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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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**“The dream that makes you dream”
A heart that transforms “wolves” into “lambs”**

Strenna 2024

During my service as Rector Major I have been able to see that the Strenna is one of the most beautiful gifts that Don Bosco and his successors offer the entire Salesian Family every year. It helps us on our journey together and spreads out to reach the most faraway places, while at the same time leaving the freedom to individual ones to accept, integrate and value what is proposed for the journey of all the individual educative and pastoral communities.

In this 2024 we will celebrate the second centenary of the “dream-vision young John had between the ages of nine and ten at his home at the Becchi”¹ in 1824: *the dream at nine years of age*.

I believe that the bicentennial anniversary of the dream that “affected Don Bosco’s whole way of living and thinking. And in particular, his way of sensing the presence of God in each one’s life and in the history of the world”² deserves to be placed at the centre of the Strenna, which will guide the educative and pastoral year of the entire Salesian Family. It can be taken up and further explored in the evangelising mission, educational interventions and in the social promotion activities carried out by our Family’s groups everywhere around the world, a Family which finds its inspirational father in Don Bosco.

“I would like to recall here the ‘dream at nine years of age’.

¹ F. MOTTO, *Il sogno dei nove anni. Redazione, storia, criteri di lettura*, in «Note di pastorale giovanile» 5 (2020), 6.

² P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica. 1. Vita e opere*, LAS, Roma 1979, 31ff.

In fact, it seems to me that this page of autobiography provides a simple, but at the same time prophetic presentation, of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. In it the field of work entrusted to him is described: the young; the aim of his apostolate was pointed out: to make them grow as individuals through education; a method of education that would be effective was offered him: the Preventive System; the context in which all that he did, and today all that we do, was presented: the marvellous plan of God who, first of all and more than anything else, loves the young.”³ This is what Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major Emeritus, wrote by way of conclusion to the commentary on Strenna 2012, offered to the Salesian Family for the first year of the three-year period in preparation for the bicentenary (year 2015) of Don Bosco’s birth.

This text is a beautiful summary that presents the essence of what the dream at nine years of age is in its simplicity and as a prophecy, in its charismatic and educational value. It is an emblematic dream. And throughout this year we will try to bring it even closer to the heart and life of the entire Family of Don Bosco. It is a dream, a “very famous dream-vision that would become and still is an important pillar, almost a founding myth, in the Salesian Family’s soaring imagination”,⁴ which, of course, needs to be contextualised and given critical attention – something that Don Bosco himself did and that our experts in Salesian history have done – in order to offer a reading and provide an up-to-date, vital and existential interpretation. Undoubtedly it is a dream that Don Bosco kept in his mind and heart throughout his life, as he himself declares, “It was at that age I had a dream. All my life this remained deeply impressed on my mind.”⁵ It is, therefore, a dream that stayed with him and has been part

³ P. CHÁVEZ V., *Let us make the young our life’s mission by coming to know and imitate Don Bosco*, in AGC 412 (2012), 35-36.

⁴ F. MOTTO, *op. cit.*, 6.

⁵ J. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales from 1815 to 1855*, in ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Salesian Sources 1. Don Bosco and his work*, LAS, Rome 2014, 1329.

of the journey of the Salesian Congregation until today. And undoubtedly it reaches our entire Salesian family.

In the words of Fr Rinaldi, referring to the first centenary of the dream, we read, “Its content is in fact of such importance, that on this centenary anniversary, we must make it our strict duty to understand it more profoundly through more regular meditation on every detail, and to put it generously into practice if we want to deserve our name as true sons of Don Bosco and perfect Salesians.”⁶ And now we are intensely experiencing the extraordinary event of this second centenary that will undoubtedly see many events throughout the Salesian world. Let the expression of all this arrive at its most celebratory, festive and also profound moment in the hopeful revision of our lives, making courageous proposals to young people to help them dream “big”, assured of the presence of the Lord Jesus, and “hand in hand” with the Teacher, the Lady, our Mother.

1. “I HAD A DREAM...”: A VERY SPECIAL DREAM

Just like that, two hundred years ago the very young John Bosco had a dream that would “mark” him throughout his life; a dream that would leave an indelible mark on him, whose meaning Don Bosco fully understood only at the end of his life. Here, then, is the dream told by Don Bosco himself according to the critical edition of Antonio da Silva Ferreira from which we depart only through two small variants.⁷

⁶ Cf. F. RINALDI, Circular Letter published in ASC Year V - N. 26 (24 October 1924), 312-317.

⁷ G. BOSCO, *Memorie dell'oratorio di san Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, in Istituto Storico Salesiano, (saggio introduttivo e note storiche a cura di A. da Silva Ferreira), “Fonti”, serie prima, 4, March 1991. Cf. A. BOZZOLO, *Il sogno dei nove anni, 3.1 Struttura narrativa e movimento onirico* in A. Bozzolo (a cura di), *I sogni di Don Bosco. Esperienza spirituale e sapienza educativa*, LAS-Roma, 2017, p. 235. note: an English translation of this is available at <http://sdl.sdb.org:9393/greenstone3/library/collection/dbdonbos/document/HASH3f428469cbc5458e999f74?>

[*Initial frame*] It was at that age that I had a dream. All my life this remained deeply impressed on my mind.

[*Vision of the boys and John's intervention*] In this dream I seemed to be very near my home in a very large yard. A crowd of children were playing there. Some were laughing, some were playing games, and quite a few were swearing. When I heard these evil words, I jumped immediately amongst them and tried to stop them by using my words and my fists.

[*Appearance of the dignified man*] At that moment a dignified man appeared, a nobly-dressed adult. He wore a white cloak and his face shone so that I could not look directly at him. He called me by name, told me to take charge of these children, and added these words: "You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love. Start straight away to teach them the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue." Confused and frightened, I replied that I was a poor, ignorant child. I was unable to talk to these youngsters about religion. At that moment the kids stopped their fighting, shouting and swearing; they gathered round the man who was speaking.

[*Conversation regarding this character's identity*] Hardly knowing what I was saying, I asked, "Who are you, ordering me to do the impossible?" "Precisely because it seems impossible to you, you must make it possible through obedience and the acquisition of knowledge." "Where, by what means, can I acquire knowledge?" "I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance you can become wise. Without her, all wisdom is foolishness." "But who are you that speak so?" "I am the son of the woman whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day." "My mother tells me not to mix with people I don't know unless I have her permission. So tell me your name." "Ask my mother what my name is."

[*Appearance of the stately-looking woman*] At that moment, I saw a lady of stately appearance standing beside him. She was wearing a mantle that sparkled all over as though covered with bright stars. Seeing from my questions and answers that I was more confused than ever, she beckoned me to approach her. She took me kindly by the hand and said, "Look" Glancing round, I realised that the youngsters had all apparently run away. A large number of goats, dogs, cats, bears and other animals had taken their place. "This is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong, and energetic. And what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do for my children." I looked round again, and where before I had seen wild animals,

I now saw gentle lambs. They were all jumping and bleating as if to welcome that man and lady. At that point, still dreaming, I began crying. I begged the lady to speak so that I could understand her, because I did not know what all this could mean. She then placed her hand on my head and said, "In good time you will understand everything."

[*Final frame*] With that, a noise woke me up and everything disappeared. I was totally bewildered. My hands seemed to be sore from the blows I had given, and my face hurt from those I had received. The memory of the man and the lady, and things said and heard, so occupied my mind that I could not get any more sleep that night. I wasted no time in telling all about my dream. I spoke first to my brothers, who laughed at the whole thing, and then to my mother and grandmother. Each one gave his or her own interpretation. My brother Joseph said, "You're going to become a keeper of goats, sheep and other animals." My mother commented, "Who knows, but you may become a priest." Anthony merely grunted, "Perhaps you'll become a robber chief." But my grandmother, though she could not read or write, knew enough theology, and made the final judgement saying, "Pay no attention to dreams." I agreed with my grandmother. However, I was unable to cast that dream out of my mind. The things I shall have to say later will give some meaning to all this. I kept quiet about these things, and my relatives paid little attention to them. But when I went to Rome in 1858 to speak to the Pope about the Salesian Congregation, he asked me to tell him everything that had even the suggestion of the supernatural about it. It was only then, for the first time, that I said anything about this dream which I had when I was nine or ten years old. The Pope ordered me to write out the dream in all its detail and to leave it as an encouragement to the sons of that Congregation whose formation was the reason for that visit to Rome.

The same dream would reoccur several times in Don Bosco's life, and he himself, who recounted that first event in his own handwriting in the *Memoirs*, the bicentenary of which we are now celebrating, on several occasions recounts what he dreams of again so many years later. In fact, the dream he had when he was nine was not an isolated dream, but belongs to a long and complementary sequence of dreamlike episodes that accompanied Don Bosco's life. He himself connects and integrates three fundamental dreams: the one in 1824 (at the Becchi), the one in 1844 (at the Convitto, the Church's pastoral centre) and the one in

1845 (when working with the Marchioness Barolo), finding some elements of continuity and others that are new. We can always recognise the thread of that first frame and scene in the field at the Becchi in the dreams, but with new details, reactions, messages tied to the stages of life that Don Bosco at the height of his mission, no longer the little nine-year-old John, was experiencing.

On another occasion, many years later, Don Bosco himself told Fr Barberis about it in 1875, when he was already sixty years old. At that time Don Bosco had seen the birth of the Salesian Congregation (18 December 1859), the Archconfraternity of Mary Help of Christians (18 April 1869), the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (5 August 1872) and the Pious Society of Salesian Cooperators – according to the original name given by Don Bosco – approved on 9 May 1876.

When this dream presents itself for the last time, Don Bosco is, as I have already said, a mature man: he has experienced many situations, he has faced and overcome numerous difficulties, he has seen for himself what the Grace and Love of the Virgin Mary have worked in his boys; he has seen many miracles of Providence and he has suffered not a little. “In good time you will understand everything” the first dream had told him, prophetically and in 1887 at the Mass of consecration of the church dedicated to the Sacred Heart in Rome, he heard that voice echo in his ears and wept with joy, wept at contemplating the wonderful effects of his invincible faith.”⁸

2. A DREAM WHICH ALL THE RECTORS MAJOR HAVE MADE REFERENCE TO

I am particularly impressed by the fact that all the Rectors Major, with the exception of Fr Rua from whom I could not find

⁸ R. ZIGGIOTTI (ed. Marco Bay), *Tenaci, audaci e amorevoli. Lettere circolari ai salesiani di don Renato Ziggioiti*, LAS, Roma 2015, 575.

any quotation, have referred to *the dream*, to this dream of Don Bosco that has marked our Congregation and the Salesian Family. I am availing myself at this moment of some magnificent research work carried out by Bro. Marco Bay⁹.

Fr Paul Albera, Don Bosco's second successor, referring to the Oratory at Valdocco as Don Bosco's Oratory, the first and for many years only work, refers to the dream as the mysterious dream in which Providence entrusts him with the mission:

"The first, and for many years only work of D. Bosco was the festive Oratory, his festive Oratory, as he had already glimpsed it in the mysterious *dream he had when he was nine years old* and in the subsequent ones that progressively enlightened his mind regarding the Work of Providence entrusted to him."¹⁰

Fr Philip Rinaldi, Don Bosco's third successor, is the one who has the opportunity of experiencing the first centenary of this dream and tries to ensure that the entire Congregation is imbued with the grace of experiencing this event. And hence he encourages people as follows:

"In my circular letter on the Jubilee of our Constitutions I have already mentioned to you, my dear sons, the centenary of Don Bosco's first dream, inviting you to meditate on this dream and to practise it (...) Let us reread together, my dear confreres, the pages written by our Ven. Father for our instruction, in obedience to the Vicar of Jesus Christ; yes, let us reread it with great veneration, and fix it in our minds word for word, these pages which evangelically describe to us the supernatural

⁹ Salesian Brother Marco Bay has been a professor at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome and is currently director of the Salesian Central Archives in Rome (UPS). He generously placed in my hands the research he had carried out on the references that the previous Rectors Major had made on the dream at nine years of age.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Fr Luis Timossi, SDB, of the Ongoing Formation Centre in Quito, and Fr Silvio Roggia, SDB, Rector of the Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá Community in Rome, for their notes and suggestions.

¹⁰ P. ALBERA, Direzione Generale delle Opere Salesiane, *Lettere Circolari di don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, Torino 1965, 123; 315; 339.

origin, the intimate nature and the specific form of our vocation. The more you read, the more it becomes new and bright.”¹¹

And in this same letter he has the confreres understand that, just as with Don Bosco’s dream at nine years of age he was called to a mission, so we too, under the guidance of the Virgin, have been called, with the benevolent guidance of the Virgin herself who takes us by the hand, shows us our field of work and encourages us in a thousand ways to acquire the gifts of humility, strength and health. We understand perfectly how the commanding invitation to be strong, humble and energetic is applied to us. The invitation that the Lady of Dream gave to the young John Bosco.

We too have been ordered to acquire the means necessary to put this method into practice, that is, obedience and knowledge, under the guidance of the Virgin; which we have done (or are doing) during the years of our religious and priestly formation. During all these happy years the Blessed Virgin took us, too, kindly by the hand and, pointing out our future field of work, encouraged us in every way to acquire humility, fortitude and health, which are the qualities strictly necessary for every true son of Don Bosco. Finally, we too will be shown countless numbers of young people, at first completely ignorant of the things of God, and perhaps already unhappy victims of evil, running enlightened, healed and joyful to celebrate Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹²

And, almost as an encouragement to celebrate this bicentenary in a great and significant way, let me take up the Salesian Bulletin at the time of Fr Rinaldi, which tells of the celebration in Rome that took place in his presence:

“Because of a dream” wrote the *Corriere d'Italia* on 2 May last. “Because of the ideal beauty of a dream - yesterday in the large courtyard of the Opere di Don Bosco in Rome, thousands of yearning and applauding souls crowded together, with Cardinal Cagliero, the vener-

¹¹ F. RINALDI, Lettera circolare pubblicata in ACS Anno V - N. 26 (24 October 1924), 312-317.

¹² *Ibidem*.

able Missionary, and Don Bosco's own Successor, Fr Rinaldi, and the Minister of P. I [Public Instruction], Pietro Fedele, to pay the moving homage of all the powers of the spirit to the incomparable Master who, in the luminous humility of the Faith, had followed the radiant paths of that sublime dream (...) A lively crowd of young people, boys and girls, Don Bosco's pupils; a large crowd of people from all walks of life – professionals, teachers, soldiers, priests – all gathered in the name of the gentle Master.”

“A hundred years ago (another Holy Year, why forget?) Don Bosco as a boy dreamed a sweet and mysterious dream; he saw, first, a group of street-kids quarrelling among themselves, swearing and cursing, and he tried to call them to order with his stick; then he saw a Lady and a Man leading him to another group of beasts, this time of dogs and cats, also quarrelling, barking and smirking - but at a mysterious sign from the Two, they turned into flocks of peaceful lambs.”

“A hundred years later that dream is a reality – splendid, vibrant, grand; – it is a miraculous story that already involves the destiny of millions of people in Schools, in Missions, in life, in prayer, in hope; all who have greeted and still greet Don Bosco, the greatest and holiest teacher of life that the Church and Italy have given to the world in our century.”¹³

And **Fr Peter Ricaldone**, fourth successor of Don Bosco, sees the seedling of the festive Oratory and the entire Salesian Work in the dream that young John had when he was nine. Many more steps would follow, says Fr Ricaldone, many stations along a pilgrimage, before arriving at Pinardi, in his home town.

There is no doubt that we must trace the first seedling of the festive Oratory and of the entire Salesian Work, as I said just now, back to the prophetic dream that young John had at the age of nine. Since when the Woman of stately appearance told the little shepherd of the Becchi: “This is the field of your work: make yourself humble, strong and energetic. And what you see happening to these animals in a moment, is what you must do for my children.”

The Becchi, Moncucco, Castelnuovo, Chieri, are other steps: but young John Bosco had hardly set out; he was walking towards a much more distant goal. 8 December 1841 is, more than a point of arrival, another starting point. He must go on new pilgrimages before arriving at the Pinardi shed, in Valdocco, his promised land. To return to the first im-

¹³ *La commemorazione di un “sogno”*, in BS Anno XLIX, 6 (June 1925), 147.

age, the tender seedling has finally found the soil it belongs in; from now on we will see it strengthen and extend beyond all human prediction.¹⁴

Fr Ricaldone even believes that Don Bosco's love and zeal for vocations also originated from his dream at nine years of age:

Don Bosco's love and zeal for vocations has its first origin in the prophetic dream he had at the age of nine, reproduced in different but substantially uniform ways over the space of almost twenty years (...) In fact, after that dream, the desire to study to become a priest and dedicate himself to the salvation of young people increased in John.¹⁵

Fr Renato Ziggotti, Don Bosco's fifth successor, stresses in a very particular way the great gift that the Teacher was for Don Bosco. In fact, it is the Lord who gives the gift of his Mother to young John, above all as a guide. It is expressed this way:

"I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance you can become wise. Without her all wisdom is foolishness." These are the prophetic words of the first dream, pronounced by the mysterious character, "the son of the woman whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day." It is therefore Jesus who gives Don Bosco his Mother as his Teacher and infallible guide along the hard journey of his entire life. How can we give sufficient thanks for this extraordinary gift that was given by Heaven to our Family?¹⁶

And she, the Mother, the Madonna, the Lady of the dream would be everything for Don Bosco. This certainty was very strong and all-encompassing in Fr Ziggotti and is what led him to ask every Salesian:

Our Lady, to whom he was consecrated by his mother at birth, who illuminated his future in the *dream at nine years of age* and then returned to comfort and advise him in a thousand ways in dreams, in the prophetic spirit, in the interior vision of the state of souls, in miracles and countless graces, which he worked by invoking her; Our Lady is everything for Don Bosco; and the Salesian who wants to acquire the spirit of the Founder must imitate him in this devotion.¹⁷

¹⁴ P. RICALDONE, Anno XVII. 24 March 1936 N. 74.

¹⁵ P. RICALDONE, *op. cit.*, N. 78.

¹⁶ R. ZIGGIOTTI, *op. cit.*, 129.

¹⁷ R. ZIGGIOTTI, *op. cit.*, 264.

And **Fr Luigi Ricceri**, Don Bosco's sixth successor, has some magnificent expressions regarding the significance of the dream at nine years of age. Fr Ricceri emphasises how important this dream was for Don Bosco to the point of remaining impressed in his heart and mind forever, and how through this, he felt called by God:

The dream at nine years of age. It is the dream – Don Bosco writes in his “Memoirs” – that “all my life... remained deeply impressed on my mind” (*MO*, 34).

The indelible impression of this dream-vision is due to the fact that it was like a sudden light that clarified the meaning of his young life and traced his path. Like little Samuel, Don Bosco feels called and sent by God in view of a mission: to save young people in all places, in all times: those of Christian countries and the “multitude” of those who in non-Christian regions are still waiting for the great advent of the Lord.¹⁸

This is the dream, Fr Ricceri says, in which Don Bosco, still without full lucidity due to his young age, intuitively grasps the great value of living to save souls, and this conviction takes shape in his life, in his mind, in his spirit, increasingly as a gift of grace. And it is through this decisive event in his life that Don Bosco had the *first great insight into what the preventive system would be in the future*. “You will have to win these friends of yours not by blows but by gentleness and love” Don Bosco writes in his narration of the event, hearing it from the Lady's lips. So much so that in the future we can talk about a precious relationship between Don Bosco and the Mother of the Lord. This is how Fr Ricceri expresses himself so beautifully:

Starting from this dream, the relationship between Don Bosco and the Mother of Jesus is strengthened, that permanent collaboration that characterises the life of the future apostle.¹⁹

Fr Egidio Viganò, Don Bosco's seventh successor, offers us other no less inspiring reflections. I am happy to see this mag-

¹⁸ L. RICCERI, *La parola del Rettor Maggiore. Conferenze, Omelie Buone notti*, v. 9, Ispettorato Centrale Salesiano, Torino 1978, 27.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 28.

nificent line of continuity from all the Rectors Major in reading, meditating and interpreting the dream par excellence, drawing out ideas that are helpful even for our current times. Fr Viganò confirms, like other successors of Don Bosco before him, that Mary is the true inspiration, Teacher and guide of John, our Father Don Bosco's vocation.

It is of special interest, I think, that in the famous dream when he was only nine – a dream many times repeated and one to which Don Bosco attached great importance in his life – in his faith awareness, Mary appeared as an important personage directly in a mission project for his life, a woman showing a particular pastoral preoccupation for the young; in fact she appeared “as a shepherdess”. And we should take note that it is not John who chooses Mary; it is Mary who takes the initiative in the choice; at the request of her Son, she will be the inspirer and guide of his vocation.²⁰

The wonderful experience John had allowed him to establish a very personal relationship with Mary – the Lady of the dream – and it is for this reason that Don Bosco would experience intimately, throughout his life and on many occasions, the very special and great affection on the part of Mary. It is a very special relationship with the Virgin Mary.

Also **Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi**, Don Bosco's eighth successor, notes that convinced as Don Bosco was that he was sent to the young, everything must be focused on that one sacred purpose, the young, and he must devote all his energies to them. Such is the thread of the story that Don Bosco makes of his life in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* starting from the *first dream*: “The Lord sent me to look after boys, therefore I must cut down on other work and keep myself fit for them”,²¹ always convinced that he was an instrument of the Lord and that his whole life

²⁰ E. VIGANÒ, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai salesiani*, vol. 1, Roma, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996, 10.

²¹ *BM VII*, 171-172. Quoted in J. E. VECCHI, *Educatori appassionati esperti e consacrati per i giovani. Lettere circolari ai Salesiani di don Juan E. Vecchi*. Introduction, key words and indexes by Marco Bay, LAS, Roma 2013, 380.

was marked by this call and mission among the young. Another great expert on Don Bosco confirms this: “The faith of being the Lord’s instrument for a very singular mission was profound and firm in him. This was the basis in him of the characteristic religious attitude of the biblical servant, the prophet who cannot escape the divine will.”²²

Finally, **Fr Pascual Chávez**, Don Bosco’s ninth successor, offers one that moves me among a large number of texts. It is a hymn to the mother figure of Mamma Margaret who, with the grace of God, was able to accompany young John by interpreting and intuiting how, in the dream he had when he was nine, the Lord and the Virgin Mary were calling her son to a very special vocation. One could speak of Mamma Margaret, Fr Pascual says, as a true “Salesian” educator.

It was this educative skill that enabled Mamma Margaret to identify the particular potentialities hidden in her children, bring them to light, develop them, and return them almost visibly to their own hands. This was the case especially with John, her most outstanding offspring. How impressive it is to see in Mamma Margaret the clear sense and awareness of her “maternal responsibility” in the constant Christian guidance of her children, while always leaving them autonomous about their vocation in life, right up until her death!

If young John’s dream at the age of nine revealed many things to him about his future, it did so primarily for Mamma Margaret; it was she who first hazarded the interpretation: “Perhaps you will become a priest!” And some years later, when she realised that their home environment was a negative one for John because of the hostility of his step-brother Anthony, she made the sacrifice of sending him to work as a farm-hand in the Moglia farm at Moncucco. A mother who deprives herself of her youngest son to send him to work at a place far from home makes a great sacrifice, but she did it not only to avoid a rift in the family but also to set John on the road revealed to both of them in the dream (...) Divine Providence gave her the grace to be a “Salesian educator”.²³

²² P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*. Vol. II, p. 32. Quoted in J. E. VECCHI, *op. cit.*, 381.

²³ P. CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Lettere circolari ai salesiani (2002-2014)*. Introduction and indexes by Marco Bay. Presentation by Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, Roma, LAS, 2021, p. 450.

3. THE PROPHETIC DREAM: a precious jewel in the charism of Don Bosco's Family

In the previous points we read how Fr Philip Rinaldi invited the confreres, and certainly at that time the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesian Cooperators, the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians and I imagine also the Past Pupils, to read the dream, to understand it, to internalise it and to feel its echo in their heart. I have no doubt about that. Certainly there has been a unanimous view in everything that has been written – be it historical research, historical-critical studies, reflections on Salesian spirituality or educative and pastoral interpretations – in recognising that this dream is much more than a simple dream. In fact, it contains so many charismatic elements that I dare to call it *a precious jewel of our charism* and a real road map for *Don Bosco's Family*.

You could really say that nothing is missing from it and there is nothing superfluous. That is what I want to refer to now.

3.1. Looking at the dream

Where to look right now? In the first instance, at the **dream itself**, since it contains an extraordinary charismatic wealth. As I have already said, there is not a word too many and certainly nothing missing. The effort Don Bosco made in writing it down, to convey to us the fact that it is not just “a” **dream**, **but that we must see it as “the” dream** that would mark his entire life, is more than evident – even though at the time, as a child, he could not have imagined it. In fact, “Don Bosco, almost sixty years old – he felt old then and was so for the time – had to pose the problem of giving a historical-spiritual foundation to his Congregation by recalling the providential origins that justified it. What could be better than ‘telling the story’ to his sons of the cradle of the ‘Congregation of the Oratories’ in its genesis, development, purpose and method, as an institution willed by God as an instrument for the salvation of youth in new

times?”²⁴ Indeed, the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, in which Don Bosco tells the story of his dream, are nothing more than the dream unfolded in his life story, in the Oratory and in the Congregation. This is why he also says in the introduction to his manuscript:

Therefore I am now putting in writing those confidential details that may somehow serve as a light or to be use to the work which Divine Province has entrusted to the Society of St Francis de Sales.²⁵ And “Now, what purpose can this chronicle serve? It will be a record to help people overcome problems that may come in the future by learning from the past. It will serve to make known how God himself has always been our guide. It will give my sons some entertainment to be able to read about their father’s adventures. Doubtless they will be read much more avidly when I have been called by God to render my account, when I am no longer among them.”²⁶

The story told in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* (and of the dream at nine years of age which is part of that) has been of such importance that it has involved its study, for their whole lives, by significant Salesian experts, seizing upon different perspectives over the years. A rich and noteworthy example, for example, comes from the various emphases that the great scholar of Salesian pedagogy, Fr Pietro Braido, made over several decades. It would be “an edifying story left by a founder to the members of his Society of apostles and educators who had to perpetuate his work and style, following his directives, guidelines and lessons” (1965); or “a history of the oratory that is more ‘theological’ and pedagogical than real, perhaps the ‘theoretical’ animation document that Don Bosco most long pondered and desired” (1989); “perhaps the richest book of contents and preventive guidelines” that Don Bosco wrote: “a manual of pedagogy and spirituality ‘told’ from a clear oratorian perspective” (1999); or even a writing in which “the parable and the message” come before and “above history”, to illustrate God’s action in human affairs, and thus, rejoicing and recreating,

²⁴ F. MOTTO, *op. cit.* 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶ J. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, quoted in F. MOTTO, *op. cit.*, 9.

“to comfort and confirm the disciples” from a clear “oratorian” perspective (1999).²⁷

One of the precious stones of this jewel to which I am referring, is the one that allows those of us who enter the dream with a Salesian heart, whatever our Christian and Salesian journey or in the Family of Don Bosco, to be questioned in our heart: are we ready to learn, are we willing to be surprised by God who accompanies our life, as he guided the life of Don Bosco, and to feel like sons and daughters before that immense fatherhood that emanates from the figure of our father? Because:

- If we do not become a **BELIEVER** and if we are not convinced that God works in history, in the history of Don Bosco and in each one’s personal history, we will understand little or nothing of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* and the dream, and it will simply be a “beautiful story”.
- If we do not become **SONS or DAUGHTERS**, we will not be able to attune ourselves to the fatherhood that Don Bosco intends to communicate through the *Memoirs of the Oratory*.
- If we do not become **DISCIPLES**, ready to learn, we will not truly enter into the spirit of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* and of the dream.

It seems to me that these three initial dispositions (faith, being children of, and discipleship) are “essential keys” to understand and take on, for ourselves, what Don Bosco has narrated and left us as a spiritual legacy. What took place in his life, and marked and enlightened him forever, Don Bosco wanted to be a legacy that would profoundly help his Salesians and all of us who, by grace, feel and are part of his Family.

3.2. Young people, key characters in the dream...

From the first moment of the dream, the “Oratorian mission” entrusted to young John Bosco is evident, even if he does not

²⁷ F. MOTTO, *op. cit.*, 10.

know how to carry it out or how to express it. As we can see, the scene is full of youngsters, who are absolutely real in young John's dream.

Therefore, it seems to me possible to state that **the young** are the central characters in the dream, and that even if they do not utter a word, everything revolves around them. In addition, the "heavenly" characters themselves and young John Bosco are there thanks to them and for them. The whole dream, then, is about them and for them: for the youngsters. If we exclude the young people from this dream, nothing significant for our mission would remain.

But what is interesting is that they are not like a photograph that fixes an image within an instance. These youngsters are in perpetual motion and activity: both when they are being aggressive (like wolves), when they cannot stand each other, and when, after being transformed in the way that the Lady of the Dream asks of young John, they become youngsters (like lambs) who are calm, friendly and warm. The most important thing that happens in the dream and that Don Bosco himself learns and, afterwards, all his followers, is discovering that the *transformation process* is always possible. It is an "Easter" movement – let me call it that – of conversion and transformation, of wolves into lambs, and lambs into what, in today's language, we would call a youth community that celebrates Jesus and Mary. It certainly seems to me an essential and central element of the dream.

3.3. ...where there is a clear vocational call

"This is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong, and energetic. And what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you you must do for my children."²⁸ What happens in the dream is above all a *call*, an invitation, a vocation that seems impossible, unachievable. Young

²⁸ Quoted in P. RICALDONE, Anno XVII. 24 March 1936 N. 74.

John Bosco wakes up tired, he has even been crying; and when the call comes from God (the dignified-looking character in the dream is Jesus), the direction that such a call can take is unpredictable and disconcerting.

This call is something very special in the dream; it is of *a unique richness*. I say this because it would seem that, due to his age, lack of a father, almost total lack of resources, poverty, internal family problems, quarrels with his half-brother Anthony, difficulties in accessing school because of the distance and the need to work in the fields, there is no possible future for John other than to stay there cultivating the fields and looking after the animals. Even to us it might seem like an unrealisable dream, far away, perhaps destined for someone else, but not for him. It is the same interpretation that young John's relatives also give of the dream, as confirmed by his grandmother's words: "Pay n attention to dreams".²⁹

However, it is precisely this difficult situation that makes Don Bosco (at this time young John) very human, in need of help, but also strong and enthusiastic. His willpower, character, temperament, fortitude and the determination of his mother, Mamma Margaret, a deep faith on the part of both his mother and John himself, make all this possible. The dream would always be there, but he would discover it through life: *I understood how, little by little, everything came true...* There is no magic, it is not a "fairy" dream, there is no predestination, but a life full of meaning, demands, sacrifices, but also of faith and hope that urges us to discover and live it every day.

In the dream, a very respectable man appears, of dignified appearance, who speaks to John, questions him, puts him in the hands of his Mother, the Lady. There is definitely a sending on mission. A mission as educator and pastor wherein a method is also pointed out: gentleness and love. Here is an example of his vocational response:

²⁹ J. BOSCO, *op. cit.*, 1177.

John, faithful from an early age to divine inspiration, begins to work in the field assigned to him by Providence. He has not yet reached the age of ten and is already an apostle among his compatriots in the village of Murialdo. Is it not a Festive Oratory, even in embryo, sketched out, that young John began in 1825, using means compatible with his age and his education?

Endowed with a prodigious memory, a lover of books, regularly listening to sermons, he treasures everything, instructions, facts, examples, to repeat them to his small audience, instilling with admirable effectiveness the love of virtue in those who rush to admire the skill of his games and to hear his childish but warm words.³⁰

3.4. And she, Mary, will forever mark young John's dream and Don Bosco's life

We are coming to the central moment of the dream: the Lady's motherly mediation (linked to the mystery of the name). For John Bosco, his mother and the Mother of the one he greets three times a day, it will be a place of humanity in which to rest, in which to find safety and refuge in the most difficult moments.

"I will give you a teacher. Under her guidance you can become wise. Without her, all wisdom is foolishness." In fact, it is she who tells him both the field where he will have to work and the method to be used: "This is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong and energetic." Mary is called upon from the very beginning for the birth of a new charism, as it is precisely her speciality to carry and give birth: for this reason, when it comes to a Founder who must receive from the Holy Spirit the original light of the charism, the Lord disposes that it is his own mother, the Virgin of Pentecost and immaculate model of the Church, who is to be his Teacher. She alone, the "full of grace", understands all charisms from within, as someone who knows all languages and speaks them as if they were her own.³¹ It is as if the Man of the dream said to the very young John Bosco: "From now on, be in agreement with her."

³¹ A. BOZZOLO (ED), *Il Sogno dei nove anni*. Questioni ermeneutiche e lettura teologica, LAS, Roma 2017, 264. Cf. fn 7 re availability of this in English.

“Let us note at once, here, that it is not John who chooses Mary, but that it is Mary who presents herself with the initiative of the choice: She, at the request of her Son, will be the Inspirer and Teacher of his vocation.”³²

This **feminine-maternal-Marian dimension** is perhaps one of the most challenging dimensions of the dream. When we look at this serenely, this aspect turns into something beautiful. It is Jesus himself who gives him a teacher, his Mother, and that he must “ask my Mother what my name is”; John must work “with her children”, and it is “She” who will see to the continuity of the dream in life, who will take him by the hand until the end of his days, until the moment when he will truly understand everything.

There is an enormous intentionality in wanting to say that in the Salesian charism on behalf of the poorest youngsters, those most deprived, most lacking in affection, the dimension of treating them with “kindly”, with gentleness and love, as well as the “Marian” dimension, *are indispensable elements* for those who want to live this charism. Our Lady has to do with formation in the “wisdom of the charism”. And that is why it is difficult to understand that in the Salesian charism there can be someone (person, group or institution) who leaves the Marian presence in the background. Without Mary of Nazareth we would be talking about another charism, not the Salesian charism, nor about the sons and daughters of Don Bosco. Fr Ziggiotti says it beautifully in this research we have done on the comments of the Rectors Major on the dream:

I would like to persuade all the Salesians of this very important fact, which illuminates the whole life of the Saint with heavenly light and therefore gives an indisputable value to everything he did and said in his life: Our Lady, to whom he was consecrated by his Mother at birth, who shed light on his future in the *dream at nine years of age* and then returned to comfort and advise him in a thousand ways in dreams, in the prophetic spirit, in his inner vision of the state of souls, in miracles

³² E. VIGANÒ, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai salesiani*, vol. 1, 1996, Roma, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996, p. 10.

and countless graces, which he worked by invoking her; Our Lady is everything for Don Bosco; and the Salesian who wants to acquire the spirit of the Founder must imitate him in this devotion.³³

3.5. Docile to the Spirit, trusting in Providence

There is certainly much to learn. Becoming humble, strong and energetic means preparing for what lies ahead. John Bosco must be obedient, docile to the Master's wisdom. He will have to learn to see and discover the processes of transformation; to understand that the route, the journey made with these young people leads to life, and to the encounter with the Lord of the dream and with his mother; leads to Jesus and Mary. John Bosco discovered all this.

At stake is obedience to God, docility to the Spirit. Just as Mary is the one who "lets things happen", who lets what God has thought and dreamed happen to her, to the point of proclaiming that "fiat" to God, that the *Lord has done great things in me*, so also the Salesian, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, every Salesian Cooperator, every devotee of Mary help of Christians, every member of our Salesian Family which is the Family of Don Bosco, will have to learn to do precisely this style of *docility to the Spirit*. I add that I would like this style to become flesh and life at all stages of initial and ongoing formation in every group, congregation and Salesian institution. And let us not forget that the "formators", the "formandi", should be, we should be, the first to "let ourselves be formed" by the Spirit, like Mary.

The dream offers, like no other element, like no other reality, what I believe can be described as "*inalienable*" clues to the DNA of the charism. It is these clues or "principles" that can help us read, discern, and act in tune with creative fidelity.

And let us not forget that this is a community task, we must carry it out together, "synodally" – we could say today in line with recent synodal work – as a Salesian Family.

³³ R. ZIGGIOTTI, *op. cit.*, 264.

Accompanying Don Bosco in reflecting on his dream at nine years of age means also emphasising his abandonment to Providence, placing us, like him, in the “in good time you will understand everything”. The dream itself was, for Don Bosco, an act of Providence. This is the radical conviction, the fundamental choice of life, “the essence of Don Bosco’s soul”, the central point, the deepest and most intimate part of him. There is no doubt that the abandonment to Divine Providence, as he had learned from his mother, was decisive for our father and must be for us the guarantee of the continuity of Salesian spirituality. It is abandonment to God, trust in God, because the God that Don Bosco learned to love is a reliable God. He really acts in history, and he has done so in the history of the Oratory, to the point that Don Bosco went so far as to say to the Salesian Rectors on 2 February 1876:

The other Congregations and Religious Orders had in their beginnings some inspiration, some vision, some supernatural fact which gave impetus to the foundation and ensured its establishment; but mostly it stopped at one or a few of these facts. Here, however, things are quite different among us. It can be said that there is nothing that has not been known before. No step was taken by the Congregation without some supernatural fact advising it; no change or refinement or enlargement that was not preceded by a command from the Lord... For example, we could have written down all the things that happened to us before they happened and written them down minutely and accurately.³⁴

3.6. However, “not by blows”. The art of kindness and educative patience

The dream not only speaks of a past, but also of a present, of a today that is extremely current. The “not by blows” that Our Lady says to young John in the dream challenges us even today, and makes it more necessary than ever to reflect on our Salesian way of educating young people, because the discourse of hatred and violence continues to increase. Our world is becoming in-

³⁴ F. MOTTO, *op. cit.*, 7.

creasingly violent and we, educators and evangelisers of the young, must be an alternative to what so distressed young John in his dream and which hurts us so much today. As the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez once stated in the Strenna for 2012,³⁵ we will undoubtedly have to “face the wolves” that seek to devour the flock: indifference, ethical relativism, consumerism that destroys the value of things and experiences, false ideologies, and other things that really impact on us and are real violence.

I believe that this message is as relevant today as it was when young John (our future Don Bosco, father and teacher) received it.

The “not by blows” is an “absolute no”. It is very clear, and it is the only correction – we could almost say reproach – that John Bosco receives in the dream. And first of all it is for us a certainty, the great certainty that the path of force and violence does not lead in the right direction of the charism. The “blows” of the dream can take a thousand forms today; in fact, I have been interested in reading, reflecting and specifying many of the more or less subtle forms of violence that surround us and that must be banned from our educative and pastoral horizon and our charismatic universe.

“**Not by blows**” means consciously fighting every kind of violence, without any justification:

- *Physical violence* that harms the body (pushing, kicking, slapping, squeezing or immobilising, throwing things).
- *Psychological and verbal violence* that damages self-esteem. The kind of violence that insults and disqualifies, that isolates, that monitors and controls without respect. The violence and psychological abuse that makes some people feel they never give enough of themselves; the violence that

³⁵ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ, “*Let us make the young our life’s mission by coming to know and imitate Don Bosco*”. *First year of preparation for the bicentenary of his birth. Strenna 2012*, in AGC 412 (2012), 3-39.

makes people see themselves as always being different and wrong, even immature for thinking what they honestly think; the violence and abuse by those who are only interested in others when they want to profit from them.

- *Emotional-sexual violence* that injures the body, the heart and the most intimate affections; that leaves indelible signs of pain and can manifest itself verbally or in writing, with looks or signs that denote obscenity, harassment, bullying and even abuse.
- *Economic violence* whereby money that is yours or used to do good is withheld, embezzled, stolen.
- *Violence is also cyber-violence*, “cyberbullying” with harassment carried out through the internet, websites, blogs, with text or email messages, or videos.
- *Violence that arises from social exclusion* that sees people, students, adolescents excluded, or publicly humiliated, without any respect.

Violence characterised by mistreatment, by verbs such as threatening, manipulating, devaluing, rejecting, denying, questioning, humiliating, insulting, disqualifying, mocking, showing indifference.

There is no doubt that we charismatically possess the antidote for these life-threatening situations. It is about Don Bosco’s pastoral genius: “ Recalling, on the other hand, that Mary’s intervention in John Bosco’s first dream was what initially configured that ‘apostolic genius’ that characterises us in the Church, I invite you to focus our reflection together on the project that characterises our pastoral genius: the Preventive System.”³⁶

3.7. SHE, the Lady: Teacher and Mother

The Lady of Dream presents herself as Teacher and Mother. She is the mother of both: of the dignified Man of the dream and of

³⁶ E. VIGANÒ, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai salesiani*, vol. 1, 1996, Roma, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996, p. 31.

young John himself; a mother – let me paraphrase – who, taking him by the hand, says to him:

“*Look*”: how important it is for us to know how to look, and how serious it is when we cannot “see” young people in their reality, for who they are; when we cannot see what is most authentic in them, and what is most tragic and painful in them and in their lives. “*Look*” is the first word we hear from “the woman of stately appearance, wearing a mantle that sparkled all over, as though covered with bright stars.”

Without wanting to “interpret” a single verb too much, it seems to me that there is a “preventive” sign of what would in fact be the path that our father would have to follow, made above all of *experiential* learning. We think how much the eyes matter in Don Bosco’s life... It is what he *sees*, when he arrives in Turin – or rather what Cafasso helps him to see – that gives birth to our mission. It is from *how he sees* every boy (we recall the first encounters in the biographies he writes): there is the introduction that is like a miracle that is followed by everything else, both for Savio, for Magone, for Cagliero, for Rua... In the museum in Chieri there is a sculpture that represents the eyes and gazes of Don Bosco, placed next to his altar in 1988. There is something unique in his gaze and that “look” spoken said by the Lady is no less original and unique.

It is precisely around “looking” that one can find an explicit reference to a word as fundamental to us as *assistance*. And we all know how essential it is.

My attention, however, does not stray very far from the dream field at the Becchi, because in fact, without young John realising it, he will be formed through *experience*: he will learn from life, especially in moments of extreme difficulty and fatigue.

Look leads the individual to decentralise, to grasp something that goes beyond their horizon and exceeds their imagination and that becomes an invitation, challenge, provocation, appeal and guide. Because it asks for a full and total involvement through which John will work for his boys. This also shows the importance of *the environment* in all of Salesian pedagogy.

It takes nothing away from the essential care of interiority and silence. We are called to raise our gaze, both when we fix it on the mystery of God, and when we pass by the man who “was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers” (Lk 10:30). And it is what always characterised the person of Don Bosco, from childhood to the end of his life.

“Learn”: become humble, strong and energetic, because you need simplicity in the face of so much arrogance; strength in the face of so many things you have to face in life; and that kind of energy that is resilience, or the ability not to be discouraged, not to “drop your arms” when you seem unable to do something.

It is interesting that what makes young John “meek” (humble, strong, energetic) are the *events* (experience) that Providence (Mary) places along his journey. For example, when some time after the dream, in February 1828 (and he was only twelve years old) his mother Margaret was forced to send him away from home because of the squabbles with Anthony. In the evening, John arrives at the Moglia farmhouse, where he is welcomed more out of pity than because of a real need – it was not in winter when they would have been looking for cowherds. In any case, the farmhouse is quite far away but at the same time quite close to Moncucco where there is one of the best parish priests that the diocese of Turin had, Fr Francesco Cottino (about whom, until now, our Salesian literature still says very little). John met with him every Sunday. For John it is the first “one on one”, the first meeting with a real guide. So a season that could only be sad and dark becomes a very important opportunity for his journey. We also know that on 3 November 1829, Uncle Michael would bring him back to the family, to the Becchi. And that on 5 November John would meet Fr Calosso returning from the Buttigliera mission.

I therefore consider it very important to strongly underline the incredible direction-accompaniment of Providence. John corresponds to it by engaging freely. However, events and people who follow each other at the right time are the architects of that “humble, strong and energetic” so essential for the mission that in the meantime matures more and more in him.

Evident, therefore, is a *primacy of Grace*, which applies above all to us if we are able to let ourselves be formed and which thus becomes fruitful for the mission. To the point that there are no longer limits or difficulties such as to prevent growth towards that fullness of life that is holiness, whatever the context, even the most challenging.

Obviously, all this does not exempt us from putting all our efforts into improving situations and overcoming injustices. In fact, Don Bosco would “ally” himself with Providence without limiting his efforts, the meetings, the drafting of employment contracts to defend and protect the young apprentices invited to the first oratory. And above all, Don Bosco *does not limit their reaching for the sky!* Indicating that there is always “one more”, a high goal to strive for.

A similar lesson was suggested by Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta with her “useless” work for the dying of Calcutta. Among other things, on a poster he had written by hand and hung in his room at the beginning of his new life for the poorest of the poor, he had written these words in black and white: “Da mihi animas cetera tolle”.

“*And be patient*”, that is, let us give time for everything and let God be God.

4. A DREAM THAT MAKES US DREAM

Dear members of the Salesian Family, I cannot conclude my commentary on the Strenna without expressing for the young people and for us, the many dreams that I carry in my heart. They can be identified with the desire to continue growing in charismatic fidelity; or with the yearning and serene provocation in the face of changes that are difficult for us, with resistances that can stifle the living fire of our charism. Or encouragement to seek to translate Don Bosco’s dream into reality but two hundred years after!

I share them with you, in the hope that anyone who reads me, in any part of the vast Salesian world, can feel that something of what is written here is also destined for him or her. These seem to me to be some concrete elements for making this dream at nine years of age come true:

1. Don Bosco showed us throughout his life that only authentic relationships transform and save. Pope Francis tells us the same thing: “it is not enough to have structures, if authentic relationships are not developed within them; it is actually the quality of these relationships that evangelises.”³⁷ That is why I express the wish that every house of our Salesian Family around the world be or become a truly educational

³⁷ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young people, faith and vocational discernment*. Final Document. Elledici, Torino, 2018, n^o 128.

space, a space of respectful relationships, a space that helps to grow in a healthy way. In this we can and must make a difference, because authentic relationships are at the origin of our charism, at the origin of the encounter with Bartholomew Garelli, at the origin of Don Bosco's own vocation.

2. Every choice made by Don Bosco was part of a larger project: God's plan for him. Therefore, no choice was superficial or trivial for Don Bosco. His dream was not an anecdote of his life, or a simple event, but a vocational response, a choice, a path, a life program that took shape as it was lived. I dream, therefore, that every Salesian, every member of Don Bosco's Family feels, by vocation and choice, that they are uncomfortable and experience first hand the pain, weariness and fatigue of so many families and so many young people who struggle every day to survive, or to live with a little more dignity. And may none of us be reduced to being passive or indifferent spectators in the face of the pain and anguish of so many young people.
3. "The primordial dream, the creative dream of God our Father, precedes and accompanies the life of all his children."³⁸ Our God has a dream for each of us, for each of our young people, a project thought up, "designed" for us by God himself. The secret of everyone's much-desired happiness will be precisely to discover the correspondence and the encounter between these two dreams: *ours and God's*. And then understanding what God's dream is for each of us means, first of all, realising that the Lord has given us life because he loves us, beyond what we are, including our limits. We must believe, then, that our God wants to do great things in each of us! We are all precious, we have great value because, without each of us, something will be missing from the world and the Church. In fact, there will be people that only I can love, words that only I can say, moments that only I can share.

³⁸ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and All the People of God*, LEV, Vatican City 2019, no 194.

4. And without dreams there is no life. For human beings, for all of us, dreaming means projecting oneself, having an ideal, a meaning in life. The worst poverty of young people is preventing them from dreaming, depriving them of their dreams or imposing invented dreams on them. Each of us is a dream of God. It is important to find out what is mine, what dream God has for me. And we must try to develop it, to achieve it, because it is about our happiness and that of our brothers and sisters.

We remember how Don Bosco wept with emotion and joy when, on 16 May 1887, he saw the dream that defined his life, his vocation, his mission “come true”.

5. God *does great things with “simple tools”* and speaks to us in many ways, even in the depths of our heart, through the feelings that move within us, through the Word of God received with faith, deepened with patience, internalised with love, followed with trust. Let us help ourselves and our boys, girls and young adults to listen to their hearts, to decipher their inner movements, to give voice to what is stirring within them and within us, to recognise which signs or “dreams” reveal the voice of God and which ones, on the other hand, are the result of wrong choices.

6. “The trials and frailties of young people help us to be better, their questions challenge us, and their doubts cause us to reflect on the quality of our faith. Their criticisms are also necessary for us, because often it is through them that we hear the voice of the Lord asking us for conversion of heart and renewal of structures.”³⁹ An authentic educator knows how to discover with intelligence and patience what every young person carries within themselves, and as such will act with understanding and affection, trying to make himself loved.⁴⁰

³⁹ SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Young people... op. cit.*, no. 116.

⁴⁰ Cf. XXIII Capitolo Generale Salesiano, *Educare ai giovani nella fede*, CCS, Madrid, 1990, n^o 99. [GC23, no. 90]

I dream and wish to meet every day, in every Salesian house around the Salesian world, Salesians and lay people who believe in the miracle that Salesian education and evangelisation have the power to achieve.

7. To live humanly is to “become”, it is to realise oneself: It is to enjoy the results of the patient processes with which God works and intervenes in our lives. How I long for our educational passion to resemble that of Don Bosco, “the father of Salesian loving-kindness”, so that in all our presences in the world, boys and girls may encounter not only trained professionals, but true educators, brothers and sisters, friends, fathers and mothers.
8. Don Bosco, “street priest“ *ante litteram* [before the term existed], was literally consumed in this undertaking. The Salesians (and those who are inspired by Don Bosco) are indeed “children of a dreamer of the future“, but of a future that is built on trust in God and in everyday life, immersing themselves and working in the lives of young people, amid the hardships and uncertainties of every day.⁴¹ And that is why the encounter *with the Lord of Life*, helping each young person to discover their dream, the dream of God in each one, and supporting them in their journey to make it come true, is the most precious gift that we can offer young people. How much I want this to be done in all our houses.
9. While Don Bosco’s heart beat at all times, we are “convinced that each young person carries in his heart the desire for God” and “are called to offer opportunities for encounter with Jesus, the source of life and joy for every young person.”⁴² Don Bosco could not tolerate that in his houses his sons and daughters did not propose an encounter with Jesus to boys, girls, adolescents and young adults – even in the freedom with which we educate to faith today in the most

⁴¹ Cf. F. MOTTO, *op. cit.* 14.

⁴² R. SALA, *Il sogno dei nove anni. Redazione, storia, criteri di lettura*, in «Note di pastorale giovanile» 5 (2020), 21.

diverse contexts. Today, too, we are called to make him known, to discover how he fascinates each individual and to help young people of other religions to be good believers starting from their own faith and ideals. I dream that this will become a reality in all Salesian houses around the world.

10. “Everywhere Salesian Work must aim at the poorest and most needy young people in society, and must employ the thousand means with them that are inspired by preventive love. Don Bosco wept when he saw so much youth growing up corrupt and unbelieving; and he wished he could have extended his care – watching over, admonishing, instructing, in a word, preventing – to all the youth of the world (...) That is why in accepting new foundations he gave preference to those places where the youth were ruined by neglect.”⁴³ I really dream of one day seeing the entire Salesian Congregation with the same dedication that Don Bosco had towards his poorest children. I dream of seeing each of my confreres joyfully giving their lives in favour of the least. In many cases this is already the case. I dream that each of our houses is filled with that “smell of sheep” to which Pope Francis refers today for every call to an apostolic vocation. And I also wish this for our entire Salesian Family: no one should feel excluded from this call.
11. “John’s life before his priestly ordination is truly a masterpiece of preparation for his vocation.”⁴⁴ Speaking to young people about their vocation, Pope Francis says: “I am a mission on this Earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. It follows that every form of pastoral activity, formation and spirituality should be seen in the light of our Christian vocation.”⁴⁵

⁴³ F. RINALDI, *Il sac. Filippo Rinaldi ai Cooperatori ed alle Cooperatrici Salesiane. Un'altra data memoranda*, in BS Anno XLIX, 1 (Gennaio 1925), 6.

⁴⁴ E. VIGANÒ, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai salesiani*, vol. 2, 1996, Roma, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996, p. 589.

⁴⁵ FRANCIS, *Christus vivit*, no. 254.

As Don Bosco always did, I consider it a duty for us to help every young person, in all our proposals, to discover what God expects of them, to have ideals that make them “fly high”, to give the best of themselves, to desire to live life as gift of self.

12. Mary shines out for being a mother and carer. When, as a very young girl, she received the angel’s announcement, she did not refrain from asking questions. When she accepted and said “yes”, she staked everything, risked everything, on this. When her cousin needed her, she put her plans and needs aside and left, without delay. When the pain of her Son impacted on her, she was the strong woman who sustained him and accompanied him to the end. She, who is Mother and Teacher, looks at the world of young people who seek her, even if there is so much noise and darkness along the way; she speaks in silence and keeps the light of hope lit.⁴⁶ I really dream that in fidelity to Don Bosco we will make our boys, girls and young adults fall in love with that Mother no less than he did, because “Our Lady is everything for Don Bosco; and the Salesian who wants to acquire the spirit of the Founder must imitate him in this devotion.”⁴⁷

5. FROM THE DREAM AT NINE YEARS OF AGE TO THE ALTAR OF TEARS

I have come to the end of this commentary. I could add more, but I believe that what I have written can reach everyone’s heart That would be great news.

I simply want to invite you to take a minute internalising and contemplating this text from the *Biographical Memoirs* that describes in a few lines what Don Bosco felt, shedding

⁴⁶ Cf. FRANCIS, *op. cit.*, 43-48, 298.

⁴⁷ R. ZIGGIOTTI, *op. cit.*, 264.

copious tears, before the altar of Mary Help of Christians in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus a few days after its consecration.

In those moments Don Bosco saw and heard the voices of his mother Margaret, the comments of his brothers and grandmother who evaluated the dream, even questioning it. Right there, at that moment, sixty-two years later, he understood everything, just as the Teacher had foretold.

This narrative moves me every time and it is for this reason that I invite you to read it again and to meditate on it personally. Once again.

No less than fifteen times after he had started the Holy Sacrifice” the *Biographical Memoirs* tells us, “Don Bosco had to stop, overcome by powerful emotion, which caused him to shed tears. From time to time, Father Charles Viglietti, who was assisting him, had to divert his attention so that he could continue.

(When he was asked) the cause of such emotion, he replied: “There appeared before my eyes the scene when at the age of ten I dreamt about the Congregation I could actually see and hear my mother and brothers, as they argued about the dream...

At that time Our Lady had said, ‘In due time you will understand everything.’ Since that day, sixty-two years of hardships, sacrifices, and struggles have passed by. All of a sudden, an unexpected flash of lightning, had revealed to him in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, the crowning point of the mission so mysteriously outlined for him on the very threshold of life.⁴⁸

I truly believe that Mary Help of Christians continues to be a true Mother and Teacher for our entire Family. I am convinced that the prophetic words of the first dream spoken by the Lord Jesus and Mary continue to be a reality in all places where the charism of our Father, a gift of the Spirit, has taken root. And I am sure that in every house, beyond our efforts and our efforts, we can apply what Don Bosco said about the Sanctuary at Valdocco:

⁴⁸ BM XVIII, 288 [Taken from the English New Rochelle translation].

Every brick is a grace of Mary Help of Christians; we have done nothing without her direct intervention; she has built her own house and it is a wonder in our eyes.

May She, the Immaculate and Help of Christians, continue to lead us all by the hand. Amen.

Valdocco, Turin, 8 December 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ángel Fernández Artime". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fr Ángel Card. FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

Caring for our vocation every day

By way of introduction

Dear confreres, in the hope that it may be an important work for each one of you, and for all of us, I hereby present below some reflections that come from the cases of confreres who have left the Congregation in recent years.

The study of the cases of the confreres who have left the Congregation is a careful study that will be part of the report on the state of the Congregation that will be presented at the next General Chapter; but interesting and important reflections emerge from this study for each of our lives.

I would like to emphasise, first of all, that the study presented here is part of a larger study conducted by Br. Marco Bay SDB, to whom the entire Congregation is grateful.

Responsibilities and decisions are always personal, but there are recurring issues which I think may be important to remember in order to strengthen our vocation and consecration on a daily basis, both personally and as a community.

The reminder and list of points you will find here is merely aimed at making us think, and “arousing in us” a deep desire for fidelity to God and ourselves, never losing sight of the “treasure in clay jars” within us, a treasure that calls for personal and community vigilance in what sustains us and is within us as our identity. What I believe is important to recall is not the list of symptoms, but the recurring roots determined by these symptoms. This is important for the renewal of our life as human beings and as religious.

Profiles of humanity and likely frailties

In the field of psychology today, within the humanistic-existential perspective, an important area of study in choice of vocation is *motivation*. Adult individuals have motives that sustain them throughout life. We are talking about motives that go beyond the physiological and impulsive, and even beyond the ones that are officially declared.

Being in control of oneself, being competent in a field of living and working, proceeding with a certain self-esteem, recognising what promotes personal fulfilment, important values and ideals, dreams, goals to achieve, all this, we can say, has to do with the complex of motives that drive a normal adult to move ahead more or less calmly, and are at the basis of ways of behaving that direct their energies towards others and not exclusively towards themselves.

Adult individuals who are driven by cognitive and moral motives tend to change, desire to grow, strive to build and develop themselves dynamically and creatively. It is about combining motives through forms of meaningful relationships in an open and welcoming way.

On the other hand, the motives that drive a person can also be identified by their deficiencies, shortcomings, and gratifications, as well as their needs and motivating goals. In such a case, one can often witness a closure, withdrawal and passivity on the part of the person who avoids or tries to get rid of the tensions that arise within him.

Furthermore, if one is dominated by needs, they risk becoming highly dependent on others when faced with their surroundings and others. The fear of being abandoned grows within them, making them aggressive and likely to exploit their neighbours to obtain affection, admiration, and security.

But when the individual allows *growth motives* to prevail, he has no fear of speaking the truth about himself and his surround-

ings, he does not reject the truth and confronts any anxieties, allying himself with knowledge. We must not neglect the *existential motives* that are very important when someone centres their life within a horizon of faith. God's presence is decisive, comes from outside, is a good for the person, promotes unity and not fragmentation on a personal, social, spiritual level.

Existential motivations are closely bound up with if not replaced by the *motivations of faith* that emerge from within the individual, from the consecrated religious individual. Consecrated life becomes an existential motivation around which to build one's entire life. But when shortcomings are triggered among the motives of faith, anonymous automatic instincts may surface, unconsciously defending the person from the anxiety that pops up due to certain repressed urges.

This first part, that brings us back to our humanity, obliges us to get to the bottom of the motivations as to why I do things; not just "because I do things" but the awareness that what we do, decide and are, moulds our humanity and constructs it.

The motivations that sustain us now are much deeper and more rooted than those we had when we began our consecrated life in the novitiate, and it cannot be otherwise.

An important question concerns "purifying the intentions" of our motivations; a splendid and continuous task that allows us to be masters of our decisions and prevents superficiality and activism from taking us away from ourselves in our daily lives, and it is the things we do that keep us going!

Affections (emotions)

As well as motivations, there are affections/emotions, the area of *affectivity*. Every consecrated person expresses affections, emotions, feelings, because his personality brings into play the energy that each of these provides. So it is that when someone is involved in community life, serving others, collabo-

rating, living in friendship, being attentive with empathy towards others, nourishing the choices of celibacy, practising the vows and experiencing a life of faith, then vitality, vigour, and inner strength are unleashed.

It is a matter of releasing affection and sexuality, channelling it for one's own well-being, for others, and for God. One does not dedicate oneself to censoring and removing or repressing impulses, but to harnessing them and transforming them positively to fulfil oneself, to expand and not to close oneself off, towards the future. All this needs to be analysed scientifically and systematically, but this is not what my contribution here is about, the aim of which is to get us to think by starting from the lived reality of so many confreres.

Science helps us to evaluate and get to know the *levels of maturity* of each one, but I repeat, this is not the purpose of these paragraphs; I will merely list them quickly:

1) Basic trust in oneself and others, or distrust and suspicion; 2) Sense of autonomy, or doubt and shame; 3) Spirit of initiative, or feelings of guilt and fear; 4) Industry and productivity, or feelings of inferiority and inadequacy; 5) Personal identity, or loss of one's identity and feelings of confusion; 6) Capacity for intimacy and solidarity, or seeking isolation and self-centred affection; 7) Generativity, or stagnation of one's generative abilities; 8) Integrity of self and wisdom, or dispersion, feelings of failure, and disgust with life.

Every consecrated individual, then, has daily behaviours that expose them to placing their emotions, their affectivity at stake which, if exaggerated, can encounter times when they are not at their best and get blocked or become defensive. Even when affectivity gets blocked, there are more evident somatologies [biological, physiological characteristics]. We could list four: relationships with others, relationships with the opposite sex and with the same sex, and relationships with authority.

In *relationships with others*, when an individual is on the

defensive he tends to react through *isolation*; or he becomes *paternalistic*, calculates his affections, that is, gives them in order to receive them later.

In *relationships with the opposite sex*, again due to being blocked or being still immature, the individual behaves by experiencing a degree of *dissociation*, an escape out of fear of sexuality; or by displaying extreme immaturity he shows a *tendency to attack the other sex*.

In *relationships with persons of the same sex*, when due to unconscious elements of homosexuality one's sexual identification has not been clearly addressed from the beginning of initial formation [there can be] unreliability in direct preventive education and discomfort for the individual and for the quality of relationships in community life.

With regard to *relationships with authority* the individual who is still emotionally blocked or influenced by negative personal memories/experiences may submit, or go on the attack.

This second section that brings us back to the people who support and produce our humanity is important, important on a daily basis. We are accustomed to asking ourselves "why do we do things?" Yet here a deeper and more vital question arises: "for whom do we do things?"

A beautiful question to which, in life, we do not always give the right answer, but undoubtedly give the true answer: the motivations that lead us to people, situations, decisions... support our existence. Sometimes we are not even able to comprehend God's presence among all this, but we will come back to that later.

Managing conflicts

The management of *conflicts* is another area that consecrated individuals find themselves recognising. We are talking about conflicts in the broad sense, not just those among confr-

eres. We often find ourselves having to choose between personal needs to satisfy and staying consistent with vocational values, with the rule of life, the teachings of the Word of God, with elements that become continuous integrators of personality.

But one also chooses when one has to manage frustrating situations that hinder the satisfaction of important needs. Think of a change of community that forces a renewal of all relational ties, of lifestyle habits, of giving up a pastorally, educationally, socially rewarding role that has been built slowly and with effort over time, of experiencing failure due to mistakes made by others or oneself, of a physical defect that, due to an illness, diminishes personal aspirations, or a death in one's family at home... these are examples of situations in which the problem imposes one or more choices that are often not immediately clear.

Conflict, then, implies the daily reconstruction of the meaning of the vows. It is increasingly necessary, for example, to renew the effort at any age to be consistent with the choice of celibate life compared to married life. So even the roles of a consecrated person in a religious community, of a confrere with a position or a task, of other confreres with expectations, clash in terms of competencies, models, patterns ... the challenging goals proposed or suggested from within or from outside (a retreat series, a document from the Congregation...) generate pressures. And in the face of this, a refined and continuous training is necessary to shape cognitive, psychological, and social readiness to reorient, re-adapt, and be resistant to shocks.

Even in the face of conflicts, it is possible to identify two predominant lines of synthesis: *the passive individual who unconsciously just sits back* and deploys the entire collection of techniques learned over time to defend oneself, save psychic energy, avoid efforts of will, responsibility, hardships, intentional growth.

However, there can also be the *active individual who consciously engages*. He is willing to live with a constant tension controlled by his cognitive mind, his will, and the goals he sets,

aligning his life orientation with fundamental values and regulating himself.

He creates commitments, struggles, efforts because perseverance is a guarantee, and we could say that it “installs antiviruses” that protect the decisions made.

The crisis in religiosity that so many areas around the world are caught up in

A fourth and final area hints at the crisis of *religiosity*. This can be considered, according to humanistic-existential psychology, as a component of personality. It promotes growth, maturity, mental health. This perspective leads the individual to want to understand his life to give it a meaningful direction. He comes to live in an existential tension more inclined to stir up cognitive aspects than affective and emotional ones. Knowledge and understanding of life, ultimate meaning, and how the individual fits within the entire human reality is a reason for growth, development, becoming, and the development of oneself towards maturity, constantly investigating the meaning of life, suffering, and death.

Religiosity is not a tool for gaining advantages and avoiding disadvantages based on outward observance of practices without essential inner faith. Religiosity is propulsive, orientating towards a goal, a purpose, fully involving the head and the heart. The practice of religiosity is the result of conviction and not of convenience. There is a dynamic of allocentric oblativity [gift of self to the other] - and not egocentric narcissism - that works directly towards a good to be continuously constructed. From the perspective of consecrated religious life, the transcendent is a person who goes beyond the absolute, perfection, omnipotence, omniscience, and the need for meaning. This individual implies in himself an intentional, daily, concrete, continuous, evolving commitment to believe and follow in faith, in history, with others ...

Last but not least: community life, the common denominator among the reasons for leaving [the Congregation]

Community, the central component of our life. Not only community: the fraternity that sustains our being and defines it. When it doesn't happen in a positive way, it happens in a negative way (in the background the absence of fraternity emerges and our humanity suffers from it).

There are many things that could be said about community, including from the many life stories of our confreres who have left the Congregation; but perhaps it is more important to outline what this fundamental dimension of our life is.

It seems good to me to do so with the expressions from the commentary on "*Chapter five - In fraternal and apostolic communities*" of the Constitutions (1986) in the belief that it communicates something more than a simple receptacle of sentences. It is a collection of fresh, challenging and essential and profound guidelines, concrete and fitting enough to propose to the 'Religious Community'; a series of brushstrokes that paint a fresco in which our life is depicted.

The guidelines can then be taken up by the reader as firm and above all clear points of principle, after reading the results. Some comments referring to articles of the Constitutions that focus on community life, along with qualitative analysis of the cases analysed, are as follows:

1. "To live and work together is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation." This is an explicit option that qualifies our religious profession.
2. The mission is entrusted first of all to the community, and the individual Salesian must perceive openness to community as a "fundamental requirement" of his vocation as well as the constant willingness to make his gifts of nature and grace available for the common mission.
3. Our relationships in apostolic work are not of the "professional" kind, purely functional ('You are in charge of sport, I am in charge of liturgy'), nor is it of an exclusively hierarchical kind ('You are the

rector, I'm just an ordinary confrere'; 'You are the parish priest, I am the assistant priest').

4. Our relationships are first of all "fraternal": beyond the role and the function, I see a brother in the other, a brother who has his own unique vocation, and I too am seen in the same way: "We love one another to the point of sharing everything."

5. The human value of the Salesian community is important since it is normal for the confreres to seek and find maturity, balance and happiness there.

6. In the face of countless and resurgent obstacles that our fragility poses to the life of communion (selfishness, mistrust, cultural diversity, distant mentalities, unpredictable temperament, different views regarding apostolic projects...), fraternal communion can really animate our community and make it a sign of Trinitarian love.

7. From a faith perspective, and in harmony with Don Bosco's teaching, community charity flows from the very gift of the Salesian vocation; therefore, the bonds of unity and communion arise from the same structural and dynamic elements of the Salesian vocation which are charity towards every confrere, the shared apostolic mission, and the practice of shared evangelical counsels.

8. In the light of faith we recognise that it is not we who choose our confreres, but we receive them from God our common Father, who "entrusts" them to us as "brothers to love".

9. We insist on the particular value of the word "brothers": it reminds us that beyond differences of origin, age, culture, functions, every Salesian is by preference sensitive to everything that unites us in fraternal equality: we are all equally Salesians; the same calling of the Father has committed us to a common mission to be achieved together; the same Superiors are first and foremost brothers who have received specific tasks and responsibilities for the good of all.

10. There is no true Salesian community without a inclination of hearts towards mutual benevolence, without a pursuit of unanimity of spirits, without an effort of convergence of wills in the dual concern of helping each other and serving the Lord with the same zeal.

11. Our complex tasks, of an educational and pastoral nature, require very close-knit teams, driven by a lived charity. The community "receives" and "accepts" the confrere: two precise verbs that mark the stages of integration into the community.

12. "The community receives each confrere with an open heart" means: inwardly giving him the respect he deserves; outwardly, let-

ting him understand that he is a brother and not a stranger, allowing him to feel at ease.

13. "It accepts him as he is" means: recognising his unique personality, rejoicing in the values he will bring to the community, not using his limitations or past weaknesses as an excuse for an attitude of marginalisation: he is "a brother whom God entrusts to us to love".

14. The community is called to "foster the growth to maturity" of each of its members, and this task never ends.

15. The community helps every brother to fully realise his vocation: and for this it not only provides whatever he needs for his health, studies, work, but supports him especially in moments of difficulty, doubt, ill-health.

16. The first attitude that the Salesian cultivates in himself is the awareness of being a responsible member of a community: he feels that building authentic Salesian fraternity depends partly on him and, therefore, he is content to give his contribution.

17. The Salesian gratefully accepts the help that comes from his brothers and seeks to correct "whatever he discovers in himself which militates against the community", remembering that selfishness and individualism have deep and mysterious roots in the heart of every man;

18. Family spirit is one of the components of the Salesian spirit.

19. The Salesian community is the primary setting in which we receive and share such a spirit: "The Salesian house becomes a family when affection is mutual and when all, both confreres and young people, feel welcome and responsible for the common good."

20. Family spirit, according to the Salesian tradition, integrates and complements the relationships of fraternal friendship with the relationships of fatherhood and sonship that are formed between the Superiors and the confreres, and between the confreres and the young people.

21. Salesian friendship, shared in a spirit of family, is a style of coexistence that permeates all interpersonal relationships and manifests itself in every situation of community life: work, prayer, meal times, or relaxation, etc. These are the various moments in which the Salesian community manifests the inner richness of love.

22. Family spirit communicates to each confrere the joy of living every moment of the day, sharing the values connected to work, prayer and other community events such as community meetings and gatherings.

23. *Interpersonal communication* is of huge value for the growth of the individual and the community. It involves the deepest problems, at both the personal and community level.

24. Religious life does not cancel out our affective life, but locates it within the existential context of the Salesian vocation.

25. Sorrows and joys do not lose any of their intensity of intimate torment or gratifying exaltation; we experience these situations through sharing: “rejoice with those who are joyful, weep with those who are weeping. Have the same feelings toward one another.”

26. One could say that the community is like an orchestra: while individual instruments play their own part, together they bring a symphonic masterpiece to life; more precisely, they bring to life the masterpiece that God has always composed for this community. And as he continues to call others to this live orchestra, the Lord renews the repertoire of compositions, adapting them, from time to time, to the possibilities and characteristics of the conductors.

1.3. Weakening of spiritual life and the relationship with God

If psychology and community are relevant areas, the life of faith and dialogue with God is a third area that is absolutely not to be neglected, one which over time habits, superficiality, secularisation and the excessive use of social media deeply wear away. We often find ourselves, (Bosco-Reggia, 1996, p. 129-136) facing faith taken for granted, a faith that does not connect with life.

There is a lack of true circularity between faith celebrated, lived and witnessed, so it is easy to fall into a routine of actions. Missing is the real authenticity of the fact that one is continuously in contact with and inspired by God. One no longer purposely and consciously engages in a true and personal relationship with God, but only on the basis of the standard practices of piety (e.g. a vigil is organised, materials are prepared, celebration occurs at the end, emotions are posted on social media, connection for other dates is reorganised on the blog),

it feels good but all of it can be traced back to the limited scope of educational and/or pastoral or community professionalism.

Therefore, one no longer grows adequately in one's deep life and in the underlying motivations of one's vocation. "The flame has (almost) gone out!"

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

August saw the confirmation of commitments that the Rector Major had undertaken prior to being appointed Cardinal. In particular those connected with World Youth Day in Portugal.

Already on 2 August he met with young people from the Youth Movement in the House at Estoril where they had gathered to celebrate WYD's SYM Day. Also present was Mother Chiara Cazzuola, Superior of the FMA. The meeting lasted the whole day and was held under the chosen motto, "Come, Live, Proclaim". For the 9,000 young people from 78 different countries, it was a day of celebration, joy and reflection that ended with the "Good Night" from the Rector Major, who stayed with them all day.

Following his busy day on 2 August, on Thursday 3 August the RM visited the City of Joy where, among other things, he visited the Salesian Family stand, also visiting nearby Belem.

On 7 August we find the Rector Major at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima to preside over the Eucharist together with the Youth Movement and the Salesian Family.

On 8 August he was still in Lisbon for the ceremony to install the new Provincial, Fr Tarcizio Morais.

He then returned to Italy, to Turin, to remember the birth of Don Bosco.

On the 16th he celebrated this at the Basilica at Colle together with many young people and devotees of St John Bosco.

Among other things Fr Artime said, "The Lord chose this poor hill, a place unknown at the time, for the little John Bosco to be born, just as he had chosen to be born himself in an unknown corner of Palestine. This is why we are here today: not to adore a person but to thank God for the gift of Don Bosco."

The RM dedicated the final days of the month to some rest with his family in Spain.

– SEPTEMBER

From Spain, the RM went directly to Israel and Palestine to celebrate the centenary of the consecration of the Basilica of Jesus the Adolescent in Nazareth. Many Salesian confreres and faithful too part in the solemn concelebration.

On return to Turin he participated in many moments of the 3rd Seminar for promotion of the Causes of Beatification and Canonisation in the Salesian Family, until its conclusion on 10 September with the celebration of the Eucharist.

On 23 September he joined the fifth edition of the Salesian School of Spiritual Accompaniment. In the afternoon of that same day and on the 24th he presided at the ceremony handing over the Crucifix to members of the 154th Missionary expedition.

This was the same day that the theme for the 29th General Chapter (GC29) was communicated: "Passionate about Jesus Christ. Dedicated to Young People - Living our Salesian vocation faithfully and prophetically."

The final days of the month were dedicated to due spiritual and material preparations for the Consistory on 30 September.

– OCTOBER

Following the busy day of the ceremony of the Consistory, on Sunday 1 October the RM celebrated his first Mass as cardinal in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. It was very well attended, especially by the Salesian Family. A convivial and joyful, and also

well-attended moment followed the liturgical celebration. Also present were family members from Spain and a group of citizens from Asturia.

Meanwhile, news arrived on 4 October that the cardinal is now a member of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life. From 3-6 October he took part in the Team Visit for the Mediterranean Region, along with members of the Council. The Visit was held at Ariccia.

Accompanied by numerous Salesians, starting with the Provincial, Fr Roberto del Mulin, on 7 October he was in Boretto, the birthplace of Saint Artemides Zatti. Here he was welcomed by the Vicar General Monsignor Giovanni Rossi on behalf of the archbishop of Reggio Emilia Archbishopop Giacomo Morandi,

the Mayor of Boretto and the Mayors of the neighbouring municipalities of Brescello and Gualtieri. During the day, as well as the celebration, he opened an exhibition on the Saint. The municipality of Boretto also awarded and gave him Honorary Citizenship.

On Sunday, 15 October, the Cardinal, the Rector Major, celebrated Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

On 17 October he returned to Rome for the opening of the aca-

demic year at the Pontifical Salesian University. Also in Rome, on 20 October he visited the new Zefferino Namuncurà community at Bufalotta.

– NOVEMBER

For the Feast of All Saints and All Souls Day, Fr Ángel went to Luanco, his birthplace, where he was welcomed with much affection and participation. Here he celebrated Mass, visited the cemetery where his parents are buried, and met many people who remembered him when he was a child.

From 14 November to Sunday he went on an animation visit to Thiès, in Senegal, where he met several groups of the Salesian Family. He then went to The Gambia, returning to Senegal, from where he left for Italy.

On 26 November, the feast of Christ the King, he was at Colle Don Bosco for a visit as cardinal.

– DECEMBER

Since 3 December he has been busy with the meetings of the General Council in Turin for almost the entire month, but in the meantime various initiatives have been included.

On 4 December, at the Sanctuary of the Consolata in Turin, he participated in an interview at a city meeting on the situation of

young people. The very well-attended interview was published in *Avenire* and the weekly *La voce e il tempo* of the diocese of Turin.

On 8 December we find the Rector Major in Rome, celebrating the Feast of the Immaculate Conception at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. Particular emphasis was placed on the Hail Mary prayer in memory of Bartholomew Garelli.

On 17 December, the Mass for taking possession of the Diaconry of Mary Help of Christians was also held in Rome.

On 18 December, in commemoration of the 164th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation (1859), he launched a missionary appeal asking for availability and service from religious and volunteers.

On 22 December he was in Turin to close the Formation course for recently appointed Provincials.

He then went to Rome to celebrate Christmas with employees at the General House brought together for the occasion by the Economist General Bro. Muller.

On the 25th he celebrated Christmas at Sacred Heart in Rome with confreres at the General House, and on the 27th presented the Strenna at the FMA General House.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

At the end of the Council's summer session at the end of July 2023, the Vicar of the Rector Major went to some places in Italy for talks and coordination. In the first days of August, the Vicar participated in the formation of young rectors in the two provinces of Spain at Santiago de Compostela. An always beautiful and important moment.

At the end of this, Fr Stefano joined his family for a period of rest.

From 22 August the Vicar went down to Rome to accompany the entrances of the new rectors of RMG houses: Sacred Heart and San Callisto. With the houses followed directly by the Vicar on behalf of the Rector Major, the Vicar has had several other meetings in recent years especially for the Sacred Heart community in Rome which has had an important renovation in view of the community's future.

Starting in mid-September 2023, the Vicar participated, with all the other councillors, in the in-

termediate session in Turin, which had as its specific task reflection on and development of the theme for GC29; a fruitful and very beautiful moment of reflection and sharing for the preparation of the next General Chapter.

At the end of the intermediate session, the Vicar of the Rector Major, together with all the confreres of the Council, went down to Rome for the Consistory. A magnificent moment of Church and Congregation in which this historic event of the Rector Major was accompanied. It was and is a historic moment for Congregation.

At the end of the consistory and over the following days, the Vicar went to Ariccia, together with the Rector Major and the Sector Councillors for the Team Visit of the Mediterranean region, coordinated by the Regional Councillor for the Mediterranean. A beautiful moment of fraternity and reflection on the future of this important part of the Congregation.

In the second half of October 2023, the Vicar of the Rector Major left to visit the Guwahati Province, to carry out the consultation for the new Provincial. A very fine experience getting to know this part of the Congregation together with the possibility

of contact with the confreres of the province. At the end of the visit to the Guwahati Province, the Vicar visited the Dimapur and Shillong provinces. The whole visit to these three provinces was a magnificent opportunity for the Vicar to get to know this beautiful part of the Congregation in north-eastern India.

Returning from India, Fr Stefano went to different parts of Italy to accompany RMG houses and other situations in need of accompaniment.

In mid-November, the Vicar went to the Philippines, to the two provinces there. First Fr Stefano went to FIS and later to FIN. A good experience in which the Vicar was able to meet people and get to know this beautiful part of the Congregation.

At the end of November, the Vicar of the Rector Major returned to Turin to prepare the work of the General Council winter plenary session.

An intense and rich period of meetings accompanying the Congregation, part of the Vicar's service as the Congregation is already on the way to the next General Chapter.

The General Councillor for Formation

After the conclusion of the 2023 summer session of the General Council, Fr Ivo Coelho went to Lisbon, Portugal, to participate, together with the Rector Major and some councillors, in World Youth Day, from 1 to 6 August.

From 7 to 20 August Fr Coelho was in India for a time with his family and in the INP and INB provinces. During this period he also visited some inter-provincial houses of formation: the prenovitiate in Loutolim - Goa, the community of theologians in Koregaon Road, Pune, and then the novitiate and postnovitiate in Nashik.

From 21 to 27 August the Councillor was in Jerusalem, where he participated in the 8th World Conference of the Salesian Biblical Association (ABS) 40 years after its foundation.

Returning to Valdocco, Fr Coelho visited the Salesian School of Accompaniment (SSA) (Italian version) at Colle Don Bosco on 20 September for a report and to greet the participants.

From 18 to 26 September he participated in the work of the

special intermediate General Council meeting in Valdocco, with the participation of all the councillors, in preparation for GC29. Then, with all the councillors, he went to Rome to participate in the Consistory where Fr Angel Fernandez Artime was created a cardinal by Pope Francis, and in the following celebrations at the Sacred Heart.

From 3 to 6 October Fr Coelho participated in the Team Visit of the Mediterranean Region held in Ariccia (RM).

The rest of the months of October and November remained in Valdocco in order to continue with the work on the *Ratio*. During this period he made visits to the theological studentate at the Crocetta – Turin and to the novitiate at Colle Don Bosco, as well as to the postnovitiate at S. Tarcisio – Rome. Due to the context of war in the Holy Land, from 7 October he accompanied the community of theologians and the STS study centre at Ratisbonne, Jeruslaem

During this period he was represented by members of the Sector at the various meetings of the Regional Formation Commissions; they also visited various formation communities.

From 29 to 31 October Fr Coelho, with the members of the Formation Sector team, went to Sacred Heart in Rome to prepare the new offices at Headquarters. Over these days, he also met with the Rector of the UPS, Fr Andrea Bozzolo, to discuss the possibility of adding the SSA to the ongoing formation course for formators that is based at UPS.

On 21 November he participated in the curatoriums of Crocetta in Turin and the novitiate at Colle Don Bosco. On 2 December he chaired the curatorium of the Z. Namuncurá Community in Rome.

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry

With regard to the coordination of the activities of the Sector, Fr Miguel Angel convened the team at headquarters on nine occasions in order to implement and prepare all the processes in place. He also planned several evaluation and work planning meetings with Fr Claudio Cartes, who animates the Salesian School America and the Vocational Training Network in the American continent; he also had meetings with the executive director of DBI and DBTech Eu-

rope in order to develop all aspects of the Charter and with the coordinator of the Salesian School Europe Commission.

Regarding the *days of Formation*, the Councillor for Youth Ministry offered an in-depth session to rectors, catechists and principals of the ICP Province (7 July) on the theme of vocational animation in schools; with the rectors he focused on first announcement and on youth ministry (4 December). There were also several occasions in which Fr Miguel Angel presented the book “youth ministry that educates to love” both online and in person. He connected online with numerous people from the provinces of COM (22 September), ARS (10 October) and with a group of doctoral students, scholars and professors during the Seminar held at UPS entitled “Youth, Affection and Identity” (11 November). In person, he illustrated the process that led to the creation of the document and the content, up to the educational criteria, to numerous members of associations and movements of the diocese of Genzano (15 November). He then offered the the provinces of COM (29 September) and ANN (13 December) a webinar on the Flash issue that explores the theme of vocational animation.

Also in the wake of in-depth and study meetings from 28 to 30 August, he held a conference on the occasion of the meeting of the National Salesian Network of Brazil in Aparecida, presiding over the final Eucharist. The Councillor then offered a formation session to participants at the Missionary Course at UPS (24 October) and to the new provincials brought together for their Course in Turin (18 December). He conducted several formation sessions in two different locations in the Province of Thailand (26-30 October) and in MOZ (23-26 November). Fr Miguel Angel then accompanied a reflection on the Salesian parish at the Seminar organised by the Italian National Centre (14 November) and a conference in Salamanca (Spain), on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in the city (16 December). Finally, in Spain, he explored the theme of accompaniment in a formation day organised by the National Centre for Youth Ministry.

In collaboration with the Faculty of Educational Sciences of the UPS, from August to November he contributed to the structuring of a Higher Formation course (375 hours) in charismatic-institutional

formation for Salesians and lay people in Europe. These meetings were preceded by a meeting with the Rector of the University (28 July) to agree on the terms of the collaboration.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry carried out a series of *pastoral animation visits*, meeting with Salesians, young people, confreres in formation and visiting some houses. In particular, from 31 August to 5 September he visited the Campo Grande Province in Brazil. From 20 to 23 October, he visited the Warsaw province and from 6 to 8 October the FIN province.

With regard to interviews and visits, on 14 September Fr Miguel Angel met with the new director and economist of the National Youth Ministry Centre for Italy and later Sister Runita, from the FMA Pastoral Sector (26 September). On 28 November he had an online meeting with Br. Juan Carlos Echavarría Zúñiga, SDB, Coordinator of the Human Rights Commission of the COM Province and with Ms. Elma Mireya Ardila Duarte, Coordinator of the Office for Institutional Relations and Accompaniment for Work of the COB Province to have information and updates regarding their participa-

tion on behalf of the Salesians in the Geneva meetings convened by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

In July, the Councillor arranged three meetings with the Provincial Economist of ICP and the Rector of Colle Don Bosco for renovation of the theatre and lawn of the dream, in view of the Youth Synod to be held in 2024. On 20 July he had an online meeting with four Rectors of African Universities.

The Youth Ministry Councillor chaired the official launch of “DB Tech Europe” (20 October) and the regional meetings of youth ministry delegates from the following continents: America (14-17 October, Chile), South Asia (1-4 November, Dimapur), Africa-Madagascar (19-22 November, Maputo) and East Asia-Oceania (9-12 November, Cebu).

From 1 to 6 August, Fr Miguel Angel participated in World Youth Day. Of particular importance was the preparation of the WYD Forum on 2 August with the Rector Major and Mother, as well as the collaboration in the organisation of the evening vigil. In September and October, on the occasion of the preparation of the great event that will be the Synod of Young People organised by the Salesians, the

Councillor sent questionnaires to the Provinces for the preparation of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. The Councillor also forwarded to the delegates a request to send a dream from a young person in their own situation, in order to compile a book containing the dreams of 200 young people of the Congregation.

Regarding *publications*, Fr Miguel Angel corrected some drafts of the text "Education is a matter of the heart" on the Salesian educative and pastoral model, in Portuguese. Two new issues of Flash have been published, which deal with the theme of "The role of the Salesian in the EPC" and "First Announcement and Salesian Youth Ministry". He prepared the presentation of research on "Salesian school leadership" curated by Dr. Patricia Parraguez. Finally, he edited the new book on the Youth Centre-Oratory, published in five languages.

In recent months, he has held several meetings (22 September and 9 December) with the heads of DB Tech bodies from the various continents in order to work on the renewal of the Framework on Vocational Training.

Together with the Rector Major and some Councillors, he partici-

pated in the work of the Team Visit of the entire Mediterranean Region, from 3 to 6 October in Ariccia, near Rome. Finally, Fr Miguel Angel participated in the celebration of the Ordinary Public Consistory (30 September), during which the Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, was created a cardinal. On the same evening, he attended the homage addressed to the Cardinal at the Spanish Embassy in Rome.

The General Councillor for the Missions

After the conclusion of the summer session of the General Council on July 24, the General Councillor for the Missions, Fr Alfred Maravilla, spent some few days of rest with his family. On 2 August he started the extraordinary visit of the Province of St John Bosco, Vietnam. The visit started with a Eucharist in the Provincial house with all the members of the Provincial Council. This was followed by a meeting with the provincial Council. Then he started the visit to the houses, regularly interrupted to exit the country due to visa restrictions. On 12 August he went to Port Moresby,

Papua New Guinea for the regional meeting of PDMAs of East Asia-Oceania region. On 18 August he proceeded to Suva, Fiji to visit the confreres and our presence. He had the opportunity to see the ongoing construction of the Church of St John Bosco. From 21-28 August he was in Mongolia for the Extraordinary Visitation of the three communities in that country. Mongolia is a Delegation of the Province of Vietnam. From Mongolia he proceeded to Seoul, Korea to confer with the Provincial on possible future development in Mongolia.

On 1 September he arrived in Turin to join all the members of the Missions Sector who animate the course for new missionaries which concluded with the giving of the missionary cross to 25 missionaries by the Rector Major on 24 September. In the same celebration the Mother General of the FMA also gave the missionary cross to departing FMA missionaries. The Councillor remained in Valdocco to participate in the intermedia session of the general Council. He then proceeded to Rome with all the members of the General Council to participate in the Ordinary Public Consistory on 30 September where Pope

Francis created the Rector Major a cardinal.

From 2-6 October Fr Maravilla took part in the Team Visit of the Mediterranean region in Ariccia, outside Rome. From 7-10 October he was in Baku, Azerbaijan for an animation visit. During his visit, he met the Apostolic Prefect, Bishop Vladimir Fekete, SDB. At the conclusion of his visit, he shared with the confreres his recommendations in view of developing our presence in the country. Later, upon his return to Valdocco, he also conferred with the Provincial of Slovakia since Azerbaijan is under the Province of Slovakia. He then proceeded to Malta to participate with Fr Pavel Zenisek, a member of the Missions Sector team, in the regional meeting of the PDMAs of Europe Centre-North region from October 12-15 and of the Mediterranean Region, in Valencia from 16-19 October. From 20-23 October he was in Sacrofano, outside Rome for the Workshop on Provincial Mission Offices.

From 24 October to 17 November he was in Vietnam to continue the second part of his Extraordinary Visitation. From 18-20 November he joined the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Stefano Mar-

toglio in Cebu, Philippines. He participated in a meeting with the Provincial and his Council to evaluate the animation and government of our presence in Pakistan. From Cebu he flew to Brasilia, Brazil primarily to visit the centre for missionary animation by the conference of religious, *Conselho Indigenista Missionário* (CIMI). He also took the opportunity to visit the Salesian presences in the city. Accompanied by Fr. Reginaldo Cordeiro, a member of the Missions Sector team, the Counciloor for missions proceeded to Campo Grande. He was welcomed by the Provincial upon his arrival on 23 October. He was able to visit the museum of cultures and the Don Bosco Catholic University (UCDB). He had an opportunity to meet the postnovices, the formation team in São Vicente and celebrated the Eucharist with them. From Campo Grande he proceeded by car to visit the Salesian mission in São Marcos (among the Xavantes), in Meruri (among the Bororos) and in Sangradouro (among the Xavantes). Together with Fr Cordeiro, Fr Maravilla proceeded to Manaus on 27 November. His visit started with the Eucharist with the Provincial and confreres residing in the communities in Manaus.

Due to the cancellation of the flight, he was not able to visit the missions in Manicorè. On 1 December he flew to Turin to participate in the winter session of the General Council.

The General Councillor for Social Communication

From 3-7 August 2023 the Councillor for Social Communication, Fr Gildasio Mendes dos Santos, was busy drafting the new document for Social Communication. Immediately after, he took part in the online meeting with the new Delegates of Communication who have been appointed in the last nine months.

From 10-23 August he spent some time holidaying in Rome. From 29-31 August he went to Messina, Sicily, to conduct a formation day for theology students at the San Tommaso Institute.

From the beginning of September until mid-month, the Councillor for Social Communication participated in the meeting of the General Council in Valdocco. This meant that he was among participants for the preparation for the Consistory of the Rector Major as a Cardinal, at St Peter's in the Vatican.

From 3-6 October, a meeting was held with Provincials of the Mediterranean Region in Ariccia for the Team Visit. From 7-11 October, meetings were held with the Sector Team for the review and programming for 2024. The new text for Social Communication was further drafted during this meeting.

Fr Gildasio also held online meeting with Salesian Composers in the Region; “Don Bosco Digital Forum”. On 12 October Fr Gildasio held a meeting with the Communication Team and the Rector Major to select the poster for the Strenna 2024. On 15 October Fr Gildasio with busy with preparations and online involvement in the “Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival” (DBGYFF), held in Los Angeles, USA. On 17 October, Fr Gildasio prepared the material for the upcoming World Communication Conference in August 2024. From 23-27 October the Councillor also attended the meeting of Provincials from the Interamerica Region, held in person in Cartagena, Colombia. He subsequently participated on site in the meeting with the Communication Delegate and his team in Medellin. From 28 to 30 October, Fr Gildasio made a brief visit to the São Paulo Province, Brazil,

and immediately after a brief visit to the headquarters of the BBH Province.

In November, from the 4th to the 11th, Fr Gildasio went to visit his family in Ji-Parana, Brazil, and then left on 12 April to return to Sacred Heart in Rome. On 17 November 17 he participated remotely in the “BOSCOM General Assembly” (India). Subsequently, he took part in the online meeting of the Regional Communication Coordinators (world level). From 18-19 November he attended the meeting with the members of the Communication Department for the Department's planning for 2024.

On 20 November, the Preparation for the launch of the Strenna 2024 was held with the collaboration of Fr Pierluigi Lanotte and Sister Maria Ausilia da Siena, FMA. On the 22nd, an online meeting was held with the Composers of Salesian music in English and French for the Africa-Madagascar Region. And then, on the 24th, the online meeting with the Salesian music composers for the Interamerica Region took place. On 27 November the “Don Bosco Digital Forum” was held with CAM Province.

On the 28th there was a meeting that involved Fr Gildasio in a

meeting with Fr Fabio Pasqualetti for the preparation of the 2024 Communication Conference and the related establishment of the World Commission on Artificial Intelligence. On 29 November Fr Gildasio held a remote digital forum with young communicators from the Provinces of Brazil. Also on the 29th, a meeting was held with the Salesian National Commission for Communication (CONAC) and young people for the preparation of the Letter on Communication. A meeting was subsequently held with the editorial team for this document. On 30 November Fr Gildasio participated in the Award Ceremony of the “Ratzinger Prize 2023” in Vatican City.

On 4 December, Fr Gildasio was involved in the General Council Session in Valdocco. On 24 December Fr Gildasio returned to Sacred Heart in Rome to spend Christmas at Sacred Heart. On 27 December he was engaged in the Launching of Strenna 2024 at the FMA Generalate in Rome.

The Economist General

During the month of **July**, the Economist General attended the various plenary sessions of the

General Council which took place in Valdocco (Turin), and participated in the retreat held in Valle d'Aosta. In the same weeks he was in Turin, he met several provincials and provincial economists to discuss together the challenges they will face in the coming years. At the end of the month, he participated in some international seminars focused on pedagogical topics.

In **August**, Bro. Muller travelled to Kenya (from the 6th to the 9th) to attend the installation of the new Provincial of Kenya. He had the opportunity to visit some works of the AFE Province, and met confreres of the new Province of Tanzania. He was able to listen to some confreres from South Sudan to understand how the unrest in the region affects the Salesian centres.

September saw the Economist General in two very interesting communities of the Congregation. From 1 to 5 September he visited Pakistan (Quetta and Lahore) and from 9 to 15 he went to Haiti. In both circumstances, he was able to see the situation of the communities and projects that are developing in the areas where he went. In Quetta he greeted students and teacher of this growing

school. Since its inception, the school has grown every year and now enjoys an excellent reputation in the city. Good collaboration with the authorities has led to the construction of new classrooms and teacher training has become a constant. The three young people who are preparing to enter the novitiate are the testimony of good vocational ministry and of the great commitment of the local Salesians to give Don Bosco's presence a long-term perspective.

In Lahore he visited the new Artemides Zatti School for Nurses. This school has been planned for a long time and is necessary to meet the many demands of a good education. The visit to Ashir Bakir's tomb and the subsequent interview with the family of the young man underlined the great importance of the presence of the Salesians here, since many Christians turn to them for support. The vocational training centre receives many requests from young people from local families who wish to carry out a highly qualified technical apprenticeship. Space is very limited and in the long term the centre will need to be expanded. Thanks to the rector's initiative, a past pupils association has been formed that sup-

ports the concerns of young people and promotes them in society.

The visit to Haiti was challenging in many ways. Logistics had to take into account the critical and violent situation. It was possible to visit many communities, each of which is a testimony to the great and optimistic Salesian charism. The living conditions of the population are often very poor, lack of food, medicines, technical equipment, etc. and it is extremely difficult to organise transport to the interior of the country due to the dangerous bandits on the roads. It is therefore even more gratifying that every Salesian community is able to support thousands of children, young people and the elderly. With his visit, the Economist General stressed his great gratitude to all the Salesians and staff in Haiti and promised to continue to support the activities of the community in the future.

In the second half of the month he took part in the intermediate session of the General Council in which the first details of General Chapter 29 were defined, which will begin in February 2024. On the 30th he took part in the appointment as Cardinal of the Rector Major, Angel Fernandez Artime.

During **October**, Bro. Muller first participated in the Team Visit of the Mediterranean Region that took place in the first week of the month in Ariccia, and then, he went twice to Africa. The first, in Ethiopia (from the 13th to 17th) to view the projects of the province in the Tigray region. The communities of Shire, Adua, Adigrat and Makallé faced another tough and difficult situation in the immediate aftermath of the Covid pandemic, as war made almost any activity impossible. Hunger and fear have reigned there for over two years and much of the damage is still visible today. During the visit, ceremonies were held for the countless victims of the war and in every village, almost in every house, people mourned their missing loved ones. Thanks to the religious and above all to the courageous presence of the Salesians, many people have managed to survive and today they are grateful that the schools are open again and that a degree of normality has been restored. The meeting with the Bishop of the Catholic Eparchy showed that the work of reconstruction has now begun and that the Church and the Salesians are once again fully engaged in educational projects.

The visit to South Africa (Johannesburg, from the 2th5 to the 29th), was scheduled to take part in the work of CIVAM and coordinate the meeting of provincial eonomers in the Africa-Madagascar Region. The numerous appointments in formation centers represent a great challenge for the economy, as costs in individual countries have risen rapidly, partly due to inflation, partly due to wars that drive up prices.

In **November**, the Economist General participated on 2 and 3 November in the International Conference that took place in the Vatican focused on *Mensuram Bonam*. From the 4th to the 9th he visited the Vice-Province of Sri Lanka where the meeting with the Provincial Economers of the South Asia Region took place. The excellent organisation of the conference in the South Asia region made it possible to discuss the main challenges of a very dynamic market. Changes in society, the need for higher and better technical standards in vocational training, the risks of change, etc. were some of the topics discussed. The need to present our work in a social balance sheet in the future will have to be highly emphasised.

Unfortunately, he only had a

few days to visit the work of the Salesians in Sri Lanka. The centres visited by the Economer General convinced him that much is being done in the LKC Vice-Province to create better learning conditions for young people and to respond to new challenges with a lot of creativity.

From 20 to 26 November, together with his team, he participated in the work of the meeting with the Provincial Economers from the Interamerica and Southern Cone Regions that were held in Colombia in Bogotá and Fusagasuga. The excellent organisation by the Bogota provincial economer, as well as the very well-prepared contributions from the participants, made this conference a platform for the near future. The Economer General pointed out: Our Congregation is now at home in many cultures, thanks to its strong expansion around the world, and these cultures are increasingly becoming part of our identity. As a global institution, we are tasked with developing the skills that make it possible to live our charism in every corner of the world, without losing unity with “Rome” and allowing diversity to release creative energy for the further development of our youth services.

The Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region

In August, Fr Alphonse Owoudou, Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, accompanied the Rector Major to the World Youth Day in Lisbon. On 8 August he travelled to Nairobi, Kenya, to attend DB Tech Africa’s annual meeting on 10 and 11 August. He then visited the Salesian community of Sherbrooke, in SUE Province. In September, Fr Alphonse returned to Nairobi for a meeting with the new team of DB Tech Africa. He then visited Dar Es Salaam (Tanzania) where, surrounded by the TZA and AFE confreres, as well as some confreres from nearby AFC and ZMB provinces, he installed the new Salesian Provincial of TZA, Fr Salema Emilius, on 8 September. On 9 September he was in Lubumbashi, in the DRC, where he officially opened the extraordinary visit to the AFC. The visit began with a series of meetings with the Provincial, Fr Guillermo Basañes, and his Provincial Council, as well as with several AFC boards of directors. He then undertook a tour of Salesian works, starting from Botte (the South), visiting first the St Joseph community in Mokambo, then Saka-

nia on 5 October and finally Kipusha on 7 October. On 10 October Fr Alphonse arrived in Imara for his visit and on 12 October he left for the Salesian presence in Kasenga. From 14-16 October Fr Alphonse discovered the work and sectors at Tabacongo. From the 16th to 18th he shared life with the confreres and students residing at Home Zanin. On the morning of 18 October he went to Nairobi to obtain the visa for South Africa more easily. From 24 to 31 October, the Regional Councillor met all Provincials and Delegates from Africa and Madagascar, where he chaired the CIVAM Assembly (Conference of Provinces and Vice-Provinces in Africa and Madagascar) in Johannesburg. During the visit, participants of CIVAM celebrated a Jubilee Mass at All Saints Parish in Ennerdale and took a guided tour of two important places in the fight against apartheid in Soweto: the Hector Pieterse Museum and the Regina Mundi Catholic Parish. On 31 October, at the end of the CIVAM Assembly, Fr Alphonse Owoudou returned to the DRC with the AFC Provincial, and the same afternoon began the Extraordinary Visitation to the work in Salama. On 3 November he crossed the northeast of

Lubumbashi to visit the Maison des Jeunes in the municipality of Ruashi. While visiting this work, located in a popular neighbourhood, he was also invited by the Provincial to open the 2023-2024 academic year for the new Salesian University in the DRC, the UDBL. He stayed in Kansebula from 5 to 11 November. The Kansebula work is the largest in the entire AFC Province – and in the entire Africa and Madagascar Region – with 84 young confreres and postnovices, and a team of 9 formators. During this visit, the Regional would also have meetings with Bishop Gaston Ruvezi, whose headquarters are nearby, and with the FMA novitiate that is right in front of the bishop's residence. From 11 to 14 November, Father Alphonse visited the Cité des Jeunes, which, among other sectors, is also responsible for the AFC Prenovitiate. On 14 November he went to Bakanja Centre. During this visit to Bakanja, Fr Alphonse, accompanied by the whole community, also made a visit by night to the city of Lubumbashi to meet the boys and girls in their environment for a first-hand understanding of some of the situations they face. On 16 November he visited the Bakanja Magone formation cen-

tre, the girls' hostel and the Bakanja ville sector. On 17 November he was given a creative welcome at Chem Chem by a group of disguised novices who skilfully simulated an armed attack and hostage-taking on the Regional convoy. The Salesian novitiate at Chem Chem (AFC) is surrounded by plots of land belonging to the Congregation, but for years they have been systematically stolen by families and apparently by high-ranking officials of the country. As a result, the situation is constantly tense and there is a degree of insecurity and uncertainty, leading the novitiate to consider an imminent transfer while the legal process continues. On 20 November, Fr Alphonse arrived at Jacaranda, another project of the OMM (Œuvres Maman Marguerite) network of AFC. It was his shortest visit, because the next day, on 21 November, he was already on his way to the Saint François de Sales Theologate for a visit that would last four days. On 25 November he went to the Don Bosco Carrefour community, whose main sector is the management and accompaniment of the Afia Don Bosco Polyclinic. Here the Regional presided over the solemn Mass of Christ the King of the Universe, among the sick,

their families, the nursing staff, and the confreres. On 26 November Fr Alphonse arrived at Provincial Headquarters for his Extraordinary Visitation there. On 28 November he left for Turin, with the intention of returning in March 2024 for the third and final phase of the Extraordinary Visitation to the AFC-East Delegation.

The General Councillor for the East Asia-Oceania Region

After the General Council's summer session, from 25 July to 16 August 2023 Fr Joseph Nguyen Phuoc began his Extraordinary Visitation to the Vice-Province of Myanmar. The country is at war, but he was still able to visit all the local communities and hold personal talks with all the confreres and superiors of this small Vice-Province. Based on his personal experiences of Salesian life during war, and the consequences of the post-war period, he encouraged his confreres to have more trust in Mary Help of Christians and to fulfil God's will every day, because God is granting them (up to this moment) precious survival with some unknown plan for the future of the young people in Myanmar.

The Councillor then continued his Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of China in three territories (18-28 August for Taiwan, 28 August-6 September for Macau and 26 October-15 November for Hong Kong). The Visitation was clearly delayed by 2 years due to Covid travel restrictions. The Salesian mission in the three territories has been fruitful with various types of apostolate, but it is also facing a rapidly changing society with greater challenges in recent years. The visit was combined with the consultation for the new superior of China, as the Provincial was completing his term of service (2018-2024).

Together with all the members of the General Council, Fr Joseph participated in the Intermediate Session (17-26) to prepare for the next General Chapter 29. The Session ended with the participation in the significant event of the appointment of the Rector Major as cardinal in Rome, on 30 September 2023.

From 1 to 20 October 2023, Fr Joseph made a trip to the Japanese communities for the Consultation for the new Superior of Japan. The journey proceeded efficiently, just like the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province in the spring of 2023.

From 24-26 October, Fr Joseph Nguyen Phuoc also chaired the meetings of the Curatorium in Cebu (for the Pre-novitiate and Novitiate; the latter consists of 10 novices: 5 from FIN, 4 from PGS, and one from CIN), in Paranaque, and in the Philippines, where the Salesian Provinces of EAO send their confreres for Specific Formation (Brothers and Salesian Clerics). All respective Provincials were present and were updated on the current situation of the formation program, its results, and the plans for the future.

The second half of November, from the 15th to the 31st, was dedicated to the consultation for the new Superior of the Vice-Province of Indonesia. The new Vice-Province (established in 2018) had its Extraordinary Visitation from 15 October to 15 November by the Visitor appointed by the Rector Major: Fr Giovanni Rolandi.

For the Regional, these six months of itinerant service were really challenging but also rewarding because he was able to better understand the Provinces and the confreres. In this way, he and the EAO Superiors have been better prepared for the Team Visit that was held in K'Long Vietnam from 14 to 17 February 2024.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

After the conclusion of the Summer Session of the General Council, the Regional for South Asia, Fr Biju Michael, returned to India and attended a meeting with financial auditors in Delhi on 3 August 2023, and then travelled to Chennai. On 4 August he addressed the South Asian Formation Commission in Chennai. Together with the Rector and the Secretary General of UPS, he visited and interacted with the staff and students of the three Salesian theological institutes in India (Don Bosco Bechi, Kavarepettai, Chennai from 4 to 5 August; Sacred Heart College, Shillong from 7 to 9 August; and Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore from 10 to 12 August) as part of the animation and accompaniment of the institutes. From the 13th to 17th, the Regional held meetings at the DBSM, Bangalore. On 18 August, he travelled to visit the confreres and refugee camps in Manipur affected by ethnic violence. On the 20th, he returned to Delhi and participated in the meeting of all the Provincial Secretaries of the South Asia Region, primarily led by Secretary General Fr Guido Garino from 21 to 25 August.

From the 26th to the 30 he held meetings with the confreres and staff responsible for the various SPCSA networks in Delhi. From 31 August to 3 September he led the SPCSA Council meeting. From 5-6 September he held online meetings with the Salesian Family to develop strategies for joint mission. On 15-16 September, the Regional accompanied the mission office and team from Turin during their visit to the New Delhi Province, and visited several projects for the most marginalised youth. On 17 September he flew to Turin to join the intermediate session of the General Council (18-26 September) in preparation for General Chapter 29. On 30 September he participated in the Consistory marking the creation of the Rector Major as Cardinal of the Church. He then travelled to the Holy Land for a retreat.

On 10 October, the Regional began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Sri Lanka Vice-Province (LKC) with a meeting with the Provincial Council and the General Assembly on 11 October. He also led the meeting of the rectors and leaders of the vice-province. He began his visits to the communities starting from the aspirantate at Dankotuwa (12-13 Octo-

ber) and continued with the Parish in Palliyawatta (14-15 October), the postnovitiate in Ahungalla (16-17 October), the Don Bosco Institute of Civil Engineering (18-19 October), Don Bosco Negombo (20-21 October), and Bosco Sevana, Uswetakeiyawa (22-23 October). Late at night on 23 October the Regional flew to Shillong, India, to begin the Consultation in the Shillong Province. From 24-25 October he accompanied the Vicar of the Rector Major on a visit to the provinces of Shillong, Dimapur and Guwahati. On the evening of 25 October he began the meetings of the Consultation starting with a gathering with confreres in Khleriat (25 October). He then led meetings in Nongstoin (26 October), two meetings in Shillong (27 October), Umran (28 October) and then flew to Mizoram. He held meetings in Thenzawl (30 October) and flew to Tripura to hold a consultation meeting in Agartala (online meeting on 31 October and a meeting for the confreres of the Tripura region on 1 November).

On 2 November the Regional flew to Dimapur to join the meeting of the Provincial Delegates of the South Asian Region for Youth Ministry and the Salesian Family

(2-4 November), organised by the Youth Ministry Sector and the Salesian Family Secretariat with the presence of the General Councillor for Youth Ministry and the Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family (1-4 November). On 5 November he returned to Delhi and then returned to Sri Lanka. On 6 November, together with the Economist General, he addressed a conference for the South Asia Economists' Network gathered in Colombo. That same evening, he travelled by road to continue the Extraordinary Visitation of Don Bosco Nochchiyagama (6-8 November). From there he continued with Don Bosco Murunkan (9-10 November), Don Bosco Jaffna (11-12 November), Pallawarayankattu (13-14 November), Kilinochchi (15-16 November), the aspirantate at Mankulam (17-18 November), Kandy (19-21 November), Bibile (21-22 November) and the Novitiate at Arambegama (23-24 November). On 25 November he attended the funeral of one of the confrere's mother and continued with the visit to the Kotedeniyawa prenovitiate (25-26 November) and Dungalpitiya (27-28 November). On 30 November he celebrated Mass and interacted with animators from all FMA

communities in Sri Lanka. On 1 December he discussed the report of the Extraordinary Visitation with the Provincial Council.

The Extraordinary Visitation concluded on 2 December with the Assembly of the confreres of the vice-province also involving all the leaders of the communities. The day also marked the pre-Christmas celebrations in the vice-province. Late in the evening of 2 December, the Regional flew from Colombo to Turin to join the winter session of the General Council starting on 4 December 2023.

The General Councillor for the America South Cone Region

On the same day the General Council's summer session in Italy ended, the Councillor left for Lisbon to participate in the World Youth Days (1-6 August).

From 8-31 August he took part in all the Curatoriums of the inter-provincial formation houses in the region: Novitiate in Barbaccena (BBH), Postnovitiate in Campo Grande (BCG), Novitiate in Jaboaão (BRE). Then he left for Paraguay to visit the tough missionary works in the Chaco, and the Salesians of the province. He took part in the Curatorium of

the Theologate at Lapa-Sao Paulo in Brazil and the Curatorium of the Postnovitiate at Lorraine – Sao Paulo (BSP). In Santiago, Chile, at the Theologate at Lo Cañas, in Buenos Aires, at the Curatorium of the Theologate at San Justo (ARS), and the Novitiate in Montevideo (URU).

On 1 September the **Extraordinary Visitation** to the Christ the King and Mary Help of Christians Province of **Guadalajara, Mexico** (MEG) began in the name of the Rector Major. This ended on 2 December. During this time he spoke with all the Salesians of the Province (134); he visited the 24 canonical houses. He learned about the situation of the different schools, parishes and public churches, the 5 social works and youth centres, work with migrants and young people at risk, festive oratories and vocational training institutes.

He met twice with the Provincial Council and once with all the Salesian rectors. He also spoke with the Provincial of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In the communities, he also met with the Salesian Family Groups and spoke with the coordinators and provincial leaders of all the groups. He met with the Salesian Family Advisory Council.

He participated in the intermediate session of the General Council from 18-26 September and in the Consistory on 30 September when the Rector Major was created cardinal.

From 24-26 October he participated in the Meeting of Provincials from the region in Recife (Jaboatão). On 2 December he returned to Turin to attend the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Central and Northern Europe Region

On 24 July 2023, after the conclusion of the summer session of the General Council, Fr Roman Jachimowicz, Regional Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region, went for a few days of holiday with his family.

He was in Enseldorf in Germany from 14-16 August for the installation of the Provincial of the Province of Germany, Fr Reinhard Gesing, who was reconfirmed in his position for the second six-year period 2023–2029. On 22 August he had a zoom meeting with the Provincials of the Central and North Europe Region. From 23–25 August he went for a brief visit to the Wrocław, Poland Province (PLO)

where he met with Provincial Bartłomiej Pola ski and other confreres from the Province.

Fr Roman carried out the Extraordinary Visitation to the Sts Cyril and Methodius Province of Slovenia (SLO) from 10 September to 10 October 2023. On 15 September he was at Valdocco, Turin, to participate in the Intermediate Session of the General Council which took place from 16 to 29 September. From 25–26 September he was in Mužlja in Serbia and on 28–29 September in Podgorica in Montenegro for the Extraordinary Visitation of these two Salesian communities, which belong to the Province of Slovenia.

On 30 September, Fr Roman, together with the entire General Council, attended the Consistory in the Vatican where Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesians, was created Cardinal.

On 1 October Fr Roman returned to Slovenia to continue the Extraordinary Visitation. On 9 October, during the meeting of all the confreres of the Province, he carried out the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial, since next year in May the current Provincial, Fr Marko Košnik, ends his six-year term. From 11–13 October Fr Roman

went to Zagreb in Croatia (CRO) where he carried out the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial, because in May 2024 the current Provincial, Fr Tihomir Šutalo will finish his mandate. Fr Roman accepted the invitation from Fr Tadeusz Jarecki, Provincial of Warsaw Province in Poland (PLR) to take part in celebrations for the blessing of the Salesian School in Sokołów Podlaski from 20–22 October. After that, on 24 October he went to the Malta Vice-Province (MLT) where he carried out the consultation for the appointment of the new Superior, since the Provincial, Fr Paul Formosa, finishes his term of office in August 2024.

From 28-29 October Fr Roman visited Georgia for official matters related to the Salesian Work.

At the beginning of November, Fr Roman went to the St Thomas of Canterbury Province of Great Britain (GBR) to begin the Extraordinary Visitation, beginning officially on 5 November and ending on 19 November 2023.

On 24 November Fr Roman visited the Province of Piła, Poland (PLN), meeting with the Provincial Fr Tadeusz Itrych and other confreres of the Province.

Following this Fr Roman went to Valdocco, Turin to participate

in the Winter Session of the General Council which began on 3 December 2023 and ended on 26 January 2024.

Over the Christmas period Fr Roman spent some time with his family and then visited some Salesian communities in Poland, including the visit to Leszno, a Salesian community canonically erected in 2021 in the Wrocław Poland Province (PLO).

On 15 December Fr Roman was in Zurich, Switzerland, to attend the funeral of his uncle the following day, and to be present at this painful time for the family.

On 19 January Fr Roman was invited by the Provincial, Fr Siegfried Kettner of Austria (AUS), where the following day he gave a Conference during the Feast of the Salesian Family.

On 26 January 2024, after the conclusion of the Winter Session of the General Council, Fr Roman went to Poland to celebrate the Feast of Don Bosco and then began the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Warsaw, Poland (PLE) in February.

The General Councillor for the Interamerica Region

The first seven days of August I had the opportunity to spend a few days in Guadalajara, Mexico, with my father. I participated in the installation of the new Provincial of the United States of America East, Father Dominic Tran, on Saturday, 12 August in New Rochelle. I was in Guatemala for the Curatorium of the Theologate and the Postnovitiate, from there I flew to Paraguay to begin the Extraordinary Visitation. Although Paraguay is not in my region, I have been asked to make this visit on behalf of the Rector Major and I do so with great pleasure, an excellent opportunity to get to know another Region and to broaden my vision of the Congregation. At the end of the month I participated in the Curatorium of the theologate in Lo Cañas in Chile.

In September I continued the Extraordinary Visitation to Paraguay, and in the middle of the month I joined the intermediate session of the General Council and at the end of the session we accompanied Fr Angel Fernández to the consistory where he received the appointment as cardinal in Rome.

The Extraordinary Visitation to Paraguay continued in October, during which I also made a fraternal visit to the province of Bolivia and held the annual meeting of provincials in the city of Cartagena, Colombia, in the COM province.

The annual meeting of provincials was attended by eleven members of the region and began with a retreat in the Cloister of San Pedro Claver, animated by the Jesuit community that resides there and by the Bishop of Cartagena, Bishop Francisco Javier Múnera.

Together with the provincials, also taking part in the animation were Fr Gildasio do Santos and Fr Ricardo Campoli from the Social Communication sector, Br. Alberto Rodríguez from the Economist's Office, Fr. Alex Figueroa of the Salesian Social Network America and Fr. Alex Figueroa of the Salesian Social Network. For the Youth Ministry sector, Mrs. Antonella Sinagoga, Fr Antonella Sinagoga and Fr Joseph Vieres. Antonella Sinagoga and Fr Joseph Vivo, of the network of Salesian schools in America, Fr Claudio Cortés, Don Bosco Green America, Fr Silvio and Sr. Mariana Cejudo, of CRESCO, Fr Juan Suriel, from the Ongoing Forma-

tion Centre community for America in Quito.

The days were very well spent given the meeting, rest, retreat, reflection, study and dialogue between provincials, as well as for the kindness and attention of the hosts. We had the opportunity to meet and greet the young people and the educational community of the Salesian schools in Cartagena.

In November I concluded my visit to Paraguay. In view of the imminent reworking of the agenda to end the visitations before GC29, that is, before February 2025, I took advantage of the rest of the month to officially open the visitation in two provinces, before I spent a week in California opening the visitation in SUO, scheduled for next April and May. Then I also started the visitation in Venezuela, which will end in February and March 2024. In both Provinces I found an open and understanding attitude and I think we are off to a good start.

The last week of November I spent in the Province of Ecuador, first with a meeting with the Provincial and his Council to follow up on the indications of the letter concluding the Extraordinary Visitation, then with a two-day meeting of the “expanded

team” of the Salesian Centre for ongoing Formation of America in Quito and concluding with the Curatorium of the postnovitiate in Quito. From there I returned to Italy, arriving a few days earlier in Turin, preparing for the work of the winter session.

The General Councillor for the Mediterranean Region

After the sessions of the General Council in June-July, the Councillor of the Mediterranean Region had the opportunity to go to Lisbon to participate in the World Youth Days, the pilgrimage with some SYM groups to Fatima and the installation of the new Provincial of Portugal. After that, he took the opportunity to spend a few days with the family.

On 28 August the Extraordinary Visitation to the ICC Province began, participating in the provincial assembly for three days in Rome and in the installation of the new rector of CNOS house in Rome. From 1 to 4 September he went to Nazareth accompanying the Rector Major for the centenary of the basilica dedicated to the Adolescent Jesus. On return from the Holy Land, on the 5th he had an initial meeting of the Ex-

traordinary Visitation with the Provincial in the morning and with the provincial council in the afternoon. On 6 September he left for Tunisia for the installation of the new Provincial of the North African Circumscription (CNA), Domenico Paternò. Later he participated in the profession of novices at Colle Don Bosco.

As part of the Extraordinary Visitation, on Saturday 9 September he participated in the assembly of the ICC SYM and from 10 to 16 he made the Extraordinary Visitation to some Houses: Civitanova-Loreto, Ancona and Macerata. From 17 to 29 September he participated in the Intermediate Council, had some meetings in preparation for the Team Visit of the Mediterranean and on the 30th he participated in the Consistory where our Rector Major was created cardinal. After a family commitment in Seville, on 2 October he went to Ariccia where the Team Visit of the Mediterranean Region took place from 3 to 6 Oc-

tober involving the provincials with the provincial councils of Italy, the two directors of the YM National Centres of Madrid and Rome, together with the Rector Major, the Vicar of the Rector Major, the Councillors of Sectors and the Regional. After having participated from 12 to 15 October in the Regional Seminar on Immigrants and Refugees in Málaga, he resumed the Extraordinary Visitation on behalf of the Rector Major to the following houses of the ICC until 30 November: Gerini-Rome, Don Bosco-Rome, Vallecrosia, Alassio, Quarto-Genoa, Varazze, Sampdarena-Genoa, San Tarcisio-Rome, Civitavecchia, Frascati, Speranza-Rome, Borgo-Rome, Latina and CNOS.Rome. During this time he also participated one evening, celebrating the Eucharist, in the economics conference organised by CISI and went to Venice-Mestre to do the consultation for the appointment of the new INE provincial, from 16 to 19 November.

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS

5.1 New Salesian Provincials

Following (in alphabetical order) are some data regarding Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council from august-december 2023.

1. *CACHIA Eric, Superior of the Malta Vice-Province (MLT). He succeeds Fr Paul Formosa.*

On 12 December 2023, the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Eric Cachia as Superior of the Mary Help of Christians Vice-Province of Malta based in Sliema. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

He was born on 4 August 1976 in Pietà Zebbug (Malta), Diocese of Malta. Fr Eric Cachia, 47 years old, is a former pupil of the Salesian school in ad-Dingli. He began his religious formation at the Novitiate in Lanuvio, Rome, in 1995, and professed his vows in 1996 before Fr Juan E. Vecchi, Rector Major. He completed a degree in Philosophy and Sociology from the University of Malta, followed by practical training at the Sliema Oratory. Further studies took him to Rome, where he obtained a degree in Theology from the UPS. Ordained a deacon in

2004, he then obtained a Master's Degree in Holistic Development in Family Ministry from All Hallows College, Dublin City University, Ireland. Fr Eric was ordained a priest in Malta in 2005.

On his return to Malta, he served for six years as Director of a youth centre, and Economist, followed by 11 years as Principal of two Salesian schools. He also spent four years as Assistant Coordinator for the Association of Catholic Schools in Malta. In 2018 he obtained a Master's Degree in Systemic Family Psychotherapy from the Institute of Family Therapy. Before his appointment as Superior, Fr Eric was Delegate for Youth Ministry for one year, in charge of postnovices for six years, Provincial Economist for 13 years, and held positions including Rector of the St Patrick's School Community. He was also secretary of the Maltese Psychotherapy Association.

2. *HAMASAKIATSUSHI Francis, Superior of the Province of Japan (GIA).*

He succeeds Fr Jacob Hideaku Hamaguchi.

On 15 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr

Francis Atsushi Hamasaki as Superior of the St Francis Xavier Province of Japan based in Tokyo. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Francis was born on 12 November 1968 in TABIRA (Japan), diocese of Nagasaki. He entered the novitiate in Chofu, Tokyo on 12 March 1989, concluding it a year later with his first religious profession. After the post-novitiate, he was sent for his practical training to the Miyazaki Community. After completing his theological studies in Tokyo, he was ordained a priest in Sugino-mi, Tokyo on 9 October 1999.

After a long experience of service as Rector of the Community in Yokkaichi, he was sent to the Community at Miyazaki, where he would reside – except for a brief interruption – for 11 years, covering various tasks at the service of the parish, school, and the Salesian Community itself.

Before being appointed Superior of Japan Province, he also served the Province continuously (since 2003), holding the various roles of Delegate, Councillor and Vice-Provincial.

3. *IVANČEVIĆ Milan Superior of the Province of Croatia (CRO). He succeeds Fr Tihomir Šutalo*

On 13.12.2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Milan Ivan evi as Superior of the St John Bosco Province of Croatia, based in Zagreb. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Milan was born on 25 October 1962 in the village of Šlimac (Rama – Prozor, Bosnia and Herzegovina). He attended primary school in his hometown until 1977; he then had to move to the larger city of Prozor to attend high school (general high school) and graduated in 1981.

After completing his military service, in the so-called JNA in Uroševac (Kosovo) in 1982, he dedicated himself to the study of mathematics and physics at the Pedagogical Academy of Mostar (1982 – 1987), earning his academic degrees.

After some years spent in teaching, he decided to enter the novitiate in Podsused, Zagreb, where he made his first religious profession on 15 August 1991.

Sent for his theological studies to Knesija in Zagreb, he was ordained priest on on 27 June 1998;

after priestly ordination he was appointed assistant parish priest in the parish of Mary Help of Christians in Zagreb.

Fr Milan spent many years teaching and also served as Rector, first in the Podsused Community in Zagreb, then in Community at Zepce and finally in the Marija Pomocnica Community in Split.

Before being appointed Provincial, he also served the Croatian Province as Councillor, Provincial Delegate and Vice-Provincial.

4. *KONČAN Peter Superior of the Province of Slovenia (SLO). He succeeds Fr Marjan Lamovšek.*

On 13.12.2023, the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Peter Končan as Superior of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Province of Slovenia based in Ljubljana. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Peter Končan was born on 30 May 1974 in Ljubljana, Slovenia. He comes from the parish of Šentjošt, where he received all the sacraments of initiation, and it is in this place in Polhov Gradec that he took his first steps in the world of education.

Having made the decision to en-

ter the Salesian Society, he completed his studies at the Religious Secondary School in Želimlje, completing them at Želimlje High School founded by the Salesians at that time.

He completed his novitiate in the Salesian Society in the Pinerolo Community in Italy, professing his first vows on 8 September 1993 in Rakovnik, Ljubljana, and his perpetual vows six years later.

His first years of Salesian life were marked first by the study of philosophy at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana (1993–1995) and by practical training at Don Bosko boarding house in Želimlje (1995–1997).

He received his theological formation at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome from 1997 to 2000 and was ordained priest in Ljubljana on 29 June 2001, on the feast of Sts Peter and Paul, by Archbishop Franc Rode.

As a priest, most of his educational and pastoral work was carried out within the Salesian work at Želimlje, which he was rector of from 2010 to 2016. He was a teacher from 2000 to 2003 and then, until 2020, Rector of the boarding house, also obtaining the relevant formal qualifications. During his stay in Želimlje, he

taught Religion and Culture at the High School for several years, becoming involved in the development of teaching aids at the national level. From 2018–2023 he was a member of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference Education Commission.

Since 2020 he has been responsible for the boarding house for students in Rakovnik in Ljubljana and since 2021 also Rector of the Salesian Work there.

In recent years he has been deeply involved in leadership roles in Salesian Work in Slovenia. From 2018 until now he has been Vice-Provincial and Delegate for Formation, and in 2021 he also took on the coordination of this sector at European level as coordinator of the RECN.

5. *KURICHEAL Sebastian Superior of the Province of Guwahati, India (ING). He succeeds Fr Januarius Sangma.*

On 11 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Sebastian Kuricheal as Superior of Mary Help of Christians Province of Guwahati, India, based in Guwahati. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Sebastian was born on 1

March 1959 in Kozha, Kottayam (Kerala) (India), in the Diocese of Palai. After his schooling he entered the novitiate at Sunnyside in Shillong, where he made his first religious profession on 24 May 1978. He began his theological studies in the theological studentate in Shillong, and was ordained a priest in Kuravilangad on 27 December 1986.

From 2005 to 2012 he was in the Haflong Community as Parish Priest, Councillor and School Principal. In 2012 he was sent by obedience to the Don Bosco Community in Guwahati, holding various positions: School Principal, Economer and Rector. He also carried out valuable activity in his Province of origin as Provincial Councillor from 2018.

6. *LEONG Teng KOK (Domingos) Superior of China Province (CIN). He succeeds Fr Joseph Ng Chi Yuen.*

On 19 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Domingos Leong Teng Kok as Superior of the Mary Help of Christians Province of China based in Hong Kong. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Domingos Leong was born

on 25 February 1961 to a Catholic family in Macau, China. Entering the Salesians, he made his first religious profession in 1982 and his perpetual profession in August 1989; he was ordained a priest in June 1993 in Hong Kong.

After ordination, he served as a teacher in the Salesian school in Hong Kong and as provincial secretary from 1995 to 1998. In 2001 he then went to Italy for a licentiate in Liturgy at the University of San Anselmo, in Rome.

Subsequently, he served the Province in several leadership roles in the communities, focusing on the promotion of vocations, the formation of young confreres, teaching in the Hong Kong Diocesan Seminary and other seminaries. From 2018 to the present he has been Vice-Provincial and Delegate for Formation.

7. *PRASTOWO Vincentius, Superior of the Vice-Province of Indonesia (INA). He succeeds Fr Andrew Wong (Lee).*

On 21 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Vincentius Prastowo as Superior of the St Louis Versiglia Vice-Province of Indonesia based in Sunter, Jakarta.

The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Vincentius was born on 28 November 1980 in Magelang (Indonesia), in the Diocese of Semarang.

After spending a year as a postulant (1999 – 2000) in East Timor, he began his novitiate, which led him to make his first religious profession on 13 June 2000.

After completing his practical training (Tigaraska, Sumba, Palermo – Italy), he began his studies of sacred theology in the Studentate at Messina in 2008.

Ordained a priest in Jakarta on 22 August 2012, he was sent to the Postnovitiate Community at Wisma as Vice-Rector and catechist. He would subsequently be appointed Rector of that community in 2018.

He has held positions as Secretary, Councillor and Delegate for Formation in the Vice-Province of Indonesia.

8. *ZAKERIAN Simon, Superior Of the Middle East Province (MOR). He succeeds Fr Alejandro José Mendoza León.*

On 21 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr

Simon Zacherian as Superior of the Jesus the Adolescent Province of the Middle East based in Cremisan (Palestine). The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

The son of Aram (father) and Araksi (mother), Fr Simon was born on 2 July 1978 in the town of Qamishly (Syria), Diocese of Qamishly, where he received all the sacraments of Christian initiation.

After the prenovitiate year in Damascus (2000-2001), his Salesian formation began by entering the novitiate in Zeitun (Egypt), which concluded with his first religious profession on 8 September 2002.

He did his practical training first in Damascus and then in Aleppo. On 1 September 2006, he entered the theological studentate at the Crocetta in Turin, and was ordained priest on 11 September, in his hometown of Qamishly.

After a few years in which obedience called him to Aleppo as Councillor and then Vice-Rector, he was sent by the Provincial to Damascus as Rector of Salesian work there; subsequently he continued his ministry as Rector in the works in Alexandria (Egypt), El Houssoun (Lebanon) and Al Fidar (Lebanon).

He has held positions in MOR Province as Councillor, Delegate for Youth Ministry, Vocational Animation and Social Communication.

9. *ZANCHETTA Silvio, Superior of the Province of North-East Italy (INE). He succeeds Fr Iginio Biffi.*

On 16 January 2024 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Silvio Zanchetta as Superior of the St Mark Province of North-East Italy based in Mestre, Venice. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr Silvio (25/09/1970) encountered the Salesian world at Castello di Godego (TV) and experienced vocational discernment in the Mogliano Veneto Live-in Community (*Comunità Proposta*, as it is known in Italian).

A Salesian since 1990 and priest since 1998, in 2000 he obtained a Licentiate in Spiritual Theology from the UPS. Later he was first in charge of the oratory of San Donà di Piave (VE) and then of the oratory at Pordenone. He was subsequently appointed Rector of this house (2009-2014) He has served the INE Province as Provincial Councillor (2012-2020)

and as YM Delegate (2014-2020). During this service, for 2 years he was the national head of the Parish-Oratories Office. Since 2020 he has been Rector of Salesian work in Mestre.

10. *ZOSIAMA John Superior of the Province of Shillong, India (INS). He succeeds Fr Paul Olphindro Lyngkot.*

On 13 December 2023 the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr John Zosiama as Superior of the St John Paul II Province of Shillong, India, based in Mawlai, Shillong. The appointment is for the 2024-2030 six-year period.

Fr John Zosiama, born on 20 August 1974 in Chhingchhip, Mizoram, India, is the beloved son of the late Raymond Ngurchhawna and the late Annie Thantluangi.

After completing his pre-university course, he joined the Salesian Aspirantate in 1993 at Mount Forest, Rongkhon. He did his Novitiate at Sunnyside, Upper Shillong, and made his First Profession on 23 May 1995. He then made his Perpetual Profession on 23 May 2003. Subsequently, he was ordained a priest on 20 De-

cember 2003. After priestly ordination, he took on the role of Economer and Socius at the Novitiate in Sunnyside, Upper Shillong. Subsequently, he undertook biblical studies at the Pontificium Institutum Biblicum in Rome. After successfully obtaining his licence in Sacred Scripture, he was appointed Chancellor, Councillor and Vice-Rector at Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong. After a period of three years, he returned to Rome to undertake his Doctorate in Biblical Theology at the Pontifical Studiorum Universitas S. Thoma AQ in Urbe (Angelicum) in Rome, which he completed in 2017. After his return to India, he was appointed Chancellor and Director of Integrated Formation for Laity and Religious (ITLR) at Sacred Heart Theological College in Shillong. On 24 May 2018, he took up the role of Vice-Provincial, a responsibility he fulfilled with unwavering dedication; he simultaneously served as a professor at the Sacred Heart Theological College in Shillong. While serving as Vice-Provincial from 2018 to 2024, he was also Delegate for Formation and vocational animation in the Province.

5.2 Deceased confreres (2nd list July-December 2023)

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

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P BARGANOWSKI, Jerzy	Woźniaków	2023/07/01	91	PLE
L AUVINET, Roger	Chu d'Angers	2023/07/02	83	FRB
P TERRONES CHÁVEZ, Gerardo	México	2023/07/04	65	MEG
P BELLÉS CENTELLES, Eliseo	El Campello, Alicante	2023/07/06	83	SMX
L ELLUL, Joseph Paul	Clayton, Victoria	2023/07/07	91	AUL
P OCHOA, Gonçalo	Campo Grande	2023/07/08	93	BCG
L ORLANDO, Giuseppe	Torino	2023/07/08	85	ICP
P TORRESIN, Vittorio	Torino	2023/07/08	92	ICP
P BARZAGHI, Gioachino	Sumirago (VA)	2023/07/09	93	ILE
P CARLOTTI, Paolo	Roma	2023/07/10	68	UPS
L SIMIONI, Sante	Torino (TO)	2023/07/12	92	ICP
P SONCIN, Lorenzo	Roma	2023/07/14	93	ICC
P NOVILLO APOLO, Luis Orlando	Guayaquil	2023/07/17	86	ECU
P GARCÍA NEBREDA, Ildefonso	Pontevedra	2023/07/20	80	SSM
P HUBLER, Jean	Mulhouse	2023/07/20	89	FRB
P RINGENBACH, Bernard	Mulhouse	2023/07/20	81	FRB
P BROVEDANI, Frediano	Udine	2023/07/21	80	INE
P PROVENZANO, Thomas Michael	Port Chester, NY	2023/07/21	56	SUE
P ROSA, António	Manique	2023/07/21	94	POR
P DANELLON, Guido	Montevideo	2023/07/22	84	URU
L SANTANA MATIAS, Ramón Asunción	Jarabacoa	2023/07/27	89	ANT
P TARDIVO GHIBAUDO, Severino	Santiago de Chile	2023/07/27	97	CIL
P UGALDE ELIZAGARAY, Feliciano	El Campello, Alicante	2023/07/28	92	SMX
P NOVELLA, Guido	Mestre	2023/07/29	80	RMG
P CHENGINIYADEN, Thomas	Guwahati	2023/07/30	80	ING
P COGO, Jacy	Belo Horizonte	2023/07/30	82	BBH
P DUBOVSKY, Stepan	Clayton, Victoria	2023/08/01	93	AUL
D SILVA SÁNCHEZ, Juan Pablo Raúl	Irapuato, Gto.	2023/08/02	89	MEG
P PARACHINI, Francesco (Franco)	Torino (TO)	2023/08/03	79	ICP
P AGAGLIATI, Giuseppe	Torino (TO)	2023/08/04	90	ICP
P DEROUET, Henri	Caen	2023/08/04	94	FRB
P MAIDHOF REUS, Vinzens Nikolaus	Neiva	2023/08/05	84	COB
P CID CONDE, Constantino	León	2023/08/07	94	SSM
L LIMA SATIRO DE, Ludovino	Belo Horizonte	2023/08/13	100	BBH
P GON, Sergio	Córdoba	2023/08/14	84	ARN
P SERUGHETTI, Giovanni	Sumirago (VA)	2023/08/14	98	ILE
P KOPECKÝ, František	Benediktbeuern	2023/08/17	92	GER

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ZIÓLKOWSKI, Piotr	Reptowo, Szczecin	2023/08/19	56	PLN
P PACHECO VÁSQUEZ, Luis	San José	2023/08/20	93	CAM
P DEL TETTO, Domenico	Torino (TO)	2023/08/21	91	ICP
P DĄBROWSKI (Kolodziej), Wiesław	Bydgoszcz	2023/08/21	86	PLN
E LEGAL, Fernando	São Paulo - SP	2023/08/21	91	
P CASTELLINO, Giorgio	Torino (TO)	2023/08/22	88	ICP
P GIORDANO, Nicolò	Palermo (PA)	2023/08/23	80	ISI
P LLORET LLORET, Jerónimo	El Campello, Alicante	2023/08/23	94	SMX
L RICHARD, Gerard	Sherbrooke	2023/08/31	100	SUE
L DE PRETTO, Bruno	Bellflower	2023/09/01	97	SUO
P VELASCO ARIJA, Anselmo	Madrid	2023/09/01	87	SSM
P ZEN, John Baptist	Tainan	2023/09/02	92	CIN
P GAUTHIER, Raymond	Caen	2023/09/03	99	FRB
P LARREATEGUI CARRANZA, José Antonio	Burgos	2023/09/07	86	SSM
P STRAZZABOSCO, Franco	Mogliano Veneto (TV)	2023/09/07	87	INE
P LAUDATO, Luigi	Manaus	2023/09/09	82	BMA
P MORAL VILLA, Miguel Ángel	Santiago de Chile	2023/09/12	80	CIL
P SALVADORI, Silvio	Cochabamba	2023/09/13	97	BOL
L CHUN, Chanhom Paul	Bangkok	2023/09/14	95	THA
L PICCHETTI, Luigi	Mestre (VE)	2023/09/14	96	INE
P SABBE, Albert	Gent	2023/09/18	90	BEN
P BALDAN, Candido	Buenos Aires	2023/09/22	88	ARS
P CAPPELLETTI, Guido	Mestre (VE)	2023/09/27	93	INE
P CUSCÓ RAFOLS, José	Pamplona	2023/09/28	90	SSM
L TONIOLLO, Sante	Perugia (PG)	2023/09/28	87	ICC
P ECHÁVARRI AYÚCAR, Máximo	Barcelona	2023/10/01	85	SMX
P ADESSO, Vincenzo	Salerno	2023/10/04	89	IME
P DE TEJADA ARNAU, Joan	Barcelona	2023/10/07	77	SMX
P RODRÍGUEZ LUCENA, Antonio	Algeciras	2023/10/09	75	SMX
P BERTOZZO, Vittorio	Belluno	2023/10/10	91	INE
L KUNG, Manuel	Hong Kong	2023/10/10	92	CIN
P ALABAU VILA, Rosendo	Sevilla	2023/10/11	74	SMX
P CHIRIBOGA CALDERON, Jesús	Cumbayá, Lumbisi	2023/10/12	93	ECU
P FANER BAGUR, Joan	Barcelona	2023/10/14	83	SMX
P MARZEDDU, Antonio	Roma	2023/10/14	75	ICC
P PALLISSERY, Sebastian	Jorhat, Assam	2023/10/15	81	IND
P CAVALIERE, Umberto	Yokohama	2023/10/16	93	GIA
P PI SIQUÉS, Juan	Barcelona	2023/10/17	80	SMX
L SIESO CUDOS, José María	Barcelona	2023/10/19	90	SMX
P SAKANASHI, Aloisio Shiro	Suginami, Tokyo	2023/10/21	91	GIA
P ZEDDA, Luigi	Roma	2023/10/21	82	ICC
P SWINNEN, Jaak	Bonheiden	2023/10/23	87	BEN
P MARTÍNEZ CRESPO, Higinio	León	2023/10/24	80	SSM
P GARCÍA HERRERA, Daniel	San Salvador	2023/10/25	37	CAM
P PETRINJAK, Franjo	Strmac, Cernik	2023/10/27	77	CRO
P TECHERA VILLAMONTE, Carlos	Montevideo	2023/10/29	86	URU

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P LEE HEI-LUNG (Li), Joseph	Hong Kong	2023/10/30	95	CIN
L NEGRATO, Giovanni	Venezia - Mestre	2023/10/30	91	INE
P TOSINI, Giulio	Venezia - Mestre	2023/10/30	94	INE
P GERALDES, Daniel	Manique	2023/11/03	90	POR
P GIAMMELLO, Raffaele	Pedara (CT)	2023/11/03	72	ISI
P ROSARIO (Lourdusamy), John	Madras	2023/11/05	55	INM
P RAMIANDRISOA, Jean Marcellin	Port Louis	2023/11/07	45	MDG
P MAÍLLO CALAMA, Leandro	Úbeda	2023/11/11	82	SMX
P WEDER, Zdzisław	Warszawa	2023/11/11	87	PLE
P THETTAYIL, Joseph	Thabore, Kerala	2023/11/13	69	IND
P GIANCOLA, Mario	Roma (RM)	2023/11/14	87	ICC
P FERNÁNDEZ VIDAL, Edesio	Sevilla	2023/11/15	89	SMX
P UMAÑA SÁNCHEZ, Rafael	San José	2023/11/17	85	CAM
P NATIVIDADE PAULA DA, Josué	Belo Horizonte	2023/11/18	102	BBH
P DE MEULENAERE, Marcel	Zwijndrecht	2023/11/21	85	BEN
L MORESCO, Giordano	Mestre (VE)	2023/11/21	98	INE
P MURPHY, Sean Francis	Dublin	2023/11/21	89	AFM
P PRAI, Antonio	Castello di Godego (TV)	2023/11/24	83	INE
P MAZZON, Franco	Monteortone (PD)	2023/11/27	93	INE
L DE DONATIS, Salvatore	Salerno	2023/11/28	59	IME
P FRÉMIN, Philippe	Angers	2023/12/01	91	FRB
P LUCATO, Adriano	Venezia-Mestre	2023/12/02	85	INE
L RATERO MARTIN, Manuel	Madrid	2023/12/03	88	SSM
P FERRONATO, Virgilio	Châtillon	2023/12/06	90	ICP
P YAGÜE CANTERA, Julio	Fuenlabrada	2023/12/06	76	SSM
P KABUYA KAMIBA, Isaac	Lubumbashi - Imara	2023/12/07	46	AFC
P D'SOUZA, Lawrence Placid	Mumbai	2023/12/12	77	INB
P FEYEN, Léopold	Kinshasa	2023/12/12	82	ACC
P DI BELLA, Vincenzo	Gela (CL)	2023/12/14	85	ISI
P GRANDE, Giuseppe	Ariano Irpino (AV)	2023/12/15	78	IME
P KUTARŃA, Kamil	Levoča	2023/12/15	72	SLK
L MARGHERI, Giorgio	Roma (RM)	2023/12/17	83	ICC
P Cerbone, James	Ridgewood, New Jersey	2023/12/19	74	SUE
P VAN BALKOM, Engelbertus Cornelis Hendrikus (Bert)	Wijchen	2023/12/20	86	BEN
P CÁRDENAS CARO, Luis Alfredo	Bogotá	2023/12/21	84	COB
P COSENZA, Salvatore Alberto	Genova	2023/12/23	91	ICC
P VILELA MARQUES, Luis Guilherme	Lisboa	2023/12/23	70	POR
P TOMELLERI, Fulvio	Verona	2023/12/27	85	INE
P MIGHELA, Marcello	Roma (RM)	2023/12/29	90	ICC
P LAU, Francis	Hong Kong	2023/12/30	94	CIN
P RAYAPPAN, Mariaselvam (Maria Selvam)	Polur	2023/12/30	85	INM
P FURLAN, Felice	Cebu City	2023/12/31	81	FIS
P GALLO, Luis Angel Antonio	Roma	2023/12/31	88	UPS



The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial data. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses and income. The document provides a detailed list of items that should be tracked, such as inventory levels, supplier payments, and customer orders. It also outlines the procedures for recording these transactions, including the use of specific forms and the assignment of responsibilities to different staff members.

The second part of the document focuses on the analysis of the recorded data. It describes various methods for identifying trends and anomalies in the financial performance. This includes comparing current data with historical trends, analyzing seasonal fluctuations, and identifying areas where costs are higher than expected. The document also discusses the importance of regular reviews and reports to management, providing a clear and concise summary of the financial situation. It includes a sample report format and a list of key performance indicators (KPIs) that should be monitored.

The final part of the document addresses the overall financial health of the organization. It discusses the impact of the recorded data on the company's budget and long-term goals. It provides a framework for setting financial targets and evaluating the company's progress against these targets. The document also includes a section on risk management, identifying potential financial risks and providing strategies to mitigate them. It concludes with a summary of the key findings and recommendations for improving the financial management process.