



Animating and governing the community

The ministry
of the Salesian Rector

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Graphics:
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Print:
Scuola grafica salesiana di Milano

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(Salesians of Don Bosco)
Extra commercial edition (2019)

Sede Centrale Salesiana
Via Marsala 42
Rome



Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the confreres who collaborated with the Formation Department (Ivo Coelho, Salvador Cleofas Murguía Villalobos – now bishop, Silvio Roggia, Jose Kuttianimattathil, Francisco Santos Montero) **in the preparatory work:** Marcello Baek, Adriano Bregolin, Raymond Callo, Vincent Castilino, Manuel Cayo, Martin Coyle, Jorge Crisafulli, Francesco de Ruvo, Salvador Delgadillo, Ian Figueiredo, Pier Fausto Frisoli, James Heuser, Zenon Klawikowski, Alberto Lorenzelli – now bishop, Gerard Martin, Eusebio Muñoz, Gabriel Ngendakuriyo, Luis Onrubia, Michael Pace, José Luis Plascencia Moncayo, Stanislaus Swamikannu, Luis Timossi, Meinolf von Spee.

Many thanks also to the members of the redaction and translation group:

Zdzisław Brzęk, Placide Carava, Ivo Coelho, Ian Figueiredo, Zenon Klawikowski, Alberto Lorenzelli, Giuseppe Nicolussi, Luis Onrubia, Silvio Roggia, Francisco Santos Montero, José Antenor Velho.

The images

The opening and closing images take us to Colle Don Bosco and Valdocco. The discourse on the Salesian Rector and his ministry for the life and governance of the local community traces its roots back in the life and charism of Don Bosco. It is within the process of ongoing formation that originated from him, and kept on unfolding all throughout the life story of the Congregation, that we understand the meaning of this work and hope to see its fruitfulness.





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ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	<i>Acts of the General Council</i>
ACS	<i>Atti del Consiglio Superiore</i>
AL	<i>Amoris Laetitia</i>
BM	<i>Biographical Memoirs</i>
C	<i>Constitutions</i> (2015)
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i> (1992)
Charter	<i>Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco</i> (2012)
CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici – Code of Canon Law</i>
CICLSAL	Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life
CL	<i>Christifideles Laici</i> (1988)
CV	<i>Christus Vivit</i> (2019)
EG	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> (2013)
EPC	Educative and Pastoral Community
ET	<i>Evangelica Testificatio</i> (1971)
FLC	CICLSAL, <i>Fraternal Life in Community</i> . ‘Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor’ (1994)
FoR	<i>Salesian Youth Ministry: Frame of Reference</i> (2014)
FSDB	<i>Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco</i> (2016)
FT	CICLSAL, <i>The Service of Authority and Obedience</i> . <i>Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram</i> (2008)
GC	General Chapter
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> (1964)
MR	<i>Mutuae Relationes</i> (1978)
MSD	<i>The Salesian Rector: A Ministry for the Animation and Governing of the Local Community</i> (1986)
NMI	<i>Novo Millennio Ineunte</i> (2001)
NW	CICLSAL, <i>New Wine in New Wineskins</i> (2017)
PDV	<i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> (1992)
PL	<i>The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco: A Guide to the Salesian Constitutions</i> (1986)
R	General Regulations (2015)
SAC	CICLSAL, <i>Starting Afresh from Christ: A Renewed Commitment to Consecrated Life in the Third Millennium</i> (2002)
SEPP	Salesian Educative–Pastoral Plan
SGC	<i>Special General Chapter</i> (1971)
VC	<i>Vita Consecrata</i> (1996)





QUESTA
È LA MIA CASA
di BOLOGNA



FOREWORD

My dear confreres,

32 years after the last Salesian Rector's Manual, I am happy to present you with a new version, revised at the behest of GC27. I can assure you that it is the fruit of consultation among all our provinces and regions, and of much hard work, not least in the General Council itself.

Our Rectors are key figures in the renewal of the Congregation and of our ministry for young people in the educative and pastoral community. They are the key to the much desired ongoing formation that must take place in our religious communities, and by extension also in our educative and pastoral communities. This Manual is therefore addressed primarily to them – and to all those who are involved in their formation, beginning from Provincials and their Councils.

But this new Manual is also addressed to all Salesians and to all the members of each Salesian religious community. The Rector is defined in our Constitutions as a brother among brothers, and this is how the Church wants it to be, when it calls us to stress the dynamic of brotherhood while not neglecting the duty of governance. This is one of the great gifts that Pope Francis is bringing to the Church: the practice of community discernment as a way of animating and governing that arises from the deep conviction that we are brothers, that we are called to communion, that the Spirit has been given to each and every baptised member of Christ's faithful.

You will see in it a great attention first of all to our identity: all of us, Salesian Brothers or Salesian Priests, are first of all Salesian consecrated persons – and the Rector is first and foremost the



guardian of this identity, responsible for promoting vocational growth in the community and in the confreres entrusted to him. He is, like Don Bosco, a man who is deeply in love with Jesus Christ, our living Rule, whose way of life he tries to reproduce, uniting his brothers in the service of the Father, with the wonderful combination of humility, realism and faith that comes from the Spirit.

The other great emphasis comes from what is perhaps the most significant development in our history since Vatican II: the clear affirmation that the Salesian spirit and mission are shared with lay people. The Rector and the Salesian community today, therefore, are part of the animating nucleus of the educative and pastoral community. Within this nucleus they have, of course, a special responsibility for fidelity to the charism: they are the 'charismatic point of reference' in the words of GC25. The Salesian of today is, therefore, called to be first and foremost the animator of those with whom he shares the charism. And, in order to do this, he needs to live his consecrated vocation with a transparent and contagious joy. To all of you, therefore, my dear confreres, I offer this gift, this effort to bring together all the developments in the Church and in our Congregation of the last 30 years or so. May Mary, our mother and teacher, help us to grow into the fullness of our consecration, that we might be ever more credible signs and bearers of God's love to the young.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,
Ángel Fernández Artime
Rector Major

Sacro Cuore – Rome, Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019







INTRODUCTION

1. OBJECTIVES

The long history of the Rector's Manual

1. This new edition of *The Salesian Rector*, or the Rector's Manual, as it is popularly known, stems from the request made by GC27. (GC27 69) The last version of the Manual was published in 1986, and was itself a revision of the earlier one requested by GC21. There was a much older Manual coming from the time of Fr Albera.¹ But the very first Manual, we could say, was Don Bosco's '*Confidential Reminders to Rectors*', given to the first Salesian Rector, the young Fr Rua, on his way to Mirabello.² The Rector's Manual has, therefore, a very long and honourable history.

Don Bosco's 'Confidential Reminders' to Rectors

2. Don Bosco's '*Confidential Reminders to Rectors*' were written with the affectionate tone of a father entrusting something important to his son ("I speak with the voice of a father who opens the heart to one of his dearest children"), and consist of guidelines for taking care of oneself and of others, whether confreres, educators or young people. The later editions of this text dropped the affectionate introduction but maintained the same concern to safeguard the Salesian spirit in the houses through the faithfulness of Rectors to their particular responsibilities. The edition of 1886 ends thus: "This is my last will and testament to the Rectors of our houses. If these suggestions are put into practice, I will die in peace, sure that our Society will flourish and be blessed by God, and that it will reach its goal, the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls."

The Rector and the shared responsibility of the confreres

3. The objective of the Manual of 1986 was to maintain the centrality of the figure of the Rector in our tradition, and at the same time to update it in the light of the Council and the changed times. The objective of the present revised edition is to balance this centrality with the role of the Salesian religious community, acknowledging the authority entrusted to the Rector while insisting on the shared responsibility



of the confreres, keeping in mind the 30 or so years that have passed. We have to take into account, therefore, the pontificates of John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, the Synods of Bishops and the documents emerging from the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. In the Congregation, we have Frs Viganò, Vecchi, Chávez and Fernández in the office of Rector Major, the General Chapters from the 23rd onwards, and the documents of the various sectors such as the *Salesian Social Communication System* (2011), the *Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (2014), *Salesian Youth Ministry: Frame of Reference* (2014) and the *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (2016).

2. PROCESS

An enormous diversity of cultures and contexts

4. The process of revision of the Manual began with a seminar involving representatives of all the regions, followed by a survey in 2016 in which all the provinces were asked to send us feedback about the current situation regarding the service of animation and governance of Salesian Rectors, and then another seminar to interpret the material that had arrived.

One thing became very clear in the process: that the Congregation, spread out over five continents, 133 nations and 89 provinces and circumscriptions, embraces an enormous diversity of cultures and contexts, and that it marches at very different speeds. This, as we can understand, makes it rather difficult to say something that will be equally valid and useful in the same way in every context. We hope, however, that what we have to offer here will serve at least as a reminder of the chief milestones in our common journey as Church and Congregation, which will then have to be read and incarnated in each different context and situation.



3. CONTENTS

The General Chapters

5. The General Chapters are the supreme expression of the entire Congregation, and so we take them as our most important signposts.

GC23 reminds us that our mission has an educative as well as pastoral dimension: we evangelize by educating, and we educate by evangelizing. GC24 was a great recognition that the subject of the Salesian mission is not only the Salesian religious community, but also the other members of the Salesian Family and our many lay mission partners – and here *Amoris Laetitia* inspires us to say that the educative and pastoral community (EPC) consists not merely of individuals but also of families, who are active agents in the mission. GC25 felt the need to further clarify the ‘new’ role of the Salesian religious community within the mission. GC26 concentrated on the Salesian aspects of our identity, with its call to return to Don Bosco, while GC27 invited us to a deeper understanding and living out of our Salesian consecrated vocation.

The present edition of the Rector’s Manual makes an effort to integrate these emphases without losing sight of the fact, so clearly emphasized in GC22 and in the new text of the Constitutions, that formation is our lifelong and ongoing response to God who calls and sends us in his love, and that formation is also shared with the laity, in the richness of the diversity of our vocations.

CG27

6. A special word on GC27 will not be out of place, especially as it commands the structure of this new edition of the Manual. Popularly, GC27 tends to be summed up in terms of its three nuclei – mystics in the Spirit, prophets of fraternity, and servants of the young. Instead, the letter of convocation of the Chapter, as well as the opening address



of the Rector Major, speak not of three but of four thematic areas:

Living our Salesian consecrated **vocation** in the grace of unity and joy since this vocation is God's gift and a personal project of life; having a strong **spiritual experience**, taking on the way of being and acting of the obedient, poor and chaste Jesus and becoming seekers of God; building **fraternity** in our communities of life and action; dedicating ourselves generously to the **mission**, walking with the young to give hope to the world. (GC27 p. 89)

It is as consecrated persons that we share in the mission of Don Bosco

7. The objective of GC27 was, therefore, “to explore our charismatic identity more deeply [and to] make us aware of our vocation to faithfully live out Don Bosco's apostolic project.” (GC27 p. 89) Clearly, it is as consecrated persons that we share in the mission of Don Bosco, and it is as consecrated persons that we take our place within the EPC.

This is why, if the three parts of the Manual of 1986 were

- 1. renewal as return and innovation;*
- 2. the animation and government of the Rector in the EPC and in the religious community;*
- 3. the methods, means and structures of animation and governance;*

the three parts of the present Manual deal with

- 1. the Rector as guardian³ of the Salesian consecrated identity;*
- 2. the Rector as animator and guide of the Salesian religious community and mission;*
- 3. the Rector and the religious community within the EPC and the neighbourhood.*



**Growing demands
on one asked to accept
the service of authority**

8. In presenting this updated edition of the Rector's Manual, we are aware that, in the years since the last edition of 1986, life in our communities and Works has become more complex, and that the number of confreres available, even in provinces that are in the flush of growth, is never enough to meet all the perceived needs. This situation tends to make even more demands on one who is asked to accept the service of authority. On the one hand, the figure of the Rector remains central in our tradition; on the other hand, he is expected now to animate not only the Salesian religious community but also the EPC.

We began the work of revising the Manual in the hope of presenting a simplified text, but the work of integration of the developments of the last 30 years yielded a figure of the Rector that was even more demanding and complex. What can we say? Only this: that the Salesian Rector is not a superman, but just a man. But he is a man who, along the way opened by Don Bosco, has been touched by the Lord. He knows he is not alone; and he accepts and carries out his service in the way that he can, growing in the awareness of his Salesian consecrated identity as he walks with his brothers and sisters, asking every day for the gift of joy and strength, knowing that in the concrete circumstances of life he will find the Lord.

4. USE

**The Rector and the
Salesian religious
community.
Provincials and Provincial
Formation Delegates**

9. A word about the use of this Manual. Obviously it is meant to be studied and meditated upon by Rectors themselves, especially when appointed for the first time. How they will do this will vary, for there is no one 'canonical' way of reading this text: some will read it a piece at a time, while others might want to read it at one go, and both ways are fine.



Given the intimate relationship between the Rector and the Salesian religious community, it is extremely important to say that the Manual is addressed also to the community. The confreres need to know and welcome the figure and authority of the Rector as the guardian of the Salesian consecrated vocation and as the animator of the mission shared with the laity and with the members of the Salesian Family. The Manual is therefore made available to all the confreres and communities, along with initiatives for studying and reflecting on it. The text thus becomes a means for fostering ongoing formation in the Congregation. Such formation finds its normal place in community life and is lifelong by its very nature, with the Salesian Rector as its main animator in collaboration with each member of the community.

The Manual will be of help especially to Provincials and Provincial Formation Delegates, and also to the various regional centres for formation, given their responsibility for the initial and ongoing formation of Rectors. It would also be a good practice to present a copy of the Manual to a new Rector during the installation ceremony.

In addition, it is important to insert the Rector's Manual into the specific formation of our aspirants to the priesthood: preparation for the role of leadership in community is surely part of growth in the ministerial form of our vocation.

Regions or provinces can adapt the Manual to their particular needs

10. We may note also that, given the many and varied needs in different parts of the Congregation, there should be nothing to prevent regions or provinces from adapting the layout of this Manual to their particular needs. We have, for example, decided to retain the many references and notes, both in the text and at the end of each chapter, because they might help in providing further leads and clues in the process of planning the formation of Rectors. However, prov-



inces can easily decide to put into circulation a simpler and less ‘cumbersome’ version of the text if they wish to. As a further help, various modules for the formation of Rectors may be found on the formation page of the official website of the Congregation (www.sdb.org).

¹ *Manuale del direttore* (San Benigno Canavese, 1915), with foreword by P. Albera.

² See Appendix 1 “Don Bosco’s ‘Confidential Reminders’ to Rectors.”

³ ‘Guardian’ is used here in the way Benedict XVI uses it in the General Audience of 4 May 2005, when he speaks of God as the ‘guardian’ (custode, in Italian) or ‘sentinel’ who keeps watch over his people.





Part I
The salesian
consecrated
identity

Strive to
make
yourself
loved...



Vine, branches, fruit... Our identity is rooted in our belonging to the Lord completely and in everything, like the vine and the branches. "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15: 5).



1. THE SALESIAN MISSION SETS THE TENOR OF OUR CONSECRATED LIFE

**The mission “sets the
tenor of our whole life”**

11. Art. 3 of our Constitutions declares that “our apostolic mission, our fraternal communion and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration,” and then adds: it is the mission that “sets the tenor of our whole life.”

In its elaboration of the definitive text of our Constitutions in 1984, GC22 decided to centre all the different elements of Salesian life and action around the mission. This can be seen in the contents of the articles, but also in the very structure of the text. The title of part 2 is, in fact: *Sent to the young in communities following Christ.*

**The centrality of mission
in Don Bosco**

12. This decision of GC22 reflects the centrality of mission in the life of Don Bosco: Don Bosco is clearly aware of *having been sent by God to work for the salvation of the young.*

The horizon of this mission begins to unfold already in the dream at the age of nine. It is remarkable that, in his own account of this dream, Don Bosco does not say that he understood it in terms of the priesthood. The only one who hints at this possibility is Mamma Margaret. Years later, when he goes through a difficult vocational discernment at the end of his school period in Chieri, it is not the priestly life that appeals immediately to him. His heart is drawn to the Franciscans, and it is only on the advice of Comollo’s uncle and of Fr Cafasso that he enters the seminary.

When he begins the experience of the Oratory, Don Bosco’s first priority is to find collaborators and helpers for his expanding work, and it is only later that he arrives at the idea of founding a Congregation of consecrated persons. The centrality of the mission led him to seek collaborators, and the same centrality led him eventually to the idea of a religious Congregation.



The salesian consecrated identity

The ‘external’ suggestions from Rattazzi and Cavour regarding the foundation of the Salesian Congregation can be understood along the same lines: these eminent defenders of laicism were impressed by Don Bosco’s mission. The same centrality of mission comes through in Cagliero’s reaction to Don Bosco’s proposal in December 1859: “Monk or no monk, I will be with Don Bosco.” In the same vein we can recall the many difficulties experienced by Don Bosco because of his original ways of forming his future priests. For him, everything was dictated by and geared to the needs of the mission, at the centre of which was a great desire for sanctity, for himself, for his collaborators, for his boys – wonderfully expressed in the motto inherited from Francis de Sales: *Da mihi animas, coetera tolle*.

Mission is not the same as work or activity

13. Given that the mission is so central for us, it is absolutely essential not to overlook its theological density. *Mission* cannot be equated to *work* or activity, just as *call* cannot be equated to *choice*. Choice, work, activity can well begin from the individual and autonomous subject; but call, vocation, mission are theological terms. Mission implies various elements: Someone who sends; someone who is sent; those to whom he is sent; the service he is sent to carry out; the way this is to be done and the means to do it. All this is condensed in article 2 of our Constitutions, and abundantly commented upon in the *Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. (PL 98) Here it is enough to insist on certain aspects.

There is Someone who calls and sends: the mission comes *from God*. The initiative is always God’s, and God calls to himself those whom he wants “to be with him and to be sent out to preach.” (Mk 3:14, see C 96) This is, in fact, the great note, at once clear and humble, of the very first article of our Constitutions: “The Society of St Francis de Sales is born not of a human project but by the initiative of God.” “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us.”



(1 Jn 4:10) In the prevenient love of God lie the deepest roots of the Preventive System. GC27 reminds us, therefore, that we are mystics in the Spirit. “In a world which is feeling ever more clearly the challenge of secularism, we need ‘to find a response in the acknowledgement of God’s absolute primacy,’ through the ‘total gift of self’ and in ‘permanent conversion in a life offered up in true spiritual worship.’” (AGC 313 19) “As for Don Bosco, for us too the primacy of God is the cornerstone of our *raison d’être* in the Church and in the world. This primacy gives meaning to our consecrated life, helps us avoid the risk of letting ourselves become too caught up in our activities and forgetting that we are essentially ‘seekers of God’ and witnesses of his love among the young and the poor.” (GC27 32)

**The mission comes to us
in and through Jesus and
the Holy Spirit**

14. The mission comes to us in and through *Jesus*, the epiphany of God, the revelation of the mystery of the triune God who is a Communion of Love. Jesus’ mission is to *reveal* and to *gather*: to reveal the Father, and to gather into one the scattered children of God. (FoR 50-54) “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” (Jn 1:18) Jesus is the revelation of the merciful face of the Father. “He who has seen me has seen the Father.” (Jn 14:9) Jesus reveals a God who is Communion-Love, Trinity.

It is the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, who reminds us of everything that Jesus said and did (Jn 14:25-26), and who equips and empowers us to carry out this mission through the charismatic gifts that he distributes to each: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses...” (Acts 1:8; see also C 1)

Like the young Johnny Bosco, whose attention is first directed to the sheep, and who only later learns the name of



The salesian consecrated identity

the gracious Lady and of her Son, the Salesian's first attention is usually directed to the apostolate. He discovers eventually – and sometimes only very gradually – his call to respond passionately and splendidly to the love revealed in the Son, and to be transformed into his likeness (2 Cor 3:18) so as to become, like Jesus, the face of the Father to young people with often deficient experiences of fatherhood and motherhood.

The essential content of our mission: to be revelations of God

15. Here, then, is the essential *content* of our mission: to be revelations of God, signs and bearers of his love (C 2), in such a way that through us the prevenient love of God is made visible. The Preventive System “is inspired by the love of a God who provides in advance (*previene*) for all his creatures, is ever present at their side, and freely gives his life to save them.” (C 20) This is a love that must be *shown* in order to be truly itself, and is all the more efficacious when it is *seen* by the young. It is a love that is liberating in every sense – our Constitutions speak of integral promotion (C 33) – so much so that the Preventive System may be defined as a *pedagogy of freedom*. But just as Jesus not only reveals the face of the Father but also “gathers into one the scattered children of God” (Jn 11,52), our mission includes the promotion and creation of fraternity and of communion, so that we become more and more what we are. For we have been created in the image of God-Communion-Love, we have been ‘thought’ in a Trinitarian manner.



Those to whom we are sent

16. We want to remember that the young to whom we are sent are by preference those who are “poor, abandoned and in danger,’ those who have greater need of love and evangelization,” and that we work especially in areas of greatest poverty – something that the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, has insisted upon since his discourse at the conclusion of GC27.¹ We want to remember that we work for young people in educative and pastoral communities that include their families as active pastoral agents. We want to remember not only the five continents in which the Salesian Congregation accompanies young people, but also the new digital continent that is ubiquitous and pervasive, and whose impact on the lives of the young cannot be understated. This digital continent is changing our notions of time and space, our self-perception and how we see others and the world, the way we communicate, learn and become informed, the relative priority of word and image, and it provides enormous power for good and evil over the lives of the young to industrial corporations and media companies.²

We are sent, then, to the young in communities following Christ, but it is the mission that sets the tenor of our life.





2. THE SALESIAN CONSECRATED VOCATION: OUR WAY OF SHARING IN THE MISSION

The Salesian mission is shared by Salesians, the Salesian Family, and lay people

17. The Salesian mission, however, does not belong exclusively to the Salesians of Don Bosco. Don Bosco, as we have said already, began with many types of collaborators and eventually arrived at the need for consecrated persons. God calls many to share in the mission – both members of the Salesian Family and lay people. This was crystallized and powerfully affirmed in GC24 – “Salesians and Lay People: Communion and Sharing in the Spirit and Mission of Don Bosco” – and is a theme that the Rector Major, Ángel Fernández Artime, constantly insists upon.³

We Salesians share in this mission, however, as consecrated persons. The practical implications of this for the figure of the Salesian Rector will be outlined later. Here we can take a clue from Fr Juan Vecchi who, at the conclusion of GC24, said that, while it is true “that many others participate in Don Bosco’s charism... the latter is concentrated in the SDB community in a special way by virtue of the force of consecration, the plan of life (profession), and total dedication to the mission.” (GC24 236)

2.1 OUR APOSTOLIC CONSECRATION

Ours is an ‘apostolic consecration’

18. Within the Church we carry out the Founder’s apostolic project – to be signs and bearers of God’s love to the young, especially those who are poor – in *a specific form of religious life*. (C 2) Given the centrality of mission, ours is an ‘apostolic consecration.’ Mission, community and evangelical counsels come together inseparably in our apostolic consecration, which we live in the grace of unity, “in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers.” (C 3) Here, then, is our basic identity: our Salesian apostolic consecration. We are religious who are educators and pastors (C 98), living out this vocation in two forms, clerical and lay. (C 4, 45) The challenge is for both Salesian



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Priests and Salesian Brothers to live out the particular form of their vocation in its entirety, from within their apostolic consecration, avoiding the tendency to pastoral genericism and apostolic individualism on the one hand, and a search for compensation on the other, either on the ecclesiastical side (taking on clerical tasks and attitudes) or on the secular side (over-emphasis on professionalism, or seeking a secular lifestyle).

Called to a deepening of the grace of unity

19. Our identity is based, then, on a harmonious and vital rediscovery of 'apostolic consecration.' 'Mission' and 'consecration' are not to be placed in dualistic opposition. We are called to a deepening of the grace of unity by which our Salesian life is religious and apostolic at the same time, in an original way of dedication to God who is loved above all things in his infinite mercy as saviour of the world. Don Bosco wanted, in fact, that the ardour of charity should make the active and the contemplative life go hand in hand. (GC22 20) "It is extremely important for us not to forget the peculiar and totalizing meaning of each of the two terms 'consecration' and 'mission,' neither of which can be reduced to indicate only one particular sector of Salesian life. Our consecration is, in itself, apostolic; and the mission entrusted to us is, insofar as it is ours, religious."⁴

Fr Vecchi, interpreting *Vita Consecrata* from a Salesian perspective, recognized in the deep unity between consecration and mission the very source of the apostolic dimension of our life. "The apostolic dimension emerges from the internal unity between consecration and mission: "The task of devoting themselves wholly to *mission* is included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission as was the whole of Jesus' life' (VC 72)." (AGC 357 17)



As we noted in the Introduction, the whole intention of GC27 was, in fact, to insist again on our apostolic consecration. The ‘evangelical radicality’ of the title of GC27, then, is not to be understood as referring only to the living out of the evangelical counsels. It refers to all the aspects of the consecrated vocation, including fraternal life and mission, as rooted in Christ. Witnessing to radical gospel values “is not a feature which takes its place at the side of the others, but rather a fundamental dimension of our life.” (AGC 413 8) It is important to remember this: “mystics, prophets and servants” is a neat way of summing up GC27, but should not distract us from the fact that the aim of the Chapter was to help us reappropriate our Salesian consecrated vocation and to live it in the grace of unity and with joy.

2.2 ROOTED IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE TRINITY

A special way of following Christ

20. Consecrated life is rooted in the mystery of Christ and the Trinity, as was authoritatively affirmed in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*. “The evangelical basis of consecrated life is to be sought in the special relationship which Jesus, in his earthly life, established with some of his disciples,” calling them not only to accept the Kingdom like everyone else but also to closely imitate his own *way of life*. “This special way of ‘following Christ’, at the origin of which is always the initiative of the Father, has an essential Christological and pneumatological meaning: it expresses in a particularly vivid way the *Trinitarian* nature of the Christian life and it anticipates in a certain way that *eschatological* fulfilment towards which the whole Church is tending.” (VC 14)

While all are equally called to follow Christ, then, consecrated persons strive to reproduce in themselves “that form



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of life which [Christ], as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world.” (LG 44) This means assuming Jesus’ concrete choices of celibacy, poverty and obedience in the way he lived them during his earthly life. (VC 30) It means showing “that the Incarnate Son of God is the eschatological goal towards which all things tend, the splendour before which every other light pales, and the infinite beauty which alone can satisfy the human heart.” (VC 16)

Impossible without Christ

21. The presence of God becomes tangible when we meet consecrated people who live with joy the total gift of self, and for whom chastity, obedience and poverty are indeed the fullness of love received and given. The beauty of their lives touches many hearts, and there are so many examples we can recall in our history: Brother Srugi and Fr Cimatti, Brother Zatti and Fr Quadrio, to mention only a few. Consecrated life thus becomes a sign to the laity and also to the members of the hierarchy, in a communion that expands in concentric circles.

The consecrated life is impossible without Christ. He is “our living Rule,” as the final article of our Constitutions says (C 196); he is the vine and we the branches, and apart from him we can do nothing.⁵ This seems to be also the approach of the ‘letters’ issued by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life during the Year of Consecrated Life (2015), which chose to refer not so much to the evangelical counsels as to the person of the Lord who fills us with joy (*Rejoice!*), whose beauty we contemplate (*Contemplate*), whose coming we await (*Keep Watch!*), and by whom we are sent to our brothers and sisters (*Proclaim*), like Mary of Magdala on the morning of the resurrection.⁶



Our vocation is to be with Jesus (intimacy) and to be sent out by him (mission)

22. The fundamental attitude of every Christian (and, *a fortiori*, of one who lives his Christian existence as a consecrated person) is the *sequela Christi* and the *imitation* of Christ.⁷ The *sequela* underlines the subjective dimension: the interpersonal relationship with Jesus, discipleship, docility. Imitation, instead, highlights the objective aspect: the need of configuration, of the complete transformation or transfiguration of the person into the likeness of Christ. Alluding to Jn 10:3, 14, C 196 speaks of “the predilection of the Lord Jesus who has called us by name.” Vocation is not given only in view of a mission to be accomplished or a task to be carried out. It is principally a call to intimacy and community of life with Jesus, who “called his Apostles individually to be with him, and to be sent forth to preach the Gospel.” (C 96, citing Mk 3:14) But both dynamics are important, *discipleship* as well as *configuration* to Christ, and the Salesian Rector looks after these both in himself and in the community entrusted to him. Intimacy with Christ leads to transfiguration into his likeness, so that we become like him the face of the Father, revelations of his love.

2.3 IN COMMUNION WITH OTHER VOCATIONS WITHIN THE SALESIAN MISSION

Different vocations in the Church and the way they are ‘meant’ for one another

23. Given that we share the mission with lay people, it becomes necessary for Salesians – and with greater reason the Rector – to attain some degree of clarity regarding the different vocations in the Church and the way they are ‘meant’ for one another.

Post-Tridentine theology became accustomed, for a variety of cultural reasons that include modern rationalism and the Protestant Reform, to establish the identity of consecrated life by separating it sharply from the lay state. The homogenizing tendency of our time tends, instead, to level down



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the different vocations within the Church. The way ahead lies, however, neither in separation nor in the blurring of distinctions, but in ‘diversity in relation,’ which is what has been affirmed with increasing clarity in the three great apostolic exhortations dealing with the states of life in the Church: *Christifideles Laici* (1988), *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), and *Vita Consecrata* (1996).

The different vocations in the Church are meant for one another and, while being distinct, they are ordered to one another. The lay state is marked by its secular character, and its service is to recall, also for priests and for consecrated people, the significance of earthly realities in the salvific plan of God. The ministerial priesthood is the permanent guarantee for all of the sacramental presence of Christ. And consecrated life bears witness to the eschatological character of the Church, reminding everyone that we are meant for ‘the life of the resurrection’ that is somehow anticipated and even experienced through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. (CL 55; cf. VC 31)

The Salesians of Don Bosco in the EPC and in the Salesian Family

24. Against this background, GC24 speaks of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco as shared by Salesians and lay people. Within the educative and pastoral community, the Salesian religious community is the charismatic point of reference for the pastoral identity of the animating nucleus, with the Rector playing a key role in safeguarding both unity and charismatic identity.⁸ This is reflected also in the *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco* (2012). Each group of the Salesian Family, according to its specific vocation, participates in the Salesian charismatic mission within the Church and for the Church,⁹ at the service of the Gospel.

Within the Salesian Family, the Salesians of Don Bosco are entrusted with the responsibility “to preserve unity of spirit



and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for mutual enrichment and greater apostolic fruitfulness.”¹⁰ The Rector of the Salesian community is entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and animating the Salesian Family.

Those of us who share the mission as consecrated people are called to be eschatological signs

25. All who share the Salesian mission are called to be in some way signs and bearers of God’s love to the young. Those of us who share the mission *as consecrated people* are called to be eschatological signs – and here, perhaps, is the ‘permanently valid inspiration’ of Don Bosco’s constant insistence on the ‘Last Things,’ along with his ability to instil a great desire for holiness in the hearts of those who surrounded him. We Salesians of Don Bosco are called to be signs and prophecies, most especially to the young, of the complete and ‘excessive’ nature of the gift that God wants to offer all human beings. We do it in communion with other groups of consecrated men and women in the Salesian Family, but also and especially with many lay people, including the young.

2.4 LIVED OUT IN TWO FORMS, PRIESTLY AND LAY

One Salesian consecrated vocation lived out in two forms

26. Our one Salesian consecrated vocation is lived out in two forms, priestly and lay, in a configuration that is quite original.¹¹ Both Brothers and Priests are first of all Salesian religious: they are educators and pastors who follow Don Bosco as consecrated persons living in community. A weak understanding of the Salesian aspect leads to genericism in the ministry, and a weak understanding of the consecrated aspect leads to pastoral individualism and to various forms of compensation, giving way to clericalist traits often denounced in Pope Francis’ teaching.

GC21 situates the Salesian Brother and the Salesian Priest squarely within the Salesian community: “It will not be so



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much the individuals who will perpetuate his [Don Bosco's] ideals as his communities, 'formed of priests and laymen,' closely united to each other by deep brotherly ties." For this reason, the Chapter goes on, "the clear precise dimension of each Salesian can only be studied and evaluated adequately in the context of a brotherly and apostolic community." (GC21 171) We find this enshrined in C 45: "The significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay Salesians in the community constitutes an essential element of its make-up and of its apostolic completeness." GC21 spoke, in fact, of the "Essential mutual relationship between the Salesian brother and the Salesian priest." (GC21 194-196) This great intuition anticipates the "theology of sign" found in the three encyclicals mentioned above on the states of life within the Church.

The Salesian Brother

27. Thus when GC21 178 tells us that the *lay dimension* is the specific characteristic of the Salesian Brother, it is clear that this must be understood in relation to the community and to the Salesian Priest. The Salesian Brother is an embodiment of the lay dimension and 'secular slant' that characterizes the Congregation as a whole, and the clarification of the vocation of the Brother is a test for the clarification of the lay element in our Society.²⁷ The Salesian Brother, we might say, is an icon of the lay dimension of the Congregation. In the words of GC24: "To his consecrated brethren he recalls the values of creation and of secular realities," inviting them to collaborate with the laity and reminding them that the apostolate goes beyond strictly priestly and catechetical activity; "to the laity he recalls the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity to the world of work, attention to the local environment, and the demands of the professional approach associated with his educative and pastoral activity."¹³ To the religions of the world, we might add, he is a prophecy of the beauty, sacredness and value of created realities.



But the Salesian Brother, as brother, is also an icon of communion and fraternity, as suggested by *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*.¹⁴ The consecrated life is *confessio Trinitatis* and *signum fraternitatis*, and in his letter introducing the Year of Consecrated Life Pope Francis reminded us that consecrated life is not meant to be shut up within itself: its vocation is to expand communion in ever-widening circles, in an expansion that knows no limits.¹⁵

The Salesian Priest

28. The question of the Salesian Priest is in a certain way more complex, because he belongs both to his religious community and also to the presbyterate presided over by the local bishop. His belonging to the presbyterate is, however, mediated and specialized. It is *mediated* by his belonging to his religious community, and it is *specialized* because he brings to the presbyterate the riches of the Salesian charism. This means, for example, that the service of the common mission takes precedence over occasional and individual exercises of priestly ministry. It means that, in the mission shared with other confreres and with lay people, he will exercise a style of authority that promotes the responsibility of all rather than assuming everything to himself, all the more so if he happens to be the Rector. It means that he will be specially sensitive to Christ the servant, welcoming the temporary nature of the service of religious authority and the fraternal sharing of humble services in community, and shunning the “spiritual worldliness” that expresses itself in desire for ecclesiastical promotions and careers, for “moving up in life,” for ease, comfort and compromise.

The implications of the Salesian priestly ministry being mediated and specialized are even more relevant at community level. New pastoral engagements should be accepted only after careful community discernment, with the Salesian identity and mission as the key criterion. Not all that is



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‘good’ is also ‘good for us,’ if we are to remain faithful to our Constitutions.

Combining the gifts of consecration and pastoral ministry

29. The identity of the Salesian Priest receives a radical orientation from our educative and pastoral charism. Our *Ratio* notes that the Salesian Priest combines in himself the gifts of consecration and those of the pastoral ministry, in such a way that “his particular manner of being a priest and exercising his ministry stems from his Salesian consecration.” (FSDB 2016 39) The Salesian Priest is essentially a priest-educator, one who is particularly sensitive to the pedagogy of freedom that is the Preventive System. Given that God’s communication of himself to us in no way excludes our own involvement, the mission that Christ entrusts to the Church and to its ministers can never be implemented in a purely vertical way. Grace always involves our freedom, and not even the most powerful grace takes away our freedom, because grace is love, and where there is no freedom there cannot be a free response to love. “We can therefore claim that the Salesian Priest is *a figure as original as the unique blending of grace and freedom that is the Preventive System of St John Bosco.*”¹⁶

It is worth reporting here Fr Vecchi’s comments on the priesthood of Don Bosco:

Don Bosco identifies himself with the figure of the priest in the best ecclesial tradition, and is not rigidly linked to any of the figures common in his time: the parish priest, the priest dedicated to the spiritual care of a particular group of people or of a chaplaincy, or the priest with some institutional responsibility in the diocese as a seminary or university professor. He is even less dependent on political or cultural tendencies: the reactionary priest, the liberal priest, the ‘modern’ priest, or the ‘social’ priest.

All these figures were to be found among the clergy of Turin. ‘St. John Bosco felt and knew how to be at all times simply a priest,’ along the lines of models represented by Don



Cafasso that gave greater emphasis to work and to pastoral charity, going back, however, from these models directly to Christ the priest and above all to the priestly sense of the Church.¹⁷

Salesian Brother and Salesian Priest

30. What, then, is the relationship between the Salesian Brother and the Salesian Priest? Within the Salesian community, Brothers and Priests are signs to each other. The Brother, as we have said, reminds his Priest confreres of the lay dimension of our common vocation. He is, further, a permanent reminder to them of their consecrated identity. In his turn, the Salesian Priest is a sign and reminder to the Brother that he is not merely a professional but above all a pastor and educator in the *saeculum*.

Cultural presuppositions might lead us to assume that the priest is “somehow superior” to a Brother. It will be helpful to recall, however, the surprising affirmation of Fr Viganò in his letter, “The Priest of the Year 2000”: that in the heavenly Jerusalem “there will be no further need for the Bible, for bishops and priests, for the magisterium, for the sacraments, for coordination, or for the great many mutual services which are indispensable in our history.” The 7th successor of Don Bosco went on to say: “And so already, in the ecclesial community, the order of institutional, hierarchical and operational realities takes second place... to the Mystery they serve and reveal to those who live the faith.” (AGC 335 24) It is wonderful to see this insight reaffirmed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* when it notes that the sacramental structure of the Church is subordinated to its final vocation, which is communion with God:

In the Church this communion of men with God, in the ‘love [that] never ends,’ is the purpose which governs everything in her that is a sacramental means, tied to this passing world. ‘[The Church’s] structure is totally ordered to the holiness of Christ’s members. And holiness is measured according to the “great mystery” in which the Bride responds with the gift of love to the gift of the Bridegroom.’ Mary goes before us



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all in the holiness that is the Church's mystery as 'the bride without spot or wrinkle.' This is why the 'Marian' dimension of the Church precedes the 'Petrine.'¹⁸

It is good to remember that the priesthood is basically *ministry*, which means humble service.

And it is good to remember, with humility, that as consecrated people we take our place at the Marian heart of the Church – not because we are in any way superior to lay people, but because of our vocation to be signs of the eschatological destiny of the whole Church.

- The Rector **will help confreres and members of the EPC to understand and value** the two forms of our vocation.
- He will take every opportunity to **present both forms of our vocation to the young**, to people in general, and to civil and ecclesiastical authorities, taking care to avoid every kind of discriminatory language.
- He will **facilitate the ongoing formation and qualification of each confrere**, whether lay or clerical.

2.5 IN COMMUNITIES THAT ARE CONSISTENT IN NUMBER AND QUALITY

The Salesian community forms part of the animating nucleus of the EPC

31. The mission of the Salesian community is always carried out in an educative and pastoral community, within which the Salesian community forms part of the animating nucleus. GC24 said that every Salesian is an animator (GC24 159), and GC25 affirmed that the Salesian community is the charismatic point of reference within the animating nucleus. (GC25 70; see 7.3 below) One of the immediate consequences of this rethinking of the role of the Salesian is the need for religious communities that are consistent in number and quality:



To carry out its role of animation, the Salesian community needs a quantitative and qualitative consistency which helps to make its activity visible and significant.

Numerical consistency is better for sustaining formation, spiritual and fraternal life, the quality and evaluation of the ministry, planning and dialogue with the area and the local church. (GC24 173, modifying the official translation)

Qualitative consistency means that in the community there must be confreres able to remain present among the young, accompany them and educate them to the faith; capable also of animating individuals and groups, of formation of lay people, of giving attention to the neighbourhood and the local Church and to the Salesian Family and Movement. (GC24 174)

If 'mission' tends to be reduced to 'working for the young' and 'running institutions and services for them,' perhaps communities need not be consistent. But if every Salesian is called to be an animator, the religious community needs to be prepared ('qualified') for this work, and communities need to be sufficiently numerous.¹⁹



3. THE RECTOR, GUARDIAN OF SALESIAN IDENTITY

The Rector within the Salesian religious community and the apostolic project of Don Bosco

32. We have been talking about the centrality of the mission for us, and the way we share in this mission as consecrated persons. It is within the Salesian religious community and the apostolic project of Don Bosco that the Rector takes his place. The internal and external richness of our apostolic consecration is naturally reflected in the complexity of the role of the Rector.

In the last decades, both the Church and the Congregation have given depth to the figure of the one who assumes authority as guide and animator of the religious community.²⁰

In Part III below, greater attention will be given to the Rector's leadership and animating role with reference to the educative and pastoral community and all the activities and groups of people related in various ways to a Salesian Work.

Between these two roles – animator of the religious community and the one with ultimate responsibility for the many activities carried on in the Salesian Work – there is a tension to which there is no easy solution. What is proposed in Parts II and III of this new edition of the Rector's Manual might help to discern wisely and to find the correct balance between the two poles of animation and government at the level of the Salesian community and of the educative pastoral community.

3.1 THE RECTOR IN THE COMMUNITY

The Rector represents Christ who unites his followers

33. Article 55 of our Constitutions is specifically dedicated to the Rector in the community: "The Rector represents Christ who unites his followers in the service of the Father. He is at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers..."



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“*The Rector represents Christ.*” With all the importance given by our tradition to paternity, it might have seemed more natural to say that the Rector represents the Father. Instead, C 55 tells us that the Rector represents Christ. We will try to unpack the deep significance of this opening affirmation.

The Rector represents Christ “who *unites his followers.*” The Rector’s service is habitually described in terms of *animation* and governance. Etymologically, ‘animation’ comes from the Latin *anima*, which we usually translate as ‘soul’ and understand in spiritual terms, but which in its original meaning refers to ‘life.’ Where there is *anima* there is life; when, instead, an organism loses its *anima* – when it dies – it is possible that the organs, and even more likely the cells, continue living, but there is no longer any unity: the organism has broken down into its component parts. The *anima* is the principle of life insofar as it is the principle of unity. Without the *anima* there is no longer a living being, even if the organs and cells continue to exist. The application is clear: a community that is not united is dead, even if its individual members are alive and continue to flourish. Animation, therefore, is the task of building up the living unity of the community. Like Christ, the Rector *unites* his brothers in the service of the Father. This does not mean that the Rector has to be the most competent, the most intelligent, or even the one with the greatest experience in the community. Today we often find situations in which the Rector is one of the youngest in the community. With a strong measure of faith, hope and love, and a good dose of humility, however, he can still keep the community united and therefore alive.

The service of the Father gives identity to the unity

34. The Rector unites his brothers “*in the service of the Father.*” It is the service of the Father that gives identity to the unity. Not every kind of unity is authentic and positive, and the Rector could be tempted to seek unity at all costs, even if it means setting aside the principal objective, which



is to search for the will of the Father.²¹ “Persons called to exercise authority must know that they will be able to do so only if they first undertake the pilgrimage that leads to seeking the will of God with intensity and righteousness. The advice that St. Ignatius of Antioch gave to one of his fellow bishops is valuable for them: ‘Nothing is done without your agreement, but you do not do anything without God’s agreement.’ Persons in authority must act in such a way that the brothers or the sisters can perceive that when they give a command, they are doing so only to obey God.” (FT 12)

At the centre of the community, brother among brothers

35. The concept of authority contained in the opening lines of C 55 is reinforced by what follows: the Rector “is at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers, who recognize his responsibilities and authority.”

“*He is at the centre of the community.*” Obviously, this is not a call to self-centredness, and much less to self-referentiality and self-promotion. (NW 45) Like Christ, the Rector must be able to say that his food is to do the will of the Father. (Jn 4:34) Like Christ who is Son and brother, he exercises authority in docility and humility. The call to evangelical radicality also involves the ‘forgotten virtue’ of humility. Humility, with its root in *humus*, takes us back immediately to Don Bosco, the *contadino*, the simple farmer, whose life was constantly accompanied by poverty and humiliation. Humility has to do with spiritual poverty, which in its deepest meaning consists in having God and God alone as our goal. The poverty of the Salesian Rector involves the humility of accepting his own insufficiency and limits, as well as those of the community. He is brother among brothers, imperfect among the imperfect. He knows his very first choice is God, and from that choice flow all other choices.

“*A brother among brothers.*” The one entrusted with authority



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remains a brother and is at the service of fraternity. Thus *New Wine in New Wineskins*: “The broader view of consecrated life elaborated since the Council has passed from the centrality of the role of authority to the centrality of fraternal dynamics.” (NW 41) Authority is personal but not private; it is at the service of communion and fidelity, or better, at the service of the Father and his project for us. (NW 41, 44)

“He is *at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers, who recognize his responsibilities and authority.*” Like Christ who is Son and brother, and at the same time revelation of the face of the Father (Jn 14:9), the Salesian Rector is both brother and father, and there is no contradiction between the roles. In Don Bosco we find a wonderful incarnation of this peculiar and deeply Trinitarian nature of Christian authority. “Our Founder,” as Fr Rinaldi would say, “has never been anything other than Father... His whole life is a complete treatise on the fatherhood that comes from the Heavenly Father... and that the Blessed practiced here in this life to the highest degree.” (ACS 12 939-940) Don Bosco always refused promotions and honours, but was happy to be called Father. He did not hide his joy and, in later years, even the tenderness that invaded him: “Call me father and I will always be happy.” (BM XVII,175)

All these elements are summed up in the practical consideration that follows: “His first task is to animate the community so that it might live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity.” (C 55)

Accumulation of responsibilities and the hierarchy of tasks

36. “*His first task is to animate the community.*” Our General Chapters, and most recently GC27, repeatedly note with regret how the field of intervention for Rectors has broadened, and how Rectors are more and more engaged in managerial tasks that leave them with little time and energy for being spiritual guides of the community and leaders of the EPC.²²



The most recurrent difficulty that emerged in the survey carried out in 2016 was the managerial roles that the Rector tends to assume. “Accumulation of responsibilities prevents the Rector from fulfilling his essential role: offering spiritual paternity; giving priority to the confreres; forming and accompanying the laity.... The care of what is urgent pushes aside the care of what is important. Many Rectors are overburdened with too many works. They have no time and energy to animate the community.”²³ Not rarely, administrative and managerial tasks are becoming predominant not only because really needed by the situations of the Salesian houses, but because such roles are often purposely chosen and preferred to what is more in keeping with the spiritual guidance of the community and the brotherly support of each confrere. In turn this is linked with other challenges: “Inconsistency of the communities in number and quality; disorientation about the type of community we need today; the qualities demanded which are beyond the capacity and preparation of many of the confreres appointed as Rectors: to be simultaneously a father, a spiritual guide, a manager, an administrator, a pastoral animator of a community both of confreres and of an educative-pastoral centre...”²⁴

The same survey nevertheless indicates the need for a Rector who is above all the charismatic animator and guide of the community, icon of the fatherliness of Don Bosco. We must not underestimate here the importance of our fundamental convictions and attitudes: there is a marked difference between a Rector who knows and is convinced that his first task is the animation of the community, and one who does not know or else is not convinced of this.

Our General Chapters have equally insisted on a hierarchy of tasks: the Rector must know how to prioritize his many responsibilities and develop his capacity to delegate. Not all



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his many tasks have the same weight, and not all of them need the same attention.

Charismatic responsibility

37. “*So that it might live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity.*” The Rector is the guardian of the Salesian spirit, which is the original style of life and action handed over to us by Don Bosco. At the centre of the Salesian spirit is *pastoral charity* – “an apostolic impetus that makes us seek souls and serve God alone.” (C 10) Pastoral charity is the charity of the Good Shepherd, the charity that, not content to provide bread and work, is intent on “saving souls”; that insists not only on education but also on evangelization, wanting to offer young people the fullness of happiness. The Rector is called to embody such charity and promote it in his confreres. Above all, he is called to love people – his confreres as well as all who form part of the educative and pastoral community – “with a heart which is new, generous and pure – with genuine self-detachment, with full, constant and faithful dedication... and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, ... until ‘Christ be formed’ in the faithful (cf. Gal. 4:19).” (PDV 22)

“So that it might live faithful to the Constitutions”: the Rector is guardian, for his confreres, also of the Salesian consecrated identity as embodied in the Constitutions. To him, therefore, is addressed in a special way the invitation of GC27 to explore more deeply our charismatic identity and to become aware of our vocation to faithfully live out Don Bosco’s apostolic project. (GC27 p. 89)

The charismatic responsibility of the Rector is emphasized once again in the next part of C 55: “He also has a *direct responsibility toward each confrere; he helps him realize his own personal vocation and carry out the work entrusted to him.*”

First formator in the local community

38. Just as the Provincial is the first formator in the prov-



ince, so the Rector is the first formator in the local community. GC22, which gave us the definitive text of our Constitutions, made the decision to frame the whole section on formation from the viewpoint of ongoing formation. For us, then, formation is by no means to be identified solely with initial formation. It is, rather, our daily response to God's call, for which God every day gives us his grace. (C 96) It is a process that lasts all our life. It is a question of discerning the voice of the Spirit in the events of each day, and so learning by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation. (C 119 and 98) Daily life is therefore the great *locus* of formation, and when we truly realize this, we realize also just how important is the role of the Rector, whose first task is to animate the community so that it might live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity, and who has a direct responsibility towards each confrere, helping him realize his own personal vocation.

Like all his confreres, the Rector remembers that he receives the grace of unity. He lives his apostolic consecration in a single movement of love towards God and towards his brothers and sisters. (C 3) He knows that there is the most intimate connection between the two poles of pastoral charity, God and neighbour. "No dedication to the young is genuine unless it proceeds from the love of God, but it is equally true that for us there is no true love of God that prescind from a predilection for the young, especially those in need." (AGC 330 29) The love of God poured into our hearts through the Spirit is the source and cause of our love of neighbour, while the way in which to love God is service to our brothers and sisters. (PL 165) The activity of pastoral charity is not inferior to its being; it is, in fact, a participation in the love of God. In the depths of apostolic experience we find a form of the interior life. (MSD 18)



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From the active presence of the Spirit the Rector draws strength for fidelity and support for hope

39. All of the above is wonderful and inspiring, but is capable also of casting a chill into the heart of the bravest Rector. It helps to remember once again that we are not alone. The call comes from God, we are called to live united with the Son, apart from whom we can do nothing, and we know that the Lord daily gives us his grace: it is from the active presence of the Spirit that we draw strength for our fidelity and support for our hope (C 1). Besides, we cannot forget that the cross is at the heart of the mystery of our faith. No 'manual' will ever be able to solve the problems of the Rector. It can only invite us, like Don Bosco invited his own mother, to fix our eyes on the Crucified One.

So with Mary, the Rector learns to fix his eyes on the Crucified Son. Mary is his *model*, because she is the perfect disciple, the perfect Yes, like her Son, to the Father. Both mother and Son knew how to walk constantly in obedience before the luminous cloud of the will of the Father – even when they did not fully understand. Mary is also *teacher*, because just as she taught Don Bosco to love, and indeed, as she taught Jesus himself, she will also teach the Rector to love, to hope and to believe.



3.2 THE RECTOR'S AUTHORITATIVENESS AND AUTHORITY

***Auctoritas* as generative force rather than directive power**

40. The Preventive System fosters a style of leadership where trust and confidence are fundamental in the relationship between educator and young people, and equally between confreres within the Salesian community. The role of guidance and animation of those entrusted with a 'service of authority' is by no means diminished. On the contrary: when such role and service is lived according to the Salesian spirit it acquires a greater authoritativeness, much more effective than what can be achieved only by recourse to 'cold rules.' (Letter from Rome 1884)

It is interesting to find the same appeal to 'authoritativeness' in the final document of the Synod on young people, the faith and vocational discernment: "To undertake a true journey of growth, young people need authoritative adults. In its etymological meaning, *auctoritas* indicates the capacity to promote growth; it does not express the idea of a directive power, but of a real generative force."²⁵

To enable a Salesian to mature in this kind of *auctoritas*, first of all as educator with the youth and then also in his service of leadership, much attention and care has to be given to his human and spiritual growth. When Don Bosco wrote the first 'Rector's Manual' for Michael Rua, sent at the age of 26 to be the Rector at Mirabello, he began his long letter with the phrase "*con te stesso*" – "for yourself" – advising Michael to take care of himself. There is no need to spell this out here in all its details, but surely what concerns the lifelong formation of each confrere concerns first and foremost the Rector himself, his vocational health, his prayer, his time for reflection and study, his being faithful to his spiritual accompaniment. The more we have responsibility for others the more we need to be personally supported and guided.²⁶



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Directly linked to this quality of the personal life of the Rector is the ability to promote shared responsibility among confreres and lay mission partners for the activities, tasks, plans and management of situations affecting the life of the educative pastoral community. (R 173)

Authority as *potestas*

41. It is worth noticing that Canon Law defines every kind of authority in the Church as *potestas*. One who receives authority receives it from the Church: only in the name of the Church and according to its guidelines can such *potestas* be exercised. The authority of Peter ultimately comes from Christ and his Gospel. It is not something arbitrary; it is always linked to Him, way, truth and life for all his disciples.

This is equally true for all authority-*potestas* present in the Salesian Constitutions, embodiment of the project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, totally dependent on the authority of the Church that “has acknowledged God’s hand in this, especially by approving our Constitutions and by proclaiming our Founder a saint.” (C 1)

The exercise of authority always seeks to promote charismatic fidelity

42. So it is in the perspective of *auctoritas-potestas* that the Code of Canon Law defines the fundamental outlines of the service of authority in consecrated life, as well as more specific rights and duties applicable to consecrated life.²⁷

It is in this same vein that the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has offered reflections on the service of authority in consecrated life with certain emphases, as, for example, on the ‘superior’ himself as being under obedience to God, and on the spirit of service and pastoral care. The exercise of authority always seeks to promote charismatic fidelity in the various areas of community life and of the apostolic work entrusted to the community.²⁸



For the proper exercise of this service of authority it is important to insist on certain fundamental dispositions: the spirit of faith and of obedience on the part of all, listening, dialogue, shared responsibility, community discernment, service to the mission, care of the roles in each community and Work. At the same time we need to avoid certain abuses of authority, as also the omission or neglect of the responsibilities assigned to the one in authority.

Each Congregation or Religious Institute establishes the features of the exercise of authority according to its own charism and proper law. For the Salesian Congregation these may be found in the Constitutions and Regulations, in the decisions of the General Chapters and in the Provincial Directories.

Salesian style in the service of authority

43. C 65 and 121 synthesize the Salesian style of exercising authority in the spirit of family and charity. Chapter 10 of the Constitutions indicates the basic criteria of this service: exercised like Christ and in his name; promoting charity in all for the faithful fulfilment of the mission through guidelines, decisions, corrections and other opportune interventions; ensuring unity, participation, responsibility, subsidiarity and decentralization in the coordination of persons and structures. “This service is directed to fostering charity, coordinating the efforts of all, animating, orienting, making decisions, giving corrections, so that the mission may be accomplished.” (C 121)

Along with this Salesian style in the service of authority, the Constitutions and Regulations provide more concrete indications for its exercise (C 175-186, R 170-184), taking into account also the competencies and responsibilities of the Rector and Vice-Rector, the Local Council and the Assembly of confreres. For the fruitful exercise of the ministry of



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the Rector, these indications must be well known also by the confreres.

The Provincial Directory and the decisions of the Provincial with his Council give concrete indications for the animation and government of each Salesian presence assigning basic responsibilities and roles in the educative and pastoral community and in the various sectors of the Work. This will facilitate the Rector in his responsibilities. Accompaniment on the part of the Province through canonical visits and other services of animation and coordination is also very helpful.

3.3 THE PRESBYTERAL CHARACTER OF THE SALESIAN RECTOR

Communities are guided by a member who is a priest

44. The service of authority in the community is entrusted to a Salesian Priest: “According to our tradition, communities are guided by a member who is a priest, and who by the grace of his priestly ministry and pastoral experience sustains and directs the spirit and activity of his brothers.” (C 121) This is an issue that came up with particular concern during GC20 and was addressed explicitly in GC21. In his intervention Fr Viganò formulated a fundamental question: “Is the service of authority substantially linked to the ministry of the priesthood or not?”²⁹ Subsequent reflection has been abundant, trying both to be faithful to Don Bosco and also to give quality to the service requested of the Rector.³⁰

The first part of C 121 offers us an important indication: “In imitation of Christ and in his name, authority in the Congregation is exercised according to the spirit of Don Bosco as a service to the brothers for discerning and fulfilling the Father’s will.” This is neither a question of canonical category (clerical institute) nor about the distribution of compe-



tences and roles for the service of authority; much less is it a matter of classifying Salesians into categories. Reference is made, rather, to the way of life of the Salesian community originated by Don Bosco, who with his priestly fatherliness guided his sons in the common project that is at the source of our Salesian life.

Following the example left us by Don Bosco, Salesian communities have always been guided by Salesian priests. The celebration of the sacraments marked deeply the spiritual animation through which Don Bosco formed and guided his confreres, and this has become part of the charismatic heritage he handed over, followed by his successors and communities.

The service of the Word, of sanctification, and of guidance – in and for the community

45. The decisive element is that the Rector is called to live out the grace of the priestly ministry by carrying out the service of authority entrusted to him in the community. He lives out the three aspects of his priestly ministry – the service of the Word, the service of sanctification, the service of guidance – in and for his community. (AGC 306 14). Fr J. Vecchi, in his letter of convocation of GC25, asked Rectors to prioritize their functions, and indicated a threefold focus: charismatic (collaborating with the Spirit in the vocational growth of the confreres), pastoral (strengthening the pastoral charity of those sharing in the Salesian mission), and fraternal (caring for relationships, unity and shared responsibility). “To realize all this, the Rector brings into play his priestly charism. The Constitutions say that the Rector must be a priest. That does not mean simply that he must have the juridical requirement of priestly ordination, but that he must exercise the priesthood in and for the religious and educative community...” (AGC 372 31)



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The priority service is the animation of vocational fidelity, fraternal life and pastoral charity

46. This is the line followed by GC25. “The Rector, following the model of Don Bosco ‘is a paternal figure, at once both affectionate and authoritative.... Deeply marked by the priestly character, he expresses it daily in the ministry of the word, of sanctification and of animation.’ ... The exercise of his ministry, in the situation of today, requires that he take into account the relative importance of his different tasks: at the service of salesian unity and identity; teacher and pastoral guide, organizer of educative commitments, manager of the work...” (GC25 64)

The presbyteral character of the Rector in the Salesian community, as Don Bosco wanted it, is a way of pointing out that the priority of his service is the animation of vocational fidelity, fraternal life and pastoral charity. For this purpose, he shares the grace of his priestly ministry and concentrates his care and efforts on the charismatic animation and spiritual fatherhood so much needed in the Congregation. (GC27 12, 14, 51)



¹ GC27 pp. 126-127; AGC 420 12; AGC 421 13-14.

² XV Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Instrumentum Laboris* (2018) 34 and 57.

³ GC27 pp. 128-129; AGC 427 “Convocation of the GC28” 24-32.

⁴ “Per noi sarà particolarmente proficuo non dimenticare il significato peculiare e totalizzante di ciascuno dei due termini ‘consacrazione’ e ‘missione’, che non possono venir ridotti, ognuno singolarmente, a indicare soltanto un settore della vita salesiana: la nostra consacrazione è, in se stessa, apostolica; e la missione che ci è affidata è, in quanto tale e nostra, religiosa.” E. Viganò, “Discorso di apertura del Rettor Maggiore,” GC22 20.

⁵ Jn 15:1-11; cf. C 12 and the icon chosen by GC27.

⁶ CICLSAL, *Rejoice! To consecrated men and women from the teachings of Pope Francis* (2014); *Contemplate: To all consecrated persons pursuing the Beauty trail* (2014); *Keep Watch! A letter to consecrated men and women journeying in the footsteps of God* (2014); *Proclaim: To consecrated men and women witnesses of the Gospel among peoples* (2016).

⁷ See Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (2017) 61-73, which chooses to refer to the phase of the study of philosophy (= our postnovitiate) as the phase of discipleship, and that of the study of theology as the phase of configuration.

⁸ Cf. GC25 70 and GC24 172.

⁹ *Charter 22*. Chapters 3 and 4 of this *Charter* present the criteria for the spirituality and formation of the members of the Salesian Family in view of a shared mission.

¹⁰ C 5; cf. C 45. The Rector Major is the “vital centre” of the Salesian Family who makes real “the reference to Don Bosco, to the common mission and to the same spirit.” (*Charter 13*)

¹¹ A note about terminology: our Constitutions use both ‘salesian brother’ (*salesiano coadiutore* in the Italian text) and ‘lay salesian’ (*salesiano laico*), sometimes in the same article, as in C 45. Aware of the fact that



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each of these terms carries a different weight and nuance in different regions, and given that we have not yet arrived at a satisfactory solution, we choose to follow the usage of the Constitutions.

¹² E. Viganò, “The Lay Element in the Salesian Community,” AGC 298 (1980), section 5. See also section 4 where Viganò distinguishes three meanings of “laicità” and notes that the Salesian Brother is not “secular” in the sense in which laypeople within the Church are, but that his vocation has nonetheless a real connection and a certain congruence of thought and activity with the first two levels of “laicità.”

¹³ See GC24 154, and Pascual Chávez, “Il Salesiano Coadiutore,” San Benigno Canavese, 19 March 2005 (unpublished) (<http://www.Coadiutoresalesiano.net/index.php/2002-14-Chavez>).

¹⁴ CICLSAL, *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* (2015).

¹⁵ *Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* (21 November 2014) 3.

¹⁶ A. Bozzolo, “Salesiano Prete e Salesiano Coadiutore: Spunti per un’interpretazione teologica,” *Sapientiam dedit illi: Studi su Don Bosco e sul carisma salesiano*, ed. Andrea Bozzolo (Rome: LAS, 2015) 357.

¹⁷ J.E. Vecchi, *Spiritualità Salesiana, Approfondimenti di alcuni temi fondamentali, Esercizi Spirituali per i Direttori salesiani delle Ispettorie IVE ed IVO*, ed. pro manuscripto, Roma Salesianum, 2000, p. 125. The original Italian version:

Don Bosco s’identifica con il prete della migliore tradizione ecclesiale, non legata rigidamente a nessuna delle figure che si vedevano allora: non a quella del parroco, del prete che assume l’attenzione spirituale di un settore di persone o la cappellania di una istituzione; non quella del prete che svolge un ruolo diocesano, del professore di seminario di università. Meno dipendente è ancora dalle collocazioni di tipo politico o culturale: il prete integrista, il prete liberale, il prete ‘moderno’, il prete ‘sociale’. Tutte queste figure erano diffuse e rappresentate da porzioni del clero di Torino, ‘San Giovanni Bosco si è sentito e ha saputo essere in ogni momento semplicemente sacerdote’, con riferimento ai modelli che più sottolineavano il lavoro e la carità pastorale tipo don Cafasso, risalendo però da questi modelli direttamente a Cristo sacerdote e



soprattutto al senso sacerdotale della Chiesa. (The internal citation is from Cardinal A. Ballestrero, retreat to the Provincials of Italy, 1988)

The text continues:

La scelta di buttarsi non in una parrocchia, non in una famiglia, non in un istituto, ma sulla strada, dunque senza una rendita fissa e un lavoro riconosciuto, è stata una scelta pastorale coraggiosa e nuova. Don Bosco praticamente si è messo nelle nuove correnti pastorali che nascevano nella Chiesa di Torino. Così, più che nel 'fare il prete' in un ruolo istituzionale definito, ha preferito 'essere prete' per la gente e i giovani nella comunione ecclesiale; senza un'inquadratura di ruolo rigido, ma certamente in accordo con il suo vescovo che in un determinato momento lo designò 'direttore' o incaricato dell'opera degli oratori. (Ibid 126. ET: The decision to work neither in a parish nor in a family nor in an institute but on the streets, and therefore without a fixed income and a recognized job, was a new and courageous pastoral choice. In practical terms, Don Bosco was associating himself with the new pastoral currents that were emerging in the Church of Turin. Thus, rather than 'doing priestly ministry' within a defined institutional role, he preferred to 'be a priest' for the people and for the young within the ecclesial communion; without the framework of a rigid role, but certainly in agreement with his bishop who eventually named him 'director' or in charge of the work of the oratories.)

¹⁸ CCC 773. Cf. also John Paul II, "Allocuzione ai Cardinali e ai Prelati della Curia Romana (22 dicembre 1987)," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 dicembre 1987.

¹⁹ F. Cereda, "Consistency of the Salesian community in number and quality," AGC 422 27-38.

²⁰ Cf. VC 43, SAC 14 and FLC 50, FT 13 and 20, NW 19-21, 41-54. Of special importance are the reflections of GC21 that gave rise to the Manual of the Salesian Rector, and those of GC25 on "The Salesian Community Today." GC27, reflecting on Salesian life in the last few years and taking note of certain challenges, felt the need to update the Manual. These are some of the indications of GC27: "Over these years the field of intervention for *Rectors/Directors* has broadened. They are fully engaged in managerial tasks as well as being spiritual guides of the confreres and leaders of the EPC. Therefore the Rectors/Directors are not always in the position to fulfil the obligations of their service and



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often they do not receive adequate cooperation from the confreres, and sometimes they are deprived of a systematic formative accompaniment at provincial level.” (GC27 14) “The Rector/Director is a central figure; more than a manager he is a father who brings his family together in communion and apostolic service. Because of the complexity of our work, the diversity of functions and less than adequate formation, he is not always in a position to look after fraternal life, discernment and shared responsibility in accordance with the community plan of life and its pastoral and educative plan. In some situations, weak support from the confreres has its effect.” (GC27 51) Indications for the way ahead may be found in GC27 69: shared responsibility in Salesian life, care of each confrere in his personal and pastoral life, accompaniment, strengthening the formation of Rectors, updating the Manual of the Rector.

²¹ The subordination of religious authority to the will of God is clearly indicated in the opening lines of the Instruction of the CICLSAL, *The Service of Authority and Obedience*, when it tells us that the one entrusted with authority in a religious community – usually temporarily – is called “to exercise the particular task of being the sign of unity and the guide in the common search both personal and communitarian of carrying out the will of God. This is the service of authority.” (FT 1)

²² See GC27 14, 51, 69. GC25 64.2: Take into account the hierarchical scale of his duties: servant of unity and Salesian identity; teacher and pastoral guide, orienter of the commitments of education, manager of the Work.

²³ From the regional data collections presented during the international seminar held in Rome, 26-31 May 2017 for the revision on the Salesian Rector’s Manual.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Per compiere un vero cammino di maturazione i giovani hanno bisogno di adulti autorevoli. Nel suo significato etimologico la *auctoritas* indica la capacità di far crescere; non esprime l’idea di un potere direttivo, ma di una vera forza generativa.” XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* (2018) 71.

²⁶ See the insistence in *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalis*



Institutionis Sacerdotalis on Spiritual Direction, both in the initial and ongoing formation of priests (107; 88).

²⁷ Cf. CIC 596, 608, 617-630 that specify details of the authority of the religious superior linked to the ministry of the Church.

²⁸ Cf. FLC, FT, NW.

²⁹ E. Viganò, “Sharing in the life and government of the Congregation,” GC21 213. Fr Viganò’s concern was to safeguard the charismatic element in this matter. (cf. GC21 212-239) The Chapter had said that “the brotherly equality of our members does not seem to be fully achieved as long as any distinction on this point remains in our particular Code,” but had then immediately added: “It is evident that we are not dealing merely with a juridical or sociological question; nor is it a problem that arises from a consideration of religious life in general. It is a question of a specific religious ecclesial problem that can be termed ‘Salesian.’ It is concerned with a particular mode of life, as found in the Salesian community as started and structured by Don Bosco, and lived and approved by the Church, with a view to the fulfilment of the concrete mission that the Holy Spirit entrusted to our Father and Founder.” (GC21 199)

³⁰ A first hint is found already in C 4 and 45: we are a ‘clerical religious institute’ made up of clerics and laymen who complement each other as brothers in living out the same vocation, a complementarity that is essential to the make-up and apostolic completeness of the community. In the wake of VC 61, GC24 192 requested the study of the legal form of the Congregation, to see if it could be regarded as a ‘mixed institute.’ This study had to be linked, of course, to the work on the same issue that VC 61 had entrusted to the CICLSAL. The results of this study have been lying with the competent authorities of the Holy See, with no further response or action. Recently the Holy See has been asked by some religious institutes to take up the issue again and give an adequate response.

The Rectors Major and General Chapters have continued offering reflections on the service of the Rector, focussing on the enrichment brought by the priestly ministry to the role of animation and guidance. Cf. E. Viganò, “The Salesian Rector and animation,” AGC 306 (1982) 3-33; E. Viganò, “Reading the Founder’s charism again at the present day,” AGC 352 (1995) 3-35; E. Viganò, “The priest of the year 2000: A theme we have very much at heart,” AGC 335 (1991) 1-44.





Part II
The Rector in the
salesian religious
community

In
Mirabello
I'll be
Don
Bosco



Wheat, ears, flour, bread... From the parables about the seed to the bread broken and shared in the Upper Room: the whole mystery of the Kingdom is hidden in these symbols.

The gift of unity is the first thing to be expected from those who are called to serve the community and make it grow (“auctoritas indicates the capacity for enabling growth” – Final document of the Synod on young people, 71). “His first task is to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity.” (C 55).

The Eucharist is the “central act of every Salesian community” (C 88) and is both the seed and the fruit of our living and working together.



4. GUARDIAN AND ANIMATOR OF THE SALESIAN CONSECRATED IDENTITY

The Rector, guardian of the Salesian consecrated identity

47. The Salesian Rector is the guardian of the Salesian consecrated identity in the local community. His is a service of animation and governance characterized by the Salesian charism. In Part I we have examined at some length this service of the Rector as found especially in C 55. In Part II we will try to work out some of its practical implications, using as our framework the three themes of GC27, but keeping always in mind that these are ways of helping us appropriate our charismatic identity more deeply and of making us aware of our vocation to live out faithfully Don Bosco's apostolic project.¹

4.1 MYSTICS IN THE SPIRIT: SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF THE COMMUNITY

Care for the core values of consecration in personal and community accompaniment

48. The expression "mystics in the Spirit" adopted by GC27 is a way of expressing the second thematic area indicated in the Opening Address of the Rector Major, with its stress on the consecrated life: "Having a strong *spiritual experience*, taking on the way of being and acting of the obedient, poor and chaste Jesus and becoming seekers of God." (GC27 p. 89).

The Church invites consecrated persons to offer clear witness of their consecrated identity, guided by the one who assumes the service of the authority. (SAC 20) To those asked to offer the service of authority it recommends, in the first place, the care for the core values of consecration, beginning from their "spiritual authority": "In the consecrated life authority is first of all a spiritual authority.... Persons in authority are 'spiritual' when they place themselves at the service of what the Spirit wants to realize through the gifts which he distributes to every member of the community, in the charismatic project of the institute.... To be in the position of promoting the spiritual life, persons in authority will



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have to cultivate first in themselves an openness to listening to others and to the signs of the times through a daily familiarity in prayer with the Word of God, with the Rule and the other norms of the life.”²

In our tradition, the Rector is always the spiritual guide of the community. His task of accompaniment has both community and personal dimensions. (C 55, 70) With GC27, he encourages each confrere to have a stable spiritual guide (75.2), and here he leads by example, so that he can be a guide who is guided. He also assists each confrere to discern, develop and use the charismatic gifts given him by the Holy Spirit for realizing the Salesian mission. (C 99; 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10; LG 12)

There are several ways of being ‘companions on the way,’ given that we are all striving to respond to the call “to become like Christ, in the footsteps of Don Bosco.” (FSDB 47) The more the Rector, supported by his Council, patiently builds an atmosphere of mutual trust and generous dedication around the core values of the Salesian charism (community accompaniment), the more also the personal journey of dynamic fidelity of each confrere will be strengthened, in full respect for his freedom and uniqueness. Against this fertile background also the mutual forms of personal support will be sought and will flourish (personal accompaniment), without need of much formality and uniformity. When there is sincere availability and interest for the good of each brother, then ‘heart speaks to heart,’ and the best ways of journeying together open up of their own accord.

4.1.1 Fidelity to the evangelical counsels

The animation by the Rector helps us to be witnesses of evangelical radicality

49. Our sharing in the Salesian mission as consecrated persons means that we follow Jesus obedient, poor and chaste, becoming living memorials of his way of life.



With the religious profession we make a public commitment to live the evangelical counsels. The community atmosphere (spiritual, fraternal, pastoral) and the animation by the Rector help us live out faithfully this witness of evangelical radicality.

This way of life, essentially countercultural, involves a special effort of ongoing discernment in order to discover incoherent personal and community options and take decisions for overcoming mediocrity.³ Our way of life is meant to be a prophecy to “wake up the world,” in the words of Pope Francis.

GC25 offers a discernment about “Evangelical Witness” with an analysis of the situation and concrete proposals for action. GC26, expressing the desire to strengthen our charismatic identity under the title “Da mihi animas cetera tolle,” offers us lines of action regarding evangelical poverty. (GC26 79-97) GC27, once again wanting to strengthen the living out of the Salesian charism, invites us to be “witnesses of evangelical radicality,” and urges us to be convinced of “the fruitfulness of the evangelical counsels in bringing about communion in community and in our mission to the young” and of “our *prophetic role* in proposing a culture inspired by the Gospel.” (GC27 36, 37)

- The Rector includes the **scrutinies** of each of the evangelical counsels in the annual community program, using the materials provided by the Provincial Formation Commission.
- He promotes initiatives to foster the **reflection on the evangelical counsels** and their effect on personal, community and pastoral life, making use of the time for community spiritual reading, meetings, and other moments of ongoing formation.
- He programs a community **study** of GC25 17-36 on “evangelical witness,” GC26 79-97 on “evangelical poverty,” and the



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indications of GC27.

- He integrates into the Community Plan **concrete commitments** regarding the evangelical counsels.

4.1.2 Animation of personal and community prayer

Taking care of the quality of prayer

50. Prayer is a gift of the Lord, a dialogue between creature and creator, communion with God who is Communion and Love. (CCC 2559-2565) The religious, who gives God first place in his life, takes special care of this gift of prayer. The Church reminds persons in authority in consecrated life about the duty “to guarantee to the community the time for and the quality of prayer.”⁴

The community considers vocation as a gift to which it must respond. (C 85) Salesian life is lived “in dialogue with the Lord” (C 85-95), in the specific style of our charism, following the concrete commitments laid out in the Constitutions. The Congregation has spoken at various times about the importance of the life of prayer for each Salesian and for the community.⁵

Far from being something alien to it, prolonged personal prayer is in keeping with the Salesian tradition, if we are to go by the personal example of Don Bosco,⁶ the lives of the young people whose biographies he wrote,⁷ and the lives of many early Salesians.⁸

The Rector, a man of prayer who animates the community to live “life as prayer”

51. The quality of our prayer is a sign of our being “seekers of God” and “witnesses of his love in the midst of the poor.” It makes the community a “school of prayer” for the young and for lay people (GC25 31); it also helps us promote the *spirituality of communion* requested by the Church.⁹



Called by the Word of God to continual conversion, the confreres and the community value the daily meditation, celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation with regularity and give central place to the daily celebration of the Eucharist, so that life itself becomes “a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom 12:1), an ongoing Marian ‘Yes’ to the call of God.

The Rector takes care of this gift of prayer in his own life, so as to be able to animate the confreres and the community to live “life as prayer.”¹⁰ He does not always find favourable conditions (GC27 14, 51), and so there is need for a special effort in this fundamental aspect of his service.

- The confreres integrate the dimension of **prayer into their Personal Plan of Life.**

- The Community Plan will privilege whatever enhances its being “a community in dialogue with the Lord,” giving due attention to **meditation**, the **Eucharist**, the **liturgy of the hours**, monthly **recollections**, the annual **retreat**, the celebration of the sacrament of **Reconciliation**, **lectio divina**, the **rosary** and other forms of Marian prayer, Salesian feasts, etc.

- The **scrutiny of prayer** will be carried out with a suitable and inspiring method, so as to promote awareness of signs of mediocrity and suggest ways of improving the quality of prayer.

- Initiatives will be promoted so as to make the community a “**school of prayer**” for **young people** and for the laity. (GC25 31) The community program will include moments of prayer with young people, lay mission partners, the Salesian Family, and other ecclesial and religious groups.

- The community will establish **moments of ongoing formation** on the topic of community prayer, reflecting on the provocations of GC25 27, and AGC 421 – “Life as prayer.”



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4.1.3 Taking care of charismatic identity

Focus on charismatic identity

52. Since the Special General Chapter requested by Vatican II, the Congregation has undertaken an intense journey of renewal of the Salesian charism. The subsequent General Chapters have sought to deepen our charismatic identity so as to encourage greater fidelity, overcoming mediocrity and building up strengths. The Rectors Major have taken it as a priority “to continue to cultivate our Charismatic Identity in total fidelity to Don Bosco.” (AGC 419 13)

It is the responsibility of every Salesian to take care of the Salesian charism, living in fidelity to his vocation and helping his brothers do the same. To this task each one brings the richness of his own vocation, whether ministerial or lay.¹¹

The role of the Rector and his council

53. The Church also reminds those entrusted with the service of authority that they must care for the charism: “Authority is called to keep alive the charism of one’s own religious family.”¹² This is why the Congregation promotes many initiatives for assimilating and deepening the Salesian charism (publications, meetings, courses on specific themes, celebrations...). It is important that these proposals find a place in the personal plan of life, as well as in the plans of the community and of the educative and pastoral community. The Rector and his Council play an important role in animating confreres, lay people and youth to an appreciation and deepening of the charism by means of suitable initiatives.

- The community takes pains to deepen two of the specific elements of the Salesian charism: the **complementarity of the two forms** of the Salesian vocation (priestly and lay, cf. GC26 74-78, GC27 69.7, AGC 424: “Renewed attention to the Salesian Brother”) and **communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco** (Salesians and laity, cf. GC24, GC27 71.1-3).



- The **provincial plans and guidelines** (Chapters with their decisions and orientations, Organic Provincial Plan, Provincial Formation Plan, Educative-Pastoral Plan...) and the deliberations of the General Chapters and General Council are attentively studied and put into practice. Renewed study is made of GC26 1-22, “Starting afresh from Don Bosco,” implementing the initiatives proposed there for individuals and communities.
- Diligent attention is given to **information about the life of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family**, also making use of the means provided by the digital culture.
- In its planning the community establishes **ways of deepening the Salesian charism** (spirituality, history, pastoral work, and life of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family...): spiritual reading, courses, conferences, recollections, publications, use of the internet and other means in the digital world.
- The community encourages the participation of confreres in **initiatives for the joint formation of Salesians and laity** in the Salesian charism (spirituality, history, pastoral work, Salesian Family) on the local, provincial and world levels.
- The Rector and confreres integrate into their **Personal Plan of Life** the means for deepening their knowledge of the Salesian charism.

4.2 PROPHETS OF FRATERNITY: ANIMATOR OF COMMUNION AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Communion is mission

54. Fraternal life in community is one of the essential characteristics of religious life. It is a gift of God that needs to be lived, witnessed to and strengthened. The Church, in the last decades, has urged consecrated persons to be “experts in communion” (VC 46), and to bear witness to fraternity as a model of life for the ecclesial and human community.¹³

One who exercises authority in the community has a special responsibility for the living out of the gift of fraternity: “The



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superiors, both men and women, in union with the persons entrusted to them, are called to build in Christ a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all else, in order to realize his redemptive plan.” (FT 17) Fraternal life is already part of mission.¹⁴

The Congregation has given serious attention to this element of consecrated life. Besides what we find in the text of the Constitutions, GC25 was dedicated to “The Salesian Community Today.” On its part, GC27 carried out a discernment about Salesians as “prophets of fraternity” and proposed concrete lines of action. These are materials with which to constantly confront ourselves in our Salesian life.¹⁵

In the Rector’s service of animation of communion and shared responsibility, the main aspects to be cared for are:

1. *Promoting unity.*
2. *Growing in fraternal relationship and communication.*
3. *Building an open and welcoming community.*

4.2.1 Promoting unity

The Rector represents Christ who unites his followers

55. It is the Spirit who moves hearts to union and helps us to form “one heart and one soul to love and serve God, and to help one another.” (C 50) Thanks to the Spirit, religious communities are able to be eloquent witnesses of unity and “experts in communion.”

To the one who guides the community belongs also the responsibility to watch over its union and to promote it, as “authority conducive to unity.”¹⁶ This is how the Congregation has always considered the Rector, from the time of Don Bosco, seeing as his first task that of being “servant of unity and guardian of the Salesian identity.” (GC21 52) Thus, “the Rector represents Christ who unites his followers



in the service of the Father.... His first task is to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity.” (C 55)

It is necessary to revive in each Salesian the consciousness that “God calls us to live in community and entrusts us with brothers to love. Brotherly love, our apostolic mission and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the bonds which form us into one and constantly reinforce our communion.” (C 50)

- The Rector and his council motivate the elaboration of the **Community Plan** and see to its implementation and evaluation.
- They prepare and carry out the **scrutiny of fraternal life** and study how to live the “spirituality of communion.” (GC27 45)
- They animate the **weekly community day** (moments of relaxation, formation, prayer, communication and togetherness), fostering fraternal relationships and encouraging confreres to share their experience of life and vocation.
- The confreres make use of the **friendly talk with the Rector** to talk about the life and mission of the community, seeing it also as an occasion for resolving differences.

4.2.2 Fraternal relationships and communication

56. Fraternal communion calls for care of personal relationships, valuing the help that comes from the human sciences when needed. The community is the place where one learns to harmonize the ‘I’ with the ‘We,’ to respect the person as well as the common good: “In this way, religious community becomes the place where we learn daily to take on that new mind which allows us to live in fraternal communion through the richness of diverse gifts and which, at the same time, fosters a convergence of these gifts towards fraternity

Salesian style of relationship and communication



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and towards co-responsibility in the apostolic plan.” (FLC 39).

On its part, the Salesian style of relationships has its own peculiar characteristics: “Salesian loving kindness” (C 15) and “family spirit” (C 16), as also “fraternal friendship” in community (C 51). These are ideals to which we tend and which serve as criteria for the evaluation of our personal and community life style. The quality of fraternal relationships in community contributes to communion of life and sharing of goods. This is something that is desired and promoted in the Church (FLC 29-34), and is a characteristic of Salesian brotherly relationships: “In an atmosphere of brotherly friendship we share our joys and sorrows, and we are partners in our apostolic plans and experiences.” (C 51)¹⁷

Given the importance of this element in fraternal life, the Rector and the Local Council take particular care of it,¹⁸ paying attention also to the concrete circumstances of each community. The analysis of the relational reality of each community will reveal lights and shadows, and so interventions must be made with realism and trust, knowing that we will never find a perfect community and that we are always on the way. We therefore need trust in God’s grace, patience, strength and hope, doing what we can with the means at our disposal.

The Rector and his Council also remember that adequate communication is essential for building community. To this end they make good use of all the traditional means of communication within the religious community such as the ‘good-night’ talk and community meetings, but also the new means afforded by the digital world. They are keenly aware of the need for a good flow of communication within the educative and pastoral community, and with the province. (GC24 128-137)



- The Rector prepares **community meetings** so as to facilitate the participation and involvement of the confreres.
- In the **Council** he evaluates the quality of relationships in the community, attentive also to the witness of fraternity perceived by the young and by the laity, and searching for concrete ways to improve.
- He gives **attention to each confrere**, and also to the families of confreres. (R 46)
- He promotes **moments of prayer and encounter in which the confreres can share** their concerns, plans, vocational experience, anxieties and joys.
- He is sensitive to certain **difficulties in relationships** within the community, analyzes the reality, considers possible interventions and looks for opportune mediations.
- **Each confrere is attentive to all that facilitates interpersonal relationships** in fraternal life: the friendly talk with the Rector, care for the personal situations of confreres, respect and mutual support, evaluation of behaviours that weaken fraternal relationships (non-constructive criticism, grumbling, indifference, jealousy...), “taking the first step,” asking for and offering forgiveness, patience, fraternal correction, dialogue to clarify differences or shed light on situations, prayer for the confreres, an atmosphere of discernment....
- The community organizes moments of ongoing formation on the topic of fraternal relationships and communication, with the **help of experts** in the area of relationships and human communication when necessary.
- The community and the EPC seek ways to form themselves in the area of **conflict resolution**. GC27 reminds us that conflict situations “should not be seen as negative but rather as an opportunity to mature: they need to be enlightened by the Gospel, tackled and then resolved with greater courage, human skill and mercy.” (GC27 42) Indications for addressing difficulties in the spirit of communion may be found in FT 25b.



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- The Rector reflects on his own interventions so as to overcome his difficulties in relating to the confreres and to the community. He also maintains a **dialogue with the Provincial and has recourse to spiritual accompaniment.**

4.2.3 An open and welcoming community

Finding life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love

57. In the context of his call for an outgoing Church, Pope Francis asks religious “to come out of yourselves and go forth to the existential peripheries.... Don’t be closed in on yourselves, don’t be stifled by petty squabbles, don’t remain a hostage to your own problems.... You will find life by giving life, hope by giving hope, love by giving love.”¹⁹

The Salesian spirit asks that the community be able “to draw everyone into the Salesian family spirit” (C 56) and to be in solidarity with the local Church and with society in the context in which it is situated (C 57), promoting the involvement of different forces in the mission (C 47), especially those that are interested in the young.

The sign of such openness and hospitality is the involvement of confreres in educative and pastoral initiatives and their presence in the animating nucleus of the EPC. The General Chapters have insisted on the importance of sharing the charism and mission with the laity and in the Salesian Family, as also on the importance of involving the young and their families in the pastoral project. GC27, and also the letter of convocation of GC28, challenges us to take care of this dimension in order to live the prophecy of fraternity.²⁰

- The Rector evaluates in the Local Council and community the **relationship of the community with the Salesian Family**, proposing specific initiatives for deepening communion: study of the Strenna of the Rector Major and of the *Charter of the*



Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco (2012), collaboration in pastoral initiatives, knowledge of and collaboration with the different groups within the Family.

- He makes efforts to strengthen the sense of belonging and **shared responsibility of Salesians and laity** involved in the Salesian presence: formation together, planning and evaluation, moments of sharing, meetings for prayer, sharing of information. He promotes the family spirit in relationships with lay mission partners, as well as respect for the different roles and tasks in the animation and governance of the Salesian Work.
- He finds concrete ways of facilitating the **presence of young people in the Salesian community** (prayer, meetings, ongoing formation, cordial relations...).
- He encourages initiatives where the Salesian presence “reaches out to the **existential peripheries**,” and in which responsibility is shared by Salesians, laity and youth.
- He participates in the activities of **consecrated institutes in the territory** and in the pastoral plans of the diocesan and local church.
- He organizes moments of community reflection for **implementing the lines of action** of GC25 46 (welcoming presence) and of GC27 13-17, 39-51, 70-71 (willingness to plan and share).
- He leads a community that is **welcoming and hospitable**. (C 56, R 45)

4.3 SERVANTS OF THE YOUNG: THE FIRST ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE APOSTOLIC MISSION

The Rector has special responsibility for the mission

58. The prophecy of fraternity leads the community to take up the common mission and commit itself with passion, in close collaboration with other forces and agencies. In consecrated life there are different ways of understanding the relationship between community and mission, but consecrated persons must always be disciples as well as apostles.



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The Church gives special responsibility for the mission to the one asked to carry out the service of authority, so that the community and the EPC might grow in pastoral charity.²¹

In Salesian life the apostolic dimension is very clear, and we are convinced that “the mission sets the tenor of our whole life.” (C 3) We know, further, that “the apostolic mandate which the Church entrusts to us is taken up and put into effect in the first place by the provincial and local communities. The members have complementary functions and each one of their tasks is important. They are aware that the pastoral objectives are achieved through unity and joint brotherly responsibility. The Provincial and the Rector, as promoters of dialogue and team work, guide the community in pastoral discernment, so that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity.... Each of us is responsible for the common mission, and participates in it with the richness of his own personal gifts.” (C 44-45)

Pastoral animation of the Salesian community

59. There are different ways in which a community is related to the Salesian Work. (Cf. Part III, 7.2.2 below) This calls for a reflection, together with the province, about organization, animation and governance. The fruits of this reflection will mark the style of direction, the involvement of the community and the identity of the EPC. (GC24 169, 171; GC25 80-81; GC26 81, 112, 120)

Chapter 8 of the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry offers a comprehensive presentation of the significance and the role of the Salesian community and particularly of the Rector in carrying out the Salesian mission, together with all the others involved. This will be the focus of Part III of the present manual.

The Rector looks after the following elements:



1. *Encouraging the pastoral charity of the confreres.*
2. *Coordinating shared responsibility for the common mission.*
3. *Guiding community and pastoral discernment.*
4. *Encouraging vocational animation.*

4.3.1 Encouraging the pastoral charity of the confreres

A father who unites his confreres in communion and apostolic service

60. The Rector, as a father who unites his confreres in communion and apostolic service, encourages the pastoral charity of the confreres and dedication to the common mission, each according to his possibilities. His is a community of missionary disciples, part of a Church that goes forth to seek the lost and welcome the outcast. (EG 24)

The Rector is attentive to the situation of each confrere, to his successes and difficulties, the elements of formation that can improve his pastoral abilities, the consequences that the confrere is unable to perceive. He takes note also of what does not help the common plan, the lessening of enthusiasm, how pastoral action fits in with the rest of the consecrated life of the confrere, the way the confrere shares the mission of the community... All this can be the object of the friendly talk and community discernment.

- The Rector **encourages the participation** of all confreres in reflection about the model of the Salesian Work.
- He promotes a **community atmosphere of prayer and pastoral commitment**, conscious that “the mission is strengthened authentically when we see it as coming from God, and when we draw sustenance for our service from Him.” (GC27 53)
- He organizes **moments of formation for the community along with the EPC** in order to assimilate the criteria of the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry and the demands of the Preventive System in each context.



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4.3.2 Coordinating shared responsibility for the common mission

Pastoral involvement of each confrere and shared responsibility of all

61. The provincial community assigns a part of the mission to a local community and determines suitable criteria and means. Each local community places all its energies at the service of the mission, with attention to the particular circumstances of the relationship between the community and the Work, as noted in GC26 120 and GC25 78-81.

It belongs to the Rector, with the help of the Local Council, to coordinate the pastoral involvement of each confrere and to encourage the shared responsibility of all, in the concrete situation of the particular Salesian Work, and in the light of the model of animation and governance adopted by the province.

- The community elaborates the **Community Plan** in which the role of the community in the EPC of the Salesian Work is laid down.
- The community participates in the **elaboration and evaluation of the SEPP**, in which the responsibilities of confreres and lay mission partners are defined. The Rector and Local Council accompany the Council of the EPC in the elaboration of the local SEPP.
- The Rector ensures **personal and vocational accompaniment of the laity** and persons responsible for different sectors of the Salesian Work.
- The Rector sees to the **coordination of the different sectors** of the Salesian Work, ensuring unity and cohesion.

4.3.3 Guiding pastoral discernment

Looking at life with the eyes of a disciple

62. Don Bosco was a man who was constantly open to divine inspiration in his work. From him we learn to always



discern the priority fields of pastoral action and the best criteria for such action in each concrete context. This disposition to pastoral discernment is the expression of the 'pastoral conversion' that the Church asks of every Salesian. It is part of the "shared responsibility in obedience" of the Salesian community. (C 66)

Discernment is a way of being in the world, a fundamental attitude and at the same time a method of work that consists in looking at life and at the world in which we are immersed with the eyes of a disciple. It leads us to recognize and become attuned to the action of the Spirit in authentic obedience. In this way it becomes openness to what is new, courage to move out of ourselves, and resistance to the temptation to reduce the new to what is already known.²² EG 51 describes the discernment process as consisting of *recognizing, interpreting and choosing*.

Renewed commitment to poorer young people and their families

63. GC26 indicates lines of action for each Salesian and community in the commitment to educate and evangelize the young, with special attention to the 'new frontiers' of poorer young people and their families.²³ These are to be considered as keys to discernment about the meaningfulness of the educative-pastoral action of the community.

Further, GC27 73.1 asks from each province "a profound assessment of our significance for and presence among poorer youth in our works in accordance with the criteria offered by General Chapters and the Rector Majors, in view of 'structural pastoral conversion' and a shift towards new poverties (cf. Reg. 1)."

The Rector, with the help of the Local Council and in harmony with the province, has the responsibility to promote this spirit of discernment, in such a way that pastoral decisions are ever more in conformity with the Salesian charism. (C 44)



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- The Local Council and community contribute to the evaluation and discernment about the **significance of each Salesian presence** (GC27 73.1) carried out by the province.
- The **community evaluates its pastoral dimension** in the light of the lines of action of GC26 34, 38, 43, 48, 106, 109.
- It promotes initiatives for the **formation of Salesians and laity** with regard to the Salesian mission and the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry.
- It fosters initiatives for giving **attention to the poorer young people** in the Salesian presence, according to the local plan and in collaboration with the institutions or agents of social development.
- It ensures the **qualification of Salesians and lay people to look after poor young people** and their families, with specific projects in each Salesian house, thus realizing the “going forth to the peripheries” asked by GC27 72-73.

4.3.4 Encouraging vocational animation

The first vocational proposal is the witness of a fraternal community

64. Vocational animation in order to help young people discover what the Lord expects of them is a decisive element in Salesian pastoral action. Further, since the beginning of our Congregation it has been clear that the first vocational proposal is the witness of a fraternal community in an enthusiastic commitment to the Lord and to the mission given by him.

The creation of a vocational culture begins, therefore, with the witness of each Salesian and of the Salesian community. (GC26 52b) As the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod of Bishops on “Young People, the faith and vocational discernment” says, “clearly, the spiritual quality of community life provides great opportunities to bring young people closer to faith and to the Church, and to accompany them in their



vocational discernment.” (184; corroborated in CV 202, 216-217, 242-243)

**Vocational animation,
ultimate horizon of our
pastoral work**

65. The *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry speaks of vocational animation as the dimension that marks “the ultimate horizon” of our pastoral work and as the heart of the SEPP. We therefore take care of the journey of education to the faith and the personal accompaniment that helps young persons elaborate their Personal Plan of Life and vocational discernment, in such a way that they can make life options and commitments that the Lord expects.²⁷

The Church presents orientations for vocational animation in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Cristus Vivit*. (cf. CV chapters 8 and 9).

Since the time of Don Bosco, the Rector has had a special role in vocational guidance and accompaniment of young people, especially of those who show signs of an apostolic vocation. Today this Salesian service of vocational guidance (C 28, 37) is carried out in accordance with the provincial and local plan of vocational animation. The Rector ensures that Salesians, young persons and Salesian educators grow in their vocational response (C 55) and that vocational animation is part of the local SEPP.

- The community plans moments of ongoing formation on the topic of “the need for vocation ministry,” going over the lines of action for each Salesian (GC26 62, 66, 70) and for the community. (GC26 63, 67, 71) It elaborates and follows up the local **plan of vocational animation**, in keeping with the provincial plan.
- It finds a way of **regularly praying for vocations**.
- It gives the **witness of a community that is united and wholeheartedly committed** to the mission with and to young people, laity, the Salesian Family and the neighbourhood. It in-



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vites young people and lay mission partners to participate in certain moments in the life of the community (prayer, sharing, celebration, formation...).

- It welcomes and makes space in its life for **young people who are discerning their vocation.**
- It participates in initiatives and courses of **formation to personal and vocational accompaniment.**
- It is **close to the families** of young people who feel called to a life of special consecration, accompanying the process of vocational discernment.
- It gives **attention to groups of the Salesian Family** and to their proposals for vocational animation, and encourages confreres to accompany lay mission partners and members of the Salesian Family on the path of vocational growth.



5. A CHARISMATIC SERVICE

Salesian charism and the service of authority

66. We recognize that the Salesian charism is a gift of God to the Church that leads us to live in a particular way the elements of consecrated life as laid down in the Constitutions. The charism also affects the exercise of the service of authority (animation and governance) and the means adopted for encouraging confreres and communities to grow in fidelity to the Salesian vocation. In this section we will speak of dispositions and attitudes, as well as of means and structures of animation.

5.1 DISPOSITIONS AND ATTITUDES

5.1.1 Listening and dialogue

The Rector facilitates dialogue

67. Dialogue is the ability to facilitate human relations and to help build community, and presupposes a desire to meet the other and seek the common good. It involves listening, recognition of the other, search for the common good, sharing of one's own riches...

In consecrated life, dialogue is proposed as an indispensable condition for the building up of fraternal life and for facilitating discernment and shared responsibility. The one who animates the life of the community has a special responsibility to facilitate dialogue.²⁵

The Salesian style of personal and pastoral relationships considers dialogue as something specific and proper to it, besides seeing it as a contemporary cultural value and an objective in the education of the young. (C 38, 44, 66, 70) Dialogue is part also of our style of animation and governance, for facilitating participation and shared responsibility. GC27 proposes it as a means for living the prophecy of fraternity. (GC27 69.1-3)



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The Rector examines his ability to dialogue, both personally and with the help of a guide: the ability to listen and to care for the confreres and common interests, patience when faced with instances of lack of shared responsibility, desire to promote information, acceptance of persons and of suggestions different from his own, mastery of his own character so as not to block dialogue, clarity together with charity in the presentation of criteria....

The Local Council reflects upon the community's ability to participate and to dialogue, proposing initiatives to improve the quality.

The community takes care to **prepare moments that involve dialogue** (meetings, discernment in assembly, formation meetings...) by way of information, preparation of materials, taking care of the relations with the participants, spiritual motivation....

The confreres reflect on the way to realize in community the indications of **C 66 and GC27 69**.

5.1.2 Personal freedom and shared responsibility

Respect for the dignity of persons and their freedom

68. Consecrated life contributes to the formation of mature persons who live in responsible freedom. This is what every Salesian professes: "I, with complete freedom, offer myself totally to you. I pledge myself to devote all my strength..." (C 24)

Authority in consecrated life is exercised with respect for the dignity of persons and their freedom. One who has been entrusted with the service of authority creates a climate of participation and shared responsibility, animating all to commit themselves to the common project, to the service of the needs of each person and of the community as a whole.²⁶ Equally, with respect to the common mission, authority knows how to assume its own responsibilities and to encourage sharing of responsibility.²⁷



The one entrusted with authority overcomes some of the inadequate ways of exercising authority: inability to listen, authoritarianism, clericalism, lack of consideration of individuals and of teams, lack of sensitivity towards persons and groups, inadequate functioning of the organisms of animation and governance...

Participation and sharing of responsibility

69. The style of animation and governance promoted by the Salesian Congregation is marked by certain fundamental principles: participation, shared responsibility, subsidiarity, decentralization (C 123-124), the obedience of free and responsible persons. (C 66-67) These are principles that the Congregation has been proposing in the General Chapters, both for fraternal life and for the mission shared in the EPC (GC27 69.3, 71.1), extending this shared responsibility to the laity, the Salesian Family and the young. (GC27 15, 19, 70.2)²⁸

Freedom is one of the great values today, not only for the young people to whom we are sent, but also for the large group of young Salesians in initial formation. The fact that they are all digital natives accentuates the contemporary cultural propensity to the freedom of choice. With Pope Francis we are invited to recognize this as a gift and an opportunity for educators,²⁹ in the spirit of the humanism we have inherited from Francis de Sales, open to “man’s natural and supernatural resources, without losing sight of his weakness.” (C 17) With the Synod on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, we recognize that freedom is at once ‘responsorial’ – preceded and generated by an act of love, and therefore called to be a loving response – and ‘responsible.’³⁰



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- **The province elaborates the model of animation and governance of the local Salesian Works**, determining the responsibilities of the different personal and collegial organs, so as not to leave this at the mercy of the personal capacity of the Rector or of those who assume different responsibilities. The community applies the model of animation and governance proposed by the province for each house.
- The Local Council and the community assembly work out **ways of promoting shared responsibility, participation and the sense of belonging**. They find **ways of evaluating** the level of involvement of persons, and for fraternal correction when shared responsibility is weak.
- The Rector ensures **adequate information and communication** about projects and activities.
- The community fosters initiatives for the **formation of persons (Salesians and lay) for teamwork** in the Salesian style of shared responsibility.

5.1.3 Personal and community discernment

Discernment – the attitude of lifelong formation

70. Discernment, as we have said above, is a way of looking at the world with the eyes of a disciple. It is something that the Church asks especially of religious, since they are “a communion of consecrated persons who profess to seek and to do the will of God.” (FT 1) It involves, as Pope Francis says, “not only recognizing and interpreting spirits, but also – and this is decisive – choosing movements of the spirit of good and rejecting those of the spirit of evil.” (EG 51)

Discernment calls for certain fundamental dispositions: a faith vision of the events and circumstances of life, quality of spiritual life, ability to listen and dialogue, openness to the conversion required for discernment, capacity for personal and spiritual communication.³¹ “Discernment is one of the peak moments in a consecrated community where



the centrality of God, that ultimate end of everyone's search, as well as the responsibility and the contribution of each one in the journey of all towards the Truth, stand out with particular clarity." (FT 20c)

In the Salesian charism, discernment is also a fundamental personal attitude – the basic attitude of lifelong formation (C119 and AGC 425 25-37) that gives direction to the decisions of ordinary life and pastoral options, both personal and communitarian. It is the ability to learn from life's experiences in the light of faith and of our charism. (C 98) Every confrere and community is responsible for this constant openness to discernment. GC25 asks that the community help each confrere give unity to his life "by the practice of evangelical discernment as an attitude of searching for the will of God through community dialogue and coherent decisional and executive processes." (GC25 32) And we know that "in listening to the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist, we express and renew our common dedication to the divine will. In matters of importance we seek the will of the Lord together in patient brotherly dialogue, with a deep awareness of shared responsibility." (C 66)

The Rector animates and encourages discernment

71. The Rector, "with the help of the community, has a special responsibility for the discernment" (C 69) of the gifts of each confrere and of pastoral options. (C 44) Animation and discernment are entrusted to the Rector (GC27 51), not so much in terms of a specific method as of helping maintain a habitual attitude of discernment. This is a way of living out the three aspects of his priestly ministry – the service of the Word, the service of sanctification, the service of guidance. (AGC 306 14)

All the confreres, however, keep in mind that the Rector must not only animate but also govern: he is called to con-



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clude moments of discernment “by making appropriate decisions.” (C 66)

- The community cultivates the **elements of Salesian life that facilitate discernment**: the quality of prayer, care of the spiritual life and of pastoral charity, willingness to listen and dialogue, ability to communicate, sharing of responsibility, the friendly talk, responsible participation in community meetings, *lectio divina*....
- It promotes the practice of community discernment in the light of the Word of God and the Constitutions (GC25 15; cf. FT 20 e and f) and encourages **specific occasions of community life** such as prayer together, meetings, retreats, revision of life, Council meetings, times of recreation, the community day. (GC25 15)
- It draws up the **plan of Salesian community life**, bearing in mind the situation of the confreres and emphasizing the aspects of personal formation, communication and communion and the commitments implied by the SEPP. (GC25 15)
- All are involved, in the spirit of family, in the **moments of planning and evaluation** (Community Plan, SEPP). The confreres are faithful to the **friendly talk** with the Rector and with the Provincial during the provincial visitation.
- The Rector and community care for the **quality of the monthly and trimonthly recollections** and the annual retreat.

5.2 MEANS OF ANIMATION

5.2.1 The friendly talk

A simple means for creating a sense of family and for helping the confrere grow in fidelity

72. The friendly talk with the Rector is a simple means for creating a sense of family and for helping the confrere grow in fidelity to his vocation. Since Don Bosco’s own time it has been a very efficacious means for the animation of the life of the community and of each confrere.



A study of the Congregation in the last decades indicates that the friendly talk is in crisis, and that the practice needs to be revived, in keeping with recent orientations regarding religious life.³²

In the survey on Salesian personal accompaniment in 2017, involving more than 4000 respondents, one of the points that clearly emerged was the distinction between the friendly talk with the Rector and personal spiritual direction, both in practice and as a desire expressed in various ways, especially by the confreres in the postnovitiate, practical training and specific formation.³³ Such a distinction does not necessarily reduce the value of the friendly talk. On the contrary, it helps to be more focused on its characteristic and original trait, clearly envisaged by Don Bosco: to be one of the most effective means for “promoting the good running of the community.” (C 70) When all the confreres regularly meet their Rector for the friendly talk, they are giving him a very valuable help for the animation and governance of the community. The friendly talk then becomes a way of practising the participatory leadership that is part of the process of renewal of religious life, as recommended in the document *New Wine in New Wine Skins*. (NW 19-24)

The Rector takes the first step

73. In a spirit of humility and service, the Rector takes the first step to promote this ‘good practice’ of the Salesian style of animation and governance, considering its benefits for the life of the confreres and of the community. Aware of its importance, he considers it his duty to invite the confreres for the talk.

The Rector accepts each confrere for what he is – child of God, consecrated person, member of the Congregation; and, as good shepherd, he is ready to accompany him on the journey of his *sequela Christi*.³⁴ He keeps in mind the psychological, relational and vocational circumstances of the confrere so as to ensure that the friendly talk is respectful and effective.



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Aware of the real difficulties of a psychological, contextual and cultural nature, the Rector takes it upon himself to foster attitudes that can be helpful in the talk: a spiritual desire to help the confrere and the community, genuine interest in the life of each one, the search for formal as well as informal occasions for meeting, attitudes and skills that are helpful (capacity to listen and dialogue, confidence, willingness to share, attention to the person), as well as care for the physical setting of the talk...

Confidentiality

74. Our Constitutions and Regulations (C 70 and R 49) remind us of the fundamental elements in the talk with the Rector. The theme of the talk varies with the attitude to the talk on the part of confrere and Rector. Some meetings are functional (with the aim of resolving particular issues), while in others, personal issues are discussed. Sometimes vocational and spiritual concerns may be shared, while at other times the topic will be the community and the ministry, the personal situations of the confreres, their joys and sorrows, worries and concerns...

The Rector knows very well that the friendly talk is protected by confidentiality: *nihil, nunquam, nulli* – nothing, never, to no one.³⁵ Here the principle formulated by GC19 is still valid: “The obligation of secrecy about what is heard in manifestation is absolutely rigorous. Since we are dealing with intimate matters, the Rector cannot reveal anything for any motive at any time, either directly or indirectly, and even more so at the time of admissions to vows or to orders.” (GC19 Ch. VIII, 11)

The secrecy covering the friendly talk – as also personal spiritual accompaniment – is not, however, absolute, as is the seal of the sacrament of reconciliation. There are, in fact, grave circumstances that can supersede it, as, for example, the case of abuse of minors, homicide or suicide.

The survey on Salesian personal accompaniment shows that



lack of confidentiality is among the most disturbing factors denounced by the respondents in every phase of initial formation, since it damages and ruins mutual trust, the indispensable condition in every meaningful human rapport, all the more so at this level of interaction between confreres.³⁶ When there are difficulties in relationships, much patience will be needed, together with a search for ways to improve the relationships.

- The Rector and confreres discern together how **best to promote the friendly talk** in the community.
- The **Rector takes the initiative** to invite confreres for the friendly talk and finds creative ways of engaging in it.
- He is careful to **maintain the confidentiality** of what is shared in the talk.
- The friendly talk is a good moment for paying **attention to the parents and family** of the confrere. (R 176).

5.2.2 Personal accompaniment

Personal accompaniment vital for growth

75. ‘Personal accompaniment’ here is taken in a broad sense as including the friendly talk with the Rector, spiritual direction, confession, etc.

In consecrated life, guidance is needed in order to help the religious configure himself progressively to Christ Jesus.³⁷

The desire for personal accompaniment is a key element in Don Bosco – in his personal life, in his work with the young, and also with his Salesians. Youth Ministry proposes personal accompaniment in the pastoral relationship (cf. CV 242-247, 291-298; FoR 114-115); R 99 proposes it also for Salesian life, according to the need of each confrere. GC27



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proposed it as a clear goal for every Salesian: “Having a stable spiritual director and referring to this person periodically.” (GC27 67.2, something that was already asked for by GC26 20).³⁸ This is valid in the first place for the Rector himself.

Personal accompaniment helps the Salesian to be faithful to his vocation and to grow spiritually, pastorally and in fraternity. Personal accompaniment in special situations also is a help to discernment.

Community spiritual accompaniment and personal spiritual accompaniment

76. The cultural context (with its tendency to individualism, personal well being, self-sufficiency, mistrust of the other...) and negative experiences (lack of respect and confidentiality, methods of accompaniment that are not in keeping with processes of personalization, inadequate attention to spiritual experience...) make it necessary to improve accompaniment through specific preparation for it.

The Rector remains responsible for ‘community spiritual accompaniment.’ (C 55) He makes himself available to all for the friendly talk, and also offers, if the confrere so wishes, personal spiritual accompaniment. (C 70; R 78) Aware that the Preventive System is a pedagogy of freedom, and in keeping with the modification of FSDB 233 and 417 proposed in section 5.2.5 of the *Orientations and Guidelines* on young Salesians and accompaniment, he encourages everyone to avail himself of the help of a spiritual guide, fully respecting and promoting, even in the early phases of initial formation, the freedom of the confrere to choose his guide. Keeping in mind Don Bosco’s advice to Fr Rua, he strives to make himself loved and knows that he has to gain the confidence of the confreres rather than rely on any rule or recommendation.

He also knows that there are many other forms of personal



accompaniment according to circumstances, relationship styles, and the spiritual experience of those involved: sharing of spiritual and vocational experience in community; the friendly talk; the sacrament of reconciliation; fraternal consultation about specific issues....

During the phases of initial formation, the *Ratio* strongly suggests that the spiritual guide be a Salesian. The *Orientations and Guidelines* on young Salesians and accompaniment propose, however, that it is better to place our trust in the Salesian quality of the formators and of the community rather than in a rule or directive, while ensuring two further elements: that the guide chosen is someone familiar with our charism and spirituality, and that it is possible to meet him or her regularly. Within a relationship of mutual trust and confidence, the Rector will find ways of dialoguing with the person in formation about his choice of spiritual guide.³⁹

If the Rector is chosen as spiritual guide by some confrere in initial formation, he will be extremely attentive to the issue of confidentiality, especially at the time of admissions to vows, ministries or orders.

- The Rector, conscious of his service as animator of the vocational fidelity of each confrere, wants to be **a guide who is guided**, and so seeks accompaniment for himself, making it a part of his Personal Project of Life.
- He ensures the presence of an **external confessor** during the monthly and trimonthly recollections.
- The community studies the proposal of GC26 70 (“Let the Salesian ... be available for spiritual accompaniment and see to his preparation for the task”), along with the proposal of GC27 75.1 about the **preparation of Salesians and laity in the art of accompaniment**.
- The Rector and community study and implement the **Orienta-**



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tions and Guidelines on Salesian personal accompaniment (cf. *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* – 2019).

Privileged moment of community spiritual direction

5.2.3 The ‘good-night’ talk

77. “In keeping with the Salesian tradition, the Rector or someone in his place should address the community by way of a ‘good-night.’” (R 48) The good-night talk is a privileged moment of community spiritual direction that is a faith-reading of the events of the day or of the week, contributing thus to the strengthening of the charismatic identity of the community. It is equally of great educative-pastoral and charismatic value when directed to young people and to the educative-pastoral community, if necessary in the form of a ‘good-morning’ talk.

There are different ways of giving the good-night talk, according to the different contexts of our communities. But it would be wonderful to maintain this tradition because, in its simplicity, it contains a great formative value:

- it is a family moment of unity of hearts and sharing things of interest: news, information about events, presentation of pastoral-educative plans in the community, the province, the Congregation;
- it is a serene word of encouragement at the end of the day that can help put hearts at ease, overcoming psychological and spiritual weariness by recalling the centre and meaning of our life;
- it is not merely information, but a faith interpretation of happenings and of events, an exercise of community discernment;



- it is a way of strengthening the Salesian sensibility about life and its happenings.

- The Rector assumes responsibility for **preparing the good-night talks**, so that they might be privileged moments of community spiritual direction.

- The Rector and his Council **evaluate the good-night talks**, listening to feedback and taking steps to ensure the quality of this means of Salesian animation and communication.

- The Rector also **shares the good-morning and good-night talks** with confreres and others, including youth, educators and members of the Salesian Family, encouraging them to speak about the different sectors of the house and about other aspects of Salesian, ecclesial or social life.

5.2.4 The Personal Plan of Life

A help for the unification of life and growth in vocational fidelity

78. It is helpful to remember that the ‘Personal Plan of Salesian Life’ is a contemporary form of the ‘resolutions’ that Don Bosco used to make during the annual retreats or when about to begin a new phase in life, as a way of ensuring growth in spiritual life and vocation.

GC25 14 proposed the Personal Plan of Life as a guideline to the whole Congregation, and asked that concrete indications be offered to the confreres. GC27 67.1 proposed it once again to each Salesian as an effective means of promoting vocational fidelity.⁴⁰

The Personal Plan of Life is the fruit of spiritual discernment, and it is a help for unifying one’s life in the process of vocational fidelity, in the context of one’s situation and the challenges he faces. What is important is not so much the formal drawing up of the plan as the willingness of each



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confreres to grow in fidelity by adopting concrete measures that are worked out during the process of personal spiritual accompaniment. The plan is not so much a way of dominating one's future and planning success, as a way of responding day by day to the Lord's call (C 96), and of remaining docile to the promptings of the Spirit in the events of daily life (C 64, 119).

Like Don Bosco, then, each Salesian makes sure that his Personal Plan of Life emerges from within his faith journey, and that it helps him mature in his vocation.

- The Rector draws up and revises periodically **his own Personal Plan of Life**, including aspects that can help him improve and grow in the ministry entrusted to him.
- He **encourages the drawing up and revision of the Personal Plan of Life** on the part of the confreres, making use of the friendly talk, the good-nights, meetings, recollections, annual retreats, and moments of personal accompaniment.
- He is especially attentive in this regard to the **confreres in practical training** he has been entrusted with. Personal accompaniment becomes more meaningful and helpful when related to the personal plan of life.
- He encourages the use of the **Personal Plan of Life in the accompaniment of young people**.

5.2.5 The Community Plan

A very useful tool for unity and direction in the community

79. The Community Plan is another useful tool for the animation of the Salesian community in its vocational fidelity, giving unity and encouragement to all the efforts made by the confreres as a community. Among the various means available to the Rector for accompanying the community, this is one of the most relevant and effective, with its beneficial effects being felt all through the year.



The process of elaborating the Community Plan every year facilitates dialogue, sharing of vocational experiences, expectations, concerns and goals, shared responsibility and the sense of belonging. The Community Plan is well established in some parts of the Congregation but not in others. We must note that the Constitutions and Regulations speak of the community drawing up its *programme* every year, “covering the life, activities and updating of the community.” (R 184, cf. C 181) It was GC25 (72-74) that invited communities to draw up a *plan* rather than merely a *programme*: “Dealing with the topic of the Salesian community, the GC25 saw in the plan of community life an effective means for strengthening the ability ‘to live and work together,’ to overcome the increasing disconnection of each individual’s work, and to avoid the danger of pastoral work becoming fragmented. For this reason it asked every community ‘to work according to a community plan’ (GC25 72).”⁴¹

**Distinct from the Salesian
Educative and Pastoral
Plan**

80. The Community Plan is distinct from the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP). The latter involves the educative and pastoral community, is concerned about our shared mission, offers a framework for the Salesian educative and pastoral engagement in the locality, and functions as a ‘roadmap’ for several years. The Community Plan instead is a yearly exercise done by the confreres, focussing on their life together and vocational growth, with goals and consequent strategies for the year ahead. Its main strength lies not so much in the written document – which could be very simple – as in the shared vision and commitment generated by the process of drawing it up together.

As a follow up to what GC25 was requesting, the Formation Department published a document, “The Salesian Community Plan: A Process of Discernment and of Sharing” (2002).⁴² The document offered motivations, made sug-



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gestions regarding method, elaboration and evaluation, and talked about conditions for usefulness, co-responsibility and possible difficulties.

The different contexts and circumstances of each community condition the elaboration and usefulness of this instrument. The Rector and his Council must keep this in mind in their work of animating community life.

- The community discusses the **indications of GC25 72-74** and those of the Formation Department regarding the Community Plan.
- The Rector **motivates and prepares the community each year for the elaboration of the plan**, in the light of the indications given by the Formation Department and the province. He also schedules its implementation and evaluation.
- He ensures that the **Community Plan responds to the real situation of the community**.
- He facilitates coordination between the **Community Plan and the elements of the local SEPP**.

5.2.6 Fraternal correction

A means for growing in fraternity and vocational fidelity

81. Fraternal correction is a Christian proposal to help believers focus their lives on the Lord and his plans, modifying attitudes and ways of life so as to bring them into harmony with the Gospel. (Mt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1-5) In the consecrated life, fraternal correction is proposed as a means of communication and formation, and as a help for personal and community growth in vocational fidelity.⁴³

Our rule of life speaks of the confrere accepting fraternal correction in order to grow in fraternity (C 52); as an aid to continuous conversion (C 90); and as a means for growing



in vocational fidelity (C 121).

The exercise of fraternal correction is not easy. GC25 14, 15, 54 and GC27 48, 68.2 call it a challenge to be faced in the Salesian life, since it raises questions concerning individual confreres and the community. The effectiveness of this way of fostering our vocational fidelity depends largely on a conducive community atmosphere.

Different ways of correcting

82. The ways of exercising fraternal correction are many and different, from the little observations in everyday life to the discernment carried out during community meetings on important themes. Sometimes good example is enough for the confreres to become aware of their responsibility and encourage them to change; at other times a community meeting will be needed to assess aspects of life that need improvement. Sometimes one needs to intervene publicly to remind the community of common criteria, while at other times it will be necessary to either talk personally with a confrere or else ask someone else to intervene.

Always, however, fraternal correction presupposes certain conditions:

- a spirit of faith, prayer and much love in the one offering the correction;
- discernment, openness, humility;
- ability to listen, understand, accept, help, forgive;
- avoiding offence, negative judgment, blame, desire to hurt;
- correction motivated by love and offered with love.



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- The Rector facilitates formation in the **basic skills needed for fraternal correction** (dialogue, listening, forgiveness, communication...).
- He programs **scrutinies on various aspects of community life**: evangelical counsels, fraternity, prayer, pastoral ministry...
- He facilitates the **mediation of people who can help resolve conflicts** or differences of opinion.

5.2.7 The house chronicle and archives

Valuing family history and good administration

83. One of the tasks entrusted by our Regulations to the Rector and his Council is to “keep the archives in order and up to date, and compile or see to the compiling of the house chronicle.” (R 178) More than a bureaucratic requirement, it is a matter of enabling the community to treasure its family history and be always ready to face demands and challenges with correct records. An orderly archive guarantees a timely and appropriate response to situations where proper documentation is needed. It is a wise preventive measure for good administration and governance.

5.3 STRUCTURES OF ANIMATION

5.3.1 The Local Council

Essential for the good animation and governance of the community

84. The Local Council – as also the assembly of confreres, when the community does not coincide with the Local Council – is a simple but precious organ of discernment, formation and sharing that deserves to be better valued and respected. It is established by Canon Law and by our Constitutions and Regulations, and is essential for the good animation and governance of the community.



One of the keys to the service of the Rector is the ability to work in team, respecting and promoting the competence of the Local Council, and taking advantage of its ability to foster the growth of the community. The meetings of Councils and assemblies are therefore not to be taken as mere requirements to be fulfilled. In their proactive functioning lies a precious possibility that can multiply the fruitfulness of the life and mission of the community. This is the clear way forward prompted by the Church for the process of renewal of religious life.⁴⁴ ‘Synodality’ becomes the way the Church is called to follow at all levels.

The duties of the Council are laid down in C 178-186, with specific indications for its meetings in R 180. Further details need to be indicated in the model of animation and governance of each Salesian Work established by the province, taking into account the diversity of ways in which the relationship between the community and the Salesian Work is conceived. (See below, Part III 7.2.2)

Some members belong to the Council by reason of the role they play in the community, while for others the appointment is linked to the particular situation of the community.⁴⁶

We must acknowledge here that in the case of a large number of small communities, all the members form part of the Council, so that there is practically no difference between Local Council and assembly of confreres. In this case the Constitutions give the possibility of a greater flexibility in the management of roles and structures for the smooth running of the life and activities of the community:

Whenever circumstances suggest that some exception should be made, the Provincial, with the consent of his Council and after hearing the opinion of the local community concerned, can modify the ordinary roles and structures



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within the community, especially when it is small in number of confreres, provided always that the figure of the rector is safeguarded. (C 182)

The responsibility of the Council members is charismatic in its nature

85. It is important to promote teamwork skills among the members of the Council (listening, dialogue, communication, planning mentality, shared responsibility...). The Local Council does not have only administrative or management functions. The responsibility of the members is charismatic in nature since they are called to serve the community and the Salesian mission according to the spirit of Don Bosco and the guidelines of the Congregation.

The relationship between the Local Council and the Council of the EPC or of the Work is defined by the province.

Lay people in charge of different sectors – principals, directors of technical schools, directors of oratories – participate in different ways in the Salesian mission and Work. In line with the spirit and guidelines of GC27⁴⁷ and of the letter of convocation of GC28⁴⁸, their involvement in decision making processes has to be part of the normal running of the activities.

Given the great variety of local contexts and situations, specific orientations on this matter are to be defined at provincial level, with other criteria being finalized during the provincial visitation.

It must be remembered that, as per the deliberations of GC26, lay administrators can be invited to participate in the Local Council without the right to vote. (Cf. GC26 121)

The Rector of a formation community makes sure to convoke periodically also meetings of the *formation team*, given that not all the formation guides are members of the Local Council.



- The Rector ensures the elements of **effective teamwork**: preparing and convoking the meeting, prior information, quality and efficiency of the meetings, clarity regarding decisions and minutes, shared responsibility in decision-making, discretion in the matters dealt with...
- The Rector ensures the elements of **effective teamwork**: preparing and convoking the meeting, prior information, quality and efficiency of the meetings, clarity regarding decisions and minutes, shared responsibility in decision-making, discretion in the matters dealt with....
- **He keeps the confreres of the community informed** about the Council meetings, both before so that they can contribute their reflections and after each meeting about matters of common interest and decisions taken. (R 180)
- He ensures initiatives for **sharing, formation and prayer among the members of the Council**.
- He schedules **periodic evaluations** of the functioning of the Council.
- When necessary, the Rector invites **laypersons with special responsibilities in the EPC**, as also lay administrators, to participate in the Local Council.

5.3.2 The Vice-Rector

First collaborator of the Rector

86. The Rector's service is carried out with the support and advice of various persons and organisms. Among these, the Vice-Rector is an important figure, being "the first collaborator of the Rector." (C 183, R 182)

Although the Vice-Rector has 'ordinary vicarious power' (in matters that have been specially entrusted to him, and in all that concerns ordinary governance when the Rector is absent or impeded, until the Provincial provides otherwise), canonically he is not a 'religious ordinary.' Experience shows



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that the role of the Vice-Rector depends, in large part, on the matters assigned to him by the Rector and on the Vice-Rector's own ability to carry them out and to give support to the community plan – but above all on a certain level of comfort and even friendship between the two.

It is up to the Rector to establish with the Vice-Rector mutual understanding, trust, a spirit of shared responsibility, concern for the life of the community and the vocation of the confreres. The Rector finds moments for meeting and dialoguing with the Vice-Rector, sharing with him the problems of community life and of the confreres, as well as plans, proposals for improvement and possible tasks that he could assume.

The Vice-Rector in his turn takes the initiative to support the Rector as well as to advise, correct, differ with and make suggestions and proposals.

Our tradition, in which the Rector is called to be father, suggests also that the Vice-Rector cares in a special way for discipline and organizational matters, in this way also being an active support for the Rector.

- In addition to 'ordinary vicarious power,' the **Vice-Rector has specific duties** assigned to him by the Rector.
- The Rector takes care to **clarify the figure and roles of the Vice-Rector in the community**, so that the confreres know the tasks assigned to him and the peculiar responsibility and authority associated with those tasks.

5.3.3 The assembly of confreres

An exercise of
community discernment

87. The assembly of the confreres, "which is a gathering of all the Salesians of the local community, is convoked and



presided over by the Rector for consultation on the principal questions which concern the community's religious life and activities." (C 186) It is an expression of the values of participation and co-responsibility (C 123), but above all an exercise of community discernment.

As mentioned already, however, there is a large number of communities today where, given the small number, there is no practical difference between assembly of confreres and Local Council.

Besides being a legally required body, the family spirit makes the assembly a fraternal encounter of sharing, discerning, programming, evaluating, and of formation and shared responsibility in life and in the common mission.

The responsibilities of the assembly of confreres are indicated in R 184; these can be developed according to the quality of fraternal life and the participation of the confreres.

- The Rector takes care to **prepare the community assemblies** (information, agenda, setting, minutes, etc.).
- He creates a **climate of shared responsibility** and a sense of belonging, a climate of discernment and of family.
- With the Council, he takes up with interest the **conclusions of the assemblies**, communicates the decisions, involves the confreres in the execution, and gives an account of their realization.

5.4 PERSONALIZED ATTENTION TO CONFRERES

Attention to the concrete situations of each confrere

88. The Rector "also has a direct responsibility toward each confrere; he helps him realize his personal vocation and sustains him in the work entrusted to him." (C 55) This task of the Rector can be carried out in many different ways, but it is



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always necessary to be attentive to the concrete situation of each confrere. Many circumstances contribute to the personal situation of a confrere: personality, family situations, formation processes, the journey of Salesian life, community and pastoral experiences, spiritual experience, plans, difficulties, gifts and qualities.... But always, as in a family, the brother is to be welcomed, loved, integrated into the community. (C 52)

5.4.1 Salesian Priests and Salesian Brothers

Complementarity of the two forms, a charismatic treasure

89. One of the special features of our Congregation is the complementarity between clerics and lay religious in the life and action of the Salesian community. We value as a precious charismatic treasure the complementarity of the two forms of our Salesian vocation.⁴⁹

GC26 and GC27 have insisted on the common elements in our vocation, and the Congregation has reflected extensively on the two forms, offering indications for living out and promoting complementarity: knowledge of the identity of the Salesian Brother, reflection on specific competences, basic and equivalent formation for all members, suggestions for the specific formation of clerical and lay members, good fraternal relationships.⁵⁰

Complementarity is a resource to be valued also in decision-making processes, according to the basic principles laid down by the Constitutions on the service of authority:

Our common vocation requires the responsible and effective participation of all the members in the life and action of the local, provincial and world communities, not only in terms of implementation but also of planning, organizing and evaluating, according to their respective roles and competence.

This shared responsibility requires also the participation of the confreres, in the most suitable way, in the choice of



those responsible for government at the different levels, and in the working out of their more important decisions.

It is the duty of those who exercise authority to promote and guide this contribution by means of adequate information, personal dialogue and community study and reflection. (C 123)

- The Rector is committed to **promote and give visibility to both forms**, especially in the educative and pastoral community, even when he has no Salesian Brothers in his community.
- He ensures **moments of study and reflection on our one vocation in its two forms**.
- He is careful to **avoid all discriminatory language** (e.g., “Salesian fathers”).

5.4.2 Confreres in initial formation

Practical training, the most characteristic phase of initial formation

90. In keeping with the FSDB and the formation section of the Provincial Directory, each house of initial formation has its Formation Plan.

From the Salesian point of view, *practical training* is the most characteristic phase of initial formation. (FSDB 428) Its main focus is the integration of the basic elements of Salesian life into a “closely-knit life project” (C 21), and the main formative role is precisely that of the Rector, who helps his practical trainees learn by experience the values of the Salesian vocation. (C 98) This is one of the most important and delicate responsibilities of the Rector.⁵¹

Quinquennium: accompanying the transition to active pastoral life

91. Special care is required also of the confreres in the *quinquennium*, in order to accompany the transition from specific formation to active life within the educative and pastoral community, helping them to take on their new commitments in the light of the basic criteria of Salesian life.



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The Provincial Directory makes mention of the initiatives that the community promotes with regard to practical training and the quinquennium, in keeping with what is indicated in the FSDB. The confreres themselves are conscious of the importance of these phases of formation and of the need for accompaniment and evaluation, taking care also to include the objectives of these phases in their Personal Plan of Life, and to participate in formation initiatives offered by the province.

The Rector, on his part, is close to the young Salesians, ensuring the conditions for a fruitful formative experience (the friendly talk, personal spiritual accompaniment, specific formation proposals, friendship, support, quarterly assessments and those in view of renewal of profession, etc.).

5.4.3 Interculturality

Sign of fraternity in the Kingdom

92. The consecrated life involves the possibility of living our vocation in different places and cultural contexts. On the part of individual religious, this calls for a capacity for adaptation and integration, while on the part of communities the ability to welcome and celebrate diversity. (NW 13, 40) Thus we become signs of fraternity in the Kingdom, signs of unity in diversity.

The experience of interculturality is not new for us: from the time of the first missionary communities, it has been a reality in the Congregation, and already before Vatican II intercultural formation communities existed in several places. Since the Council, however, the Congregation, with the rest of the Church, has lived through a period of new sensitivity to local cultural contexts. GC27 and the repeated appeals of the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, invite us now to promote international communities with intercultural experiences that bear witness to unity and pastoral charity. (GC27 29, 75.5)



The community facilitates smooth integration

93. The community that receives Salesians from another culture facilitates smooth integration: material (clothing, food, financial administration, official documentation, opportunities for learning the language and culture...), relational (both within and outside the community), spiritual (ensuring access to the sacrament of reconciliation and spiritual accompaniment), pastoral, initiation to the life of the new Province (introduction to the communities – including the educative and pastoral communities – and to the confreres). The Rector of the community has the special responsibility to facilitate the progressive integration of these confreres, and to maintain relationship with the province and with his family of origin.

The community values the cultural diversity of the confreres, and welcomes the contributions of each one to the common life and mission. It helps all the confreres develop the ability to dialogue and welcome, to understand diversity and to value the other, and to overcome attitudes that are not helpful. It promotes fraternal equality among confreres coming from different ethnic groups, cultural and social backgrounds, avoiding every discrimination.

5.4.4 Confreres passing through difficult moments

The Rector and the community intervene in a timely and opportune manner

94. In the life of a confrere there can arise moments of doubt, weakness and lack of motivation. Besides openness and transparency on the part of the confrere himself, it is important that the Rector and the community be sensitive to detect the situation and intervene in a timely and opportune manner.

The quality of fraternal life, with its moments of prayer, formation, fraternal correction, meeting and support, is the first way of helping the confrere, but is not enough. The



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Rector must also look for other ways, such as personal accompaniment and suitable formation proposals in specialized centres, the closeness of some particular confreres, and adjustment of the workload.

But the first interventions are not always fruitful, which is why much patience, perseverance, trust and faith in the action of grace are necessary.

5.4.5 Elderly confreres

Old age a gift to be welcomed

95. *Vita Consecrata* speaks of old age as a gift to be welcomed and valued in the consecrated life – a thought often repeated by Pope Francis.⁵² The Salesian tradition reminds us that the community surrounds elderly confreres with care and affection (C 53), and suggests that these in turn continue to live out their vocation with joy, being at the service of the community and of the mission in whatever way they can.⁵³ Their contribution to the common mission is by no means less relevant and less fruitful, when lived in a spirit of faith. “Suffering and the cross always find a place in life, and it must be said at once that periods of sickness and limitation are just as fruitful as those of specific activity, if they are lived in the light of the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection.”⁵⁴

Differences in vocation journey, spiritual and pastoral experience and health make the integration into the community unique for each confrere. Ongoing formation initiatives to help grow old gracefully are always useful. Dialogue with elderly Salesians helps them feel part of the family, recognizing their possibilities and limits and indicating concrete fields of action and ways of contributing to the community life and mission, also through prayer and closeness to young people and towards the educators in the Salesian presence. Of course, this dialogue is not always easy: it calls for pa-



tience and clarity, and also for firmness in dealing with individual desires that might be at odds with the community and pastoral plans.

Varied situations in the Salesian world

96. Elderly confreres need careful personal attention to their health and to their psychological and spiritual well-being. The Rector is responsible for this kind of accompaniment. He helps them to love and be loved, inviting the other members of the community to express care and concern, also by means of visits. The seniors, on the other hand, are often also able to offer various kinds of support and help to their younger brothers.

We must acknowledge that as far as elderly confreres are concerned, situations vary widely from region to region in the Congregation. Provinces with hardly any elderly confreres miss the experience and wisdom that can come with age. Others with large numbers of elderly confreres in communities present a different kind of challenge to the Rector, and here Provincials are responsible for the qualitative and quantitative consistency of communities and for finding other solutions.

5.4.6 Sick confreres

Illness, a moment for living out our vocation

97. The experience of illness is also a moment for living out our vocation. Each situation is different, of course, and each person lives it out differently. Especially when there are confreres who do not know how to express their need for help, fraternity demands that the Rector and confreres take the first step to ask, listen and help. Such sensitivity and attention to a sick confrere is one of the great expressions of brotherliness.

In any case, we help the confrere accept his situation and live it in a spirit of faith (C 53), so that he might discover



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the pastoral fruitfulness of his prayer and of the oblation of his suffering together with that of Christ.

A sick confrere needs different kinds of attention – medical, psychological, spiritual. When he continues to live in the community, it becomes an occasion for bearing witness to fraternity and to the spirit of family. As in any family, this calls for special commitment on the part of the other confreres. In other cases, the confrere is admitted to a house for the care of the elderly and the sick. The Rector of this house and others follow up these confreres with fraternal concern, seeking to promote also the closeness of the local and provincial community.

Confreres who find it difficult to accept their limitations

98. Sometimes a confrere finds it difficult to accept his limitations and the instructions of caregivers and doctors. Here one needs to be both kind and firm. Persons whom he trusts, including medical personnel, can help the confrere accept difficult decisions, even when contrary to his own likes and desires.

We cannot forget here the importance of maintaining constant communication with the Provincial and with the family of the sick confrere, and visits and communication on the part of other confreres and communities. Further, it would be wonderful if the province could offer formation initiatives aimed at helping sick confreres to accept and live through their particular moment of trial.

5.4.7 Confreres needing special attention

Confreres with problems, addictions, or particular difficulties of integration

99. We also have confreres undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment for various problems or for addictions (alcohol, gambling, internet, and so on), or who have particular difficulties of integration. The indications given above for sick confreres apply also to them, but call for even greater tactful-



ness on the part of the Rector and the community.

It is necessary to clearly define the conditions of the treatment to be followed by these confreres, with specific guidelines for them as well as for the Rector and the community.

It would be ideal to detect as early as possible the symptoms of problematic situations. The family atmosphere in the community, frank and truthful relationships, fraternal correction, the friendly talk – these are some of the common but effective means for prevention and also for the accompaniment of confreres needing special attention.

When we have confreres undergoing special therapy, it may be necessary to make adjustments in the rhythm of community life and in our interaction. Any ordinary family finds itself having to make serious adjustments when someone is sick, and true fraternity asks the same of us.

Confreres under restriction or in other special situations

100. The Rector ensures knowledge of the guidelines and policies of the Congregation and of the Province regarding child protection, and applies them clearly and decisively, overcoming predictable resistance.⁵⁵ He coordinates with the competent authority at provincial level, with careful attention to legal aspects and to the area of communication.

The community gives the same kind of attention to confreres with lifestyles and ways of thinking that are alien to the orientations of the Congregation and the Church, and those subject to canonical processes or in irregular situations for various reasons.

The Rector and the community are always supported and accompanied by the Province, which accompanies with care also the family of the confrere concerned. As we have said already, the written policies of the Province, specifying com-



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petences and actions to be taken at different levels, are of paramount importance. Frequent Rectors' meetings are precious occasions for ongoing formation in this area.

5.5 THE ECONOMY AND ADMINISTRATION

The Rector – 'first in order of responsibility' for administration

101. The priority of the charismatic and spiritual includes care for the economic dimension and for efficiency.⁵⁶ Here too the Rector has his responsibility, according to the guidelines of the Church and of the Congregation, since administration remains "under the direction and control of the respective superiors and Councils." (C 190, cf. R 198) The Rector is, in fact, "first in order of responsibility" also for the administration of the goods of the local community (Cf. C 176), while keeping in mind what is said in R 198:

The administration of the goods of each house is entrusted to the local economer, who will act in dependence on the rector and his council.

Every financial transaction in any sector of the house, even that of the rector, must be referred back for accounting purposes to the economer's office, which will be organized in a manner proportionate to the importance and complexity of the work involved.

During the installation of a new Rector and during his visitations, the Provincial will clearly present the role and responsibilities of the Rector – including juridical aspects – to the confreres and the members of the educative and pastoral community involved in animation and leadership roles.

The service of authority is responsible for supervising the quality and transparency of the administration for the sake of the mission: "Supervision and appropriate controls are not intended to be means of limiting the autonomy of an entity, nor are they signs of a lack of confidence. Rather they



express the service of communion and transparency, as well as providing protection for those with the delicate tasks of administration.”⁵⁷ GC26 had invited us to “responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity”: “Manage resources in a responsible, transparent way, consistent with the purposes of the mission, putting the necessary checks and balances in place at local, provincial, world level.” (GC26 94)

Aspects under the Rector’s supervision

102. The main administrative aspects under the supervision of the Rector and his Council are:

- Evaluating the correct functioning of administration services.
- Planning for resources to ensure the viability and sustainability of the Work.
- Approving budgets and following up accounts.
- Following up the persons involved in the Salesian Work (selection of personnel and assessment of performance).
- Conserving the local archives, guaranteeing confidentiality and data protection, and compiling the house chronicle.
- Archiving of historical and artistic heritage, as directed by the General Secretariat, Provincial Administration or by the Provincial Directory. (R 62)

These general principles related to the administration of assets are regulated by R 198-202 and are further specified in the section ‘poverty and administration of goods’ of the Provincial Directories. (R 190) The Rector is responsible to the Provincial, and follows all these provincial guidelines, making them known and seeing that they are implemented, in



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view of an orderly and effective pastoral and educative service.

As per the provisions of the Provincial Directories, the Rector invites lay administrators, as also the lay people in charge of sectors of the Work, to take part, without right to vote, in meetings of the Local Council whenever their presence is required. (Cf. GC26 121)

- The Rector **periodically studies with his Council the Regulations relevant to the economy and administration**, as well as the pertinent section of the Provincial Directory. (GC26 88)
- The **community is involved in the preparation of the annual budget** and financial statements. (GC26 88)
- It hands over **to the province “surplus funds that may be available.”** (R197, GC26 88)
- The community makes the **annual *scrutinium paupertatis***. (R 65, GC26 88)
- Where there is a Salesian economer, **the Rector submits his own monthly accounts** to him.



6. ONGOING FORMATION

Essential for vocational fidelity

103. Ongoing formation in the consecrated life is essential for the vocational fidelity of each confrere and the community. In recent decades, reflection on ongoing formation and formation initiatives has intensified.⁵⁸ In this area, those entrusted with the service of authority have a precise responsibility:

A task always to be considered most important today on the part of persons in authority is that of accompanying the persons for whom they are called to care throughout their lives. This they do not only by offering help in resolving possible problems or in managing possible crises, but also in paying attention to the normal growth of each one in every phase and season of life, in order to guarantee that 'youthfulness of spirit which lasts through time' (VC 70) and that makes the consecrated person ever more conformed to the 'sentiments which were in Christ Jesus.' (Phil 2:5)

Therefore, it will be the responsibility of persons in authority to keep a high level of openness to being formed as well as the ability to learn from life. In particular, this is important to do regarding the freedom of letting oneself be formed by others and for each one to feel a responsibility for the growth of others. Both will be fostered by making use of means of growth in community passed on by tradition and that are today especially recommended by those who have solid experience in the field of spiritual formation: sharing of the Word, personal and community plans, communitarian discernment, review of one's life and fraternal correction. (FT 13g)

6.1 IN THE COMMUNITY

'Formation' primarily means 'ongoing formation' and the Rector is its first animator

104. In the two chapters of our Constitutions dedicated to the topic, 'formation' primarily means 'ongoing formation.' It is our daily response to God's call (C 96), and is lifelong. (C 98) It is our ability to discern the voice of the Spirit and in this way learn from all the experiences of life, good and bad. (C 98, 119) Ongoing formation is therefore a personal attitude of discernment in all life's circumstances, and takes place first and foremost in the local community. (GC25 49-62)⁵⁹



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Like the Church, the Congregation also reminds the Rector of his responsibility to animate and guide the formation of the community, as also the joint formation of Salesians and lay members of the educative and pastoral community:

The Rector is the first animator of the experience of ongoing formation in his community. Suitably prepared for his role, he:

- *fosters a climate and a pattern of internal and external relations* which enhance the daily life of the community (“common spiritual direction, conferences, good-nights and informal meetings” – R 175);
- *communicates to the confreres the Salesian principles of life and work*; to this end he makes known and uses ecclesial and Salesian documents as his favoured sources, and cultivates communion with the Province and the Congregation;
- *animates the Salesian mission* by ensuring that the Assembly of the confreres and the Local Council assume their responsibilities, and encouraging meetings that contribute to brotherhood, updating and relaxation;
- *promotes processes of relationship and formation with the Salesian Family and the educative and pastoral community*, safeguarding the Salesian charism in the Salesian educative and pastoral plan, and encouraging the Salesian community to carry out its specific role of animation; he makes intelligent use of means of animation such as Salesian news and concrete sharing of experiences. (FSDB 544)

Community plan for ongoing formation

105. The Congregation has made efforts in the area of ongoing formation, while at the same time acknowledging difficulties in assuming this vocational responsibility.⁶⁰ Each province, through the Formation Commission, the Provincial Directory and the Provincial Formation Plan, works out means and formative proposals for individual confreres, the communities and the EPC.



This provincial framework helps Rectors and communities draw up the Community Plan⁶¹ so as to include meaningful proposals for ongoing formation. They will encourage confreres to grow in their identity and vocation, and promote a culture of reading, reflection and writing. The areas that can be included in the plan (human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral) are specified according to the contexts and concrete situations. As possible topics GC25 57 indicates human, relational and affective maturity, Christian and Salesian identity, the deepening of the Preventive System, formation to teamwork and planning mentality, knowledge of the cultural context and the youth reality, the inculturation of the Gospel and the Salesian charism.

Besides these, there are many other themes such as social communication and the human sciences, pastoral updating, consecrated life, spirituality... and of course the specific needs of each community. Confreres will certainly need to deepen their understanding of the digital universe if they are to accompany young people today, and if they are to make full and proper use of the internet and digital technologies as a means for the New Evangelization.⁶²

Joint formation of Salesians and lay people

106. The formation of those who share the Salesian mission in the educative pastoral community is an absolute priority. The more it is the result of a common concern and commitment between confreres and laity the more it will be constructive for all, starting from the first beneficiaries of our presence, the young people to whom we are sent. This is an explicit requirement of the last General Chapters.⁶³

One of the first objectives that the Rector pursues together with the Councils of the Salesian community and the EPC is, therefore, the drawing up of a realistic formation plan for all those who share in the Salesian mission, harmonized



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with the SEPP and the annual plan of the Salesian community.⁶⁴

There is, further, also the need for the formation of the parents who form part of the EPC, in line with the renewed awareness of the fundamental role of the family in society and in the Church, prompted by the two synodal assemblies focused on family life and the subsequent apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. No one has a more important place in the field of education than parents.⁶⁵ This is a field where networking among communities, provincial animation teams, and other ecclesial and social realities becomes very helpful: in many places parents have to face unprecedented challenges, and local communities may find it difficult on their own to come up with adequate responses and offer quality formation.

The Rectors of formation houses and their formation teams have a special role to play with regard to the joint formation of Salesians and lay people. Meaningful experiences of growth in the core values of the charism enable all involved to develop the interest and ability to walk and work together. Besides the gifts we share in common, such as the Preventive System, there are also many areas in which lay people have specific gifts and competences to offer young Salesians, and vice versa.

To make these processes effective, good planning is needed at provincial level, under the guidance of the Provincial Formation Delegate and the Provincial Formation Commission.



- The Rector guides the community to a **realistic elaboration and regular evaluation of the Community Plan**, following the guidelines of the province.
- The community reflects on the letter of Fr Pascual Chávez, “**Vocation and formation. Gift and commitment**” (AGC 416); the guidelines of the Councillor for Formation: “Formation is Lifelong” AGC 425; and FSDB chapter 12.
- The Rector and Council ensure the quality of the **elements of community life that contribute to ongoing formation**: personal prayer and the *lectio divina*; sharing of pastoral, ecclesial and social experiences; the good-night talk; constant information about ways to deepen these themes; well selected materials for spiritual reading in common. (R 71)
- The community takes care of **the library** and facilitates access to ecclesial, Salesian and pastoral documents that keep alive the attitude of formation.
- Aware of their need to learn to relate to lay people, the **confreres participate in joint formation** moments with lay people.
- Rectors of formation communities ensure that joint formation of Salesians and lay people begins already in the years of **initial formation**.
- The Rector and his Council ensure **participation in formation initiatives** at different levels: initial formation, the quinquennium, vocational consolidation in the stage of maturity, preparation for old age, special initiatives on the occasion of anniversaries of profession and ordination, specific preparation for pastoral services, etc....



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6.2 FOR THE RECTOR HIMSELF

The Rector also needs ongoing formation and accompaniment

107. As a brother among brothers at the service of the Father, the Rector also needs ongoing formation to strengthen his vocational fidelity. He looks after his own formation so as to carry out the service entrusted to him, seeks personal accompaniment, and draws up a Personal Plan of Life, so as to be not 'a blind man leading the blind' (Lk 6:39), but a guide who is guided. He has a strong sense of belonging to the province and to the Congregation, works with constant reference to the Organic Provincial Plan and the Provincial Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan, and knows he can depend on the Provincial and the various delegates for encouragement, support and guidance.

One of the most common difficulties shared by Rectors is the lack of time due to the excessive load of work and responsibilities. This is a serious challenge for many and can be a heavy burden. In the capacity for discernment that pertains to the Rector's office, two skills are particularly important and need to be developed and strengthened: the ability to delegate and share responsibilities and tasks; and the ability to prioritize, with due distinction between what is important and cannot be neglected, and what is urgent, but should be addressed in a way that will not be detrimental to what is important. It is interesting to see that this advice comes from Don Bosco himself, when he spoke to Rectors in the first General Chapter of the Congregation:

Two particular situations have hampered the smooth running of our houses in the past: 1. Due to lack of personnel, the director was so badly overloaded with work that he could not possibly run the house smoothly. This situation has been gradually improving, though the operation is still not as smooth as it should be. Our basic principle must be: let the director be a director, that is, direct others in the course of their work. He should supervise and plan without putting his own hand to the work. If he cannot find fully qualified



people for a certain task, let him be satisfied with the less qualified, but he should not yield to the desire to do things himself in order to see them done better. He must see to it that everyone carries out his duties, but must involve himself in none of them, so as to give himself time to do what I fear I have never adequately stressed. (BM XIII, 189-190)

Province planning for the formation of Rectors

108. The Rector is also keenly aware that the Salesian spirit and mission is shared with many lay people and members of the Salesian Family, and that the subject of the mission is the educative and pastoral community, within which the Salesian religious community forms part of the animating nucleus. He knows that education and evangelization is a question of preparing young people to take their place in Church and in society, and to live life as a vocation to love. He is also very much aware that the agents of education today are many, chief among them being the means of social communication and the digital world. Each of these factors has its implication for his own formation as well as that of the EPC.

Our General Chapters, however, acknowledge that Rectors often do not have prior preparation for their service, and that they are not accompanied in a systematic way by the Province.⁶⁶ This calls for a serious reflection in each Province and a plan for the formation of Rectors at provincial or regional level, as requested by GC25 65 and repeated by GC27 69.10.

Good planning for the formation of Rectors at provincial level is a guarantee of quality formation, overcoming the risk of Rectors' meetings dedicated mainly to matters of organization and business. A valuable help for the formation of Rectors comes from the regional centres for ongoing formation. Digital technology, which favours networking and sharing of resources, can also be a great support in the formation of Rectors.



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Improving consultation and discernment leading to appointment of Rectors

109. The mandatory consultation for the appointment of Rectors (C 177, R 170) is a source of information for the Provincial and his Council regarding the needs of the house and the expectations about the new Rector. It also helps the Rector to identify and take up the priorities and needs of each community and house.

The sharing of 2016 among Rectors, Provincial Councils, local communities and individual confreres in view of the revision of the Rector's Manual revealed a desire to improve the way consultations are done, as also the discernment leading to appointments of Rectors. "In the consultation a better methodology is needed, based on good common criteria, deeper knowledge of the situation of the houses and the situation of the confrere, before coming to a nomination. Special attention should be given to the ability by potential candidates to share and entrust responsibilities to others and to their capacity to lead."⁶⁷ Equally, there is an emphasis on better preparation of new Rectors, requesting that plans be drawn up at regional level, and that formation be focused especially on "the accompaniment of confreres and collaborators, community animation, active listening, spiritual paternity, managing changes and transitions." These aspects are to be given attention in comparison with other issues of an administrative and managerial nature. From all the regions there was also a strong appeal for Rectors with the ability to work collegially with the EPC, since "it should be the Rector who co-ordinates and animates the community in this."⁶⁹

Formation of Rectors: the main areas

110. In view of the provincial plan for the formation of Rectors and the Rector's own personal formation program, here are the main areas to take care of:



Spiritual life: the religious life of the Rector (as consecrated Salesian, educator-pastor-priest in the Salesian community and in the EPC).

Human maturity: self-knowledge; elements of psychology for understanding and guiding the dynamics of persons and groups, teams, community. Elements of human relationships, and relationship skills. Formation to strength of mind, patience, endurance of loneliness and criticism, confronting difficult confreres and people. Overcoming certain defects pointed out by confreres (authoritarianism, clericalism, coldness in relationship, favouritism, personal interests, hunger for power, weakness in decision-making, lack of leadership...).

Spiritual animation of confreres, lay people and young people. Formation for accompaniment and discernment.

General cultural preparation and knowledge of **youth culture**.

Consecrated life, Salesianity, pastoral ministry, theology.

Salesian style of authority: communion, shared responsibility, networking, collaboration, planning mentality, provincial plan, animation of the pastoral dimension, with faith education as the basic objective.

Methodology of animation and governance: leadership, teamwork, formation for communication, listening, guidance of teams (in the community, the Work, the EPC, the Salesian Family), planning mentality, communion and sharing of responsibility, conflict management.⁷⁰

Specific themes according to the circumstances and problems to be faced, both in the local and in the provincial community.



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Economic, administrative, legal issues.

Dealing with **civil authorities, the mass media and social groups.**

Dealing with **special cases** (protection of minors, problems with justice, canonical processes, confreres in irregular situations or with inappropriate attitudes in consecrated life...), according to the protocols indicated by the province in relation to civil authorities.

Formation and accompaniment of Rectors by the Provincial and his Council

111. Some points to be kept in mind by the Provincial and his Council for the formation and accompaniment of Rectors:

Careful study of the consultations for the appointment of the Rector, keeping in mind the three focuses proposed by Fr Vecchi and repeated by Fr Chávez.⁷¹

Accompaniment and closeness on the part of the Provincial and of the Provincial Council, through appropriately planned visits, meetings, talks....

Drawing up the **Provincial Plan for the formation of the Rectors**, taking advantage also of inter-provincial initiatives in this regard.

Formation of newly appointed Rectors with a variety of methodologies (theoretical, experiential...).

Periodic meetings of Rectors for sharing, reinforcing the sense of a provincial plan, deepening unity and shared responsibility, facing specific problems, reflecting together, and identifying common orientations; and also for planning the formation of Rectors. The Provincial will make sure therefore that these meetings are truly moments of forma-



tion and not only ‘business’ meetings.

Specific spiritual formation initiatives for Rectors: annual retreats, recollections, Salesianity Days, pilgrimage to the places of Don Bosco, formation experiences in the Holy Land...

Making known every year the **Province Policy for the Protection of Minors**.

Promotion of **online resources**, and creation of a system for sharing between Rectors and the Provincial Council (email, digital magazine, messages, Rectors’ WhatsApp group, reflection materials...).

Remote formation: preparation of confreres in initial formation, especially aspirants to the priesthood, in the areas of community and pastoral animation, leadership, planning mentality, teamwork, sharing of responsibility, and working with lay people sharing the Salesian mission.

**At the level of the
Congregation**

112. At the level of the Congregation:

The Formation Department offers online resources for the formation of Rectors (texts, audio-visual hyperlinks, etc.), and promotes something similar at regional and provincial levels.





¹ The three dimensions, spiritual experience, fraternity and mission – in these or similar terms – structure the ecclesial documents on consecrated life (*Vita Consecrata, Faciem Tuam*) and also the reflections of GC27, and we find them already in our Constitutions: “Our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers.” (C 3) We keep in mind, however, the strong unity of our life: ours is an apostolic consecration in which mission and consecration are totalizing, define each other, and cannot be reduced merely to some particular sectors of Salesian life. (Cf. GC22, 20)

² FT 13a. FLC 50 says the same thing: If consecrated persons have dedicated themselves to the total service of God, authority promotes and sustains their consecration. In a certain sense, authority can be seen as ‘servant of the servants of God’. Authority has as its main task building in unity the brothers and sisters of ‘a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all’. A superior must therefore be, above all, a spiritual person, convinced of the primacy of the spiritual, both with respect to personal life and for the development of fraternal life; in other words, he or she must know that the more the love of God increases in each individual heart, the more unity there will be between hearts. / Thus, the superior’s main task will be the spiritual, community and apostolic animation of his or her community.

³ GC27 2-3, 35-36; SAC 12-13.

⁴ FT 13b: “*Persons in authority are called to guarantee to the community the time for and the quality of prayer, looking after the community’s daily faithfulness to prayer, in the awareness that the community approaches God with small but constant steps, everyday and by everyone’s effort, and that consecrated persons can be useful to one another to the extent that they are united to God.*”

⁵ The Congregation has made many efforts to offer reflections and to animate the life of prayer of the Salesian: for a recent example, see the reflection offered by the General Councillor for Formation, “Life as Prayer” (AGC 421) 32-42. See also the many analyses and documents, as for example GC25 26, 30-31. GC27 1 says: “We wish, as individuals and communities, to give **primacy to God** in our lives, challenged by Salesian holiness and the thirst young people have for authenticity. We are more aware that only a personal encounter with God, through his Word, the Sacraments and our neighbour, can make us significant and



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authentic witnesses in the Church and society.” At the same time GC27 3 recognizes our shortcomings: “At the same time we find that **who we are and what we do does not always appear to be rooted in faith, hope and charity**, and does not clearly show that the initiative begins from God and always returns to Him. At times the **Eucharist** is not seen or experienced as the source and support of communion, and prayer in common which builds and strengthens fraternal life is too easily set aside. It is our young people and their families in particular who question us on our spiritual roots and vocational motivation, reawakening in us our identity as consecrated persons and our educative and pastoral mission.”

⁶ In the process for the canonization of Don Bosco, Fr. Philp Rinaldi testified under oath that he often found Don Bosco, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, deep in prayer – BM XIX, 369. See also BM III, 24; BM IV, 130.

⁷ *Salesian Sources*, 1138; 1198-1199; 1214; 1248; 1294-95.

⁸ Cleric Giovanni Arata (1858 – 1878), see: http://www.donboscosanto.eu/oe/biografie_dei_salesiani_defunti_negli_anni_1883_e_1884.php

Cleric Cesare Peloso (1860 – 1878), see: [http://www.donboscosanto.eu/oe/societa_di_san_francesco_di_sales._anno_1879.php#_Toc228457543 {71} \[39\]}}](http://www.donboscosanto.eu/oe/societa_di_san_francesco_di_sales._anno_1879.php#_Toc228457543 {71} [39]).

Cleric Carlo Becchio (1844 - 1877), see: [http://www.donboscosanto.eu/oe/societa_di_san_francesco_di_sales._anno_1879.php#_Toc228457543 {37\[5\]}}](http://www.donboscosanto.eu/oe/societa_di_san_francesco_di_sales._anno_1879.php#_Toc228457543 {37[5]}).

⁹ SAC 28-29; FT 19; GC27 45.

¹⁰ C 95; cf. AGC 421 32-42.

¹¹ C 45; GC26 55, 74-76; AGC 424 65-75.

¹² FT 13e: “*Persons in authority are called to keep the charism of their own religious family alive.* The exercise of authority also includes putting oneself at the service of the proper charism of the institute to which one belongs, keeping it carefully and making it real in the local community and in the province or the entire institute, according to the plans and orientations offered, in particular by General Chapters (or analogous meetings). What is required of persons in authority is an adequate knowledge of the charism of the institute, making it part of themselves,



in order then better to see it in relation to community life and in relation to its place in ecclesial and social contexts.”

¹³ The cry of Pope Francis, “Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community!” (EG 92) reflects the desire of the Church expressed in various documents: *Fraternal Life in Community, Starting Afresh from Christ, Faciem Tuam, New Wine in New Wineskins*. FLC 54-57, FT 22 etc. make reference to concrete ways in which fraternal life is expressed, insisting that the effort to build fraternity be transformed into witness, into mission that makes this way of life credible.

¹⁴ See FT 22; FLC 54-57.

¹⁵ GC27 speaks of the lights and shadows in our fraternal life (8-21, 39-51) and proposes suitable lines of action. The Rector is given special recommendations for realizing the prophecy of fraternity: “The Rector/Director is a central figure; more than a manager he is a father who brings his family together in communion and apostolic service.” (GC27 51)

In his convocation of GC27 (AGC 413 35), Fr Pascual Chávez makes a clear synthesis: “The profound renewal of our religious and Salesian life will therefore be achieved also through a profound renewal of our fraternal life in community. Of particular importance in this is the style of animation and governance of the *Rector*, in his role of spiritual authority, which helps the confreres in their vocational journey, by means of a lively and intelligent form of community animation and attentive personal accompaniment; an authority which builds unity, which creates a family atmosphere able to foster fraternal sharing and co-responsibility; a pastoral authority which guides and directs all the people, the activities and the resources towards the objectives of education and evangelisation which are the special features of our mission; an authority which knows how to make the necessary decisions and to ensure their implementation.”

¹⁶ FLC 50: “An authority conducive to unity is one concerned to create a climate favourable to sharing and co-responsibility; to encourage all to contribute to the affairs of all; to encourage members to assume and to respect responsibility; to promote, by their respect for the human person, voluntary obedience; to listen willingly to the members, promoting their harmonious collaboration for the good of the institute and the Church; to engage in dialogue and offer timely opportunities for encounter; to give courage and hope in times of difficulty; to look ahead



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and point to new horizons for mission. Still more: an authority which seeks to maintain a balance among the various aspects of community life – between prayer and work, apostolate and formation, work and rest. The authority of a superior works so that the religious house is not merely a place of residence, a collection of subjects each of whom lives an individual history, but a ‘fraternal community in Christ’.”

¹⁷ The indications of GC25 15 can be of help here:

[The community] encourages specific occasions of community life, such as prayer together, meetings, retreats, revision of life, council meetings, times of recreation, community day. In these through suitable arrangements the confreres are helped to:

- express the riches of their own interior lived experience;
- share their own worries and problems, plans and educative and pastoral activities;
- practise listening, dialogue, the acceptance of different opinions and fraternal correction.

Fr Pascual Chávez, in his convocation of GC27 (AGC 413 33-34), speaks of certain circumstances that condition relationships in community and the need to respond with maturity and in a religious way:

It is impossible to imagine Salesian religious life without that communion which is realised in the common life and in the shared mission. The requirement for fraternity arises from the fact of our being sons of the same Father and members of the Body of Christ; religious life creates a real family made up of people who share the same faith and the same plan of life. From the typically Salesian standpoint, we are called to create and to live the family spirit as Don Bosco wanted it and lived it.

Obviously, as in other areas of religious life, here too we can identify some dangers, for example, that of organising a style of relationships which are merely functional or hierarchical or falsely democratic. Rather, our relationships ought to be fraternal and friendly, which lead us to love each other to the extent of sharing everything. This criterion helps us to see that the community is well understood and lived, when it is nourished by communion and leads to communion. A community without communion, with all that this implies with regard to acceptance, appreciation and esteem, mutual assistance and love, is reduced to a group



in which people may have a place but where in fact they are left isolated. On the other hand, in religious life, communion without community is a narcissistic way of living and consequently a contradiction, since it is a subtle form of individualism.

Nowadays religious have to make a great shared effort in order to create community, where the spiritual dimension, human qualities and apostolic commitment of each member means that life is really good, beautiful and happy. In other words, without the human dimension, the quality of spiritual life and apostolic commitment there is no real fraternity.

¹⁸ The indications of R 176 are simple. The Church indicates that the service of authority promotes in different ways listening, an atmosphere favourable to dialogue, the participation with shared responsibility in common tasks, the attention given to each confrere and to the community, the attitude of community discernment. (Cf. FT 20).

It adds an aspect important for communication and communion of life: "It is not enough to place material goods in common, but still more significant is the communion of goods and personal abilities of endowments and talents, of intuitions and inspirations, and still more fundamental, and to be promoted, is the sharing of spiritual goods, of listening to the Word of God, of faith: 'the more we share those things which are central and vital, the more the fraternal bond grows in strength'." (FT 20)

¹⁹ *Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* (21 November 2014) 4.

²⁰ GC27 13-17, 39-51, 70-71.

²¹ FT 25:

All this implies that authority be recognized as an important task in carrying out the mission, faithful to the charism proper to each. This is not a simple task, nor one without difficulties and ambiguities. In the past, the risk could come from persons in authority being directed mainly towards managing the work, with the danger of not taking care of persons. Today, the risk can come rather from excessive fear of hurting others' feelings or from a fragmentation of competencies and responsibilities that weakens the unified movement towards the common objective and frustrates the role of authority. / However, persons in authority are not



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only responsible for the animation of the community but also for the coordinating of the various competencies in relation to the mission. Thus, they respect the roles and follow the internal norms of the Institute.

The document goes on to indicate other aspects to be attended to by the person entrusted with the service of authority: (a) He encourages people to take up responsibilities, and respects them once they have been taken up; (b) he invites them to confront differences of opinion in a spirit of communion; (c) He keeps a balance between the different dimensions of consecrated life; (d) He has a merciful heart; (e) he has a sense of justice; (f) he promotes collaboration with lay people.

²² XV Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Instrumentum Laboris* (2018) 2. Cf. CV Chapter 9.

²³ GC26 34, 38, 43, 48, 106, 109.

²⁴ FoR 160-162. GC26 dedicated one of the themes of its reflection and proposal to the “need for vocation ministry.” GC27 75.1 recalls this important service to the young: “Developing a culture of vocation and care for vocations to Salesian life, cultivating the art of accompaniment and preparing Salesians and lay people to become spiritual guides of the young.”

²⁵ FT 20b:

Persons in authority will have to be concerned with creating an environment of trust, promoting the recognition of the abilities and the sensitivities of individuals. Moreover, with words and deeds they will nourish the conviction that the community requires participation and therefore information.

In addition to listening, persons in authority will value sincere and free dialogue — sharing feelings, perspectives and plans: in this atmosphere, each one will be able to have his or her true identity recognized and to improve his or her own relational abilities. Persons in authority will not be afraid to recognize and accept those problems that can easily arise from searching, deciding, working and together undertaking the best ways of realizing a fruitful collaboration. On the contrary, they will look for the causes of any possible uneasiness and misunderstandings, knowing how to propose solutions, shared as much as possible. Moreover, they will commit themselves to finding ways of overcoming any form of childishness, and discourage whatever attempts



are made to avoid responsibility or to evade major commitments, to close oneself in one's own world and in one's own interests or to work in an isolated manner.

²⁶ The fundamental guidelines laid down in FT20 are: the creation of an atmosphere favourable to dialogue, sharing and shared responsibility; the solicitation of the contribution of all for the concerns of all; at the service of the individual and of the community.

²⁷ Cf. NW 19-21, 41-45; FLC 47-53. With reference to the mission FT 25 says:

Many are the challenges that the present time places on persons in authority in the task of coordinating energies for the mission. Some important tasks are also listed here:

a) Persons in authority encourage the taking up of responsibilities and respect them when taken up

For some, responsibilities can provoke a sense of fear. Therefore, it is necessary that persons in authority convey to their collaborators Christian strength and the courage to face difficulties, overcoming fears and attitudes of giving up.

Their concern will be sharing not only information but also responsibilities, committing themselves to respecting each one in his or her own rightful autonomy. This involves, on the part of authority, a patient coordination and, on the part of the consecrated person, a sincere openness to working together.

Persons in authority need to 'be present' when necessary, to foster in the members of the community the sense of interdependence, as far from childish dependence as from a self-sufficient independence. This interdependence is the fruit of that interior freedom that permits each one to work and collaborate, to substitute as well as to be substituted for, to take an active part and to make his or her own contribution, even from behind the scenes.

Whoever exercises the service of authority will have to be attentive not to give in to the temptation of personal self-sufficiency, to believe that everything depends on him or her and that it would not be important and useful to foster community participation; it is better to take one step together than to take two or more alone.



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²⁸ These principles are explained in MSD 50-53 (authority that promotes participation and sharing of responsibility in dialogue), 163-167 (climate of true shared responsibility) and 133-156 (shared responsibility and pastoral coordination). GC24 106-148 indicates the following as areas of commitment: broadening the involvement, promoting sharing of responsibility, and exploiting communication.

²⁹ In this regard, it is meaningful to see the educative perspectives present in *Amoris Laetitia*, particularly in Ch. VII. They are inspiring for any kind of leadership, even more so for us Salesians, called to be educators and pastors also in the manner of exercising the service of authority. “Were maturity merely the development of something already present in our genetic code, not much would have to be done. But prudence, good judgement and common sense are dependent not on purely quantitative growth factors, but rather on a whole series of things that come together deep within each person, or better, at the very core of our freedom. Inevitably, each child will surprise us with ideas and projects born of that freedom, which challenge us to rethink our own ideas. This is a good thing. Education includes encouraging the responsible use of freedom to face issues with good sense and intelligence. It involves forming persons who readily understand that their own lives, and the life of the community, are in their hands, and that freedom is itself a great gift.” (AL 262)

³⁰ Cf. XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* (2018) 73-76.

³¹ Cf. FT 20e:

Even if true and appropriate discernment is reserved to the most important decisions, the spirit of discernment ought to characterize every decision-making process that involves the community. A time of individual prayer and reflection together with a series of important attitudes for choosing together what is right and pleasing to God, should never be missing prior to every decision. Here are some of these attitudes:

– determination to seek nothing other than the divine will, letting oneself be inspired by God’s way of acting as seen in the Sacred Scriptures and in the history of the charism of the institute, and with the awareness that evangelical logic is often ‘upside-down’ in relation to human logic that looks



for success, efficiency and recognition;

– openness to recognize in each brother or sister the ability to discover the truth, even if partial, and consequently to welcome his or her opinions as mediation for discovering together the will of God — an openness to the point of knowing how to recognize the ideas of others as better than one's own;

– attention to the signs of the times, to the expectations of the people, to the needs of the poor, to the pressing needs of evangelization, to the priorities of the Universal Church and of particular churches and to the indications of Chapters and of major superiors;

– freedom from prejudices, from excessive attachment to one's own ideas, from perceptual frameworks which are rigid or distorted and from strong positions which frustrate the diversity of opinions;

– courage to ground firmly one's own ideas while also opening oneself to new perspectives and to changing one's own point of view;

– firm proposal to maintain unity in any case, whatever the final decision might be.

³² MSD 247-265 presents a history of the friendly talk in Salesian life since the beginnings of the Congregation and offers many concrete indications, while recognizing the situation of crisis and the need for renewal. GC25 65 and GC27 42 invite us to rediscover this means of animation of Salesian life. A valuable study on this theme is Pietro Brocardo, *Maturare in dialogo fraterno. Dal rendiconto di don Bosco al colloquio fraterno* (Rome: LAS, 2000).

³³ Marco Bay, *Giovani Salesiani e accompagnamento. Risultati di una ricerca internazionale* (Rome: LAS, 2018).

³⁴ The suggestions given by FT 20a about the attitude of listening can be applied to the talk with the Rector:

Listening is one of the principal ministries of superiors for which they must always be available, above all for those who feel isolated and in need of attention. In fact, listening means accepting the other unconditionally, giving him or



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her space in one's own heart. For this listening conveys affection and understanding, declares that the other is appreciated, and that his or her presence and opinion are taken into consideration.

Whoever presides must remember that the one who does not listen to his brother or sister does not know how to listen to God either, that an attentive listening allows one to better coordinate the energy and gifts that the Spirit gives to the community and also, when making decisions, to keep in mind the limits and the difficulties of some members. Time spent in listening is never time wasted, and listening can often prevent crises and difficult times both on the individual and community levels.

³⁵ MSD 264:

The very nature of the friendly talk with the Rector calls for rigorous secrecy and confidentiality. 'Let the Rector be careful never to reveal to others the faults a confrere may have, even when they may already know of them through other channels. Let it be obvious to his subjects that he is able to respect the confidentiality of what is entrusted to him. It only takes some small indiscretion to weaken and maybe entirely destroy the confidence they have shown him.' (Manuale del direttore of Don Paolo Albera 131).

For reasons inherent in your office, you may be asked by the Provincial for your opinion on some confrere or other, and in such a case you have to give the necessary information objectively and responsibly. But it should be based exclusively on the external behaviour of the confrere concerned and on what others may say about him. Confidences that may have been given in private talks are protected by a rigorous secret: nihil, nunquam, nulli [nothing, never, to no one].

³⁶ Bay 63, 98, 146, 201, 279, 316, 408.

³⁷ FT 13g:

Persons in authority are called to accompany the journey of ongoing formation. A task always to be considered most important today on the part of persons in authority is that of accompanying the persons for whom they are called to care throughout their lives. This they do not only by offering help



in resolving possible problems or in managing possible crises but also in paying attention to the normal growth of each one in every phase and season of life, in order to guarantee that “youthfulness of spirit which lasts through time” (VC 70) and that makes the consecrated person ever more conformed to the “sentiments which were in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 2:5)

³⁸ This is a matter addressed in different places in our Salesian literature: MSD 265-278 brings together some indications for accompaniment and spiritual direction in Salesian life, both in initial and in ongoing formation, recalling also the experience of Don Bosco and the Salesian tradition. FSDB 260-263 indicates some characteristics of accompaniment and spiritual direction in the life of the Salesian.

³⁹ See FSDB 292, including the reference to ACS 244 97, and *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* (2019) 197.

⁴⁰ See the unpublished comment by the Formation Department entitled “Personal project of life: A journey of creative fidelity towards sanctity” (2003). Very useful is also the article by Giuseppe M. Roggia, “Il progetto di vita personale,” in *Formazione affettivo-sessuale. Itinerario per I seminaristi e giovani consacrati e consacrate*, ed. P. Gambini, M.L. Llanos and G.M. Roggia (Bologna: EDB, 2017) 341-347.

⁴¹ F. Cereda, “The Salesian community plan. A process of discernment and sharing,” Letter to Provincials and their Councils and Delegates for Formation, Rome 13 October 2002. It is interesting to note that the Italian text of GC25 72-74 uses the expression ‘progetto comunitario,’ which in the English text is rendered as ‘community project,’ whereas the letter of Cereda translates it as ‘community plan.’ Still, it is clear that GC25 72-74 invites the community to work out a common vision and to adopt common goals, and not merely restrict itself to programming (in the sense of fixing the agenda and annual calendar):

The community becomes accustomed to working according to a planning mentality:

- developing among the confreres a common and shared vision of the community project and helping each one to discover and give due value to his own talents and qualities. The community accepts each member with his strong points and limitations, and decides on roles of shared responsibility for each one.



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- living the project as a community process that starts from the daily experience of the confreres. The objective is not only the final design of the project, but especially the giving of effect to continued assessments of aims, values and expectations which lead the confreres to a practical living and working together
- encouraging moments of dialogue (Assembly of Confreres, Local Council), of discernment of God's will (times of prayer, listening to God's Word through the lectio divina, reference to the magisterium of the Church and the Congregation), in harmony with the Organic Provincial Plan each community agrees on, draws up, and revises each year the progress of its own project.
- questioning itself in particular on the following aspects: Who do we want to be at the present day as a local community? How can we, as a local community, be present in a religious and Salesian manner, animate the EPC and give evangelical witness? What practical consequences follow for the community? What choices must we make right now? What kind of personal and community formation do we need? (GC25 73)

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ FLC 32:

There are many ways in which spiritual gifts can be shared and communicated. Besides the ones already mentioned (sharing the word and the experience of God, communal discernment, community projects), we should recall fraternal correction, review of life, and other forms characteristic of the tradition. These are concrete ways of putting at the service of others and of pouring into the community the gifts which the Spirit gives so abundantly for its upbuilding and for its mission in the world.

FT 13g (Persons in authority called to accompany the journey of ongoing formation):

Therefore, it will be the responsibility of persons in authority to keep a high level of openness to being formed as well as the ability to learn from life. In particular, this is important to do regarding the freedom of letting oneself be formed by



others and for each one to feel a responsibility for the growth of others. Both will be fostered by making use of means of growth in community passed on by tradition and that are today especially recommended by those who have solid experience in the field of spiritual formation: sharing of the Word, personal and community plans, communitarian discernment, review of one's life and fraternal correction.

⁴⁴ “Authority must not be anything other than being at the service of communion – a true ministry for accompanying brothers and sisters towards conscious and responsible fidelity. In fact, discussion among brothers or sisters and listening to each individual involved becomes an essential occasion for the exercise of the service of authority that is evangelical.” (NW 41)

⁴⁵ Cf. XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* (2018) 118, and the citation in the note of International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (2 March 2018) 9 and 64.

⁴⁶ See C 179, 180, 186.

⁴⁷ GC27 15, 70.2, 88c.

⁴⁸ See Fr Ángel Fernández Artime's clear emphasis on the shared mission with lay mission partners in the third part of the letter of convocation of GC28. (AGC 427)

⁴⁹ C 45, GC26 76, AGC 424.

⁵⁰ See AGC 424 65-75 for an account of the journey of the Congregation, and for a reflection as requested by GC27 28, 69.7, and earlier by GC21 and GC26. See MSD 169-171 for the fundamental guidelines to be kept in mind by the Rector in order to value the two ways of living the Salesian vocation and each confrere for what he is.

⁵¹ C 115: “Throughout the whole period of initial formation, importance is given not only to study but also to the pastoral activities of our mission. The practical training period provides opportunity for a deeper living experience of Salesian educative and pastoral action. During this time the young confrere gets practice in the preventive system, particularly in Salesian assistance. With the support of the Rector and the community, he is able to integrate his activity and the fundamental



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values of his vocation.” (Cf. R 86, 96)

⁵² See VC 44, FLC 63, NW 47.

⁵³ GC26 34, GC27 69.4.

⁵⁴ AGC 377 8. Cf. also G. Basañes, letter of 11 November 2018 addressed to sick and elderly confreres.

⁵⁵ See AGC 425 22-24, which mentions a *Vademecum* on this matter to be sent to the Provincials.

⁵⁶ Cf. CICLSAL, *Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and in Societies of Apostolic Life* (2014) 12.

⁵⁷ CICLSAL, *Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets* 10.

⁵⁸ Cf. VC 69-71, NW 16-35. SAC 15:

The times in which we are living call for a general rethinking of the formation of consecrated men and women, which is no longer limited to one period of life. Not only to enable them to become better able to insert themselves into a reality which changes with a rhythm which is often frenetic but also and more importantly because consecrated life itself, of its nature, calls for the constant openness of those who are called to it. If, in fact, consecrated life is in itself ‘a progressive taking on of the attitude of Christ’, (VC 65) it seems evident that such a path must endure for a lifetime and involve the whole person, heart, mind and strength (cf. Mt 22:37) reshaping the person in the likeness of the Son who gives himself to the Father for the good of humanity. Thus understood, formation is no longer only a teaching period in preparation for vows but also represents a theological way of thinking of consecrated life which is in itself a never ending formation ‘sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions in the heart the inner attitudes of the Son’. (VC 66)

Thus it will be important that all consecrated persons be formed in the freedom to learn throughout life, in every age and season, in every human ambient and context, from every person and every culture open to be taught by any fragment of truth and beauty found around them. But above all they must learn to be formed by everyday life, by their own community, by their brothers and sisters, by everyday



things, ordinary and extraordinary, by prayer and by apostolic fatigue, in joy and in suffering, until the moment of death.

⁵⁹ Besides ch. 12 of FSDB, see also AGC 416 3-56 and the guidelines offered in AGC 425 25-37.

⁶⁰ GC25 49-54; GC27 7-8, 36; AGC 425 25-37.

⁶¹ FSDB 543, 553. FSDB 543 offers some suggestions for the organization of ongoing formation in the local community:

Here are some expedients that can contribute towards truly making the community a place of ongoing formation:

– create in the community a climate and a style of life and work that fosters the growth of individuals and of the community:

the family spirit disposes one to encounter others, gives him a readiness to listen and to dialogue, creates a mentality of searching and discerning together by drawing on everyone's experience, and leads one to learn through everyday experience;

an atmosphere of faith and prayer strengthens the inner motivations, disposing one to live them in the radical way of the Gospel and with apostolic generosity;

a good arrangement of the work itself, the community and pastoral plan, and the assessments encourages the Salesian to engage in a process of revising his attitudes towards religious life and his methods of work and to relaunch a quest for quality in his life and mission.

– make use of all the moments, means and aspects that community life offers to promote ongoing formation:

the moments of community prayer such as meditation, spiritual reading, the good night, the monthly and quarterly recollections; the moments of evaluation, participation and shared responsibility (including especially the community day);

communication with the provincial community and with the Congregation and a ready acceptance of the exhortations and guidelines that come from them;

information, readings, an up-to-date library;

– establish a yearly programme of ongoing formation;



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– ensure that formation takes place together within the educative and pastoral community through reflection, planning and evaluation, and initiatives shared with other members of the Salesian Family;
offer those in need the possibility of frequenting specific moments or programmes of renewal and updating (initiatives, experiences, courses, etc.).

⁶² XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Instrumentum Laboris* (2018) 34-35; 57-58.

⁶³ GC24 13, 55, 101, 103, 136-148; GC25 26, 31, 39, 46, 50, 57, 60, 70, 80; GC26 10, 11, 24, 38, 39, 49, 68, 101, 111; GC27 15, 67, 71; Letter of convocation of GC28, 2.3.3 “Joint formation of Salesians and lay people,” AGC 427 28-29. See also the address of the Rector Major Fr Ángel Fernández Artime at the closing of GC27 concerning the seventh key for interpreting the reflections of GC27: “With lay people in the urgency of a shared mission.” (AGC 418 128-129)

⁶⁴ FoR 133:

Formative programmes that focus only on content or the acquisition of skills and techniques have been shown to be insufficient. We are becoming more and more convinced of the importance of the educator being involved with his or her whole person in the task of education. Communication skills and education must be firmly rooted in the educator's own identity and be part of a real personal journey. It is possible to have all the information, and to have mastered all the most modern methodologies and teaching procedures, to have all the resources and a professional approach, but these are not enough. The process of professional training of Salesian educators ultimately brings into play the educator's own identity and the gift of his or her testimony. The educator is a model with whom the young identify by imitating the path of his or her personal growth. The vocation to the service of education requires the ability to question oneself and allow oneself to be questioned on one's deepest convictions, motivations and expectations. Self-knowledge takes away fear and strengthens one's identity.

⁶⁵ See Chapter VII of *Amoris Laetitia*, Towards a better education of children.



⁶⁶ GC25 54, 64, 65 and GC27 14, 51.

⁶⁷ From the regional data collection presented during the 2nd international seminar held in Rome, 26-31 May 2017, for the revision of the Rector's Manual.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Useful in this context: BM XIII, 258; *Lettere circolari di don Michele Rua ai salesiani* (n. 26 of 1902) (Torino: Direzione Generale delle Opere Salesiane, 1965) 323-325; GC21 on the Rector (cf. 46-57) and on the EPC. (Cf. 63-67)

⁷¹ AGC 372 31; GC27 pp. 79-80.





Part III
The Rector
and the shared
Salesian
mission

A
heart as
great as
the sands
on the
seashore



Sea, boats, nets... Peter is fishing when he is first called by Jesus, and again when the Risen One, on the same lake of Galilee, asks him to feed a flock without limits, in which we too were already included (Jn 21).

The shared Salesian mission requires the same breadth of horizons and of trust in the Kingdom of God that continues to grow, in which the Salesian community, animated by the Rector, is but a simple instrument along with many other people, starting from the young, in whom the Spirit of God is present and constantly at work, inside and outside the Church.



7. THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

The EPC and the SEPP, fruits of post-conciliar reflection

113. The educative and pastoral community (EPC) and the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP) have been extensively presented and discussed in the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry. Without repeating all that is said there, our aim will be to highlight the fact that the Rector and the Salesian religious community today are called to carry out the Salesian apostolic project within the EPC.¹

7.1 THE EPC AND THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PLAN

7.1.1 The updating of the Preventive System

The subject of the Salesian mission is the educative and pastoral community

114. The subject of the Salesian mission is the educative and pastoral community. C 47 tells us: “We bring about in our works the educative and pastoral community which involves young people and adults, parents and educators, in a family atmosphere, so that it can become a living experience of Church and a revelation of God’s plan for us. In this community lay people associated with our work make a contribution all their own.... We welcome and encourage their collaboration, and we give them the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of the Salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system. We foster the spiritual growth of each of them...”

It is the Council of the EPC that draws up the local Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP), in harmony with the provincial SEPP. (R 4)

The SEPP and the EPC are significant elements in the updating of the Preventive System that the Congregation has been carrying out especially since Vatican II. First proposed in GC21, they were sanctioned in GC22 by the approval of the Constitutions and Regulations, and spelt out in greater detail in GC24.



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GC24, heart of post-conciliar Salesian magisterium, our charismatic response to the “ecclesiology of communion”

115. GC24, whose title itself contains a whole program – *Salesians and lay people: Communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco* – is the heart of the post-conciliar Salesian magisterium, our charismatic response to the “ecclesiology of communion” of Vatican Council II. This Chapter stretches backward to gather the best of what had been produced, and forward to offer a new apostolic and communitarian style of thinking and action. The two major elements of this new style are the persons engaged in the mission (EPC) and the shared plan (SEPP). To these, the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry dedicates two chapters of great interest: Chapter 5 on the EPC and Chapter 6 on the SEPP. Together with Chapter 4 on the Preventive System as a spiritual and educative experience, these chapters are the backbone of our charism today.

The roots of the renewal crystallized in GC24 are all present in Don Bosco, who set in motion a vast movement of people with the responsibility of educating and evangelizing the young. Yet the Chapter is also a new starting point and a point of no return, “the only practicable model in present conditions.” (GC24 39) Unfortunately – as the Rector Major Fr Ángel Fernández Artime notes in the letter convoking GC28 – the reception of this Chapter has been uneven in the Congregation, with significant resistances to the model of the Church as communion proposed by Vatican Council II. (AGC 427 23-31)

7.1.2 The necessary inculturation of the Preventive System

One mission realized in different contexts

116. The updating of the Preventive System also involves its inculturation. The Congregation has arrived gradually at the recognition of the multiplicity of contexts in which it operates around the world, even though this recognition



has not always immediately structured its thinking and its pronouncements.

Let us begin with a wonderful text from the opening sections of GC24:

The mission is one and only, but it can be realized in different ways, as many in fact as are the historical, geographical, religious and cultural situations and contexts in which young people are living.

The salesian educative and pastoral project (SEPP) is the historical mediation and the practical instrument used in all latitudes and cultures of the same mission. The project therefore is not just a technical fact but a cultural horizon for constant reference, and is demanded by the necessary inculturation of the charism.

It is specified and realized in every salesian work by a community which we call the educative and pastoral community (EPC). This is the group of people (youngsters and adults, parents and educators, religious and lay, representatives of other ecclesial and civil institutions, including also those belonging to other religions, and men and women of good will) who work together for the education and evangelization of the young, and especially those who are poorer. (GC24 5)

The salesian charism, raised up in the Church for the world, must become incarnated in the different cultural situations in order to express its powers of service to the young and the poor. In contact with the different cultures it can illustrate its vitality and acquire new and enriching characteristics. (GC24 6)

The *Frame of Reference* on the inculturation of the Preventive System

117. This window opened by GC24 is taken up and affirmed in different ways in the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry:

- *The Salesian mission is one*: it consists in evangelizing and educating, convinced that the fullness of life and the happiness of human beings is God's plan for all, that the vocation of all human beings is to love and to give of oneself. (FoR 59, 61; cf. "Preparatory Document," Synod 2018)



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- *This mission can be incarnated in a variety of cultures and religious traditions.* The Preventive System has, in fact, been incarnated in different continents, in multicultural and multi-religious situations. (FoR 87)
- *The EPC is both subject and object of our educative and pastoral activity.* (FoR 116)
- *The EPC is a Salesian way of animation rather than a new structure* or merely a way of organizing our work. It is a recognition of the fact that education takes place within a community, within a network of significant relationships. (FoR 117)
- *The EPC is a community that consists of concentric circles* with the young at the centre, and includes the Salesian religious community, families, lay people in various capacities, and members of the Salesian Family. (FoR 118)
- *The EPC is a living experience of Church.* The Preventive System is at once personal and intensely communal. The first key element in realizing Salesian Youth Ministry is the community, and genuine communion is itself an experience of Church. (C 44-48; R 5; FoR 116)

SEPP: practical instrument for inculturation of the Salesian charism and mission

118. Obviously, the EPC is a living experience of Church *in a particular area*. It is a community that is open to all and collaborates with all – with the local Church and with all forces in the neighbourhood working for the good of youth. It exists in contexts that are predominantly Christian, in those that are post-Christian, as well as in multi-religious and multicultural contexts. In some places it will include lay collaborators who are predominantly Christian, while in others there will be a significant presence of people belonging to different cultures and beliefs. (FoR 121)



GC24 184 says:

We can invite lay people of different beliefs to collaborate with us in an educative project applicable to different situations and cultures: “*The aspect of religious transcendence, the cornerstone of Don Bosco’s pedagogical method, is not only applicable to every culture but can also be profitably adapted even to non-Christian religions.*” (luvenum Patris 11) “*There, (in territories of first evangelization), it will be possible to work efficaciously, even with lay people who do not belong to the Catholic Church, provided that there is the ability to live to the full the experience of Don Bosco and to put forward in an integral manner both his educative system and his apostolic spirit.*” (Message of John Paul II to GC24)

In every particular situation, then, the EPC is a presence of the Church, an experience of communion that reflects the Community of Love that is the Blessed Trinity.

GC21 had called for a rethinking and updating of the Preventive System “with its operators, content, aim, style, and means in the various settings in which we work” (GC21 14), something that the Rector’s Manual of 1986 had echoed in its call to accomplish the mission “by bringing the Preventive System up to date.” (MSD 109ff) GC24 declares, as we have seen above, that the SEPP is the *historical mediation and practical instrument* for the inculturation and contextualization of the Salesian charism and mission. (GC24 5) This is true of the provincial SEPP, but even more so of the local SEPP, given that it is worked out in each particular EPC with the diversity of its members.

Inculturation and the digital universe

119. A most urgent form of inculturation today regards digital culture, which is global, omnipresent and transversal.

GC27 extends a strong invitation to be proactive in this field.² This invitation has been reiterated by the Synod on young people, the faith and vocational discernment.³



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Effective response calls for good networking. The EPC is certainly one of the places for working out meaningful educative and evangelizing responses to the challenges posed by our hyperconnected age, valuing the immense potential offered by the digital universe.

The EPC itself can find help in an active and fruitful exchange of experiences within the provincial community, on the regional and inter-regional levels, in the Salesian Family, with various ecclesial and ecumenical realities, and with other agencies for the education and welfare of youth. Don Bosco was a great master in gathering all kinds of positive forces so to 'save as many as possible.' His example urges us to "keep abreast with new trends and meet them with the well-balanced creativity of the Founder." (C 19)

7.1.3 The Council of the EPC and/or of the Work

EPCs and the Council of the Work

120. In complex Works that have several sectors of activity (parish, school, university hostel, young people in difficulty), it is possible to have several EPCs. If there is only one EPC, there will be one Council of the EPC. If there are several EPCs, each will have its own Council, and there will be a Council of the Work that will be made up of representatives of the EPC Councils.

It is easy to imagine that the Rector's role increases in complexity in direct proportion to the complexity of the Work. Further, if there are lay mission partners who are heads of various sectors, it is possible that they are often persons of great competence and expertise. Yet again, real sharing of responsibility is a function of several other factors, including the personality of the Rector and prevalent cultural models of authority.

Obviously, there is need of a serious effort of formation,



including joint formation of Salesians and lay mission partners, in order to reduce the incidence of personal and cultural factors. However, it helps also, as GC24 wisely requested, to define precisely the specific task of the Rector within the EPC Council and the Council of the Work. (GC24 161) Such definition is the responsibility of the Provincial and his Council in dialogue with the local Salesian community. (GC24 169)

- The Rector participates in the provincial initiatives for the **formation of Rectors**.
- He studies with his Council and in the EPC the *Frame of Reference* **in order to understand the EPC and the SEPP** as instruments for the inculturation and contextualisation of the Preventive System.
- Whether the context is Christian, post-Christian or multi-religious, **the Rector and his Council promote the EPC**, in a spirit of openness, dialogue and creativity.
- The members of the EPC remember that **inculturation today involves learning to inhabit the digital world** so as to be able to accompany the young, and so as to use it as a fertile terrain for evangelisation.

7.2 THE SALESIAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY WITHIN THE EPC

7.2.1 The animating nucleus

Composition of the animating nucleus

121. R 5 implies that the Salesian religious community is the animating nucleus of the EPC. GC25 points out, instead, that “the animating nucleus of the EPC is becoming composed ever more of other subjects (young and lay people, members of the Salesian Family, representatives of the local Church and neighbourhood), who share our spirituality and mission committing themselves to animation.” (GC25



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70) It goes on to say that the Salesian community, while not being identical with the animating nucleus, is a *significant part of the animating nucleus* of the EPC, its charismatic point of reference.⁴ This is a ratification of the expansion of the animating nucleus by Fr J.E. Vecchi in his 1998 letter, “Experts, witnesses and craftsmen of communion.’ The Salesian community – animating nucleus”:

What do we mean by ‘animating nucleus’? It is a group of people who identify themselves with the salesian mission, educational system and spirituality, and together take up the task of assembling, motivating, and involving all those who are concerned with a work, so as to form with them the educative community and to carry out a plan for the evangelization and education of the young.⁵

The *Frame of Reference* makes it clear that all in the educative and pastoral communities, Salesians as well as lay people – including young people and their parents – participate in its animation, but that some have the specific task of promoting the contribution of all, taking care of the quality and coordination of the animation and paying particular attention to the Salesian identity and quality of education and evangelization. These people constitute the animating nucleus of the EPC. (FoR 125)

Key to good functioning of the EPC

122. The animating nucleus – or the Council of the EPC – is the key to the good functioning of the EPC. It is therefore important to guarantee the spiritual quality, educational competence and pastoral passion of this nucleus. Any change in the quality of the animating nucleus brings about change in the EPC as a whole, and eventually in the territory and in the local Church.⁶

Even when facing difficulties of various kinds, giving the necessary attention to a good Council of the EPC can be really decisive for the good running of the Work. When it is not



possible to plan with the whole EPC, such planning can be done in the animating nucleus or even only with those who are available. If the SEPP cannot be implemented at the level of the Work as a whole, we can always create learning processes that favour the growth of smaller groups of people.⁷ Finally, it is good to remember that formation takes place also through action: “the first and best mode of self-formation to participation and shared responsibility is the correct functioning of the educative and pastoral community.” (GC24 43) In short, a stable, well-formed animating nucleus capable of thinking, evaluating and planning with a good rhythm of work and meetings is the key to the functioning of the EPC.

7.2.2 The different relationships between the Salesian community and the Work

Variety of situations

123. We are faced, however, with a variety of situations as far as the ‘relationship between community and Work’ is concerned:

A. Works entrusted jointly to the Salesian community and to lay people.

B. Works entrusted to lay people under the direction of the Province.⁸

It is important to note that there is no third model, one formed by “Salesians only,” which was, before Vatican II, the only possibility.

A. Works entrusted jointly to the Salesian community and to lay people

The Salesian community within the animating nucleus

124. In Works entrusted jointly to the Salesian religious community and to lay people, the community is a significant part of the animating nucleus of the EPC, and is the guiding



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model for the pastoral identity of this nucleus. The Salesian community provides the witness of religious life, safeguards the Salesian charismatic identity by being present among the young, promoting the family spirit, and participating in the drawing up of the SEPP. It promotes communion, participation and collaboration. It takes primary responsibility for spiritual, Salesian and vocational formation. (GC24 159)

Such a sharing of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco with lay people is a new phase in the development of our charism. From it follows the need for the Salesian religious community to reflect on and assume fully its relatively new role within the EPC. Especially in contexts where the EPC has still to take root, the Salesian community is called to make a shift from exclusive responsibility for Works, with lay people as helpers, to sharing responsibility effectively with lay people as active mission partners, while assuming the commitment to form them pastorally and spiritually. (FoR 274-275) This involves a momentous shift from a pyramidal structure of authority to a more participative style, where personal relationships and processes are of the greatest importance. Further, the autonomy of the Council of the EPC/Work must be guaranteed, following the principle of subsidiarity and decentralization well expressed in C 124:

Authority of any kind and at every level leaves to the initiative of lower levels and of individuals whatever can be decided and done by them, according to their respective competence. In this way the worth of individuals and communities is recognized, and more real involvement is encouraged.

The principle of subsidiarity implies decentralization which, while safeguarding unity, recognizes a proper autonomy and consequently a right distribution of powers between the different organs of government.⁹

The Province defines the relationship between the Salesian community and the EPC

125. The concrete form of the relationship between the Salesian community and the Work, or sectors of it, cannot be reduced to a single model. (GC26 120) In certain cases,



the *Frame of Reference* recommends that the Salesian identity and coordination of the Work be the responsibility of the Province, while the local community, often reduced in numbers, can delegate Salesians for pastoral animation, formation and accompaniment of the staff, according to the criteria proposed by GC24 164, in collaboration wherever possible with members of the Salesian Family. (FoR 279) In all cases, the precise relationship between the Salesian community and the Work, as also the authority of the Rector, is codified in the provincial and local SEPP.

Thus each province defines and designs ways that favour the best possible collaboration between the Salesian communities and the EPC, contextualising guidelines according to the different social environments and specific settings and Works. Guiding principles are to be given for the relationships between the Local Council and the Council of the EPC; Rectors and directors, principals, heads of departments and others holding key positions; Provincial Delegates and local animators.

During the provincial visitation, a specific Memorandum of Understanding may be finalized, so to foster the best cooperation in full respect of due autonomy of the various persons and organisms involved in the Work.

- The Salesian community prepares itself for its **role in the animating nucleus of the EPC** by study, reflection and assimilation of the **relevant documents and guidelines of the Congregation** (among them GC24 and FoR, but also the provincial and local SEPP).
- The Rector and the Local Council collaborate with the Provincial and his Council in the **elaboration of the local model of animation and governance**, indicating criteria for the composition of the Council of the EPC/Work, and defining the competences of each organism and of the Salesian community in the Work.



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- The Rector encourages his **confreres to accompany processes in the EPC.**
- The **Provincial and his Council accompany Rectors** and support them according to the specific relationship of each community with the EPC.
- The **Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry and Formation**, with the respective provincial commissions, in contact with the various educative pastoral communities, prepare adequate modules of formation for Rectors, and for Salesians and lay people together.



B. Works entrusted to lay people under the direction of the province

The animating nucleus consisting entirely of lay people

126. GC26 speaks of “activities and Works entirely entrusted by the Salesians to lay people, or set up by lay people and recognised in the Provincial Plan, according to the criteria indicated by GC24, nn. 180-182.” The two essential conditions here are (1) the criteria of identity, communion and significance of Salesian activity; (2) accompaniment by the Provincial and his Council. (FoR 279) The Work has no direct reference to any local Salesian community, and the animating nucleus is made up entirely of lay people. “To lay people in a Salesian Work where there is no religious community must be ensured, in whatever way possible, that there is real participation and responsibility in the organization and management, and in all the functions that belong to the animating nucleus.” (FoR 126)

In this case also it belongs to the Provincial and his Council to define the local model of animation and governance for the Work, and animate and govern it in a manner analogous to those in which a Salesian community is present, with the help of a confrere nominated for the purpose, and by means of the annual canonical visitation. (Cf. FoR 280 for details)



- The setting up of the **Council of the EPC and the elaboration of the SEPP** are carefully followed up and accompanied by the Provincial or by a designated confrere, with the help of the Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry and Formation.
- The SEPP indicates the modality of **interaction between the Lay Director, the Delegate of the Provincial, the Council of the EPC and the Provincial Council.**
- The **formation in Salesian identity** of the members of the EPC at various levels will be part of the processes defined in the SEPP and followed up closely by the Delegate of the Provincial for that Work.

7.3 THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY: CHARISMATIC POINT OF REFERENCE IN THE EPC

The Salesian religious community: charismatic point of reference

127. We have been saying that the Salesian religious community, where it exists, always shares responsibility for a Work with lay members of the animating nucleus. But what, we might ask, is the position and role of the Salesian community in such a situation? What is the specificity that a religious community today is called to bring to lay people who share with them the passion for education and the apostolic mission? What is the professional quality proper to Salesians today, in which they must be competent in a definite and unmistakable way? GC25 offers us a very clear answer, as it is stated in the *Frame of Reference*:

It should be emphasised that the Salesian religious community (cf. C. 38, 47, R. 5), with its spiritual heritage, its educational method, its relationships of fraternity and shared responsibility for the mission, is the point of reference for the pastoral identity of the animating nucleus: “The Salesian community plays the role of the charismatic point of reference from which all take their inspiration.” (GC25, no.70).¹⁰

The Rector, guardian of charismatic identity

128. Within the religious community, the Rector is “first in



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order of responsibility... for its apostolic activities” (C 176) and “guides the community in pastoral discernment, so that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity.” (C 44) GC24 continues to consider him, along with the Provincial, a key figure in the sharing of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco with lay people.¹¹ “As the one responsible in the first place for the EPC the SDB Rector animates the animators and safeguards the over-all unity of the project.” (FoR 275) On the Rector, then, in a special way, falls the responsibility of being guardian of the charismatic identity of the EPC.

Promoter of a new style of authority

129. The Rector is conscious that he has primary responsibility for the apostolic activity and administration of the goods of the community, and also for the EPC: “In it the final word, after patient research, will belong to him, always in dialogue with his Council.” (GC24 172) However, he also knows that he is a promoter of the new style of authority summarized in the four words of GC24 (107-148): *broadening the involvement, promoting the sharing of responsibility, making best use of communication, and qualifying formation.*

Animation of animators as a vocational trait of SDBs

130. GC24 declared that every SDB is an animator. (GC24 159) “To be animators therefore of the activity of persons involved in Don Bosco’s mission and spirit,” says Fr Vecchi, “is not an extra function for particular occasions: it is a *vocational trait* forming part of the identity of the consecrated individual Salesian or community, and a main part of the pastoral praxis.” (AGC 363 p. 23) For the Salesian community, therefore, the first objective of its activities is the EPC, and the first service is that of spiritual and Salesian animation. “We are called not only to give dynamism to a group of educators or collaborators by suitable methods; we are called to give rise to ‘an experience of Church’, to give rise to and extend a vocational reality. It is not only a matter of



making better use of the resources we have available, the laity for example, but of communicating the faith and the Salesian spirit. In this way *animation comes to be a primary part of our mission and an original manner of living our communion.*" (AGC 363 p. 21-22)

7.3.1 Spiritual animation

Professionals of evangelization

131. As consecrated persons, we are called to be spiritual animators, or professionals of evangelization within an educational context. Our animation is not merely cultural or social, nor concerned merely with sports and games; it is an animation according to the Spirit of the Lord. "Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery." (C 34)

Here 'spiritual' is to be taken not as limiting but as bringing together all the other aspects of animation in a particular perspective. Spiritual animation is concerned, therefore, about the pastoral quality of our work. It is concerned about the interpenetration of education and evangelization.

We cannot be spiritual animators unless we live our spirituality with conviction and express it with joyful spontaneity. Faith cannot be communicated unless it be lived as the great resource of one's own existence. "Spiritual and pastoral renewal are two aspects which mutually compenetrates and are interdependent." (GC23 217)

Shared holiness

132. "The goal of formation, of and with the laity, is a shared holiness." (AGC 363 p. 28) "At Valdocco," GC24 reminds us, "there was a particular kind of atmosphere: holiness was built up together; it was shared and mutually communicated, in such a way that the holiness of some cannot be explained without the holiness of the others." (GC24 104)



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Pedagogy of prayer

133. The capacity for spiritual animation presupposes the experience of prayer. Prayer gives back to us the taste for being with Christ and the meaning of the mission. A healthy life of prayer will enable the community “to set up a pedagogy of prayer leading to a personal relationship with Christ.” It is a question of moving beyond offering occasional experiences to become “*educators and masters in spirituality... companions and authoritative witnesses, leaders and guides in the ways of spirituality.*” (AGC 363 p. 27)

This is what the Church expects of consecrated persons. “Today a renewed commitment to holiness by consecrated persons is more necessary than ever, also as a means of promoting and supporting every Christian’s desire for perfection. ... To the degree that they deepen their friendship with God, consecrated persons become better prepared to help their brothers and sisters through valuable spiritual activities.” (VC 39)

In Christian contexts, the Rector and the community will ensure attention to key elements: the experience of faith, the Personal Plan of Life, vocational motivations, pastoral charity and apostolic commitment, the sense of the Church and fidelity to the Pope, the ecclesial sense of mission, the life of the sacraments, growth in prayer, discernment of one’s charismatic gifts received from the Holy Spirit, and the presence of Mary in the Church and in the Salesian vocation.... They will regard the participation of the young and our collaborators in our prayer as a significant way of introducing them to prayer and giving them a taste for it.

Spiritual accompaniment

134. The Rector and the Salesian community take particular care of spiritual accompaniment. In the light of our tradition and strengthened by the invitation of the Synod on young people, the faith and vocational discernment, they promote



the vital complementarity of community and personal accompaniment. They willingly make themselves available for this service and prepare themselves and the lay mission partners for it.¹² *Christus Vivit* dedicates Chapter 8 to vocation and Chapter 9 to discernment, and offers important indications to those who accompany young people. (Cf. CV 242-247)

**In non-Christian or
post-Christian contexts**

135. In contexts that are predominantly non-Christian or post-Christian, the spiritual animation of the EPC calls for particular creativity and boldness (*parrhesia*). This is one of the areas of the inculturation of our ministry. As indicated by GC24, here the Preventive System is both criterion and basis: “With those who do not accept God we can journey together, basing ourselves on the human and lay values present in the Preventive System; with those who do accept God and the transcendent we can go further, even to welcoming their religious values; and finally, with those who share our faith in Christ but not our membership of the Church, we can walk still more closely on the path of the Gospel.” (GC24 185) Human values, religious values, Gospel values: these are the bases for an inculturated and contextualized ministry of spiritual and pastoral animation on the part of the Rector and the EPC.

What is important, as we have said already, is that Christians in the EPC live in fidelity to their vocation and the evangelising mission of the Church according to the Salesian charism. (GC24 183-185)

**Rector, animator
of animators**

136. The Rector, animator of animators, allows his relationship to Christ to emerge in all things and everywhere, and he animates in a simple and humble way. He is aware that it is Christ who entrusts confreres, collaborators and young people to him. He carries out his ministry with a clear awareness of his own fragility and limitations, and with a



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great confidence in the love of Jesus that precedes, envelops and sustains him. He is, above all, a man of discernment. This gift, so central in the magisterium of Pope Francis, is needed more than ever today, when we are faced with a variety of situations and persons, each with his or her unique life story and needs. In the animation of the EPC, the capacity to discern is probably the most important quality of the Rector.

7.3.2 Prophecy of fraternity

Centrality of communion

137. In a culture of globalized narcissism, where the dominant framework is one of competition rather than communion, fraternity lived with generosity truly becomes ‘prophecy.’ “An educational and pastoral work animated by a group of Salesians and lay people that truly works in communion, sharing and co-responsibility is a living prophecy of fraternity, a luminous sign of an ecclesiology of communion that is being realized and a shining educational signal for all the beneficiaries of the work: boys and girls, adolescents, youth, families, the local Church.”¹³ Communion leads to mission, and itself becomes mission. (VC 46)

A decisive contribution to communion comes from the witness of the Salesian community and from its leader, who is a man of communion and who believes deeply in the centrality of this value. A religious community is *confessio Trinitatis* and *signum fraternitatis*, a sign of communion within the Church. By virtue of our call, we are people who create and maintain communion within the EPC.

The Rector, therefore, with the help of his community, promotes unity and a spirit of family in the EPC and among all those who contribute to the good of young people. He resists the temptation to create small groups in the EPC of those who think like him or have some other affinity with



him. He takes care of unity centred around a common project, coordination between the different sectors of the Work, good relationships, unity in diversity and involvement of the Salesian Family.

Looking to Mary, icon of the Church as communion, the Rector becomes an expert in communion, one who is able not only to integrate diversity but also to celebrate differences.

- The Salesian community, led by the Rector, periodically **assesses the quality of its animating** presence in the EPC.
- It sets up a **pedagogy of prayer**, also by inviting participation of young people and lay mission partners in moments of community prayer.
- It takes special care of community and **personal spiritual accompaniment**, also by preparing both Salesians and laity for this service.
- It promotes a **familiar style of relationships** in the EPC, and periodically assesses the quality of its 'prophecy of fraternity.'
- Attentive to the **pastoral quality of the EPC**, it ensures formation of its members, especially with the help of the *Frame of Reference*.
- The Rector is keenly **attentive to his own formation to the new style of authority**, and makes use of every opportunity, whether offered by the Province or by others.

7.4 THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY AND THE SEPP

The planning mentality

138. The formulation of an educative and pastoral plan forms part of the 'model' for pastoral ministry that was worked out in order to implement the indications of GC23 and GC24.¹⁴ This is done both at the level of the province



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and at that of the local community. “Just like the Province community, the local community is called upon to live and act with a *clear planning mentality*, a mentality that leads it to identifying the priority areas it should pay attention to and making the fundamental choices that should guide peoples’ lives and activities in various sectors of the work.” (FoR 268)

The local SEPP

139. The planning mentality is made concrete in the SEPP formulated within and by an educative and pastoral community. Our pastoral work finds its principal point of reference in the local SEPP. “The SEPP indicates *the guidelines for carrying out Youth Ministry* in all the sectors and areas of the Work. The SEPP provides for the cohesion and the articulation of the four dimensions which characterise the Salesian educative and pastoral project.” (FoR 268) The primary purpose of the SEPP is to lead local communities to work with a shared mind-set and with clear criteria and objectives, and to make shared management of pastoral processes possible. (FoR 145) A complete description of it may be found in Chapter 6 of the *Frame of Reference*.

The responsibility of the Rector and his Council

140. According to this document, where a Salesian community is involved in the running of a Work along with lay people, “the Rector and his Council have *primary responsibility for the government and pastoral animation of the Work*. In their hands lies the fundamental responsibility for the co-ordination and organisation of Youth Ministry. They should foster procedures leading to involving people, identifying priorities, allocating resources and initiating reflection.” (FoR 268) Real sharing of responsibility is governed by the principles of subsidiarity and decentralization mentioned in 7.2.2 and concretized in the model of local governance established by the Province and codified in the local SEPP.

Ensuring the integrity of Salesian Youth Ministry

141. The Rector with his Council makes sure that the vari-



ous dimensions of Salesian Youth Ministry are present in the SEPP:

- The *dimension of education to the faith*: beginning from where young persons find themselves, we accompany them to the fullness of life and love which we believe is found in Jesus Christ;
- The *educational and cultural dimension*, which is a question of encouraging the development of all the human resources of young people and opening them up to the meaning of life;
- The *dimension of group and social experience*, which helps young people discover and value the meaning of communion, of which the Church is the sign and sacrament;
- The *vocational dimension*, which means accompanying every young person to discover his or her life project in view of transforming the world into the beautiful place it is meant to be in God's plan.

In addition, as the *Frame of Reference* indicates (FoR 163-173), the Rector pays attention to certain educational and pastoral tasks that cut across all sectors:

- The *animation of apostolic vocations*, ensuring accompaniment to those young people who manifest signs of lay, religious or priestly vocations in the Church. (R 9)
- *Missionary animation*, as the natural flourishing of every Christian and community.¹⁵
- *Social communication*, which is for us not only a means of education but also a significant field of activity that constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission.



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(C 43)¹⁶ The Rector will give special attention to the digital universe, given that it is a very relevant part of the identity of young people today and of their way of living, that it has profound anthropological and cultural impact, and that it has great potentialities for both good and evil.

Strengthening the planning mentality

142. Especially in contexts where the planning mentality has still to take root, the Rector first ensures that the EPC is convinced of the need for a plan. Some useful points here are:

- The SEPP is a way of applying the Preventive System in each context, including those that are multicultural and multi-religious or even post-religious.
- A plan makes it possible to define what we are aiming at in our educational and pastoral work, ensures continuity, and frees us from the danger of facile improvisation. It becomes possible to collaborate within a framework of shared objectives; the sense of belonging is reinforced, and common principles are available for evaluating enterprises and events. (MSD 111-112)
- Choices and planning are based on the experiences and real needs of the young (C 41, 7; R 1, 4), with discerning attention to the signs of the times and openness to all positive values. (C 57, 17)
- Faced with challenging situations, full use is made of the creativity that is the fruit of pastoral charity and a pastoral sense. (C 7, 10, 18, 19, 40, 41)
- The SEPP is also a way of ensuring continuity at moments such as the change of Rectors and other key personnel. The province will also establish proper “handing over” procedures in this regard.



Challenges and difficulties

143. Some of the challenges and difficulties in drawing up the SEPP stem from *internal factors* such as the worldwide expansion of the Congregation in diverse cultural, historical and geographical contexts, the different kinds of presences and the different relationships between the religious community and the Works, the new role that Salesians are called to play in the EPC, and the growing temporal, cultural and even linguistic distance from our origins.

Others stem from *external factors* such as the constantly new situations of young people, the existence of a plurality of ‘agencies’ of education – including the communication media and the digital universe, the values of pluralism, freedom and participation, besides the plurality of cultures and of religions, and a growing indifference to religion.

The Rector remembers that our very vocation requires us to live in an attitude of openness, in dialogue with reality, and with the practical creative sensitivity of the educator and communicator. He fosters this attitude in himself and then also in his confreres and in the EPC. It is the ability to learn by experience in the light of the person of Jesus and of his Gospel, lived according to the spirit of Don Bosco (C 98), which is the attitude of discernment, the ability to listen to the voice of the Spirit in the events of every day and in the reality that surrounds us. (C 119)

Guidelines for the elaboration of the SEPP

144. Suggestions regarding the elaboration and evaluation of the local SEPP in each of the sectors of the Work may be found in the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry. These can serve also as guidelines for the Rector and the Council of the EPC and/or of the Work for ensuring the educative and pastoral quality of their service.

The Rector’s presence in the Work

145. Every Salesian Work and setting has its own specific organization, based on the indications of the SEPP. Ideally,



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the Rector is present in all the settings and sectors of the house with specific competencies (GC24 172), but, especially in works that are very complex, he must know to delegate wherever possible. What he needs to know is that he participates by right in the Councils of the EPCs when they are many – respecting the authorities of those Councils – and presides over the Council of the EPC / Council of the Work as the case may be.

Youth Ministry Coordinator

146. As per the policy of the province, and especially when the Work is complex, the Rector sees to the appointment of a local Youth Ministry Coordinator, Salesian or a lay person, supported by a team of Salesians and lay people. (FoR 276-277)

The local Coordinator with his team, plans, organises and coordinates the pastoral activity of the Work, according to the objectives set out by the local SEPP and the guidelines and criteria of the Council of the EPC and/or of the Work, always working closely with the Rector. (FoR 277-278)

- The Rector and his Council **participate actively in the elaboration of the local SEPP**, sensitive to cultural and religious diversity, and in a spirit of dialogue on the basis of the Preventive System and within its parameters.

- The Rector (or his delegate) **participates in the management of every educative and pastoral setting**, and presides at the Council of the EPC / Work.

- The Rector and the Council of the EPC accompany the elaboration of the **SEPP of each sector** in the light of the local SEPP; they also evaluate annually the reports of the sectors, thus preparing for the updating of the local SEPP.

- New Rectors will take care to **promote the continuity of the SEPP** and to respect the planning processes that have already taken place.

- The Rector sees that the **model of animation and governance**



established by the Province is implemented, and assures the presence of Salesians and lay people formed in the Salesian spirit.

- He ensures the **Salesian identity of the SEPP**, guiding its elaboration, integrating elements of the Salesian spirit in formation and in the activities.
- He promotes **formation processes for Salesians and lay people together**, especially in the area of educative-pastoral competences proper to the Salesian charism.
- He makes proposals for the **assimilation and application of the *Frame of Reference***.
- He sees that the **integrity and unity of Salesian Youth Ministry** is preserved in all the activities.
- As per the policy of the Province, he sees to the appointment of a **local Youth Ministry Coordinator** and team of Salesians and lay people. (FoR 276-277)
- He uses the established **criteria for the selection and formation of lay people**, making sure to involve the Council of the EPC and/or of the Work.
- He ensures **knowledge and implementation of the provincial Child Protection Policy**, and of existing legislation about 'privacy.'



8. AN OPEN COMMUNITY

Open to the Province, the Congregation, the Salesian Family and the Salesian Movement, the Church, the world

147. The Constitutions define the local Salesian community as a “living part of the provincial community” (C 58), of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family. It “works in communion with the particular Church” and “is open to the world’s values and attentive to the cultural milieu in which it carries out its apostolic work. At one with those among whom it lives, it cultivates good relations with all.” (C 57)

Its pastoral activity can be considered at various levels:

- It is activity carried out within the EPC, with the presence of Salesians and lay collaborators, especially those who belong to the Salesian Family;
- It is activity of the Church, both in the sense that the EPC incarnates and inculturates the Church in a particular milieu, and in the sense of collaboration with various organs and bodies of the local Church;
- It is activity within the social milieu.

The local community, therefore, lives and works with shared responsibility in a wider communion: within the Congregation, with the Province and with the Rector Major and his Council; with the Salesian Family and its constituent groups; with the Church at world and local levels; and finally with all those who work even partially for the attainment of the same ends.



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To be Salesian is to belong to the Congregation

8.1 THE PROVINCIAL AND WORLD COMMUNITIES

148. Just as the universal Church is expressed in the pluralism of the various particular churches and the basic groupings, so the Salesian Congregation is made up of provincial communities which in turn are made up of local communities which provide the concrete setting and practical manner in which the Salesian vocation is fulfilled.” (SGC 506)

The local community is not an island; it is a living part of the provincial community, which is united by brotherly communion and the common mission. As a member of the local and provincial communities, every confrere lives his membership of the whole Society, in which he was incardinated on the day of his religious profession. (Cf. C 59)

The Salesian vocation has a universal dimension. To become a Salesian is to enter a great community that the Founder himself saw would have no frontiers. This world extension is one of the most outstanding and evangelical features of the Salesian spirit.

Living this openness at world level means consciously accepting those responsibilities that have their origin in that community of spirit, witness and service that the Congregation offers to the universal Church. (Cf. C 59)

Everything that promotes the transmission of values from the world headquarters to the provinces and to the individual communities and vice versa also enriches our communion, the experience of our vocation and the effectiveness of our mission. We can think here of the duties of animation and governance assigned by the Constitutions to the Rector Major, to Provincials and their Councils, and to the various pastoral and technical organisms, and also of the communication within the Congregation (Constitutions,



Acts of the General Chapters, the communications of the Rector Major and of his Councillors, the various means and agencies of internal communication).

- The Rector facilitates **communication and the constant flow of information** between the local, provincial and world levels.
- He encourages **sincere loyalty to the provincial plans** as well as personal availability.
- He **fosters solidarity with the provincial community**. (R 58, 197)

8.2 THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Salesians need the Salesian Family

149. Ideally, the EPC, ought to involve, to the extent possible, also the various groups and members of the Salesian Family. However, it is also true that we cannot reduce the Salesian Family to its involvement in the EPC of a Salesian Work. This is why it is important to dedicate some space to a discussion of the relationship between the Rector, the Salesian community and the Salesian Family.

The Salesian Family was born as part of Don Bosco's response to the demands of his vocation and to the needs of the youth of his time. Today "the salesians cannot fully rethink their vocation in the Church without reference to those who share with them in carrying out their Founder's will. Consequently, they are seeking a greater union of all, while preserving the genuine diversity of each." (SGC 151)

Salesians need the other groups of the Salesian Family. At the Church level, the Salesian Family offers us a good opportunity to rethink and rediscover the specific nature of our vocation as evangelizers, and to develop a fresh appreciation for those things that are truly Salesian. (GC21 73) In the EPC also, the presence of members of the Salesian



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Family strengthens the animating nucleus and ensures fidelity to our charism and spirit.

Salesians have particular responsibilities within the Salesian Family

150. On the other hand, the Salesian Family, by the express wish of the Founder, needs the Salesians. In the Salesian Family, “by the will of the Founder, we have particular responsibilities: to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness.” (C 5) Preserving unity of spirit, fostering dialogue, and promoting fraternal collaboration: these are the three responsibilities of the Rector Major, the Provincial and the Rector, each at his own level. To this we can add R 36: “It is the duty of the Provincial and the Rector, assisted by their respective delegates, to sensitize the communities so that they may discharge their duties in the Salesian Family.”

We need to keep in mind also that, according to R 38-40, we have a special responsibility towards 5 of the 32 groups of the Salesian Family: the Salesian Cooperators, the Past Pupils of Don Bosco, the ADMA, the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB), and the Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB).

In order to carry out these responsibilities in keeping with Don Bosco’s charism, we not only insist on the importance of education and evangelization, but also indicate certain means.

First, the meeting of the *Local Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family*.¹⁷ This Committee, which complements the one at the provincial level, is convoked and presided by the Rector. The members are the ones in charge of the groups of the Salesian Family present in the territory of the local Salesian community. The Committee is an expression of the charismatic unity of the groups: it becomes a way of promoting communion and ensures the development of the



Salesian charism. Besides, it is a privileged moment for favouring dialogue, reflection, planning and collaboration in the realization of the Salesian mission.

Second, the local celebration of the *Day (Feast) of the Salesian Family*. Here the groups of the Salesian Family come together for prayer and formation, in order to get to know one another better and to celebrate the joy of belonging to the Family of Don Bosco.

Third, *collaboration*. This can be done in different ways, and is greatly facilitated when there are delegates for the Salesian Family. It is quite possible that the Rector himself is the local delegate for the Salesian Family or of some group within it.

The *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco* (2012) is today indispensable for understanding the Salesian Family and its importance. It deserves to be better known and studied if we are to make the Salesian Family a living and vibrant reality.

The Salesian Movement

151. It is important to mention here also the *Salesian Movement*. C 5 tells us that Don Bosco “inspired the start of a vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young.” The *Charter of the Salesian Family* speaks, in fact, of different levels of belonging to the Family, the third level being constituted by *particular titles to membership*, or “the circle of people who form part of the vast *Salesian Movement* and find in the Salesian Family their animating nucleus. This is formed by the Friends of Don Bosco, by the Salesian Youth Movement and more in general, by Salesian voluntary social service and by an extensive category of men and women educators, catechists, adult professionals, sympathetic politicians, co-workers, even those belonging to different religions and cultures, who are



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working in the five continents.”¹⁸

The Rector plays a fundamental role in promoting the sense of belonging and in ensuring adequate accompaniment of the Salesian Family. The vitality and significance of the Salesian Family in a particular territory, at the level of Church and society, depends to a large extent on the love and concern with which the Rector carries out his task of accompaniment and animation.

- The Rector convokes and presides over the local **Consultative Committee of the Salesian Family**, and promotes collaboration among the different groups.
- He ensures the local celebration of the **annual Day or Feast of the Salesian Family**.
- He includes the activities of the **Salesian Family in the Community Plan**.
- He promotes the **study of the Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family**, both in the Salesian community and among the groups of the Salesian Family.
- The Rector and the community have a **welcoming attitude** towards the members of the Salesian Family.
- The Rector offers Cooperators and Past Pupils **office space and meeting rooms** in the house.
- He promotes the commitment of all the members of the Salesian Family in the area of **pastoral work for vocations**, particularly vocations related to our charism.



8.3 THE CHURCH

Our place within the life of the Church

152. An active *sensus ecclesiae* is so much a part of the living Salesian tradition that it must be considered a constituent element of its spirit. (Cf. C 13)

The Rector and the EPC consider the particular Church as the historical space in which the community lives and expresses its apostolic commitment. (Cf. C 48) The local Church has, in fact, “the special function of directing to God the human riches of its people and making them serve as a particular expression of redeeming grace.” (SGC 80) The SGC urged us to find our place within the context of the life of the Church, avoiding both an isolationist mentality and a misconstrued autonomy, or in other words, fear of working with others and a kind of smug self-sufficiency.

The local community accepts with joy the fact that the Church and the Congregation share the same goals. In carrying out its pastoral work, it always seeks to be in line with the directives of the diocese and of the Bishops’ Conferences. (Cf. C 48) In collaborating with the local Church, it distinguishes, of course, between the normal or occasional kind of collaboration that does not call for an extraordinary amount of time, and other kinds that, because of the greater commitment involved, require the authorization of the Provincial.

In young Churches we participate in a specialized way through our spirit of predilection for youth, and through missionary work. Missionary work is an essential feature of our Congregation. (Cf. C 30) The missions are a preferential setting for carrying out the Salesian Mission.¹⁹ On the other hand, the missionary dimension remains an essential and constitutive feature of our identity as a Congregation.



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Collaboration mediated through the charism

153. Our Constitutions are clear about our collaboration with the local Church: “We offer the particular Church the contribution of our work and Salesian pedagogy, and we receive from it direction and support. To forge more systematic links we share initiatives with other groups belonging to the Salesian Family and with other religious institutes.” (C 48) The Rector will present such collaboration to his confreres and to the EPC as an essential value in the light of the ecclesiology of communion promoted by Vatican Council II. Such collaboration is, of course, mediated through our charism. In the local Church, in fact, there are sectors that fit in very well with our mission, e.g., pastoral work for the young and for vocations, involvement in the world of work and with poor neighbourhoods, and in the field of culture and social communication.

Participation in national and diocesan associations of religious

154. The Rector will also promote participation in national and diocesan associations of religious. *Mutuae Relationes* not only recognizes the existence of these but also assigns them great importance: “The *associations of religious* at the diocesan level are very useful; they should therefore be encouraged.” (MR 59) Charisms, as Pope Francis has been insisting, are for the sake of communion.²⁰

Love for the Church and the Pope

155. As a pontifical Congregation present in all the continents and in a large number of countries, we nurture a strong sense of belonging to the universal Church, and we foster love for the Church in the people with whom we work, especially those who share the Catholic faith.

Faithful to our Founder we cultivate a special filial devotion towards the successor of Peter.

The Salesian Society has as its highest superior the Supreme Pontiff. Even by reason of the vow of obedience, the members are filially submissive to his authority, and available for



the good of the universal Church. They welcome his magisterium with docility and help the faithful, especially the young, to accept his teachings. (C 125)

The Rector will promote these charismatic dimensions of filial love towards the Church and the Pope through the means of animation at his disposal, supported by the Local Council.

- In his talks, conferences and other moments of animation, the Rector promotes **a sense of belonging to the local Church**.
- Through active contact with the local Church, he works out ways of participating in the **diocesan pastoral project**.
- He personally participates and encourages participation of confreres in the initiatives of the **diocesan and national associations of religious**.
- He promotes the **missionary spirit** and awareness in the religious community and in the EPC, as also forms of practical commitment to the mission *ad gentes*.
- He nurtures and fosters the **sense of belonging to the universal Church** and promotes the knowledge and acceptance of the **magisterium of the Pope**.

8.4 THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Networking and advocacy in the civil and social context

156. The Salesian work carried out by the EPC is itself our action within a particular neighbourhood. However, a further word on the neighbourhood might not be out of place, given especially that, according to C 48, “We are ready to cooperate with civil organizations working in the fields of education and social development.”

This kind of collaboration is also a way of rendering service to the Church in a particular neighbourhood, area or terri-



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tory. Wherever possible, we become part of the civil and social context, so as to be able to be a Christian presence and also exert, where possible, a Christian influence in the field of legislation. Fidelity to our vocation today demands such participation, especially through the 'lay' presence of Salesian Brothers, lay collaborators, and groups of the Salesian Family. As the SGC says, "The community shares in the dynamism of the Church and is intended for and open to the service of its fellows, offering to all the benefit of the graces the Lord has showered on it. It joyfully cultivates and enlivens with its faith the relationships which bind it to people of other backgrounds, whether through kinship, inspiration, work, ideals, or on the grounds of duty, propriety, friendship, or charity." (SGC 507)

Social and political education

157. Involvement in the neighbourhood also implies *social and political education* so as to prepare 'honest citizens' who see active social and political participation as part of their moral responsibility, and who know the need to become citizens of the world.²¹ GC26 speaks of moving from "a welfare mentality, to involving poor young people in being active agents of their own development and active in the social and political field." (GC26 104; cf. also 98) All recent popes have encouraged Catholics to embrace the vocation to politics as a high form of charity. Benedict XVI, for example, repeatedly called for the formation of Catholics capable of assuming responsibility in the various areas of society, "especially in politics. This area needs more than ever people who are capable of building a 'good life' for the benefit and at the service of all, especially young people. Indeed, Christians, pilgrims bound for Heaven but who already live an anticipation of eternity on earth cannot shirk this commitment."²² Pope Francis has also invited the faithful to become interested and participate creatively in politics, and young people to be 'young and committed' to giving a Christian response to the building of a new society. (CV 168-174)



The digital universe

158. Further, we must not forget that the neighbourhood today is not merely physical but also *digital*. In Don Bosco's time the Salesian work took place within an institutional system "that was closed, separated, apolitical, autonomous, where everything happened within a clear and self-sufficient educative space, where the officially recognized masters were Don Bosco and his 'sons,' and where a single and simple culture reigned, one that was Catholic and popular, whose only aspiration was that of being equipped with sufficient earthly means while awaiting the heavenly reward."²³ Today it is clear that Salesians are no longer the sole agents of education, not only in the sense that the subject of the Salesian mission is the EPC, but also that the new information technology – the digital world – is now a formidable agent of education that is contributing to a change of culture and of anthropology. (AGC 427 17-19).

"The digital world, 'the new *areopagus* of modern times,' challenges us as educators of the young: it is a 'new playground,' a 'new oratory' which demands our presence and encourages us to new forms of evangelization and education." (GC27 62) Being servants of the young, therefore, means committing ourselves to entering the digital world "where the young in particular are at home in a significant and educational manner, ensuring the appropriate professional and ethical formation of confreres and collaborators, and applying the Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS)." (GC27 75.4) *Christus Vivit* recognizes the scope of the digital world in Youth Ministry. (Cf. CV 86-90)



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- With the Council of the EPC, the Rector studies **ways of participating in the civil and social context**, and of collaborating with civil organizations working in the fields of educational and social development.
- The Rector and the Council of the EPC plan and implement **proposals for the socio-political education of the young**.
- The Rector and the Council of the EPC also commit themselves to **formation in the area of the digital world**, so as to be better prepared for their work of education and evangelization of this 'new playground' and 'new oratory.'



¹ The FoR brings together all the preceding Salesian orientations and guidelines. This explains the abundance of references to the FoR in the present part of *The Salesian Rector*.

² GC27 62; see also 25 and 75.

³ XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* 21-24; 145-146. See also CV 86-90.

⁴ GC25 70, 78. FoR 125-126, 275.

⁵ AGC 363 I.2, cited in GC25 79, note 49.

⁶ This is known as the ‘inside-out’ principle: bring about change at lower and less complex levels in order to promote change at higher and more complex ones. Cf. M. Vojtaš, *Progettare e discernere. Progettazione educativo-pastorale salesiana tra storia, teoria e proposte innovative* (Rome: LAS, 2015) 281.

⁷ Vojtaš 314.

⁸ AGC 363 pp. 9-10 It is interesting that Fr Vecchi speaks of two possible ways of constituting the animating nucleus, one formed by Salesian consecrated persons and lay people, and the other formed by lay people alone, but considers the latter as ‘complementary’:

The type we are dealing with here, which ought to lead to the implementation of provincial plans for relocation and redimensioning, is one in which the Salesian community is present in sufficient numbers and in quality to animate, together with some lay people, an educative community and project, accepting that this allows of a variety of styles of implementation depending on the number of confreres and roles.

The other kind, the one in which only lay people make up the immediate animating nucleus is complementary: it is a possibility which could answer certain particular problems of either personnel or initiatives, and always looks to the “Salesian nucleus” as the inspirational model to inspire it and in which to find support. (AGC 363 I.2)

GC25, as we have said already, consolidated and ratified Fr Vecchi’s expansion of the animating nucleus but did not pronounce on the kinds



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of Salesian Works. (GC25 70, 78-81)

GC26, instead, while somehow not attentive to this expansion of the animating nucleus, recognizes (a) “works managed by a Salesian community that is the animating nucleus of a wider educative pastoral community”; (b) “activities and works entirely entrusted by the Salesians to lay people, or set up by lay people and recognised in the Provincial Plan, according to the criteria indicated by GC24, nn. 180-182”; and (c) “varied forms of management that cannot be reduced to a single model, in which the relationship between a local community and a work (or more works) persists, but this (or sectors of it) are managed by lay people.” (GC26 120. FoR 126-127, 273-280)

⁹ Cf. the comment in PL 893-895.

¹⁰ FoR 126. Cf. also GC25 78, 80.

¹¹ GC24 172; cf. 169-171.

¹² XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* 95-97.

¹³ Rossano Sala, “Il segno della Comunità Educativo-Pastorale. Profezia di fraternità nello spirito e nella missione salesiana oggi,” *Fare di ogni CEP la casa e la scuola della comunione*. Atti Convegno Nazionale sulla Comunità Educativo-Pastorale, Salesianum – Roma, 16-19 febbraio 2017 (Roma, 2017) 66-67.

¹⁴ Cf. AGC 363 p.4-7. The other elements in the model are the EPC, the animating nucleus and the knowledge of the situation and mentality of young people.

¹⁵ Cf. Missions Department and Formation Department, *Missionary formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (2014).

¹⁶ Cf. Social Communications Department, *Salesian Social Communication System* (2011).

¹⁷ *Charter* 46.

¹⁸ *Charter* 3.

¹⁹ GC27 p. 129.



²⁰ *Apostolic Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* (21 November 2014) (21 November 2014) 3.

²¹ Pascual Chávez, “Don Bosco’s Educational System Today,” *Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education* 21 (2010) 6-7.

²² Benedict XVI, To members of the Second Ecclesial Convention of Aquileia, Basilica of Aquileia, 7 May 2011, at <http://www.clerus.org/bibliaclerusonline/en/ctx.htm>.

²³ Chávez, “Don Bosco’s Educational System Today” 5.





CONCLUSION

Incorporating stimuli and contributions from Church and Congregation

159. Our new edition of the Rector's Manual has tried to incorporate, with varying measures of success, the stimuli and contributions coming from the Church and the Congregation during the last three decades. The structure of the text itself reveals the concerns of the last few General Chapters – the perspective given by our apostolic consecration (GC26 and GC27), the Rector in the Salesian religious community (especially GC25), the Rector and the religious community in the EPC (GC23 and GC24).

Brother among brothers, man of faith and joy

160. Given the centrality of the role of the Rector in our tradition, the Manual will still appear as asking too much from a single person. We need to keep in mind, however, the relational model of authority, with the passage from the centrality of the role of authority to the centrality of the dynamic of fraternity. No individual, however brilliant, can carry today all the weight of authority. The Salesian Rector, while retaining his personal authority, remains a brother among brothers – a brother who believes deeply and hopes because he knows he has been given the gift of love, like Peter. He lives with a keen awareness of his own limits and of those of his community, with a deeply Salesian sensitivity to his brothers and sisters and especially to the needs of young people on the margins of life.

He knows therefore that the service entrusted to him entails suffering, and with Don Bosco and Mamma Margaret he turns his eyes to the cross. But he also lives with the light-heartedness and joy of one who knows that the world has been saved. He may not have all the gifts that our documents – and also confreres and lay mission partners – expect him to have, but he knows he can always be a man of faith and a brother who knows how to keep his community welcoming and hospitable, opening its doors to all in a communion that expands in concentric circles. He is aware of course that his role involves governance,



Conclusion

and he accepts – according to his temperament – all that this entails.

**With humble entrustment
to Mary and our Heavenly
Protectors**

161. With his confreres, the Rector entrusts himself to our heavenly protectors, all those who have gone before us, and most especially to Mary, mother and teacher, the woman of valour who knows when to ask for help, when to stand at the foot of the cross, and when simply to keep things in her heart, walking always before the luminous cloud of the Father's will.

At the age of 26, Michael Rua became the first Rector of the Congregation at Mirabello. To him Don Bosco gave the first, handwritten 'Rector's Manual,' with the precious words "Studia di farti amare" – "Strive to make yourself loved," which are now inscribed on the cross given to each confrere at perpetual profession. Fr Rua, the 'living rule,' is the first and best interpreter of what Don Bosco wanted his Salesians and his Rectors to be. With the words of Don Bosco ringing in our ears – "You will complete the work that I begin; I shall sketch it, you will color it." (BM XI,289) – we ask Blessed Rua to intercede for us that we might be faithful interpreters of the mind of our Father and Founder.



APPENDIX I

DON BOSCO'S 'CONFIDENTIAL REMINDERS' TO RECTORS

We present here the last printed version of Don Bosco's 'Confidential Reminders' to Rectors. It is dated 8 December 1886, about a year before Don Bosco's death.¹ The origin of this document is a letter written to Fr Rua whom Don Bosco had asked, in 1863, to take responsibility as Rector at Mirabello, the first Salesian house outside Turin. The twenty-six points of the original letter to Fr Rua were enriched by new content over the intervening years.

For yourself

1. Let nothing disturb you.
2. Avoid austerity in food. Let your mortifications be diligence in your duties and putting up with the annoyances of others. Get seven hours of rest each night. That can vary more or less for you and others when there is some reasonable motive. This is useful for your health and that of your dependants.
3. Celebrate Holy Mass and recite the breviary *pie, attente ac devote* (piously, attentively and devoutly). This is for you and for your dependants.
4. Every morning never omit meditation and during the day a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. For other things, do as indicated in the Rules of the Society.
5. Learn how to make yourself loved rather than feared. Let charity and patience constantly accompany you in commanding and correcting and act in such a way that everyone knows by your words and deeds that it is the good of souls you are seeking. Put up with anything when it is a matter of preventing sin. Let your concerns be directed to the good of the youngsters whom Divine Providence has entrusted to you.
6. In matters of greater importance always lift your heart



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briefly to God before making a decision. When some report is made to you, listen to everything but try to discern the facts well and listen to both parties before making a judgement. Often on first hearing of them, things seem like wooden beams that are merely splinters.

With the teachers

1. See that teachers are lacking nothing they need regarding food and clothing. Note their efforts and if they are ill or simply unwell, quickly send someone to substitute them in class.
2. Speak with them often, individually or together; see that they do not have too much to do, or if they lack clothing or books, or have some physical or moral concern or if they have pupils in class who need to be corrected or have particular disciplinary needs regarding the level and way of teaching them. As soon as you know of some need do whatever you can to accommodate it.
3. In appropriate Conferences recommend that their questions in class cover all the pupils without distinction. They should read each one's work in turn. Let them avoid particular friendships or favouritism and they should never allow pupils or others into their rooms.
4. If they need to give tasks or advice to pupils, they should use a room or hall made available for this purpose.
5. When there are Solemnities, Novenas or Feast Days in honour of Our Lady or the Patron Saint of some town, the school, or one or other Mystery of our Religion, they should say a few words about it beforehand and should never omit to do this.
6. Keep an eye out to see that teachers never send pupils away



from the school or, should that be absolutely necessary, see that they are accompanied by the Superior. They should never hit delinquent or negligent boys. If something serious happens they should immediately advise the Director of Studies or the Superior of the House.

7. Outside of school, teachers cannot exercise any authority over their pupils and should limit themselves to advice, warnings or at most corrections that suggest that they mean to do so charitably.

With the assistants and those in charge of dormitories

1. Most of what has been said concerning teachers can be applied to those in charge of the dormitories.

2. Try to share out tasks so that both for teachers and for these they can have the time and ease for attending to their studies.

3. Deal willingly with them to listen to their opinion about the behaviour of the boys entrusted to them. The most important aspect of their duties is to arrive punctually where the boys come together to rest, or for school, work, recreation or the like.

4. If you see that one of them has engaged in a particular friendship with a pupil, or that his role or his morals may be at risk of being compromised, change his duties with all prudence; if the risk continues you should immediately let your Superior know.

5. Bring the teachers, assistants and those in charge of dormitories together every now and then and tell them to make efforts to prevent bad conversations, keep out every book, writing, image or picture (*hic scientia est*) or anything that en-



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dangers purity, the Queen of virtues, purity. Let them offer good advice and be charitable to everyone.

6. Let them make it their common concern to discover the more risky pupils; once they have been found, encourage them to let you know who these are.

With the coadjutors and service personnel

1. See that every morning they can hear Mass and approach the Sacraments according to the rules of the Society. Service personnel should be encouraged to go to Confession every fortnight or at least once a month.

2. Employ great charity in giving commands, letting people know by your words and actions that you want the good of their souls. Keep a special eye out to see that they do not engage in familiarity with the boys or people from outside.

3. Never allow women into the dormitories or the kitchen or allow them to deal with people in the house unless it is for charitable matters of something absolutely necessary. This article is of the greatest importance.

4. If arguments or disputes should break out amongst service personnel, assistants, the boys or others, hear each one out charitably, but ordinarily I would say offer your view separately so that one does not hear what is being said about the other.

5. A coadjutor of known probity should be appointed head of the service personnel to watch over their work and their moral conduct, so that there is no theft or bad conversation. And take special care to prevent anyone taking on jobs or engaging in business affairs with relatives or other people outside, whoever they may be.



With the young pupils

1. Never accept pupils who have been expelled from other [boarding] Colleges or whom you judge to be of bad conduct. If, despite due caution, you happen to accept one of this kind, appoint a companion you are certain of who will stay with him and never let him out of his sight. When he gets involved in some misdemeanour advise him at least once and if he fails again he should immediately be sent home.

2. Let the pupils get to know you, and you should get to know them by spending all the time possible with them, offering whatever word of affection in their ear you know best as you see the need, bit by bit. This is the great secret that will make you master of their hearts.

3. You might ask: what are these words? They are the same ones that were said to you once upon a time. For example, "How are you?" "*Good.*" "And your soul?" "*Just so-so.*" "Would you like to help me in a great task, will you help?" "*Yes, but what is it?*" "Make yourself good" or "Saving your soul", or "Make yourself the best of all the boys." And with the wilder ones: "When do you want to start?" "*Start what?*" "To be my consolation, behaving like St Aloysius." And for the ones who are a bit resistant to approaching the sacraments: "When would you like to break the devil's horns?" "*How?*" "With a good confession." "*When would you suggest?*" "As soon as possible." On other occasions: "When should we have a good clean-up?" or "Do you feel like helping me to break the devil's horns?" "Do you want us two to be soul friends?" *Haec aut similia.*

4. In our Houses the Rector/Director is the ordinary Confessor, therefore see that you willingly hear anyone's confession but give them full freedom to go to confession to someone else if they wish. Make it well known that you take no part in the marks given for good conduct and try to eliminate any



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hint of suspicion that you make use of or even recall what was told you in Confession. Let there not be even the least hint of favouritism shown to someone who goes to confession to one rather than the other.

5. The Altar Boys, the St Aloysius, Blessed Sacrament, Immaculate Conception Sodalties should be encouraged and promoted. Show good will and satisfaction towards those who are enrolled, but you should only be a promoter and not their director. Consider such things as being for the boys. They are entrusted to the Catechist to run.

6. When you succeed in discovering some serious misdemeanour, have the guilty one or the suspect called to your room and in the most charitable way try to get him to admit his fault and the wrong he has committed. Then correct him and invite him to fix up his conscience. This way and by continuing to give kindly assistance to the pupil, wonderful results are obtained and improvements that one would never have thought possible.

With people outside

1. We willingly lend our efforts for religious services, preaching, celebrating Masses for the public and hearing confessions any time that charity and our duties of state allow us to, especially for parishes our houses are in. But never take on tasks or other things that mean you have to be away from the house or that can affect the roles that each one has.

2. Out of courtesy priests from outside are sometimes invited to preach or are invited to a Solemnity, musical entertainments and the like. Similar invitations can be made to authorities or any well-deserving or charitable people who have given us favours or who would be able to.



3. Charity and courtesy are the characteristic features of a Rector/Director towards people both inside and outside.

4. In case of questions regarding material matters be as agreeable as you can, even if there is some disadvantage, so long as anything that is matter for dispute or any other thing that could cause a loss of charity are kept far away.

5. If it is a case of spiritual matters, questions are always to be resolved with whatever gives greater glory to God. Your tasks, or stubbornness, spirit of vengeance, self-love, arguments, pretensions and also honour – everything is to be sacrificed to avoid sin.

6. In matters of grave importance it is good to ask time to pray and take advice from some pious and prudent individual.

With members of the Society

1. The exact observance of the rules and especially obedience is the basis of everything. But if you want others to obey you, you must also obey your superiors. Nobody who is not able to obey is suitable for being in command.

2. Try to share things out in such a way that nobody is overburdened but see that each one does faithfully what is entrusted to him.

3. Let nobody in the Congregation draw up contracts, receive monies, offer loans or lend things to relatives, friends or others. Nor let anyone keep money or administer temporal matters without being directly authorised by the Superior. Observance of this article will keep some of the problems that have been fatal for other Congregations far away from us.



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4. Abhor any modification of the Rules like poison. Their exact observance is better than any variation. The best is the enemy of the good.

5. Study, time, experience have allowed me to have first-hand knowledge that greed, interest and vainglory were the ruin of flourishing congregations and respectable religious orders. Time will also allow you to see the truths that perhaps you only think are unbelievable right now.

6. Take the greatest care to foster common life through word and deed.

Giving commands

1. Never command things that you judge to be beyond the strength of your subjects or that you see they will not obey. Try to avoid repugnant commands. Indeed, take the greatest care to support the inclinations each one has by preferably giving them roles that you know they will enjoy fulfilling.

2. Never command things that are injurious to health or that hinder them taking the rest they need, or which clash with other tasks or orders from another superior.

3. When commanding, always use charitable and mild words and manner. Threats, anger, and even more so violence should always be far from your words and actions.

4. Where you have to command a subject to do difficult or repugnant things say, for example: “Could you do this or that other thing?” or “I have something important that I would prefer not to ask you to do because it is difficult, but there is nobody other than yourself who is up to it. You have the time



and the health; it will not keep you away from other tasks," etc. Experience tells us over time that approaches of the kind have been very effective.

5. Be economical in everything, but ensure absolutely that those who are ill lack nothing. Amongst other things this lets people know that we have made a vow of poverty, therefore we ought not seek comfort nor even desire it in anything. We must love poverty and what comes with poverty, so avoid any unnecessary expense in clothing, books, furniture, trips etc.

This is like a Testament that I address to the Directors/Rectors of individual Houses. If this advice is put into practice, I will die happy because I will be certain that our Society will flourish even more before men and be blessed by the Lord, and it will achieve its end, which is the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr John Bosco

Turin, 1886, Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary
Most Holy,
45th anniversary of the founding of the Oratory

¹ Istituto Storico Salesiano, *Salesian Sources. 1. Don Bosco and his Work. Collected Works* (Rome: LAS / Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2017) 478-485.





APPENDIX II

THE LOCAL SUPERIOR IN THE CODE OF CANON LAW

We present here the articles of the Code of Canon Law that refer to the local Superior. The normative hierarchy is indicated in art. 191 of our Constitutions: "The life and activity of communities and confreres are regulated by the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Society. The latter is expressed in the Constitutions, which represent our basic code, the general Chapter, the general and provincial directories, and in other decisions made by competent authorities." For a more thorough interpretation of the canons one may refer to the Comments on the Code of Canon Law and to specific studies in the various languages.

POWER, FACULTY, DUTIES, OBLIGATIONS

Can. 596 – Personal and collegial Power

§1. Superiors and chapters of institutes possess that power over members which is defined in universal law and the constitutions.

§2. In clerical religious institutes of pontifical right, however, they also possess ecclesiastical power of governance for both the external and internal forum.

§3. The prescripts of cann.131 [*ordinary and delegated power*], 133 [*limits of the mandate to delegate*], and 137 - 144 [*modality in the exercise of executive power*] apply to the power mentioned in §1.

Can. 608 – The religious house

A religious community must live in a legitimately established house under the authority of a superior designated according to the norm of law. Each house is to have at least an oratory in which the Eucharist is to be celebrated and reserved so that it is truly the center of the community.



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Can. 617 – Modality in the exercise of power

Superiors are to fulfill their function and exercise their power according to the norm of universal and proper law.

Can. 618 – Spirit of service

Superiors are to exercise their power, received from God through the ministry of the Church, in a spirit of service. Therefore, docile to the will of God in fulfilling their function, they are to govern their subjects as sons or daughters of God and, promoting the voluntary obedience of their subjects with reverence for the human person, they are to listen to them willingly and foster their common endeavor for the good of the institute and the Church, but without prejudice to the authority of superiors to decide and prescribe what must be done.

Can. 619 – Duties of the Superior

Superiors are to devote themselves diligently to their office and together with the members entrusted to them are to strive to build a community of brothers or sisters in Christ, in which God is sought and loved before all things. Therefore, they are to nourish the members regularly with the food of the word of God and are to draw them to the celebration of the sacred liturgy. They are to be an example to them in cultivating virtues and in the observance of the laws and traditions of their own institute; they are to meet the personal needs of the members appropriately, solicitously to care for and visit the sick, to correct the restless, to console the faint of heart, and to be patient toward all.

Can. 623 – Appointment

In order for members to be appointed or elected validly to the function of superior, a suitable time is required after perpetual or definitive profession, to be determined by proper law, or if it concerns major superiors, by the constitutions.



Can. 624 – Duration of the appointment

§1. Superiors are to be constituted for a certain and appropriate period of time according to the nature and need of the institute, unless the constitutions determine otherwise for the supreme moderator and for superiors of an autonomous house.

§2. Proper law is to provide suitable norms so that superiors, constituted for a definite time, do not remain too long in offices of governance without interruption.

§3. Nevertheless, they can be removed from office during their function or be transferred to another for reasons established in proper law.

Can. 627 – The Council, mandatoriness and responsibilities

§1. According to the norm of the constitutions, superiors are to have their own Council, whose assistance they must use in carrying out their function.

§2. In addition to the cases prescribed in universal law, proper law is to determine the cases which require consent or counsel to act validly; such consent or counsel must be obtained according to the norm of can. 127.

Can. 629 – The obligation of residence

Superiors are to reside in their respective houses, and are not to absent themselves from their house except according to the norm of proper law.

Can. 630 – Norms for the sacrament of penance and the direction of conscience

§1. Superiors are to recognize the due freedom of their members regarding the sacrament of penance and direction of conscience, without prejudice, however, to the discipline of the institute.

§2. According to the norm of proper law, superiors are to be concerned that suitable confessors are available to the members, to whom the members can confess frequently.

§3. In monasteries of nuns, in houses of formation, and in



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more numerous lay communities, there are to be ordinary confessors approved by the local ordinary after consultation with the community; nevertheless, there is no obligation to approach them.

§4. Superiors are not to hear the confessions of subjects unless the members request it on their own initiative.

§5. Members are to approach superiors with trust, to whom they can freely and on their own initiative open their minds. Superiors, however, are forbidden to induce the members in any way to make a manifestation of conscience to them.

Can. 636 – The Administrator distinct from the local Superior

§1. In each institute and likewise in each province which is governed by a major superior, there is to be a Finance officer [administrator], distinct from the major superior and constituted according to the norm of proper law, who is to manage the administration of goods under the direction of the respective superior. Insofar as possible, a Finance officer [administrator] distinct from the local superior is to be designated even in local communities.

Can. 661 – Due care for the ongoing formation of confreres

Through their entire life, religious are to continue diligently their spiritual, doctrinal, and practical formation. Superiors, moreover, are to provide them with the resources and time for this.

Can. 665 – Seeking the religious who withdraws illegitimately from the house

§2. A member who is absent from a religious house illegitimately with the intention of withdrawing from the power of the superiors is to be sought out solicitously by them and is to be helped to return to and persevere in his or her vocation.



Can. 687 – Care of the exclaustrated religious

An exclaustrated member is considered freed from the obligations which cannot be reconciled with the new condition of his or her life, yet remains dependent upon and under the care of superiors and also of the local ordinary, especially if the member is a cleric. The member can wear the habit of the institute unless the indult determines otherwise. Nevertheless, the member lacks active and passive voice.

Can. 703 – Immediate expulsion from the religious house ¹

In the case of grave external scandal or of most grave imminent harm to the institute, a member can be expelled immediately from a religious house by the major superior or, if there is danger in delay, by the local superior with the consent of the Council. If it is necessary, the major superior is to take care to begin a process of dismissal according to the norm of law or is to refer the matter to the Apostolic See.

Can. 911 – Administering of Viaticum to sick confreres

§1. The pastor, parochial vicars, chaplains, and, with regard to all those dwelling in the house, the superior of a community in clerical religious institutes and societies of apostolic life have the duty and right of bringing the Most Holy Eucharist as Viaticum to the sick.

Can. 1179 – The funeral rites of deceased confreres

The funerals of religious or members of a society of apostolic life are generally to be celebrated in their own church or oratory by the superior if the institute or society is clerical; otherwise by the chaplain.

Can. 1196 – The faculty of dispensing from private vows

In addition to the Roman Pontiff, the following can dispense from private vows for a just cause provided that a dispensation does not injure a right acquired by others:



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- 1° the local ordinary and the pastor with regard to all their subjects and even travellers;
- 2° the superior of a religious institute or society of apostolic life if it is clerical and of pontifical right with regard to members, novices, and persons who live day and night in a house of the institute or society;
- 3° those to whom the Apostolic See or the local ordinary has delegated the power of dispensing.

Can. 1203 – The faculty of dispensing from promissory oaths

Those who can suspend, dispense, or commute a vow have the same power in the same manner over a promissory oath; but if the dispensation from the oath tends to the disadvantage of others who refuse to remit the obligation of the oath, only the Apostolic See can dispense the oath.

Can. 1245 – Sacred times

Without prejudice to the right of diocesan bishops mentioned in can. 87, for a just cause and according to the prescripts of the diocesan bishop, a pastor can grant in individual cases a dispensation from the obligation of observing a feast day or a day of penance or can grant a commutation of the obligation into other pious works. A superior of a religious institute or society of apostolic life, if they are clerical and of pontifical right, can also do this in regard to his own subjects and others living in the house day and night.

DIOCESAN CHURCH AND APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY

Can. 463 – Participation in the Diocesan Synod

§1. The following must be called to a diocesan Synod as members of the Synod and are obliged to participate in it:

[.....]

- 9° some superiors of religious institutes and of societies of apostolic life which have a house in the diocese, chosen in a num-



ber and manner determined by the diocesan bishop.

Can. 677 – Fidelity to the mission and works proper to the Institute and prudent updating

§1. Superiors and members are to retain faithfully the mission and works proper to the institute.

Nevertheless, attentive to the necessities of times and places, they are to accommodate them prudently, even employing new and opportune means.

§2. Moreover, if they have associations of the Christian faithful joined to them, institutes are to assist them with special care so that they are imbued with the genuine spirit of their family.

Can. 678 – Rapport with the Diocesan Bishop

§1. Religious are subject to the power of bishops whom they are bound to follow with devoted submission and reverence in those matters which regard the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship, and other works of the apostolate.

§2. In exercising an external apostolate, religious are also subject to their proper superiors and must remain faithful to the discipline of the institute. The bishops themselves are not to fail to urge this obligation if the case warrants it.

§3. In organizing the works of the apostolate of religious, diocesan bishops and religious superiors must proceed through mutual consultation.

Can. 778 – Care for catechetical instruction

Religious superiors and superiors of societies of apostolic life are to take care that catechetical instruction is imparted diligently in their churches, schools, and other works entrusted to them in any way.

Can. 968 – Faculty to hear confessions

§1. In virtue of office, a local ordinary, canon penitentiary, a pastor, and those who take the place of a pastor possess



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the faculty of hearing confessions, each within his jurisdiction.

§2. In virtue of their office, superiors of religious institutes or societies of apostolic life that are clerical and of pontifical right, who have executive power of governance according to the norm of their constitutions, possess the faculty of hearing the confessions of their subjects and of others living day and night in the house, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 630, §4.

Can. 969 – Competence of the local Ordinary and the power of the local Superior to delegate

§1. The local ordinary alone is competent to confer upon any presbyters whatsoever the faculty to hear the confessions of any of the faithful. Presbyters who are members of religious institutes, however, are not to use the faculty without at least the presumed permission of their superior.

§2. The superior of a religious institute or society of apostolic life mentioned in can. 968, §2 is competent to confer upon any presbyters whatsoever the faculty to hear the confessions of their subjects and of others living day and night in the house.

ACTS REQUIRING CONSENT, OPINION, PERMISSION

Can. 119 – Elections and other collegial acts

With regard to collegial acts, unless the law or statutes provide otherwise:

1° if it concerns elections, when the majority of those who must be convoked are present, that which is approved by the absolute majority of those present has the force of law; after two indecisive ballots, a vote is to be taken on the two candidates who have obtained the greater number of votes or, if there are several, on the two senior in age; after the



third ballot, if a tie remains, the one who is senior in age is considered elected;

2° if it concerns other affairs, when an absolute majority of those who must be convoked are present, that which is approved by the absolute majority of those present has the force of law; if after two ballots the votes are equal, the one presiding can break the tie by his or her vote;

3° what touches all as individuals, however, must be approved by all.

Can. 127 – Acts that require the consent or the opinion of a college, a group or of individuals²

§1. When it is established by law that in order to place acts a superior needs the consent or counsel of some college or group of persons, the college or group must be convoked according to the norm of can. 166 unless, when it concerns seeking counsel only, particular or proper law provides otherwise. For such acts to be valid, however, it is required that the consent of an absolute majority of those present is obtained or that the counsel of all is sought.

§2. When it is established by law that in order to place acts a superior needs the consent or counsel of certain persons as individuals:

1° if consent is required, the act of a superior who does not seek the consent of those persons or who acts contrary to the opinion of all or any of them is invalid;

2° if counsel is required, the act of a superior who does not hear those persons is invalid; although not obliged to accept their opinion even if unanimous, a superior is nonetheless not to act contrary to that opinion, especially if unanimous, without a reason which is overriding in the superior's judgment.

§3. All whose consent or counsel is required are obliged to offer their opinion sincerely and, if the gravity of the affair requires it, to observe secrecy diligently; moreover, the superior can insist upon this obligation.³



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Can. 307 – Permission for a religious to form part of an association

§3. Members of religious institutes can join associations [*of the Christian faithful*] according to the norm of their proper law with the consent of their superior.

Can. 638 – Permission to carry out extraordinary administrative acts, alienation and other legal transactions

§1. Within the scope of universal law, it belongs to proper law to determine acts which exceed the limit and manner of ordinary administration and to establish what is necessary to place an act of extraordinary administration validly.

§2. In addition to superiors, the officials who are designated for this in proper law also validly incur expenses and perform juridic acts of ordinary administration within the limits of their function.

§3. For the validity of alienation and of any other affair in which the patrimonial condition of a juridic person can worsen, the written permission of the competent superior with the consent of the Council is required.

Nevertheless, if it concerns an affair which exceeds the amount defined by the Holy See for each region, or things given to the Church by vow, or things precious for artistic or historical reasons, the permission of the Holy See itself is also required.

Can. 665 – Permission for a religious to absent himself from the house.

§1. Observing common life, religious are to live in their own religious house and are not to be absent from it except with the permission of their superior. If it concerns a lengthy absence from the house, however, the major superior, with the consent of the Council and for a just cause, can permit a member to live outside a house of the institute, but not for more than a year, except for the purpose of caring for ill health, of studies, or of exercising an apostolate in the name of the institute.



Can. 671 – Permission for a religious to assume offices or tasks outside of the institute

A religious is not to accept functions and offices outside the institute without the permission of a legitimate superior.

¹ This provision, of an urgent and extraordinary nature, is not to be confused with dismissal.

² Cf. C 181; R 180,181.

The authentic interpretation of can. 127 enacted on 5 July 1985 by the Pontifical Commission for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of law of the Latin Rite established that, when the Superior requires the consent of a college or group of persons to emit acts, that Superior does not have the right to vote with the others, not even to settle eventual ties.

When instead the act (for example, admission to religious profession or to sacred orders, or the permission to alienate) is the responsibility of the Provincial Superior with the consent of his council, and the opinion of the local Superior with his council is sought, in that case the local Superior votes along with his council.

³ On the basis of this norm, abstention is not legitimate.



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