



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES
SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA

Via Marsala, 42 – 00185 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

**Rome 20 May 2018
Solemnity of Pentecost**

**Letter of the Rector Major
at the conclusion of the Second Seminar on the promotion of the Causes of
Beatification and Canonization of the Salesian Family**

**Dear Superiors/and those Responsible for the Salesian Family
Dear Provincials and those animating and promoting the Causes**

The celebration of the Seminar for the promotion of the Causes of Beatification and Canonization of the Salesian Family, held in Rome between 10 and 14 April 2018, with the participation of about 90 people coming from various parts of the world, was an occasion of grace to examine the spiritual and pastoral progress of the whole of our Salesian Family.

The meeting highlighted how the process and the witness of Salesian holiness in the Salesian Family are above all the gift of the Holy Spirit to be welcomed with humility and gratitude. They confirm the fact that it is not enough to offer services and to do things but that it is necessary to bring Jesus and to bring to Jesus, by proclaiming the joy of the Gospel.

From Don Bosco down to our own times we recognise a tradition of holiness to which we need to pay attention, since the incarnation of the charism that had its origin in him found its expression in a variety of states of life and in different forms, it is a question of men and women, young people and adults, consecrated persons and lay people, bishops and missionaries who in certain historical, cultural and social contexts, different in time and place, made the special light of the Salesian charism shine out, representing a heritage that continues to play an effective role in the life and in the communities of believers and of men and women of good will.

In my closing address I expressed this hope: “I would like to look at the witness of our saints, blessed and all the members of the Salesian Family on the way to holiness recognised by the Church, as those who accompany us in the ways and in the life of the Spirit. Their life-witness and the unfolding of their vocations and often their writings are for us *outlines of ways of life* from which we can learn how to place *all our lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to be ready to listen to His inspirations and directives.*”

In this year in which the Church devotes the Synod of Bishops to the Young and their journey of faith and of vocation I should also like to look at both the *young saints* of the Salesian Family, of which there are 45 under 30 years of age – a sign of the dynamism of the Salesian spirit incarnated in youngsters, teenagers and young people – and also at *the youth of saints* as a manifestation of the way God can act in the lives of people in a variety of the most different ways.

By means of talks of the highest quality, opportunities for sharing ideas in group work, the aim was achieved of being able to present the material and the processes that assist in the verification and follow up of any presumed miracles but above all this gathering has been further confirmation of the fact that the promotion and the care given to the Causes of Beatification and Canonization of our Family give rise to the dynamics of grace that are the source of evangelical joy and to the sense of belonging to the charism, renewing resolutions and commitments to fidelity to the call received and creating apostolic and vocational fruitfulness.

This seminar – which will have its third edition between 13 and 17 April 2021 – gives rise to some reflections that involve the General Office of Postulation and those bodies that are coordinated by it at local level, but also makes some demands on the Government of the Congregation and on the Departments of which it is composed, in order to then branch out into the local situations, under the direction of the Provinces and of the Salesian Family, in accordance with the local Churches: a process that unfolds with two different timescales or, if you prefer along two different paths – the institutional and the pastoral – which need to act in harmony as they give each other support. In this area some challenges have surfaced that need to be recognised and faced up to:

(1) To continue in the Salesian Family, in communion with the local Churches, the process of promoting the Causes by means of initiatives to make our candidates for holiness known, imitated and prayed to. As a challenge I would like to ask **“Do we keep in mind and pray to our Blesseds, Venerables and Servants of God? Do we have confidence in the communion of saints? Do we believe in the power of intercession of the saints?”**

(2) To coordinate as well as possible the process of “Government” and that of the Postulation Office it is necessary that for each Cause at local level there are some people who take on the responsibility of following up our Causes, keeping them on track and keeping them alive, and spreading devotion to the Servants of God, the Venerables, and the Blesseds in communion and collaboration with the local Churches. Vice-postulators, collaborators and promoters need to raise awareness, inform, and encourage approaches to the local Bishops and superiors. To keep things moving there is no need to wait quietly for the Bishops to make their decisions and give recommendations from on high. What is needed is to be responsible and to awaken a sense of co-responsibility, in a spirit of communion with the Church and of pastoral creativity. A first initiative could be that of proposing to/in the local Churches and within the Salesian Family a day on which to present and make known the findings of the Seminar.

(3) To increase our awareness of the crucial importance of a miracle and the need for it for the successful outcome of a Cause. In the light of the talks by Card.

Amato, Mons. Pellegrino and Father Turek it is necessary to reflect on the twofold aspects of a lack of scientific explanation and of intercession; to committing ourselves to praying and getting others to pray to our candidates for the altars, overcoming laziness and spiritual superficiality. Again here I ask: **“Do we think that it is important to pray to obtain miracles? Or do we believe that miracles can no longer happen? Unless we pray to the Blesseds and Venerables, we shall not be able to obtain miracles from God”**.

(4) To appreciate the manifold richness of the one Salesian Family, made up of 31 different groups some of which are distinguished by being essentially lay in character: a richness in its own way unique in the Church. This richness that is expressed at the charismatic level, could now also be transformed into a new form of collaboration in the Causes of Beatification and Canonization, with all that this implies, and a very real movement in the Church to which it would give rise.

Holiness already recognised or in the process of being recognised, on the one hand is itself the realization of the evangelical radical approach and fidelity to the apostolic project of Don Bosco, which one can recognise as a spiritual and pastoral treasure; on the other hand, it is a challenge to live one’s own vocation with fidelity and to be ready to bear witness to love right to the end. Our Saints, Blesseds. Venerables and Servants of God are the veritable incarnation of the Salesian charism and of the *Constitutions* or *Regulations* of our Institutes and Groups in the most diverse of times and situations, overcoming that worldliness and spiritual superficiality that undermine the roots of our credibility and fruitfulness. They are true mystics of the primacy of God in the generous gift of oneself, prophets of evangelical fraternity, servants of their brothers and sisters with creativity.

I thank the Lord for the grace of this Seminar which has helped us to appreciate ever more the mystery of the Communion of Saints and has placed us within that “circle of saints” which in artistic language Blessed Fra Angelico wanted to describe and which in Salesian terms is like a “gift of the Spirit” which enables us to come together and to journey together along the joyful and demanding path of holiness. These initiatives are a privileged means for the promotion among the whole people of God of that common vocation to holiness which is so dear to us in our Salesian tradition and to which Pope Francis with his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* is exhorting us.

May Our Mother Mary Help of Christians, given to little John in his dreams at 9 years of age as his «teacher, under whose guidance you will become wise and without whom all wisdom becomes foolishness» take us by the hand and with a motherly gaze accompany us on the way of holiness.




Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime
Rector Major