Dear friends,

I trust that this communication of mine finds you well in this first month of the new year, which is also a month of Salesian holiness.

I would like to share some points with you concerning GC28, the Strenna theme and the celebration of the Feasts of Saint Francis de Sales and Saint John Bosco.

By now, GC28 is but a few days away. More than 240 Salesians from 90 provinces and delegations 90 province across 134 countries will be focused on Valdocco in Turin, where it all began for us. There, before the altars of Mary help of Christians and Don Bosco we will be asking for the gifts of the Holy Spirit so we can draw up the profile of the Salesian for today’s young people. The theme concerns the Salesians of your country and the youth of your province from where future vocations will come.

The event demands prayer, visibility, and diffusion in the Church and society. Communications delegates from every province are asked to encourage the participation of Salesians, lay people, youth and members of the Salesian Family by providing adequate information. The Department, through ANS and Multimedia has been in contact with you, offering materials and asking your collaboration so that we can have an intense experience of this most important meeting in the Congregation that takes place every six years. I am very grateful for the generous and professional response we have received to this point. ANS will continue to be in contact with you until the end of GC28, soliciting your cooperation.

You will already have the Strenna material in your hands. The Rector Major has begun to disseminate it more broadly. First of all he presented it to the SDB communities in Rome, then to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and most recently at Valdocco in Turin to the entire Salesian Family.

The theme is a profoundly human and Christian one, profoundly Salesian and youthful: “Good Christians and upright citizens. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. It is an invitation, of course, to collaborate in building the Kingdom of God as Jesus did with his Gospel; an appeal to build up “The civilisation of love” as St John Paul II said, and a call to respect and look after our common home, as Pope Francis has urged.

Here too, Communication delegates can make the written Strenna known and promote the video in their various works and among the different Groups of the Salesian Family. Motivated by this theme, let us spread the fundamental rights of persons; let us defend life at every stage because it is sacred; let us protect minors, give a voice to those who have none and give visibility to the marginalised. Let us spread truth, justice and peace.

This coming 24 January we celebrate Saint Francis de Sales, the patron of journalists and a great communicator. It was from him that our father Don Bosco learned to communicate good and hence evangelise and educate the young and ordinary people. We can learn so much from them: their vocation and mission, their passion for God and the salvation of souls as the basis for why they were communicators. Our vision and communicative activity, following their example, is rooted in a solid experience of God and a great apostolic passion that focuses on always being more professional and authentic. Only this way can we be a credible point of reference in society.

Congratulations to all of you communicators and happy feast day for our patron saints. May the Virgin, the Help of Christians protect and accompany you. Greetings too from the other members of the Department.

Fr Filiberto González Plasencia