**HOW TO INHABIT AND EVANGELISE THE DIGITAL CONTINENT?**

**Dear friends!**

**We are all citizens of the digital continent**. We already inhabit this universe with about 4.8 billion other users.

**When we look at this huge continent where our young people spend each day of their lives,** a fundamental question arises: how do we evangelise this digital environment?

**The Church, through the Synod on Young People, faced us with this important challenge and the need to understand the dynamics** of this environment, and the need to dialogue with its cultures and evangelise in this habitat.

**“The digital environment presents a challenge to the Church on various levels; it is essential, therefore, to deepen knowledge of its dynamics and its range of possibilities from the anthropological** and ethical point of view. This requires not only entering into it and promoting its communicative potential with a view to the Christian proclamation, but also giving a Gospel flavour to its culture and its dynamics”(145).

**What does this challenge presented by the Church demand of us?** It demands not only that we live there, but that we continue finding new ways for inculturating the Gospel in these new areopagi of our times.

**An easy task? Definitely not! But, as inhabitants of this continent, we are already engaged in this work of cultural dialogue through the studies** and many initiatives carried out by Salesians, educators and our young people.

**The Rector Major, Fr Àngel Fernández Artime, in his roadmap for the next six years of the Salesian Congregation makes a very important request to us** in our mission as Salesian educators and communicators of the young:

**“Engage the Social Communication Department, at various levels, in offering resources and stimuli for a constant process of verification, updating, inculturation of the Salesian mission in the digital habitat where young** people live, involving our universities in a network with other centres and agencies that more closely follow and study the transformations that the digital world is bringing among the new generations.”

**As Salesian evangelisers and educators of the young, with Salesian Presences in over 134 countries and different cultures**, we always seek to answer the great questions of young people and their reality in the light of the Gospel and the Church's teachings.

 **The Church, an expert in humanity, knows very well the importance of dialogue between the Gospel and culture** and between religion and societies.

**The Word of God, studied and understood more deeply, has always guided and enlightened us in our interpretations of new human and cultural phenomena.** It is a fundamental starting point for dialogue with the digital universe and a sure orientation for our educational and pastoral mission.

**I would like to suggest a joint study by educators and scholars of communication so as to continue to develop some anthropological, biblical** and educational guidelines for our greater knowledge and security as we inhabit and evangelise the digital continent.

**The World Communication Advisory Council, held online this month (October)**, involves reflection and sharing on some initial important questions for this study with the participants.

**1) How can we express the gift of freedom to communicate which God gives to every human being,** and take up this gift as responsibility and service to individuals and communities?

2) **What are the sources of biblical, anthropological and theological inspiration for enlightening and guiding us** in the process of inculturation of the Gospel in the digital world?

3) **What educational principles guide us and give us direction with regard to the new challenges that communication poses for us today** in our dialogue with the digital environment?

4) **How do we identify guidelines for inculturating the digital continent?**

5) **How can we outline some horizons for our educative and pastoral work with a Salesian identity** in the digital universe?

**To answer these questions and many others about the inculturation of the Gospel in the digital habitat, we would like to continue a journey of study integrated with our practical experiences** and the involvement of educators-communicators who work and reflect on the phenomenon of communication in the digital continent.

**Don Bosco said, with much faith and great love for his young people*:*** *“for you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life.”*

**Our father Don Bosco knew very well that to work with young people it is fundamental** that we walk with them and with the times.

**Understanding how young people live and communicate in these times of great cultural change is very important** for our mission today and in the future.

**This is a fundamental mission for those who love** and journey with young people!

Fraternal greetings!

Fr Gildásio Mendes dos Santos

General Councillor for Social Communication

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