Dear brothers, sisters and friends,

This time I am writing to you from Valdocco, Turin, since we are at the 28th General Chapter, a charismatic experience of Pentecost for an international and intercultural Congregation seeking its future in God’s will and in the salvation of the young.

This is the final communication I am offering you as Councillor for Social Communication after twelve years in contact with you all and with so many other people who enliven this important field of the Salesian mission. Here, though in summary form, I thank you and testify to everything that I have experienced along with you.

Before the altar of Mary Help of Christians and before Don Bosco’s casket, I have thanked God for having allowed me to meet you and share work, plans and dreams with you. I have spoken your names, the name of your groups, provinces, countries, regions and continents before these altars, all different as they are but all united by Don Bosco and the Salesian mission.

Briefly, and in accordance with the SSCS areas: what have I seen and experienced with you over these twelve years?

I have come to know a Congregation of consecrated people who share the mission and spirit with wonderful lay people. I have become aware that the motivation for our communication has always been Jesus Christ and his gospel. We have worked while growing in spiritual depth and at a professional level, communicating human rights, especially the rights of the poor and of children.

The people do the communication, the media is the media. As Salesian communication we have focused on people, their names and stories, their sorrows and their hopes. We have used many kinds of media to give a voice to those who have none, to give a name to those who are just a number, to make visible to so many children and older youth, men and women, that a consumer society brings their plans to nothing, and we have put books, values, ideas and joys that will nurture their spirit into the hands of the poor .

Our communication has not been limited to providing information on what is happening every day, offering photographs of events or making videos and documentaries or occasional interviews. Our communication has been a ‘reading’ of history, has offered a sense of what is happening and a viewpoint of life based on what is true and good in the midst of a jungle of tendencies, interests and, at times, false news.

Communicating the gospel and the good that thousands of Salesians and lay people in our works are doing for the most needy young people has been the specific contribution we have offered to society; it is what identifies us and makes us significant in a hyper-informed world that does not always communicate: “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5:16). This is why our communication has been a cry of hope that proclaims the real possibility of building a better world, and in countries and societies that are fragmented it has been a call to unity; we have built bridges while others were building walls.

The communication meetings in their various expressions have allowed us to grow in the sense of belonging to and participating in the worldwide Salesian institution, to form work and reflection groups, collaborative groups and groups of friends willing to overcome challenges together. We have learned from one another; we have given importance to formation, especially of young Salesians and those who work with us in our works. Technological updating and formation have been sought where possible. For all the above, and for many other things, I am deeply grateful to you.

It is true that we have not always achieved what we wanted – at least not to the degree we hoped for. A combination of so many factors slows or hinders processes: not knowing the charismatic and historical origins of Salesian communication; separating it from the mission; reducing it to the use and production of media; not having been formed in this mission field; lack of Salesian personnel or the financial means for entrusting communication to lay people; personal limitations, etc. However, I see that we have opened up paths and initiated important processes.

Thinking of all of you and that in the next few days the Chapter will choose a new Councillor for Communications, I am assured that what comes will be better. That is why I invite you to continue to work with a great sense of belonging and involvement in the Congregation, in unity and collaboration with the new Councillor, with generosity and professionalism, in search of new goals as you have always done.

Once again let me express my gratitude to God, to Our Lady Help of Christians and to you, trusting that we will meet again as good brothers, sisters and friends wherever in the world we are. Here is my new email address: pfiligopla@gmail.com.

Cordially in Don Bosco: Filiberto González Plasencia sdb