Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 7 April 2020.

**Dear brothers and sisters!**

**It is with joy and gratitude that I am writing my first Newsletter** as the Councillor for Social Communication of the Salesian Congregation.

**Both I and you believe that we are communicators** with the youngin our digital culture.

**In the name of Jesus Christ,** **we believe that to communicate** is to be at the service of others.

**It is with this sentiment t**hat I would like to offer my compliments and thank each of you who believes in and dedicates themselves to the important service of communication in the Salesian Congregation!

**The young are the best communicators in the Internet era** and in the era of social networks!

**Don Bosco loved and believed in young people.** They are the most original communicators. They are with us! We are with them!

**This is why the Salesian Congregation is one of the world’s leading institutions** in the communication of human and Christian values.

**During the 28th General Chapter held in Turin during February and March this year, we Salesians** renewed our commitment and sense of the importance of communication in the Congregation in this media age.

**As a response of faith and gratitude for this new mission that the Salesian Congregation entrusts to me as Councillor for Communication,** I am accepting this important service with joy and availability, together with our Provincials, Delegates for Communication and the laity and the young.

**With a deep sense of the Congregation, united with the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, and the General Council, our Provincials, Communications Delegates, and our Communities**, we continue together in loving, educating and evangelizing young people with hope, and plenty of work in the service of our mission to those to whom we are sent.

**To Fr Filiberto González Plasencia, who was Councillor for Communication for twelve years, we wish to express our deep appreciation and gratitude for his commitment and service to communication** in the Salesian Congregation.. He leaves us as an example of witness and love for communication.

**The Congregation has matured in its work on behalf of communication.** This is the result of the commitment, support and work of the Provincials, their Delegates, Rectors/Directors, Salesians, Laity and Youth in our Presences and the work done in the different areas of communication.

**Every Province and community brings with it a wide range of social communication experiences:** radio, periodicals, television, video production, publishers, news networks, newsletters, websites, social networks, music production, literature. And all this must always be updated and put at the service of our mission with the young, especially the poorest.

**Communication is something that is very dynamic, speedy and demanding.** That is why it is essential to strengthen our institutional communication, to update our communication systems and platforms, to give priority to discernment processes, collaborative work, the sharing of interdisciplinary studies and research by educators in our universities, to continue the formation of new Salesians with a synodal vision, at the service of the evangelizing mission of the Salesians in the Church and in the cultures in which we work.

**Today we have a good text of Social Communication:** the Salesian Social Communication System, put together over the years and involving many of us. But it is time to review and update this document together in the light of the most recent of the Church’s documents and the new challenges and opportunities presented by our media culture.

**This is one of the first things we will undertake,** involving everyone in this process.

**Communication goes hand in hand with community!** We are a Salesian Family in communication. Communicating more and more in the network that exists among Salesians, FMA, Cooperators, ADMA, Past Pupils and other branches of the Salesian Family is a prophetic gesture to communicate in a synodal way.

**We know that communicating in a synodal way requires a new mentality of presence** and the unconditional service of others, especially the poorest members of society.

**In our days, communicating in an evangelical way** means embracing the hopes and sorrows of people in faith.

**The most recent Coronavirus crisis has affected the entire world,** causing huge difficulties, suffering and anguish in families and in society.

**The Communications Department with its team has has provided significant coverage** by way of news and messages in these difficult times the world is facing due to this crisis.

**On 24 March, at the end of the Extraordinary Novena to Mary Help of Christians which was celebrated throughout the Salesian world, the Rector Major** invited us to make an Act of Entrustment, renewing our trust in our Blessed Mother with the heart of Don Bosco at this time of trial and suffering caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

**From the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome where Don Bosco celebrated Mass on 16 May 1887,** the Rector Major, before the picture of Mary Help of Christians, entrusted the people of the entire world *to She who accomplished everything*.

**Recently, Pope Francis, during a prayer in solidarity with the victims of the Coronavirus,** shared with us that faith in Christ opens up new hopes for us.

*“We have an anchor: in the cross we have been saved. We have a tiller: in his cross we have been redeemed. We have a hope: in his cross we were healed and embraced so that nothing and no one could separate us from his redeeming love.”*

**May the Madonna, communicator of life and hope,** protect and guide us so that everywhere we can be proclaimers of Easter and the New Life.



***Fr Gildásio Mendes dos Santos – SDB***

**General Councillor for Social Communication**

.