

acts

of the general council

year CIX January-June 2026

N. 448

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Sede Centrale
Salesiana
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acts

of the General Council of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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Thinking as God thinks (Mt 16,23)

Following Jesus after the example of Don Bosco the mystic

Dear Confreres,

I send you my warmest greetings, hoping that each of you is well. This letter reaches you at the end of my first year as Rector Major, during which we have shared significant moments that touch upon the life of the Congregation, the Church and humanity.

The death of Pope Francis a few days after the end of the 29th General Chapter (GC29) immediately springs to mind. His final months were marked by a total dedication to the Church, which he served generously and loved deeply. As a Congregation, we are particularly grateful to the Lord for the gift of Pope Francis. He showed us a special affection by giving us the invitation and the courage to live our Salesian mission in a contemporary and authentic way.

The election of Pope Leo was a moment when we all felt comforted by Jesus' promise that he would never leave Peter's boat abandoned. The Church continues its journey through history, amidst a thousand storms, but always *cum Petro et sub Petro.* During this year the Lord has generously granted us moments in which, as Rector Major and as the General Council on 19 December 2025, and as the Generalate, we were able to meet the Holy Father, including at our own house here at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, on 22 February 2026.

These encounters have strengthened our devotion and love for the Pope. Moments such as these have a powerful charismatic significance, for they bring us into living contact with the legacy that Don Bosco left us and which he so insistently wanted us to learn from him.

This year, we cannot fail to comment on and reflect upon a global scenario that shatters our established patterns and ways of thinking, presenting us with immense challenges that we must understand, experience and manage, for this is our world and the world in which young people live and which shapes their culture. I do not intend here to go into the merits and dynamics of the great geopolitical changes which we are not only witnessing but in which we are experiencing, and of what this global change brings with it and imposes. I do, however, wish to share with you my and our constant concern and closeness, as the General Council and as the entire Congregation, to our Salesian confreres and all those who share our mission in war zones and areas of conflict of various kinds. Let us take care not to let them lack the necessary support: first and foremost our prayers, and then our attention and human closeness, as well as the practical aid needed to meet the needs on the ground, so that we may serve and be close to all those who rely daily on our presence and works.

What strikes us most deeply at this moment is the great gift of witness that these brothers and sisters of ours are offering us: their tenacity in standing by those suffering violence, persecution and bereavement, and those forced to abandon their homes and homelands. We are all filled with admiration and esteem for these witnesses who – despite difficult and precarious, impoverished and even inhumane situations – never consider abandoning the flock entrusted to them.

Dear brothers, I encourage you to pray for these brothers and sisters of ours, to help them in the best way possible. But above all, I invite everyone to allow themselves to be challenged by their witness: so that ours too may be ever more an authentic, sincere and decidedly adult and mature witness.

In light of this situation, in this letter I would like to offer a twofold reflection. **First,** let me take up the Gospel passage where Jesus begins a conversation with his disciples by asking:

'*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*' (Mt 16:13). At the end of that conversation comes Peter's confession. Jesus then reveals his mission, announcing his death and his victory over death. Faced with this unexpected scenario, Peter changes his way of thinking and ends up rebuking Jesus himself. Jesus' response leaves no room for doubt: '*But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things"*' (Mt 16:23). From here begins Jesus' discourse on the conditions for following him (Mt 16:24–28).

I shall comment on two verses in this passage. First of all: ***'to have the mind of*** God' (***thinking as God thinks***) (cf. Mt 16:23): this is the clear and direct rebuke that Jesus addresses to Peter, a reminder that clearly sets out the way to belong to Christ: ***to think as God thinks***.

The **second** verse is the programme that Jesus offers to those who wish to follow him. Having clarified the choice and the underlying attitude, the path follows: '***If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me***' (Mt 16:24).

This first part is followed by a **second reflection** inspired by these verses. And in them I ask myself: do we hear, echoing in them, the question of how Don Bosco lived out this call? How can we grasp his ***asceticism*** and ***mysticism*** which shaped his '**following**' of Jesus? In what way, then, does his witness remain an indispensable point of reference for us, a living source that continues to show us the way that gives us life?

PART I – FOLLOWING JESUS

As the General Council, we are increasingly realising that GC29 is truly emerging, gradually and clearly, as a compass for the governance and animation of the Congregation and the provinces. The choice of theme and the concrete proceedings of GC29 itself, with its **Final Document** (FD), are points of reference and constant sources of support for the life of the Congregation.

In this context, the reflection I would like to propose here is intended as a further step towards assimilating and living the spirit of GC29. If we truly wish to grow in being ***'passionate about Jesus'***, the only path to take is the one indicated by Christ to Peter.

We are well aware of the danger, even for us, of setting aside or even losing our *'thinking as God thinks'*. How easy it is to adopt other ways of 'thinking', which, whilst not necessarily wrong, are not the ones we are called to make our own. Jesus' call is simple and direct: a 'thinking' grounded in the Gospel, rooted in the person of Christ.

Only in this way does our being ***'dedicated to young people'*** prove to be a healthy and healing choice for the lives of young people. Only by following Jesus, freely and embracing the cross of mission, can we look upon young people through the eyes of Christ, serve them and love them with his own heart.

In an increasingly confused, fragmented world, wounded by so many struggles and fratricidal wars, conditioned by an aggressive and violent vocabulary and collective imagination, we have no choice but to take seriously the warning Jesus issues to Peter. A warning that urges us to rediscover the courage and determination to let ourselves be guided by his Spirit. The alternative – drawing our own criteria for judgement, allowing ourselves to be guided by other voices, following other paths – would ultimately be a betrayal of the cry of young people, their questions and their expectations.

Asceticism, in short, is this inner freedom that opens the door to him, which frees the heart from every useless and toxic dependence. A freedom that makes us happy servants and credible heralds for and with young people. ***Mysticism*** is the courage to graft our liberated freedom onto the roots of the tree of the cross. Only a life drawn to and nourished by the fruit of that tree generates life. And only from this choice – a fundamental choice – do good and lasting fruits arise. And the awareness that only this path is right; because it leads to Calvary, that is, to total self-giving, but then continues further on... towards the Resurrection, towards true life.

1. *Thinking as God thinks*

The passage we have placed at the centre of our reflection begins with a question that calls into question what we might today call public opinion: '*Who do people say the Son of Man is?*' (Mt 16:13). Here the discussion is very general; it gathers together what others say and think. It is the first stage of a process, one that is not yet particularly engaging or empowering on a personal level, even though the Apostles were, of course, part of the 'people'.

It is not a pointless stage; on the contrary. It is a starting point that sets the tone, establishing broad and wide-ranging parameters, which gradually help to focus the discussion on what, ultimately, Jesus himself wants to be decisive for his followers. Jesus's initial question is highly pedagogical because – precisely – it sets a process in motion. So the second question follows almost naturally: (*And he said to them:*) '*But who do you say that I am?*' (Mt 16:14). Here the disciples are called to 'step outside' the 'some say' of the people, to take a personal stand.

Peter grasps the specific meaning of Jesus' question and feels personally addressed. Here is his answer: '*You are the Christ, the Son of the living* God' (Mt 16:16). The answer is beautiful, and Jesus himself comments on it as that of a 'blessed'

person, one who has been touched by the Spirit of the Father. But the answer is not merely 'theologically' correct; rather, it opens up an inner willingness to be guided and enlightened. Pope Benedict XVI comments:

> Here, Peter begins with his words the confession of the Church's Christological faith and becomes spokesman also for the other Apostles, and of we believers of all times. This does not mean that he had already understood the mystery of Christ in all its depth; his faith was still at the beginning of a journey of faith. It would reach its true fullness only through the experience of the Paschal events. Nonetheless, it was already faith, open to the greatest reality; open especially because it was not faith in something, it was faith in Someone: in him, Christ.[1]

Peter's faith is, from the very beginning, a confession in 'Someone', a faith open to a reality greater than itself which does not guarantee a definitive victory: Peter will face his trials, his falls, which will help him to purify himself, to grow stronger, to mature.

The first trial comes immediately.

I interrupt the exegesis with a comment that calls into question our own mission in its day-to-day reality. First of all, Jesus fosters a space, an atmosphere where profound and vital questions can emerge. He creates an environment of friendship and sharing of a family nature, encouraging questions to be asked and listened to, especially those that challenge established and habitual convictions. It is in this environment that the Spirit of God works, and where we are encouraged to let him surface and to open the doors of our hearts to him. But it is also here that our hidden resistances emerge, ways of thinking and interpreting that may be questionable. What follows confirms this clearly.

Peter's reaction to the announcement of Jesus' passion shows us how easily we can veer from a 'Gospel-spiritual' read-

[1] Benedict XVI, General Audience, 24 May 2006, see: https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060524.html

ing of reality towards an 'egocentric' one. Peter's first response was not 'his own': it was the fruit of the Spirit's power within him, which led him to proclaim *Christ, the Son of the living God* (Mt 16:16). In his first response, Peter allowed himself to be guided. In the second, however, everything changes radically, in a diametrically opposite way! Keeping ourselves alive and attentive to the logic of the kingdom is a journey that has its ups and downs. Woe betide us if we think we have arrived, for the moment we believe that, we are already out of tune with Christ!

Jesus' response to Peter's 'rebuke' leaves no room for doubt or ambiguity. There is only one way to follow Jesus: to have the mind of God, that is, to *setting our mind on divine things (not) on human things* (Mt 16:23). The stark contrast between the two positions could not be more explicit.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's reflection on the call to *'think as God thinks'* is illuminating. It is a very concrete commentary, not least because it is a testimony to his own lived experience.

> Jesus summons men to follow him not as a teacher or a pattern of the good life, but as the Christ, the Son of God. And what does the text inform us about the content of discipleship? Follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in his steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible program for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after. It is not a cause which human calculation might deem worthy of our devotion, even the devotion of ourselves. What happens? At the call, Levi leaves all that he has – but not because he thinks that he might be doing something worthwhile, but simply for the sake of the call. Otherwise he cannot follow in the steps of Jesus.[2]

Thinking as God thinks is a call which, when it is true and authentic, has the power to define our identity. GC29 captures this challenge very well when it says that "We therefore recognise that at the basis of inner dispersion and fragmentation

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sequela* (Queriniana Publishers 1997) p. 44 Italian (p. 62 English, where it is known as *The Cost of Discipleship,* MacMillan Pub. Co. Inc. 1st edition in 1947, 21st printing 1979).

In his closing address at *the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* on 26 October 2024, Pope Francis quoted some verses by Madeleine Delbrêl that resonate deeply with the urgency of allowing Jesus to take possession of our hearts:

For I think that you may have had enough
of people who, always, speak of serving you with the look of a leader,
of encountering you with the air of a professor,
of approaching you with sporting regulations,
of loving you as one loves in an aged marriage.
...
Let us live our life,
not as a game of chess where everything is calculated,
not as a game where everything is difficult,
not as a theorem that breaks our minds,
but like an endless party where your meeting is renewed,
like a ball, like a dance,
in the arms of your grace,
in the universal music of love.[4]

'Self-denial' is the first step towards that freedom which allows us to take on the mission as a gift entrusted to us, to be shared, and to live it with joy as a participation in the saving cross of Christ. Without this inner freedom, the experience of the cross would never lead us to the authentic mysticism of apostolic action, for we would not see its meaning and the light beyond. For the true foundations of mission, the fruit of Easter, are built upon a solid spirituality that flows from true asceticism, which is the gift of self to Christ.

3. *Taking up the Cross – mysticism*

Peter understood the lesson very well, and it was he himself who, in his letters, handed down to us the interpretation of what Christ had asked of hi m. Taking up the cross, living the mission in the footsteps of Christ, became a constant invitation for the early Christian community. As an elder, Peter is 'a witness of

[4] https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2024/october/documents/20241026-sinodo-vescovi.html

the sufferings of Christ, as well as one who shares in the glory to be revealed' (1 Pet 5:1).

The experience of Ananias, called by God to accompany Saul after his conversion, helps us to grasp the connection between mission and the cross. God's plan for Saul is revealed to Ananias. This plan encapsulates the essence of the mission to which Saul is called: *But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'* (Acts 9:15–16).

What is prepared for Saul is also our lot. The mission entrusted to us makes us an instrument chosen by God. A mission that has a clear objective: to bring the name of Jesus to the nations. And this mission calls for sacrifice, for suffering.

There is no mission without suffering, without the cross. To be instruments chosen by God, obeying his plan for us, is to share in the very life of Christ, to *'take up the cross'*. Herein lies the hallmark of the true disciple.

If this is the path, we recognise that it entails a considerable commitment. We cannot take this second step without first freeing our hearts from those temptations and burdens that make it impossible for us to dwell in the space of mystery. Entering this sacred space to be shaped and enlightened by the Spirit of God means leaving behind all that baggage which prevents us from moving forward, deeper into the mystery of God's love for us.

The seed of God's love cannot grow on hard ground, on ground full of thorns, on scorched ground. God's love cannot take root in my heart, and thus give me true life if the inner sanctuary of my heart is occupied by disordered choices. The Lord's invitation to follow him necessarily entails the experience of the cross, like a fire that purifies us of impurities and the poisons of existence. Only in this way can I be nourished by that which gives me life.

We might say that the cross is the place where love becomes

obedience. A mystical experience in which one perceives that being united with Christ is a journey that conforms us ever more closely to him. Only in this way do we become credible witnesses to his love in the world. In this sense, it is true mysticism that gives rise to mission, and in turn, true mission identifies us ever more closely with the experience of Christ's cross.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, in a lecture on *'The Crisis and Future of the* Church',[5] clearly identifies where the problem of faith lies today: 'the true and deepest challenge, in our secularised and pluralistic situation, is the question of God.' Not so much 'the new aggressive atheism, which does indeed exist', but 'indifference towards God, the dimming of awareness of God and the apparent absence of God.'

It is the question that winds its way subtly and widely through the hearts of so many who 'live as if God did not exist, and think that they can live perfectly well this way', as well as many others who 'call themselves agnostics, but are, so to speak, devout agnostics who are searching within.' They experience this apparent absence of God as 'pilgrims, and find themselves, so to speak, in the court of the Gentiles.' Faced with this challenge, Kasper says:

> I am convinced that the future of the Church in our societies depends (...) on whether or not we are capable of answering this question, and whether we do not merely speak with our lips, but can also bear credible witness in our lives.

Today more than ever, the true and authentic answer is the one that finds its roots in that mystical space which defines our witness and lends credibility to our mission. For it is this sacred space that confers the seal of authenticity.

4. *Follow me – life*

With a free heart and a life rooted in Christ, we take up the

[5] Walter Kasper, *'Crisi e futuro della Chiesa'* [*Crisis and Future of the Church*], in *Il Regno – Documenti* 21, 2012, pp. 654–655.

call to be educators and evangelisers. GC29 strongly urges us to maintain this balance that our mission demands of us.

> As Salesians we recognise that our mission requires a constant balance between commitment to education and a passion for evangelisation. The threefold formula "reason, religion and loving-kindness" is not just a slogan but a constant source of inspiration that helps us keep in mind the lofty goal of youthful holiness and the gradual nature of the journey, the powerful educational resources of the Sacraments and the Word of God, and the pedagogy of the playground and the street that leads us to encounter young people "at their present stage of freedom" (C. 38). (GC29, no. 54)

For following Jesus risks becoming a superficial journey without the grace of unity which helps us to live our missionary commitment with a heart nourished by faith in Christ. A risk that GC29 itself clearly points out: 'This vital synthesis is not always present in the hearts of all our confreres and the members of our educative and pastoral communities.' (GC29, n.54)

Not a judgement, but a painful observation. Often it is the young people themselves and our collaborators in the mission who ask us to be bolder witnesses to the Gospel message. It does us no harm to acknowledge sincerely that in some of our presences 'Those who observe us point out – not without reason – that we risk reducing our mission to the management of educational or social welfare activities.' (GC29, n.54)

'Follow me', then, is not a one-off action. It is a choice born of an inner freedom nourished and guided by the power of the Word and the Eucharist. 'Follow me' is the response to Jesus' invitation, which is alive in the heart of every pastor.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, in his book **Who is the Christian?** ([6]) offers a highly pertinent and ever-relevant reflection:

> Christ not only speaks and acts *before* men, but he actually goes *with*

[6] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Chi è il cristiano? Meditazioni teologiche* [*Who is a Christian? Theological Meditations*] Queriniana, 1984. The following three quotations are taken from this volume. English edition published by Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2014.

> them and invites them to go *with him*. This is manifested in highly visible form in the choosing of the Apostles: "He called to him those whom he wished, and they went with him. And he appointed twelve to be with him" *(Mk* 3:13–14). In other scenes of vocation the phrase: *sequere me appears* which can be fairly rendered as 'follow after me', provided one understands the 'after' not in the sense of limping along after him, but as a master-disciple relationship in which the disciple, in following him, is admitted into the master's inner world and spiritually inducted into it. (pp. 58–59)

The truth of our response, as we agree to follow him, lies in being admitted into the master's inner world. By remaining outside, alone, we end up building a false life, a superficial witness. It is true that we speak of Christ, but we are far from dwelling in his inner world, from contemplating his love for us, from recognising the Father's love in his love. The call to contemplate and to dwell in this love is not a luxury for the few. It is the path towards true Christian maturity. Because:

> there is no external action without inner contemplation (which is the existential dimension of faith itself)... For the contemplative act is the act that lies continuously at the root of all external action; it is active and effective, fruitful and missionary beyond all the exterior undertakings of the Church. (p. 82)

I conclude this first part with a warning, again from Balthasar, which sums up very well what has been proposed. First of all, we must not forget that "the more obedient we are to the free Spirit of Christ, the freer or more mature we can consider ourselves to be. All the rest is disingenuous self-deception.' Secondly, we know that Jesus has already shown us the path to follow: 'It is a matter, in all seriousness, of appropriating Christ's death on the Cross as the basic form of our earthly existence' (p. 95). Outside this logic and far from this dynamic, we are travelling down the wrong path and leading the young people entrusted to us astray.

PART II – DON BOSCO THE MYSTIC

The Salesian charism is a form of *thinking as God thinks,* heroically realised in Don Bosco's spiritual experience which the Church has recognised as authentically evangelical. We must return to Don Bosco so that the truth, the demands and the possibilities of our thinking as God thinks may be nourished by the richness of the Salesian charism.

Hence the ever-renewed urgency to go to the roots of our history, to draw near to and penetrate the inner life of Don Bosco, in that mystical vigour which is both the fruit and the source of his thinking as God thinks. And we do so enlightened by the word of Jesus, who taught his followers to embrace the beauty and the toil of following him. Let us truly pray that he may teach us too today in the same school, for the same mission.

1. *Don Bosco the mystic: a relevance to be rediscovered*

Don Bosco's mystical authority lies entirely in his faithful and original way of living a life inspired by a heart rich in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity: 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' (Col 1:27), "mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages... but has now been revealed to his saints" (Col 1:26).

The mystical heart of the Christian life lies here, in its essence and its exceptional nature: an authentically evangelical existence, a high standard set with authoritative command, given without parsimony or regret, with generosity and freedom: 'A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap' (Lk 6:38).

Don Bosco's mysticism, in the unassuming greatness of an ordinary, everyday tenacity, is a clear testimony to what a heart truly given is in the lived experience of every Christian life: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2:20).

Don Bosco's self-giving conveys a heroic measure in its simplicity, and this is why we find it exceptional: not in the sense of a distant aloofness that repels, but rather as a way that draws us in. His heart is open to the mystery of God, and this is for us like a powerful call, a true 'pro-vocation'. When we take Don Bosco's spiritual life seriously, we accept an invitation to go beyond a superficial knowledge of his life – that which remains on the surface without grasping the dynamism of the Spirit. Faced with this real (and I would say present) danger, I call upon every Salesian to deepen their understanding of how Don Bosco lived out his personal consent to Grace, to discover the source of the courage and joy of his generosity.

If Don Bosco's mystical heart bears witness to a path of fidelity that is for all of us the exceptional nature (the consistent and faithful strength) of his 'yes' to God, this encourages our conversion, our passion for Jesus. It is in this dynamic movement that we find the charismatic nourishment that the Spirit of God freely offers to our vocational journey.

Don Bosco's mysticism thus presents itself to us as a *contagious, easy* and *joyful* holiness, as attested by the fervour it kindles in Dominic Savio, leading him to declare: 'I did not think I could become a saint so easily; but now that I have realised this can be achieved even whilst being cheerful, I absolutely want to, and I absolutely need to become a saint.'[7] (*Life of the young Dominic Savio, pupil of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, Salesian Sources* 1, no. 306).

Contagious, easy and joyful – 'likeable', as Fr Viganò describes it[8] – Don Bosco's holiness offers a quality that is crucial for today's times and young people: being truly 'within reach', not the preserve of a select few, but without compromise or be-

[7] *Life of the young Savio Domenico, pupil of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales, Salesian Sources* 1, no. 306.

[8] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Replanning our Holiness Together*, ASC no. 303, 1981.

trayal. And this overcomes every excuse that ultimately leads only to spiritual superficiality. Here we stand before the mystery of grace, which demands reflection and contemplation, freedom and an open heart.

Don Bosco is a masterpiece of this demanding and beautiful mysticism: it takes the form of a transparent and joyful intimacy with God in him, which pours forth in good, simple words and gestures, with an immediacy that has become spontaneous and natural, yet which is a discreet veil over a mysterious depth of the Spirit. Beyond that veil, Don Bosco reveals to us the reasons for the credibility of a familiar mysticism, but also its roots, which can make one's head spin, so deeply are they rooted in the mystery of the Lord.

Fr Ceria illustrates the evangelical fire that burns in Don Bosco's soul, without which – amidst trials and tribulations of every kind – his face could not be joyful:

> Now, with all this succession of misfortunes, never a complaint, never the slightest hint of impatience; on the contrary, working at his desk, hearing confessions at length, preaching, travelling, as one who enjoys perfect health; moreover, always in good spirits, always cheerful in appearance and encouraging in speech. When asked to pray to the Lord to free him from a discomfort, he replied: – If I knew that a single ejaculatory prayer would be enough to heal me, I would not say it. – Don Bosco, looking upon his sufferings in the One who sent them, found them all the more lovable the greater their number and the greater the distress. This fact alone reveals to us such an abyss of interiority that one would scarcely believe it, were it not for the knowledge of how admirable God is in his saints (*Don Bosco with God*, Chapter VIII).

What do we see if we peer into this abyss of interiority that the ever-present joy on Don Bosco's face both reveals and conceals? We find the very heart of Christian mysticism: the renunciation of self, taking up the cross and following Jesus! (Mt 16:24). In the words of Paul: 'For me [...] living is Christ' (Phil 1:21).

Don Bosco's inner life was permeated by an intimate identification with this movement of the theological life, an experience that

gradually shaped his entire life. We can say that for Don Bosco, Jesus' words: 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work' (Jn 4:34), were not mere rhetoric. By virtue of his love for God, Don Bosco sought to discover and embrace the Father's will for him, a fully unifying assimilation, by virtue of love.

It is by this path, and this path alone, that Don Bosco is a saint. A path founded on the footsteps of Jesus. His life was a daily offering of his will to the mystery of God. From this source flowed and spread his love for young people, for their salvation. It is from here, from this immersion in the love of the Triune God, of a God who is Father, who becomes flesh for us, who is the power of Love, that Don Bosco drew his strength. Strength nourished by the sacramental fullness of the celebrated Eucharist, guided by the luminous truth of meditated Scripture, sustained by the mystical intimacy of unceasing prayer: these are the sources of Don Bosco, of Don Bosco's holiness, of his 'union with God' (Ceria).

I believe that Don Bosco must be encountered anew in this light; the only one in which a contagious, easy and joyful holiness allows itself to be grasped at its demanding root. If we stray from this Don Bosco, we will find ourselves surrounded by the superficial allure of taken-for-granted virtue, by the illusions that the radical choice of a mystical path is useless or outdated.

2. *The mystical pedagogy of God and the story of John Bosco*

If we recognise, as the Gospel teaches us, that 'mysticism' is the very root of Christian existence – as the life of God in faith, hope and charity, which radiates through the believer's days – and if it is equally true that its maturation can vary from fruitful eminence to betrayal in sin against the Holy Spirit, we must ask ourselves about the causes of the mystical stagnation in our spiritual experience.

Salesian history and teaching offer many lessons here. Our charism arises by virtue of a specific mystical pedagogy that

God brings to bear to make Don Bosco the Lord's disciple and the apostle of young people. And this is confirmed in the life of our Founder who, whilst forming his sons in the Spirit, warns them against the dangers of superficiality and vocational betrayal: dangers which, sadly, can still consume us today.

Let us first retrace this pedagogy of God who, through meaningful interventions, instilled in Don Bosco's soul the wisdom necessary to understand the life of Grace as divine action within human freedom – a prerequisite for interpreting its unfolding and fulfilment as *a Historia salutis* guided by redeeming Love.[9] Certain episodes in the life of John Bosco are, in fact, particularly illuminating for the extraordinary way in which God reaches into the ordinary life of a boy, foreshadowing the uniqueness of the mission that will be entrusted to him as father, teacher and friend to young people.

a. In the dream he had at the age of nine, the mystical fabric of Don Bosco's soul reveals its fundamental weave, in a splendid dialogue between God and his creature: a boy just nine years old, living on the margins of society, is graced with a calling that resembles that of the biblical prophets.

[9] Don Bosco arrived at this reinterpretation during the memorable Eucharist celebrated at the altar of Mary Help of Christians in the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome on 16 May 1887. When asked by his secretary about the reasons that had compelled him, during the celebration, to pause several times, overcome by emotion, Don Bosco replied: "There appeared before my eyes the scene when at the age of ten I dreamt about the Congregation. I could actually see and hear my mother and brothers, as they argued about the dream... - AAt that time Our Lady had said, "In due time you will understand everything." Since that day, sixty-two years of hardships, sacrifices, and struggles have passed by. All of a sudden, an unexpected flash of lightning, had revealed to him in the building of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, the crowning point of the mission so mysteriously outlined for him on the very threshold of life. How long and arduous had been the path all the way from Becchi at Castelnuovo to the See of the Vicar of Jesus Christ! He felt at that point that his own personal activity was drawing to a close, and he blessed the Divine Providence with tears in his eyes, as he lifted his gaze confidently to his imminent rest in the eternal peace within God's bosom.' (*BM* 18, 289).

God's pedagogy does not force situations; communication takes place in a dream; the images are vivid and unmistakable for a rural setting; the reactions of the young man called are inspired by emotions consistent with his age, yet the underlying message is profoundly mystical: a tenacious human will must be strengthened, through God's humble wisdom, to allow itself to be inhabited – purified and transfigured – by a mystery that comes from on high.

God whispers to John what is perhaps the most neglected truth of Christian life today, a life increasingly tempted by a worldly self-referentiality: only the life of God leads human life to rediscover itself, and only God's plan revealed in the days of man gives those days meaning and identity, vigour and resilience.

b. The encounter with Father Calosso represents a further privileged moment for reflecting on John's obedience to the mystery of God and a new stage in the mystical maturation that touches his life. John is thirteen years old, and he confides to this priest – who is the first to show him affectionate concern – his vocational dream, inspired by generous apostolic intentions: 'to become a priest [...] to attract my companions, talk to them and teach them our religion. They are not bad but they become bad because there is no one to guide them' (*Memoirs of the Oratory, First Decade*, 2).

John benefited from the care of the man he would always gratefully acknowledge as his first 'soul friend', and placed his hope of fulfilling his vocation in the priest's support. Those promising hopes were shattered, however, within a few months by Fr Calosso's sudden death, which plunged John into such deep sadness that it worried his mother Margaret.

It was his mother's maternal wisdom, fearing for the health and stability of that son who 'wept inconsolably for his deceased benefactor' (*Memoirs of the Oratory, First Decade*, 4), that led her to send John away from the Becchi family for a time, sending him to his grandparents in Capriglio.

Here, however, the mystery of God once again shook a fifteen-year-old already tried by suffering, and did so with a severity that was humanly incomprehensible. John recounts a dream in which "I was *sorely reproached* for having put my hope in men and not in our good heavenly Fathe" (*Memoirs of the Oratory, First decade*, 4).

The trial of his affections, shaken by Fr Calosso's death, is transfigured by Grace into a demanding test of faith, through the wisdom of God who treats John as a son; 'for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?' (Heb 12:7).

The mystical journey is demanding; it leaves no room for poetry and distances itself from sentimentality, for 'love is as strong as death' (*Song of Songs* 8:6). God's will is love, a love that burns away the fear entrenched in the human will to make way only for trust; it is thus that the disciple's generous desire is directed towards becoming the good passion of an apostle.

c. A third instance in which God's mystical pedagogy perhaps surprises the limited frameworks of our spiritual wisdom is described by Don Bosco, once again with unique touches, in *the Memoirs of the Oratory.*

Don Bosco recalls the invitation he received, shortly after his ordination, to go to Lauriano (At) to preach, and the accident that befell him on the way due to a dangerous fall from his horse.

Recalling the event, Don Bosco first draws from that adventure a lesson on the expansiveness of goodness which, if generously offered to one's neighbour, is not long in returning in even greater measure to the benefactor himself; yet, in a matter-of-fact manner, he offers a genuinely and boldly mystical interpretation of the episode: 'After this warning, I firmly resolved that in the future I would prepare my sermons for the greater glory of God, and not to appear learned and erudite' (*Memoirs of the Oratory, Second Decade*, 10).

These are three key moments in the life of John Bosco, through which God brings to fulfilment his desire to conform the life of a generous son to his own heart, purifying it to establish it on the foundation of trusting abandonment to Providence, in humble self-forgetfulness and in the freedom of love.

An authentic vocation, in its personal and original forms, can only be nurtured and sustained by a mystical pedagogy, as a contemporary and urgent necessity, lest the gift of self become meaningless and the Gospel irrelevant.

3. *In the footsteps of Don Bosco, an apostolic mysticism*

The realism of mystical pedagogy, brought to life by God in Don Bosco's life, whilst not concealing the strict demands of a purification of the intellect and the will, nevertheless subordinates everything to the love of the Father who wishes to pour himself into the heart of each of his children.

There is no Christian mysticism outside the centrality of the love that Jesus revealed to us as the truth of a God who is passionate about the salvation and fullness of human life.

If in Jesus' *actions* we contemplate the *Father's will*, in his *suffering* the *heart of God* is revealed to us: pierced on the cross, it bestows the benefits of the Paschal mysteries of our salvation.

In the Paschal Mystery we contemplate, in all its grandeur, that fire of Love which pierces through death. The embrace of the Crucified One unites earth with heaven, God's passion for humanity and humanity's passion for God. Here, *taking up the cross* finds its deepest and highest point. The heart of God is the *heart of the new law*, but also the *new law of the heart* that judges the world (Mt 25) and makes existence blessed (Mt 5).

The Christian mystic has the heart of God; he has received it as a gift in a communion of love and passion: this is the secret of Don Bosco's heart. Fr Rinaldi writes:

> *Da mihi animas coetera tolle* [...], the strength and fervour of his charity: love for souls, a true love because it was a reflection of his love for our Lord Jesus Christ and because it was the souls themselves that he saw in the thought, heart and precious blood of our Lord; and so there was no sacrifice or enterprise that he would not undertake to win over those souls so intensely loved.[10]

Don Bosco feels about souls as God feels about them, because the life of God in him is a fusion of loves and passions, effectively produced by a mystical love, kindled and nourished by communion with the Eucharist, by meditation on the Word, by the intimacy of prayer.

This is the mystical path that Don Bosco points out to each of us: the way of love, promising not only because it is more attuned to the sensibilities of our time – wary of paths that seek God through the choice of suffering, or through mere moralistic and voluntaristic effort – but because it is authentic on an anthropological, evangelical and charismatic level.

Living beyond oneself is not, first and foremost, a moral or religious imperative, nor an invitation to the mysticism of sacrifice, but a fact of reality: it is whom we love, how much we love, and how we love that leads us beyond ourselves, so that we may find ourselves anew in a passion for meaning – a meaning that always takes the form of a gift: the gift of ourselves to others.

The true Christian is one who devotes himself to the loves of God, which, having merited his Passion, are not merely significant but are the sole Source of meaning in life and history, for 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water' (*Jn* 7:38).

In Don Bosco's heart we find God's loves, and it is there alone that our hearts can be formed. We do not walk this path in the harsh-

[10] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Don Philip Rinaldi, authentic witness and interpreter of the 'Salesian spirit'*, AGC no. 332, 1989.

ness of a solitary struggle, but in the grace of an attraction that radiates from his life spent, with fidelity and evangelical originality.

It is important, then, to meditate on the great loves that burn in Don Bosco's heart and sustain the generosity of his self-giving: the life of Grace, the good of young people, the holiness of the Church.

a. Don Bosco's life, both in his most mundane and practical commitments and in the zeal of his priestly ministry, is entirely at the service of the inestimable good of the soul's friendship with God, which demands **a strenuous struggle against sin**: 'Don Bosco, we know, was an implacable enemy of sin; he knew that it cuts us off from God and his friendship, and in consequence it disfigures both man and society.'[11]

The boldness of Don Bosco's struggle against evil cannot be attributed to cultural influences or Jansenist or moralistic suggestions; rather, it is the fruit of his habitual intimacy with the heart of God, contemplated through "the passion and death of Christ", from which we learn:

> the enormous abyss created by the sins of mankind, our own sins and the sins of our charges. Christ the Just One suffered and died for us sinners and left to his Church throughout the centuries the mysterious and salvific mission of taking up the cross daily and following in his footsteps. [...] In order to destroy sin the Father's own Son had to suffer and die.[12]

b. Don Bosco's heart is also filled with love for young people. **Loving kindness**, before being the cornerstone of the Salesian educational system, is the defining feature of the life of the Saint of Youth. A trait that makes the charm of his person irresistible, so spontaneous and free from artifice as to appear natural, in full harmony with his whole being.

It is a kindness free from sentimentality, which goes straight

[11] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Replanning our holiness together*, ASC no. 303, 1981.
[12] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Martyrdom and Suffering in the Apostolic Spirit of Don Bosco*, ASC no. 308, 1983.

to the authentic, unique and priceless value that every young person possesses. His gaze, affection and noble demeanour are the space that Don Bosco offers to young people so that they – often for the first time – may discover their own worth. Don Bosco's fatherly care sees the wonder in every child of God, without allowing himself to be misled by their poverty or their mistakes. Young people thus learn of their own greatness through the good that Don Bosco wishes for them, far greater than what they themselves feel they deserve, and this disposes them to a courageous and faithful generosity:

> All the depositions that were made in the two Processes at Turin concerning the heroicity of his virtues were warm and unanimous in asserting that "fatherliness" was his most eminent and distinctive attitude, and the deponents spoke as though they felt themselves still enveloped by the kindness of his loving gaze. Each one remembered a smile, an encouraging word, an affectionate welcome, an understanding encounter of forgiveness and generosity, a gesture of fatherly authority, equal care for all, an enlightening piece of advice, his inexhaustible patience, a chat that removed anxiety. the ability to meet every event with gospel simplicity. His fatherliness too was marked by an affable approach and manner which removed any feeling of distance and went straight to the heart, bringing tranquillity and joy wherever he went.[13]

c. Don Bosco's heart, however, could not be fully understood in all its depth without grasping his **love for the Church**. His total identification with the priestly vocation – 'Your Excellency, I want you to know that Don Bosco is a priest at the altar, a priest in the confessional, a priest among his boys, a priest in Turin, and a priest in Florence. He is a priest in the house of the poor and a priest in the palace of the king!'[14] – reveals the full integration of his entire life into the mission of the Church.

Fr Pascual Chávez quotes a letter from Fr Michael Rua which sheds further light on the subject:

[13] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Don Philip Rinaldi, authentic witness and interpreter of the 'Salesian spirit'*, AGC no. 332, 1989.

[14] Don Bosco's words to Bettino Ricasoli, Minister of the Kingdom of Italy, *BM* 8, 239.

> In everything he wanted to follow the guidance of the Church which is the *column and foundation of truth.* If we examine his interior life, we shall find a Don Bosco determined in the first place to be a most obedient son of Holy Church, and ready for any sacrifice to spread her doctrines and uphold her rights. Not only did he observe her laws, he even anticipated her desires.[15]

He then goes on to present, in a very effective way, this ecclesial essence at the heart of Don Bosco:

> (Don Bosco) showed his love for the Church in a deep but simple threefold way: *love for Jesus Christ,* mainly as present in the Eucharist, the central action of the Church; *devotion to Mary,* Mother and Model of the Church; and *fidelity to the Pope,* Peter's successor and the Church's centre of unity. [...] Don Bosco's Church is Eucharistic in form, with a Marian figure and a Petrine foundation.[16]

Don Bosco is not simply a man of the Church because he is tireless, obedient and bold in the service he renders to her. Don Bosco serves the holiness of the Church, which radiates from the Mystery of which she is the custodian and which establishes her. It is within this holiness that his heart as Father of Youth takes shape, wholly devoted to winning souls to friendship with God and freeing them from the bonds of evil.

4. *With the heart of Don Bosco: the mystical soul of our charism*

The appeal of Don Bosco's mystical experience, however, also draws its attractive power from a straightforward realism. Love wins us over through its beauty and, at the same time, imparts the vigour needed to welcome and follow it: it is not a matter of sheer willpower, nor is it a path that can do without good will.

[15] Blessed Michael Rua, *Lettera Edificante. Lo spirito di D. Bosco – Vocazioni – Buona Stampa,* 14 June 1905, from *Lettere Circolari* pp. 384-385. Quoted in Fr Pascual Chávez, *Rejuvenating the Church, A Gift and a Task,* AGC no. 388, 2005.

[16] *Ibid.*

From his very first steps, our Father aroused in numerous disciples – among whom we too are included – the desire to follow him; yet the love that burns in his heart does not fuel illusions nor justify recklessness.

The dream of the rose arbour is a highly topical warning about the demanding realism of Don Bosco's love, beyond all romantic naivety.

Fr Lemoyne's account of the dream – drawn from Fr Bonetti's sparse notes – is illuminating, especially when he attributes to the Blessed Virgin the words explaining the images of the roses and thorns upon which Don Bosco and his followers must walk:

> She replied: 'The path strewn with roses and thorns is an image of your mission among boys. You must wear shoes, a symbol of mortification. The thorns on the ground stand for sensible affections, human likes and dislikes which distract the educator from his true goal, weaken and halt him in his mission, and hinder his progress and heavenly harvest. The roses symbolize the burning charity which must be your distinguishing trait and that of your fellow workers. The other thorns stand for the obstacles, sufferings and disappointments you will experience. But you must not lose heart. Charity and mortification will enable you to overcome all difficulties and lead you to roses without thorns.' (*BM* 3, 27).

'Sensible affections': this is the challenge that a mystic of the heart must take up.

Don Bosco – and this is perhaps where the fascinating relevance of his mysticism, his charism, and his educational wisdom lies – does not set affection against the will and reason: God wins us over through affection, through his affections – his loves – which, if we open ourselves to their influence, spread through our hearts and make them one with his.

But affections can be corrupted; the 'sensible' ones, in Don Bosco's language, are those which, perverted by selfishness, by their very nature divide the heart and separate it both from the merciful Father and from the brothers in service or to be served.

The selfishness of the sensible affections is divisive and illusory; and this is one of the central messages of *the Letter from Rome*, an indispensable document of authentic Salesian mystical pedagogy addressed to his heart as an educator and pastor.

Sensible affections – the thorns that force one to strengthen one's sandals in the rose-covered arbour – in *the Letter from Rome* become misleading apostolic motivations:

> ...you will no longer see anyone working for his own glory; you will no longer see anyone punishing out of wounded self-love; you will not see anyone neglecting the work of supervision through jealousy of another's popularity; you won't hear people running others down so as to be looked up to by the boys: those who exclude all other superiors and earn for themselves nothing but contempt and hypocritical flattery; people who let their hearts be stolen by one individual and neglect all the other boys to cultivate that particular one. No one will neglect his strict duty of supervision for the sake of his own ease and comfort; no one will fail through human respect to reprimand those who need reprimanding.[17]

It is a most precise and refined educational interpretation of the Gospel *'Woes'*, which, turned on their head, restore to us *the freshest pastoral beatitudes.*

Sensible affections – today we might say, using a paradoxical yet effective phrase, 'emotional selfishness' – find healing only in the love of the calibre of Jesus who pours into the heart an abundance of goodness and meaning capable of extinguishing the idolatrous allure of every selfish substitute.

And when love, true goodness, is sought mystically, through a life of Grace and intimacy with the Father, then it manifests itself – as 'Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift' (*Jas* 1:17) – as salvation, received, embraced and given together, an authentic charismatic principle: '"to let oneself be loved!": that is, to know how to translate love into attitudes of kindness,

[17] *Letter from Rome*, in *Salesian Sources* 1, no. 153.

into a way of fostering friendship, into the familiarity of dialogue and the joy of living together.'[18]

A *'letting oneself be loved'* that has its source in God and leads back to God, capable of reaching even those who are far away: those who perhaps have not yet heard, nor can understand, the name of Jesus.

The ways in which this love may blossom and flow in the heart of the Salesian, to become an authentic and evangelical *'letting oneself be* loved', have been indicated in the vision of the ten diamonds, especially when – in the fundamental interpretation offered by Fr Rinaldi – one understands the structural unity, together with the truly non-random positioning, of the virtues that the diamonds represent. Fr Egidio Viganò comments on this unity in a truly clear manner:

> Again it goes without saying that the five diamonds are not just a list of virtues but rather the principal paths of an ascetical *sequela Christi.* Following Don Rinaldi's line of thought, it is important to indicate that these principal ways are positioned on the back of the mantle and characterize the Salesian's interior life. They are not directly obvious in the basic exterior image of the Salesian, but rather they are a hidden and absolutely necessary supporting structure.[19]

The dream of the ten diamonds speaks of a mystical life that did not remain buried in Don Bosco's heart, but radiated from his face and reverberated in his actions, imprinting them with faith, hope and charity, and kindling them with the life of God.

This mystical life was visibly transformed into good, fragrant bread for the table of his boys and his sons, or for the often troubled lives of people received during endless hours of audiences.

But this public display of faith, hope and charity, sustained by tireless work and gruelling self-discipline, was not the whole story.

[18] Fr Egidio Viganò, *Don Bosco's Canonization*, ASC no. 310, 1983.
[19] Fr Egidio Viganò, *The Salesian according to Don Bosco's dream of the man with ten diamonds*, ASC no. 300, 1981.

Silent and hidden were the inner paths that Don Bosco faithfully traversed, to find his strength in God. Paths illuminated by the 'five diamonds' that the figure in the dream wears sewn onto the back of his cloak. We still remember these 'five diamonds' today: *Obedience*, the *Vow of Poverty*, the *Reward*, the *Vow of Chastity* and *Fasting*. For Don Bosco, as for every Salesian today, they constitute the 'strong and hidden spiritual framework. Here lies fulfilment of the second part of the Salesian motto, *Caetera tolle*; here lies too our special style of consecrated life.'[20]

These diamonds are also the seal of five 'yeses' to love: in the obedient surrender of oneself, in the possession of God as our sole treasure, in the purity of the gift of self, and in the joy of simplicity that keeps the spirit watchful as we await the Bridegroom who is to come.

5. Conclusion

General Chapter 27 invited us to be 'Mystics, prophets and servants', so that we might be rooted in the Spirit. The order of the invitation is no accident.

We must understand our religious vocation as a mystical vocation, without reducing the term to a generic synonym for the word 'spiritual', a term often overused to the point of exhaustion and worryingly distant from the reference to the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Rahner's well-known motto on the Christianity of the future – that it will be mystical or it will not exist – can only be understood from a non-temporal but essential perspective: Christianity, of yesterday, today and tomorrow, is either mystical or it is not Christian. It is either contact with God or a human and vain search for oneself.

[20] *Ibid.*

And if the Christian life is essentially mystical because it is life in God, developed by the power of the Spirit from the Word and the Flesh of the Son, then the Salesian religious life is mystical and apostolic, ecclesial and charismatic for the same reasons and on the same foundations.

To meditate on the story of Don Bosco is to return to his heart, set ablaze by the love of God, embraced in a fascinating and constant purification of self for the sake of his brothers, young people, children and the poor.

It is there that our eyes must be fixed, our lives rooted, our hearts set ablaze, so that even in the simplicity of our service the world may encounter the prophecy of the Gospel.

Fr Fabio ATTARD, sdb
Rector Major

2.1 THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RECTOR MAJOR Guidelines & Orientations

Fr Jorge Mario CRISAFULLI
Councillor for the Missions

Fr Gabriel STAWOWY
Economer General

Dear Confreres,

In 2021, the General Council published criteria and orientations for the distribution of the Rector Major's Fund (cf. Acts of the General Council 436, pp. 58; Prot. 021/022, 31 January 2021), aiming to foster transparency and accountability in the use of Mission Procure funds.

This updated letter shares additional clarifications and insights for our current situation. GC29 called us to engage creatively with new forms of poverty on new frontiers and reminded us that all financial resources must serve the mission. Like Don Bosco, who began his work for young people without funds and in total reliance on Divine Providence, we are called to use whatever we receive for the benefit of the young – especially the poorest. His personal testament stressed evangelical poverty, detachment from material goods, and apostolic freedom. He told us, "If our society seeks ease and comfort, it will cease to exist."

We live in an era of rapid change, with deep financial, economic, and administrative challenges. Fidelity to our Salesian charism demands flexibility, adaptability, and a professional approach.

1. Gratitude to Our Mission Procures

The principal funding for the Rector Major's distributions comes from three major Mission Procures: New Rochelle, Turin, and Madrid. We thank them sincerely for their generosity and professionalism. Our gratitude extends equally to other Mission procures and the hundreds of thousands of donors who love Don Bosco and support the missions through their personal contributions.

2. The Challenge of Sustainability

The current climate poses real threats to our funding capacity:

- Political, social, demographic, and economic uncertainties are reducing donations globally.
- International cooperation is declining due to geopolitical conflicts, economic crises, and inflation.
- Private donations are decreasing as benefactors face financial constraints, declining trust, or pass away.

These pressures limit what Sede Centrale can provide to provinces for formation, running costs, new missionary setups, and development projects.

3. The Distribution Fund and the Spirit of Solidarity

The Rector Major's Distribution Fund is not unlimited – in fact, it is significantly more limited than in previous years. Every province is called to a spirit of communion and co-responsibility: both giving and receiving.

> No province should consider itself only a "receiver." Each is called to contribute — even with the widow's mite – to the RM's Solidarity Fund.

The Congregation has its own running costs and cannot give what it does not have. We have seen less-privileged provinces contribute faithfully, while some wealthier provinces – including some that receive substantial RM support – remain indifferent. As St Paul reminds us: "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). Let us give generously, not reluctantly or under compulsion.

Contributing to the Solidarity fund actively is a 'sine qua non' condition for receiving distribution support.

4. Sustainable Investments — Amended C. 187

GC29 amended Article 187 of our Salesian Constitutions. Ethical, transparent income-generating activities are considered legitimate and compatible with our call to live simple, poor lives. While purely speculative financial or real estate activities remain explicitly prohibited, sustainable investments are now permitted when:

- They support our Salesian works; and
- They provide for the sustenance of provinces, communities, and especially elderly or sick confreres.

Responsibly managed investments can help provinces achieve financial self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on RM distributions.

5. Planning and Development Offices (PDOs)

Our donors trust us. They expect transparency and accountability in how we use distributed funds. Every province must develop and strengthen its own Planning and Development Office and Provincial Mission office with professional staff – not only to submit proposals to the RM, but above all to:

- Monitor and implement approved projects;

- Submit timely financial and narrative reports to our procures;
- Actively seek funds from public and private sources: local benefactors, past pupils, NGOs, foundations, companies, and government agencies.

Requisitions to the RM must become a "last resort," not a routine source of funding.

6. Accountability, Transparency, and Financial Reporting

The Provincial and Provincial Economer bear moral responsibility for ensuring that funds are used for their intended purpose. Misapplication of funds is unacceptable.

Before submitting applications for RM distributions, each province must provide the General Economer with the annual provincial statement of accounts (rendiconto).

This is another sine qua non condition for applying for distribution support.

This is not merely a control mechanism. It is an invitation to administer wisely the means that Divine Providence places at the service of our mission –avoiding waste and luxury, remembering that all we have belongs to the young, especially the poorest of the poor.

7. Strategic Planning and Priority Projects

All projects must align with:

- GC29 deliberations;
- The Rector Major's planning priorities (2025–2030);
- Provincial Chapter decisions;
- The Organic Provincial Plan (OPP); and

- The Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan (SEPP).

Each province may submit no more than 4 priority projects per year across the two distributions. Other projects should be directed to mission offices, NGOs, or foundations that are well-suited to fund social, educational, or pastoral initiatives.

8. New Digital Platform for Project Submissions

In March 2026, the Rector Major – with the consent of the General Council — approved the development of a digital platform for project submissions.

Development	Throughout 2026
Testing period	Six months before launch
Launch	July 2027
Mandatory use	From July 2027 onwards, all requisitions must be submitted via the platform

Projects submitted after the deadline will not be considered and must be resubmitted for the following distribution.

9. Operational Guidelines

a. Submission Responsibility and Format

Provincials, supported by their Provincial Economer and PDO, are responsible for preparing and submitting project applications with the approval of the Provincial Council. Official application forms from the Missions Sector must be used and presented professionally.

b. Submission Deadlines

December distribution	Deadline: 30 September — Submit to: distribuzione179@sdb.org
June distribution	Deadline: 31 March — Submit to: distribuzione180@sdb.org
Late submissions	Not considered; must be resubmitted for the next distribution

All your requests, using the correct project format, must be directed to the one designated email address, which is also accessible to the General Councillor for Missions and the Economer General as well. From July 2027, all submissions must be done through the digital platform.

c. Project Justification

Provinces must submit timely financial justifications to the Procures with supporting documents. Photos and videos of completed projects are strongly encouraged to help motivate donors. No funds will be disbursed for new projects from provinces that have not accounted for previous distributions.

d. Discernment and Approval Process

All requests follow this sequence:

a. Regional Councillors review and comment on requests from their region.

b. A Committee – chaired by the General Councillor for Missions, with the Economer General and General Councillors – screens applications at the start of the General Council session.

c. The Rector Major and his Council discuss and give final approval.

d. Mission Offices are authorised to disburse funds. Provinces are notified by email.

Requests not approved at one distribution are not carried over automatically — they must be resubmitted.

e. Priority Areas for Distribution

In line with GC29, the following areas receive priority:

- **Running costs** of provinces, vice-provinces, and delegations in need. Priority is given to newly constituted entities for a limited number of years. Applications are accepted once per year (June or December distribution) and must include: (1) the annual budget with a sustainability plan; (2) proof of timely submission of accounts to procures; (3) proof of contribution to the RM Solidarity Fund; and (4) the annual balance sheet (rendiconto).
- **Formation of Salesians** (initial formation and specialization). The official Excel form must be completed annually with each student's name, stage of studies, institution, and year. Only students belonging to the requesting province may be listed. Key rules: aspirantate and prenovitiate running costs are covered by provinces; licences funded for up to 2 years; doctorates for up to 3 years; all funds must be accounted for with clear reports.
- **Evangelisation programmes** targeting poor children and young people (GC29 §19–29; §52–69).
- **New Salesian missionary presences** (GC29 §61–69).
- **Other projects that lack financing.** Social projects (water wells, solar systems, agricultural programs, vehicles, etc.) are well-suited for external agencies such as mission offices, NGOs, and foundations. The Missions Sector is available to assist PDOs in preparing these proposals.
- **Construction, purchase of land, and major items.** Requests for buildings or land require: (1) official approval from the Rector Major and Council (C. 188); (2) supporting documents (letter from the Provincial, architectural drawings, bills of quantities, at least 3 bids); (3) civil proof of land ownership – ecclesiastical agreements with bishops are not sufficient.

Each proposal must address long-term sustainability and maintenance of structures. The correct use of financial and human resources (buildings, land, equipment, staffing, salaries) must be clearly described.

Conclusion

Our Rector Major consistently reminds us not to separate economic and financial issues from our charismatic and spiritual identity. The orientations in this letter are not merely technical or logistica - they are a call to remain prophetically faithful and apostolically fruitful.

Evangelical poverty is not an imposition, but a personal option lived at the congregation, provincial, and local levels. In his advice to the first missionaries, Don Bosco urged them to seek souls, not money, to care for the poor, to avoid comfort and idleness, to be poor and to live it, to be 'rich' before God in order to gain the hearts of people (benefactors). He reminded them: "Remember well, that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well" (C. 79). Let Mary Help of Christians, and St Joseph continue to assist us so that we remain faithful to our charism and mission!

SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES
SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA
Via Marsala, 42 – 00185 Roma

Il Vicario del Rettor Maggiore

Rome 08 July 2026
Prot. n. 26/0246

For the attention of
Reverend Provincials
and Provincial Councils

Subject. **Convening of the interim provincial chapters for the six-year period**

Dear Provincials,

In accordance with the three-year cycle required by our Constitutions in Article 172, Provinces and Vice-Provinces are invited to convene their Provincial Chapter in 2027. Articles 170–174 of the Constitutions and Articles 162–170 of the General Regulations set out the necessary guidelines to ensure that the Provincial Chapter is a fruitful experience of communion, discernment and operational convergence within the provincial community.

Local communities are also involved in the Chapter process, in accordance with the guidelines to be provided by the Provincial and the Chapter Moderator.

At recent Provincial Chapters, the opportunity to take part has been extended to some members of the Salesian Family and

to some lay people holding positions of responsibility within the works: this is a practice that deserves to be continued.

The Rector Major, together with the General Council, has identified and selected two topics, with some specific points to be emphasised, which the Provincial Chapters are to study and explore in depth:

1. "Implementation of GC29"

With regard to the "Implementation of GC29", I would remind you that according to the Constitutions, once the General Chapter has concluded, the Provincial Chapters must determine the arrangements for its implementation (cf. C. 171). The Province will continue the journey begun at the Provincial Chapter in preparation for GC29, reviewing and building on the work already undertaken. It is therefore a matter of ***taking up the Provincial Chapter's contribution to GC29 and reviewing it in the light of GC29 itself***, thereby ensuring continuity in your work of reflection.

2. Salesian and Lay formation processes

In particular, as part of the implementation of GC29, I invite you to examine which joint formation processes – involving both Salesians and laypeople – the Province is currently promoting or intends to promote, at both provincial and local levels. This is an approach that GC29 has urged us to strengthen: ***Share spirituality, mission and formation with lay people and members of the Salesian family in every educative and pastoral community. (FD 51)***

At the community level:

a. Assess and examine progress in the work to establish the Educative and Pastoral Community Council as a body for discernment, formation and shared responsibility and, where such does not exist, see that it is established;

b. A joint formation plan for Salesians and lay people should be implemented or drawn up, which includes sharing in daily life and prayer, as well as educative and pastoral reflection.

At the provincial level:

a. Check whether a commitment to shared mission between Salesian Family members in the area covered by the Province is being fostered;

b. Check whether there are qualification plans in place for lay people with regard to the Salesian charism.

3. Implementation methods

Provincial Chapters will be held in **2027**. The reflection paper produced by the Provincial Chapter, as outlined in the two previous issues, must be sent to the Secretary General by **28 February 2028** at the latest, in digital format only (Word or PDF).

Any other matters of specific interest to the life of the Province – such as amendments to certain parts of the Provincial Directory – which require the approval of the Rector Major and the General Council – must be sent to the Secretary General by **28 February 2028**, in digital format only (Word or PDF).

Any correspondence sent to the Secretary General must always be accompanied by a covering letter from the Provincial.

To foster a genuine experience of discernment, discussion and sharing, the primary concern must not be the drafting of a document. In any case, documents should be carefully prepared and well-written, while at the same time being concise and free from repetition.

Finally, I would remind you that the OPP (Overall Provincial Plan) is drawn up by the Provincial together with his Council; it is advisable that it should cover a six-year period, from one

General Chapter to the next, so that it may take on board the requirements of the General Chapter itself. It is essential that the Provincial community be involved in the drafting and revision of the OPP (GC25, 82, 84).

It is therefore appropriate for this to be discussed in depth at the Provincial Chapter, so as to provide criteria, guidelines and priorities for its integration or development. This provincial document does not need to be approved by the Rector Major and the General Council; it should subsequently be sent to the Regional Councillor for information and any comments.

The *provincial educative and pastoral plan and the provincial formation plan* (see attachments 1 and 2 of the new edition of the Ratio) also fall within the remit of the Provincial, together with the Provincial Council, and do not require the approval of the Rector Major and the General Council; they may be discussed at the Provincial Chapter; they should be sent to the Councillor for Youth Ministry and the Councillor for Formation respectively, for information and any comments they may have.

Thank you for your attention. I send you my warmest regards!

In Don Bosco

Fr Stefano Martoglio
Vicar of the Rector Major

Chronicle of the Rector Major

– January 2026

The month began in Valdocco (2–5 January), where the Rector Major led a meeting of the SDB Rectors of the Lombardy-Emilia Province (ILE) and the FMA Community Leaders of the Lombardy-Veneto Province (ILO), dedicated to educational leadership.

On 10 and 11 January, in San Cataldo, the Rector Major brought the centenary of the Salesian presence to a close, meeting with the Educative and Pastoral Community and the young people of the Salesian Youth Movement, receiving honorary citizenship and unveiling the monument to Don Bosco.

From 15 to 18 January in Valdocco, Turin, Fr Fabio took part in the **44th** Salesian Family Spirituality Days, presenting the 2026 Strenna.

On 27 January, the Rector Major met with the Executive Council of the Salesian Biblical Association (ABS), discussing current issues such as the accompaniment of young people, artificial intelligence, mission and interreligious dialogue.

On **30 January**, Fr Fabio Attard celebrated the feast of Don Bosco in Chiari, marking the centenary of the Salesian presence in that town.

In Turin, he then celebrated First Vespers and shared the "Good Night" at Valdocco.

On 31 January, on the Solemnity of St John Bosco, he presided over the celebration in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians for the first time as Rector Major.

– February 2026

The Rector Major celebrated the Solemnity of St John Bosco in Chieri Cathedral on 1 February. The town of Chieri conferred honorary citizenship upon him.

From 5 to 17 February, Don Bosco's 11th Successor visited the Indian Provinces of Kolkata (INC), New Delhi (INN) and Chennai (INM). He met with Salesians, young people, educators, Past Pupils and members of the Salesian Family, promoting communion, missionary renewal and fidelity to the charism.

In Kolkata (5–8 February), the Rector Major, Fr Fabio, celebrated the centenary of the Salesian presence and installed the new Provin-

cial, Fr Sunil Kerketta. He visited the Salesian communities in Siliguri and Azimganj.

From 9 to 12 February, the Rector Major visited the New Delhi province, the South Asia Regional House (SPCI) and young people and Salesians in the Chottanagpur region. Fr Fabio Attard concluded his visit to the INN province at Don Bosco Gumla, celebrating the institute's Silver Jubilee.

From 13 to 17 February, the Rector Major, Fr Fabio Attard, visited the Chennai Province and various Salesian works serving the poor and vulnerable young people. On 14 February, he presided over the first profession of a Don Bosco Volunteer (CDB) in the Chennai Province and the South Asia Region. On 16 February 2026, in Tirupattur, the "cradle of Salesian India", the Rector Major celebrated the Platinum Jubilee marking 75 years of educational service by the "Sacred Heart" Salesian College.

On 22 February, Fr Fabio Attard welcomed Pope Leo XIV, who had come for a pastoral visit to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. In his address, the Rector Major recalled the bond between Don Bosco and Pope Leo XIII, emphasising the Salesians' traditional fidelity to the Successor of St Peter.

On 25–26 February, in Turin, he took part in the meetings of the CAFS and the Council of Salesian Sites, highlighting Valdocco, Chieri and Colle Don Bosco as places of spirituality and formation. He reflected with business leaders on social changes, urging them to equip young people with skills and sound values.

From 27 February to 1 March, in Valdocco, he took part in the Meeting of Salesian Provincials of Europe.

– March 2026

From 6 to 8 March, he celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Salesian presence in Vallecrosia, where he was awarded honorary citizenship.

From 9 March, he chaired the First Plenary Session of the General Council in Rome.

The Rector Major addressed the DB Tech World Visioning meeting on 16 and 17 March.

On 20 March, together with the General Council, the Rector Major visited the community in Testaccio.

The Rector Major travelled to Chiari on 24 March to preside over the funeral of Fr Eugenio Riva.

On 27 March, he met with the Community of Sant'Egidio. On 28 March, the Rector Major, together

with some members of the General Council, held a discussion with a view to further exploring, at General Council level, the topic of Artificial Intelligence and its implications for the Salesian mission.

– April 2026

From 6 to 11 April, the Rector Major took part in the General Council's Retreat in Nemi, led by Fr Pascual Chávez.

On 17 April, in Turin, Fr Fabio met with participants in the School of Accompaniment and, the following day, 18 April, he gave an online talk for the Salesian Cooperators of Interamerica. In the days that followed, from 19 to 25 April, the Salesian Generalate in Rome hosted the first Formation Meeting for Vice-Provincials, attended by 16 Salesians from the eight Regions of the Congregation, who explored their role in animation and governance in the light of GC29. On 27 April, he visited the Don Bosco community at UPS for a conversation with the Salesian students at UPS.

– May 2026

On 2 May, he led a day of retreat for the young confreres at the Theologate in Bufalotta and, the following day, 3 May, at the Parish of Maria delle Grazie, he conferred the ministry of lector on some of them.

On 4 May, he met with the new provincial economers who were attending the course for new economers at the Central Office.

From 7 to 10 May, Don Bosco's 11th successor took part in the 6th World Congress of Salesian Cooperators in Sacrofano, Rome, on the theme **"To be leaven in order to be fruitful."** To mark the **150th anniversary of the Association of Salesian Cooperators**, the event brought together around 400 delegates from all over the world to reflect on the Association's identity, mission and strategic guidelines for the six-year term 2026–2032.

From 14 to 19 May, Fr Fabio undertook an Animation Visit to Sri Lanka to mark the 70th anniversary of the Salesian presence there and the 25th anniversary of the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Negombo.

From 20 to 23 May, Fr Fabio Attard chaired the Salesian Family World Advisory Council in Valdocco, bringing together representatives from 27 groups of the Salesian Family. In preparation for the 150th anniversary of the Preventive System, the meeting combined prayer, formation and discernment, concluding with the

Rector Major's invitation to live the Preventive System as a path to holiness, evangelical leadership and renewed missionary zeal.

On 24 May, the Rector Major led the celebrations for the feast of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco. Following the vigil on 23 May, he presided over the Mass for the Salesian Youth Movement. The celebrations concluded with the traditional Marian procession.

On 25 May, Fr Fabio Attard welcomed the 44 Provincial Delegates from around the world to Rome for the School of Youth Ministry.

On 26 May, Fr Fabio met in Rome with the Rectors of Specific Formation for Salesian Brothers and candidates for the priesthood, presenting the formation priorities of the 29th General Chapter.

– June 2026

On 2 June, he met with the Rectors and the Provincial Council of the ICC in Rome, offering a reflection on leadership rooted in the spirit of Don Bosco. On 3 and 4 June, in Turin, Fr Fabio met with those in charge of the Salesian sites, providing an opportunity for discussion, sharing and reflection on the journey currently underway.

From 5 to 8 June, the Rector Major travelled to Poland for the beatification of the nine Salesian martyrs, which took place on 6 June in Krakow. On 7 June, he met with young people in O□wi□cim, followed by a Eucharistic celebration for the Salesian Family.

On 9 June, Fr Fabio took part in the launch in Avigliana of the **'Costellazioni'** and **'La Comunità che Educa'** projects, designed to support the most vulnerable young people.

On 17 June, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, the Rector Major presided over a Mass of thanksgiving for the newly beatified. On 22 June, Fr Fabio attended the editorial meeting of *Note di Pastorale Giovanile.*

On **24 June**, the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, the Salesian Family celebrated the **Feast of the Rector Major** with a solemn Mass presided over by Fr Fabio Attard.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

At the start of January 2026, after spending the start of the year with his family, he returned to Sacred Heart to take up his co-ordination duties within his own office.

In mid-January, he took part in the Salesian Family Spirituality Days in Valdocco; a very positive and well-attended event, focusing on the Rector Major's Strenna for 2026.

Following the Salesian Family Days, after a spell in Rome, he returned to Piedmont to spend a few days supporting the community at Colle Don Bosco and to celebrate, again at Colle, the Solemnity of St John Bosco.

In February, together with Fr Patrick, the Vicar travelled to Argentina, to the ARN Province, to facilitate the consultation for the appointment of the new provincial. It was a wonderful experience of fraternity and Salesian life, supporting a province that is living out a rich Salesian experience in Argentina.

On his return from Argentina, the Vicar stopped off in Rome to prepare for the General Council session in March–April. It was an intense session, in line with the Council's new work schedule, which also included a period of Retreat in Nemi, led by Fr Pascual Chavez. A real blessing!

Following the spring Provincial Council session, Fr Stefano, together with Fr Patrick, coordinated the first formation course for vice-provincials. It was a highly successful experience, part of a Congregational project that many had been eagerly awaiting and which, unfortunately, could not be launched during the previous six-year term due to various circumstances.

The course for vice-provincials will take place twice a year, with two vice-provincials from each region of the Congregation taking part. This will enable us to make up for this stage of formation during this six-year term, so that we can provide support for the majority of the Congregation's vice-provincials.

In addition to the formation programme for vice-provincials, Fr Stefano took part in formation sessions for provincial economers,

youth ministry delegates, and a course for formators on the new *Ratio*.

This rich formative experience reflects the significant work carried out by the various sectors in the formation and accompaniment of confreres across the provinces in their various ministry roles.

In June 2026, the Vicar travelled to Algeria for six days – having successfully obtained an entry visa – to prepare, together with the Bishop of Algiers and all other ecclesial and social stakeholders, for the establishment of a presence in Algeria. The Congregation had two houses in Algeria until around fifty years ago, which were subsequently closed due to events linked to Algeria's path to independence.

This was a very interesting and useful experience for understanding the Algerian context – both ecclesial and social – and the steps required to establish a Salesian foundation deeply embedded within the ecclesial fabric.

In June, the Vicar was also able to take part in the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the highlight of pastoral life at the Basilica built by Don Bosco; on 24 June, Don Bosco's name day, Fr Stefano took part in the Rector Major's feast day, in a spirit of gratitude. It was the first time in the Congregation's history that the Rector Major's feast day had taken place without the full General Council present. It was a new experience in which many confreres based in Rome took part.

The Rector Major's feast day also provided an opportunity to officially inaugurate the final phase of the renovation of the Sacred Heart House – the hall beneath the Basilica, which had been closed for many years.

In the days following the Rector Major's feast day, the Vicar travelled to Turin for meetings on animation and planning, and returned to Rome on 4 July for the General Council session that had begun on 6 June.

The General Councillor for Formation

During the first half of January, a pastoral visit took place to the provinces of Hyderabad, Chennai and Trichy, focusing on their formation communities. It was a time of interaction with all the groups of young confreres,

culminating in the 75th anniversary of the Salesian presence at the postnovitiate in Yercaud for the provinces of Trichy and Chennai.

On the 14th of the month, we held an advisory council meeting on Salesian centres at Colle Don Bosco, and on the 15th in Genoa we enjoyed a wonderful day's gathering with the confreres of the ICC's quinquennium group.

From 16 to 18 January, a meeting took place in Madrid with all the formators from the two provinces in Spain. An opportunity to begin familiarising ourselves with the new edition of the *Ratio* and to share the most important issues regarding formation in the country.

On 19 January, at Rebaudengo, the meeting of the working group on the Crocetta Theological College.

26 January: promulgation of the *Ratio*, with the production of materials (videos, resources, etc.) for the gradual dissemination of the document.

27 January: meeting of the executive committee of the Salesian Biblical Association, also attended by the Rector Major.

Towards the end of the month, there were also many online meetings with the various RFCs – regional formation commissions – from different regions, halfway through the annual cycle, as already scheduled.

2–4 February: participation in the curatorium and interaction with the community.

The group of young confreres has also been mobilised to disseminate the *Ratio* amongst the initial formation communities via the interrazio.org platform. An initial launch event coincided with the first chapter of the *Ratio*, featuring a video interview with Fr Stefano Martoglio and other resources prepared during this period.

8–16 February: visit to the communities in Lubumbashi and Cansebula, a new centre, for the curatorium and the animation of those formation centres.

22 February: at Sacred Heart for Pope Leo's visit to the Basilica and the community.

25 February: advisory council meeeting on Salesian sites in Valdocco.

From 27 February to 1 March: meeting of the European Provin-

cials in Valdocco, with various sessions on animation over the three days.

From 3 to 7 March: in Nairobi for the curatorium and a visit to the community.

From 9 March, the Council's work resumed with several projects for the formation sector to be presented: some in conjunction with youth ministry, such as the one on the aspirantate, and others which became working groups to be continued in preparation for the next session, such as the one on the curatorium.

20 April: curatorium at the Crocetta.

20–25 April: participation in the formation school, with personally guided retreat.

Sunday 26: meeting of the Colle Don Bosco sector team.

27–30: presentation of Salesian sites as part of the Arcolle accompaniment course in Chieri, with related input. ==> from Colle to Chieri

Preparation of video interviews in five languages, plus materials for the dissemination of chapters 3–4–5 of the *Ratio* in the coming months.

6 May: presentation during the course for provincial economers at Sacred Heart.

7–9 May: at Colle Don Bosco, a formation school for sessions on young Salesians and for the practicum.

12–15 May: visit to Togo for the curatorium in Lomé and Gbo□omé, and a formation day for AOS–AON formators. 16–22 May: animation visit to the formation communities in Nigeria.

24 May: participation in the feast of Mary Help of Christians at our basilica in Rome, Pius XI community.

25–30 May: a week of formation for all rectors and formators of specific formation communities, held at the Zeffirino community in Via della Bufalotta, Rome.

3 June: meeting of the study group on the Theologate at the Crocetta, Turin. 4 June: Valdocco, meeting of the advisory council on Salesian sites.

6 June: in-person curatorium meeting of the Zeffirino community; 9 June: online curatorium meeting. On the evenings either before or after, meetings with each year group of the same community.

12 June: departure for Addis Ababa and, on the 14th, attendance at the episcopal ordination of our confrere Hailemariam Medhin Tesfay as coadjutor bishop of Gambella.

From 15 to 20: World Advisory Council on Formation in Addis Ababa.

21 June: visit to the prenovitiate and novitiate of the Ethiopian Province.

26 June: participation in the formation of formators from Italy at the Basilica of Don Bosco in Tuscolano.

27 June: participation in the diaconate ordination of confreres from the Zeffirino community. In the afternoon, participation in the UPS curatorium.

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry

The month began with Fr Rafael Bejarano's Animation Visit to the Ecuador Province (ECU), from 5 to 9 January, during which he met with the Salesian communities in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca. The visit provided an important opportunity for dialogue with confreres, young people, lay co-responsible partners and educators, enabling a closer understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing Youth Ministry within the Province and encouraging the educational and pastoral processes currently underway. The meetings with local communities facilitated a shared re-examination of the pastoral priorities and the educational journey of the Salesian works, in line with the guidelines for the new six-year term.

Also at the start of the year, the Sector launched the #DBSchools-GoGreen global campaign, aimed at promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices in all Salesian educational institutions worldwide. Fr Bejarano sent a letter to all Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry, recalling the mandate of the 29th General Chapter on integral ecology and inviting Salesian schools to adopt the UNESCO Green School Quality Standard as an operational framework.

On his return to Rome, the Councillor resumed his regular coordination work for the Sector, overseeing developments in the international Youth Ministry platform, the coordination of the

Italian team and the Colle Don Bosco international volunteer project. During this same period, he oversaw the preparation and conduct of the online General Assembly of Don Bosco International, reaffirming the Sector's commitment to advocacy work and the Salesian presence within European institutions. At the same time, coordination meetings continued with the Sector's team, focusing on planning the year's activities and consolidating international collaboration networks, with particular attention to initiatives aimed at the most vulnerable young people and the processes of supporting the Provinces.

In February, the Councillor supported various processes relating to formation, digital communication and the strengthening of Salesian educational networks. These included the Advanced Formation Course on Salesian Educational Leadership, the coordination meetings for the Salesian Portal, and dialogue with DB Tech Europe and the Don Bosco in the World Foundation. On 2 February, at Salesian Headquarters, an important round-table discussion was held on the educational and pastoral value of sport, attended by the President of PGS International, the Councillors for Youth Ministry of the SDB and FMA, and their respective delegates. The meeting reaffirmed the shared commitment to making sport a key instrument of the Salesian mission, identifying the next steps towards implementing a shared strategy.

Particular attention was paid to strengthening synergies between the various Salesian bodies involved in education, social promotion and vocational training, fostering greater integration of initiatives at an international level. This context also included participation in the meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Don Bosco in the World Foundation, held jointly with the heads of the Missions and Finance Sectors, with a view to shared responsibility and support for the Congregation's educational mission. During the month, discussions also continued with the heads of the continental networks and with staff involved in the Sector's digital projects, promoting the sharing of resources and the development of an increasingly integrated vision of Salesian Youth Ministry.

During the month, the Councillor also paid a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, travelling to Goma on 17 February together with the Regional Councillor for Central and West Africa, Fr Alphonse Owoudou. At the St Joseph Delegation of Central-East Africa he met with his confreres and the local educational communities, visiting the Mamma Margherita community and the Technical-Industrial Institute in Goma (ITIG). The visit — the Councillor's first to the African continent — provided an opportunity to express the Congregation's solidarity with a population marked by instability and violence, whilst encouraging the educational and pastoral work carried out on behalf of young people and the most vulnerable families.

March was marked by a busy programme of international outreach, which saw the Councillor engaged in various regional contexts. At the start of the month, Fr Rafael met around 300 young people at the Don Bosco Institute in Kharghuli, in India, on the fringes of the General Assembly of the Salesian Provincials' Conference of South Asia (SPCSA), for which he also presided over the Eucharist, inviting his confreres to be peacemakers and to renew the clarity of their missionary vision. At the same time, he took part in the meeting of Superiors of the East Asia-Oceania Region in Talisay City (Philippines), presenting the key criteria for the renewal of Youth Ministry in the Region, starting from the identity of the Salesian educator as a shepherd, mentor and companion to young people.

Fr Rafael also led several online meetings with Provinces in Latin America dedicated to presenting network-based work and promoting social initiatives and shared pastoral processes. These meetings provided an opportunity to explore the opportunities offered by inter-provincial collaboration and to revitalise a shared vision of the educational and pastoral mission. From 16 to 20 March, the DB Tech World Visioning programme took place in Rome, bringing together representatives of Salesian vocational training from various regions of the world to reflect on the future of the network and its contribution to the integral development of young people. The initiative facilitated a meaningful exchange of experiences and best practices,

highlighting the strategic role of vocational training in addressing the employment and social challenges of different contexts.

In the second half of the month, the Sector's team met at the Generalate for a period of planning, evaluation and discernment, paying particular attention to the prospects for advocacy in Youth Ministry and the promotion of the rights of the most vulnerable young people. The meetings helped to define common operational guidelines and to strengthen the coordination of the Sector's international initiatives.

Throughout the semester, the Councillor paid particular attention to situations marked by war, forced migration and social fragility, maintaining constant dialogue with Salesian works in Ukraine, Belarus, the Holy Land and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These contacts and visits made it possible to support educational and pastoral processes aimed at young people and to encourage communities working in particularly complex contexts. This context also includes the visit to the Holy Land, which offered the Councillor the opportunity to meet the Salesian communities engaged in educational and pastoral work in the Region, encouraging them to continue their mission of accompanying young people and promoting peace, in the spirit of Don Bosco's charism.

In April, the process of presenting and consolidating the Congregation's pastoral networks continued. Through a series of online meetings, the Councillor and his team engaged in dialogue with numerous Provinces in Latin America, including those of Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela, outlining the priorities for the six-year term and fostering greater synergy between the various local communities. Of particular note was the meeting of the National Commission for Salesian Youth Ministry in Brazil, held in Brasília on 9 and 10 April, which defined four strategic priorities for the six-year term — charismatic identity, vocational animation, youth leadership and Youth Ministry as an expression of the Salesian mission — whilst also addressing the issue of combating femicide as an urgent educational challenge.

These meetings provided an opportunity to present the work of the Councillor, the Sector team and the main international net-

works, promoting a culture of collaboration and pastoral co-responsibility. Particular attention was given to social works, the formation of educators and the support of young people in vulnerable situations. Contacts also continued with the Pontifical Salesian University and the IUS Europa, with a view to new forms of collaboration in the fields of formation, educational research and the production of materials to serve educational and pastoral communities. A further area of reflection concerned the theme of the shared responsibility of the laity, explored in depth through dialogue with a number of French Salesian organisations engaged in developing new models of participation and animation.

May saw the continuation of work on Salesian digital platforms and Salesian University Institutions, through meetings with continental coordinators and those in charge of the Salesian Portal. These discussions fostered a shared reflection on the potential of new technologies for education, evangelisation and networking. On 12 May, Fr Rafael met online with the BBH community to present their networking activities and prospects for pastoral collaboration.

From 25 May to 7 June, the fifth School for Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry took place at Salesian Headquarters, one of the most significant events of the first year of the six-year term. The initiative brought together 47 participants — Salesians and laypeople from over 40 Provinces and from all the Regions of the Congregation — offering an experience of formation, discussion and sharing centred on the main challenges of the Salesian youth mission. The programme centred on the theme "Being authentic disciples of Jesus", exploring the relationship between evangelisation, education and the accompaniment of young people in the contemporary cultural context. Through lectures, workshops, group work and moments of dialogue, the participants addressed topics such as the identity of the Youth Ministry Delegate, the Preventive System, digital culture, networking, the spiritual accompaniment of young people, pastoral planning and care for the most vulnerable groups.

The School marked the first major training event of the six-

year term for the new Provincial Delegates, fostering the development of a shared vision of the Salesian youth mission and strengthening relations between the Provinces. The programme involved members of the Sector, lecturers from the Pontifical Salesian University and collaborators from various Salesian works, with a particular focus on building educational networks capable of promoting processes of integral evangelisation and vocational accompaniment.

The first week of June was devoted to concluding the School's work, bringing together guidelines, proposals and operational strategies that will guide the Sector's journey in the coming years. During the same period, meetings continued with the coordinators of the Salesian Higher Education Institutions (IUS), confirming the strategic role of this international network, which currently comprises 97 institutions across 22 countries.

During the same month a further forum took place, dedicated to the animation of the Salesian Youth Movement and the pastoral prospects for the coming years, with particular attention to the involvement of young people in major ecclesial and Salesian events. The month also saw a particularly significant editorial development with the meeting of the editorial team of *Note di Pastorale Giovanile*, attended by Fr Rossano Sala, Fr Carlos Méndez and the Councillor, confirming the Sector's commitment to the production and dissemination of high-quality training materials.

Overall, the first half of 2026 was characterised by a strong commitment to coordination processes, the building of international networks and the support of the Provinces. The Councillor and his team have paid particular attention to formation, cross-sector collaboration, lay shared responsibility and the promotion of a Youth Ministry that is increasingly capable of responding to the educational, social, cultural, ecological and digital challenges of the contemporary world, whilst keeping the care of young people – especially the poorest and most vulnerable – at the centre of its work.

The General Councilor for Missions

January and the first half of February 2026: Following the conclusion of the General Council's sessions for November and December, Fr Jorge Mario Crisafulli, General Councillor for the Missions, travelled to Spain. From 26 to 30 December, he took part in a series of meetings and made the most of the opportunity to undergo his annual medical check-up.

From 31 December to 3 January, he visited Sicily, in particular the town of Fiumefreddo, his father's birthplace.

On 5 January, he held a Zoom meeting with the Provincial, the Provincial Council and the rectors of the Slovenian Province (SLO), with a view to exploring the possibility of that Province taking on the new Salesian presence in Greece.

From 7 to 9 January, he took part in the Don Bosco Network Board of Directors' meeting in Paris, which was dedicated to evaluating the activities carried out during the previous year and planning initiatives for 2026.

From 21 to 25 January, he travelled to Bangkok (Thailand), where he took part in an evaluation and planning meeting alongside a group of missionaries from the East Asia-Oceania Region.

From 27 January to 2 February, he made an official visitation to the AKM Delegation (Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro), which forms part of the IME Province. The visit began in Albania, from where he travelled to Montenegro to meet the Salesian community in Podgorica. He then returned to Albania and visited the community in Shkodër (Scutari), where he spent time with the Salesians and had a personal conversation with each of the missionaries. From there, he travelled to Kosovo to visit the Salesian presence in Gjilan, where he toured the primary and secondary schools. He then travelled to Pristina, where he celebrated the Solemnity of St John Bosco together with the Church and Salesian community in the Kosovar capital. On his return to Tirana, he met with the Salesian community and had the opportunity to meet the Salesians and lay people engaged in pastoral work with the Roma community, which has for decades faced serious challenges related to social marginalisation, poverty and exclusion. Be-

fore returning to Rome, he also visited the Salesian community in Lushnjë, where he celebrated Mass with the parishioners and took part in the celebrations for the feast of Don Bosco. In each of the communities he visited, he set aside special time for personal meetings with the *ad gentes ad vitam* missionaries carrying out their service within the Delegation's territory, listening to their experiences, challenges and hopes.

On 2 February, he returned to Rome and, the following day, set off for Sihanoukville (Cambodia), where he took part, until 14 February, in the quinquennial meeting of young missionaries belonging to Missionary Expeditions 150 to 155. Salesians from eight countries were taking part: Croatia, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, South Korea, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Thailand. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on how to strengthen discernment, initial and ongoing formation, and the accompaniment of Salesian missionaries *ad gentes*, with a view to responding ever more effectively to the challenges of the mission in diverse cultural contexts.

Second half of February and March: On 14 February, Fr Jorge returned to Rome and, two days later, set off for Greece, to the island of Syros, accompanied by the Provincial of Slovenia, to visit the new community. During the visit, he held meetings with the Salesian community, the Apostolic Administrator of Syros, and priests and religious on the island. He also visited various parishes and an abandoned convent belonging to the Sisters of the Holy Cross, which is currently up for sale and could, in the future, serve as a possible residence for the Salesian community.

On 20 February, he returned to Rome and, on the afternoon of the 22nd, after taking part in Pope Leo's visit to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome, he set off for Nairobi (Kenya), where he took part in the quinquennial meeting of young missionaries working in the two regions of Africa and Madagascar. The reflections during those days focused on pastoral discernment in mission territories, intercultural dialogue, managing culture shock and supporting the most vulnerable young people.

From 27 February to 2 March, he took part in the meeting of the Provincials from the two European regions in Valdocco, Turin. During the meeting, he presented the results of a survey carried out amongst missionaries, Provincials and members of the General Council concerning the discernment, selection, formation and accompaniment of new missionary vocations. At the same time, he presented a new proposal for the 'Germoglio' course, designed as a longer and more in-depth programme of missionary preparation; this initiative was very well received by the participating Provincials. On 2 March, he returned to Rome. On 3 March, he set off, together with the Economer General, for Madagascar, where they visited the Salesian communities and those of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Antananarivo. They then travelled to Toamasina, a city severely affected by the cyclone that struck the region in early February 2026, causing significant material damage, numerous casualties and leaving thousands of people homeless. From Madagascar, they travelled to Mauritius, where they visited the Salesian community and the vocational training centre in Port Louis, which belong to the Mary Immaculate Vice-Province of Madagascar. During the visit, they were received by the Bishop of Port Louis, Jean Michael Durhône, who expressed his appreciation for the educational and pastoral work of the Salesians and expressed the hope for a future expansion of the Salesian presence on the island. Before returning to Rome, Fr Jorge and Fr Gabriel Romero also met with Cardinal Maurice Piat, Bishop Emeritus of Port Louis, a great friend and supporter of the Salesian mission in Mauritius. They returned to Rome on 7 March.

From 9 March to 17 April, Fr Jorge took part in the various sessions of the General Council. From 6 to 11 April, he joined the other members of the General Council in the retreat led by Fr Pascual Chávez. On 18 April, he had the opportunity to give a talk at the Salesian community of St Tarcisius in Rome to the participants — Salesians and lay people working in Africa — of the course on *Trauma Healing*. On that occasion, he shared his experience as head of Don Bosco Fambul in Sierra Leone, serving vulnerable children and young people.

April and May 2026: From 20 to 26 April, Fr Jorge took part in the Quinquennium Meeting at Casa Versiglia in Genzano (Italy), attended by 31 young missionaries from the two regions of Europe. During these days, the main challenges faced during the early years of missionary life were explored in depth, and the exchange of experiences amongst the participants encouraged, strengthening the spirit of communion and the Salesian missionary identity. The topic of the Europe Project was also discussed. From 27 April to 1 May, he travelled to Madrid to take part in various meetings and gatherings relating to the animation and coordination of the Sector for the Missions. On 2 May he returned to Rome and, the following day, set off with members of the Sector for the Missions to Montevideo (Uruguay), where the Quinquennium Meeting of young missionaries from the South Cone and Interamerica Regions was being held. The gathering, which took place from 3 to 9 May, offered participants the opportunity to visit various Salesian presences in Montevideo and to learn about the numerous educational, pastoral and social initiatives carried out by the Uruguayan Province, particularly through its social programmes serving the most vulnerable young people. One of the most significant moments of the gathering was the exchange between the young missionaries and more than two hundred young people from missionary groups in Uruguay. This opportunity for exchange allows them to share vocational testimonies, missionary experiences and their enthusiasm for evangelisation, strengthening in many young people the desire to respond generously to the Lord's call. On 6 May, as part of the gathering, Fr Jorge took part via videoconference in the meeting of the new provincial economers, organised in Rome, where he presented some reflections on the relationship between finance and mission, emphasising the importance of responsible stewardship in the service of the charism and evangelisation.

Following the meeting, which took place from 9 to 23 May, Fr Jorge, accompanied by Fr Reginaldo Cordeiro – a member of the Missions Sector team and a native of São Gabriel da Cachoeira – visited the Missionary Province of Manaus, in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon. The visit began in Manaus, where he met

with the Provincial Council to share the main guidelines of the 29th General Chapter and to present the Rector Major and his Council's programme for the six-year term 2025–2031. Together with Fr Reginaldo, he then visited the Salesian communities and those of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Manaus before travelling to São Gabriel da Cachoeira, one of the main centres of the Salesian mission in the Amazon region. There, he held meetings with the Salesian community, the prenovitiate community, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Bishop of the diocese, Raimundo Vanthuy Neto. From São Gabriel da Cachoeira, he undertook a long journey along the Rio Negro and the Rio Vaupés to visit various indigenous communities served by the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the north-west of the State of Amazonas. For several days, he took part in the celebrations for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, visited numerous riverside villages and shares in the daily life of the indigenous communities, celebrating the Eucharist, leading gatherings with young people and families, and gaining a first-hand understanding of the reality of the various ethnic groups present in the region. He then continued his journey to the Maturacá mission, which provides pastoral care to the Yanomami people. There he met with the Salesian community, a young volunteer from Bolivia, and the chiefs and representatives of various indigenous communities. The visit included meetings at schools, community centres and with families, as well as liturgical celebrations and opportunities for dialogue with children, young people and adults, which provided a better understanding of the challenges of evangelisation and human development in one of the Congregation's most remote missionary territories. In order to fulfil his scheduled commitments, Fr Jorge returned from São Gabriel da Cachoeira to Manaus by speedboat, a journey of approximately twenty-three hours of continuous sailing, from where he departed immediately for Argentina.

On 23 May he arrived in Cordoba to take part in the National Congress of Missionary Groups organised by the Argentine Bishops' Conference. During the Congress, he gave a talk on vocation and

missionary spirituality, inviting participants to rediscover mission as an integral part of every Christian vocation. After the event, he also had the pleasure of sharing a friendly moment with several companions from his novitiate year, some of whom had since left the Congregation but remain deeply attached to Don Bosco's charism and mission. On 30 May, he returned to Rome to prepare for the visits scheduled for the month of June.

June 2026: On 1 June, Fr Jorge leaves Rome for Greece together with the Economer General. There he met with Fr Peter Conca and the Provincial Council of the Slovenian Province (SLO), with the aim of finalising the arrangements for the establishment of the new Salesian presence on the island of Syros. During the visit, a meeting was held with the Apostolic Administrator of Syros to sign the agreement between the SLO Province and the diocese, which governs the Salesians' presence and pastoral service on the island. In addition, various meetings took place between the Provincial Council, the missionaries and representatives of the Generalate, culminating in the signing of an agreement between the Slovenian Province and the Generalate to define the responsibilities and remit of each party in the new mission in Greece.

From 8 to 15 June, the General Councillor for the Missions carried out a Missionary Animation Visit to the Nepal Delegation, which belongs to the Calcutta, India Province (INC). The visit began in Kathmandu with a meeting at the Don Bosco Lubhu Salesian centre. The following day, he travelled to Nepalgunj to visit the Chinchu mission, situated in the west of the country, where he visited the primary school, the parish and the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He then continued his tour of various Salesian works across the country. In Biratnagar–Tankisinuwari, he visited a school with around 450 pupils and a vocational training centre run by the Sirsia community. In the same city, he also visited the Salesian school in Pokharia, which accommodates some 250 students. The itinerary continued with a visit to Don Bosco Dharan, where he met with the local Catholic community and the Vincentian Fathers, who are responsible for the pastoral care of the parish. Later, he

visited Don Bosco Bharoule-Chakkaragatti and the Don Bosco School, which serves more than 800 pupils. In the same town, he also visited the Morning Star School, with approximately 900 pupils. On 12 June, he arrived at the Salesian community in Lauki, where the Delegate for Nepal, Fr P. K. Jacob, resides. There, he learned about the initiatives in sustainable agriculture, rural development, IT training and initial evangelisation that the Salesians are carrying out amongst various ethnic groups in the region. The following day, he visited the Don Bosco Sirsia community, which runs a school with 350 pupils – forty of whom are boarders – and a parish serving more than 330 Catholic parishioners. In the afternoon, he celebrated Mass at the Marcel Nagar community centre and also visited the community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who are likewise engaged in initial evangelisation. On 14 June, he took part in the Assembly of all the Salesians in Nepal, chaired by the Provincial of INC. On that occasion, he shared his main impressions gathered during the visit and offered some guidance inspired by the 29th General Chapter and the programme set out by the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year term 2025–2031.

Before setting off for Australia, he visited the Don Bosco Thecho community in Kathmandu, where he toured the vocational training centre, the boarding school and the OPD office. From 16 to 19 June, he visited the Australian Province, accompanied by Fr William Matthews, Regional Superior for East Asia-Oceania. During those days, he toured the main Salesian presences in Melbourne: the Provincial House in Ascot Vale, Salesian College in Chadstone, the Salesian presence in Brunswick, the Don Bosco Retreat Centre in Lysterfield, the formation community in Clifton Hill and Salesian College in Sunbury. As well as meeting with the Provincial Council, he held a fraternal gathering with each of the Salesian communities he visited, listening to their projects, challenges and prospects for the future.

From 20 to 22 June, the Missionary Animation Visit continued in the Fiji Islands, where, together with Fr William Matthews, he visiteed the Salesian community in Suva. During his stay, he celebrated Mass with the parish community and held various meetings

with young people from the Oratory and the youth centre, encouraging them to live out their Christian vocation and missionary commitment with generosity. From 23 to 26 June, the visit continued in Samoa, taking in the Salesian communities of Alafua and Salelologa. There, he visited the Delegation centre, the vocational training school, the parishes and the youth centres, sharing moments of fellowship with the Salesians and the young people for whom the mission is intended. From 27 to 30 June, he visited the Vice-Province of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Due to the cancellation of a flight, he was unable to reach the missionary community of Araimiri, which had originally been included in the programme. Nevertheless, he was able to visit the various Salesian presences in Port Moresby: the Provincial headquarters in Boroko East, the retreat house, the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians and various chaplaincies. He also visited the Don Bosco Technical Institute, where he addressed the traditional 'Good Morning' to the entire educational community. He then travelled to the Salesian community in Bomana where the Salesian aspirants reside, and to the community in Gabutu, which runs the Don Bosco Technical School. Before returning to Rome, he paid a final visit to the new missionary presence in Vanuatu. In Port Vila, he met Fr Alfred Maravilla, former General Councillor for the Missions, and the three Salesians who have recently taken on the pastoral care of a quasi-parish in the country's capital. During the visit, he inspected the twenty-hectare plot of land donated by the Bishop to the Congregation for the development of a future educational and pastoral project, which includes the creation of a school, an oratory and a youth centre – signs of hope for the growth of the Salesian presence on this new missionary frontier.

On 4 July, he returned to Rome to take part, the following day, in the opening of the General Council's summer session.

The General Councillor for Social Communication

– January 2026

The Social Communication Sector began the year by strengthening its service to the Congregation through communication, formation and digital innovation.

During the month, the **Editorial and Audiovisual Production Department** coordinated communication support for the Salesian Family Days, handling the event's communications, graphics, video production, audio support and overall multimedia management. The department also finalised the multilingual editions of the Rector Major's Strenna, produced the Rector Major's video messages, contributed to the Meeting of Postulators of the Saints with a presentation on communication, and developed the new Generalate Management Portal.

On 14 January, **Fr Fidel Orendain**, General Councillor for Social Communication, presented the Social Communication Sector to the Salesian community at the Generalate, outlining its staff, responsibilities, strategic priorities for the six-year term and the services offered to the Provinces and communities.

From 15 to 18 January, the **other members** of the Sector also took an active part in the **Salesian Family Days** in Turin, fostering communion and collaboration amongst the various groups of the Salesian Family through professional communication support. Daily photo shoots, video recordings, daily highlight videos and daily photo compilations were produced. ANS published 10 articles on the Days of Spirituality.

ANS also published a series of 10 thematic articles on Don Bosco during the novena leading up to the feast day. A short video entitled ***'Viva Don Bosco'*** was also produced and distributed, featuring testimonies from Salesians, members of the Salesian Family and young people in five languages. A curated collection of 100 high-quality images of Don Bosco was also compiled, made available via Google Drive and shared on ANS.

On 25 January, **Fr Pedro André** arrived in Rome to begin his gradual integration into the Social Communications Sector, in preparation for his future role as director of ANS. Even in his first week, he immediately contributed to various audiovisual productions, including recordings for the Missions Sector's "Ratio" project, the preparation and broadcast of the Rector Major's Mass from the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, and support for the celebration of **Don Bosco nel Mondo Foundation**. He has also be-

gun discussions with **Prof. Fabio Pasqualetti** regarding his licentiate thesis in Social Communication Sciences, whilst familiarising himself with the Sector's ongoing projects.

Meanwhile, under the coordination of the **Social Media and IT Department**, the Salesian Online Bulletin has continued its global service through editorial work, proofreading, translation, publication, social media management, digital archiving and platform maintenance. Work has also begun on improving the Bulletin's digital infrastructure, redesigning future web platforms, exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence for multilingual communication, and participating in the committee tasked with studying the future of the print edition of the Salesian Bulletin.

– February 2026

In February, formation became one of the Sector's key priorities.

From 1 to 7 February, **Fr Orendain** held the **first seminar on leadership and communication in Nigeria**, aimed at rectors and members of provincial councils.

From 15 to 21 February, he held a similar seminar in **Myanmar**. The introduction to communication and crisis management was particularly well received and prompted numerous requests for further training. In Myanmar, he was accompanied by Fr Paul Sathish, Regional Supervisor for Asia, who assisted with coordination and led the local formation communities.

During the month, the **Editorial and Audiovisual Production Department**, under the supervision of **Fr Pierluigi Lanotte**, oversaw the production of promotional videos for VIS, the Rector Major's live interview with young people at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, the Rector Major's new video messages, the General Council's institutional letterhead, and the design of the cover of the **2026 Annuario (Yearbook)**.

As part of his gradual integration into the Sector, the **new director of ANS** helped produce audiovisual materials for Pope Leo XIV's visit, preparing multilingual video resources and content for display screens, documenting the papal visit, assisting with further productions of the Ratio for the Missions Sector, and contributing to editorial sup-

port by drafting correspondence for the Rector Major.

On 19 February, **the Regional Supervisor for the Americas, Fr Ricardo Campoli**, interviewed Cristóbal Fones, International Director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, discussing communication, music, cinema and future collaborative initiatives.

From 21 February to 4 March, **Fr Orendain**, together with **the Regional Supervisors, Fr Campoli and Fr Sathish**, represented the Sector at the BOSCOM meeting in South Asia. The meeting brought together delegates from twelve provinces in India and Sri Lanka to assess the current state of communications and plan responses to emerging challenges. Visits to the provinces of Guwahati, Shillong and Chennai provided valuable opportunities to observe exemplary communication initiatives and strengthen regional collaboration.

The **regional supervisor for Asia, Fr Sathish**, also provided technical and creative support by preparing presentation materials, graphic resources and visual content for the various sessions. At all the regional meetings, he facilitated the coordination, reporting and documentation of the regional meeting.

The **ANS Department**, through **Fr Harris Pakkam**, also continued its regular editorial activities, ensuring the daily publication of news, and has collaborated on all communication initiatives for Pope Leo XIV's visit on 22 February, as well as on the preparation of the global Salesian video documentary summarising the activities of 2025.

At the same time, the **Social Media and IT Department,** led by **Fr Andrei Munteanu**, continued to carry out strategic digital initiatives, including improving the Bulletin's online platform, implementing AI-assisted translation workflows that have significantly reduced translation costs, enhancing the donbosco.info search platform, and planning the future sdb.org website.

– March 2026

The month focused on support, networking, strategic planning and digital development.

From 27 February to 7 March, **Fr Orendain** represented the Sector at **the Meeting of**

Provincial Superiors of East Asia and Oceania held in Cebu, presenting the renewed vision, priorities and reorganisation of the Social Communications Sector.

During the sessions of the General Council, the Councillor continued his dialogue with provincials, Councillors and the various sectors, strengthening communication as an essential aspect of Salesian governance.

During March, April and May, **the Regional Supervisor for the Americas** and the Mediterranean held individual online meetings with the Delegates for Social Communication in the Americas. These discussions served to strengthen relationships, assess local circumstances, share best practice, present the reorganisation of the Sector and prepare for future continental initiatives.

Similarly, the **Regional Supervisor for Asia** took part in a series of online meetings with the various Salesian regions, helping to coordinate and review their annual Social Communication plans.

Meanwhile, the **Editorial and Audiovisual Production Department** coordinated the filming of the interview with Fr Pascual Chávez during the World Meeting of Salesian Cooperators, the publication of the Salesian Family Newsletter, and the design of the new audiovisual system for the Sacred Heart Theatre.

The new director of ANS has continued to support the Sector through audiovisual production for the Missions Sector's *'Ratio'* project and post-production work, whilst gradually familiarising himself with the Sector's communications services.

On 31 March, **ANS** published the global video documentary ***"Salesians 2025: Mission, Youth and Hope***, which brought together 267 news reports from around the world, produced in five languages and organised into three parts. The three-part documentary was presented in a dynamic and accessible format, offering a coherent overview of the Congregation's journey throughout 2025. Similarly, on 25 March, a short commemorative video in five languages was produced to mark the first anniversary of Fr Fabio Attard's election as Rector Major.

The Social Media and IT Department has stepped up its efforts in preparing for the future sdb.org website, organising thousands of digital documents in preparation for the migration, reviewing proposals from software developers and exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence to improve communication services throughout the Congregation.

– April 2026

International collaboration and multimedia production were the hallmarks of April.

From 9 to 21 April, the **Regional Supervisor for the Americas** represented the Sector in Colombia, taking part in the joint meeting of the Social Communication groups from Bogotá and Medellín. The Regional Supervisor also attended the Cartagena International Film Festival as part of his ongoing professional development.

The **Editorial and Audiovisual Production Department** completed one of its most significant projects of the semester: the multilingual **Novena to Mary Help of Christians,** producing nine videos in five languages alongside the accompanying booklet. The department also completed the interviews for *'Ratio Formation'* with the Rector Major and his Vicar, as well as the multilingual booklet on the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. The **new Director of ANS** supported the department during the two days of filming for the multilingual Novena.

ANS has continued the daily news output of the global Salesian press agency, whilst also working on the revamp and update of the ANS website. In addition, the documentary video ***'The General Chapters in Brief'*** was published in five languages to mark the first anniversary of the conclusion of the General Chapter and to illustrate the historical development of the General Chapters from the time of Don Bosco to the present day.

During the month, the Communications Sector continued its dialogue with the Vice-Provincials and Provincials, helping to clarify the renewed mission of the Social Communications Sector and strengthening collaboration between the Sector and the provincial leadership.

The **Regional Supervisor for Asia** has been actively involved in supporting the work of the Generalate, particularly through the

preparation of communication materials for the Youth Ministry and Missions Sectors. His contribution has included the design of graphic resources, visual communication materials and promotional content for various initiatives undertaken by the sectors.

Meanwhile, the **Social Media and IT Department** continued to carry out software maintenance, improve digital platforms and conduct research into artificial intelligence with a view to future courses on communication.

– May 2026

Formation, networking, multimedia production and digital innovation have continued to grow.

The **Editorial and Audiovisual Production Department** oversaw the completion of the multilingual Novena and coordinated the live coverage of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians. The new Director of ANS helped with the production of the video series *"Ratio"* and the live broadcast of the celebrations at Valdocco.

On **7 May,** the Communications Sector explained to Provincial Economers the importance of communication for responsible administration, transparency and sustainable development planning.

The Regional Supervisor for the Americas also held an online meeting with ENCOS (the Argentine National Team for Social Communication), coordinating ongoing projects and preparing for the World Councillor's visit to the Argentine provinces.

On **14 May,** the Social Communication Team welcomed members of the Rome Communication Network (NetCom Rome) to the General House, fostering dialogue, fraternity and professional collaboration amongst communication professionals working for the major religious institutions.

The ANS produced a series of 18 posters featuring quotes from Don Bosco on Mary Help of Christians in six languages and has also published articles on the subject.

From **26 to 30 May**, **Fr Orendain** and **Fr Sathish** took part in the Regional Meeting of Delegates for Social Communication for East Asia and Oceania, held in Manila, further strengthening regional collaboration and consolidating the Sector's shared vision. He was accompanied by the Regional Supervisor for Asia,

who also led formation programmes at the houses of formation in the Philippines. The Regional Supervisor provided technical support, prepared multimedia resources, documented the event and contributed to the communication and coordination of the regional meeting.

Under the coordination of the **Social Media and IT Department**, the implementation of AI-assisted translation systems has reduced translation costs by around fifty per cent, whilst maintaining the quality of communication, thus representing a significant milestone in the sector's digital transformation.

– June 2026

The semester concluded with intensive regional support and leadership training.

From **1 to 5 June**, **Fr Orendain**, together with **Fr Campoli,** took part in the Regional Meeting of Delegates for Social Communication from Central and Northern Europe and the Mediterranean, held in Krakow, Poland. The meeting strengthened collaboration amongst the delegates, provided food for thought on the evolving role of Provincial Delegates for Social Communication, and fostered greater regional cooperation despite linguistic and cultural differences. They also attended the beatification of nine Polish Salesian martyrs.

From **10 to 13 June**, **Fr Orendain** led a seminar on leadership and communication in the Papua New Guinea Vice-Province, followed by another seminar in the Mumbai Province from **24 to 27 June** together with Fr Paul Sathish. These seminars demonstrated once again the growing recognition that communication is an essential skill for leadership. The sessions on **crisis communication and crisis management** attracted considerable interest, and several provinces have requested more specialised training for their leadership teams.

Fr Sathish also contributed to the outreach programme for provincial leaders and supported the initiative by preparing presentation materials, visual aids, providing technical coordination and producing multimedia documentation, thereby helping to ensure the formation sessions ran smoothly.

On **16 June**, **Fr Campoli** took part in the online meeting of the

ECSA's Social Communication Group, ahead of the Continental Meeting of Delegates for Social Communication scheduled for October in Santo Domingo.

During the month, **the Publishing and Audiovisual Production Department** oversaw the production of the video for the Rector Major's celebration, further interviews for 'Ratio Formation' and graphic design projects for the General House.

The **Social Media and IT Department** has finalised the institutional content for the Salesian Online Bulletin for the future sdb.org website, whilst continuing preparations for the digital archive, expanding the area reserved for Salesians on donbosco.info, and continuing research into the applications of Artificial Intelligence for communication and knowledge management.

The **new director of ANS** also provided support to the audiovisual services during the Sacred Heart celebrations, the Thanksgiving Celebration for the Rector Major and the Mass of Thanksgiving for the recently beatified Polish Salesian martyrs, contributing through photography, assistance with live streaming and the dubbing of Missions Sector materials *from the Ratio*, whilst also continuing his studies towards a degree in Social Communication Sciences.

The ANS has continued its usual editorial coordination, and significant progress has been made in the final stages of updating and revamping the ANS website, paving the way for its new phase of service to the Congregation.

At the end of June, **the General Councillor, together with the Regional Supervisor for the Americas**, visited Argentina and Chile to accompany the Provincial Delegates of those provinces, observe local communication initiatives and strengthen collaboration between the provincial communication offices. The professionalism of these well-organised offices, many of which are led by highly competent lay staff, has provided encouraging signs of the growing maturity of the ministry of communication throughout the Congregation.

– Overall evaluation

During the first half of 2026, the Social Communication Sector significantly strengthened its

services worldwide through leadership formation, **support for Provincial Delegates, regional networking, multimedia production and digital innovation.**

Thanks to additional contributions from Fr Fidel Orendain, Fr Pierluigi Lanotte, Fr Ricardo Campoli, Fr Harris Pakkam, Fr Sathish Paul, Fr Pedro André and Fr Andrei Munteanu, the Sector has expanded its investment in Artificial Intelligence, modernised its digital communication platforms, enhanced its multilingual communication services, strengthened global editorial coordination through ANS, and continued to provide professional audiovisual support to the Rector Major, the General Council and the provinces.

The seminars on leadership and communication proved to be one of the most significant initiatives of the semester. Their strong emphasis on communication as an essential aspect of leadership, together with the introduction of the topics of crisis communication and crisis management, addressed an increasingly urgent need throughout the Congregation. The numerous requests from the Provinces for similar formation confirm both the importance of this initiative and the growing recognition that effective communication is indispensable for Salesian leadership and mission in today's world.

The Economer General

The first half of 2026 was marked by activities that combined international financial visits, governance meetings, and formation events.

From 29 to 31 January, the Economer General carried out a financial visit to Colle Don Bosco, reviewing the progress of ongoing projects and discussing the future development of this important Salesian center, especially in view of its role as a place of formation and spirituality.

From 27 February to 1 March, he participated in the 9th Meeting of the Provincials of Europe, held in Valdocco, Turin. The gathering offered an opportunity to reflect together on the principal challenges facing the Salesian mission in Europe and to strengthen collaboration among the Provinces.

Immediately afterward, from 2

to 5 March, he visited Madagascar to assess the condition of the Salesian works following the devastating typhoon that had struck the island. During the visit, together with the Missions Sector Councilor, he met with the local confreres, inspected damaged structures, and evaluated the most urgent needs in order to coordinate future assistance.

On 6–7 March, he continued his visitation with a financial visit to Mauritius, meeting the confreres and reviewing the financial management and sustainability of the local Salesian works.

From 9 March to 17 April, he participated in the meetings of the General Council in Rome. During this period, from 6 to 11 April, the members of the Council took part in their annual Retreat, a privileged time of prayer, discernment, and spiritual renewal.

On 25 March he was invited to Mestre to speak at a meeting of the Italian Provincial Economers and their consultants. He focused on the challenges of responsibly managing the temporal goods of the Congregation, highlighting the importance of transparency, accountability, sustainability, and recognising financial administration as a service to the Salesian mission.

Between 20 April and 2 May, he undertook a financial visit to Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. The visit focused on accompanying the local Salesian communities, reviewing administrative and financial matters, promoting responsible stewardship of resources, and strengthening communion with the Congregation.

From 4 to 8 May, he coordinated the Formation Course for Newly Appointed Provincial Economers in Rome. Through lectures, workshops, and discussions, the participants were introduced to the principles of Salesian financial administration, transparency, accountability, and the responsible management of the temporal goods entrusted to the Congregation.

From 1 to 4 June he conducted a financial visit to Greece alongside the Salesian Missions Sector Councilor and the provincial council members of the Slovenia province. One of the highlights of this trip was the opening of a new Salesian presence on the island of Syros, which represents a significant advancement in the development of the Salesian mission in the country.

On 6 June, he participated in Krakow, Poland, in the solemn beatification of the nine Polish Salesian martyrs who gave their lives in the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau during the Second World War. The celebration, presided over by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro at the Sanctuary of St. John Paul II, honored their heroic witness of faith and fidelity to Christ and to the Salesian vocation, offering an enduring example for the entire Congregation and the universal Church.

Regional Councillor for Central *and* West Africa

On 14 January, Fr Alphonse Owoudou, Regional Councillor for Central-West Africa, arrived in Turin for the Salesian Days of Spirituality (14–18 January). On 19 January he led an online formation session for the FMA (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) of Francophone West Africa (AFO), focused on the psychology of personality and the ministry of animation.

From 25 to 28 January he travelled to Lagos. The visit included a stop at the Onipetesi project for street children and youth — already designated by the African Provincials as the continental coordination hub for the Congregation's Social Works — along with meetings at the regional offices to explore possible animation and coordination structures. On 28 January, passing through Lomé, Fr Owoudou reached Pointe-Noire late in the evening.

The following days, until 3 February, were devoted entirely to an animation visit in the Province of Congo-Congo Africa (ACC). The highlight was the opening of a new prenovitiate at the Côte Matève work, a significant milestone in the Province's formation journey, celebrated amid the joy of the Feast of Don Bosco. The Councillor also visited the local community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Pointe-Noire.

From 10 to 12 February, Fr Owoudou travelled to Kansebula and Lubumbashi to chair two Curatorium sessions of the AFC Province (Theologate and Postnovitiate), together with Fr Silvio Roggia, General Councillor for Formation. On 25 February he left Lubumbashi for Addis Ababa, returning to Rome overnight between 25 and 26 February.

On 28 February, Fr Owoudou preached the quarterly retreat for the Salesian community of Don Bosco Testaccio, held at Casa Betania of the Pious Disciples on Via Portuense. The theme – "'I have longed so much...': living the grace of unity with Christ and for young people" (GC29, Core Topic 1, C 88) – gave the confreres a moment of spiritual reflection rooted in the heart of the General Chapter.

From 9 March to 17 April, he took part in the second Plenary Session of the General Council, held at the Sacred Heart house in Rome. On the margins of that intense session, the Councillor held several bilateral meetings with Fr Innocent Bizimana, Councillor for East Africa and Madagascar, to advance regional cooperation. Topics discussed included preparations for the 50th anniversary of the Africa Project (1980–2030), whose launch is planned for Tanzania in June 2028 in the presence of the Rector Major; coordination of the Visits of the Whole and the inter-regional Curatorium; and, together with the Vicar of the Rector Major, discernment on renewing the DBTECH Africa team.

On 8–9 May, Yaoundé hosted the Curatorium of the Theologate and the ATE Brothers Centre, a key moment for discerning and accompanying young people in formation within the Vice-Province. What makes the Yaoundé Curatorium distinctive is that it covers both the Saint Augustine Theologate and the specific formation centre for coadjutor brothers — currently the only one of its kind in Africa, and one of just three across the entire Congregation.

Still in the second week of May, Fr Owoudou moved on to Lomé, where on 13–14 May he chaired the Curatorium of the AOS Novitiate and Postnovitiate, alongside a formation meeting with formators and the AOS Provincial Formation Commission at the novitiate in Gbodjomé. This gathering opened a series of workshops for formators of RACO (the Central-West Africa Region) on the new *Ratio Formationis*. The second workshop took place in Sunyani, Ghana, from 15 to 21 May, first with the formation team and then with novices and trainees.

On 24 May, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the Councillor presided over the celebration at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Yaoundé, where construction work has recently re-

sumed with completion now expected by May 2027.

On 2 June, Fr Owoudou left Yaoundé for Lubumbashi, arriving overnight. From 3 to 14 June 2026, the Regional Councillor visited communities across the Congolese region — from the Theologicum in Lubumbashi to the novitiate, and on to the communities of the "Boot" area (Mokambo, Sakania, Kasumbalesa) — in an intensive animation mission on the *Ratio*, made up of meetings, exchanges and Eucharistic celebrations. On 14 June he left Lubumbashi to return to Yaoundé.

On 20 June, the Councillor concelebrated and took part in the ordination of 3 priests and 11 deacons at the Mary Help of Christians parish in Mimboman III, Yaoundé. That same city held one of the most significant appointments of the semester: on 24 June, Fr Owoudou presided over and led the installation ceremony of the new ATE Provincial, Fr André Young Ela Enam, the seventh superior of the circumscription — a moment of great importance for the ATE, and the occasion, willed by the Rector Major, for elevating the ATE Vice-Province (1998–2026) to full Province status.

From 25 to 29 June, Fr Owoudou accompanied the new ATE Provincial and his councillors to Equatorial Guinea. The trip served a double purpose: holding formation meetings with the new ATE council, and taking part in the installation of Salesian Bishop Miguel Ángel Nguema Bee as the new Bishop of Bata, after nine years as Bishop of Ebebiyin in the north of the country. Before being appointed bishop by Pope Francis on 1 April 2017, Miguel Ángel had spent two years as Superior of the ATE Vice-Province.

Finally, it should be noted that the Extraordinary Visitation to the Vice-Province of Haiti, originally planned in Fr Owoudou's schedule, could not take place due to the serious security situation in the country. In recent months, however, both the Rector Major and Fr Owoudou have made a concerted effort to meet online with confreres of various categories. In recent weeks, Fr Alphonse has led online workshops — first with confreres of perpetual profession, then with all young people in formation both inside and outside Haiti, and finally, on 30 June, with the formation teams and members of the HAI Provincial Formation Commission.

The Councillor for the East and Southern Africa *Region*

From 4 January to 6 March, an extraordinary visitation took place to the ZMB (Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Botswana) Mary Help of Christians Vice-Province. The visitation began in Malawi, in the community of Lilongwe, and then continued to Ankhotakota. The ZMB Vice-Province has many works in Zambia, two in Zimbabwe and one in Botswana (Francistown).

On 15 February, Fr Americo Chaquisse was installed as Provincial of MOZ (Mozambique) for the six-year term 2026–2032. Fr Americo Chaquisse was provincial econom er when he was appointed Provincial.

4 March 2026 – Curatorium at the Postovitiate in Makeni, ZMB. The Postnovitiate in Makeni also welcomes confreres from the AFM, TZA, AFC and AFE provinces. During the visit to this Postnovitiate community, the foundation stone for the University, situated next to the Postnovitiate, was laid. Work on the construction of the building is currently underway.

5 March 2026 – Curatorium at the Novitiate in Kabwe – ZMB – The Novitiate also welcomes novices from the TZA, AFM and AFC provinces.

7-8 March Curatorium at UTUME – Nairobi.

9 March to 17 April 2026 – General Council Session – Rome

4 May to 6 June – Portuguese language course in Lisbon, Portugal. On 12 and 13 May, I took part in the pilgrimage and procession to Fatima in honour of Our Lady of Fatima. Then, on 23 May, together with the whole Salesian Family in Portugal, we went on a pilgrimage to Fatima, where the 2026 Strenna was presented.

10–17 June – Ethiopia – Attendance at the episcopal ordination of Bishop Hailemariam Tesfay, Coadjutor Bishop of Gambella – Bishop Hailemariam served as Provincial of the AET for the six-year term 2019–2025.

17–23 June – Visit to the South Sudan Delegation – 8 communities in Juba, Wau, Kwajok and Tonj)

23–30 Visit to Madagascar – 27 June – Celebration of the 30th anniversary of Radio Don Bosco Madagascar –

28 June, visit to Don Bosco University, Diocese of Moramanga, 120 km from Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar.

The Councillor for the East Asia-Oceania *Region*

At the conclusion of the first plenary General Council of 2026, the General Councillor for East Asia-Oceania, Fr William Matthews, departed for Taipei to begin the Extraordinary Visitation to the China Province of Mary Help of Christians on **22 April 2026**.

The visitation commenced in the **Taipei community**, followed by a visit to the **Tainan community** in southern Taiwan. On **4 May**, Fr Matthews travelled to **Hong Kong**, where he spent five weeks visiting Salesian communities and their works in both **Hong Kong and Macau**. This visit was particularly significant, as it coincided with the **120th anniversary of the Salesian mission in the region**, originally led by Saint Bishop Louis Versiglia. The Extraordinary Visitation concluded successfully on **10 June 2026**.

While based in Hong Kong, Fr Matthews also travelled to **Hanoi, Vietnam**, on **9 June** to conduct consultations for the appointment of a new superior for the newly established **North Vietnam Vice-Province**.

Following this, on **11–12 June**, he visited Salesian communities and ministries in **Sydney, Australia**. On **16 June**, accompanied by the General Councillor for Missions, Fr Jorge Crisafulli, he visited five Salesian communities in **Melbourne**. A particularly meaningful moment took place at the **formation community in Clifton Hill**, near the city centre, where they shared a conference, celebration of Mass, and a fraternal meal with the confreres.

On **18 June**, both General Councillors participated in the **AUL Provincial Council meeting**, listening attentively to reports on the current realities and future plans of the Province.

On **20 June**, Fr Matthews and Fr Crisafulli travelled to **Suva, Fiji**, where they spent two days visiting confreres and observing their works in **Nakasi**, while staying at the formation community. They also visited the **Pacific Regional Seminary**, where Salesians are engaged in teaching and forma-

tion. During their time in Fiji, the Councillors engaged in dialogue with confreres, listening to their **dreams and aspirations for the Pacific Delegation.**

On **23 June**, they continued their journey to **Samoa**, visiting the two Salesian communities: **Alafua** on the island of Upolu and **Salelologa** on Savai'i. The Salesians have maintained a presence in Samoa for nearly fifty years, operating a **technical school in Alafua** and a **secondary/technical school in Salelologa.**

On **26 June**, Fr Crisafulli departed for **Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu**, while Fr Matthews travelled to **New Zealand**, where he visited the Salesian community in **Massey**, a suburb of Auckland. After spending nearly a week there, Fr Matthews concluded his journey and returned to Rome in preparation for the **summer plenary General Council meeting.**

The Councillor for the South Asia *Region*

Soon after the November-December session of the General Council, the Regional, Fr Biju Michael, travelled to Trichy, India on 1 January and installed the new Provincial on 3 January. On 4 January, he proceeded to Sri Lanka and opened the extraordinary visitation of the Province on 5 January with an assembly of the confreres. He also held a meeting with the Rectors and Leaders of the Vice Province. On 6 January in the morning, he held meetings with the Provincial Council. He then did the extraordinary visitation of the following communities: Novitiate at Arambegama (6-8 January), pre-novitiate at Kotadeniyawa (8-10 January), Palliyawatta (10-12 January), aspirantate at Dankotuwa (12-13 January), post-novitiate at Ahungalla (14-16 January), and Uswetakeiyawa (16-17 January). After a day at the Provincial House (18 January), he continued the visitation in the following communities: Murunkan (19-20 January), Pallavarayankattu (21-22 January), and Mankulam (23-25 January). On 25 January the Regional joined an online meeting with the Rector Major to discuss the visitation. On 26 January he held meetings with the MSMHC Sisters and the SDBs about collaboration in mission at Pallavarayankattu. He did the visitation of Kilinochchi (25-28 January), Nochchiyagama

(28-30 January), Negombo (30 January – 1 February), and Kandy (1-3 February).

On 3 February the Regional interrupted the extraordinary visitation in Sri Lanka and travelled to Kolkata, India, to join the visit of the Rector Major to the Province of Kolkata. He joined the Provincial and team in welcoming the Rector Major on his arrival on 5 February. The centenary celebrations of the Province with the Rector Major were held at Siliguri, Azimganj and Kolkata. On 9 February he accompanied the Rector Major to the New Delhi Province. On 11 February he travelled to Ranchi with the Rector Major and then on 13 February he accompanied the Rector Major to the Chennai Province. Celebrations were held at several places in Chennai and Tirupattur. On 17 February, the Regional travelled alone to Bangalore and held meetings at DBRC and DBSM and with the "Mission Poverty Eradication" team. On 18 February he travelled from Bangalore to Colombo, Sri Lanka. The Regional resumed the extraordinary visitation in the communities of Metiyagane (19-21 February), and the Provincial House at Dungalpitiya (23-25 February).

On 25 February, the Regional held meetings with the Martinus Foundation and SDBs of Sri Lanka on the importance of value education and life skills and possible collaboration. On 26 February the Regional addressed the AGM (Annual General Meeting) of BOSCOM online whose members were gathered at Shillong. On 28 February he officially concluded the extraordinary visitation with an assembly of confreres of the Vice Province and in the afternoon visited the FMA community in Colombo.

On 1 March he travelled to Guwahati in India and led the Assembly of the Salesian Provincials Conference of South Asia (SPCSA) on 2-3 March. He then chaired the SPCSA Council on 4-5 March. On 6 March he led the meeting of all the Major Superiors of the Salesian Family of South Asia. On 7 March he travelled to Mumbai for planning meetings. On 8 March he travelled to Rome to join the General Council session starting on 9 March.

After the General Council that ended on 17 April, the Regional took online classes for the theology students at Jerusalem on "Virtue", based on his book "*Virtues: Real-*

ization of the Best in You" published by LAS, Rome. (The planned travel to Jerusalem was impeded due to the war situation). At the end of the classes and exams conducted from Rome, the Regional returned to India. On 2 June he held meetings and a discussion on a developing idea about "Global Salesian Migration Network" with ideating confreres at Aluva and visited the sick confreres at the Mamma Margaret Home. Then he travelled to Kolkata on 3 June. On 4 June he held meetings regarding "Mission Poverty Eradication" – a flagship initiative of the Salesian South Asia Region.

On 5 June the Regional inaugurated the extraordinary visitation of the Province of Kolkata with an assembly of confreres and held Provincial Council and Rectors and Leaders' meetings. On 6 June he flew to Bagdogra and then travelled by road to Samthar to begin the visit to the communities for the visitation. He did the extraordinary visitation of Samthar (6-7 June), Kalimpong (7-9 June), Malbasey (9-11 June), Mirik (11-13 June), Siliguri Salesian College (13-15 June), Siliguri Don Bosco (15-17 June), Sonada Salesian College (17-21 June), Dhajea (21-22 June), Oodlabari (22-24 June), Gazole (24-25 June), Purnea (25-27 June), and Katihar (27-29 June). On 29 June evening he flew to Kolkata. On 30 June the Regional flew to Chennai to join a national seminar on "Friendship as Well-being in the AI Era: New Models of Youth Accompaniment" which was the culmination of nationwide research in India and the publication of the findings in book form, held on 1 July at the Chennai Provincial House. On 2 July he met with the Provincial Council of the Chennai Province. On 3 July he joined the Province Feast and Foundation Day along with the celebration of the diamond and golden Jubilees of thirteen senior confreres. On 4 July he flew from Chennai to Rome to join the General Council session beginning on 6 July.

The General Councillor for the America South Cone *Region*

On 2 February, the Councillor set off for Argentina to attend the ceremony marking the installation of the new Provincial of Argentina South, Fr Manuel Cayo, on 4 February in Junín de los Andes (Neuquén). On 8 February, he began his **Extraordinary Visitation** to the Nossa Senhora

Auxiliadora Province in São Paulo, Brazil (BSP), and on 25 February he took part in the CRESCO Curatorium in Tlaquepaque. This first part of the Extraordinary Visitation lasted until 7 March, when he returned to Rome to begin the ordinary session of the General Council, which ran until 17 April.

From 20 to 22 April, he visited the house for theology students in Belém (Brazil), then took part in the meetings of the Salesian Network of Brazil (23–24 April) and, on 25 April, presided over the installation ceremony for the new Provincial of Argentina North, Fr Julio Boffelli, in Cordoba, also taking part in the Curatorium of the Postnovitiate in the same city on 27 April.

On 29 April, he began the second part of the **Extraordinary Visitation** to the Nossa Senhora Auxiliadora Province of São Paulo, Brazil (BSP), on behalf of the Rector Major. During these two sessions of the Visitation, he spoke with all the Salesians of the Province (121); he visited the 18 canonical houses and the two lay-run works. He familiarised himself with the situation of the various schools (11), parishes (14), public churches (5) and shrines (3), social works (18) and youth centres, work with young people at risk, weekend oratories, the various vocational training centres, the University Centre (3), and the three houses of Initial Formation.

He met twice with the Provincial Council and twice with all the Salesian rectors and coordinators of the various pastoral sectors. He also spoke with the Provincial Superior of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. In the communities, he also met with groups from the Salesian Family and spoke with the provincial coordinators and presidents of many groups.

At the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation to BSP, he took part in a meeting with the Salesian rectors and the Provincial Council of Paraguay to carry out the mid-six-year evaluation of the previous Extraordinary Visitation, held from 25 to 27 June in Asunción. On 28 and 29 June, he also visited the Theology Formation Centre in Curitiba, Brazil, which serves all the Brazilian provinces.

On 30 June, he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Central and Northern Europe *Region*

From 28 April to 14 May, General Councillor Fr Roman Jachimowicz carried out an Extraordinary Visitation in the Maltese Vice-Province (MLT). During this time, he visited the communities and Salesian works, meeting confreres, rectors, those in charge of the various sectors and numerous lay people. It was a time for listening, dialogue and reflection on community life, youth ministry, vocations and the future of the Salesian presence. The Maltese community proved to be vibrant, dynamic and full of enthusiasm.

On 15 and 16 May, General Councillor Fr Roman was in Rome, at the Generalate, for working meetings and to prepare for his upcoming commitments. From 20 to 22 May, he took part in the Curatorium meetings at Crocetta and San Tarcisio. During the meetings, discussions centred on formation, community life, studies and the human and spiritual accompaniment of young confreres.

On 25 May, he attended the installation of the new Provincial in Slovakia (SLK). The following day, 26 May, he took part in a similar celebration in the Czech Republic (CEP). In both places, he met with the confreres and shared moments of prayer, fraternity and dialogue on the situation of the provinces, vocations and the mission amongst young people.

From 5 to 7 June, together with the Rector Major, he took part in the celebrations for the beatification of the Salesian martyrs in Krakow (PLS) and Oswi□cim. These were very intense days, spent with numerous confreres, members of the Salesian Family, young people and the faithful. The witness of the new Blessed reminded everyone of the value of fidelity, courage and total self-giving to God.

On 13 June, in L□d, General Councillor Fr Roman took part in the installation of the new Provincial of the Pi□a Province (PLN). The celebration took place in an atmosphere of family, gratitude and confidence in the future. It was also an opportunity to meet the confreres and discuss the life of the communities and the prospects for the Salesian mission.

From 15 to 25 June, he carried out an Extraordinary Visitation in Belgium and the Netherlands (BEN) on behalf of the Rector Major. He visited communities and educational, pastoral and social works. He met with the Provincial and his Council, the rectors, confreres, heads of the various sectors and many lay people. The visit provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of a context marked by major cultural and religious changes.

During the meetings, discussions centred not only on organisation and activities, but also on faith, spirituality and the profound questions facing people today. It became clear that social work alone is no longer enough. Many young people and adults are seeking meaning, genuine relationships, community and a spiritual response. This was an important sign of hope.

On 27 June, General Councillor Fr Roman held a working meeting with the Provincial of Warsaw (PLE). The discussion focused on the situation of the province, community life, the mission amongst young people and priorities for the future.

This period was very intense, but also rich in fraternity, dialogue and signs of hope for the Salesian presence in Europe.

General Councilor for the Interamerica Region

I began the year 2026 on 15 January with the first part of my Extraordinary Visitation to the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province in Southern Mexico. This first part concluded on 5 February. There was a 'break' until 21 April, when the second part of the visit began, concluding on 26 June. This was the province where I spent the most time during the first half of 2026.

From 11 to 17 February, I conducted the consultation process for the new Provincial of the SUO; over the course of two meetings, I was able to meet with most of the confreres, in Corpus Christi and Bellflower, California.

From 22 February to 4 March, I devoted time to supporting the various formation communities in the region, taking part in various curatorium meetings: the novitiate in Coacalco, the Theological College in Tlaquepaque, the CRESCO in Tlaquepaque,

the post-novitiate in Orange, New Jersey, and the Theological College in Chicago, Illinois.

The first ordinary session of the General Council was held in Rome from 9 March to 17 April. In addition to carrying out my usual duties, during this period, in my capacity as Regional Superior, I accompanied Fr Jorge Ghaza, the newly appointed Provincial for Venezuela, on a visit to the Generalate.

On 5 May, on the occasion of the Salesian Family's annual pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, organised by the MEM Province, I had the pleasure and privilege of presiding over the Eucharistic celebration in a place so significant for the country and for the province, and indeed for me personally. Also in May, I had the opportunity to visit the missionary presences in the Mixepolitana Prelature of Oaxaca and to greet its bishop, Bishop Salvador Murguia Villalobos SDB, in person.

I concluded my visit to MEM after presenting a report to the provincials and the rectors on 26 June and presiding, on 27 June, over the first profession of six novices: three from CAM, two from MEG and one from ANT.

I returned to Rome on 4 July 2026 to take part in the second ordinary session of the General Council.

The General Councillor for the Mediterranean *Region*

In January, after a few days' rest and a visit to his family at Christmas, he visited for the house in Podgorica (Montenegro) the first time, which is now part of the AKM Mother of Good Counsel Delegation (Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro), under the IME Province. Immediately afterwards, he attended the CISI meeting (10–11), and then travelled to Cape Verde, thus continuing the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Portugal which he had begun in September. On his return to Lisbon, on 18 January, he devoted himself to finalising the report on the Visitation, which he shared with the provincial, the Provincial Council and the heads of schools, thus concluding the Extraordinary Visitation on 21 January.

Before beginning the Extraordinary Visitation to the Blessed Michael Rua Province (IME) on 26 January, on 23 and 24 Jan-

uary he took part in the first Congress of FMA Schools in Spain, where he gave a talk entitled "Dreaming of the future, building the present: new challenges". On arriving in Naples, after meeting the Provincial and the Provincial Council, he began the Extraordinary Visitation of the houses in Torre Annunziata, Naples Don Bosco, Potenza, Foggia, Andria, Bari, Naples Don Rua, Salerno and Cerignola. He then travelled to Turin to take part in the Meeting of European Provincials (27 February – 1 March) and remained there until the 8th to present and begin, in various assemblies with his confreres, the rectors and the Provincial Council, the discernment process for the appointment of the new Provincial.

From 9 March to 17 April, he took part in the sessions of the General Council in Rome and in the Retreat at Nemi. Following the General Council sessions, he chaired the meetings of the *Curatorium* of the region's houses of formation in Italy (Novitiate, Postnovitiate and Crocetta); the meetings of the Iberian Conference, the Mediterranean Region and CISI; and the presentation of the new Provincial of the Santiago el Mayor-St James the Greater (SSM) Province in Madrid.

On 4 May, he resumed his Extraordinary Visitation of the IME at the houses in Brindisi, Lecce, Corigliano d'Otranto, Caserta and Naples Vomero. From 18 to 21 May, he travelled to Seville to preach a triduum of the novena to Mary Help of Christians at the FMA house in Seville-Nervión. Subsequently, from 22 May to 8 June, he visited Albania (Tirana, Shkodër and Lushnjë), Kosovo (Pristina and Gjilan) and Montenegro (Podgorica). On his return from Albania, he visited Cisternino, Santeramo in Colle, Taranto, Corigliano Rossano, Soverato, Bova Marina and Vibo Valentia.

Over the weekend of 19–20 June, he took part in the meeting of the Mission Office in Madrid and in the celebration of the perpetual profession of four Salesian confreres. Following a meeting with the Provincial, the Provincial Council and the Rectors, the Extraordinary Visitation concluded on 4 July. On 5 July, he returned to Rome to take part in the sessions of the General Council.

5.1 New Salesian Provincials

Below is some data (in alphabetical order) of Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council during the summer plenary session: May-July 2025.

1. VU KIM LONG Thomas, Superior of the Our Lady of La Vang Vice-Province of North Vietnam (VVN).

The Rector Major with the consent of the General Council on 09.07.2025 appointed Fr VU KIM LONG Thomas, as Superior of the Our Lady of La Vang Vice-Province of North Vietnam based in Van Phuc (VVN), for the 2026-2032 term of office.

Fr Thomas Vu Kim Long was born in Vietnam, in Hung Yen, on 27 March 1954. He entered the Don Bosco Minor Seminary in Thu Duc in 1965 at a young age and, after studying, he began the Salesian novitiate in Tram Hanh (31 August 1972) One year later, he made his First Religious Profession in Thu Duc (19 August 1973).

A student of philosophy in the postnovitiate at Da Lat between 1973 and 1975, he subsequently completed his theological studies at Duc Huy. On 6 August 1979 he made his perpetual profession in Duc Huy, and on 25 June 1993 he was ordained a deacon in Xuan Hiep. He was ordained a priest on 30 May 1994 in Vinh Long for the Vietnam Province.

During his Salesian ministry, obedience led him to hold numerous positions of governance: Rector at Duc Huy (1994-1999) and at Hoc Mon (1999-2001); Parish priest at Duc Huy (2002-2006). Subsequently he was appointed Rector of the Prenovitiate at Cau Bong (2006-2009) and the Don Rua postnovitiate at Da Lat from 2009 to 2015 and again as Vice-Rector until 2021

He was again Rector at Dong Thuan from 2015 to 2021.

Much appreciated in the Province, he would hold the positions of Provincial Councillor for Youth Ministry (1996-2002), Councillor for the Salesian Family (2002-2008), Vice-Provincial (2008-2015) and Provincial Councillor for the Missions (2015-2017; 2021-2024). At the time of his appointment as Superior, he held the position of Provincial Delegate for the Our Lady of La Vang Delegation.

North Vietnam was initially configured by the Salesian Congregation as a Delegation of the Province of Vietnam starting from 10 July 2019.

Fr Thomas Vu Kim Long becomes the first Superior of the new Vice-Province of North Vietnam (VVN), composed of eight works, and canonically erected, by Decree of the Rector Major, on 9 July 2026.

5.2 Deceased confreres (1st list January-June 2026)

"Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ's peace. They have spent their lives in the Congregation, and not a few have suffered even to the point of martyrdom for the love of the Lord... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission" (*C. 94*).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P **ZARANTONELLO Giovanni**	Rome	02/01/2026	88	ICC
P **STEPAN Josip**	Zagreb	02/01/2026	83	CRO
P **POLATO Gelindo**	Rome	03/01/2026	91	ICC
P **CHIAROT Mauro Maximiliano**	Campinas - SP	04/01/2026	94	BSP
P **ALCASID Rolo**	San Jose City, Nuova Ecija	08/01/2026	74	FIN
L **FECHER Erwin**	Kastl	09/01/2026	85	GER
P **GOYAL Raghunath Dandu (Anthony)**	Dakor	10/01/2026	59	INB
P **ORATHEL Matthew**	Yercaud, Tiruchy	14/01/2026	90	INT
P **GLOGAR Vojtěch**	Teplice	15/01/2026	69	CEP
P **GALLI Lino**	Castano Primo (MI)	16/01/2026	102	ILE
P **TURINA Arturo**	Turin (TO))	18/01/2026	86	ICP
P **ZANARDINI Giuseppe**	Fernando de la Mora	19/01/2026	83	PAR
P **SPOOREN Tinus**	Peer	23/01/2026	94	BEN
P **ALTAREJOS GARCÍA Antonio**	Seville	24/01/2026	98	SMX
P **RODRIGUES TORGA José**	Campos - RJ	24/01/2026	99	BBH
P **ESTEVES RAMALHO Enio**	Wichimi, Taisha, Morona Santiago	26/01/2026	46	ECU
L **CARVALHO FILHO José Pereira de**	Belo Horizonte - MG	26/01/2026	86	BBH
P **MICIANO Romeo Agustin**	Makati City	27/01/2026	64	FIN
P **FRÜHWIRTH Friedrich**	Amstetten	28/01/2026	87	AUS
L **MOTTINELLI Enzo**	Turin (TO))	01/02/2026	81	ICP
L **HWANG Philip Neri (Bok Man)**	Honiara	05/02/2026	68	KOR
E **GABRIELLI ZEN Pedro**	Macas	06/02/2026	94	VES
P **CHRISTOPHE Henri**	Roanne	07/02/2026	79	FRB
P **KIKATELE SHISALA Dominique Savio**	Lubumbashi	11/02/2026	49	AFC
P **LAFUENTE INDIA José**	El Campello (Alicante)	11/02/2026	84	SMX
P **GUTIÉRREZ BERNABÉ Antonio**	Seville	14/02/2026	94	SMX
P **MARITANO Mario**	Chieri (TO)	14/02/2026	82	ICP
P **NIETO SANTILLÁN Francisco**	Quito	17/02/2026	88	ECU
L **OBESO MENOYO José Ángel**	Avila	19/02/2026	85	SSM
P **TKACHUK Mariano Luis**	Córdoba	22/02/2026	88	ARN
P **LAMBRECHTS Guy**	Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Bruxelles	22/02/2026	88	FRB
L **MAFFEIS Lorenzo**	Rome	22/02/2026	81	ICC
L **LI (LEE) TUNG BIU Paul**	Hong Kong	23/02/2026	89	CIN
P **FERRARESE Cataldo**	Potenza (PZ)	25/02/2026	81	IME
P **NIETO LIMIA Sergio**	León	04/03/2026	86	SSM
P **SOFIA Tiziano**	Belluno	06/03/2026	89	INE
P **RAPACZ Kazimierz**	Wrocław	07/03/2026	82	PLO

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P **LEGIERSKI Franciszek**	Racibórz	08/03/2026	84	PLS
P **ACCORNERO Flavio**	Turin (TO)	09/03/2026	101	ICP
L **MONTAGNANI Pier Giorgio**	Rome	09/03/2026	86	ICC
P **LÓPEZ ORNELAS José Trinidad**	Mexico City	09/03/2026	71	MEM
L **THIRUMALACHALIL (TIRUMALACHALIL) Roy John**	Aluva, Kerala	19/03/2026	51	INC
P **ZENKLUSEN Edgardo Marcelo**	Córdoba	20/03/2026	90	ARN
P **RODRÍGUEZ GARCÍA Federico**	Santo Domingo	20/03/2026	83	ANT
P **KHONDE Joseph Batatuka**	Yaoundé	20/03/2026	60	ATE
P **RIVA Eugenio**	Brescia	22/03/2026	75	ILE
E **VARUVEL Jeromedhas**	Chennai	24/03/2026	74	VES
P **WITVROUWEN Jos**	Heverlee	25/03/2026	88	BEN
P **SÁNCHEZ MÉNDEZ Fulgencio**	Caracas	29/03/2026	93	VEN
P **ERVITI ECHEVERRIA Miguel Ángel**	El Campello, Alicante	30/03/2026	78	SMX
P **LILLIU Giovanni**	Sassari	07/04/2026	81	ICC
P **KIERBIEDŹ Tadeusz**	Konin	07/04/2026	76	PLN
P **ŠTRUCELJ Vinko**	Trstenik	08/04/2026	69	SLO
P **ADRIANI Stefano**	Sesto San Giovanni (MI)	10/04/2026	79	ILE
P **KALLARACKAL Job**	Dimapur	11/04/2026	77	IND
L **BACCHIN Luigi**	Turin (TO)	13/04/2026	89	ICP
P **CASTI Francesco**	Rome	14/04/2026	94	ICC
P **SAK Henryk**	Szczecin	16/04/2026	93	PLN
L **SIERADZ Stefan**	Bydgoszcz	16/04/2026	67	PLN
P **MARTELOZZO Fernando**	Santiago	17/04/2026	94	CIL
P **MAIPPAN Paul**	Dibrugarh	19/04/2026	61	IND
P **MUÑOZ MORÁN José Carmelo**	León	20/04/2026	85	MEG
P **COZATTI Dilermando Luiz**	Piracicaba - SP	22/04/2026	82	BSP
L **DOZINEL Paul**	Tournai	22/04/2026	83	FRB
L **BATTOCCHIO Tarcisio**	Cuenca	24/04/2026	92	ECU
P **CASTILLO SOLORZANO Róger**	San José	26/04/2026	88	CAM
P **DENIZIAK Józef**	Rumia	27/04/2026	93	PLN
L **HAU POU LOH Paul**	Kowloon, Hong Kong	03/05/2026	87	CIN
P **LACONI Giovanni**	Rome	05/05/2026	90	MOR (ICC)
L **TOJO Arturo Kazutoshi**	Nakatsu, Ōita	07/05/2026	92	GIA
L **NARDONE Franco**	Ventimiglia (IM)	09/05/2026	85	ICC
P **CIPRIANI Mario**	Salerno (SA)	10/05/2026	94	IME
P **KOKOT Miroslaw**	Częstochowa	11/05/2026	90	PLO
P **IBAÑEZ LOPEZ Alfredo**	Barcelona	15/05/2026	82	SMX
P **OCHAGAVÍA ESTOMBA Juan**	Barcelona	16/05/2026	99	SMX
P **LOURDES Peter**	Calcutta	28/05/2026	100	INC
P **SARASOLA DEL ALAMO Félix**	El Campello, Alicante	28/05/2026	84	SMX
L **GERMANETTO Antonio**	Turin (TO)	29/05/2026	92	ICP
P **KINDO Jyotish Kumar**	New Delhi	29/05/2026	52	INN
P **CHIRIYANKANDATH Mathew**	Azimganj	30/05/2026	82	INC
L **VALERI Luciano**	Turin (TO)	06/06/2026	90	ICP
P **DOWD Gerard**	Castlecomer, Co. Kilkenny	11/06/2026	71	IRL
P **MURRAY Aidan**	Camberley, Surrey	12/06/2026	96	GBR

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L **CAGNOLI Giuseppe**	Turin (TO)	13/06/2026	89	ICP
L **PASAIK Richard**	Haverstraw, New York	14/06/2026	88	SUE
P **LESPOIX Maurits**	Sint-Denis-Westrem	14/06/2026	83	BEN
P **CICALA Paolo**	Catania (CT)	15/06/2026	81	ISI
L **MACEDO DA ROCHA José**	Manique	21/06/2026	93	POR
P **AGUILAR MEDINA Miguel Agustín**	Mexico City	22/06/2026	65	MEM (MEG)
P **PLAZA ROMERO Carlos**	Leon	24/06/2026	89	SSM
P **ANDREOLI Francesco**	Schio (VI)	25/06/2026	36	INE
P **SANTIDRIÁN CASTRO Andrés Avelino**	Arévalo	26/06/2026	83	SSM
P **ROSSINI Giovanni**	Turin (TO)	30/06/2026	92	ICP