SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER XX

ROME - 10 JUNE 1971 - 5 JANUARY 1972

LETTER OF PRESENTATION OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Rome, 31. 1. 1972

Dear Sons,

On the day appointed by the Church to celebrate the 'dies natalis' of our Founder, rather less than a month since the conclusion of our Special General Chapter, I have the great pleasure of presenting you with its fruits. Not the only ones to be sure, but certainly the most positive and substantial. They are to be found in two volumes, one of which I here offer you contains the background of doctrinal and pastoral thinking and guidelines for action, the other embodies the new Constitutions and Regulations which obviously have normative value with universal application of a kind all their own.

As I hand you this volume of the 'Orientamenti,' *I want to make a few observations which I consider important, so that it may be rightly valued and its content put into practice, this also goes for all the work done by our Special General Chapter.*

In the Constitutions and Regulations you will also find my brief note of presentation, I hope it will serve as an introduction to them.

1. MEANING OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER

The XX General Chapter has without any doubt been the longest in our history, but we have to appreciate that the Church, and therefore the Congregation, had entrusted it with a task of extraordinary complexity needing delicate handling. Wherefore considering the vast mass of work to be faced and its unusual nature, the seven months it was to take, do not seen too long.

Indeed other congregations have given even more time than this to their General Chapters, some have had to divide it into two sessions.

In search of our own identity

The Chapter has sought to rediscover in depth our own identity, to give substance and firm foundation to this renewal so desired by the Church. It is demanded of us by society in evolution whose manifold aspects deeply influence youth today, among whom it is our mission to work. We set about this task, facing things as they really are, by following the guide-lines and directives of the Church of the Council and in answer to the insistent demands from the Congregation itself.

As I said at the concluding session, the Special General Chapter has been a very great event, both spiritual and ecclesial, and of enormous importance to our salesian family. We had witnessed responsible collaboration on the widest scale, it was accompanied by a thousands' strong chorus of prayer that the efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit be with us at every phase of the Chapter. Looking back, I feel I can truly say, in spite of deficiencies, of weakness and error, all part of human limitation, we were conscious of this through the long process of its development and the task to be done was certainly no simple one.

Fidelity to Don Bosco

The leit motiv *which has run through the work of the Chapter at every stage has been: "guardare a Don Bosco oggi" — look to Don Bosco as if he were here today. — How must we do things to be true to the spirit of Don Bosco in the circumstances, situations, in the difficulties of today and tomorrow; in the secular society of our own time with its radical transformation at a pace never before witnessed? The Chapter has tried to understand both what it is that providence wants of us today, and what was in the heart, character and supernatural charism of Don Bosco which made*

him respond as he did to the mission the same providence gave to his Society in his own time.

In times of particular difficulty and special tension, looking always to Don Bosco, we have had a clear understanding that the vitality of the Congregation and its successful apostolate in the years to come would depend in a very definitive way on the direction the Chapter now gave to its activity, and still more to the image the Congregation will have in the Church for the youth of today, to the world and of course before all in the first place God himself.

All these questions and similar anxieties have been with us all the time and oftentimes reached the point of producing acute personal suffering, intensified by the natural difference there was in the appreciation of the problems and of the solutions offered. Now all these anxious questionings find an answer — I repeat not a total or complete answer, certainly not a perfect one — the human condition makes this impossible — but to my way of thinking, a very clear and exhaustive one in these 'orientamenti' *I now present to you.*

By themselves they are not normative, but they are none the less of fundamental importance in that they contain the 'ideas' — things by which we live.

Within the covers of this volume you find the motivation of the new Constitutions and Regulations — the principles whence they spring and the concrete directives of which they are the corollary. As you see we are dealing with documents of the very greatest importance for every single salesian.

Temptations to be overcome

1. Preconceptions of distrust — disillusionment.

The famous physicist Einstein used to say it is easier to smash the atom than break down a preconception.

It is possible that there is such a preconception — I would not know how wide-spread — which for different reasons —

even for reasons opposed to one another — devalues a priori *all the work of the Special General Chapter.*

I am not now going to enumerate the pseudo-motives — or better — apparent reasons — put forward to justify these attitudes; I simply say that similar points of view however motivated could bring immense hurt to salesian communities. It would compromise the efficacy of the immense work done and nullify the sacrifices of every kind which the Congregation has had to bear. It would be an act of distrust showing little docility to the Church which willed the Special General Chapter to see the Congregation renewed, it would also be an act of proud presumption in the individual in face of the pronouncements of the supreme organ of the Congregation. There is this to add, he who acts in this manner is not recognizable as a son of that Don Bosco who was in his filial attitude ever ready to meet the dispositions of the Church and the Pope; neither does he love the Congregation which at this moment has great need of seeing all the powers of her sons united as a single force towards renewal.

2. Harmonizing the documents.

It has come about, and unfortunately with great hurt to the Church that often the Conciliar Documents have been quoted out of context in support of ideas and modes of action completely alien to the context and the 'mens' *of the Conciliar Documents themselves.*

I suggest that all avoid a similar attitude when dealing with our own Special General Chapter.

The Chapter, together with its document is one indivisible, harmonious, organic whole. Not all of it will have the same normative value. Of necessity the documents and the 'Orientamenti' *will have different styles and its own way of presenting the problems; the editing will vary from one to another and sometimes there may appear a lack of homogeneity this in no way lessens their validity, for there is always a global oneness between the individual documents.*

It cannot be admitted that the Special General Chapter was only prepared to accept those things which sustained its own personal theses, or its own attitudes to life and mode of thought. For motives of what I might call simple honesty and respect for truth, the General Chapter is to be accepted through all that, and in all that, it teaches objectively in its documents. And all this without parentheses, without straining the meaning, avoiding all underlining, or convenient silences and whatever interpretation that cannot be honestly derived from the context and from the 'mens' *of the Chapter which results from the whole body of the documents themselves.*

Our duty

I always like to think that our attitude, young or old as we are, lay religious or priests, true sons of Don Bosco and of the Congregation is just that asked of us by Paul VI in that so cordial audience given us on 20 December last. (1971)

"We know," he said, "that in the long and fatiguing discussions in your Chapter you have worked out the prescriptive guidelines for your up-dating (aggiornamento); we also know with what breadth of vision and competence you have wrestled with your many problems; all that remains to Us is to urge you to treasure the fruit of so much study and to give your willing co-operation to the carrying out into effect the prescriptions to which you are committed."

Now to practice: if the fatherly words of the Pope clear as they are, are to become for each one of us a fruitful reality, and actually bring us to that "willing co-operation to carry into effect the prescriptions to which you are committed" to which he invites us all, it is necessary to keep present before us considerations which are both premises and conditions for achieving this purpose.

This is true: just as it is not documents but men who make history, so will it always be the salesians themselves and not just one or two volumes of documents who will renew the Congregation; and it is also true that to become the men capable of bringing

about this renewal it is an indispensable condition that all the documents be really well known so that the content is assimilated and brought into the real here-and-now of each member, and the same for communities at their various levels.

a) To read and study *these Capitular documents is not only demanded by our docility to the Holy Spirit and an act of thanksgiving for his fruitful presence in the Chapter, but also it is a duty intimately linked with our religious profession. Today a salesian cannot be faithful to his vocation if in any way at all he should refuse to walk the path sign-posted by the Special General Chapter XX.*

He who would ignore these documents and still more to the point, the new Constitutions and Regulations would, let me say it clearly — fall far short of that creative fidelity to Don Bosco which the Church asks of us today.

Therefore — a word of command for everyone.

Find time to read these documents personally. Not just read them, but make the reading systematic, penetrating, and do it at a time when you are at peace and receptive. This will enable you to absorb the richness therein contained.

Let them be read in community, stopping here and there to comment, discuss and to challenge certain points in order to get down to its real meaning and to the obligations which derive from it. In a special way let them be read in their entirety and seriously studied in provincial councils and in the commissions preparatory to the provincial chapters. Such reading will serve to give a clear idea of the spirit which permeates all the documents, at the same time it will demonstrate clearly the motivation, the area and the limits of all the powers which have been given to different sectors of government in the province, in view of the principle of subsidiarity and decentralization.

Thus will be avoided errors in planning or in setting-up things for study, there will be fewer omissions and gaps in the study and solution of problems which the provinces and provincial conferences will have to face.

I have referred to provincial chapters: they will have a most

important part to play to bring into effect the work of the Special General Chapter in the provinces. It is for this purpose alone they will be called and organized, it is in this field alone that they must work and in no other.

Therefore it is not their business to propose and study new problems, but solely to study and find the best possible way to realize the General Chapter: this if well prepared for and conducted, will offer the most efficacious way to the renewal of the province.

b) To absorb to the full: *I have insisted on the right reading of the documents, but it is evident that this cannot be a end in itself. As I have hinted it has to serve in the first place to* 'absorb and assimilate' *all the richness they contain and then to arrive at a convinced intellectual acceptance of them, of their spirit so that they can be transformed and become part of our life style: the whole purpose of the enormous work of the Chapter is just this: to make salesians, all of us, those who realize and bring about by our convinced, enthusiastic work this great renewal, personal and together with our brothers in community.*

Dear Sons, let us have it well in mind; it will not be the impatient intemperance of the militants, nor the prophets of doom who long for the things now past and no longer of service, who will renew the Congregation, but the patient, generous work of all those, who with a humble and generous heart, open and available, have been able to catch the voice of Don Bosco in the capitular documents which plan the structure for renewal.

2. THE STRUCTURES LEADING TO POST CAPITULAR RENEWAL

Up to now I have spoken of the renewal in ample and somewhat generic terms.

But the post-capitular obligations demand well determined choice of means which will work, and very down to earth and well graduated step-by-step action which set boundaries on the breadth of the global themes of the Chapter, and instead correspond

to the need there is to concentrate, at least for the years immediately ahead, all the weight of the renewal on a few essential 'linee.'

Following a promise made to the members of the Chapter in the concluding phases of the work, that the dissipation of energies should be avoided, that the obligation should be homogeneous and for all the Congregation, strengthening in the Congregation unity in development, I desire to suggest to you five broard 'linee' *on which we should focus all our attention and to which we should direct all our energies in the years immediately ahead.*

I have indicated very briefly the sense of each of these "linee" *(ways). The capitular documents amply show their content. Here I wish only to put in evidence those things which should become the centres of convergence in the actual post-capitular endeavour.*

1. Vital awareness of the active presence of God

In art. 1 of the new Constitutions we proclaim our conviction that our Society "...came into being not only by human agency but by the providence of God..." and that the active presence of the Spirit is the firm basis of our hope and it urges us to fidelity. These words form a synthesis of what must be the first centre of our convergence in our post-capitular commitment to renewal.

It is to begin by our eager personal sense of awareness of the presence of God in our midst. What we say of the individual we say also of the community. Here is the irreplaceable basis of a true salesian vocation. It would be the gravest and irreparable kind of error to place the fundamental point of our renewal on anything else.

The Special General Chapter, while taking into account all the human resources of the Congregation and the sociological aspects of its apostolate, always emphasized clearly that the salesians are moved from on high through the various means God ordinarily uses to further his plans.

Especially through the new Constitutions the Special General Chapter guarded against the danger of looking solely to human instruments and it makes lively and stimulating reference, more

frequently than in the old constitutions, to the supernatural aspect of God's presence in the Congregation.

The Society is not just any kind of beneficent and social association, but a great community of consecrated persons, bonded together in charity to perform a mission which is totally supernatural.

Here the words of Paul VI are most opportune:

"If the desired up-dating does not lead apostolic dynamism back to a more intimate contact with God, but yields to secular mentality and follows effemeral ways and changing worldly attitudes, camouflaging itself with the world and its forms and without discernment, then indeed would there be need of thinking seriously of those severe words of the gospel: 'if salt lose its savour... it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under the foot of man.'

The spirit of your founder, who in life was so open to the needs of youth, but remained always united with God, seems to Us today to ask of you before anything else this particular commitment. We are certain that you as always, and with even greater readiness, will follow this impulse." (Discourse of Paul VI to the members of the Spec. Gen. Chap.).

All this implies in practice that we make energetic efforts to give again absolute priority to the life of faith (cf Const. 52). Such primacy is achieved in a constant twofold way, by that of renewed prayer and by a life of daily witness (Const. 2; 54).

2. Mission to youth and to the people

Art. 3 of the new Constitutions reminds us that the mission specifies the task we have in the Church and the place we have among other religious families, and this it is which determines the whole tone of our life (Const. 3).

In the long months of capitular work we were very preoccupied how to re-define, with the greatest possible precision, the mission God had confided to Don Bosco and his sons in the Church. It was seen as the focal point of our whole vocation. From it

go out initiatives and creativity for a true increase in fidelity to our calling. We have need to reflect seriously: the renewal of our mission to youth and to the working classes conditions the whole range of the true up-dating of the Congregation.

If therefore there are a few anachronisms, if here and there with humility we detect infidelities to correct, and if there are challenges of history which today we are called to face up to; if there is a need to increase and multifply, we have to concentrate our attention on our faith and our research into the specific mission salesians have in the Church. And it is here we find the parameter of our identity, secure and well-defined.

The Special General Chapter beyond giving us the reasons why, points out to us three great highroads to traverse to renew our mission to youth and to the people.

These highways we have to travel along with decision, overcoming difficulties, habits and prejudices:

— *the way of the poor* (*Const. 10; espec.* 87-88-89);
— *the way of catechesis* (*Const. 20; Regul. 1-2*);
— *the way of the Missions* (*Const. 20; 24*).

In order to reach out with love to youth in its poverty and to make ourselves credible to them, to achieve the same re-awakening of the missionary spirit and the urge to evangelize, to be sensitive to the demands of our fundamental mission of 'catechizing,' before all else we have to have the heart of a poor man, who lives and loves that true poverty which makes him free and therefore available to souls, all of them poor in so many different ways. Therefore the fight against the easy life of comfort, on personal and community levels, in all its manifest expressions must be conducted after the chapter without any false indulgence.

Whatever spiritual conquests we hope for tomorrow, however great and wonderful, they will depend on this very point. I can hear Don Bosco repeating it for us.

Therefore read attentively the articles of the Constitutions which cover these "linee" (*ways*) *then clarify them with the documents — orientamenti — and we shall see open up before*

us a vast panorama of work to be done here and now; this is precisely what return to Don Bosco means — back to the fields of Valdocco which gives us back belief in and enthusiasm for our vocation.

The sincerity and the efficacy of post capitular commitment, and each one can assess himself, verifying his progress against the master-plan, plotted by these 'ways' of the salesian mission.

3. Building community

The third centre indicated by the Special General Chapter for vigorous prosecution in the order of renewal is certainly the community dimension of our salesian life. It is affirmed as a 'fundamental requirement' and the 'secure way' (Const. 50) for the realization of our vocation.

The community of which the Special General Chapter speaks is a religious community, that is, one in which the members live united by the bond of charity, by a common consecration and mission.

The XIX General Chapter had already been concerned and preoccupied and had given new and wide consideration to community life.

In the construction of the religious community the Special General Chapter underlines the aspect of the "communion of brotherhood" to be sought after in the individual houses (Const. 58-59-60) and the special importance the provincial community has in the Congregation (Const. 64-106-187-180-196 — Regul. 1-4-7-44-47-52-62-64-90-95-172-177).

In this field we need to concentrate our efforts on two planes: that of "co-responsibility and participation" of the members in the activity of the Congregation (Const. 126) and that of "subsidiarity and decentralization" which both develops and increases the living unity of the Congregation in the ever varying plurality of situations (Const. 127).

All this brings with it a more intense and watchful awareness of the deep significance of the principles which inspired the Chapter in the light of Vatican Council II. It would be a serious mistake

therefore to base oneself on a phrase here and there out of context, in order to deduce arguments completely alien to the principles of Chapter XX. For example, in its assessment of the value of community it has never for a moment intended to annul the value and the function of authority.

The Special General Chapter XX emphasizes clearly the reality of the "communion" among confrères, by which they share in all the spiritual goods of the community and in all its apostolic responsibilities.

The salesian therefore is not one in isolation, who follows his own purpose by his personal initiative, he is instead, one who lives with others in charity, works with others in a common activity, makes his contribution to the spiritual life of the community and from it receives help and support; he shares the responsibility of the community in research, in making decisions and in producing effective work. While the salesian fulfils his own proper role in the life of the community, he respects that of others and in the first place that of authority.

This concept of community is in fact that of Don Bosco himself, he always thought of the salesian community as a family. To bring into being the family of Don Bosco, there is no place for the vindication of personal rights, the mortification of others and the exacerbation of the conflict between authority and obedience. The salesian family (that is the new community willed by the Special General Chapter XX) comes into being if we commence in principle by wishing to bring out all the spiritual powers of the confrères and bond them together by the chain of supernatural love for the Father and by our common mission.

In the salesian community — and it helps to recall it — the basic element is love: where there is love all other forms of participation take their place serenely.

4. Evaluating and re-launching the Salesian Family

Salesians, says document 1 (n. 151), cannot re-think their vocation in the Church without reference to those who with them carry out the will of the Founder, for this purpose they seek for

a deeper unity with all within the authentic diversity of each. There are various groups which live in the spirit of Don Bosco. Art. 5 of the new Constitutions tells us that such groups 'together with us' form the Salesian Family, and in this family we have special responsibilities (Const. 5). And here we face another great signpost on the march towards renewal in the years immediately ahead. It is also another indispensable point of convergence in the post-capitular task.

It is a matter of urgency to give back to our communities the sense of their being a nucleus powerful enough to animate and envigorate other spiritual and apostolic forces and these in their turn will enrich us with great spiritual and apostolic advantages.

This was one of the characteristics of the pastoral charity of Don Bosco. It is not my intention to linger on our commitment to and our relationship with the single groups of our family. I do however feel it my duty to call your attention to one precise responsibility. It is made the more pressing and serious today because it is one of the demands of the ecclesial renewal of Vatican Council II. This is the hour of the laity — the People of God. We cannot and must not continue to ignore it. We cannot let it languish and thus destroy it. This precise commitment, as I have said above, can turn to our great advantage.

While speaking of our lay-folk, I want especially to speak of our Salesian Co-operators. The twofold declaration of the Special General Chapter to the Co-operators and to the confrères can serve as a concrete plan to bring into effect Don Bosco's original project for the salesian co-operator.

In the project for the deliberations personally prepared by Don Bosco for the First General Chapter of the Congregation, we read these words: "It is an association of the greatest importance for us... it is the soul of our Congregation, this work of the salesian co-operators..." These are very demanding words. At this moment of our history when we feel the need to be flanked and strengthened by lay people formed by and filled with our own spirit, we must not allow the words of our Father to remain yet again empty

rhetoric. There is only one thing to be done. Roll up our sleeves and draw from the prophetic words of Don Bosco all the consequences, as profound as they are full of promise through renewal.

5. Preserving unity in decentralization

Our community is not only local or even provincial, both the one and the other are living cells in a much vaster organism which forms the world community — this is the whole Congregation (Const. 6-63-123-130-131-132-135-152-160-161). This is the community which must be built up with a very special commitment. The motive which demands all our concentration and attention is to be found in this phase of decentralization which we are about to enter on with the Special General Chapter. It is a phase very delicately poised.

Let us re-read the articles of both Constitutions and Regulations which assign new obligations to provincial chapters and to provincial conferences. As can be seen this decentralization, although limited by the Constitutions, nevertheless implies pluralistic forms and commitments which if they are not counter-balanced by the profoundest requirements of unity, could bring with them irreparable harm, nay even disintegration by a process of dissolution to the world community — the Congregation.

Such a thing, as it was repeated often enough in the Chapter, no one desires, but good desires are not enough in this field. We have to act with vigilant prudence to avoid steps which could compromise that very unity which is the "conditio sine qua non" for the life and the future of the Congregation.

While we set about building up communities at different levels, there is a great need that we be preoccupied directly and with positive action to preserve and strengthen the vital unity of the Congregation at world level against the eventual centrifugal tendencies not to be confused with true decentralization.

In the years ahead this is a most serious responsibility to be kept before the minds of provincials and those forming their councils — and not to these alone!

The common effort should concentrate on two complementary planes: the identity of spirit of our one and the same mission (Const. Chap. 6) and the permanent bond to be kept alive with the Rector Major and his Council (Const. 130-131-132-135-145).

If it is true, and the Constitutions affirm that they re-echo the teaching of our Father in fidelity to our constant tradition, that the Rector Major is the "centre of unity" and that he in communion with the Superior Council shall promote in the members constant and renewed fidelity to their salesian vocation (Const. 129), it is easy enough to understand how essential it is that in every single part of the Congregation there be this bond and that it be strengthened in positive ways. Here lies our power and our strength and from this springs the security of marching ahead together with Don Bosco.

3. CONCLUSION

Dear sons, I have sought to point out to you what to me seem to be the load-bearing structures of the Special General Chapter and this not so much to explain the content of the documents as to enable you to see the importance and therefore the urgency of the operative choices on which we must concentrate all our energies during the next six years. On close examination one can say that these five "linee" *(ways) come together and from them flow outwards that body of principles, norms and directives contained in the capitular documents. You have therefore in your hands material of exceptional richness and of the greatest interest to make of you all builders in the renewed Congregation.*

Forward therefore, the time of research, of discussion and confrontation is over. The Congregation through its Special General Chapter — its supreme organ — has brought to a conclusion with much hard labour the fecund phase and presents us now with the fruit of its immense common effort. From this day onwards in the Congregation it is time for work, to bring into effect, to carry out; let each one within the limits of his own task and responsibility feel both the duty and the joy of giving to such an

end his personal contribution. But let us remember once again that the renewal will not come about through programmes however elaborate nor be brought about by changes which are purely external and not easily assimilated, but rather through interior attitudes, these indeed vitalize and determine the expressions of life. The renewal will be true and authentic only when we have the security of having found again and reproduced Don Bosco in us.

I like to think that Don Rua whose beatification we are preparing for and to whose care we confide all the work of this post-capitual time would not speak differently himself.

May the Virgin Help of Christians always maternally present at every decisive turn in the history of the Congregation be with us as a star along this new stretch of our journey to keep us safe and to keep us strong.

very affectionately
Don LUIGI RICCERI
Rector Major

Key to the abbreviations

1) Bible

Old Testament

Deut.	=	Deuteronomy
Eccles.	=	Ecclesiastes
Ex.	=	Exodus
Ezek.	=	Ezekiel
Gen.	=	Genesis
Jer.	=	Jeremiah
Is.	=	Isaiah
Lev.	=	Leviticus
1 Mac.	=	Maccabees
2 Mac.	=	Maccabees
Num.	=	Numbers
Prov.	=	Proverbs
Ps.	=	Psalms
1 Kings	=	Kings
2 Kings	=	Kings
1 Chron.		
2 Chron.		
Sam.	=	Samuel
Seph.	=	Sophonias

New Testament

Rev.	=	Revelations
Acts	=	Acts
Col.	=	Colossians
Cor.	=	Corinthians
Heb.	=	Hebrews
Eph.	=	Ephesians
Phil.	=	Philippians
Gal.	=	Galatians
Jas.	=	Epistle of St. James

Jn. = Gospel of John
1 Jn. 2nd Jn. = Epistles of John
Lk. = Luke
Mk. = Mark
Mt. = Matthew
Pet 1 & 2 = Peter
Rom. = Romans
Thess. 1 & 2 = Thessalonians
Tim. = Timothy
Tit. = Titus

2) Acts of the teaching magisterium

AA = Apostolicam Actuositatem
AAS = Acta Apostolicae Sedis
AG = Ad Gentes
CC = Casti Connubii
CD = Christus Dominus
CEI = International Catechetical Congress, Rome 1971
CP = Communio et Progressio
DB = Denziger-Bannwart: Enchiridion
DH = Dignitatis Humanae
DI = Divini Illius Magistri
DV = Dei Verbum
ES = Ecclesiam Suam
ESa = Ecclesiae Sanctae
GE = Gravissimum Educationis
GS = Gaudium et Spes
ET = Evangelica Testificatio
HG = Humani Generis
HV = Humanae Vitae
IM = Inter Mirifica
LG = Lumen Gentium
MC = Mystici Corporis
MD = Mediator Dei
MF = Mysterium Fidei
MM = Mater et Magistra
NAE = Nostra Aetate
OA = Octogesima Adveniens
OT = Optatam Totius
PC = Perfectae Charitatis
PO = Presbyterorum Ordinis

PP = Populorum Progressio
RC = Renovationis Causam
RdC = Catechetical Renewal (Bishops' Conference of Italy)
RF = Ratio Fundamentalis
SC = Sacrosanctum Concilium
UR = Unitatis Redintegratio

3) Salesian sources

AGC = Acts of General Chapter
ASC = Acts of the Superior Council
CIS = Capitolo ispettoriale speciale
GC = General Chapter
SGC = Special General Chapter
GCD = General Catechetical Directory
Ep = Letter of Don Bosco
MB = Biographical Memoirs of Don Bosco
MO = Memories of the Oratory
PeP = Problems and Perspectives
ist = istanze = requests from SPC (special provincial chapters)

Part One

CAPITULAR DOCUMENTS

FIRST SECTION

Our apostolic mission

Document 1

SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO IN THE CHURCH

Identity and vocation of the Salesian Society today

"If the religious life is to be renewed it must alter what is accidental in its structures to suit the rapidly changing circumstances of human life at every level. But it is only possible to do this and to retain those stable forms of living [1] *recognized by the Church, by renewing the authentic vocation of your own Institute. Any living organism adapts to its environment by the development of the form and vitality proper to itself, not by rejecting its own identity. You should have such a deep feeling for the spiritual tendencies and needs of modern man that your own power and creativity bursts forth with renewed energy. In spite of its many difficulties, renewal is a task which should set the spirit alight."* [2]

[1] LG 43.
[2] ET 51.

INTRODUCTION

OUR RENEWAL: TO REVITALIZE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN TO DON BOSCO AND HIS SONS

A) THE CHURCH IS RENEWED UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 1. The Holy Spirit renews the Church

a) John XXIII has put on record that the idea and the decision to convoke a Council came to him suddenly on 25 January 1959 like a burst of spring: he felt that he was acting with courageous docility to the impulse of the Holy Spirit.[1]

The Holy Spirit who "guides the Church into a fullness of truth and gives her a unity of fellowship and service" [2] is in fact the inspiration of all its supernatural renewal: "Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created and thou shalt renew the face of the earth." [3] The Council, "which has been gathered together in the Holy Spirit" (LG 1) "has approved, decreed and established whatever is contained in the documents through the Holy Spirit.[4] It has stated with precision in the texts of the documents that the Holy Spirit moves the Church "to renew herself and to perpetually renew herself." [5]

[1] Cf. AAS 51 (1959) p 68; 52 (1960) p 183; 54 (1962) p 787 (discourse at the beginning of the Council).

[2] LG 4.

[3] Ps 104, 30.

[4] LG 1.

[5] LG 4; 8 c; cf. LG 8 a; 9 d; GS 21 c.

2 *b*) What is the essential element in this work of renewal? Pope Paul VI already pointed it out in his encyclical "Ecclesiam Suam" (6 August 1964): the Holy Spirit helps the Church on the one hand to know herself better and to renew herself interiorly, and on the other to turn her attention more decisively to the world, the better to proclaim and fulfil her mission of salvation. This twofold role of the Church has been stressed in all the work of the Council.[6] From now on the Church more clearly presents herself "as a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind," [7] and wishes to present the authentic message of the Gospel in a language understandable to men of today.[8]

3 2. **The Holy Spirit renews Religious Institutes**

a) The Religious Institutes, before being recognized as authentic by hierarchical authority, are within the Church the special fruit of the charismatic impulse of the Holy Spirit, whether in their Founders, or as Institutes, or in each one of the members.[9] And therefore it is natural that the renewal of the church should find a privileged place in Religious Institutes to bring this about. "This renewal of the Religious Life should go forward under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church.[10]

4 *b*) Along the lines that the Council has laid down for the renewal of the Church, it indicates with the utmost

[6] This comes out in particular in the four fundamental documents; the Church returns to its sources (LG) (DV; SC) and opens itself to the world (GS).

[7] LG 1.

[8] LG 44 b.

[9] Cf. AA.VV., *Lines of renewal,* LDC 1971, p 112; and Paul VI, ET 11, 32.

[10] PC 2 a.

clarity in what renewal of the religious life consists: "The appropriate renewal of religious life involves two simultaneous processes: (i) a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original inspiration behind a given community and (ii) an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times." [11] It is fundamental to understand well this definition.

According to the mind of the Fathers of the Council, these two elements are not to be considered as separate or following on one another, but constitute rather one vital movement which has as its focal points: "a return to the sources" and "the adaptation to the changed conditions of the times." It is a question of *"incarnating" more realistically in the present day world a more authentic religious life.* It is thus that the meaning of the four principles of renewal as indicated in PC 2 is clarified: in "the return to the sources" we must be faithful to the spirit of the *Gospel* and to the intention of the *Founder;* in the "adaptation to present conditions" we must be aware of the renewal of the *Church,* and the appeal to the *world.*

5 *c*) To these four principles is added a fifth which concerns directly the *individual religious* and should always have first place because it conditions and unifies the realization of the other four: it is *"the spiritual renewal."* It consists fundamentally in the *attitude of listening and of docility to the Holy Spirit.* "The charisms of religious life are to be understood as the fruits of the Holy Spirit ever at work in the Church. It is from this charism that each religious family will draw its spiritual force." [12] The living Spirit leads the religious to rediscover Christ and his *Gospel,* because he is the Master

[11] PC 2.
[12] ET 11-12.

of the interior life: it helps the religious to find once again the spirit of the *Founder,* because it is he who has called the Founder and enriched him with gifts; it makes the religious participate energetically in the life of the *Church* because he is its permanent Pentecost; and finally the ability to understand what are the needs of the *world,* because he is the hidden leaven of the world and works in a mysterious way in the hearts of all men.[13]

6 3. **The Holy Spirit inspires our renewal**

We begin with this act of faith: The Holy Spirit "who has raised up St. John Bosco as the father and teacher of youth and through him has caused to flourish in the Church new religious communities" [14] wishes even today to inspire the members of these families and to help them to realize better their mission in the Church. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit they must deepen their knowledge of their original spirit [15] and be aware once more of the evangelical values which Don Bosco pursued as the ideal of his vocation, so that they may revitalize them in the modern world with all the necessary adaptations.

The importance and complexity of this task need some words of explanation.

B) DON BOSCO, DOCILE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, FULFILLED HIS VOCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIS OWN TIMES

7 1. **Don Bosco, « a man of God »**

Don Bosco was without doubt a great man with a "charism" whom God raised up in this Church. The

[13] Cf. for these four aspects: John 14, 26 and 16, 13-15; ET 11; LG 4 and AG 4; GS 22 and 38.

[14] Collect for the feast of St. John Bosco.

[15] ES 16, 3.

intensity of the divine initiative in him is manifest not only in his personal sanctity, solemnly recognized by the Church, but also in his work as *Founder,* also recognized by the Church with the official approbation of the Constitutions of the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Association of Salesian Co-operators.

8 To recognize him as an instrument of God, the Church has certainly used first of all the fundamental criterion of christian wisdom: the evangelical authenticity of the virtues and works of our Father. But it is also quite legitimate for us to observe how he himself, through his own experience, realized with certainty that he was led by providence. And he wished that his sons should never lose sight of the intensity of this divine intervention. With this end in view he wrote in the Memoirs of the Oratory: "What purpose does all this serve?... To make known how God himself has guided everything at all times." [16]

9 2. The vocation of Don Bosco: his role in the Church

In the course of a life so complex as his, Don Bosco developed a certain number of activities linked up with current situations, like that for example of acting as intermediary between the Holy See and the Italian government after 1870. But what interests us here are the fundamental lines of his vocation as Founder, that is the

[16] MO, (1873). And on February 2 1876, he told his rectors: "The Congregation never undertook anything except what was indicated in some supernatural way; no change or expansion was ever made which was not preceded by an order from God" (MB 12, 69; quoted by Don Ceria in the Introduction to the MO, p 3). Cf. also the Mass at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, 16 May 1887, in which, with tears, he "understood" his whole life: MB 17, 340.

work which the Spirit of God inspired in him to "found" not only for present needs but also for the future of the Church.

10 a) *Called for a permanent mission*: a service of pastoral charity *for the young, above all the poor, and the working classes.* To John Bosco, a young Turin priest in 1841, the Holy Spirit gave a special sensitivity for being aware, through different experiences, of the misfortunes and the dangers which young people, uprooted from their own environment, ran the risk of in a city in the throes of social, political and religious upheaval. Thus he was called to dedicate his life to helping them to become honest citizens and good christians, and to creating to this end a series of corporal and spiritual works of charity suited to their needs.

His zeal was also directed towards *the adults of the working classes* especially those in country districts [17] beset by a wave of anti-clericalism, and without any culture, especially religious. Later his charity was aroused by the material and spiritual misery of the far-off pagan countries.

The Spirit gradually made him realize that this complex mission should expand in space and in time to the benefit of diverse peoples and many generations.

11 b) *Called to bring into being this mission according to a particular way of life and action.* The same Spirit gave him the apostolic zeal and the kindness of heart of St. Francis of Sales, so as to be able to personify in himself, by means of his admirable human qualities, a particular *way of life, of action, of prayer, of pastoral care,* which he would inculcate in his sons and his helpers. In

[17] The manuscript of the Constitutions 1959, ASC 022 (1), p 5-7.

particular he created a system of education wholly penetrated with the charity of Christ.

12 c) *Called to found the Salesian Congregation and other religious institutes.* Such a mission to be brought into being with such a spirit a a lasting service to the Church, demanded men capable of "working with Don Bosco" and *institutes capable of assuring its continuity with dynamic fidelity.* Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco understood very soon that such a heavy task could only be borne by men who consecrated themselves entirely to it; the same Spirit inspired in his first disciples the call to consecrate themselves totally to the religious life. The life of Don Bosco identified itself in part (especially from 1859-1874) with the patient *establishment of the Salesian Congregation.*

Later, realizing with certainty that it was "the will of God that he should have a care for girls also," [18] he founded the congregation of the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.*

Lastly, it was his firm conviction that the greatest possible number of christians should unite their forces for the good of souls especially of poor boys. He understood then that the salesian Society should act as the leaven of a vast movement of charity, in which men and women would be sharers in his mission and his spirit, each one according to his own state in life: thus was born the Association of *Co-operators,* the third institution bearing his charism.

Truly to Don Bosco "God has given a heart as vast as the sea shore... He hoped against hope and became the father of many nations." [19]

[18] MB X, 597.

[19] The Entrance and the Communion antiphons for the liturgy of 31 January.

13 3. **Permanent and temporary aspects in the realization of Don Bosco's work**

a) To emphasize, as we have done, the divine inspiration in Don Bosco's life, does not mean in any way that his work and his achievements must be deified and are untouchable. The action or the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not "things," perfect in themselves and transmissible. They exist "*in persons*:" on the one hand there is the Spirit who acts freely, and on the other human beings, always with their limitations and living in time, who receive this influx of the Spirit and respond to it within the limits of their liberty and their historical situation. A charism is always concretely "incarnated," and therefore its exterior manifestations are subject to human realities.

14 *b*) Don Bosco followed the inspiration of God always making his mode of action and his works coincide with the needs of time and place.[20] The divine inspiration did not prevent him from nourishing himself with the theology and the spirituality of his time.[21] Sharing with the Church the consciousness which the Church had of itself under the pontificate of Pius IX, sensitive to the type of society, pre-industrial and liberal in the political sense, of Italy between 1848 and 1880, his work concerned itself with boys in a well-defined social, economic and religious context, and took on the forms most opportune at the time. The religious institutes which he founded followed the canonical needs of the times... It was all perfectly natural.

[20] We can find this opinion confirmed in the reply of Don Bosco to the Rector of the Seminary of Montpellier regarding the Preventive System: "I always went ahead as God inspired me and circumstances demanded" (July 1886, MB 18, 127). Cf. also D.B. FASCIE, *Il metodo educativo di D. Bosco*, SEI, p 20-22.

[21] Cf. studies by Don Stella and Don Desramaut.

15 *c*) From all this an important truth results: in the life, thoughts and works established by *Don Bosco*, and a fortiori, in the works, traditions and structures of the *Congregation in the past*, we must make a distinction:

— between what corresponds to the *permanent intentions* of God regarding the Congregation, made known through the Founder, the vital and essential reality of his mission, his spirit and his foundations — all of this must not only not be changed, it must constantly be rediscovered, purified and improved;

— and that which is the expression of changing situations and the concrete historical forms in which was incarnated this vital and essential reality. Some of these *non-permanent forms*, still fully valid, should be preserved; others which are no longer valid and are inadequate should be substituted or renewed under the impulse of the dogmatic-ascetical, pastoral and canonical development of the Church and of the new sociological and cultural context of the world, and in particular of the young.

Thus the mission, the spirit, the religious life and the salesian foundations, always the same in their profound reality, can express themselves in new forms which will allow them to attain their scope for TODAY, at the service of the Church and the people of our time.[22]

[22] To amplify this very important idea recourse may be had to the following sources:

1. PC 2,3; the words of Pope Paul to the Salesian Chapter 1965 (Acts of the General Chapter XIX) concerning this distinction.

2. The explanation of "renewal" of religious institutes given by Fr. TILLARD O.P. in his commentary on PC: *Il rinnovamento della vita religiosa*, Vallecchi, pp 92-93.

3. Various authors: *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, nos. 22-27 entitled: "Lo Spirito aiuta gli Istituti religiosi a incarnare il loro carisma in forme concrete sempre aggiornate."

C) THE SALESIANS, OBEDIENT TO THE HOLY SPIRIT, MUST CARRY OUT THEIR VOCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TODAY

16 1. The difficulties of this task

This task of discernment and of renewal is difficult, delicate and urgent. *It is difficult subjectively* because its progress puts us psychologically to the test and cannot be done without plenty of courage and the spirit of sacrifice (it is always easier to stay as we are in our manner of thinking and acting). *Objectively it is delicate,* because we cannot see all at once, nor always with clarity, which are the permanent and which the temporary, so complex is our own Congregation. What is at stake is important: to suppress or change an essential aspect would mean suppressing the true Salesian Congregation to form another; not to change and not to renew when we ought to would prevent the Congregation from being the Salesian Congregation of "today." We must therefore be faithful to this progress which is vital. Finally this task is *urgent and serious,* because we are now in a period of extraordinary evolution: "profound and rapid changes are spreading throughout the world today;" [23] the Church is undergoing decisive changes and she commands us to renew ourselves in order to help her in her mission.

On what can we base our hope of being able to overcome the difficulties in arriving at this discernment and this renewal? In the first place, the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the communities of those whom he himself has called to follow Don Bosco.

[23] GS 4.

17 **2. He who has inspired Don Bosco is still present to help us**

The statement that there is a kind of "permanence" of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the Congregation is based on the fact that this same Holy Spirit has made clear, in the charism of the foundation of the Congregation, his will to give to the Church a specialized body of people to serve poor boys. Being logical with himself, faithful and generous, he has pledged himself in some way to give "sons" and "disciples" to our Founder: in the course of time therefore he continues to call other christians to continue his mission. The long experience of the Congregation (and especially the presence in it of many "men of God") suggests this, and the Church gives us the assurance of it.

Now it is this presence of the Spirit on which we base our hope of being *faithful* to Don Bosco and his mission. He who raised up and guided Don Bosco is actively present among us. On a deeper level it brings about our union with Don Bosco and therefore our "communion" as salesians. And as the Spirit led Don Bosco to bring into being his work in union with the Church and the world of his day, so also does he lead us to carry out our work in union with the world of today. He wants to help us to be at the same time "with Don Bosco and with the times" (Don Albera) or better still to be "Don Bosco today."

18 **3. This action of the Spirit demands of us continual attention and collaboration**

All this work of the Spirit is *an invitation to our liberty*. A gift of the Holy Spirit can never be something static, nor a collection of customs and rules, even though they are in themselves good; it can never be transmitted automatically through any rite, doctrine or custom, nor

even through belonging physically to the Congregation. Nor can we afford to rely imprudently or rashly on the past glories of the Congregation. The gift of the Holy Spirit becomes efficacious in people in the measure in which they are docile and generous in co-operation and in their daily lives. True, "we can resist the Holy Spirit,"[24] we can "quench the Spirit" [25] who then could entrust the salesian mission to others.

Our *first duty*, therefore, is our *spiritual conversion*: to recognize our own insufficiency and to turn towards the Holy Spirit without whom we can do *nothing* worth while for the kingdom of God, and put ourselves in an attitude of supplication, of listening and of docility. In order to work out this necessary discernment and renewal, historians are not sufficient, nor theologians nor politicians, nor organizers: we need *spiritual* men,[26] men of faith, sensitive to the things of God and ready to work with courageous obedience as our Founder did. *True fidelity to Don Bosco* consists not in copying him exteriorly but in imitating his fidelity to the Holy Spirit.

All this must be done *as a community* because the Spirit of truth is also the Spirit of charity and he manifests himself to the community gathered together in his name in the spirit of love. There is also a *second task* which is included in the first — the various members together, each one according to his own gifts and his own responsibility, must have recourse with humility and loyalty to the criteria of the authentic presence of the Holy Spirit: people, works, experiences are to be judged according to the spirit of the Gospel,[27] to the common

[24] Acts 7, 51.

[25] 1 Thess 5, 19.

[26] Cf. ET 38.

[27] "You will know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7, 15-20) — those "fruits of the Spirit" indicated by St. Paul in Galatians 5, 22-24.

sense of the People of God,[28] to the magisterium, to the profound values of salesian traditions, to the needs of the present day. The prudent but relative certitude arrived at is sufficient for us to go forward with peace and hope, but we must always be *attentive* to the mysterious action of God.

19 **4. Docility to the Holy Spirit is the permanent fundamental law of the Congregation**

This fundamental act of faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit gives us, in a word, the best criterion for our renewal. It is not a question of strengthening an ecclesiastical institution, however venerable it may be, but of revitalizing a gift of God to his Church. This act of faith provides us with the fundamental principle of *all the life* of the Congregation: it raises its eyes to the level of the mystery of divine action which makes use of poor men; the result is a *style of life and action* which at one and the same time produces the greatest sanctity of its members and the greatest fruitfulness of their apostolate.

Such a characteristic style could be expressed thus: the institutional elements, the structures, the organization, the written laws, the intervention of authority are not ends in themselves but necessary means to the service of our vocation and mission given by the Holy Spirit, and on the other hand they never exhaust the concrete needs suggested by the Holy Spirit. He is the great living force: in the measure in which we listen to him he inspires the constant re-adaptation of the means, prevents routine, inspires ends and concrete modes of action which are never completely indicated in advance in the official programmes.

[28] LG 12 a.

We shall point out some aspects of this life in reference to the Holy Spirit, but only briefly, as they will be treated in other documents.

20 a) *The kind of mutual relationships.* Before being an institution, the Congregation is at its various levels a "community" of christians who have received the gift of the same vocation. The action of the Holy Spirit inspires, from within, their style of brotherly life and the exercise of authority; it makes them enter together into the same apostolic way of life; it produces unity and dynamism in all the members of the salesian family.

21 b) *The kind of apostolic work. Dynamism* and *enthusiasm*: we feel ourselves brought together and co-responsible in a divine plan. The Spirit is the same breath of Pentecost which infuses courage, boldness, courage in suffering. *Realism and creativity*: the Spirit invites us to keep the methods of action for the salvation of souls flexible and adequate. *Our contribution to the Church*: he makes us aware of our vocation in the Church and he inspires us with the most concrete means of rendering her the service which she expects of us.

22 c) *The style of our own way of life.* On the *interior* level: the necessity of listening to the Holy Spirit, docility to his promptings, and consequently a continual conversion till sanctity is reached — that sanctity which is the realization of God's plan regarding each one consecrated to his service. On the level of our *obligations*: the salesian brings into action all his personal resources; but he knows also how to act as a member of the community, bearing in mind that the Spirit gives his charisms, not for the benefit of the individual, but for the community, with a view to the increase of charity.[29] Lastly, "the

[29] Cf. I Cor 12, 32.

joy of being the Lord's for ever is the incomparable fruit of the Holy Spirit. You have already had experience of it, and Christ will keep it alive in you, so that you can face whatever comes with confidence." [30]

[30] ET 55.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MISSION AND THOSE TO WHOM IT IS DIRECTED [1]

23 INTRODUCTION

Why the word 'mission' rather than 'end?'

The Church uses this term speaking of her mystery;[2] this means that, in the extension of the same mission as that of the Son and the Holy Spirit, she (and every true body she contains) does not of her own accord fix the end to be reached, but receives it from God the Father, and therefore as something of obligation which she seeks with more urgency and zeal.[3] Besides, this term implies also those to whom the Church is sent to attain its end: men to be saved.

To speak of the mission of the salesians represents therefore from the start a sense of their 'vocation' and of their presence in the Church; God 'calls' them and 'sends' them to perform a particular service in the Church: to co-operate directly in the salvation of the youth, especially the poor. Hence the importance of the study which attempts to establish clearly the role of the salesians today.

[1] The mind of the Congregation as it has been expressed on this fundamental theme can be found:

1. I CIS "This is what salesians say" vol. I, pp 68-133; 156-157.
2. Problems & Perspectives, II, p 23-44; 45-49.
3. II CIS, 2 vol., Istanze 22-48.

[2] Cf. LG 1.

[3] Cf. AA.VV., *Linee di rinnovamento*, Torino-LDC 1971, II nos. 18-26, pp 63, 64, 71-76.

A) SOME DOCTRINAL REMINDERS CONCERNING THE MISSION

Our mission is part of the mission of the people of God, which itself shares in the mission of the Son: "As the Father has sent me, so I also send you." [4]

24 1. The theological dimension of every mission in the Church

a) *The state of the mission.* ...In the mission there are two poles in a constant and vital linkage: *God* and the world. The emphasis is on 'God' because the mission depends totally on his initiative and has as its final end to lead the world to the fullness of the divine life. The unity of this linkage is guaranteed because God has so loved the world that he has sent his Son to save it.[5]

Christ sums up in himself this linkage: the Son of God, made truly man, cannot exist or act without bringing together at the same time two extremes.

The whole Church, the Body of Christ, united vitally with his Paschal Mystery, also necessarily shares in his mission as Servant of the Father, and Good Shepherd of men. In Vatican II, the Church has once again strongly realized that her mystical being is concretely identified with her dynamic mission.

25 b) *Aims of the mission.* ...The Church has expressed in the Council the specific aims of this mission in these terms: By her relationship with Christ, the Church is a kind of sacrament or sign and instrument of union with God, and of the unity of all mankind.[6] In the first place she is the *visible sign* and witness of the living Christ

[4] Cf. Jn 20, 21; cf. AG 1.
[5] Cf. Jn 3, 16.
[6] LG 1.

and of his redemptive love; therefore she must constantly renew herself "so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church." [7] Secondly, she is the *instrument* of the action of Christ, through which the reign of the Father is realized. The Church herself is the real and growing seed of this twofold communion of men with God, and among themselves; she fulfils the role of sign and instrument in two complementary and indivisible ways: *directly spreading* the faith and salvation, and bringing the whole world into relationship with Christ [8] "The mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and the grace of Christ but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the gospel." [9] The genuine mission therefore overcomes every dualism which would separate evangelization from human progress.

Finally, let us observe that this task on behalf of men gives glory to the Father: the supreme mission of the Church is her liturgical mission. The apostolate itself is considered by St. Paul as a liturgy,[10] which is expressed directly in the Eucharist.

26 c) *Spirituality of the mission.* ...This role of 'mediation' belonging to every apostle and all his tasks presupposes in him a 'consecration' on the part of God, and requires of him specific interior dispositions: a deep sense of the presence of him who calls and a willing availability in his instrument, and at the same time a profound willingness to serve those to whom he is sent.[11] Both of these are made possible and harmonized only by the power of the *charity* which the Holy Spirit pours out in

[7] LG 15.
[8] Cf. AA 2; AG 5.
[9] AA 5; cf. GS 40 c.
[10] Cf. Rom. 15, 15; Phil. 2, 17.
[11] AG 5.

our hearts.[12] Solely charity, but with the internal subordination of its manifestations, that is to say with the dependence of charity towards God. Thus the apostle, preserved from every danger of secularism, can live an authentic "mystique" of participation in the mission and in the very heart of Christ, the apostle of the Father.[13]

27 2. Ecclesial dimension of our mission

a) *Threefold ecclesial sense of our mission.*

1. Our mission is not different from that of the Church; it is only a participation, a specific aspect, a particular 'ministry:' it therefore receives all its authenticity and force from its insertion in the global mission of the Church. The conciliar teaching in this regard is clear: a religious institute is a charismatic gift with which the Holy Spirit enriches the Church so that she may carry out her work.

2. With regard to institutes committed to an active apostolate, the Council adds that their sacred ministry and their works of charity "have been *consigned to them by the Church* and must be discharged in her name." [14] It is true that the primary origin of the mission of our Society is the free initiative of the Holy Spirit, but this interior and invisible mission has to be officially recognized by the hierarchy, and visibly inserted into the concrete mission of the Church.[15] Thus while we preserve the originality of our charism, we work with a sense of obedience to and of the unity of the Church.

3. Finally, it is clear that *we work for the Church*: the youth and the adults to whom we are sent must be

[12] Cf. Rom. 5, 8.
[13] Cf. PO 10-12.
[14] PC 8.
[15] Hence the explanation of 'canonical' mission (cf. LG 45).

formed by us as members of the Church, conscious of their responsibility. Every attitude therefore which would concentrate around ourselves 'our' youngsters, past-pupils, co-operators, etc. is to be rejected.

28 b) *The duty of service to the local and universal Church.* The Council points out among the criteria of the renewal of religious Institutes a more determined involvement in all the current pastoral initiatives of the Church.[16] A characteristic of this activity is the prominence given to the local church as prime mover and organizer of the mission for a specific group of men. A more practical involvement in the joint pastoral action in a locality requires from us decentralization and pluralism. This is to be brought about in an ecclesiology of collegiality, in which the meaning of our *exemption* is renewed and deepened.[17] Exemption provides a special availability of service on behalf of the Church's commitments at various levels, (diocesan, national or regional, and universal); in addition it helps to maintain the unity of the Congregation, so much the more necessary as the variety of the situations becomes more diversified.[18]

29 c) *The Community the first subject of the mission.* Christ has confided his mission to the Church taken in its entirety and within her in a special manner to the Apostolic College guided by the primacy of Peter. In the Church the salesian mission, beginning from the Founder, is confided not to the individual but to the whole Congregation and to its provincial and local communities. It follows that each salesian receives a part of the salesian mission to accomplish in so far as he is

[16] PC 2 d mentions various facets.

[17] Cf. LG 45; CD 35; ES first part no 22 seq; cf. *Linee di rinnovamento*, Torino LDC 1971, II no. 34 p 81-82.

[18] CD 35, 2; ET 50.

a member, and therefore in intimate solidarity with his confrères and superiors;[19] thus, every service in the community, even if not directly connected with the apostolate, shares in this mission and is a service and a witness with this ecclesial dimension.

30 3. **Practical accomplishment of the mission: unity of the mission, pluralism in pastoral action**

A mission is not carried out outside the Church or the world, but is 'incarnated' and fulfilled in a real pastoral apostolate. In the 6th article of the document 'Ad Gentes' the Council states that: "This duty (of the whole Church) is one and the same everywhere and in every situation, even though the variety of situations keeps it from being exercised in the same way. Hence the differences to be found in this activity of the Church do not result from the inner nature of the mission itself, but are due rather to the *circumstances* in which this mission is exercised. These conditions depend sometimes on the Church (on the 'degree' of her presence), sometimes on the people or groups or individuals to whom the mission is directed." [20] Such an affirmation is most useful to help us resolve our problem of unity and pluralism: unity in our specific mission, but also diversity in the method of pastoral work and apostolic creativity.

Pastoral work is a practical realization of the mission under the guidance of the 'pastors.' This presupposes a sensitiveness to the signs of the times and a sense of adaptation to the time and local situation. There necessarily follows pluralism of pastoral work, or in other words of practical concrete choices by the church (universal and local) in the threefold service of the community — 'pro-

[19] Cf. PO 7-8.
[20] Cf. AA 2.

phetic,' 'liturgical,' 'direction.' [21] In this way one can explain the different pastoral apostolates depending on age, sex, socio-cultural context, the degree of faith, the joint pastoral action of the area.

The 'apostolate' in the sense as used in the decree 'Apostolicam Actuositatem' is more extensive than 'pastoral work.' It embraces every christian activity connected with the salvific mission of the Church, but which occurs at a level that goes far beyond co-ordination by pastors and the particular duty of the ecclesial community (e.g. the social activity of a christian).

At a time of renewal, fidelity to the mission requires that 'pastoral' inventive creativity and 'apostolic' initiative be brought to life in the hearts of the apostles so that they can be 'revitalized' under the impulse of the Spirit, with openness and with courageous daring.[22] Fidelity to our mission requires an authentic 'comprehension' of the concrete reality which surrounds the salesian community, an evangelical and salesian evaluation of that reality, and finally a personal responsible involvement in the apostolate.

B) THE NEW CONTEXT OF OUR MISSION TODAY

It is not our task here to present a sociological and doctrinal treatise on the world and the Church of today; we only wish to recall certain fundamental considerations which it is necessary to bear in mind in the 'renewal' of our mission. Certainly, these considerations are not equally applicable in all the different countries in which

[21] This evidently implies a clear understanding of the 'mission' to be carried out here and now.

[22] This applies especially to the salesian plans of campaign. We must determine 'constitutionally' the permanent content of the salesian mission, but also show how this is affected by coming into contact with the concrete situation of the Church, of the world, and of youth, in this present time.

we work, but they are matters of practical consequence which, at some time or other, are of interest to all.

31 1. The world today [23]

Let us recall three vital facts only amongst others.

a) The world on the way to secularization [24]

If one takes the trouble to distinguish between secularization (an historical process), secularity (objective qualification), and secularism (an erroneous doctrine) one can say that the conciliar Church herself has seen as conforming to the divine plan the process of secularization, that is, man's aspiration to take a hand in his own history and the whole of creation; she has recognized as legitimate that secularity, which the Council [25] explains as an autonomy in the temporal order, a genuine autonomy but one which is open to a recognition of the God of love, the Beginning and the End of all; she has on the other hand rejected that secularism which denies or fails to recognize such teaching.

This results in the Church being always more inclined to refrain from intervening in an outspoken and official way not only in cultural and scientific matters but also in the socio-political organization of life. On the other hand, many 'functions' in the cultural and social order, previously performed by the Church, are now provided for by civil authority.

What are the consequences for the Church today?

A determining factor for the accomplishing of her mission: *a new form of presence and of activity.* The Church

[23] Cf. GS 1-39; *Linee di rinnovamento* I p 15-37.
[24] Cf. *Linee di rinnovamento* I nos. 22-27 p 30-33.
[25] Cf. GS 36; 41 bc; AA 7.

turns towards the world in order to love it with the love of God and to move forward with it, sharing its earthly lot.[26] It does not wish either to take from the world the fulfilment of its own responsibilities, or to use temporal power, or to allign itself with the structures of external power. It presents itself prudently, in a more explicitly spiritual manner, "as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society;" and above all, "inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a single goal; to carry forward the works of Christ himself who entered this world... to serve, and not to be served." [27]

The Church believes that this humble presence of hers is *more necessary than ever before,* and desires it most sincerely, in order to offer to the world the twofold service contained in her mission: "to penetrate with the spirit of the gospel" [28] all the real problems of this secularized world, especially through the laity, and explicitly to bring "the message and grace of Christ." [29] In this way she faces the current danger of secularism and atheism and helps men to open themselves to a faith that has become more personal and more difficult, because it is no longer preserved and transmitted in a sociological context which is exclusively sacred. All this directly touches upon the salesian mission.

32 b) The world in a situation of injustice [30]

One of the most disturbing problems of our world, whether from the point of view of its quantitative and qualitative aspects, or on account of the serious social tensions it produces, is that of *under-development,* and of

[26] GS 40 b.
[27] GS 3; cf. 40.
[28] AA 5.
[29] AA 5.
[30] Cf. GS and PP.

the inequalities among men. Under-development is not only a stage in the general retrogression; it is fundamentally the result of economic, social and political power structures, and the oppression and exploitation of the poor are the result of decisions deliberately taken by groups of those who have wealth and power. Combining with the population explosion, and the development of science and technology, the disorganized growth and expansion of production means that modern society has become a machine for the production of poor people. Thus there comes into existence the 'scandal' of the growing antagonism between countries and classes of plenty, and countries and classes of destitution. "An enormous mass of people lack the absolute necessities of life... Many are deprived of almost all possibility of acting on their own initiative and responsibility." [31] "People hounded by hunger call upon those better off." [32] The poor are becoming aware of their condition [33] and the pressure for their improvement as human beings is coming from all sides.

What are the consequences for the Church today?

A more determined evangelical approach to the problem on behalf of the poor: a rejection of all "that would be a compromise with any form of social injustice whatsoever;" [34] the positive obligation to "awaken consciences to the drama of misery and to the requirements of social justice, of the gospel and of the Church" (ibid.); a practical and preferential love for poor people themselves, with positive help, and above all, with an education to

[31] GS 63 c.
[32] GS 9 b; cf. 66 a-b; 69 a; 71 f; f; 63-68.
[33] Cf. GS 9 b.
[34] ET 18.

a sense of their own dignity; finally, the witness of personal detachment from earthly goods.

All this ought to find a fervent echo in a *Congregation* which concerns itself primarily with poor youth and with adults of the working class, in view of providing them with 'spiritual and corporal' assistance, and whose members, consecrated to God by evangelical poverty, are invited to hear "the cry of the poor" [35] as an urgent call to action.

33 c) The world in search of unity in plurality

The other disturbing problem connected with the previous one is that of the "fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations." [36] "The whole human family has reached an hour of supreme crisis in its advance towards maturity. Moving gradually together, and everywhere more conscious already of its oneness" [37] and of "how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most greviously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces." [38] There is, indeed, a great desire to create a truly "international community" [39] in which every nation will be recognized with its particular values and material and cultural riches, in such a way that there will be established among all a real *co-operation* in a spirit of brotherhood. In such a setting, the continuation of war becomes another scandal in our world.

What are the consequences for the Church today?

A more lively awareness and realization of her own catholicity. The Church can and ought to promote this

[35] ET 17 seq.
[36] GS 77.
[37] GS 77.
[38] GS 4.
[39] GS 83-90; 75.

movement of the people towards their unity in the expression of a lawful diversity, because it is in harmony with her mystery and her mission. Vatican II has restored to *individual churches* their own positions: their diversity does not hinder the unity of the people of God; it rather contributes to it with *a communion of charity and of mutual service*, under the direction of the successor of Peter. In this way the universal consensus of the faith is arrived at, the universal mission is accomplished, and the brotherhood of the whole human race is built up.[40] The spirit of catholicism animates both the local churches and the universal Church in dialogue with our separated brethren and with the non-christian religions.[41]

All this concerns an exempt and international *Congregation*, and obliges it to find harmony between lawful pluralism and unity.

34 **2. Youth today in this world and in this Church** [42]

Youth 'in the abstract' does not exist. They exist only in their environment of origin and depend on it. It is a simple statement which helps us to understand two things:

— from the time of Don Bosco to the present day the world has undergone 'profound and rapid changes;' there has been a real social and cultural transformation.[43] Youth has changed in this same measure. And our ex-

[40] Cf. LG 13 b-c; 23 d; 28 b-c-d; AG 19-20, 22, 35; *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 11 nos 31-55 p 79-83.

[41] LG 15-17; NAE 1-2; ES.

[42] The object of this section is *not* to indicate either the manner or the means of our pastoral action on behalf of youth (which belongs to the documents dealing with salesian mode of action) but the idea, new to some extent, of our mission as such, and its renewed aptness and urgency.

[43] GS 4.

perience today makes us discover youth in continual evolution.

— It is almost impossible to speak of 'youth:' they are *thousands of young people in the concrete,* in whose outlook is reflected the condition of the country to which they belong. But it is perhaps possible to outline *some common traits,* to the extent that humanity itself begins to be unified. The means of social communication allow for universal and immediate information; there is an increasing and progressive participation of all in common priorites.

35 a) "The gravity which the problem of youth has taken on in the world of today" [44]

The most outstanding factor is the importance that youth has assumed in modern society.

1. *Demographically* the number of children, adolescents and young people has increased in an extraordinary way because of the decline in infant mortality. It is estimated that the number of young people from 15 to 24 years of age which in 1960 was 520,000,000 will have increased to 1,120,000,000 by the year 2000. Alongside the importance of the number of young people, we must emphasize their qualitative significance. Youth constitutes the constant renewal of the life of humanity and therefore also in the cultural and spiritual sense.

The increase and importance of young people is especially striking in the countries of the third world. The hope of being able to study and to work more easily has caused a massive migration to the big cities with the consequences of unadaptability and living on the fringe of society.

The problem of *youth in the cities* already stressed

[44] CARDINAL VILLOT, *Letter to Don Ricceri,* 26 April 1971.

by Don Bosco, has new dimensions today: "The more populated the cities are, the more there is work for us," wrote Don Bosco to the bishop of Frejus.[45]

36 2. *Socially*, youth has become conscious of itself as a new and coherent group. They have their own set of values, their own sense of autonomy, language, ideals and customs. They break away more rapidly from their own families; they live in spontaneous groups, boys and girls alike; by nature they are not racists. Although they have, according to the people they belong to, their own psychological-social outlook, little by little they form themselves into a kind of International Youth, with interests, ideals, and objectives in common and also with regressive tendencies (protests against the social system itself, pop musical festivals, international work squads, the council of young people at Taizé, etc.).

So it is a present-day problem for educators, *to approach the young and get to know them.* Perhaps the time has come to find a new way of living together: how can we make ourselves acceptable to *"their world*?"

37 3. *Politically* youth is even more the object of care on the part of the various governments. Schools of various types, apprenticeships for professional training, sport and recreation *have become everywhere important sections of national organization* (some countries have a 'ministry for youth' and not only regarding education). The heritage of force and hope built up by these young people brings about in many countries their indoctrination, political and 'Party' training.

Young people are themselves conscious of this fact. In some countries they can vote at 18. However, in developed countries they have become a purchasing power and there is an economic sector which exploits them.

[45] Letter 1620.

So a serious *problem* arises of *collective responsibility* on the part of adults regarding the formation of the young and the direction it should take: are they just utilized, put into prefabricated patterns or moulds or are they educated in an unselfish and liberating way?

38 4. *As far as the Church is concerned* they have long been a subject of her interest and care. The history of pedagogy can name many great christians in its cause, including saints, and among them Don Bosco.

Recent years have seen the formation of *apostolic movements for youth* encouraged strongly by the Council: "Youth must become themselves the immediate apostles of youth exercising the apostolate among themselves, taking into account the special environment in which they live." [46] The Council concerned itself directly with the problem of Christian Education and Schools.[47] On 8 December 1965, its eighth and last message was directed to youth: "It is for you, especially you young people that the Church by means of its Council has lit a lamp which will light up the future — your future." In the same message, the Church finds in youth a sign of itself, a sign of the 'newness' contained in the gospel, which announces the new meaning of all things, renews and rejuvenates humanity.

However, in countries with a christian tradition the root of the *problem is faith itself*. Youth is the privileged place for the difficult encounter between the Church and the world, the most sensitive point of the process of secularization. The decisive problem then arises of forming youth who come from a world and who will have to live in a world in which the faith is no longer something almost natural but becomes the object of personal choice.

[46] AA 12.
[47] GE.

How can we help them in this choice? Don Bosco interested himself concretely in boys and knew how to adapt himself to them as he found them.

We also, moved by the same love and the same will to serve, ought to get to know the heart of the young people with whom we come in contact. If we have the true salesian outlook we shall know how to discover all the rich possibilities in youth, and working on this foundation as did Don Bosco we can make a success of our work as educators.

39 b) The critical situation of youth in a well-to-do society

The *crisis* of youth in this society is well marked in the developed countries: it has become a new and decisive force. This crisis arises, at least in part, from the fact that young people feel themselves deprived of sufficient support from their families; they have no firm moral code, either from lack of religion or from the absence of family traditions. It comes originally from the type of society into which they are born and which breeds in them great desires which cannot be satisfied. The young become critical of adults and widen the generation gap, which makes dialogue very difficult. Adults react often with distrust, lack of understanding and are authoritarian; or on the contrary, they react with fear, weakness, and give up. In this context education is a very difficult task.

40 1. *The vital stimulus which they feel.* Material and cultural growth has created in the young people of today an extraordinary and equivocal *will-to-live* and to experience, with the various possibilities offered to their energies. They want to live *personally*, away from the traditional ways of acting, of the official norms presented to them; they want to feel responsible in a new sort of experience which is all theirs. They want to live *completely*

free from all laws which they consider just banal restrictions.

They want to try out all the experiences available to them and to find out new ones (the extraordinary excitement of drugs). They want to test the *effectiveness* of their own actions, eager to build a better world.

And here arises a grave *problem*: an educator, whose attitude faced with life and its problems is one of fear, who is lacking in enthusiasm, will never be accepted by modern youth. Youth is perhaps anxious to listen to *him* who said; "I came so that they may have life and have it more abundantly." [48]

41 2. *The subversive forces by which they are affected.* ...Modern society offers them a complex of pressures so varied and contrasting that it increases the ambiguity of their vital stimulus, and tragically prevents them from finding true liberty or their real identity. They are immersed in a *technological atmosphere* which excludes them from the 'human' and spiritual dimension of things and problems and so they are people of 'one' dimension; they are in a *'relative' atmosphere* which breaks down for them the traditional systems of truth and values and makes them doubt everything; they live in a *hedonistic atmosphere* which makes them the slaves of money, comfort, unbridled sensuality and easily come-by amusements; they live in an atmosphere of subversive propaganda in which the multiplicity of means of social communications, public opinion, slogans, fashion, the gods and goddesses of the day, make them completely passive and prevent them from being true to themselves; in a word their atmosphere tends towards secularism and atheism which makes faith and the practice of it difficult. The *problem* which the educator is up against is the necessity of finding and making them

[48] Jn. 10, 10.

accept the presence in their lives of forces which will free them from their predicament.

42 3. *The uneasiness which they feel even to the point of rebellion.* All this prevents these young people from entering into society with the assurance which they need and the initiative which they wish to have. Often they find themselves confronted by adults who treat them as so many objects, rather than recognize them in their own personality; who adopt an attitude of the preacher, rather than giving them the example of an upright life; who frustrate them rather than give them confidence and a sense of co-responsibility.

The most serious *result* is that many of these young people find themselves without any support; they do not find it in adults nor in themselves, detached as they are from sound principles and values both in thought and action. Isolated, lost, weak, uneasy about the future, full of contradictions, they band themselves together against adults, they are bitterly critical of them, they take refuge in escapism, indulge in strange behaviour and are often violent in their confrontations; they manifest at one and the same time their refusal to conform to the society which is imposed upon them, and their own lack of security. Rarely have we seen among us so many young people so spiritually poor and in danger, who are indeed so desperately in need of help.

The educator has to face up to *two grave problems*: he has to be near young people and behave towards them in such a way as to inspire confidence in him, so that they may lean on him for support; and he must understand the basis of the rebellion of the young and argue with them gently but firmly against all that is neither human nor christian in present day society.

43 4. *The resources and the means they must use for their liberation.* The educator must help these young people

to develop in themselves some resources before they are bled dry by evil: such as the taste for nobility of character and integrity, a sense of solidarity and brotherliness; a sensitivity to the social values of justice, of universal harmony, and of helping the most needy. "When the consciousness of their own personality matures and they are spurred on by their zest for life and their own exuberance, they can take their proper place in social and cultural life." [49] By doing this they have the awareness of being responsible for, and shapers of, *their own destiny*, since they act upon society and the Church, of which they are members, for the benefit of the future.

The greatest liberating force for them is undoubtedly the confidence of adults, specially parents and educators, and to have the good fortune of finding in them witnesses and guides who teach them true values, and especially the faith, more by their example than by their words; sound and confident educators, who are proud to have the truth themselves but never cease to deepen it in their lives. Many youths today are like the idle man in the parable: they are waiting for someone who can make them hear the great appeals of humanity and christianity: "Go ye also into my vineyard." [50]

44 c) The tragic situation of the young in the poorer quarters

But there are great masses of young people who do not stage any challenge, not because they do not have the motives but because they do not have the strength. You find them in the countries of the third world. It is calculated that three-quarters of the youth of the world live in the under-developed countries: but they are found

[49] AA 12 b.

[50] Mt. 20, 3-7; cf. *Il Servizio Salesiano ai giovani*, LDC 1970. Studies by Don Perez and Don Gambino.

also in some areas of the more developed countries, especially on the out-skirts of large cities, and in areas where the proletariate and sub-proletariate live (sometimes called the '*Fourth World*').[51] They are 'the holocausts to expansion,' because this very expansion generates social inequality and poverty.

There are two grades of this poverty. *Peripheral poverty*: this is the process by which individuals and groups, already wounded in their material and social existence, are little by little rejected by the economic and political circuits to the point of being excluded from the society to which they seem to belong. Pushed to its logical conclusion this peripheral poverty becomes the poverty of exclusion, a miserable state of affairs brought about by the accumulation of the various factors of poverty. And this, which exists for some groups in the western world, we find on a national scale in the society of the Third World.

What are these factors of poverty of which millions of children and young people are the victims? The "poor and abandoned" person is the one who as far as education is concerned, has remained illiterate; who not being qualified for any professional work cannot be employed and is the lowest paid; who has the minimal possibility of having decent accommodation; the one, in whom the lack of material goods and culture, the continual shame and humiliations, have killed any kind of creative responsibility and any interest in values; who feels himself excluded from any active part in society, and who has no voice in public affairs. In children and adolescents of such environment there is retarded development both psychic and mental with the consequent disturbances in personality; the tragic consequences of poverty in these

[51] Cf. *Il servizio salesiano ai giovani*, LDC 1970, study by H. Lecomte p 85-96.

youths will, in a word, prevent them from becoming 'men.' Today large groups of young people can no longer live their youth because they are immediately integrated into the production system or exploited by it: they pass directly from childhood to adulthood. It can be stated categorically that the greater number of these people between 14 and 25 have never been young and never will be.[52]

The *problem* here is to know whether the sons of Don Bosco have some providential mission towards these poor young people who are waiting for liberators through whom they can get to know the Saviour.

Summing up: we can affirm that these young people, especially the poor, are today a large sector worthy of the endeavours of the salesians: our Congregation has today more than ever a specific service to render to the Church and the world.

45 C) THOSE TO WHOM OUR MISSION IS SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED

1. Priority to the 'young,' and absolute priority to 'poor and abandoned' youth.[53]

This double priority appears clearly in the life, works and dreams of Don Bosco, in our Constitutions,[54] in our traditions,[55] in the awareness of the salesians of today.[56] There are five points to clarify:

46 a) 'Youth'

The Church calls Don Bosco "adolescentium pater et magister." Our Society feels that it is sent precisely for

[52] *Juventud y Cristianismo en America Latina*, Bogotà 1969 p 29.
[53] Cf. Constitutions 1.
[54] Art. 1; then 3-7.
[55] CG XIX, doc. IX.
[56] Cf. PeP pp 26-27, 36-37; also answers to Istanze 33-35.

the *pre-adolescents*, the *adolescents* and the *young adults* according to the age which in the various countries and cultures corresponds to this decisive stage in human life. Children are not to be excluded; but in their case the task is incidental and a preparation for the next stage.

47 **b) 'The poor, the abandoned and those in danger'** [57]

1. Which poor? Those who are hit by any kind of poverty:

— by *economic poverty*, which is at the root of so many other privations and so takes first place in our preoccupations;

— from *social and cultural poverty* which is felt as frustration ("I am not recognised, accepted; I haven't got what I have a right to have") and as being left out ("I depend on others, I cannot use my own initiative");

— from *affective poverty* (such as an orphan, not being well accepted), from *moral and spiritual poverty* (without any consciousness of values, and above all of the true God; strongly exposed to sin).

48 2. *"The most poor and abandoned."* Don Bosco used this expression frequently, particularly in Art. 1 of the Constitutions.[58] It is therefore a priority among priorities: help to the *"most needy."* This is verified:

— when one or the other various kinds of poverty above mentioned is experienced to a *special degree of gravity*: the youths who in dire straits are hungry, are illiterate, have no possibility of leading a normal life if they are not helped: young people tormented with religious and moral problems, on the way to delinquency, just come

[57] Cf. PeP istanze 37-41 & answers to istanze 36-44.
[58] Cf. *Comment* by Fr. DESRAMAUT.

out from prison, who are desperate, who do not believe any longer or are atheists, who are on drugs;

— *when there is an accumulation of these forms of poverty*: this happens often in the countries of the Third World and in the large cities of developed countries (the proletariate and sub-proletariate youth of the shanty-towns displaced young people; Fourth World).[59] Many confrères think that also in a situation in which the State intervenes in a general way to carry out social justice, there always remains a section of youth and poor boys not reached by these reforms. The task of the sons of Don Bosco is to go out to those whom no one helps and to bear witness that God loves and wants to save "the most abandoned." The world will always accept us with pleasure as long as our solicitude is for the poorest and those most in danger in society. This is our real wealth that no one can take from us.[60]

49 3. "Sons of the working class who go out to work." [61]

The example of Don Bosco and a long-standing tradition direct our mission towards those youths who, even if they don't live in miserable conditions, belong to the less fortunate working classes: the apprentices and young workers in the cities and in the countryside. Very often they are full of human and christian resources to be developed to their own advantage and that of their environment.

50 **c) Vocations**

The XIX General Chapter has laid it down quite clearly that among the works of the Society, special care

[59] Cf. answers to PeP, Istanze 43-44; RICCERI, *Letter on Underdevelopment*, ASC July 1970.

[60] BM XVII, 272; cf. XVII, 207.

[61] Cf. Const. art 5.

should be taken of those boys who show signs of a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life.[62] The Vatican Council itself has pointed out the urgency of this duty.[63] Don Bosco was so concerned with this need as to set up special houses with this end in view. He also helped more mature young men (Sons of Mary) who showed signs of a vocation, but who, on account of their poverty, could not pursue the necessary course of study elsewhere. Under his care vocations flourished, for his own work, for the dioceses, and for other Congregations. This characteristic of our work must remain. However, the evolution of the Church towards a diversification of vocations with the accent on the lay apostolate, and with our own tradition, lead us to concern ourselves with those young people who are capable of becoming leaders in the lay apostolate.[64]

We must make the point the "the Congregation does not refuse to work for *any class* of people but prefers to work for the *poorer* classes as *being most* in need." [65]

Thus, the young men who are comfortably off, are normally not excluded from our work. But, since they can afford their education elsewhere, if they come to us we must accept them with the sole motive of cultivating in them the sense of *service in the apostolate* to be exercised by them in their own environment and for the benefit of the poor.

51 d) Young women

Here we ask ourselves if our mission is directed also towards young women. There are two complementary

[62] AGC XIX document II, third paragraph; cf. BM V, 411; XII, 87; Const. art 6-7 with comment by Fr. DESRAMAUT, *Annals of the Congregation*, I ch. 20 p 207-215.

[63] PC 24-25; OT 2; PO 11.

[64] Cf. PeP istanze 67-68, formation of leaders.

[65] Regulations for the Houses, 1877 part two chapter I p 59.

answers to this question. Our work is, without doubt, for boys: everything in our work is geared to them. On the other hand we must take into account two factors. In the various kinds of pastoral responsibility which we are accepting more and more we have to have a care for young women (parishes, missions, chaplaincies for mixed groups, e.g. in State schools, or chaplains in the work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians). Besides, the social life of today (it varies from country to country) brings young people of both sexes together as a general rule. "We cannot ignore the contacts between the sexes which are a commonplace in modern living." [66]

There arises therefore a need for an integrated education for our young people. In this education all the values of life (love, beauty, etc.) seen in the light of the divine plan, will be precious elements for the maturing of their personality. In certain environments the need will arise for the specific task of mixed education. This will entail for us the responsibility of a more direct care for girls. The problem of 'how' (discretion, the sense of the supernatural, close collaboration with women teachers, etc.) is important but it will be treated elsewhere.[67]

52 e) What do we mean by 'priority?'

We have chosen to use this word to translate the word "specially" used by Don Bosco. The importance and the urgency of the needs of the young and the corresponding apostolate is the very reason for the choice of the word "priority." Through the pastoral needs of the Church, *priority* for the young describes objectively our mission and makes it more precise. We have already said that there are degrees of priority (youth, poor youth,

[66] AGC XIX p 196.
[67] Cf. Document of the CISI, May 1969.

poor and abandoned youth) for which the concrete needs have without doubt to be taken into consideration. The preference is fixed at the psychological level of those who are sent: it is at the same time a "motive" and a result of the mission.

It is possible to affirm this priority for the young in all cases, because also in the salesians who are directly consecrated to work for adults, we suppose a special preference for the young, a mentality sensitive to their problems and a special care for them whenever the occasion arises.

53 **2. Adults who are complementary objects of our mission** [68]

We are assured both by Don Bosco and our traditions that our work is also directed in a complementary way to adults... it is formally expressed in the Constitutions and is found in the Acts of the XIX GC [69] and in the replies of the confrères.[70]

The problem is very complex: is it a mission in its own right, parallel with that of the young, or is it integrated with the work for youth?

The reply is also complex.

The *reasons* for which we concern ourselves with adults can partly clear up this complexity.

1. The zeal of *Don Bosco*, ardent and all-embracing as it was, moved him to work directly for the raising of the cultural, human and religious level of "adults of the lower classes." [71]

2. The *Church* has insisted that we take on some

[68] Const. art 7 b-10.

[69] AGC XIX doc. XII, XVI, XVII.

[70] Cf. answers to Istanza 35 of PeP.

[71] Cf. Original text of the Const. "Scope of this Society...", art. 6 given in BM V, p 933.

pastoral responsibility for adults, especially when it was a question of parishes in poor quarters.

And then there are reasons which are more directly bound up with our salesian mission.

3. In many cases the education of the young is so bound up with the conditions of the family and its social and political background that we cannot do anything beneficial for them without trying to improve their environment and consequently that of the adults.

4. The spread and complexity of the integral advancement of youth and the joint pastoral care of the area forces us to fulfil our mission even by "indirect action," that is, by acting on the greatest possible number of adults and of organizations which have influence over youth.[72] In this perspective lies our interest and responsibility towards the laity, our direct collaborators, and the salesian co-operators.

To the question: "Do we occupy ourselves with adults for their own sake, or because of their connection with youth? we answer "YES" to both parts of the question. We can divide these adults into two main groups:

54 **a) The adults of the working classes**

We are not sent to all categories of adults but specifically to the lower classes.[73] In this category as in that for youth, the preference of Don Bosco was for the "poor;" who need to be helped in a special way for their human and religious advancement. So this educative mission should link up with the work in favour of the young;

[72] Cf. *41 Contributi di studio* to istanza 4 of PeP, summarised on pp 43-54 of II Special Provincial Chapters.

[73] With reference to the situation of his time, Don Bosco said: "the uncouth and the ignorant."

there is *an internal* unity between our mission towards "the young" and that towards "the people." This explains the fact that when we have a mission directly concerned with adults, we find that there is work to be done as educators among the poor boys of the area. It happens especially in parishes in poorer districts which we must prefer.

The present problem is that we must be aware of the *new context* in which these people live, and take into account the new, present-day meaning of the term "people" (or "working class"). To Don Bosco this meant almost exclusively that category of ordinary people who needed to be taught a little culture, the catechism and good religious practices. Today it means also a category, social-cultural and social-political who have "class consciousness" (and sometimes "class warfare"). It signifies specific environments, differing one from the other: rural, emigrants, etc. That means for us a change of mentality and a suitable adaptation of our pastoral work if we want to be efficacious bearers of the light of the Gospel. In addition, among these adults who are the object of our care we must place our past pupils.

55 b) Adults who are responsible for the young

Since education begins in the family and in many cases since the human development of the child depends on this initial education, salesians will do everything possible, by writing and lectures, to help parents, especially young parents, in the christian and human education of their children. Lay people who are directly responsible for the young have also a great influence in the evolution of youth. Hence we should increase our contacts with them.

We may also have the care of many other people who are on a higher social-cultural plane. With their social and political responsibilities and their scientific and

pastoral skill, they can have a great influence on the education of youth.[74]

56 **3. Those for whom we care on the missions**

This deserves special and separate mention because it has a special place in the mind of Don Bosco and in our traditions. It was solemnly recorded in the XIX General Chapter [75] and reaffirmed by the confrères.[76]

Without being listed among the Congregations which are exclusively missionary, *our Society, in the mind of Don Bosco is authentically and "essentially" missionary.* It could be said that this aspect constitutes a privileged application of our work and an extension of our mission to the working classes and to poor youth, because in the majority of cases missionary activity is directed towards people who are not yet christians with a preference for regions which are materially and spiritually poor; there we meet many young people and the field of the apostolate is vast.

57 **4. Psychological and practical consequences for the salesian**

Having specified the various categories of people to whom our mission is directed we can see that in the salesian there has to be a *special attachment* to poor youth and to adults of the working class. The sympathy of the salesian for these two categories is spontaneous. Present with them and sympathetic towards them he can appreciate their qualities, their tastes, their interests and legitimate initiatives. He keeps young with the young

[74] Cf. Suggested list in PeP p 42. From a certain point of view comes in the problem of Salesian Co-operators.

[75] Document XVIII.

[76] Cf. PeP pp 54-55, answers to Istanze 77-80.

and at the same time knows how to adapt himself to the common environment. These are some aspects of his primary "spirit." [77]

But, having stated that the priority of our mission is towards the young, it does not mean that other sectors are peripheral and less salesian. Those of us who are dedicated to the apostolate among adults are as much salesian as those who work for boys. All are sent by the same Christ and make effective the same gift of the Spirit.

[77] Cf. P. STELLA, vol. II p 369.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SERVICE RENDERED BY OUR MISSION

A) GENERAL SURVEY

58 1. God calls and sends us as "signs and witnesses" of his saving love

In harmony with the mission of the Church, in which we participate,[1] we can describe our mission thus: the salesians are in the Church as "signs and witnesses" of the special love of Christ for young people, above all the poor; love which, more precisely, aims to bring about their meeting ("communion") with God the Father and among themselves, sons of the same Father.[2]

Through self-sacrifice, joy, confidence, and vigour they must make young people, especially the poor, realize that this Christ is not only a person of the past but that he is risen, alive and present, that he is reaching out to them and calling to them in order to love them, help them, bring them to perfection, save them and unite them; and so they give the proof that salvation is in operation *today for each one of them.*

The love of Christ is a love which calls for a free response from every man and invites him to an ever more complete reply. The intensity of liberation is rightly measured by the quality of this reply of love. Hence salesians cannot fulfil their mission except by participating in the salvific charity of Christ for young people;

[1] Cf. n 25.
[2] Cf. LG 1.

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and their charity, being pastoral and educative, aims at arousing a reply of free fidelity to the love that they have received: "I know my own and my own know me;" [3] this is the central nucleus of the salesian spirit and of the preventive system of Don Bosco.

59 **2. As witnesses of Christ the salesians educate youth and adults of the working classes towards their full christian development**

a) Fullness and totality of the salesian service

Our mission participates in the fullness of the service rendered by Christ and by the Church to man seen in his "total vocation." [4]

Christ has come to save the whole man: in the gospel he reveals his active charity not only by teaching the word and pardoning sins, but also by healing the sick and feeding the crowds.

The Church in Vatican II reconsidered its wide responsibility to work for the "kingdom" of Christ, in a mission which includes two inseparable aspects: to evangelize and sanctify men in their reality, penetrating the temporal order with the spirit of the gospel in order to orientate it towards Christ the King.[5]

Don Bosco, as we know, wanted the total good of his boys. He laid it down that the object of his work should be "every work of charity both spiritual and corporal;" [6] and the fruit expected from these works is "to make young people honest citizens and good christians," to make them happy in this life and in the next.

[3] Jn 10, 14.
[4] GS 11.
[5] Cf. LG 31-36; AA 2-5-7; GE introduction; AG 5-12; GS 40-43.
[6] Const. 1.

60 b) Supernatural unity of the salesian saving activity, in the distinction of the two kinds of service rendered

Our complex mission shares in the action of Christ and the Church, which is a single whole. Certainly from the point of view of the objective result, to heal and to feed the body, and illumine or heal the soul are actions in different orders touching the human and earthly happiness of man and also the supernatural and eternal. The Council clearly affirms the single vocation of man to communion with God in Christ,[7] but recognizes "the legitimate autonomy of earthly affairs." [8]

In the concrete a salesian knows very well how to distinguish between the service of giving "lodging, food and clothing" [9] to orphans, and of giving the pardon of God in the sacrament of confession. The distinction however is absorbed into a real and higher unity. There are not two missions, one natural and the other supernatural. There is a single mission of a religious nature (christian, ecclesial, apostolic and salvific) which tends to bring about "that the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate each other;" [10] it is a question of "communicating divine life and contributing towards making the family of man and its history more human." [11] This unity can be considered from different points of view.

a) *The unity of the kingdom of Christ and the plan of the Father* that require the diversity of these services. Earthly progress is directed to the coming of the kingdom of God. "The spiritual order and the temporal order, although distinct, are so connected in the one plan of

[7] GS 22.
[8] GS 36; cf. also no. 31.
[9] Const. 5.
[10] GS 40.
[11] GS 40 c.

God that he himself intends in Christ to appropriate the whole universe." [12] All the earthly values, love, the dignity of man, fraternity and liberty will still remain in the kingdom, but will be transformed and purified.[13]

b) *The unity of the young person* to love in his own integral vocation (to become a true man, a 'complete' man adopted as a son of God), and to be of concrete service, in all his needs, to promote his total salvation.

c) The unity of the *salesian who loves young people* with the knowledge of being sent by Christ, and who lives his charity and evangelical spirit in all his different duties.

If human betterment and evangelization are attained in a single movement of charity (the integral salesian mission which performs "works of spiritual and corporal charity") both angelic spiritualism and mere horizontal sociology will be avoided. We believe that the "Da mihi animas" of Don Bosco bound the two aspects together with some insistence on the religious aspect. This intrinsic bond is reaffirmed today by the Council; "The Church has the duty of occupying itself with the entire life of men, even earthly life in so far as it is connected with the heavenly vocation." [14]

We discover also that the human level and the type of earthly life partially condition the faith; in fact there is needed a bit of earthly happiness to discover the love that wants the integral salvation of man, a minimum of liberty and culture to accept the faith. In its turn faith finds in its earthly life its concrete context of application.

[12] AA 5.

[13] Cf. GS 39; GS 41 says "in the same divine order are identified the Lord of human history and the Lord of the history of salvation"; cf. GE 1 c; 9.

[14] GS introduction.

"Ad Gentes" says that the presence of disinterested service among men is the first stage and, in a certain sense, a permanent stage of missionary work itself. The announcement of the God of love must always be accompanied by "signs" of its authenticity: love in action.

Our mission is based on a vision of man which is fully human and fully christian; and our *renewal* consists in "dedicating ourselves to young people, to help them to be themselves, to live authentically their own human and christian experience, making them find in friendship with the redeemer the stimulating pivot of their complete formation." [15]

61 c) How to express this single and complex mission

The word "evangelization" could be chosen, but in normal language (in the strict sense) it is reserved for that pronouncement which is "offered to arouse that first act of faith,[16] with which men adhere to the word of God" [17] and believe in Christ. We have chosen two complementary expressions. 1) "*Integral christian promotion:*" "promotion" indicates the process of development of the person; "integral" indicates the whole range of this process, right up to divine sonship and sanctity; "christian" indicates that the source and energy which will animate the whole process is the same love of Christ. 2) "*Liberating christian education*" expresses the work to be done and the same process from the point of view of the salesian "educator;" "liberating" emphasises the dynamic aspect of the historical process of the growth of man starting from the situation of "slavery" in which he finds himself: multiform slaveries of the material, psychological, intel-

[15] CARD. VILLOT, *Letter to Fr. Ricceri.*
[16] CD 11, 13; AG 6-13-14.
[17] DCG 17.

lectual, social, and above all ethical-religious orders (with reference to the slavery of sin as described in the gospel and by St. Paul; from this slavery Christ has liberated us). We speak of liberating "christian" education because we are dealing with an apostolic activity which is brought about according to the spirit of the gospel read in the light of Vatican II.

Fr. Ricceri in his letter on under-development affirms that this liberating work must succeed in "making men mature with an integral personality, capable of liberating themselves, but also to be *liberators* of their brothers; men capable of making themselves bearers of christian hope, even when the human horizon offers few motives for hope." [18] Moreover the expression indicates that education must be liberating not only in its objectives, but also in its methods, with the continual appeal to the responsibility and personal participation of the person being educated.[19]

B) THE TASK OF EVANGELIZATION

62 **1. As witnesses of Christ, the salesians educate young people and others to whom their mission is directed, to receive and live the christian faith even to heroic sanctity**

The Council teaches that the mission of the Church to men aims "by the example of her life and her preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace to lead them to the faith, the freedom, and the peace of Christ and open to them a free and trustworthy road to full participation in the mystery of Christ." [20] Synthetically all the

[18] ASC no. 261 p 38-39.

[19] Cf. GE 1 b; *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, II nn. 45-2 and 47-2 pp 97-99-102.

[20] AG 5 a; cf. GE 2.

work is "manifesting Christ's message (evangelizing) and communicating his grace (sanctifying)." [21]

The examples and the directives of Don Bosco and our tradition have caused the salesians to dedicate themselves to such work with enthusiastic and untiring zeal, conscious of the divine excellence of the service given both to young people and to adults. Dynamic fidelity to the mission that we have received demands that we continue to take into account the present context of the Church and of the world.

The essential points are:[22]

63 a) To arouse and cultivate the faith

Gathering the young and adults according to the level of their spiritual life, we must prepare the ground for their meeting with Christ; hence we must explain the plan of God and the mystery of his Son the Saviour, until minds and hearts open to him with sincere faith. After this comes the "nurturing" of this faith with an adequate presentation of the doctrine of the gospel and of the Church, so that the christian may know how "to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you." [23]

This is the point or particular aspect of the *Pastoral work of the Lord,* where the salesians must have special ability.

64 b) To initiate into the encounter with God and into liturgical-sacramental life

The first expression of faith is the adoration of the Father "in spirit and in truth." The salesian educates

[21] AA 6 a.

[22] We refer for a fuller treatment to the document an "Evangelization and catechesis."

[23] I Pet. 3, 15.

to prayer as a loving and intimate encounter with Jesus our Saviour and with the Father. The Virgin Mary is the best of all guides on this path.

Christian life reaches its most significant expression in the sacraments and in liturgical participation. The salesian often has to prepare young people and adults for baptism and confirmation (sometimes for marriage). But he will give particular attention to confession and above all to the eucharist, the centre of liturgical life, because of their richness in grace and because of the exceptional value of their resources for human and christian education.

This is an aspect of the liturgical and sacramental pastoral work, another sector in which the salesians must be deeply involved.

65 c) To manifest the sense of the Church and of human service

This complete education which is given in an ecclesial context, tends to develop love for the Church, of which each one feels himself an *active member.* The supreme fruit of the formation is obtained when the young people or adults, each one finding his proper place in the Church and in society, "devote themselves to the building up of the Mystical Body and promote that christian transformation of the world" [24] and dedicate themselves for justice and peace, avoiding what the GS counts as the most serious errors: "the split between the faith which many people profess and their daily lives." [25]

This is the aspect of the ecclesial *pastoral work of groups and of movements* of formation and of apostolic action, and the *pastoral work of vocations,* another privileged sector of salesian action.

[24] GE 2.
[25] GS 43.

To sum up. Every educative pastoral enterprise demands the combined presence of these three integrated aspects of pastoral work. The harmonious development of these three dimensions will bring to maturity authentic christian personalities. Hence our mission has really no other aim than *forming saints*. The figure of Dominic Savio, rising up right at the beginning of our salesian work, is a strong and inspiring reminder of this. It is useful to note that Dominic Savio is one of the finest fruits of the *preventive system*. This salesian pastoral method is in perfect accord with the scope of christian education: basing itself on "reason, religion and kindness," it appeals to the deepest interior forces of man; in such a way that the person being educated may become a *free man* and a conscious christian awakening in himself with the grace of God, the forces necessary to build up his own personality and to dedicate himself to the service of God and other men.

66 **2. As witnesses of Christ, the salesians co-operate in planting the Church amongst non-christians**

The originality of the missionary task requires that the most important aspect of the salesian mission be considered apart. It is a question of taking shape in a group which does not yet believe or no longer believes in Christ, and of bringing about there "the evangelization and the foundation of the Church." [26] In this vast context all the preceding tasks find their complete application. This is the aspect of *missionary pastoral work*.[27]

[26] AG 6 c.

[27] AG 11; the SGC treats widely of this in scheme 8 on "Salesian missionary action."

C) THE DUTY OF SALESIANS TO PROMOTE JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

In the spirit of the evangelical beatitudes the salesians dedicate themselves to an intense educative action which bears witness to and promotes justice in the world.

67 Introduction: the current urgency for the coming of justice into the world

"The problem of justice in the world is one of the most vast, grave and urgent of contemporary society. It is the central problem of world society today." [28]

One of the signs of the times is the awareness, especially on the part of young people, of the injustice which impedes the equilibrium of society and the realization of a total liberation of man. Under-development, illiteracy, misery and hunger in the world are today of such extent and gravity that emergency assistance is not sufficient, but rather there is needed action to deal with the deep causes of such situations. We meet in fact with structures which often seriously hinder or even impede the essence of the gospel message; the poor and oppressed cannot discover in such structures the image of God, to believe that the kingdom has arrived in this world, nor turn themselves towards the path of integral salvation. Hence they are structures of sin.[29]

On the other hand the human betterment of the poor requires that they become aware of the situation, and that changes be brought about by them, and that they do so collectively. All this means that they have need of help from persons and institutions that work for justice.

[28] From the "Text of discussion on justice in the world submitted to the Synod," Vatican City, 1971.

[29] Cf. Rom. 8, 20 seqq.

Here the christian community has a part of primary importance to play.[30]

In such a situation, *what is the task of the salesians* [31] whom Christ sends among the young people especially the poor, and under what conditions will their action remain "apostolic and salesian?"

Don Bosco used to distinguish a double work possible in the field of social structures:

a) a task with broad horizons where the policy is that of the "Our Father:" this is inherent to christian evangelization intimately connected with the integral promotion of the human person; here the salesians work principally through education;

b) a more restricted view, limited to the policies of political parties, from which Don Bosco wanted complete abstention, both for himself and for his sons. "If we want to make progress — Don Bosco said — we must never talk politics neither for nor against." [32]

Our reply today in the matter of work for justice in the world is given in a new cultural context: it is not aroused by contingent motives of political factions and of idealogies of the moment, but from the needs that the integral formation of the "perfect christian and honest citizen" places before the educator: the Church and the world ask us to form men capable of bringing justice into our world laden with grave problems.[33]

[30] Cf. OA 4.

[31] We do not consider here the problem of how this undertaking will be realized. The unit responsible is the *salesian community* at all levels (world, provincial, local); it studies, programmes, realizes and reviews this sector of our apostolate. The practical problem is to compound in a *responsible* way a pastoral service which takes count of persons, possibilities, circumstances, places etc.

[32] Ep. (Letters) Vol. III, 167.

[33] Cf. OA 2.

68 **a) Intense educative action for young people and adults responsible for the liberation of the poor**[34]

1) *For young people to whom we are sent.* "Our collaboration towards development is principally the education, qualification and formation of men who are the chief factors in development.[35] Our first responsibility concerns the mass of young people who need an open and complete education: understanding of the social situation, knowledge of the doctrine of the Church, formation in civic, social and political responsibility, initiation into a progressive undertaking of concrete service. Our educative action will thus be linked with local circumstances raising up christians dedicated to the liberation of their brothers.

Like Don Bosco, we are particularly sensitive to the needs of those who remain on the fringe of society because they are illiterate: "An illiterate person is an undernourished spirit." [36] We collaborate with national and international organizations which promote basic education and reading and writing among the poor, so that these brothers of ours on the fringe of society may be able to liberate themselves from the slavery of ignorance and participate in social and cultural life.

69 2) *For adults dedicated to justice.* As pastors we must illumine and stimulate the laity to work for justice (parishioners, christian movements, past pupils, co-operators, our lay collaborators...). "Pastors must clearly state the evangelical and magisterial principles and feed the spiritual life and apostolic sense of these adults and of their

[34] The doctrine of the Council gives principles only (Cf. AA 13-14; 24; GS 63-72; 83-86; cf. also PP; OA; ET. The Synod of Bishops (Doc. Cat. pp 19-21) gives a clear exposition of the content of and the method of realizing this education for justice.

[35] *Letter of Fr. Ricceri,* ASC no. 261 p 36.

[36] PP 35.

groups." [37] Therefore it is our urgent duty to probe deeply into social doctrine so as to render ourselves capable of such a delicate task.[38]

70 b) The task of being witness to justice in the world, a reflection of our educative work

Our educative work for justice in the world becomes "credible" therefore to the extent that the individual salesian, and the community, at all levels, are authentic witnesses to justice. The Synod of Bishops recalls that in regard to the use of temporal possessions it must never happen that the evangelical witness which the Church is required to give becomes ambiguous. "Although in general it is difficult to draw a line between what is needed for right use and what is demanded by prophetic witness, we must certainly keep firmly to this principle: our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the Church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the Church appears to be among the rich and powerful of this world, its credibility is diminished." [39]

The external testimony of the evangelical values which uphold our religious life is a permanent dimension of our being, and is itself a very efficacious form of "education:" one educates more through what one is than with what one says. Our mission for young people, above all for the poorest, requires from our communities a type of presence and global attitude towards the poor themselves and towards the movement (more or less organized) with which they attempt to achieve their rights to a more human life.

[37] AA 7 d; 25 b; cf. also LG 37 c; GS 43 b; PO 9.

[38] Cf. OA 42 seq.

[39] Synod of Bishops: *Text of discussion on justice in the world* p 18.

As religious we bear witness to the spirit of the beatitudes: the Lord has given us this special vocation, and even demands this service from us. Therefore our work for justice in the world must never obscure the clarity of this testimony, which each one will give according to the gift received from the Spirit. Our testimony and service for justice arises from charity and aims at a more profound communion among men.

71 c) An efficacious action for the coming of justice in accordance with the directives of the local Church and of our Congregation

We must at once make it clear that our work for justice in the world does not indeed signify taking sides in politics, which is the affair of the laity and not of religious nor of priests.[40] In this sector there necessarily arise differences and disagreements, and educators and 'pastors' cannot compromise the Church in such disputes, but rather they have the duty of preserving the unity of the people of God.[41]

This does not prevent (indeed it rather demands), that like Jesus Christ and the Church, we also devote ourselves by preference to the service of the suffering, the poor and the oppressed, those who for so long have lived in conditions openly contrary to their condition and dignity as sons of God.[42]

The desire we have for justice in the world does not arise from class hatred, nor does it propose any violent action, but it remains an expression of charity drawn from gospel sources. "The specifically christian action of the faithful for justice in their way of living

[40] Cf. Synod of Bishops: *The Ministerial Priesthood*, Vatican 1971 pp 20-21.

[41] Cf. GS 43; AA 25; PO 9 c.

[42] Cf. OA 23; ET 17-18.

the gospel (in the family, at work, in schools, in social, cultural and political life); it is evident that education, or the formation of christians, represents the first contribution of the Church. But an authentic education does not acknowledge any dichotomy between faith and life; it is not "information," but a change of heart towards justice and love of God and man; it does not admit any compromise with institutions which are not at the service of justice and integral development. It must make men capable of analysing and criticizing unjust situations which exist in their society and of seeking new forms of collective life. Likewise it must permit a liberation of men from harmful organized manipulation and render them truly masters of their own destiny.[43]

Let us pin-point some aspects which particularly interest us as salesians whether at the level of the Congregation as such, or at the level of the local provincial community or at the individual level.

72 1) *We choose the line of the 'progress of peoples.'* "The struggles against under-development is related to the very essence of the salesian Congregation which therefore feels itself fundamentally committed to it. Nevertheless it must act according to its own particular charism, viz. along the lines, the style and spirit of Don Bosco, and hence also with his courage, intelligence and realistic attitude — and always with his charity... This is and must be a vital principle packed tight with implications that must be translated into action." [44]

73 2) *We refuse every compromise with any form of social injustice* [45] *and all collusion with riches and power.*[46] It is

[43] *"A synthesis of the document on justice in the world"* (Oss. Rom. 4.11.1971).

[44] Fr. RICCERI, *l.c.* pp 22-23.

[45] ET 18.

[46] Fr. RICCERI, *l.c.* p 25.

the most elementary form of evangelical testimony for a more just society. In preaching, oral and written catechesis and pastoral work, we must have the courage to denounce injustice and to recall all the demands of a gospel which is binding upon personal and collective life.[47]

74 3) *We collaborate for the promotion of the world of the workers and emigrants.* Our mission for youth and the people implies: a friendly attention for the social and the historical reality of the workers' world; the effort to discover its educative, human and evangelical values; the concern to collaborate with movements dedicated to its evangelization, without forgetting that the principal aim we must have in mind is that the poor themselves take responsibility in hand for their own human and christian betterment.

Similarly we collaborate with those responsible for the *pastoral work for emigrants.* Our salesian vocation calls for our presence among these brothers who aspire to a more human life in very difficult situations. It will not be difficult for us, an international Congregation, to provide qualified service especially for the assistance and education of the children of emigrants.[48]

75 4) *We adopt a poor style of life*: "to free ourselves from a bourgeois mentality." [49] This aspect is treated more fully in the document on salesian poverty. Here we merely recall that our religious poverty demands an austere style of life which enables us to insert ourselves among poor young people after the example of the incarnate Christ.

[47] Cf. GS 76 e.

[48] Cf. Oss. Rom. Nov. 19, 1971: "*Problemi delle migrazioni oggi,*" a document of the Italian Episcopal Commission for Emigration.

[49] Fr. Ricceri, *l.c.* p 1; cf. ET 18-19-22.

76 5) *We make some prophetic gestures,* which show more clearly our privileged love for the poor in a way conforming to the reality of today.

Paul VI says to religious: "Let the cry of the poor... induce some of you to participate in their conditions, and to share their great anxieties." [50] We too have great need of what the spirit wants to tell us through the voice of the poor.

It is in agreement with *our spirit* and with *our mission today* that some of us go to live among the poorest of the poor if analysis by the community shows that this is the best way of working from within for their human formation and evangelization. Likewise it may be opportune to experiment by sending some salesians who want to make better contact with workers, young and old, to work alongside them if this method of acting is required by the needs of the local mission, is in harmony with the collective pastoral work of the area and with the approval of the hierarchy.

All this may be left to the courageous and prudent approbation and, better, to the initiative of the provincials and provincial councils, and always in agreement with the local bishops.

77 **d) The apostolic spirit of our work for justice in the world**

Our work for justice is one element of our mission, fulfilled by people consecrated to God and always in reference to the gospel. Hence it must always be carried out in an authentic religious and apostolic spirit and in direct combination with evangelization; in fact:

1) it has as *source* and living soul the charity of Christ the Saviour;

[50] ET 25, 35.

2) it has as motivation the demands of the gospel and the desire of helping Christ himself in the poor: "I was hungry, and you gave me food;" [51]

3) it has as object the co-operation with the mission of the Church which aims at animating the temporal order with an evangelical spirit;

4) it has as immediate *effect* the co-operation in the manifestation of a particular aspect of the love of Christ and of his work of salvation;

5) it has as style that of Don Bosco: an easy approachability based on "reason, religion and kindness," through which the work for justice is put in the wider context of an integral promotion and of a christian liberating education. Through this the explicit announcement of the kingdom is made to every man whatever be his level of human development.

Briefly: Our true mission is made up of two linked ideas: never to separate the immediate assistance of the poor from opposition to the external causes of collective poverty; and never to separate this effort of human promotion from the authentic evangelization of both poor and rich. In other words: not to evangelize the individuals without keeping in mind the collective evangelization of their environment.

78 D) WORK INSERTED INTO THE PASTORAL ACTIVITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The nature, size and complexity of our mission requires that it be done as a combined work, in which the various responsibilities are exercised in a spirit of collaboration. The confrères ask with insistence for a more complete insertion of our action into that of the

[51] Mt. 25, 35.

local church,[52] and within each community they want more attention given to apostolic co-responsibility in respect of the figure and particular duty of each one, including our lay collaborators.

1. Our mission is carried out as a service to the local church [53]

79 **a) Ecclesial and missionary nature of the local church**

1) "The individual bishop is the visible principle and foundation of unity in the particular church, fashioned after the model of the universal Church. In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only catholic Church." [54]

Each particular and local church crystallizes for a portion of believers the entire mystery and mission of the Church itself. From this it follows that the local church is the prime and directly responsible agent and organiser of the mission for that group of people. Therefore Vatican II recommends to religious "to assist in the various pastoral ministries, the particular character of each community should, however, be kept in mind. Superiors should encourage this work to the utmost..." [55]

Exemption permits religious to be more available for a group of particular churches with their special charismatic presence. This means that our salesian service must be inserted into the pastoral work of the local church. The young people and adults to whom we are sent are members of the people of God: we go to meet

[52] Cf. Thumb-nail sketch I CIS; the whole of chapter 5, especially pp 97-109, in which one speaks of "the plebiscite will of the Congregation" answers to PeP 54; 62-64.

[53] For the ecclesial dimension of our mission cf. above nos. 27-29-33.

[54] LG 23 a; cf. 26 a; CD 11.

[55] CD 35, 1.

them and receive them to educate them as members of the local church.

80 2) On the other hand, a local church does not exist only for practical reasons in the organization of the preaching of the gospel message and of christian life, but above all for bringing about the catholicity of the Church. It has the original function of directing to God the human riches of its people and making them serve as a particular expression of redeeming grace. Therefore it is necessary to adapt the general pastoral work of the Church to the concrete character and special needs of these people, adapting it to a local pastoral work. Hence our pastoral work for youth open as it is to working class people, whilst remaining authentically salesian must insert itself into the joint pastoral action of the area; it must provide an original service, but must also be inspired, co-ordinated and carried out in strict collaboration with all those responsible in the region.

The unity of our mission is here expressed in a plurality of pastoral works. The balance between fidelity to our charism and availability for the pastoral work of the local church [56] will give to each salesian province (or group of provinces) a distinctive physionomy and a particular pastoral unity.

81 **b) Insertion of our service in the mission of the local Church**

Our work is always a service rendered to the local church, but this service can be given in two principal ways.

1) *Pastoral service in the pastoral institutions of the local churches themselves.*

The local church has a more or less high level of

[56] ET 50.

organization in the various sectors of pastoral work (catechetics, liturgy, associations, care of vocations, schools, ecumenical movement...).

Groups of salesians can render valid service to the local church by putting themselves directly at its disposition in sectors which correspond to their mission: evangelization of young people and of adults of the working class. In some environments a group will receive the total responsibility of a pastoral service (as happens for parishes); elsewhere, on the other hand, it will be the individual confrères who, in agreement with the community, will make their contribution to a complex service.

Moreover the local church must guarantee the evangelical animation of temporal realities. Ordinarily this work is done by laymen; but it can happen that the presence of religious and priests is recognized as opportune or necessary. Therefore some salesians can be called either for the religious service of apostolic movements run by the laity, or to work in civil institutions of education, culture, social services..., and above all for the improvements of the condition of the poor.

All this is mentioned here not to describe different possible forms of salesian apostolate, but to emphasize the co-responsible and co-operative way with which we fulfil our mission in the Church. In such cases the salesians will be in more direct and permanent collaboration with those responsible in the diocese, and often they may find themselves in the more humble position of "servants."

82 2) *Salesian service in our institutes founded to meet local needs.*

This is the common case in our present works. Here it is sufficient to recall that our relative autonomy (which has its advantages) can never signify "pastoral self-sufficiency," but must appear as a valid form of service

and participation in the mission of the diocese and of our religion. This is required both from the nature of the work itself which must correspond with true local needs, and from the method of carrying it out, in harmony, that is, with the joint pastoral work in the area. In point of fact it often happens that a salesian house has confrères who render both these forms of ecclesial service.

In order that our insertion into the combined pastoral work may be realized in a form of true co-responsibility, it is to be hoped that many salesians will be chosen as members of councils of priests and the pastoral councils.

83 **c) Harmony of our service with that of other salesian forces in the local church**

This is another aspect of co-responsibility and collaboration, and an original form of work which is at the same time both salesian and diocesan. *The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Don Bosco Volunteers are at the service of the diocese like us.* For the *Co-operators* Don Bosco says: "The association will depend absolutely on the Supreme Pontiff, bishops and parish priests, in all those matters which refer to religion." [57]

We must make the co-operators aware of their salesian and ecclesial responsibility so that they may fulfil the salesian mission in broader and more efficacious ways. The problem of a more organic connection between the various salesian forces of an area must be considered in the context of the combined pastoral work there.

84 **2. The mission primarily belongs to the salesian community as such**

Each salesian must act in the awareness of being a "number" united with his brothers in the fulfilment

[57] Regulations 1876, III.

of the mission. Our pastoral service is always inserted into the local church; the *"provincial community"* has a particular part in the responsibility for our apostolic work; in fact it constitutes the institutional salesian unity which corresponds better to a local church.

In many cases the grouping of provinces of the same country or region into provincial conferences takes on, from the point of view of the mission to be carried out, a special importance; hence at these levels there is need for valid structures of collaboration and an even greater need for consistency in aims and in pastoral vigour.

The local salesian community expresses its deep unity by putting into action the common mission with the same salesian spirit. Nevertheless the various types of service which are requested, and the personal contribution of each confrère clearly show that this unity of the community is quite contrary to uniformity: it is the unity of an organic body, in which each member, in union with the others fulfils its own proper function. The richness and the variety of apostolic service arises from the combination of complementary functions.[58]

It is also clear that the priority of belonging to the religious community does not prevent us from belonging in a different way to other apostolic communities, something which happens especially in the case of salesians who are engaged in direct service of pastoral institutions of the local church.

[58] For the principles and ways according to which the service of authority will be exercised in our salesian communities, cf. schemes 13, 16, 17, 18.

CHAPTER THREE

SALESIAN SPIRIT

85 Meaning of salesian spirit

Speaking in chapter I of the "spirituality of the mission," we saw that it consisted of an interior attitude to God and to men, made possible only by the energy of love diffused in the heart of the apostle by the Holy Spirit. It is at the level of pastoral love as lived by Don Bosco throughout his life that this outline of the salesian spirit is presented.

86 1. Every religious institute has its own religious spirit

Setting out the general principles for the renewal of religious life, PC 2 declares: "It serves the best interests of the Church for communities to have their own special character and purpose. Therefore loyal recognition and safekeeping should be accorded to the spirit of Founders..." This present document uses the word 'spirit' in a global sense contained in such expressions as "spirit of the Founder," "spirit of the Rule" etc.[1]

In general terms the salesian spirit can be defined as "our own style of thought and feeling, of life and activity, in putting into operation the specific vocation

[1] Cf. LG 45 a; PC 2 b; ET 11; then PC 20, 21, 22; ET 32. The expression occurs in conferences, letters, and in other manuscripts of Don Bosco, and living tradition has made them familiar to salesians. (Cf. also Fr. RICCERI, *Introduction to the Constitutions*, 1966, p 58 c).

and the mission which the Holy Spirit does not cease to give us." More specifically, "the salesian spirit is the complex of the elements and values of the world of men and of the christian mystery (before all else the Gospel, the Church, kingdom of God...), to which the sons of Don Bosco, gathering the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and by reason of their mission are particularly sensitive, as much in their interior disposition as in their outward behaviour."

87 2. **"Salesian" spirit today**

Speaking of the "salesian" spirit, we refer first of all to its foundation and to its source, which is the "spirit of Don Bosco" (his life, vocation, work, teaching), then to the spirit shared and lived since then in *his family* (the life and sound traditions [2] of the salesians), and

[2] "Sound Traditions:" The spirit of an Institute is not born complete; nor is it discovered or preserved in isolation; but it is incarnated in concrete states of existence, in those structures and methods which express it, and which serve as vehicles of communication of the spirit in a particular time. These forms, structures, methods, all together are the "sound traditions" which, according to Vatican II (PC 2 b) together with the spirit and the intention of the Founder, of whom they are the expression, constitute the "patrimony of each Institute."

If renewal means returning to the living sources of the gospel and of the charism of the Founder, it does not mean that one starts all over again. If some of these traditions, because they belong strictly to the times in which they arose, have to be passed over, or better still, substituted by others which allow the life of the spirit to express itself in new forms better suited to the sensibilities of men and to the signs of the times, there are others so intimately one with the spirit of the Founder that to relinquish them would be to impoverish the spiritual patrimony inherited by the Institute; it would be a sin of infidelity to the spirit, an alteration to the features that the Lord himself gave it.

It is here that the grave obligation lies for every Congregation

finally to the understanding of it expressed by today's salesians in the special provincial chapters.

It is difficult to determine the spirit, the living reality necessarily incarnated in historical and local structures; but it is possible to understand it in its essential vitality as deriving from the reflection of salesians on their existence: we have a *living* spirit! Along these lines, the general consultation done through the special provincial chapters is of inestimable value, and only with difficulty could one fail to appreciate this.[3]

A fragmentary analysis of the various sources might suggest that the component elements of the salesian spirit are not original, and that they can be found elsewhere; however, seen all together, and taking into consideration the way in which they act upon each other, their real originality can be perceived.

The special character of the salesian spirit, while it

or religious Institute to "observe and faithfully interpret" such traditions. Such a fidelity is not a monotonous repetition of the past; but it is a continual reaching out to the founts which feed its life; a development and an expansion stemming from the root and the trunk from which it draws life.

[3] a) SOURCES: the writings of Don Bosco: *Memorie dell'Oratorio; the life of Dom. Savio; and F. Besucco; the Preventive System; Dream of San Benigno 1881; Letter from Rome, 1884; Spiritual Testament, 1884-1886; Epistolario; Recommendations to the Missionaries, 1886; Conferences (in manuscript) to Salesians; Confidential recommendations to Rectors, 1875*

Official Acts of the Congregation;

Documentation of the First and Second Special Provincial Chapters.

b) STUDIES: *Biographical Memoirs; Essays* of E. CERIA; A. CAVIGLIA, P. BRAIDO, F. DESRAMAUT, P. STELLA.

Particular attention should be given to the essay on the spiritual formation of Don Bosco (the influence of Mamma Margaret, St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonsus, D. Cafasso, and of the theology of the day).

is the foundation of unity, is the soul of post-conciliar renewal; not only that of salesians, but of all the members of the "salesian family."

N.B. *It must be made clear that this document does not intend to give an absolute and definitive presentation of the salesian spirit. It is only an attempt to reply to the request made by all our Congregation. Experience and study will help us to complete our work.*

88 A) THE SALESIAN SPIRIT IN ITS CENTRAL ELEMENT AND IN ITS EVANGELICAL INSPIRATION

1. In search of unifying inspiration

To understand a spirit is to comprehend an organizing inspiration; this is a sort of soul informing the whole body and constituting its complex unity.

Don Bosco is the saint in whom perhaps the most outstanding trait is the unity of his personality, of his life, of his work. His personality was constructed harmoniously and progressively from a dynamic nucleus, in which the spirit of the Risen Christ was received by a rich and generous heart.

Let us attempt the very delicate task of entering Don Bosco's soul, and gathering from it the elements most apt to explain the man, the work, and the life-style.

89 2. The centre of the personality of the salesian, and the deepest source of his unity

At the centre there is the *"Give me souls, take away all else"* — that is, the charity with an all-pervading fervour which drives him to dedicate himself to the good of others, especially of young people, for the glory of God: the true *apostolic passion,* lit up by youthful ardour.

Today's salesians, as did Don Bosco in the first draft of the first article of the constitutions,[4] trace their zeal, as to its fount, to the gospel, to the person and heart of Christ, the Apostle of the Father, whose image appears in Don Bosco.[5]

In their return to the gospel, the confrères have been inspired, secretly by the Holy Spirit, explicitly by the conciliar Church. In fact the salesians have received from the Holy Spirit the gift of the rediscovery of those insights of Don Bosco into the gospels, i.e. of a certain "salesian way" of interpreting the face and mission of Christ; our spiritual inheritance is, before all else, in the reading of the gospel.

From another point of view, the wave of renewal which is sweeping over the Church is enabling us to understand more deeply the Christ of the gospels, and the way Don Bosco understood and imitated him; this enables us to revive the gospel intuitions of the salesian spirit and to gear them to the new possibilities and the immense needs of the world of today.[6]

These realities justify our mode of expressing now our greatest gospel insights flowing from our salesian inspiration of faith and love.

90 3. Filial gratitude to the Father for his scheme of salvation

In his reply of faith to the action of the Spirit who wishes to unite him to Christ, Son of God, the salesian discovers the infinite fatherhood of God and his generosity

[4] "The purpose of this Congregation is to gather together its members... in order to perfect themselves by imitating the virtues of our Divine Redeemer, especially in his love for poor youth."

[5] "What today's salesian thinks of his Congregation," vol. I p 44.

[6] *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, p 52-54.

in giving to men a divine vocation.[7] He lives therefore in the presence of his heavenly Father with a heart filled with joyous gratitude and confidence. He feels called also to be one who will reveal this Father, in his own mission a father of his young people, whom he wishes to encourage to behave according to their dignity of sons of God.

In this way the salesian understands more deeply Don Bosco in his union with God, and in his extraordinary sense of being *Father*.[8] He understands too, the supreme model of Don Bosco, *Christ*, in the deepest part of his soul, in his sonship, which urged him ever to live in intimate union with the Father, to thrill with joy contemplating his design [9] to see all men as sons of God.

The real world has pressing need to discover this true face of God and this vocation to sonship that every man has.

91 **4. Preferential love for the "little ones" and for the "poor"**

Docile to the action of the Spirit which leads him to Christ the Redeemer, the poor man of the poor, the salesian chooses yet again in this age to go with liberating love to young people, especially to the poor and the ordinary, because he has become aware of the importance of the adolescent, and the appeal of the poor.

Guided by this experience, he penetrates the heart of Don Bosco, totally given over to poor youth in whom he saw the person of Christ. He penetrates the heart of Jesus himself, attracted in a special way by the "little ones" and by the poor; that is, by those who feel their

[7] Cf. Eph. 1, 5.
[8] Cf. P. BRAIDO, *The Preventive System*, pp 28-29.
[9] Lk. 10, 22.

limitations and are ready to receive the kingdom and its salvation.[10]

In a world in which the number of poor young people is growing, the salesian understands better the renewed importance of his vocation: to render present to them the love of Christ.[11]

92 **5. Zeal for the salvation of man inspired by the urgency of the Kingdom**

Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, who wants to give him the characteristics of Christ, the zealous Servant of the Father, the salesian discovers with wonderment that he is, in the hands of God, a most effiicient instrument for the salvation of the needy. Urged on by the imminence of the kingdom which makes its advent every day, he dedicates himself with fervour to their total salvation, and accepts being "consumed" by this work.

He also discovers through the heart of Don Bosco — great as the sea-shore — the consuming zeal of Christ, and he sees the sense of urgency with which he carried out his works with their twofold salvific mission: "He travelled through all Galilee, teaching and healing." [12]

The actual world has greatly accentuated the im-

[10] The word "little ones" is often used in the gospels in a metaphorical sense. For example in Mt. 18, 1-6, the Lord gathers the children together, and presents them as a model of every disciple, who must become "little... simple." In Mt. 11, 25, God hides his mysteries from the "learned and the wise," and reveals them to his "little ones," i.e. to the straightforward and simple souls, the ones to whom wisdom extends her invitation (Pro. 1, 4; 9, 4 — which has a meaning a little different from the "poor... humble ones"). These texts have relevance for adolescents to the extent in which their age and their background favours this interior attitude of simple docility.

[11] Cf. *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, II 45 pp 96-100.

[12] Mt. 4, 23.

pression of a fable which is constructed with feverish activity by all who inhabit "a secular city:" this makes the preaching of the kingdom all the more urgent for the zeal of an apostle.[13]

93 6. **Method of the Good Shepherd**

Inspired by the Spirit who wants to conform him to Christ — "meek and humble of heart" — the salesian chooses love as the means and fundamental method of his apostolate, conscious of its demands of friendly contacts, patience, and death to oneself, but also of the victorious strength of the Risen One.

In this light he perceives more clearly the pastoral method of St. Francis of Sales, by which Don Bosco was inspired, the promoter of "untiring" affection and of "familiarity" — salesian names for love applied to young people.[14] It becomes clear how much the method of the two saints was directly inspired by the Christ of the gospels who appeared among us as the "goodness and loving kindness of God." [15] It is the image of Christ the Good Shepherd [16] that today's salesian is particularly aware of.

The movement towards friendly dialogue with all

[13] Cf. *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, II 21-22 and 45, pp 66-69 and 96.

[14] We must remember the two significant reasons why Don Bosco chose St. Francis of Sales as Patron of the Congregation, a Saint already widely venerated in Piedmont (e.g. by the Marchese Barolo): the Bishop of Geneva was to him a model of zeal for souls, for the defence of truth, for fidelity to the Catholic Church, and above all else, a model of a completely evangelical method of exercising this zeal, — "charity, sweetness, courtesy, great calm, extraordinary gentleness" — as Don Bosco himself expressed it (MO p 141; Regulation for the Oratory, 1877 p 4).

[15] Titus 3, 4.

[16] Jn. 10, 3-4.

men, brought about by the Church of today, drives the salesian to a stronger commitment to his own characteristic method. It is in this ecclesial and salesian context that we find our fidelity to an educative style which Don Bosco himself called the "preventive system."

94 7. Desire to bring his own into unity

Finally, enlightened and animated by the Spirit which unites him to Christ, Master of his disciples, the salesian chooses to live in a brotherly community, in deep friendship with his confrères, and contributes with all his energies to construct a unity at all levels, especially by bringing together into a new "family" neglected youth.

In this light, and through the example of Don Bosco, taken up as he was by the unity of his sons in brotherly love and in pastoral activity, he reaches the intentions of Christ, Brother and Friend of his Apostles, and at the same time their Lord and Master.[17]

The salesian finds in his actual field of work new reasons and fresh appeals to dedicate himself all the more to the search for an apostolic brotherhood. The Council has redefined the Church as the community of love, to which all are called. Religious communities must be its most credible manifestation.[18]

95 *Summary.* These five acute gospel insights are not disconnected one from the other. The fatherhood of God, preference for the poor and the little ones, mystery of the apostolate, omnipotence of pastoral love, unique value of the community: all this, flowing from Christ, speaks of the saving love of God seen in its *source*, in its privileged *recipients*, in its *instrument*, in its *method*, and in its *fruits*.

[17] Lk. 22, 24-27.
[18] BM XII, 143.

96 B) SALESIAN SPIRIT IN ACTION

In the light of these insights into the gospel which inspire the pastoral love of the salesian, we must attempt to determine the principal sectors in which it manifests and finds itself every day. These attitudes arise, mature, and become integrated especially in the vital context of a community permeated with the family spirit.

Wanting to see today the "spirit that lives," we will try to describe it organically, starting with that which is *most external* till we reach its *intimate nucleus.*

Pastoral and evangelical love inspires: 1) our style of acting; 2) our own kind of mutual relationships; 3) our kind of prayer and relations with God, which give life to the two preceding elements. This presentation coincides with the triptych of the salesian living tradition: work, family spirit, prayer.

97 1. Evangelical love inspires our kind of action

a) A spirit of untiring work and renunciation ("work and temperance")

"Work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish." [19] "The first predominating element of the salesian spirit is its prodigious activity both collective and individual." [20] The salesian gives himself as a complete gift to his apostolic task. For him, a "religious in shirt-sleeves," this work is at one and the same time a mystical (work of God) asceticism (acceptance of every sacrifice), and an obligation of consecration in joyous freedom which is born of chastity, poverty and obedience.

This attitude puts the salesian in sympathy with the man of today, who is conscious of being "homo faber," transformer of the world, and actor in history. With his

[19] BM XII, 143.

[20] Cf. Fr. CERIA, *Annals* I p 722.

labour, as a workman of the kingdom, he undertakes to do his part to animate in a christian manner this movement.

98 b) Creativity and flexibility in face of the needs of the times

"I have always gone on as the Lord has inspired me and as circumstances have required." [21] Like Don Bosco, the salesian begins his activity starting with what is to hand. He wants his work to be an adequate and timely response to the needs of time and place. From here come his spirit of initiative and of balanced creativity; his resolution in facing problems and searching out solutions, his constancy in wanting to overcome difficulties; from here, again, the daring of his works and methods which make him use the most effective and most modern means to his ends. He understands that adaptation has to pace itself according to the rhythm of evolutionary history, which today is very fast, especially in the world of youth. Here as well the salesian finds himself in agreement with the man of today; caught up in this accelerated moment of history and on the alert to respond to the calls which are pushing him into the future.

99 c) Sense of the growth and of the unity of the Church

"Any weariness is small when you are talking of the Church and of the Papacy." [22] Don Bosco lived immersed in the ecclesial reality of his own times. The salesian, conscious that the Church is the Sacrament of Salvation, participates actively in the pastoral life of the local church; he is open to the problems of the universal Church; he expresses sincere respect for the episcopate and especially for the Pope, the sign of the unity of the Church.

[21] BM XVIII, p 36.
[22] BM V, p 577.

In his burning desire for the growth of the Body of Christ, he feels more urgently the problems regarding priestly and religious vocations, the inspiration of laypeople in the apostolate, and of work for the missions; and in his desire to respond the better to the great needs of youth, he searches for a living communion and an active collaboration with the other groups in the salesian family.

2. Evangelical charity inspires our way of relating to each other

100 a) Chaste and virile love

"The young should not only be loved, but know themselves to be loved." [23] Apostolic activity puts a salesian in contact with many persons; confrères, young people, older people; hence he asks the Holy Spirit for the gift of "sympathy" modelled on the meekness of Christ.

He cultivates the sense of concrete contact with each person (and this could be the most timid of the boys), always ready to make the first move, to approach all with respect, with the desire of understanding and helping, with the joy of being present (it is in this context that the real sense of "salesian assistance" is to be understood) among young people who are poor and neglected. This is the salesian "kindness:" a true affection, made at one and the same time from human warmth and supernatural delicacy.[24]

He can get the better of a self-centred activity, because he promised a total chastity, generous, with no compromise. It shines in the salesian educative method in such a way as to become an attractive example to young people.

[23] BM XVII, 11.

[24] *Preventive System* in "Regulations" art 86-88.

In today's atmosphere, impregnated with eroticism, the commitment of the salesian is a contribution towards a liberating activity flowing from his message and his special sense of purity which directs and guides all the forces of young people towards an authentic love.[25]

101 b) Family spirit

When affection is reciprocated a true community (whether religious amongst confrères, or "educational" amongst youth) is created which has the character of a family. Mutual confidence is expressed in an intense inter-communication, in the need to and in the joy of sharing everything, and in relationships regulated more by an appeal to interior capacities of each person (affection, reason, liberty, faith) than by a recourse to laws and to authority.[26] This is the source of the family style of authority and of obedience, and brotherly unity in action. God does not want things done under compulsion. Being a God of love, he wants all to be done out of love.[27]

Our family spirit offers a valid reply to the two pleas of the modern world, especially the world of the young: the recognition of the value of one's personality, and the anxiety to live an experience of true brotherhood.

102 c) Optimism and joy

"Let nothing upset you!" "Be cheerful!" said Don Bosco on many occasions. The true salesian never lets himself be discouraged by the difficulties he encounters: "Believe all things, hope all things, endure all things." [28] His optimistic humanism, inspired by St. Francis of Sales,

[25] BM XII, 224; IX, 705.
[26] Cf. *Preventive System* in "Regulations" art 86.
[27] BM VI, 15.
[28] Cf. I Cor. 13, 7.

enables him to appreciate all that is human, and to have confidence in the natural and supernatural resources of man, while not being blind to human weakness, especially where youth is concerned. He knows how to gather and to appreciate the values present in the world and in history; he refuses to grumble about his own times, "he holds on to all that is good," [29] especially if it is liked by young people.

In a life-style that is single in its outlook and its contacts, he nurtures a permanent sense of joy, — a necessary gift for the educator of the young — and expresses, within the limits of possibility, a happy disposition; but more than that, he expresses a radiant faith: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace." [30]

In today's world in which young people often become sceptical, sad, and sometimes despairing, or even naively optimistic about their future, the joy of a salesian, with all its realism seems to give encouragement to the first group, and to lead the second group to a realistic awareness of things.

3. Evangelical love inspires our kind of relations with God

103 **a) Simple and vital prayer**

"We work, contemplating. We are active and contemplative. This is how Don Bosco was." [31] The salesian sees God as very close, present in all events, and so he keeps up an almost continuous dialogue of heart with him which is simple and childlike. His practices of piety; are few, those that belong to the life of an active religious but he cultivates more than all else "the spirit of piety'

[29] Cf. I Thess. 5, 21.
[30] Cf. Gal. 5, 22.
[31] From a conference given by Fr. RINALDI in 1927.

and union with God. He is a contemplative in action, where he gets a glimpse of the proper sense of the mystery contained in his apostolate.

The Council has reiterated the message of St. Paul regarding the "spiritual cult" which involves the whole life of the faithful: salesian work, "sanctified labour" finds in the message an incentive to deepen reflection.[32]

104 b) Openness to the sacramental world

The *Eucharist* is the centre and the goal of the life of the christian, as a binding force and a dynamic nucleus of the brotherly community. It is an encounter with the fullness of the same mystery of salvation in whose service he spends his life. The life of a salesian is especially founded on this truth. The enthusiasm and the richness of all his activity take their origin from the eucharistic mystery.

For this reason the salesian cultivates the sense of liturgical celebration and caters for its needs, both in its interior qualities and by its external beauty, well aware that young people are attracted by the splendour and the truth of these celebrations.[33]

In the sacrament of penance, the salesian meets Christ who pardons him, and who pours into him the meaning of the ever-present necessity of the penitential spirit, not only for his own sins, but also for the sins of young people on whose behalf he wishes to make expiation as a sign of his solidarity with them.

"Frequent confession and frequent communion... are the pillars which must hold up our educational edifice." [34]

[32] *Linee di rinnovamento*, LDC 1971, III 60-63, p 145-148.
[33] E. CERIA, *Annals* I, p 728.
[34] *Preventive System* in "Regulations" art 92.

105 c) Special confidence in Mary

"Mary most holy is the foundress and will be the sustainer of our works." [35] The salesian is convinced of the special, unquestioned role which Mary, — always the handmaid of God and associate of his Son — has had in the life of Don Bosco and of the Congregation.

She is the watchful mother of his boys, and their "interior" teacher. She is, besides, *his* mother, hence he has for her — the Immaculate One and his Help — a tender and strong devotion, simple and true, enlightened and dynamically practical.

The mariological panorama opened by Vatican II which inserted the mystery of Mary into that of Christ and of the Church, offers the salesian a firm theological basis for renewing and intensifying his traditional marian devotion, in so far as it presents Mary Immaculate as assumed into the eschatological fullness of Christ, and with him as the help really involved in history for the salvation of men.

And finally we cannot forget the pedagogical content of these elements of the salesian spirit. Its riches, the gift of the one Spirit, must be spread by fruitful activity amongst those to whom our apostolic mission is directed.

[35] BM VII, 334.

CHAPTER FOUR

OUR RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION

INTRODUCTION

106 The Salesian mission is vivified by religious consecration

The mission assigned to us by the Lord has an objective outside the scope of all our powers. However we know that God, in giving us a mission, also enables us to carry it out efficaciously. It is in the light of the *generous initiative* of God that we must re-think our religious consecration today.

In calling us to the salesian mission in the religious life the Lord actuates his pact of alliance with us through a *special bond of "consecration"* which pervades our entire christian mode of being and acting. This consecration brings with it a type of "totality in Christ" through which the manner of being his disciples and the capacity to be his collaborators are enriched with a special value of sign and efficacy.

However this is not something external added to baptismal consecration, but *a mode of living out baptismal commitment* in one of the different and complementary christian vocations, all generated by the Spirit. There are not two levels in this vocation: that of religious life which is a little higher, and that of christian life which is a little lower. For the religious, testifying to the spirit of the beatitudes with the profession of the vows is *his* only manner of living out baptism and of being a disciple

of the Lord, thus fulfilling a co-ordinated service in the global mission of the Church.

In this vocation religious consecration and apostolic mission *interpenetrate in an inseparable form.* They are essential elements of our *identity* in the Church; and for this reason to find the vital meaning of each and their living unity directly concerns our renewal. To conceive either the salesian mission prescinding from our religious consecration or this consecration outside the mission would constitute an irreparable loss of identity and a kind of vocational suicide. With the desire of clarifying our concrete identity in the Church let us therefore study in depth the intimate bond between these two aspects, considering:

A) religious consecration in the mystery of the Church;

B) the religious consecration of the salesians of Don Bosco in the exercise of their mission.

A) RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION IN THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

107 It is the mystery of Christ and of his Church which gives our consecration its meaning and its value.

1. Fundamental meaning of consecration in the christian context

Consecration is at the same time an act of the free initiative of God and an act of the free response of man. There are therefore two correlative acts, but these cannot be put on the same level or given the same force. To consecrate is uniquely *an act of God.* It is not a magical gesture or a simple rite which would attempt to overcome the dualism between "sacred" and "profane:" here we are concerned with a personal relation. The thrice holy

God, "for his own kind purposes," [1] and in accordance with his plan for the salvation of the world, takes the initiative of entering into dialogue with man to make him his interlocutor and collaborator: consecration is precisely this original bond which God offers to man, awaiting his free response.

Under the impulse of the Holy Spirit *man accepts* this bond which transforms him: he gives to God the totality of his being and mode of acting in order to collaborate in the salvation of all. In the broad sense it can be said that one "consecrates" oneself to God; but the spiritual and moral obligation of one's response has not the same character as the divine act. It is thus better to say that "one gives oneself" to God with a commitment which is never realized automatically, but which requires a will for continually renewed donation: in fact one could be unfaithful and still remain consecrated because of the fidelity of God.

Thus consecration presents itself linked to the mystery of the *Covenant.* Here two acts of love which are correlative but graded converge in a marvellous manner: God consecrates to himself, and man gives himself to God.

108 2. Jesus, the "Christ"

Jesus presents in himself the fullness of consecration, because he realizes in his being as the incarnate Son the New Covenant itself.

Revelation tells us that "the Word was made flesh:" the divine Person of the Word has fully assumed human nature. But he who was incarnate is and remains *the Son* of the Father: Sacred Scripture presents Jesus as *he whom the Father has consecrated to himself,* "annointed" and

[1] Eph. 1, 5.

"signed" as his Son in the Spirit, in a manner so radical and complete that Jesus receives the name "Consecrated-Annointed:" he is "the Messiah," "the Christ."

The most significant fact is that Jesus is intimately *ordained to his mission as Saviour.* He receives the annointing of the Spirit to be the Servant of Yahweh;[2] this annointing enriches his human nature with every capacity, indeed with divine energy itself, which Christ will need in order to realize in history the salvation of man. This task is so linked with his being that it is expressed in his very name: "...Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1, 21). Tradition has with profound intuition indissolubly united the two terms in a single proper name: "Jesus-Christ."

The gospel attests to us that in the heart of Jesus *there is no dualism* between "being the Son of God" and "acting for man." On the contrary: he lives with the permanent consciousness of being the Son sent as a Servant: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has annointed me to preach the good news to the poor." [3]

The same conpenetration of the two aspects verifies itself in the *perfect reply* which he gives to the Father: he lives as a Son, but always as an obedient Son who yearns to arrive at his paschal "hour," in which the gift of himself will be supreme and total. His love for the Father is the very source of his saving love for men.

In brief there is a *mutual and intrinsic functionality* between the consecration realized in the incarnation and the mission accomplished in the redemption: the mission motivates the consecration, conferring to it its historicity and dynamism (and in this sense it has priority), whilst the consecration resolves the needs and preoccupations

[2] Cf. Is. 11, 1-5; 42, 1-4; 61, 1-2.
[3] Lk. 4, 18; cf. Jn. 10, 36.

which emerge from the mission and brings in the salvific energy of God (and in this sense it appears as principal).

109 3. Baptismal consecration and the various christian vocations

The Church, the Body of Christ, participates in his consecration and mission. It is at the same time the "Spouse" which Christ has consecrated and united to himself [4] and the Spouse rendered fertile, the "Mother" of the disciples, sent to all men. United to Christ, it too is consecrated and sent by the Father: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people..." [5] Thus the Council presents it, bringing into relief its union with the risen Christ and its task of being the sign and universal instrument ("sacrament") of the kingdom.

In turn, *every member of the Church* necessarily participates in Christ's consecration and mission. This is the meaning of the two fundamental sacraments of baptism and confirmation and of their "character:" every baptized and confirmed person becomes a "christian" and receives his mission of contributing to the "sacramental" function of the Church, that is of bearing witness, as a sign of the mystery of Christ, and of serving, as an instrument of his communication to man. He is called to realize this baptismal vocation in evangelical charity inspired by the beatitudes: a single commandment, filial love for the Father and fraternal love for his neighbour, after the example of Christ, is the only way towards the same sanctity for all the baptized.

But all this is not expressed in a uniform manner,

[4] Cf. Eph 5, 26-27.
[5] I Pet 2, 9-10; Cf. LG 10.

but according to a *variety of concrete vocations*. The Church in fact is an organic reality whose functions are complex, and it is animated by the Holy Spirit, who desires ever to enrich and renew it. Thus one can speak of subordinate forms of consecration, distinct from baptismal consecration even if they are rooted in it, and of different expressions of christian sanctity: here our religious consecration has its rightful place.

110 4. Religious consecration

a) An eminent form of evangelical charity, through the practice of the counsels

The Council characterizes religious consecration by saying that it brings about a more profound interior implanting "Intimius consecratur," "intime radicatur" and a richer exterior expression "plenius exprimit" of baptismal consecration.[6] The religious is one who, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, wishes to intensify to the maximum the "following of Christ according to the Gospel," in search of love. In this drive of the soul which captures the entire person to put it at the disposition of God, he chooses *a completely new way of life*: he makes the *evangelical counsels* his "profession," his principal commitment in the Church. He makes of the three realities of celibacy, of poverty and of obedience three convergent means of entering more profoundly into the paschal mystery of the Lord, and thus loves God and his neighbour *more directly* and more intensely, and he participates more in the mission of the kingdom. He expresses this commitment with "vows or other sacred bonds" [7] which the Church receives in the name of God.[8]

[6] Important arts. LG 44 a, PC 5 a.
[7] LG 44 a.
[8] LG 45 c.

111 b) A means of practising the counsels which engenders a form of new life and a special mission in the Church

The member of a secular institute professes the evangelical counsels in a discrete, almost invisible manner, as hidden leaven immersed in the world.[9] The "religious" on the other hand professes them in a visible manner, renouncing the habitual form of life and the values which it includes to establish in full liberty a *new form of life* in which the transcendental values of the kingdom are brought more clearly into relief, institutional in some way, and where charity finds privileged conditions to develop. Thus this newness blossoms necessarily into the formation of a particular social group: the *fraternal community* founded on the common 'following of Christ according to the Gospel." In short religious life is a new type of existence in which the entire *spirit of the gospel* expresses itself *in structures* of life also dictated by it. It really achieves the "kind of poor and virginal life which Christ the Lord chose for himself." [10]

The Church receives this type of consecrated christian existence with joy: it declares that "it belongs inseparably to her life and holiness" [11] and it recognizes in it a *unique and irreplaceable function* in its mission as "sign and instrument" of universal salvation. The religious community indeed, of its very originality *expresses the ecclesial mystery of salvation visibly*: it shows the reality and the power of the risen Christ, capable of uniting men around him, in a new humanity, according to the same principles which govern the eternal community. This function of being the eschatological signs of the kingdom, the "witnesses of the City of God," has been strongly ex-

[9] Cf. PC 1.
[10] LG 44 b.
[11] LG 44 a.

pressed by the Council;[12] and Paul VI also underlines it in his exhortation,[13] because it has become more urgent in the new "secular city" which is in danger of forgetting its ultimate destiny and the need it has of Christ for the "rectitude" of its temporal commitments. This "exceptional testimony" (Paul VI) is thus the fundamental service which all await from religious.

The preceding truths show to what extent religious life has the capacity of bringing into relief the dimensions themselves of baptismal existence: 1) *Christological-theological*: it is crossed by a powerful drive of love towards Christ and the Father; 2) *Ecclesial*: it is a sign for man of the mystery of the Church and takes a great part in his mission; 3) *Eschatological*: it affirms that the dynamism of the Pasch of Christ operates in human history.

112 **c) The ever valid value of definitive commitment**

It is important today to emphasize one characteristic of religious consecration: its aspect of definitive choice translated into a "state of life." The vocational option made by the religious by the perpetual profession of the vows is brought to a crisis by the present process of secularization. The anthropological sciences have made several criticisms, sometimes useful and objective, of the religious life. And some have gone further still, even so far as to affirm that religious consecration can of itself only be something temporary.

Without doubt there can be temporary "religious" commitments worthy of all praise; but in such cases, one is not dealing with a personal *fundamental option* of the essence itself of religious consecration. In the profession of the perpetual vows one not only effects an "act" but

[12] LG 44 c; 46 b; 38 a.

[13] Cf. ET 1, 3, 13, 31, 34, 42, 50, 53.

one assumes a *project of one's whole life* out of love for the kingdom of God. It is the expression of a strong personality to be able to commit oneself for all one's life. Precisely because of this such vocations presuppose a special gift from the Lord.

It is true that human liberty can destroy today all that it built yesterday, and there are "cases" in which a religious can and must change his state of life. What constitutes the greatness of personal liberty is not its indifference or the possibility of changing, but the option of great values and *fidelity* in living them; and fidelity has its full expression in *giving oneself until death itself.* To be a person is to be faithful. How could one otherwise explain the life of Christ, of his apostles and of the saints? If Don Bosco had thought that his vocation was ephemeral and to be reconsidered in the light of other values discovered later, he would not have deepened the content of the supreme values already chosen and would never have found the heroic energy to overcome so many difficulties met with in his life.

113 5. The religious of the active life

The religious life, a special manner of living out baptismal consecration, expresses itself in a diversity of concrete realizations, according to the diversity of charisms. "Nothing is more prone to misunderstanding today than these studies of a general character on the various aspects of consecrated life which do not underline the variety of application which monastic life or the life of the Institutes consecrated to the apostolate presupposes." [14] Now our Congregation is an authentic religious institute, but of the active life; it therefore fully embraces the

[14] J. BEYER, S.J. in the preface to the book of P. OLPHE-GAILLARD, *Chrétiens consacrés*, Paris, Lethielleux 1971, p 6.

characteristics of religious consecration, but lives them in accordance with its own vocation of service to youth in need. It is clear that this brings with it new aspects of particular importance for renewal.

114 a) The particular aspect of the institutes "of the active life"

With well chosen formulae the Council has expressed the originality of the institutes of active life: they are "*devoted* to various aspects of the apostolate." [15] Within the general vocation of all the institutes these have a *more specific mission* of their own; to fulfil in the Church *a precise pastoral or charitable service* according to their own charism received from the Spirit. Apostolic activity does not constitute for them a diffuse or marginal fact: it is recognized in it special nobility and utility: "In such communities the very nature of the religious life requires apostolic action and services, since a sacred ministry and a special work of charity have been given to them by the Church and must be discharged in her name." [16] In fact it concentrates the interests of these religious, fills their day, and outlines for them a determined style of "active" life; in a word it realizes the *concrete unity* of this kind of christian existence.

This fact introduces a novelty in the relations between the two aspects of witness and of service which the religious life fulfils in participating in the ecclesial mission of sign and instrument of salvation. Whilst pure witness shines in the contemplative or monastic orders, in the congregations of the active life *the accent is placed on effective service*; in the case of the latter the same witness expresses itself through service more than through a "religious" style of life.

[15] PC 8.
[16] PC 8.

115 b) The "religious" life is lived in apostolic service

Apostolic action embraces not only a part of the function of witness, but also the religious life itself. The Institutes "of active life" remain authentic "religious" institutes; however the evangelical exigencies, the search for perfect love, the practice of the counsels, etc. are lived in the context of and according to the demands of the apostolic work to be accomplished, and they contribute their value to it. If pastoral charitable action becomes its soul, the religious life becomes apostolic and the apostolate becomes religious in so far as it is obliged to accentuate the spirit of transcendence and the search for God. There is in brief *vital integration* between the two elements, the influence of one on the other, osmosis and mutual enrichment, as the famous Council formula affirms: "the entire religious life of the members of these communities should be penetrated by an apostolic spirit, as their entire apostolic activity should be animated by a religious spirit." [17]

116 It follows that the active religious, provided that they are faithful to their charism and to their true identity in the Church, are capable of realizing their vital unity in the movement of a *single dynamism*; they reach their personal sanctity and give their religious witness in the supernatural exercise of their apostolate. In the *rich synthesis of their vocation* their dedication to God is religious and apostolic; and with their profession they oblige themselves to follow Christ in his active service of the Father, and in the full liberty of this service through virginity and poverty. Under the impulse of a singular love God is recognised and served as Beginning and End both in

[17] PC 8.

apostolic action and in the religious observances which sustain it.

All this holds for the active life of the salesians of Don Bosco.

B) THE RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION OF SALESIANS IN THE EXERCISE OF THEIR MISSION

117 1. Don Bosco, founder of a religious institute of the active life

Don Bosco was called by God to realize in the Church an apostolic service for youth and for the people. In this climate he lived the various gifts received from the Lord: his priestly consecration, his charism as founder, but he also gave himself to God in accordance with the most authentic evangelical spirit. Illumined by the Spirit, and following the advice of competent people,[18] he clearly wanted his more intimate collaborators to be bound to the fulfilment of their mission by religious consecration.[19] In founding the Society of St. Francis of Sales (18 Dec. 1895) he had no other aim than to give to the Church *apostles totally consecrated* in their service to youth.[20]

118 The obligation of our renewal requires a clarification of *the reasons why Don Bosco has linked* evangelical religious life to the service of youth in need. *In itself,* in fact, there is no absolute link: one can dedicate oneself to abandoned youth, whilst taking inspiration from the

[18] E.g. Pius IX: cf. Introd. to the Constitutions, p 24.

[19] Michael Rua, cleric, was the first to take the vows, privately, on 25 March 1855.

[20] Cf. the first compilation of art 1 of the Constitutions of 1858 on the aim of the Congregation: "perfezionare se stesso imitando le virtù del Salvatore, specialmente nella carità verso i giovani poveri" (Archivio sal. 022).

salesian style of life, without being a religious, and in particular this is the case of our lay collaborators and of many co-operators.

119 The reasons for the absolute bond *for us* on the level of concrete existence seem to come from two points of view. In the first place we must affirm that we are concerned with a *vocational* problem: it is not an ideology, but the gratuitous initiative of the Holy Spirit who urged Don Bosco to found a society of "evangelical" educators whose style of active life was to be animated by the most authentic religious consecration. And this fact repeats itself for the vocation of each of us: an authentic call commits us to the unique and rich project of "active religious salesian life" without exalting one aspect at the expense of the other.

120 But there is also another reason, included in some way in the preceding one. In his zeal Don Bosco wanted his salesians to be ready to commit themselves *radically* to save thousands of youngsters *effectively* in a work which was *stable* and destined to *endure*. Now the Holy Spirit made him perceive, through experience, all the *objective resources* and the fertile promise of evangelical life consecrated to this mission. In fact religious life, whether it be considered in its institutional reality or even more in its interior dynamism, tends to reinforce the quality and efficacy of our apostolic actions and of the spirit which characterize it. Between these two aspects there are *profound affinities*, "...accords... on many scores," [21] an inner coherence, a radical, dynamic orientation towards God, which explain the concrete utility of salesian life.

[21] An expression which the Council uses to translate the relation between priestly ministry and celibacy: PO 16 b.

121 2. How evangelical consecration, with its own values, animates our mission

There is a Council text which supports our reflection: speaking of the profession of the evangelical counsels, it explains how they contribute to the development of the person: "For the counsels... 1) contribute greatly to *purification* of heart and spiritual liberty; 2) they continually kindle the fervour of *charity*; ... 3) are especially able to *pattern* the christian after that manner of virginal and humble life which *Christ* the Lord elected for himself." [22]

Another interesting text [23] indicates four benefits enjoyed by the members of the religious institution: stability, doctrine, fraternal communion, and liberty... In the case of the active life these positive concomitants are reserved to the exercise of the mission. Let us group them around the three series of values recognized above concerning religious consecration.

122 a) Evangelical consecration animates our mission with its Christological values

The mission which we fulfil towards the young and adults is not to be reduced to a philanthropic work. It is a divine enterprise which presupposes in us *a radical sense of the Christ-God and his kingdom.* Everything comes from him who sends us as simple servants and animates us with his own charity for the Father and for souls. And everything moves towards him, because the specific aim of our educative work is to lead the young to Christ and to his Father.

It is certainly not necessary to be a religious to have such a sense of God and his glory. The Council affirms

[22] LG 46 b.
[23] LG 43 a.

for example that the secular priest finds in his consecration and ministry his own spiritual resources.[24] But it is significant that, immediately afterwards, it invites him to intensify this apostolic love through the practice of obedience, of celibacy, and of a certain poverty, according to the spirit of the Gospel.[25] That is what religious consecration does *for us*, in accordance with its particular forms. In fact it is characterized by the radicality of its dynamism: it is liberation to fulfil an integrally evangelical "sequela Christi;" it is a reply and a total gift of oneself to God who consecrates us to himself. To the extent to which we accept and live this reality our pastoral involvement receives *its entire guarantee of authenticity and supernatural efficacy.* We are helped to announce Christ as the word of life "which we have touched with our hands" [26] in a special intimacy, to recognize him and to serve him in his members,[27] to lead to the Father the young to whom baptism has given rebirth as "sons of God." The growth of our inner life prevents our action from becoming just human initiative.[28] "Animated by a religious spirit" our life receives a filial and priestly impulse: it becomes liturgy vivified by the ardent zeal for the glory of God which shines so much in our Founder.

123 b) Evangelical consecration animates our mission with its ecclesial values

Our mission is an ecclesial work in so far as the Church sends the salesian community to work "in her name," [29]

[24] Cf. PO 12-14.
[25] PO 15-17.
[26] I Jn 1, 1.
[27] Cf. PC 8.
[28] PC 8.
[29] PC 8.

and in so far as we express to the young the saving love of the Church for them.

Our task requires "teams" which are well-knit together and coherent in their method of action; it requires also a particularly cordial family spirit. All this is sustained by the evangelical virtues of the religious life. Don Bosco was extremely sensitive to the *"fraternal" consequences of our vows*, which are bonds of love:[30] to the extent to which we practise them they contribute considerably to deepen and to establish the ties of our communion, to reinforce the cohesion and the apostolic dynamism of our community, and to irradiate at the same time the salesian spirit. Also *at provincial and world level* the religious community allows us to establish and amass incessantly, in space and time, a precious capital of spiritual, pastoral, and doctrinal traditions which ensure the unity and increase of our charism to the advantage of the Church in its service to the world.

The evangelical values of the religious life equally favour our saving work for youth and for the working classes, and the spirit of zeal and affectionate kindness with which we must fulfil it. They allow us to realize the "caetera tolle" which conditions the fullness of the "da mihi animas;" in fact they render us available both in our exterior life and in our deeper emotional response. The salesian renounces having children of his own through marriage in order to love the young people with whom he works. He renounces the possession of goods to put both himself and the goods he receives at the service of the poor; he renounces a life at his own choice to be ready to go wherever service is most necessary. His religious spirit enables him to be "ready to sustain and to face" all the sacrifices[31] demanded by his service.

[30] Cf. Introduzione alle Costituzioni p 24.

[31] Cf. Const. art 188 and *Preventive System* in the Regul. art 97.

124 Evangelical life renders the salesian not only available but also capable in his task. His chastity gives transparency and the force of understanding to his relations of spiritual paternity. His life of free devotion renders his task of liberating education connatural with it: Pure and loving, he will know how to form youth in purity and love; being poor, he will know how to educate them to the christian meaning of the use of goods; being obedient, he will know how to initiate them into true liberty in the obligations of life.

125 **c) Evangelical consecration animates our mission with its eschatological values**

Every apostolic mission, and in particular every proclamation of the word needs, to be efficacious, to be "confirmed... by the signs that attend it." [32] The most eloquent sign is the very witness of the life of the messenger (cf. Jesus, John the Baptist...). Now our religious consecration *brings a particular vigour to this witness* because it obliges us really to live the evangelical values which we must teach our boys. It becomes easier for us to announce the gospel to the extent to which our community and individual life permanently radiates it.

The realities to which we give this witness are many: God exists; his love is sufficient to fill a whole life etc. etc. But the generous practice of the three counsels has a particular power to educate, because it is related to the three fundamental values towards which the young are most sensitive: "the forces of love, the need to possess and the freedom to regulate one's own life." [33] The religious holds these values highly and by his consecrated life he challenges every deviation from them (eroticism, unjust amassing of wealth and oppressive power) he shows

[32] Mk 16, 17-20.
[33] ET 7.

their limitations and proclaims their downfall in the pasch of the liberating Christ.

126 **3. Contribution of our religious consecration to the life of the entire salesian family**

The salesian religious consecration is lived in a context in which it must appear not as a privilege of greater perfection regarding others, but as a vocation of *greater service* or, as it were, as a "right of others" in favour of whom the Lord has called us and consecrated us. Every charism in the Church is given for the good of the community.

From this point of view, it appears that the religious consecration of the salesians is indispensable in the groups of the "Salesian Family" viewed as a whole, even if their mission and their spirit are lived and participated in by important groups which are not "religious." Indeed the Congregation is the animating nucleus of this family according to requirements and needs. It is with reason therefore that the other groups require us *to be authentically "ourselves;"* this is a call to rediscover the enriching dynamism of our religious consecration in the concrete expression of our life. At this time of profound renewal for the salesian family in the promising search of its true identity, and in the vision of the immense good which it is called upon to do in those areas where young people and the working classes are to be found, it is important to hear this call to authenticity. In particular a truer consciousness of the religious aspect of our vocation will make us better fitted to help the co-operators and other lay groups to live their vocation with a more penetrating sense of the gospel and of the beatitudes.

127 **4. Urgency of synthesis in our activity**

The project of life which Don Bosco has left us urges us to meditate on *two complementary affirmations*:

— "The more the salesian is an apostle, the more he is authentically a religious," because his concrete apostolic vocation makes him understand the indispensable necessity of his religious consecration for himself and for others.

— "The more the salesian is a religious, the more he is an authentic apostle," because his concrete religious spirit urges him to express his total donation to God in generous apostolic action.

The salesian "apostle" wants to live as Don Bosco in union with God; and the salesian "religious" is he who has "lost his life" to find it with the young.

The Holy Spirit calls the salesian to an option of christian existence which is at the same time apostolic and religious. Thus he gives him *the grace of unity* to live the dynamism of apostolic action and the fullness of religious life in a *single movement of charity* towards God and his neighbour.

This type of life is not something fixed and prefabricated, but is a *"project" in permanent construction.* Its unity is not static, but is a unity in extension and in continual need of balance, of revision, of conversion and adaptation.

Consequently *the renewal* of our vocation presents a *double urgency*: we must revive two great correlative values: *a*) the apostolic meaning of our religious consecration, with the reactualization of its specific values; *b*) the religious meaning of our mission to the young and the working classes.

From the rediscovery of this unity will dawn the light of our salesian "identity" and the possibility of that new type of salesian required today by the signs of the times.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FORM OF THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

INTRODUCTION

RENEWAL OF THE FORM OF THE CONGREGATION

128 **1. The Form**

We call the *"concrete historic form"* of the Congregation that according to which it exists in the Church as a religious institute of active life, which incarnates its spirit, its life and action in a body of *institutionalized structures*: the form of the community at different levels, the particular ways of practising the vows, fraternal life, prayer, relations with Church and world, formation, the organs of government and the ways of exercising authority, the various types of activity and functions, all of which require laws or recourse to traditions and customs.

We call the *"canonical form"* of the Congregation, that according to which amongst the different types of religious institutes it is classified as an *exempt clerical Congregation.*

129 **2. Renewal of the form**

The problem which faces us is this: how, with the help of the Holy Spirit, are we to live our form of life as active religious in the Church today?

a) Texts of the Magisterium

Let us recall the indications given us by the Church in "Perfectae Caritatis".

1. *For all Institutes* "the manner of living, praying

and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological conditions of today's religious, and also, to the extent required by the nature of each community, to the needs of the apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstances anywhere, but especially in missionary territory." [1] To these criteria must be added those deduced from the renewal in ecclesiology and from the initiatives of the Church.[2]

2. *For institutes of active life,* "...the religious life which is committed to apostolic works takes on many forms." [3] "These communities should skillfully harmonize their observances and practices with the needs of the apostolate to which they are dedicated," each bearing in mind its original character, so that "the members will have to be sustained in living for Christ's service by means which are proper and fitting for themselves." [4]

130 b) The criteria for renewal

In the light of these texts, we can reduce the criteria for the renewal of the institute to three.

1. The changes in the world which affect persons and social groups in their being, in their way of life, and their activities for others.

2. The renewal brought about by the Church itself, starting with ecclesiology and its recognition of the process of secularization. The Church, as people of God and the Body of Christ, has the task of signifying and bringing

[1] PC 3 a-b; cf. 20 a.
[2] Cf. PC 2 c.
[3] PC 8 b.
[4] PC 8 b. These basic texts are to be completed by ES 11, 16-18, 25-27.

salvation to the world, and therefore needs to renew its institutional apparatus so as to express its mystery better, and carry out its mission more efficaciously.

3. The original nature of *our Society* which is a religious institute of active life: this fact makes us particularly sensitive to current apostolic requirements in accordance with that spirit of flexibility and creativity which Don Bosco has transmitted to us.

The permanent elements are those of which we have spoken in the preceding chapters, viz., our own mission and spirit, and consecration in a stable form of brotherly life by the profession of the evangelical counsels.

In the time of Don Bosco and during the hundred years of the life of the Congregation, these elements have been incarnated in institutional forms that have not escaped the historical process and the imperfections which normally accompany it. These imperfections, of their very nature, entail the risk of fossilization and a formalism which imprisons the spirit.[5] In a period of re-thinking and change like ours, it is to be expected that the salesians should evaluate those exterior forms which sustain the onward drive of their vocation.

131 *POINTS TO BE DEALT WITH*

The form of the Congregation will be given a more extensive treatment elsewhere. However, because of the nature of this document, it seems necessary to clarify a few points here.

A) Action demands flexible structures. Without jeopardizing our consecration, we must fully accept the life style of active religious.

[5] ET 12.

B) The Congregation must be decentralized, without endangering its unity.

C) The efficacy of our activity requires a reassessment of the work done by the original members.[6]

A) AS AN INSTITUTE OF APOSTOLIC LIFE WE MUST ACCEPT FULLY THE LIFE-STYLE OF ACTIVE RELIGIOUS

132 1. Don Bosco founded a true religious congregation with its own special characteristics

a) Don Bosco founded his Congregation

A founder, whilst receiving inspiration from the situation he lives in, has undoubtedly under the charismatic impulse of the Holy Spirit the vision and strength to blaze *new trails*. This is true of the style of religious life Don Bosco wished for his sons. He founded his Congregation at a time when in Italy the reputation of religious and the very meaning of their existence were being questioned. In founding it, he desired that it should be characterized by an extraordinary pastoral dynamism to provide an answer to some clear-cut and pressing social and church problems.

133 1. *It is a Congregation of religious who are close to all men, their brothers.*

In the external and social aspects of their life, his salesians do not perpetuate behaviour patterns which people would find off-putting and unacceptable. At that time in fact, religious "friars" were still suffering from the negative experiences and decadence associated with

[6] Cf. P. STELLA, *La società salesiana in Don Bosco*, vol. I ch. 6 pp 129-165; M. MIDALI, *Carisma salesiano e istituzione salesiana*, in "Il carisma permanente di Don Bosco," LDC 1970, pp 123-155.

religious life in previous centuries. It was Don Bosco's wish that nothing should separate his salesians, as new religious, from the men of their times. No special religious habit distinguishes them. They are at one with the people and retain their full citizenship. This preoccupation is seen in the terminology Don Bosco preferred. He called the Congregation a "society." He used current terms to designate his superiors: director, inspector (provincial). The members retain their right of ownership. "The Lord has made use of us to set a new model for the vow of poverty in accordance with the requirements of the time."[7]

134 2. *A Congregation of religious at the service of men, their brothers.*

In the 19th century, religious were accused of being society's useless parasites — an accusation which was not unfounded, even if at times unjust allegations were made. Don Bosco asked of his religious, who were to be great workers, a spirit of prayer rather than the recitation of long prayers: "The active life towards which the Society more especially tends renders its members unable to perform many exercises of piety in common." [8] Their work is a permanent and explicit service rendered to society, and especially to those in greatest need of help. For Don Bosco, spiritual life flourishes in love which is tangible, and every apostolate has social relevance. The salesian advances civilization by spreading the gospel and evangelizes by improving the level of civilization.

135 **b) Don Bosco's creative spirit**

In several important matters, Don Bosco had already shown his characteristic spirit, a spirit which was not

[7] BM IX, 502.
[8] Constitutions 152.

static and lifeless and closed, nor attached to any one particular experience. He looked rather to the validity of what he was doing, and its bearing on events around him. Paying careful attention to the apostolic ventures of others, he was ready to assimilate what he saw with his extraordinary intuition would be useful for his own numerous charitable enterprises. He thought everything out and was prepared to re-fashion in accordance with the changes which the signs and needs of the times suggested. On meeting an obstacle which he could not remove, he made a detour and forged ahead. To promote the education of young apprentices he at first made work contracts, then at a later date he organized workshops himself. In 1850, he established a society of mutual help for the boys who belonged to the Sodality of St. Aloysius, but later was prepared to abandon this and fall in with the initiatives of the workers' unions. Between 1864 and 1874 he organized external members of the society, and later took up the idea again under the form of the Union of Salesian Co-operators.

Our condition as an exempt clerical congregation has meaning for Don Bosco in so far as it corresponds with his universal vocation as an educator, and is in keeping with the mobility of modern life, overstepping local boundaries, free from restrictive and inward-looking tendencies. Don Rinaldi expresses this new idea very well: "Many obstacles were created in obtaining the approval of the Congregation because of the new spirit which Don Bosco stamped upon it, a spirit well ahead of the times. But Don Bosco worked, insisted, prayed... and waited for fully 15 years; finally, he accepted only those changes in the Constitutions which harmonized with their *modernity*, flexible and easily adaptable to time and place.

His idea was a pious society which would be a *true religious congregation minus the traditional external features.* It was enough that there should be the religious spirit,

the one factor leading to the perfection of the evangelical counsels. In all else, he believed *he could bend to the needs of the times.* This elasticity in adapting to all the forms of good which are continually arising among men is the proper spirit of our Constitutions." [9]

This openness to the times, this mental agility, this special creativity which consists in knowing how to re-think one's own enterprises and those of others, ought today more than ever to penetrate into the hearts of the salesians and induce them to rediscover the vitality which derives from a sympathetic understanding of, and sharing in the spirit of Don Bosco.

136 **2. Aspects of our renewal as an institute of active life**

a) An atmosphere which assures our spiritual authenticity as "religious" educators

The Council has also spoken of adaptation to the "physical and psychological conditions" of today's religious. This must go hand in hand with our adaptation to the apostolic needs of the world. The salesian can accomplish his apostolic work with efficacy only in so far as he is a man of interior life,[10] capable of maintaining his spiritual liberty, and of resisting the very real temptations of the world, and the wear and tear which varied activity gives rise to. True spiritual life is impossible for both the apostle and the apostolic community unless there are times and places for relaxation, recollection and spiritual renewal. In this way the laws of psychology are respected, and the balance of the members as religious and human beings is safeguarded against the constant threat posed by the pressures and tensions of the modern world.[11]

[9] ASC 1923 p 41.
[10] ET 32.
[11] ET 33.

It is absolutely essential that the structures of our life provide for this need. The latest and perhaps most original section of Pope Paul's exhortation — nos. 32-38 of ET — can serve as a guide-line on this point. The Pope invites us to adapt our life style directing it towards the building up of the "man of interior life." "An excessive desire for flexibility and creative spontaneity could give the appearance of rigidity to that minimum of regularity which is ordinarily required for the life of a community and for personal maturity." [12] The religious community must live in an atmosphere of regularity and fraternity in which discipline is freely accepted. In such a context, each one is allowed to become an "open and complete person," [13] whose being is gradually becoming more deeply christian in accordance with the beatitudes.[14] Only on this condition will the salesian guarantee a "qualified" presence in the midst of the youth of the world.

b) A life-style and presence adapted to the needs of the salesian apostolate today [15]

It should be evident that the *society structures* given to the Congregation by Don Bosco (our particular way of practising the vows, our forms of prayer, and community living, etc...) are, at root, functional and relative.

Our *presence*, especially amongst youth, indicates an attitude of attention and a will to meet them. It requires us to live with them, to share in their ideals and undertakings, and in the joys and difficulties they encounter. It is expressed in the desire to avoid everything in our ways of thinking, speaking, and living which makes us outsiders and aliens. This qualified presence is a *function*

[12] ET 32.
[13] ET 34.
[14] ET 36.
[15] PC 8.

of the Church. It is a participation, according to the "charism of the institute," [16] in the mission which the Church has reaffirmed of herself; "to be present in the world of today" to purify, animate and save it.

B) AS AN INSTITUTE OF GENUINE APOSTOLIC SERVICE WE MUST ACCEPT PLURALISM IN UNITY

137 1. Need for unifying structures

We take unity as our starting point — the fact, that is, that we are what we are, and are determined to take the necessary steps to be so. As a consequence, the salesians will be able to fulfil their mission in a variety of suitable pastoral forms.

We are one in our mission, in our spirit lived in all its richness, in the values of our religious and apostolic consecration. We are one as groups and individuals united in an institute juridically recognised by the Church. This unity should be maintained and advanced by means of suitable and efficient structures of co-responsibility, formation, communication, government and exchange. Today, unity is ever more widely understood in terms of spirit — co-responsible, capable of dialogue, radiating salesianity — rather than as the product of law.

138 2. Present reasons for decentralization

a) The Church

The hierarchic vision of Vatican I has been enriched by Vatican II, which stresses the communitarian aspects of the people of God. The universal Church today sees herself as a "communion of particular churches" united in Christ and in his vicar who holds the primacy in love. Based on this unity and communion, the Church can

[16] ET 32.

become the servant of that world which she seeks to animate and evangelize, a world rich in the pluralism of its peoples and cultures.

b) Religious of active life

Religious of active life because they are the Church, and because within the Church they function as an organism which by its nature is more flexible and in closer touch with life, consequently, they must fulfil their apostolic mission in a variety of suitable pastoral forms.[17]

c) Salesians

The raison d'être of the salesians in the Church is the salvation of the youth of the working classes in widely differing socio-cultural contexts. Our action is ecclesial action, inserted in the over-all pastoral activity of the local church. In order that the pastoral activity of a world-wide organization should be efficacious and suitably adapted, pluralism is absolutely necessary.[18]

139 3. Areas where flexibility and pluralism can be applied

The concrete application of this pluralism consists in recognizing the *relative autonomy* of each province (or group of provinces according to national or cultural unity). Each is a living community with an institutional unity charged with the task of carrying out Don Bosco's mission in the local church. The province is responsible for structures to maintain unity with the centre and within its own confines and also those which will make it possible to fulfil our salesian mission in a way which meets local needs.

[17] Cf. nos. 30-33.
[18] Cf. also nos. 28, 30, 33, 78-84.

Therefore decentralization and the pluralism which results from it, must be accepted with loyalty as being necessary for the fulfilment of our mission,

— in our pastoral activity on behalf of youth and adults in the choice of activities, works, experiments;

— in the formation required for these activities;

— in the diversity of legitimate ways in which salesianity will be expressed in accordance with the cultural and religious character of each region. This type of pluralism must spread to the local communities in proportionate measure. And this will allow us to express the salesian charism in all its richness, and thus serve the Church better.

C) AS AN INSTITUTE OF FRATERNAL AND APOSTOLIC LIFE, WE MUST REASSESS THE IDENTITY OF THE MEMBERS, AFFIRMING THEIR FUNDAMENTAL EQUALITY AND SPECIFYING THEIR FUNCTIONS

140 Introduction

One of the characteristics which attentive biographers of Don Bosco believe should be stressed is his "tendency towards action, or better towards work, often motivated by a consciousness of his mission from God and by urgent needs." This attitude "distinguishes Don Bosco's spirituality of the active life from that of St. Francis of Sales and others who, despite their life of intense work, still give great importance in their own spiritual awareness to psychological and psychosensory efforts to reach a state of union with God in prayer." [19]

Many original "creations" of Don Bosco bear witness to his practicality. It is against the background of his

[19] P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, PAS Verlag, II p 15.

spiritual initiative in this field that the "identity" of his salesians, priests and brothers is to be viewed.

141 1. *THE SALESIAN PRIEST*

a) The "identity crisis" of the salesian priest today

The salesian priest can experience the profound questionings and anxieties which are assailing priests everywhere. Layfolk substitute the priest in education, social services, aid to under-developed countries, as moving spirits in cultural activities, marriage advisers, and sometimes also as specialists in catechetics and creative evangelization. What is left for him?

142 b) His "identity"

The world is taking shape according to certain definite characteristics,[20] which are transforming many of the roles the priest formerly played into subsidiary functions. However, this world is still the object of apostolic action for which there is no substitute. The priest is the spiritual man and must always have before his eyes the image of Christ, servant and good shepherd. His ministry is an act of service, eschatological in character, the visible signs of which are his preaching the gospel, and his conferring the sacraments.[21] In virtue of his office, he publicly proclaims Christ as Saviour of "today's world;" he gathers together the christian community, uniting them in Christ's sacrifice; and as their guide, he leads them to the Father through Christ in the Spirit.[22] It is this paschal mystery which gives the priest his identity.

[20] Cf. nos. 31-33.
[21] PO 12.
[22] PO 6.

143 c) **The salesian priest**

The salesian priest is called to exercise this ministry in the spirit of Don Bosco especially for young people in need. His work entails a wide range of commitments, and his service is expressed in a variety of forms, in different places and circumstances. But he always prefers what the young esteem and love, and want of him, so as to give them that which he alone, through God's favour, can bring.

144 d) **The context of his mission as educator in the faith**

The salesian priest must put before himself as his ideal and as the criterion of his educative activity Don Bosco's great capacity for adapting to the times. There are many traits which characterize human relations today. By way of example one can site a sense of common responsibility in matters which concern all; a new concept of authority and of interpersonal relations; an awareness that the problem of justice in a world in which society is evolving assumes global proportions. The salesian must consequently strive to acquire this new sensitivity, for it will enable him to exercise his pastoral ministry amongst young people who are living in this atmosphere. Furthermore, the whole salesian community, of which he is a living part, must carry out its pastoral activity fully aware of these new situations. The basic element of cohesion, education and direction is to be found in his pastoral love consecrated in the sacrament of holy orders.

145 2. *THE SALESIAN BROTHER*

1. **Don Bosco's idea**

The category of lay brother was already to be found in other institutes — the Pavoniani of Brescia, for example. In this sense Don Bosco's lay religious are not an original

creation. With his customary practicality, Don Bosco assimilated the idea, and refashioned it in view of his own complex of undertakings. He included the "co-adjutor" (brother) in his organization as printer, shoemaker, blacksmith, factotum (like Bro. Rossi), and gave him maximum scope (Dogliani, for instance, was a highly esteemed musician and a respected composer).

2. Basic characteristics

The fundamental characteristics of the salesian brother and the links which integrate him with the salesian priest can be briefly outlined as follows:

146 **a) A fundamental equality**

In 1927, Don Rinaldi wrote: "When Don Bosco began to think about founding a new religious society, he desired all the members, priests, clerics and brothers to enjoy the same rights and privileges... The brothers do not constitute a second order, but are true salesians, obliged to the same perfection and to exercise the same apostolate, which forms the essence of the salesian society." [23] A basic equality therefore: the one religious consecration, and the identical apostolic mission form the basis of the equality between priest and brother. Where this is lacking, there cannot be even an authentic community life.

147 **b) With distinct and complementary roles**

The identical apostolic mission is a complex reality, but the distinct roles to be filled by each member must correspond to the individual vocation of each one.

Beyond the "rights and obligations... resulting from sacred orders," beyond the service which the salesian

[23] ASC 24 July 1927 p 574.

priest, within the community envisaged by Don Bosco, must render it through his pastoral love consecrated by holy orders, a great variety of apostolic works and forms of service is open to the brother, some of which are indeed more suited to his lay vocation than to that of a priest.

148 c) A deep unity

One must endeavour to understand that in the field of education of youth it is better to create deep unity in intention and in practice, rather than set up rigid boundaries and clearcut demarcation lines. Diversity of function is a reason for unity and apostolic effectiveness, not for separation. For it can create greater solidarity through the pooling of the qualities and talents of each individual, and as each complements the other, it can increase our apostolic efficacy.

"The same sons of St John Bosco must stand side by side, complete one another, and go forward in carrying out the aims of their identical mission... they are not separate or divergent elements, but the heirs, instruments and executors of the same divine plan." [24] If we succeed in assimilating this truth of our mutual need and service, we shall all come to understand that in the Congregation there exists only Jesus Christ who is above all and who completes himself through the ministry of each individual for the salvation of youth.

149 d) The lay aspect of the brother's vocation

The particular traits of the lay dimension of the brother's vocation are the following:

— with the characteristics proper to religious life, he lives his vocation as a member of the laity, seeking "the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs

[24] Don RICALDONE, ASC 1939 p 180.

and by ordering them according to the plan of God;"

— he exercises his baptismal priesthood, prophetic witness and kingly service, and in this way truly shares in the life and mission of Christ in the Church;

— with the intensity that derives from his specific consecration, and by "mandate" of the Church — and not merely as a private individual — he fulfils the mission of spreading the gospel, and of sanctifying in a non-sacramental manner;

— his works of charity are undertaken with greater dedication within a Congregation devoted to the integral education of youth, especially those in need;

— finally, as regards the christian renewal of the temporal order, since he has renounced worldliness, he exercises this form of apostolate as a religious in a most efficacious manner, educating youth to the christian renewal of work and to other human values.

In many spheres, he can play a role which cannot be substituted: "There are things which priests and clerics cannot do, and which you will do," said Don Bosco.[25] It is therefore necessary that we be prepared to make more far-reaching experiments than those tried to date. This is demanded by the times we are living in, and by the need to promote the vocation of the brother in all its originality.

150 3. *THE SALESIAN DEACON*

Don Bosco never refused to include as capable and complementary forces for the accomplishment of his mission, those church or lay persons which his times presented him with.

[25] BM XVI, 312.

The Council has reassessed in the ecclesiology of LG [26] the figure and functions of the deacon. It is therefore opportune that the Congregation should take this possibility into account where particular needs of the local church suggest, especially in mission lands.

Since the permanent deacon has a specifically different vocation from the brother and the priest, the Congregation conscious of the fact that he does not change its nature and that, as has been said, he can be particularly useful in the fulfilment of her mission, will have to arrange an adequate preparation for the ministry which is his, planning explicitly the conditions of his life in the places where he works, or to which he is transferred. In fact a Congregation like ours, operating on a world-wide scale, can assure deacons of a sphere of action, where the needs of the Church are more pressing. Particular requirements will give rise to experiments in this regard, which will proceed gradually, observing the directives of the magisterium of the Church.

[26] LG 29 and also *Lettera Apostolica-Motu Proprio* "Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem."

CHAPTER SIX

THE SALESIAN "FAMILY" TODAY

151 1. The need to consider the theme of the "family" in our salesian renewal

The salesians cannot fully re-think their vocation in the Church without reference to those who share with them in carrying out their Founder's will. Consequently they are seeking a greater union of all, whilst preserving the genuine diversity of each.

152 2. The Term "Family"

This word indicates the reality of interpersonal relationships, and a certain style in keeping with them, amongst those who possess the "salesian spirit," which is precisely a "family spirit."

This term is continually used in the salesian tradition to indicate in a generic way, the links which exist between the salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, co-operators, pupils and past pupils.

After close examination one reaches the conclusion that the concept of "family" is applied in a different way to these various groups according to the nature of their relationship. The co-operators, for example, belong to the salesian family because both as an association and individually they assume the responsibility of fulfilling in the world the mission which the founder has given them, in union with the Congregation, and in accordance with its spirit. The pupils and past pupils on the other hand belong to the salesian family for other reasons, especially the fact that they are or have been the recipients of salesian education which ought to spur them on to various types of apostolic activity.

A) THE EXISTENCE OF DON BOSCO'S FAMILY UP TO THE PRESENT DAY AND THE PROBLEM IT POSES

The problem has its origin in a rather complex historical fact. In order to fulfil his vocation to save poor and abandoned youth, Don Bosco sought a wide grouping of apostolic forces, linked together in the unity of a "family."

153 1. Don Bosco, charismatic founder

In founding the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Co-operators to work together in his mission, and according to his spirit, Don Bosco gave the Salesian Congregation a special role.

From 1841 to 1888, he showed a *singleness of purpose* which can be traced through a wide spectrum of *different decisions*. This was to unite all who agreed to work with him in a vast ensemble. "...In these difficult times we must unite..." [1] "Unity amongst ourselves and with the Congregation... Let us be united in our common aim, and in using the same means to achieve it... Let us be united in a single family by the bonds of fraternal charity which will stimulate us to help and support one another in our work for others." [2]

This *drive towards reunion and communion* even during Don Bosco's life time took on different forms according to the degree of participation and the types of activities which the members undertook. Summarizing we can cite: the work of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales; after 1850 participation in different ways in the work of the Salesian Society from its origins (1855 to 1858); participation in a manner that was juridically acceptable, though not clearly defined, nor in fact realized by "ex-

[1] From *Rules* for the Co-operators, Introduction. 1876.
[2] *Bollettino Salesiano*, Jan. 1878 pp 1-3.

ternal members" "affiliated" to the society between 1864 and 1874; spiritual union with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians through the person of the Rector Major from about 1872 till the start of the 20th century; and finally, from 1874 participation as Co-operators, lay or ecclesiastical.

Don Bosco expressed his plan in a well-known passage: "The Union of Salesian Co-operators is a very important association in our eyes. It is the soul of our Congregation, and serves as a link whereby we can do good together with the people who live in the world. There exists the Salesian Congregation for those who wish to consecrate their lives to God through religious profession. There is the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for girls who wish to follow the salesian way of life. Now we need friends and benefactors in the world who live the salesian spirit whilst remaining in their own families. This is what the salesian co-operators do. They help us in our needs, and support us in our difficulties. They collaborate with us in our undertakings for the glory of God, especially when we lack personnel or funds. The number of these co-operators must grow as much as possible." [3]

There is another aspect which completes Don Bosco's view of the co-operators. It places them in the context of the local church whilst remaining faithful to the salesian spirit. "I have studied a great deal the question of the foundation of the salesian co-operators," Don Bosco is reported as saying to Don Lemoyne on 16th February 1884. "Their true object is not to help the salesians but to aid the Church, the bishops, the parish priests, under the general direction of the salesians, in works of charity — such as catechetics, the education of the poor, etc.

[3] Point for discussion for the first GC 1877; MS of Don Bosco.

Helping the salesians means helping in one of the numerous apostolates existing in the catholic Church. It's true that we shall call upon them when we have need, but they are instruments in the hands of the bishops... we should not be jealous of our salesian co-operators because they belong to the diocese, and all parish priests together with their parishioners ought to be co-operators." [4]

2. The different groups and their history: awareness of a salesian common good and of real unity

a) Those belonging to the salesian family "in the strict sense"

154 1. *Co-operators.* An awareness of the fact that the co-operators belong to the salesian family has always been substantially present *in the course of our history,* though a certain amount of difficulty was entailed in establishing this juridically. Through the enlightening grace of God, the co-operators are called to share in the mission of the founder, according to their different states in life, and also to share his spirit.

This awareness is found in the *Regulations* of the Association: "The association has as its primary end, the active life of charity towards one's neighbour and especially young people in need." [5] *The same fields of apostolate are* proposed for the co-operators as for the salesian Congregation to which they wish to be associated.[6] "The members of the salesian Congregation will consider all co-operators as brothers in Jesus Christ and turn to them for help... With equal liberty, the co-operators will have recourse to the members of the salesian Congregation." [7]

[4] BM XVII, 25 quoted by P. STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica,* PAS Verlag, I pp 220-221.

[5] Regulations, I 1963 p 8.

[6] Ibid, p 9.

[7] Ibid, p 13.

Pius XII on 12 September 1952, in his discourse to the co-operators on the occasion of their 75th anniversary affirmed their salesian identity: "salesian co-operators, effective auxiliaries of Catholic Action... new providential movement of catholic laity... Deeply permeated by the salesian spirit... men and women who fully live the salesian ideal... The requirements of your manifold work... oblige you to attend jealously to your interior life, that life which the wisdom of the *saint of action* provided for, *when to you, no less than* to his twofild family of Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, he gave a *rule of spiritual life* destined to *form you — whilst not living the common life — to that internal and external religious spirit* suited to one who is striving for the perfection of christian charity." [8]

Today the co-operators show their clear *awareness* of belonging to the salesian family in their "message to the members of the Special General Chapter:" "*Fully aware* of belonging to the one salesian family, because of our common founder, our aims, the principal object of our apostolate, our sharing of spiritual goods, and the same superiors."

155 2. *The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.* The events of the period 1872-1969 bear witness to changes in the juridical forms of the relationship of the salesian Congregation with the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians* — passing from dependence on the Rector Major to their autonomy. They also reveal the preoccupation of Don Bosco, his successors, and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians too, that even with these variations, it should always be possible to safeguard and nourish the particularly salesian form of the spirit of the gospel for the mission to which they are called.

[8] Ibid, p 28.

156 3. *Other members.* Other religious or secular institutes (e.g. the Volunteers of Don Bosco) or organized groups which, in harmony with the inspiration of Don Bosco, are called to fulfil his mission in accordance with his spirit, belong to this family in the strict sense.

157 b) Those who "for different reasons" belong to the salesian family "in the broad sense"

1. *Pupils and past pupils.* The way in which the *pupils* and the *Movement of Past Pupils* belong to the salesian family stems *ordinarily*, as has already been indicated, and above all from the fact that they are or have been the recipients of our education in an atmosphere in which the family spirit prevails. Educators should ensure that these ties are lasting. The Declaration on Christian Education is of the same mind: "Even after students have graduated, their teachers should continue to assist them with advice and friendship, and also by establishing special groups genuinely inspired by the spirit of the Church." [9] This is what our past pupils are asking of us and what the present World Confederation of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco intends.[10]

It is to be hoped that within the movement for the past pupils, as a result of the education they have received, those who are inclined and gifted that way should become organized as co-operators or members of apostolic groups so as to participate in the spirit and activity of the salesian family in appropriate apostolates within their local church.

2. Those well-wishers and benefactors who have some connection with salesian work can also be said to belong to the salesian family 'in the broad sense.'

[9] GE 8.
[10] Cf. Statutes art 7.

3. Present day needs cause the problem of unity and communion to be posed in fresh terms

158 a) The view of the Special Provincial Chapter

These Chapters in general have asked for a renewed effort on the part of salesians in promoting the greater unity and closer collaboration between those who share in the mission and the spirit of Don Bosco.[11]

159 b) The ecclesial reality of the salesian family

In fact, the background to the activity of the salesian family today and of which its members should be aware, consists in this:

— that the salesian family is an ecclesial reality which becomes a sign and witness of the vocation of its members through their special mission according to the spirit of Don Bosco;

— in line with the Church's teaching about herself — the salesian family is an expression of communion consisting of different ways of serving the people of God, and integrating various vocations, so as to show forth the richness of the founder's charism;

— the salesian family develops an original spirituality, charismatic by nature, which enriches the whole body of the Church and becomes a particular model of christian pedagogy.

The salesian family therefore, viewed within the mystery of the Church must define its identity, its mission and its form, in the light of the essential dimensions of the Church. This requires that we speak of vocation, mission, witness, communion, historicity, and permanent renewal, as being fundamental components of this family.

[11] Cf. First and Second Special Provincial Chapters.

160 **c) The signs of the times**

The extraordinary extent and complexity of *youth problems today* stimulate our zeal to accentuate the *redistribution* of the forces at work in this sector, and to improve their mutual *collaboration.* This is not simply a question of a "strategy of action" at a human level, but of building the future together in the light of the gospel, in the dynamism of christian hope [12] under the impulse of the action of God who is constructing his kingdom in human history.[13]

B) UNION, COMMUNION, AND DIVERSITY IN THE FAMILY ("in the strict sense") (one body with different complementary parts)

161 **1. Common elements**

If we wish to trace out the elements which the various groups of the salesian family have in common, we must bear in mind that basically they can be reduced to the fact that all are called to the same salvific *mission* as *Don Bosco,* a mission to be achieved in accordance with his spirit.

It can be said that the *mission* inspired by Don Bosco is *one,* but that it is carried out through a wide *diversity of pastoral* and apostolic *forms.* Let us first of all take a brief look at the common elements.

162 a) *The consecration through baptism* (and confirmation) is the basic element which all members of the salesian family have in common. In virtue of this consecration they are called by God to christian holiness. "All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or stature, are called

[12] LG 10 a; 35 a; 48 b; UR 2 e; 12 a; GS 93 a.
[13] LG 5; 9 b; 35 b; 36 a; AG 42 b; GS 38 a; 39 b.

to the fullness of christian life and to the perfection of charity." [14]

In this sense all christians are called to share the spirit of the evangelical counsels,[15] translating and incarnating it in their own state of life. For the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians this is evident in their profession of the religious vows, but this spirit animates the life of the co-operators too. In their regulations, Don Bosco indicates a certain similarity and mutual attraction between the life of the salesian religious and that of the co-operators: "No particular external apostolate is prescribed for the salesian co-operators, but so that their lives *may bear some resemblance* to that of those who live in *religious community* they are recommended to observe modesty in dress, frugality at table, simplicity in furnishing the home, control of the tongue, and exactness in the performance of the duties of their state." In other words, "on becoming salesian co-operators, they can continue to live in the midst of their normal occupations, in their own family, and yet live as if they were in fact members of the Congregation." [16]

163 b) *Common vocation and mission.* All the members of the salesian family receive from the Holy Spirit a special grace of enlightenment and decision in view of the concrete needs of poor and abandoned youth. These two movements of 'vocation' and 'mission' are correlative and sustain the particular decision of the person who replies positively to this grace. This reply, it will be noted, is expressed in a different manner according to the state of life of the individual (religious man or woman, member of a secular institute, or baptized christian).

[14] LG 41.
[15] LG 42.
[16] Regulations VI p 16.

This common vocation (in the groups referred to) is directed towards the same object. It is sufficient to quote a few words from the Regulations of the Co-operators: "The salesian co-operators work in the same harvest as the Congregation of St. Francis of Sales with whom they intend to be associated." [17]

164 c) *The common 'salesian spirit.'* This is the special spirit and typical *style* with which the salesians, in God's Church, bring Christ's saving love to the youth of today: This was the will of our holy Founder when he wrote "Now it is necessary that we should have friends and benefactors in the world who *live completely* the spirit of the salesians whilst remaining in their own families. This is precisely what the salesian co-operators do." [18]

165 d) *According to a form of apostolic fraternity* which takes its rise in their common zeal for the salvation of youth, and expresses itself in different ways. The action of all the members of the salesian family (understood as the integral development and education in the faith of poor and abandoned boys) is both *communitarian and fraternal,* and is based on the principle of co-responsibility.

However, differences of time, place, and person will determine the various ways in which this complex apostolic action is expressed. This variety is essential when one considers the diversity within the movement itself of the groups which make it up, and their mutual relationships, and also the inclusion of salesian action within the pastoral activity of parish, diocese and region.

In such a wide variety of expressions the 'family style,' characteristic of Don Bosco, is an element of unity amongst the members of the salesian family, and a trait which typifies their apostolate.

[17] Ibid p 13.

[18] Manuscript cited above.

166 2. **Differences**

The type of consecration and the way of life proper to each individual member of the salesian family give rise to the different ways in which the salesian mission is realized and the 'salesian spirit' lived.

A plurality of graces, apostolates and works [19] in view of a common mission is an aspect of the catholicity of the Church. The same is true within the salesian family. At the source we always discover a *different, particularized vocation.*

167 a) *The Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.* Since they have received from God the gift of a religious vocation, a greater commitment in fulfilling the salesian mission is expected of them in accordance with their type of consecration. Their *chastity,* embraced for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, is a clear sign of an individual love for Christ and becomes "a stimulus towards charity, as well as a unique source of spiritual fertility" [20] in the world of youth today. God's call to *poverty,* reminding man that ultimately progress consists in our "participating as sons in the life of our living God" [21] makes them grateful and sensitive to the requirements of poor young people. Finally with the profession of *obedience* "following the example of Christ who came to carry out his Father's will, and in union with him... they are bound more closely to the service of the Church and their brethren" [22] and this is achieved in a *communal life.*

Within the Salesian Congregation and in relation to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the one relig-

[19] Cf. LG 32 c.
[20] LG 42 c.
[21] PC 13.
[22] ET 23.

ious vocation receives a further diversification from the fact that it is lived on the basis of the sacramental consecration of baptism, confirmation and priesthood, or baptism and confirmation only.

168 b) This is also true for *other female religious institutes*, whilst the secular institutes, for instance the "Volunteers of Don Bosco," carry to maturity their baptismal and confirmation consecration by the profession of the evangelical counsels, united by the salesian spirit in the particular work of charity to which they are dedicated. They achieve this without a life in common, but like the leaven which animates the Body of Christ and causes it to grow, they are immersed in the world's structures: "In fulfilling this secular consecration, the 'Volunteers' take their inspiration from the spiritual message of Don Bosco, whose ideals they share, through the Servant of God, Don Philip Rinaldi." [23]

169 c) *Salesian co-operators*. The christian commitment resulting from baptismal and confirmation consecration receives a fresh orientation from its connection with the Association of Salesian Co-operators. Hence the co-operators are immersed in temporal activities [24] with special emphasis on the integral education of poor and abandoned youth — without however, the specific responsibility entailed by religious and secular consecration.

170 d) *Other possible groups* which may come together under Don Bosco's inspiration, and whose form is recognized by the Congregation, can be efficaciously present in this family, with their values and precious ministry.

[23] Constitutions of the Volunteers of Don Bosco art 5.
[24] Cf. GS 43.

171 **3. Communion in the same basic vocation and with the minimum of institutionalized unity**

a) *The Holy Spirit is the bond of unity of those 'called together.'* The foundation of our salesianity is the call of the Holy Spirit to realize in an organic though complex way the salvation of poor and abandoned youth according to the spirit of Don Bosco. In this sense, all the members of the salesian family feel that their reciprocal bonds are authentic. Don Bosco expressed this in the Regulations for Co-operators "The members of the Salesian Congregation will consider all the co-operators as *brothers in Jesus Christ.*[25]

The salesian co-operators are aware of this common vocation and express it in the "message to the members of the Special General Chapter:" "We believe... that the time is ripe for the establishment at every level between salesian religious and salesian co-operators a mutual relationship of *true fraternity.* From now on, this will constitute a new style of salesian life, both within and outside the educative communities duly open to the co-operators."

172 b) *Institutional unity.* The various elements which make up the salesian family all require some *external* institutionalized *expression.* We know with what insistence *Don Bosco* wished to unite publicly (even if, with great flexibility) the efforts of his various collaborators. This is not the place to determine the concrete forms this visible unity and organization will assume. It is sufficient to affirm the principle — which is beyond discussion.

The autonomy of each group of the family is guaranteed, so that each may fully express its own riches. But the external and functional link between the groups — ex-

[25] Regulation IV p 13.

pression of a common salesian vocation — is likewise reaffirmed.

173 c) *The particular role of the salesian society.* Stemming from the Holy Spirit who inspired Don Bosco to fulfil a determined mission with a certain spirit, we take a look at the part played by salesians in the salesian family. In the first place, their function is one of '*stability*:' they live the salesian mission and spirit through religious consecration according to the fullness of Don Bosco. Their profession of the evangelical counsels provides them with those helps necessary for stability and coherent creativity (as demanded by their salesian mission and spirit) in the Church on the one hand, and amongst the groups that make up the family on the other.

They also have the function of being '*animators.*' The salesians, since they achieve the fullness of their consecration (by baptism, confirmation, and for some by holy orders) are bearers and animators, in the Church and in the salesian family itself, of our mission seen in its integrity: — human development to the fullness of christian life.

Finally they exercise a 'unifying' function both within the various groups in virtue of the animation referred to above, and externally because, in a spirit of service they bind together the individual groups and the groups among themselves.

C) INTERCOMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

174 ### 1. Basic motives and aims

The reflections we have made ought to lead each group to communicate its riches, so that they may become the riches of all.

Dynamic fidelity to the Spirit and its gifts demands this, so that the original and inventive form of each

group might achieve the 'common cause' of the salesian family. By means of this sharing, we shall all be enlightened on the *relevance for today* and the *authenticity* of the gift made to Don Bosco and of the gifts which the Spirit in like manner bestows on us. We shall have a better appreciation of the force and *apostolic fruitfulness* of our mission and of the method to be adopted; through sharing and collaboration, we shall live the experience of the gospel — to our mutual enrichment.

Dynamic fidelity to Don Bosco through sharing and collaborating will extend the influence of his pastoral intuition and his paternity. This will shine all the more brightly because every increase in fraternity, unity, and commitment on the part of those who consider themselves his "sons" adds to his stature. This paternity will assume ecclesial dimensions. Don Bosco is in fact the source of male and female religious, committed layfolk, and consecrated members of secular institutes, resulting directly from his work or the sanctity of his sons.

Through co-responsibility and dialogue the unstifled natural qualities of individuals and the variety of apostolic endeavours will help to avoid uniformity on the one hand, and will achieve and strengthen unity on the other.

Those who exercise the service of authority have the duty of stimulating such a contribution, which builds up the Body of Christ.[26]

175 2. Content and methods of this sharing and collaboration

a) *Content.* Possible objects for mutual collaboration and communication between the various groups could be:

1. the *present situation* in the preaching of the gospel message to the young and the working classes according to our mission;[27]

[26] Cf. AA 3 d; PO 9 b.
[27] Cf. Ch. II nos. 58-84.

2. *relations* with other organizations in view of a joint pastoral action within the local church;

3. the *means* that will be useful for our common formation and information in view of the mission assigned to us.

176 b) *Method.* Communication and collaboration are not to be equated with dependence of the different groups on the salesian Congregation. We reaffirm the internal and administrative autonomy of the various groups in their different forms.

Sharing and collaboration must take place in the salesian apostolate within the local church. The pastoral situation in the local church and the specific nature of the salesian apostolate will determine the forms which, by mutual agreement, this interchange will take.

177 3. **Conclusion**

The capacity to manifest unity in mission and salesian spirit expressed in a plurality of forms, and the creativity of each group for the benefit of the others, will make us more acceptable in the Church, the communion of salvation, more *effective* in our apostolic work, and *richer* in personal fulfilment.

"Hence the group apostolate of christian believers happily corresponds to a human and christian need, and at the same time signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ, who said: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' " [28]

[28] Mt 18, 20; AA 18.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

178 The Special General Chapter entrusts to the provincial conferences, chapters and councils the practical application of these DIRECTIVES, which it offers to the confrères to help to bring about the desired renewal.

Their *main task* will be to study the kinds of initiative and plans of action that will ensure an eventual realization of this renewal both on a personal and community level.

179 1. A rediscovery of the real meaning of our mission

As our MISSION is a specific element of our salesian identity, these practical directives should be looked upon as decisive for the work of renewal.

It is necessary to point out to the confrères the *supernatural sense* of our mission in its theological and ecclesial aspects as a sharing in the mission of Christ and of the people of God.

It is also important to remind them of the *spiritual resources* inherent in our mission which help us to live more completely our religious vocation and the spirit of Don Bosco.

The best possible use must be made at all levels (individual, local and provincial) of all the available ways and means which help the confrères to live their salesian mission more generously. Among such helps are: a deeper study of the theology of the active religious life, discussions and talks on this subject, meetings and retreats with this end in view, a community check on the ideals of this mission, pastoral work, etc.

180 2. **Absolute priority of pastoral work for youth**

Recognizing that the primary end of our work is for the young, and bearing in mind the pre-eminence and importance of such work in modern society, we have a threefold obligation:

a) to acquire a direct *knowledge* of the young people of today with all their problems;

b) unconditional *availability* for youth work at provincial and diocesan level;

c) a *re-dimensioning* of our work and activities which will permit us to offer a better and more adequate service on behalf of the young, and so re-awaken in all the confrères Don Bosco's apostolic charity in their regard.

As a consequence, this absolute priority of youth work will mean: on the one hand that our activity on behalf of youth will take up the greatest part of our time, our efforts and our personnel; and on the other, that even in our work for adults, according to their needs, we shall still maintain our primary preoccupation *for the young*.

181 3. **Absolute priority of the "poor"**

Bearing especially in mind the mission left us by Don Bosco on behalf of boys, "especially of the poorer classes," and also that of adults most in need amongst the working classes,[1] whose faith and very survival are being attacked; and remembering how the conditions of the modern world multiply, often tragically, the number and wretched conditions of both, we must remember our obligation as dedicated apostles to ease the lot of the poor and help them to realize an integral, material, social, cultural and religious freedom.

[1] Cf. article 1 of the Constitutions.

This implies certain precise decisions:

a) the gradual *channelling* of our efforts to the poorest of the young and to adults most in need, i.e., to those who have the least possibility of realizing in their lives the designs of God, whether they live in under-developed countries or wealthy regions;

b) the *correction* of certain exaggerations in works which developed in a way that does not give clear witness of the salesian charism (for the poor) with consequent atrophy of the usual congenial salesian characteristics;[2]

c) *the inculcating of an appreciation and understanding*, in the light of the phenomenon of poverty and the doctrine of the Council and the social encyclicals, of the evangelic and apostolic validity of the campaign for justice in the world, with the object of making it more human;

d) the clear acceptance, in this spirit and with the necessary elucidations and reservations, of such a campaign without divorcing it from our direct obligation of preaching the gospel;

e) a more precise *concentration of our efforts* of service to the third world, without detriment to our obligations in other sectors equally in need.[3]

182 **4. Our service to the illiterate**

Our work for poor boys is in great demand today especially in those countries still in course of development, because the first aim in any plan of social development is the provison of a basic education.[4] Because of this

[2] Fr. RICCERI, *Letter...* p 20.

[3] N.B. For the practical directives in connection with Evangelization and Catechesis, cf. Document 3.

[4] Cf. p 35.

the salesian Congregation, through its Special General Chapter, dedicates itself to an effective collaboration with those social organizations which promote the cause of justice in the world through basic education, beginning with reading and writing.

183 5. **The permanent salesian diaconate**

Our Special General Chapter, in the spirit of Don Bosco, identifies itself with the post-conciliar movement towards renewal, one characteristic of which is the restoration of the figure and role of the deacon.

The eventual salesian deacon will take his place amongst those responsible for the salesian mission without changing the nature of the Congregation but rather completing it in the practice of its salvific ministry in collaboration with the priest, through missions, parishes, work with youth groups, etc.

In order that experiments along these lines can be made during the next six years, it would be opportune, where the particular circumstances of the local church require it, for provincial chapters and the respective councils:

a) to study the method to be followed for its *eventual institution*;

b) to give candidates for the diaconate an adequate preparation;

c) *to follow the experiment* attentively with the local church, with a view to its future definitive realization.

184 6. **The salesian brother - lay religious**

With the intention of producing a more intense "communion," even from the point of view of direct responsibility, the Special General Chapter, after an ample debate on the subject of the brother in the context of our renewal, has decided that brothers can become mem-

bers of councils at all levels (local, provincial and world). An adequate and gradual move in this direction is therefore imperative in order to render this decision operative.

Therefore:

a) each province should undertake the provision for brothers of an adequate *religious* and theological *preparation*, together with *technical and professional qualifications*, in view of these new posts of responsibility;

b) wherever possible, posts of direct *responsibility* should be given to them in the different spheres of salesian work, e.g. schools, youth centres, publishing houses, etc;

c) the main point however at the moment is to *change the mind and attitude of the whole Congregation* towards the salesian brother;

d) with this in view, provision should be made for:

1. a *general meeting* of the brothers of each *region* (or at least each group of provinces) within *two years* of the close of the Special General Chapter, at which problems can be aired and steps taken for a practical application of the Chapter decisions;

2. a *world meeting* of brothers some time in the following two years with representatives from each region.[5]

185 **7. Pastoral work of the province in the context of the local church**

The ecclesial service rendered by Don Bosco to the Pope and the bishops, and the new evaluation of the local church in the present renewal, lead us to consider the role of each province in this kind of pastoral work. Our availability for such activity on behalf of the local

[5] Concerning representation at this meeting, use could be made of a formula analogous to that used for the election of delegates to the GC.

church means that each province and each group of provinces even more so, should study how best this can be done.

This entails for provinces full co-operation with other groups working for youth, especially in the field of catechetics, and special attention must be paid to the instructions of the bishops and episcopal conferences concerned. Technical organization is indispensable and special groups must be set up for inter-communication and research, and for the purpose of promoting interest and exchange of ideas.

But this legitimate pluralism requires more effort on our part to preserve unity, e.g. in fostering a sense of mission and common spirit, and in frequent and fraternal exchanges with other provincial communities and with the Rector Major who is the visible sign of unity.

186 8. **Centre of "Salesianity"**

In the conviction that a deep knowledge of our salesian spirit is a big help in the renewal of the Congregation, we recommend the establishing of a *salesian centre* where the various aspects of our salesian spirit can be studied (historical, pedagogical, spiritual, ascetical, etc.).

The scientific and pastoral work of such a centre will help to give the confrères, especially those in formation, a doctrine that will nourish and sustain their vocation and inspire their apostolic activity.

187 9. **Knowledge of Don Bosco's more important works**

The much desired return to our beginnings likewise demands a revitalization in the spirit of the Founder. To effect this a knowledge of the more significant writings of Don Bosco is indispensable. Consequently *all the confrères should be given the possibility of contact* with our salesian sources in their own language.

It is the duty of those in charge to provide for the translation of whatever is considered more important for a deeper knowledge of Don Bosco and his spirit, such as the Memoirs of the Oratory, the Spiritual Testament, the treatise on the preventive system, the letter from Rome of 1884, collected letters, etc.

188 **10. Educative presence amongst the young**

As Don Bosco was both the father and teacher of his boys, sharing their sorrows, hopes and joys, fidelity to the preventive system demands that we continue the style of life that he began — living with the boys, among them and for them; this presence amongst them should be regarded as a duty.

In spite of the changes that are everywhere taking place, we must know how to remain faithful to the salesian spirit which requires a *constant "presence."* With the young people of today however the preventive system means that a *new kind of presence is needed.* Our educative efficiency is linked up with a renewed fidelity to the preventive system of Don Bosco.

189. **11. The salesians for the salesian family**

It was Don Bosco's wish that the binding influence, stabilizing factor, and driving force in the family should be the salesians themselves. *To encourage* this and in a spirit of service, fraternal exchanges must be arranged wherever and whenever possible according to local circumstances. This will ensure reciprocal enrichment, greater collaboration and a more fruitful apostolate.

We pledge ourselves *to study together* the best way of perfecting the work we undertake in the local church in evangelization and catechetics in the context of the joint pastoral plan of the local church, to study the methods of formation and information for this purpose and the means most apt to attain our object.

190 12. **The salesians for the co-operators**

In response to the "message of the co-operators to the Special General Chapter," we suggest the introduction of a *programme for the formation of a salesian laity*, and the compilation of a volume containing pertinent salesian literature. We also propose that a group of experts (salesians and co-operators) draft a new *Rule Book* in the light of Conciliar doctrine and the mind of Don Bosco, which would also define the relationships at different levels between the Association of Co-operators and the Salesian Congregation.

191 13. **The Salesians for the past pupils**

Bearing in mind that the past pupils are the fruit of our mission of education, and that this does not cease when they leave us but rather goes on developing with the passing of the years, and also taking into account the many points raised during the World Congress, we propose:

1. that the *care of the past pupils* should be considered one of our specific and primary duties;

2. that each community study how best to keep up this on-going education without its degenerating into mere sentimental and nostalgic contacts;

3. that each community be ready and open to accept whatever form of collaboration, advice and sound criticism of our educational methods the past pupils can offer.

Document 2

DON BOSCO AT THE ORATORY

enduring criterion for the renewal of salesian action

DON BOSCO AT THE ORATORY

Return to sources and adjustment to the times

INTRODUCTION

192 The renewal of our apostolic work is not finished with the decisions of a Special Chapter; there still remains a lasting demand for the salesian Congregation, due to the fact that it is a constituent part of the ecclesial organism.[1]

The essential parts of an authentic renewal, in accordance with the Council, are twofold: a *return* (reditus) to the sources, and an adjustment (aptatio) to the changed conditions of our times.[2]

193 The acceptance of the gospel as fundamental norm of our renewal includes also the respect for the varying grades of its particular incarnation in each religious society. The profile of the salesian is therefore the result of Don Bosco's reading of the gospel and hence is subjected to the law of dynamic fidelity.[3]

Experience teaches us that differences emerge and tensions arise in the difficult process of returning to the spirit of the founder, and at the same time adapting to the needs of the modern age. There is a danger of reducing fidelity to a mere mechanical repetition, and the opposite danger of falling into relativism, in the name of badly assimilated progress.

194 A proper criterion must be found which can separate

[1] Cf UR 6.

[2] Cf PC 2.

[3] Fidelity to the spirit of the founder is "one of the principles of renewal, and one of the surest criteria of what any institute should eventually undertake" (ET 11).

the authentic formulae of renewal from their eventual imitations.

For a criterion to be *ideal,* it must be *certain* in its function as a distinctive sign; *specific* in the concrete information of its reality, and *universal,* i.e. accessible to everyone, everywhere and at all times.

As a result, such a criterion must necessarily be objective and external. It would seem that neither a mere appeal to the 'spirit' of the founder, nor to his concrete works alone meets these requirements. Not the 'spirit,' because often enough one's subjective evaluations encroach on the matter, and give rise to a need for further criteria; not the 'works' alone, because they are not immune from being idealized and even deformed, and therefore need a prior assessment.

It is clear then that the criterion of dynamic fidelity in the renewal of our specific field of work demands an innate reality, by which we respect the functions of a 'sign,' without however identifying ourselves with one particular work. Even a type of work more original than the rest must always be unique co-ordinates of time and space.

195 The Don Bosco we see in the Oratory admirably fulfils the requirements of an ideal criterion. We must go back to that figure, alive and at work in the midst of his boys, throughout the period of his apostolic life. We must go back to the Oratory itself, as pictured for us by his biographers and remember the fascination of the early days. We ought not to look upon it however as a concrete piece of work, as distinct from the other works started by Don Bosco, but rather as the matrix, the synthesis, the sum total of all the genial apostolic creations of our Founder, the mature fruit of all his efforts.

196 For us salesians returning to the Founder means going back to Don Bosco of the Oratory. At his school

we must learn how to re-act to the events of history; i.e. the first criterion of our renewal, as salesians, must be found in the person of Don Bosco who, in the Oratory, first gives us an exemplary lesson of dynamic fidelity to his apostolic vocation.

The history of the Oratory shows us how tenaciously Don Bosco held on to his mission to youth. But not even this permanent service (diaconia) which was an unfailing characteristic in his life prevented him from starting all those other activities which the needs of the day demanded. "We must strive to keep in touch with our times and adapt ourselves to them." [4]

197 The Don Bosco of the Oratory, faithful and dynamic, docile and creative, firm but at the same time flexible, stands out as a model of behaviour for all his sons.[5] They are invited to act *as* he did, rather than repeat in a servile way *what* he did; instead of indulging in a mere mechanical reproduction of his every action, they are called upon to understand the spirit which inspired his work, as he himself so simply declared: "I have always gone ahead as the Lord inspired me, and as circumstances demanded." [6]

This was the spirit which in the past assured the success of his apostolate, and conditions today the unity of its further *development*.

198 This scheme sets out to show above all the integration of permanent and variable factors in the apostolic work of Don Bosco. It then seeks to show that true adherence to our Founder demands *fidelity* to one's work with dynamic initiative, and courageous *energy* without detriment to authentic fidelity.

[4] MB XVI, 416.
[5] MB VII, 457.
[6] MB XVIII, 127.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CRITERION RECALLED

199 The question of a return to the Oratory, at this moment when we are re-thinking all our pastoral activity, has been raised and explicitly requested by many provincial chapters.[1]

However, when we return to the Oratory we do not look so much for the historic events as for the idea Don Bosco had about his mission, and the way in which he set about realizing it.

200 **1. Origin of the apostolate**

If it be true that Don Bosco's Oratory represented the concrete embodiment of his mission, the study of its origins brings us to the source of his ideal.[2] We are struck right from the beginning by his clear-cut decision

[1] "It is not an institution, but rather a characteristic of the salesian spirit which pervades every branch of apostolic work for youth of both sexes and without distinction. By the Oratory, as Don Bosco created it, we do not mean the institute but rather a spirit that pervades the whole complex of work with youth in need. When this is understood, the Oratory recalls everything Don Bosco did and desired to do, and today it stands out as the 'matrix of all salesian works and a constant reminder of what a salesian should be:' Radiografia I CIS, Lombard Province.

"The Oratory, thus understood would not be just one among many other salesian works, but the fundamental formula from which all others derive, different works carried on by a salesian community on behalf of all the young of a particular area, with widely differing activities. This is precisely what the Oratory was originally (Radiografia I CIS).

[2] Fr. RICALDONE, *L'Oratorio festivo*, Torino 1940 p 2.

to give an intelligent and faithful response to the divine call.

201 a) *The divine call* led young John, from the start, to that kind of work which he had seen in the mysterious dream he had, when he was nine years old.[3]

This explains why some priests, now advanced in years, who had been his companions in the early years, recognized in Valdocco what Don Bosco, many years before as a seminarist, had described as though he saw it with his own eyes.[4]

202 b) *The response* to the divine call was the work undertaken by Don Bosco in the Oratory on behalf of the young. Don Bosco himself calls his first tentative apostolic efforts, just after his first dream, "a kind of Oratory."[5]

Don Bosco also looked on his meeting with Bartholomew Garelli, and the first catechism lesson given on that historic feast of the Immaculate Conception as "the beginning of the Oratory." [6]

He saw in the Oratory his answer to God's call, and his object in life: "When I dedicated myself to this kind of priestly ministry I determined to consecrate all my energies to God for the good of souls." [7]

203 We can reconstruct Don Bosco's line of thought on his work either by starting from his early vocation and passing on to his work as realized in the Oratory, or by starting from his many activities and going back to the motives that inspired them.

[3] ALBERA, *Lettera Circolare* p 123.

[4] "When I was ten years old I did what I could at that age, and this was a kind of festive oratory" (MO p 127).

[5] MB I, 425.

[6] This was the beginning of our Oratory which, with God's blessing developed to a degree I could not have imagined MO p 127.

[7] "Don Bosco: Regolamento per l'Oratorio" in P. BRAIDO, *Scritti sul Sistema Preventivo*, Brescia 1975 p 362.

204 A simple way of doing this is to recall *his dreams about his vocation* on the one hand, and to read the *Rules of the Oratory* on the other.

Let us consider the dreams as an autobiographical reconstruction of Don Bosco's vocation. It would seem that in his description of them Don Bosco seeks to ensure for his mission that charism that comes from above. Our work is to clarify the ideas of the author, rather than discuss the objective reality of the facts; hence we can disregard some of the questions that concern the literary aspect of the narrative.

205 The Regulations written by Don Bosco bear eloquent witness to the slant he intended to give to his work, even on the institutional level.

206 **2. Lines of apostolic action**

a) In repeated references to the dreams of his boyhood Don Bosco reveals his full consciousness of his duty of interpreting them as evident signs of a higher vocation traced out for him by specific signs from above.

The reading of these dreams, rich in biblical lore, conjures up a Don Bosco convinced that he was called by God to be "the shepherd of youth." This idea of being a "shepherd" returns insistently in all his dreams about vocation right from the beginning.[8]

207 The dreams show him as a future shepherd, destined for the care of youth ("I was told to put myself at the head of those children"), for whom Christ has a love of predilection. ("Sinite parvulos venire ad me") and the "most delicate and precious group of society;" [9] his

[8] MO p 22 seq.
[9] MB II, 462.

favourites will be the poorest and most abandoned of youth." [10]

The reason is that, precisely because they are the most in need, they are the first to whom the gospel is to be preached, and evangelical work carried on amongst them bears the sign of divine salvation in action ("Pauperes evangelizantur").[11]

208 The pastoral work for youth confided to our Founder found its basis in the true shepherd of the gospel: Don Bosco had to be *good* ("Not by blows, but with kindness and love..."), and *solicitous* ("Put yourself immediately to work to instruct...").[12]

209 There are other indications that pin-point the evangelical and catechetical nature of Don Bosco's mission:

— the words of Christ to his apostles "Go and teach" are realized in Don Bosco's work for poor boys in a modest yet authentic way, but one rich in content and pedagogical art — *he teaches the catechism*: ("Set yourself to instruct them about the ugliness of sin and the beauty of virtue");[13]

210 — The words "I am with you," so often repeated in the missions of the bible as a pledge of authenticity and of God's faithfulness to his promises, carries a special idea of motherly tenderness in respect of abandoned boys.

One could say that Christ wanted to make himself visible through the affectionate care shown by his mother, to make up for the inadequacies of this poor shepherd of the Becchi ("...I will give you a *Mistress*")[14] and even

[10] MB XVIII, 528.
[11] MB I, 32; II, 298.
[12] MO p 23, no. 158.
[13] MO p 23.
[14] MO p 24.

for the needs of the flock, deprived of the warmth of a family and the love of a mother: ("What you see in these animals... you will do for *my sons*").[15]

This marvellous picture, in which pedagogical wisdom is found side by side with evangelical goodness, sums up the ideas of Don Bosco. He wanted his sons to prepare themselves for his mission, which was to him clearly supernatural, but also deeply human.

211 As desired by God in the dreams, the Oratory was to become a house for the religious instruction of deprived youth. It was to be especially a training ground where they could obtain an integral formation according to the living truths of the gospel, and where also (since the Mistress was also a Mother), they would find a real family, where poor orphans could discover the saving goodness of the Father, made apparent to them through the pedagogy of the gospel, which is a pedagogy of love.

212 *b*) In the regulations of the Oratory.

Passing from the theory of the project to its historical realization, there is nothing more expressive than the *Regulations for the Oratory*, where the characteristic traits of Don Bosco's pastoral work become specifically salesian norms of action.

In these regulations Don Bosco pin-points the scope of his institute: "It seems to me that the efforts made by the word of God to gather together the sons of God who were scattered, can be literally applied to the youth of our time." [16]

213 In this light, the Oratory acquires *true evangelical dimensions*. Though of their nature they are necessarily dry and formal, the Regulations do make it clear that

[15] MO p 24.

[16] "Don Bosco: Piano di Regolamento per l'Oratorio" in P. BRAIDO, *Scritti sul Sistema Preventivo*, Brescia 1965 p 360.

the apostolic lines of the work correspond faithfully to the prophetic projects.

214 *a*) The care exercised towards the young in the Oratory is not austere, rigid or forbidding. Rather is it happy, pleasant and attractive. "The purpose of the Oratory is to occupy boys on feastdays in pleasing and wholesome recreation." [17] But at the same time it is formative, educative, and aimed to the salvation of souls, in accordance with the command given in Don Bosco's dreams. "Religious training is the first aim, everything else is secondary and merely an attraction to persuade boys to come." [18]

215 *b*) The Oratory is catholic, that is universal, in so far as it is open to all boys: "have a special care for working boys... but other boys, such as students, are not excluded." [19]

The reason for this preference for the poor, the abandoned and the backward [20] is in perfect harmony with the fundamental aim of the Oratory, with its apostolic concern for this type of boy, "because they have greater need of assistance if they are to save their souls." [21]

The Oratory is an ensemble which caters for the whole boy, considering him as both a human being and a christian: "to make them good citizens here on earth and later, dwellers in heaven." [22]

[17] "Piano..." p 361.

[18] MB IX, 295.

"According to the mind of Don Bosco, Oratories in which catechism is not taught are nothing but games-rooms" (M. RUA, *Lettere Circolari* Torino 1965, cf ALBERA, *Lettere Circolari* p 130) p 388.

[19] "Piano..." p 369.

[20] "Piano..." p 380.

[21] "Piano..." p 162.

[22] "Piano..." p 362.

216 Finally, the Oratory sets out to be:

a home for those who have none,[23]

a parish, for those who do not know where their parish is,[24]

a school, open to all who elsewhere might find insuperable difficulty.[25]

217 *c*) The chief characteristic of this kind of pastoral work is an intense evangelical charity. "This Oratory has been placed under the protection of St. Francis of Sales, because those who intend to dedicate themselves to this kind of work must take this saint as their model of charity, in good manners which are the seeds from which we hope the fruits of the Oratories will grow." [26]

A similar statement is eloquently expressed in Don Bosco's work 'The Preventive System.'

218 It is precisely this authentically supernatural charity which is at the same time "incarnate" that can be recognized by the boys: happy and serene, the friendship of a true family, evoked by the motherly kindness of Our Lady, who is the inspiration of all the work done at the Oratory:[27]

— whether it be at recreation, producing a warm and carefree atmosphere in which the boys can live;

— or at times of specific formation either at a personal level such as times of religious instruction, or reception of the sacraments; or at a community level, moments of mutual help in group discussions or sodality meetings.

[23] MB IX, 569; XIV, 90.
[24] MB III, 196-197.
[25] MO p 194.
[26] "Piano..." pp 363-364.
[27] MB II, 98; cf Cost. e Regol. 1966 p 171; art 86, 87, 88, 101.

219 3. Permanency and contingency

In Don Bosco's mission there is therefore a definite connection between the two relationships: vocation and response, and programme and its realization.

We must emphasize the points which we consider essential for today's renewal: *continuity* and *innovation*. These are, without doubt, the two constituent elements of Don Bosco's work.

220 a) Continuity

In the first dream it seems as if the work was confided exclusively to Don Bosco himself. But granted the analogy with vocation in the biblical sense inherent in the style of narration, it is reasonable to admit of the normal process of sharing and succession which become more explicit from the later documentation. Indeed in the later dreams, which confirmed the first one, we find very clear pointers to this.

At a certain point reference is made to Don Bosco's tiredness: "Overcome by weariness I wanted to sit down in a neighbouring street". Such a rest, which would have rendered his work *unfinished* was not granted him "but the shepherdess told me to carry on." [28]

He had to make sure of helpers. And it was precisely at that moment that "several other shepherds appeared to help me in the work which had increased beyond measure." [29]

221 But these first helpers did not solve the problem, because of lack of *continuity*: "They stayed for a short time and then went away." This was no way of developing a successful work. A solution had to be found. And

[28] MO p 135.
[29] MO p 135.

"then a wonderful thing happened." [30] And the wonder was that the Oratory matured and developed to a point which made it capable of *providing its own shepherds.*

"Many pupils were transformed into little shepherds who grew up and took care of the others." The Oratory was able to extend, carrying to other areas the same fire of apostolic work for the young. "And as the number of shepherds increased, they were able to go elsewhere and gather together other sheep and lead them into other folds." [31]

And this was still not the complete answer. Don Bosco lamented the lack of continuity amongst his helpers. "Some priests were helping me but they did not stay long I had worked hard to gather them around me, but they went away and left me alone."

Once again the Madonna of his dreams came to his assistance: "Do you want to know how to keep them? Take this white ribbon and tie it around their foreheads." I took the ribbon reverently from her hand, and I saw that the word *Obedience* was written on it." [32]

222 In the mind of our Founder then, the congregation with its vow of obedience is nothing else but the formula to ensure the stable establishment of the apostolic work which was confided to him, and shared by him with his first collaborators. "This had a growing effect on my helpers, for whilst I carried on with the work entrusted to me, they put aside the idea of leaving and stayed on to help me. In this way the salesian Society was established." [33]

[30] MO p 135.
[31] MO p 135.
[32] MB II, 299.
[33] MB II, 300.

223 b) Possibility of change

Whilst always keeping faithful to his original mission, Don Bosco was ready to undertake other works demanded by different conditions of place and time, by change in the political or ecclesiastical sphere, or by the needs of his boys.[34]

From the outset he saw the need for a new kind of priest, less austere and more approachable by boys.[35]

He knew how to meet suspicions, persecutions and lack of means in a positive manner, reasonable but tenacious.[36] The fortunes of the Oratory, during their wanderings from the Convitto to the Rifugio, and then to fields on the outskirts of the city are a proof of his adaptability.[37] He always insisted on trust in divine providence, but he was amongst the first to demand work contracts for apprentices;[38] he offered his life for his poor boys, but he did not reject work which seemed contrary to his original vocation — for example, the colleges at Valsalice and Alassio, for better class boys. He was prepared to work with an anti-clerical government to settle the problem of vacant bishoprics, despite his desire to keep out of politics. He did not hesitate to strike out in a new direction — which made a great impression at the Oratory — by taking on the care of italian emigrants abroad, and also work on the missions.

224 These and other enterprises was certainly not undertaken lightly; they were the result of docility to the laws

[34] "I have always gone ahead as the Lord inspired me, and as the occasion demanded" (MB XVIII, 127).

[35] MO p 35.

[36] Our congregation has three characteristics — great zeal, tact in never antagonizing our opponents; and flexibility of operation, in moving elsewhere, when we cannot work where we are (MB XI, 83).

[37] PO p 153.

[38] MB IV, 295-298.

of change in a living organism. The same vital principle was always found in every new work under different aspects; the seeking of new approaches to boys in order to help them and lead them to God. The first little chat he had with Bartholomew Garelli, in the sacristy of the church of St Francis of Assisi was something that went on and on. Don Bosco declared that he was prepared to do anything to save the souls of his boys, even to "raising his hat to the devil."

With such a spirit Don Bosco naturally appears to us as one ready to face up to whatever the times demanded. This he did deliberately even to the point of declaring, without fear of contradiction, that he was an enthusiastic supporter of progress.[39]

225 **c) Synthesis: dynamic fidelity**

In this way Don Bosco appears as a model both of docility to his original charism, and of intelligent openness to the signs of the times. In the framework of the Oratory, he is a perfect example of this dynamic fidelity to the work for the formation of youth. His example is our rule.

His experience of the vicissitudes of life led Don Bosco to confess that he felt the need to return to the original source of his mission in search of secure principles: "At first," he said, after narrating his vocational dreams, "I had only a partial understanding of them, because I had little faith in them, but I came to understand them better, as they were gradually verified. Indeed, later on, together with other dreams, *they served as a programme when I had to make decisions.*" [40]

226 And this is our own rule of conduct as salesians prompted by both the desire of fidelity to our vocation,

[39] MB XVI, 323.
[40] MO p 136.

and by the necessity of giving a positive response to the changes of the giddy development of society and history. Reacting to the needs of concrete situations in the light of the original mandate of Don Bosco is something beyond mere imitation. Don Bosco encouraged us to this end when he wrote his confidential advice to his sons, with the intention of putting at their disposal "a rule for overcoming future difficulties, by learning from the past."[41]

227 A return then to Don Bosco of the Oratory, as a criterion of renewal, is neither a stipulation a priori, nor a kindly intuition; it is rather a dynamic act of faith in the original mission of our Founder.

We know no other way of finding a formula for harmonized development, for deciding which works best correspond to fidelity to the salesian mission, for knowing what Don Bosco would do today, i.e., what we salesians ought to do now, than to return to the Oratory, where his exemplary apostolate was born and flourished.[42]

[41] MO p 16; cf MB V, 882; VII, 587 re: the order given by Pius IX to Don Bosco to write his memoirs.

[42] "I will talk to you of the festive oratories, of that apostolate that gave birth to all the salesian works and to our society itself" (M. RUA, *Lettere circolari*, Torino 1965 p 101). "The corner stone on which our whole work is based is the festive oratory" (P. ALBERA).

CHAPTER TWO

DYNAMISM BACKED BY LOYALTY

228 The application of the basic principles for the renewal of salesian activity implies two phases:

a) a critical *examination* to determine whether the various works which we undertake today represent a faithful continuation of the mission of Don Bosco;

b) a *plan for the future* to ensure that our activities correspond to the needs of the times in conformity with the original spirit.

These are two complementary phases: to ensure fidelity in the dynamism of today and to guarantee this "*dynamism in fidelity*" to our apostolate of tomorrow.

229 In setting out to make a critical analysis of our activities of today we start from two premises: fidelity to Don Bosco does not mean mechanical repetition of his initiatives, but conformity with his end and his methods.[1] In the second place fidelity means an effort to take into account modern conditions in the same way that our founder was aware of the needs of his time.

1. Quality of the works

230 **a) Basic principles**

To guide the dynamic fidelity in our works the first task is to see whether or not they preserve intact the

[1] In his outline for the Rules of the Oratory Don Bosco expressly distinguishes *work* and *spirit* "My aim is to set out the things that we do in the BOY'S ORATORY of St Francis of Sales in Valdocco and the method by which they are done." ("Piano..." p 361).

direction taken by Don Bosco. There are three indispensable conditions for any activity to be truly salesian:

— it must be at the service of *youth* especially the most needy;

— it must be completely *pastoral* in its scope;

— it must be impregnated with that *spirit* which inspired the action of Don Bosco in his Oratory at Valdocco.

We will attempt a rapid analysis both of the *nature* and of the *spirit* of our works by means of an objective study. This will not be confined to a condemnation of any possible deviations, but is rather concerned with directing in a profitable manner the vital forces, convinced as we are that a healthy criticism of our works means in practice a mutual construction of the underlying ideal.

231 **b) A problem**

The application of our basic principle *Don Bosco in the Oratory* at first sight seems to call in question the validity of the work of some salesians which we hold to be traditional. It is enough to glance around our communities. Often one finds confrères who are not satisfied in their life and work.

232 Some have an occupation which does not give them any direct contact with youth, and they fear that they are excluded from the true salesian apostolate. They wonder if an apostolate which keeps them away from young people because of the needs of other activities is worthy of the name of an apostolate for youth.

Others though in continual contact with young people are dissatisfied. They have the idea that their duties, that of a teacher for example, hinder or render impossible or precarious specifically pastoral work. And this to them seems unjustifiable at a time when the ministers of the Lord are getting fewer and fewer.

Finally others even though they are immersed in typically pastoral work (for example in parishes or in missions) feel that tensions arise from a lack of consistency between the calls of the ecclesial mission and the calls of a strictly salesian apostolate.

233 **c) Proposal for solution**

Is there any answer in the light of the teaching of Don Bosco? We think there is. It was Don Bosco himself who assigned to those helpers who were determined to remain with him, the most varied of occupations, including tasks which prevented direct contact with young people. Seeing the community nature of his work he considered them all as members of his apostolic organization, and they felt themselves as part of the salesian mission.

234 It was Don Bosco who sent his followers to State Universities and subsequently gave them the job of teaching normal school subjects. Don Bosco had very clear ideas on the unity of man and of the consequent need for a complete educative process. He knew that pastoral activity makes both for "honest citizens" and "good christians." In this sense he saw our schools as a providential element in formation.[2]

The argument seems less conclusive when one considers the sending of the first salesians to the mission as an expansion of the Oratory, and similar problems arise in the analogous situation of parish work.

235 Reflecting on the history of the Oratory and on the writings of Don Bosco about the missionary ventures we are led to the following conclusions:

— the missions need the salesians because there

[2] MB X, 1018-1019.

are large numbers of young pagans who are waiting for the good news of the gospel;[3]

— in their turn the salesians need the missions because it is impossible to form young people without that particular sensitivity which comes from a living experience of a missionary church.[4]

236 Thus the missions are for the salesians an essential part of their apostolate. They are asked to work in the missions in the way and in the spirit of their Founder. The argument would seem to be similar in the case of our insertion into the framework of the local church.

2. Dynamism in our works

237 **a) Actual problems**

The extraordinary tensions which are at work in the Church and in the world today make us aware of the need of applying the basic principles to ensure an ever dynamic fidelity to our Founder. There are some confrères who look at Vatican II with suspicion and doubt whether fidelity to Don Bosco is compatible with a sincere and full acceptance of the Council's message. In the same way there can be salesians on the other hand who believe that many traditions are now out of date, after the Church's teaching. For them Don Bosco was a genius in his time but it would be anachronistic to follow his methods in so different a context.

238 **b) Proposed solution**

Referring to the problem of the saint we are able to see a way out of the difficulty. There must be a simple formula which is valid for any situation present or future.

[3] Ep 2033; 3, 568.
[4] Ep 2035; 3, 577.

Don Bosco had as a basic principle of his work filial and devoted submission to the authentic magisterium.[5]

The true salesian attitude will therefore be one of fidelity to the pastors of the Church so that while retaining our salesian identity we can even sacrifice some of our cherished family traditions.

This formula, which for some is too simple, might give the impression of a certain automatism which is hard to accept in our time, and a certain authoritarianism in the exercise of the magisterium in contrast with recent ecclesiology.

239 So we must search for an application of these principles in a more restrained way, more in conformity with the history of the Oratory; there we see Don Bosco humble and obedient, but at the same time tenacious in defence of his charism in face of opposition from less illumined ecclesiastics.[6]

The answer must be sought not on the surface but in the deeper evangelical meeting point of the basic principles of the Oratory and Vatican II. Notwithstanding the apparent contradictions due to different historical contexts there *does exist a true harmony* which is undeniable. At the foundation of the ecclesiological teaching of Vatican II we find precisely the acceptance of three signs of the times which imply the anthropological integration of pastoral action:

[5] Our pastors especially the bishops unite us to the Pope, and the Pope unites us to God." (MB IV, 226).

"I am a superior of communities, and I want to leave this message to my subjects as a principle for the present and any conditions that the future may bring: my sons, follow the opinion of the Pope even when he speaks only as a philosopher, theologian or private teacher." (MB XV, 443-444).

[6] Cf MB X; XVIII, 124-143; CERIA, *Annali* I, 474-484.

— recognition of the dignity of the *human person*;
— *brotherly links among men*;
— *true dynamism and progress* of human reality.

240 The Council was able to make these values its own, by means of a living insertion of the message of the gospel. This raises man to his vocation as a *son of God*, transforming the social human tendency into a real communion in the *mystical Body of Christ*; and allaying the fears of the future with the unlimited vision of a truly *eschatological* christian life.[7]

241 In the Oratory of Don Bosco one can see assimilated in fact this christian humanism in respect of the person of young people, in the effort to prepare them for insertion into society with their natural and supernatural gifts developed.[8]

c) Basic Agreement

242 The basic agreement between the principles of the Oratory and the directives of Vatican II must not be attributed only to the genius of an educator like Don Bosco who went beyond the frontiers of his own era and reached out towards the future, but also to a deeper spiritual understanding of an apostle who reflected on his "diakonia" in the light of the gospel, and knew how to discover the permanent and thus ever actual values of young people.[9]

[7] GS 5, 12 seq; 23 seq; 33 seq.

[8] "No one is forced to stay in Don Bosco's houses" (MB XIII, 205); "The young are the delight of Jesus and Mary," (MB XVIII, 482); "They are the most noble preference of the King of Kings," (MB X, 1081); "Let us treat the young as we would treat Jesus Christ himself." (MB X, 847).

[9] "Just as there is no soil so ungrateful and sterile which by means of long patience cannot be finally made to bear fruit, so in the case of man — a moral field — no matter how sterile he is he

The renewal in the Church comes from her apostolic concern. The actuality of Don Bosco and his Congregation is based on its participation in the apostolic impetus of the Church. The *works* therefore correspond to the basic ideal and will not necessarily be fixed in rigid out-moded structures, but will also develop in a harmonious manner like latent seeds in the personal *work* of Don Bosco.

3. The grass-roots of all our works

243 a) Mode of the work

The 'diakonia' in favour of youth offers to the creativity of Don Bosco's sons a wide field of new initiatives.

One could say that salesian works sprout like branches from a tree. Grafted on to the original trunk they are the natural development of the work of our Father.[10]

The pastoral care of needy youth in the characteristic style of the Oratory should consequently be the spirit that informs every initiative of any kind.

244 It is necessary to reconsider the traditional works for youth. In this regard there are neither preferences nor limits. What matters is the harmony with the work of Don Bosco. Rather than an enumeration of possible works it is better to concentrate our attention on the

produces sooner or later honest thoughts and virtuous acts when a guide joins his efforts with ardent prayer to the hand of God in cultivating this field and making it fertile and beautiful. In every young person even the most unfortunate, there is an accessible point for good and it is the duty of the educator to find this point, this sensitive chord of the heart and to profit from it." (MB V, 367).

[10] "Thus the Oratory of Don Bosco is always spreading and reproducing itself in thousands of places and different times, but is always one in nature and is the heart of our Society." (P. ALBERA, *Lettere circolari* p 124).

point of salesian action. Three principles will control its legitimate expansion:

— that it tends to the finding and preparation of educators;

— that it is directed towards the human and christian formation of youth;

— that it serves to facilitate the meeting of those involved in the educative process.

b) Deep Roots

245 It will be useful to remember in conclusion two fundamental points. First of all the vital spirit of the marvellous work of Don Bosco was his intense interior life. The secret of his fertility in the apostolate has its roots in his heart. A faithful and prudent servant he was wise enough to strengthen his mission with the powerful help of his religious consecration.

The salesians, faithful to the call of Vatican II which desires a more intense insertion into the apostolate of the Church will not fail to invigorate the fidelity to their consecration in order to renew the original vitality of their mission to youth.

246 The fundamental principles of renewal guarantee this examination of the way we are going in our work and will ensure our fidelity to the mission of Don Bosco.

No unnecessary limitation need be feared in the true apostolic dynamism already in action. On the contrary, fidelity to the work of Don Bosco to undertake works as yet untried to bring out his burning zeal which forced him to choose the most advanced posts whenever it was a case of the good of the young and to take risks with courage even to the point of appearing rash.

CHAPTER THREE

DYNAMIC ASPECT OF FIDELITY

247 It would not be right to offer as a basic principle a simple norm of prudence that would systematically ensure that a check was kept on every fresh undertaking for fear of possible failure in fidelity. True fidelity to Don Bosco of the Oratory requires that we also take as our norm our Father's own *daringly courageous* zeal in the carrying out of his apostolate.

248 In order to give an adequate response to the needs of the present day there must be an expansion of our apostolate. It remains to be seen whether the sort of expansion required should be of a quantitative nature or whether a qualitative change is also *necessary.*

a) Without doubt there must be a wider field of action if we are to face up to the problems of present day civilization and remain fully faithful to our own tradition. Don Bosco felt himself called to the salvation of all youth. If his sons seriously believe in the same mission, then today they will certainly discover fresh fields and pastures new.

b) The problem however has to be outlined more clearly than this: we are faced nowadays with situations that are entirely new. It would seem that the problems they give rise to cannot be resolved without a qualitative change: this change is necessary partly because of the goal to be achieved, partly because of the manner of its achievement. We realize that the problems referred to are difficult ones admitting of no easy solution. That is why we must reflect seriously upon them.

249 1. Quantitative expansion

We are of the opinion that our basic principle authorizes us to undertake works that might have been unknown to Don Bosco but which naturally flow from the development of his apostolate.

We believe that a renewal that is faithful to our traditional spirit and that takes into account the needs of the present day demands:

— an effort on the part of all;

— to bring out the best results in our work for youth;

— with absolute dedication.

250 a) Effort on the part of all

The follower of Don Bosco at the present day must try to understand what a truly dynamic apostolate his was: he saw to it that EVERY available force was put into action: clerical and lay; secular and religious; salesians, co-operators and benefactors. In addition to this, he was active in seeking out vocations and forming future collaborators for his work at the cost of enormous sacrifices.[1]

Present day ecclesiology suggests new methods for the expansion of the kingdom of God — secular institutes, which are bodies neither wholly religious nor wholly

[1] Don Bosco himself makes special mention of some of these early helpers whose names, he said, "remain indelibly imprinted on my mind and heart. Amongst others there was John Coriasso, now head of the carpentry section; Feliciano Vergano, now a businessman; Paul Delfino, now a teacher of technical subjects; to these there must be added Anthony and John Melanette, the first a pharmacist and the second a pastry cook; Felix and Peter Ferrero, the latter a broker and the former a compositor, and John Piola, a carpenter, now a shopkeeper." (MB II, 559; cf also M. RUA, *Lettere Circolari* p 492).

secular. Today we are witnessing an explosion of the Spirit driving on many generous souls to consecrate themselves to God in the world.

It was Don Bosco's desire to enlist the help of all possible forces in the cause of youth. For this reason we ought to be prepared to co-operate in establishing a *Secular Institute* for men to reinforce the ranks of the salesians in their apostolic work; analogous to the institute of the *Volunteers of Don Bosco* for women.

251 The new sociological situation has led to the rise of organizations that are international in character and have at their disposal marvellous means for the service of mankind (UNO, UNESCO, FAO, COE, etc.). Helping the young is generally one of their objectives. Obviously the salesians ought to welcome the opportunity of collaborating with such bodies.

252 b) For Youth

The Special Provincial Chapters, interpreting the apostolic anxiety of Don Bosco, encouraged us to more dynamic action than we have shown in the past. Instead of passively waiting for youth to come to us, we are to go out in search of them. There is now more urgent need of this than ever: not only is there a continual increase in the number of poor and abandoned boys, but the future of the world depends upon them more and more. Here are some examples of the type of youth we ought to help in this way.[2]

253 — *The children of emigrant families*: they have been

[2] "Wherever the sons of Don Bosco are to be found, there his Oratory must flourish, *open to all young people*, so that they can be gathered together, addressed and instructed, and made not only good citizens on earth but also worthy dwellers in heaven." (P. ALBERA, *Lettere Circolari*, pp 124-125).

uprooted from their families and no longer enjoy a congenial social atmosphere. They are truly poor. Any organized help they receive is usually social or financial. Their religious needs are generally neglected, or those of the adults are the only ones catered for. We salesians are established not only in the countries where these emigrants work but in their homeland as well. For this reason we are in an ideal position to help them.

254 — *Young apprentices*: these require help not only during the period of their qualification, but also and especially at that difficult stage in their life when they first join the ranks of the workers. Don Bosco was especially concerned for them and did all in his power to help them. We should devote our attention to the formation of leaders, chaplains, providing meals, help for commuters, hostels, etc.[3]

255 — *Abandoned youth*: in recent years we have been witnessing a strange phenomenon especially in certain countries: the growing number of young people who run away from home and, immature as they are, try to live a completely autonomous life doing their own thing. Often this means drifting into drug addiction, entertaining foolish utopian ideas, giving themselves up to a life of vice, or even committing suicide. This is the sort of people we have to help. Where necessary, rules will have to be changed to enable us to do so; we have to be able to meet them on their own ground, win their confidence, and make the most of the desire they have for friendship, association and generosity.

[3] "In general the Oratory was made up of plasterers, builders, plumbers, bricklayers, and others who came from a long way off." (MO p 129). In 1853 Don Bosco began the first teaching-workshops (MB IV, 657 seq).

256 **c) With absolute dedication**

Everyone should consider himself obliged to use all the means that an enlightened charity suggests and that serve in particular to exercise the three saving functions of Christ underlined by the Council:

— *The biblical movement* has opened up new approaches to evangelization hardly known to Don Bosco. The gospel message is always relevant and it makes its appeal to the youth of our day. This is proved by the success of such movements as the "Focolarini," the "Cursillos de cristiandad," small communities, and the Taizé movement. We have to ask ourselves whether we have succeeded in putting modern techniques of social communication at the service of our work of evangelization.[4]

257 — *The renewed liturgical movement* has reaffirmed that the eucharist is at the centre of the christian life. Don Bosco regarded it as the cornerstone of the Oratory. At the present time certain factors ought to make us pause for thought. There is first of all the desire on the part of many young people, non-catholics included, of taking part in group liturgy. Then there is the wish to receive holy communion together as a sign of their common brotherhood. There is their lack of patience with canon law. As we examine our conscience in the matter we ought to consider why it is that we have failed

[4] The kernel of the biblical movement is the Word of God distributed to the people of God. Don Bosco was a born catechist: "It was my greatest desire to gather young people together in order to teach them catechism; that seemed to me the only thing that I ought to do upon this earth." (MB I, 143).

In the preface to his famous *Bible History* we read: "In order to succeed in this undertaking I told a group of boys of every class stories from the bible, noting the effect that each one had on them. From this I drew up the norm that guided me in the selection of my material." (P. Braido, *Scritti* pp 560-561).

to shake certain of our young people out of their indifference to the blessed sacrament.[5]

258 — *The pastoral movement* which is one of the most marvellous results of Vatican II, presents us with opportunities that Don Bosco would have been glad to make use of. If we share his outlook and zeal then we ought to collaborate with ecclesiastical and civil organizations:

— to help in the national work of catechetics,

— to help with the pedagogical formation of candidates for the priesthood,

— for training in the use of audio-visual means of education and in literature,

— to make our influence felt in legislation affecting schools,

— for initiatives of a cultural nature, e.g. to meet the problem of illiteracy,

— to undertake various activities that are in line with the apostolate: language schools, organizing tours and other initiatives for the use of free time,

— finally giving help to young people who show a desire for social service or for the lay apostolate in developing countries.

These are only examples. The Special Provincial Chapters have emphasized the zeal and imagination we must have if we are to fulfil our mission.

[5] Don Bosco gave great importance to the liturgical formation of the boys (*Knights of the Altar, sacred music* — MB III, 151), and again and again he stressed the need of their developing a eucharistic piety. These he called "the strongest safeguards of youth" (MB IV, 145); "the surest way to heaven" (MB XVI, 16); "the secret of the success of a house." (MB VII, 795).

259 2. A "qualitative leap"

The reaction to certain examples of radical change, understandable though it is, seems to go against what Don Bosco said and did. The nature of our present study prevents us from going into details and compels us to remain at the theoretical level. We are living in a new world that has its own authentic values, and it is for this world that we are preparing our youth. We cannot use tradition as an excuse for denying the existence of these values but *can we speak of loyalty while admitting the necessity of this dynamic view*?

There is a permanent tension between continuity and change, but already a certain agreement has been reached. All realise the need for a synthesis. The problem is: how much of each component are we to put in? We are of the opinion that our criterion can help, in this regard.

Dynamic fidelity does not exclude variables that are qualitatively [6] different. Once these are accepted then obviously the way lies open for changes of *even the widest nature.*

260 a) Structure of the synthesis

Our own problem is only one particular aspect of the overall problem of the Church's renewal. *Loyalty to tradition* in fact *arises out of our faith. Bringing the theory down to the real world* of mankind is the fundamental law of the incarnation. The history of the Church arises as the direct result of these two components: the *conser-*

[6] "In matters that help youth or gain souls for God I am ahead, to the point of foolishness." (MB XIV, 602).

"When it was a question of anything that had any bearing upon the great cause of what is good, Don Bosco wanted to be always in the vanguard of progress." (MB XIX, 157, 320).

vation of a deposit of faith and *service* to those towards whom her saving mission is directed.

At the level of Vatican II two typical stages in the advance of the people of God can be seen:

261 1) Throughout *her pilgrimage on earth* the Church feels the *vertical attraction* of her Lord calling her to a continual purification. For this reason there is need of permanent reform in the Church, and we have no difficulty in interpreting the sense of *Ecclesia sancta semper reformanda.*

262 2) In *dispensing her divine treasures* the Church must always be concerned about truly *authentic human* values as well. She must therefore be open to *dialogue,* which dominates the entire pastoral action of the Church at the present day.

Our salesian way of life must then be influenced by these two factors: the continual need for reform and the need for dialogue imposed on us by the Council. These two variables introduce points that are entirely new. Nor must we be surprised if their synthesis demands something new.

263 **b) The criterion in action**

The hypothesis then of a fundamental change does not necessarily imply infidelity. Yet the working out of the synthesis will be an extremely delicate operation. The importance of the criterion for checking our direction must be emphasized.

264 DIFFICULTIES

In the process of our renewal problems arise on all sides. They can roughly be classified under three headings: education, the person being educated, and the educative action adopted.

Sometimes we meet with circumstances that cannot be successfully faced simply by intensifying our efforts. What is needed is a qualitative leap. We would like to give some consideration to this matter:

a) A key factor in the salesian approach has always been the use of all possible means to help needy youth.[7] But with the sort of collaboration that exists today the picture is entirely different from what it was in the past. What fresh approach should we adopt to remain in line with Don Bosco but at the same time ensure the maximum apostolic efficiency?

b) As far as the PERSON being educated is concerned, the presentation of the *message of purity* is one of the characteristics of the salesian approach to education.[8] We live in an age where there have been great advances in the field of child psychology; an age when the segregation according to sex, traditional in our institutes, is frowned upon. What changes could we make in the presentation of our message?

c) As to our educative method, Don Bosco wanted no mention made of politics, for he was convinced that such discussion would have done nothing but harm at that time.[9] In the light of what the Church teaches nowadays concerning the new structures of society and

[7] Cf Constitutions art 1 & 4.

[8] "Make sure that everyone possesses this virtue and does his best to inculcate it in the hearts of others." (MB XII, 224).

[9] In the Oratory "it is forbidden to talk politics..." (Reg. Orat. 2, 3; BRAIDO, *op. cit.* p 381).

"As a priest I love my religion, and as a citizen I want to do what I can for the government. Knowing little of politics and matters of public concern, there would be no fear of any embarrassing publicity being given to any service I may be able to carry out on Your Excellency's behalf." (Ep 1, 20; 2, 313). Cf also nos. 12 & 13, third decade (1846-56) of the MO pp 216-220.

the civic responsibilities to which we have to form tomorrow's citizens *should we not make a radical change in our traditional approach*?

265 Other considerations that have to be taken into account at the present day are: the modern view of parishes, universities, means of social communication, youth centres; the new approach to collaboration with the family, to the structure of our work. Everywhere there is a conflict between the traditions of the past and the needs of the present, and *these conflicts call for an urgent solution.*

266 ACTIVITY

The problem admits of no easy solution. The criterion must be carefully applied: as we see it there are two steps to be taken:

a) The two elements that are going to be integrated into a synthesis must first of all be clearly distinguished. What we call tradition must really be tradition; often its true appearance will be concealed beneath the grime of ages, which must be wiped away, so that we can see the true face of tradition — phase of *reform.*

We must also weigh up what seem to us to be the true values of the world today and make sure of their authenticity in the secular or ecclesial sphere-phase of *dialogue.*

267 *b*) Secondly there must be an exact calculation of what is going to result from mixing together these two components. The result of our work must be a true synthesis of all that is best in the past and in the present. There must be true continuity with the genuine past and equally there must be authentic change in keeping with the signs of the times. In the order of judgement it is not sufficient that there be convergence, but the convergence must also be clearly seen if it is to act as a sign.

An example may help at this stage. It has been said that we have drifted away from Don Bosco and that now there is a dividing line between the polemical Don Bosco and his ecumenizing sons. This constitutes a "qualitative leap." On the basis of the criterion of dynamic fidelity can it be considered legitimate?

We begin by examining the two elements:

— what do we mean by saying that Don Bosco's attitude was polemical? There is indeed historical evidence for asserting it, as it is clearly seen in his behaviour and his writings.[10] We must keep in mind however that this attitude of Don Bosco arose out of his tremendous love for the truth of the faith and out of his anxiety to protect his boys from the threat of error;

— what does the conciliar outlook imply? Pastoral activity involving dialogue must obviously extend to non-catholics. This is confirmed by the decree "Unitatis Redintegratio" which bids us have respect for non-catholics who engage in dialogue with us, we are to show sincere and understanding openness for their deposit of evangelical truth.

269 How does ecumenism succeed in harmoniously synthetizing what is authentic in tradition and what is true

[10] "In 1847 when there took place the emancipation of the jews and the protestants it was necessary to provide the faithful in general and young people in particular with some kind of antidote... protestants used every possible means to spread their doctrine. That persuaded me of the need there was for a popular means of spreading the knowledge of the fundamental principles of catholic teaching. And so a small book was published with the title, "Advice for Catholics." Its aim was to put catholics on the alert and to save them from being caught in the net of the heretics." (MO pp 240-241).

today? Can we see continuity and change organically united?

There is without doubt true *continuity* in the salesian who is an ecumenist: he is acting in harmony with the profound intention that motivated his father. In both of them is to be found the same service to *catholic truth* and the same loving anxiety concerning *youth whose faith may be in danger.*

This does not mean that change suffers. The salesian's ecumenism takes account of factors not to be found in Don Bosco, totally unknown in the Church of his time. Today the salesian's view of truth does not stop at the truth expressed in our own creed but it takes in all that is valid in the *creeds of other denominations.* He reaches out not only to *catholic youth* but also to *all our brothers* who do not live in communion with Rome.

Ecumenical integration represents a true change from the example of Don Bosco. In spite of all that, it still falls within the ambit of *dynamic fidelity.*

Don Bosco was not an ecumenist; but salesian ecumenism carries out *what Don Bosco intended,* and this *more perfectly* and in a *more developed* way. It is the natural development of the work of the Oratory.

270 This is only an example. Mention has been made of the point here only because it is not spoken of in other documents of the Chapter and because it gives us an insight into the problem. We shall not always finish up with a clear picture when we formulate traditional data, nor will it always be easy to read the signs of the times. Our concern here is to outline the nature and function of the criterion for renewal that remains valid even in extreme cases.

Our criterion seems useful: it gets rid of irrelevancies and transfers the action beyond what Don Bosco succeeded in doing or planning; it safeguards us against

the danger of twisting his spirit, for it keeps us profoundly close to him. That is what DYNAMIC FIDELITY is all about.

271 1) *Criterion.* Our study covers only a restricted field. We are merely reflecting upon a criterion applied in a spontaneous manner. It is encouraging to think that at the beginning of christianity ecclesial life always preceded ecclesiological reflection.

272 2) *Renewal.* Nevertheless the effort is worthwhile. The renewal of the Congregation does not end with the Chapter. Because of its ecclesial nature it will always be necessary: "The pilgrim church is called by Christ to continual reform." [11]

However, it is not just something that we have to put up with. We must see in it signs of vitality in search of fresh means of expression. "Every renewal of the Church consists essentially in increased fidelity to its vocation." [12] That is what our criterion consists in: this increased fidelity, this fidelity in progress, this dynamic fidelity that was so much a characteristic of Don Bosco of the Oratory.

273 3) *Salesian renewal.* This criterion has its roots in the gospel. Don Bosco in his *plan for the Rules* of the Oratory expressly compares that work with the saving mission of the Word Incarnate. [13] "Through the words of the gospel we get to know the divine Saviour come down from heaven to gather together all God's children who are scattered over different parts of the earth. May

[11] UR 6.
[12] UR 6.
[13] Jn 11, 52.

I be permitted to apply those words literally to the youth of our day... difficulty arises in finding means of gathering them together or in speaking to them or in teaching them how to behave. This was the mission of the *Son of God*. Only our holy religion can accomplish this." [14] Besides the economy of the salvation of Christ rests on two principles: the *unchangeable nature* of religion, for it is "eternal and essentially immutable" and its *flexibility*, in so far as "it knows how to preach the word according to the changes that time brings and how to adapt its message to meet of all men." [15]

Don Bosco's tenacity and flexibility find their profound inspiration in the gospel. This was the deciding factor in choosing it as our permanent criterion of renewal.

We are glad that our own views are in line with Don Bosco's mentality. At the end of his life he left his sons his autobiography that it might act as a *norm* in overcoming future difficulties by referring to the lessons of the past.[16]

In this context the lesson has great appeal. We seem to hear St. Paul's invitation re-echoing: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ."

[14] "Piano..." p 361.
[15] Ibid.
[16] MO p 16.

Document 3

EVANGELIZATION AND CATECHESIS

274 1. The document *"Evangelization and Catechesis"* is a response of the Congregation to the appeal of the Church for a more faithful and modern service of the word.

It seeks to emphazise the most important catechetical directives as a means of the renewal of the Congregation. Directed as it is to confrères of nations which "have different situations and needs, it has taken into consideration what could be called the average situation," [1] and therefore it must be read and judged from this particular viewpoint.

It is not concerned with giving an exhaustive list of principles but rather with pointing out the urgency of a change of mentality in the field of evangelization.

2. The order chosen in the pastoral directives takes account of the diversity of conditions in the salesian world. The General Catechetical Directory in fact says that "it is legitimate to set out from God to reach Christ or the reverse; it is equally possible to set out from man to arrive at God and the reverse. The choice of the method to be followed in catechetical exposition depends on the concrete circumstances in which the ecclesial community or the individual faithful to whom catechesis is directed, live." [2]

However so as not to compromise on a basic point of renewal — setting out from the individual person so

[1] GCS Introduction.
[2] GCD 46.

as to help him to encounter Christ — the document keeps in mind the human choice in all its aspects and places the individual, the word of God and the community in a permanent mutual relationship.

This means that we can emphazise "the priority of the word of God" as the fundamental criterion for renewal, and can assert that the whole process of pastoral development from man to Christ is inspired by Christ right from the start.[3]

3. The document wishes to bring to our notice the rich possibilities to be found in catechesis, as the GCD clearly indicates when it says: 'Catechesis is directed to the community, without however neglecting the individual christian. It is linked to the other pastoral functions of the Church, while retaining its own individuality. It carries out simultaneously the work of initiation, of education and of teaching.' [4]

4. The Second Vatican Council speaks of catechesis as the first and most suitable "means" of christian education;[5] the XX General Chapter in keeping with our salesian tradition, stresses the educative context in which catechesis has always been developed in our Congregation, and reveals more clearly that evangelization is the fundamental characteristic of our salesian mission. In consequence our catechetical activities now find their place as part of the renewed pedagogical perspectives of the Church.[6]

[3] GS 3, 10-11.
[4] GCD 31.
[5] GE 2.
[6] GE 2.

INTRODUCTION

OUR ANXIETY OVER THE WORK OF EVANGELIZATION

275 "Right from the very beginning this society was a simple lesson of catechism." [1] With these words, in 1868, Don Bosco introduced his Congregation to the Bishop of Casale. For him the salesian society and the art of education to the faith were in a certain sense synonymous.

Already in the early years of his life he had learnt the art of educating in the faith from Mamma Margarita. It could be said that the charism of catechist passed into little John from its natural source, the Holy Spirit, through the heart of his mother.

While still adolescent his passion for apostolic activity grew and he learned the art of making the catechism lesson an important part of his daily activity and even of his games. He discovered soon enough that the proclamation of the Good News goes naturally with the joy of youth; and so he delighted in listening to the word of God, and then joyfully repeating it, adapting it to his listeners.

For John Bosco the faith became life, and life shone out as witness, and witness became teaching, and teaching flowered into joy. The 'Joy Club' (Società dell'Allegria) was the climate in which the faith of the young saint and his companions grew; and as he afterwards said his "delight was to teach catechism to children." [2]

[1] MB IX, 61.
[2] MB II, 18.

276 As a priest, his love for the young, made him realize that the Father and entrusted him with the mission of bringing Christ to poor boys and his meeting with Bartholomew Garelli confirmed this for him. Soon he organized the lessons of catechism on a large scale choosing collaborators from among the clergy, the educated laity, the students, and the more sensible and dedicated boys of his own oratory.

He confirmed this approach in his Constitutions: "the first work of charity will be that of gathering together poor and abandoned boys, to instruct them in their holy religion." [3]

In his work as educator he adapted the message to fit in with the concrete needs of the boys by making the gospel an integral part of every day life. In thus educating the young in the faith he experienced the truth of the saying: 'to evangelize is to civilize and to civilize is to evangelize." [4]

277 The salesian Congregation has inherited Don Bosco's zeal as an evangelist. The zeal of his sons has led to a world-wide apostolate with the establishing of centres and works, and new enterprises aimed at the strengthening and encouraging people in the faith, in order to instruct them, so as to help them to make a living and to be good citizens and good christians.[5]

In particular the successors of Don Bosco, by founding the 'Salesian Catechetical Centre' of Turin-Leumann and the P.A.S. have made genuinely possible a deeper study and a continuous up-dating and renewal in the field of catechetics. In consequence the work of salesians in this sector has become an integral part of the

[3] Constitutions art 4.
[4] Pio XI.
[5] Constitutions art 4-5-8.

ecclesial renewal of catechesis and has participated in a notable way in the pastoral activity of the Church at world wide, national and diocesan levels.

278 Today the Congregation recalling the apostolic zeal of its founder and his history of evangelization and in conformity with his spirit wishes to comply with the fundamental concern of the Church "to announce and promote the faith in the society of the men of today, a society which is undergoing profound social and cultural transformations." [6]

279 The XX General Chapter considers it desirable to endorse what the XIX Chapter authoritatively affirmed: "salesians, consecrated as they are to the service of youth, especially the poorest, in order to be amongst them the efficacious presence of the love of God, will consider the religious education of youth as the first apostolic activity of the salesian apostolate; it asks therefore for a rethinking and for a reorganization of all salesian works so that they may have as their main purpose the formation of the man of faith." [7]

[6] GCD 1.
[7] AGC XIX, 187.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD

280 "Thus we are witnesses of the birth of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all by his responsibility towards his brothers and towards history." [1]

281 In this context the following doctrinal and pastoral orientations receive their full value, and make us conscious of this important question: "How can one make the gospel message penetrate the culture of the masses? How does one act at the level of a developing new culture, with its new type of man who thinks that he has no longer need of redemption?" [2] In particular how can one bring the gospel to youth of today?

The ministry of the word takes on for us a special urgency, and we need to become more familiar with the various ways in which it is exercised; amongst them must be placed "evangelization" or missionary preaching that arouses the first act of faith, and tends to fill the new realities of today with the spirit of the gospel; and "catechesis" which vitalizes the faith and makes it more conscious and active.[3]

282 The Special General Chapter gives several significant directives meant to draw the attention of each confrère to this fundamental dimension of the salesian mission, and to awaken the consciousness of the community to

[1] GS 55.
[2] ET 52.
[3] GCD 17.

its prophetic mission. In this way each salesian living as he does in an unbelieving world marked by the absence of God, should be and should feel himself to be an "evangelist," and a "witness of the word," and each community should become an "evangelizing and catechizing" community.

1. Repeated listening to the Word of God

283 To bring about this renewal it is necessary above all to rediscover the mysterious link that unites the christian community with the word of God. The word "listened to with reverence" [4] builds up the community, converts it to the gospel, educates it in faith and charity; and the community for its part, putting itself at the service of the word, lives it, is responsible for it, proclaims it with the life its members live, brings to the world a liberating power that is "leaven in the bread," and becomes salvation for others.

The communities will be nenewed if the living and efficacious word of God is listened to and celebrated in such a way as to give the word of God its rightful place.

284 In the apostolic church, faith in the Risen Christ was professed in the eucharistic community, and in each new event it was examined in the light of what Christ had done and said. From this continual and faithful reference to the mystery of salvation came into being under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the writings of the New Testament.[5]

285 For the Church sacred scripture is the key for interpreting the history of man, for finding once again the true plan of God, and for discovering the real meaning

[4] DV 1.
[5] Cf Lk 1, 1-3; DV 11; GCD 12.

of the world. Each generation setting out from its own experience of life and suffering, its own areas of sensitivity, its own aspirations and its own problems, has searched the gospel and had found there what was original, relevant and new.

The utilization of this source of first importance and its prayerful meditation is the foundation of the catechetical renewal. But this renewal demands deep reflection both by the individual and the community on the word of God incarnate in history; it demands a new capacity for hearing and seeing in every happening a continual awareness of human problems and a ceaseless comparison between the word of God and the events of everyday life.

286 The Church under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and with the guidance of the magisterium which guarantees her authenticity, constantly fulfils her mandate to renew the relevance of the proclamation of the word, by putting the living God and the individual in communication with each other; this is the mission of mediation which she carries out in fidelity to God and to man, interpreting and proclaiming the gospel to each new generation: "The first preoccupation of the magisterium is to remove continually all the obstacles that can prevent the power of the word of God from penetrating into the lives of all men and revealing to them the mystery of the good news." [6]

287 But in listening to the word of God, man finds serious obstacles, not the least of which is the monotonous, abstract and tired explanation of it, almost as if the word had grown old in the heart of the speaker. To preach in this way is to become a bore especially to the young, whether they are those who looking at the world with

[6] Paul VI CIC 1971.

new eyes, live the future as though it were already here; or whether they are those who appear to have grown old before their time, as a result of a mis-spent youth.

The salesian too amid the multiplicity of his tasks, meets obstacles to a fruitful listening of the word. Although tempted to hurry and to be superficial he will find the secret of his renewal above all in a serious study of the word of God and by following the example of Mary who listened and pondered in her heart.[7]

288 For this reason our communities must realize effectively the serious responsibility they have of celebrating with greater love and care the ministry of the word of God; of meditating on it daily in the readings in the breviary and the lectionary, of being transformed by it, of firmly witnessing to it, and of taking it as the yardstick for interpreting the events of life. In this way our communities will place themselves fully at the service of the Spirit for the work of evangelizing: "woe to me if I do not evangelize." [8]

2. Announce the word of God beginning from the form of life lived by the man to whom we speak

289 The salesian community, illumined by the gospel must place itself in harmony with the world in which it lives, and within this situation seek a meeting point for announcing the word of God.

"The world is not saved from without; just as the word of God became man so it is necessary for us to take upon ourselves a way of life to some extent resembling that of those to whom we are bringing the message of Christ; without placing obstacles of privilege or language

[7] Lk 2, 19.
[8] I Cor. 9, 16.

it is necessary to share the common customs especially those of the poorest if one wants to be listened to and understood." [9]

He who remains aloof from the concrete existence of the individual cannot evangelize him; he could perhaps make him much better instructed in the revealed truths of religion but he will not succeed in leading him to the Lord.

290 A renewed apostolate of evangelization and catechesis seeks in every way to become part of the concrete realities of every day; it seeks to grasp and understand the problems that beset the heart of man, to live the process of growing to maturity of each human community, and to enlighten their existence with the light of the gospel from within human problems. Without a profound knowledge and an open and sincere acceptance of modern social changes, it is difficult to make the message of the gospel understandable.

291 "Catechesis cannot be indifferent to the problems that a believer who desires to progress further in his understanding of the faith meets today. We must know these problems if we are to meet the just demands to which they give rise on that level which is specifically ours, the level of faith..." [10]

There is need therefore of a more topical formulation of the faith which excludes unintelligible formulae, fruit of cultures having little in common with the contemporary situation. It is necessary each time to look for a language which will be a genuine communication for those living today because fashioned from the concrete experience of each community. "Let those who are being

[9] ES 49.
[10] Paul VI CIC 1971.

taught, especially adults, be asked how they understand the christian message and what words they would use to re-express it." [11]

Young people in particular need a new language: for subjected as they are to a continual and disturbing bombardment of ideas, of assertions and of events, they feel the need to live intensely the growth of their own personality, to discover and re-discover the fundamental values of life and to become immersed in the tormented development of the society in which they live. Their vocabulary is in continual evolution from a civilization based on the written word to the world of sound and sight in the age of television.

292 Their whole way of communicating with others has a characteristic style and so the gospel needs to be pondered on and reformulated in accordance with this style so that it may be for them too a proclamation of joy.

The salesian must seek to master this language so that like Don Bosco he can present the gospel in a simple and sincere way, and in a manner that is direct and down to earth.

This new interest in and concern for man and his problems must be linked with a renewed study of theology and of scripture so that the proclamation of the word may be carried out "with entire fidelity to the words and thought of Christ, giving due consideration to the authoritative teachings of ecclesiastical traditions, and in interior enlightenment of the Holy Spirit." [12]

3. Witnessing to the word of God

293 Evangelization and catechesis are not confined to a mere proclamation of the word; to be credible they

[11] GCD 75.

[12] Paul VI, 29 Sept. 1963.

also demand witness. Man finds Christ in the personal life of the believer and in the christian community that proclaims the message. If the image of Christ appears to be veiled and deformed in them then men become disillusioned. But they do believe christians who resemble the Christ they preach.

294 Communities united fraternally in charity (the sign of *koinonia*) and pledged to the service of all men (sign of *diakonia*) and united by their faith in the eucharist, become in the eyes of the world the supreme message, which brings with it an evangelizing power that man will be able to resist only with difficulty; the life of the Church during the past centuries bears this out.

"From this it appears just how vital it is that ecclesial communities following the teachings of the Church and guided by her pastors, eliminate and correct what is disfiguring the image of the Church and making her an obstacle to the faith of men," [13] because despite the good will of many evangelists and catechists their work can be nullified, or made very difficult, by the counter-witness of individuals, institutions and works.

295 Young people in particular have a keen perception of what is authentic. Thus the attraction that they find in men and communities who really live what they preach, and the need they have of finding incarnated in people the values they hear spoken of, indicates clearly the efficacy of personal and community example in education, and the power of a faith, that is not just preached but is believed in and lived. What affects them more than the whole and radical nature of the gospel message is the total and radical availability and selflessness of those who witness to the gospel. Young people will

[13] GS 19.

not criticize us for being too christian, but for not being christian enough.

We marvel at the quality of faith that Don Bosco was able to produce in his boys, and when we consider how much he spoke to and encouraged the young and old both inside and outside the house, we soon become aware that the force of attraction and of conviction that he and the community radiated, must have been the fruit of an exceptional evangelical witness on the part of both salesians and boys.

296 When a similar climate of witness flourishes in communities especially in the educative communities *it makes the whole of that community an evangelizing force,* because it offers to each of its members that experience both christian and divine which is indispensable for the renewal and preservation of the faith. Christian faith and christian life are unthinkable apart from a community that helps one to experience the efficacious love of God.

CHAPTER TWO

VITAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CATECHESIS

1. Evangelization "through dialogue" in a pluralistic world

297 Our concern for the future of young people born and baptized in the Church does not mean that we confine all our efforts to them.

The true evangelist excludes nobody; he discovers Christ in his brothers in other churches and christian communities and has an ecumenical approach at once generous and loyal; he commits himself to making contact with those who are far from the faith.

298 He recognizes religious experience wherever it is found: namely in man's search for God, his faith in the absolute, and in the secret encounter by grace with the divine, all values that are fundamental to many non-christian religions. Such values, imperilled today by our type of civilization, need to be rediscovered, developed, freed of all ambiguity, and finally made the object of a new attitude on the part of christians.

Accompanying all these religious realities the evangelist finds atheism "the most serious phenomenon of our times."[1] To understand the complex nature of atheism, to listen to the criticism it makes, to repudiate the scandal of a distorted gospel, to recognize true human values and the possibility of a salvation in an atheism

[1] ES 55.

lived in good faith and at the same time "to make God the Father and his incarnate Son present to the world and in a sense visible," [2] all this is a serious and demanding task for the evangelizing Church of our time.

299 "In a world in process of secularization, the Church can rediscover her prophetic mission of bringing the good news of salvation; she does not remain neutral, but judges all realities both personal and collective that men have to live with and she offers to all men Christ and his question which echoes from generation to generation: 'And who do you say that I am?' " [3]

300 Youth is the most appropriate time for learning the difficult art of dialogue because it is a period of openness, growth and encounter. The young person of today wants to overcome barriers, to move about without scandal in a pluralistic culture, to give himself to everything without partiality, and to refuse a gospel closed in on itself.

For the salesian it is not only a question of making use of dialogue when he is evangelizing or giving religious instruction; he has already been trained to this by the preventive system. The situation of diaspora in which the christian and the atheist, the protestant and the catholic collaborate together in daily life, compels the salesian to prepare and train his boys for dialogue considered today as a constant and indispensable need of society and therefore of evangelization.

"Even before speaking, we have to listen to the voice or better still the heart of man; we must understand him, and as far as we can, respect him; and when he deserves it, we must support him. If we want to become pastors, and fathers, and teachers of all men we must become first

[2] GS 21.
[3] Mt 16, 15; Paul VI CIC 1971.

their brothers. The climate of dialogue is friendship, or, more truly, service." [4]

It is in the light of what has been said above that we must re-examine the way we mix with our boys and listen to them, the respect and brotherly assistance we give them, and our constant presence among them.

Our communities therefore must not be islands but filled with sympathy for the world about them, they should live "with other men as with brothers." [5]

2. Promoting encounter with Jesus Christ, the living centre of history

301 This is the central point of our catechesis; this is the true renewal to which communities must look.

302 To evangelize means to proclaim the living person of Christ "yesterday, today and for ever:" Jesus Christ, the Man-God, the meeting point of divine and human love. It means to proclaim a historical fact: Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God, crucified and risen. It means to proclaim a reality which is always present in the Church: the community that has encountered the lord, and that, moved by the Spirit, awaits his return; it means to proclaim the total Christ in his historical reality and in his resurrection: always living among men and in the world, as the powerful lord of history.

Catechesis presents the life of Christ as "a Son's love" that enables us to "see the Father;" as "the love of a brother "who, risen and ascended to heaven, does not leave his brothers as orphans, but sends the Spirit for the "new creation."

Catechesis therefore does not preach a new ideology,

[4] ES 49.
[5] PO 3.

nor a system of abstract truths, but Jesus Christ as a person who exists and his total message, in other words, it introduces men into the wonderful fullness of his life, so that they can acknowledge and share in the mystery of God, the communion of the Trinity.

303 Jesus Christ is the Church's reply to the man who asks about the ultimate meaning of life, seeing it as a problem, an enigma and a mystery. It is clear that in the light of Christ seen as a living person and not just a mere historical figure the vague deism that characterizes certain forms of catechesis is not faithful to the proclamation of the apostles.

304 In particular young people precisely because they accept only those persons who lead coherent lives of integrity more willingly give themselves to a catechesis which presents Christ as love at the disposition of all and as he achieves the liberation of man by the total gift of himself in sacrifice.

They question in depth the meaning of life and of suffering, and spurred on by their own experience, not always helpful, of love, of friendship and of work they seek God "trying to sense his presence and lay hold of him." [6] For them Christ can become the only response to an irresistible attraction.

305 But there is something that is both disturbing and discouraging: it is that the Christ presented by us does not always capture the interest of the young. The mysterious freedom that is theirs can cause them even to refuse the redemptive presence of the Lord. A marked immaturity, the result of the environment in which many live can lead to a genuine inability to listen to the message

[6] Acts 17, 26-27.

of salvation, and so our catechesis fails to become the manifest mediation of the mystery of Christ. Perhaps the language used is difficult to understand; perhaps our catechesis does not answer the questions raised or concern itself with problems encountered by the believers of today; perhaps it is still using out-dated sermons and instructions, couched in abstract and polemical terms; in other words it is not a catechesis which is really evangelical.

306 For the salesian, the existence of young people living without Christ, and a Christ unable to find a welcome among young people, is not just a cause for regret, but is also a challenge and an incentive to renew himself and to discover new ways and take any risks in order to proclaim efficaciously the salvation of God, and to help young people "to be themselves and to give authentically their human and christian experience, helping them to find in their friendship with the redeemer the power to reach full maturity." [7]

To help people both young and old to encounter Christ through the salesian communities, it is necessary to have encountered him personally first of all.

3. Progressive education in the faith

307 To catechize is more than to preach or to teach religion, or to give catechism lessons; it is a complete educative process to help the baptized use all the values of his own personality from the point of view of the gospel, and then to direct them towards an adult faith.

308 Education in the faith is a gradual and continuous process leading to the discovery of a person. If each person is a mystery, God is even more a mystery, and

[7] CARD. VILLOT, *Letter to Fr. Ricceri*, 26 April 1971.

our knowledge of him grows only slowly and gradually throughout life. Because of this, catechesis is needed at all times, in every circumstance, at every age, and in all aspects of life. It involves more than preparing the faithful for the reception of the sacraments; it never finishes its work; it is never satisfied with a wearisome repetition of words and phrases. God reveals himself continuously, while man only gradually becomes capable of knowing God's plan of salvation and of making a free response to it in faith.

This pilgrimage towards God, this gradual discovery of his revelation in Jesus Christ involves several stages, and no stage must be relinquished until there has been a real assimilation of what it contains. Thus before dealing with the sacraments it is essential for a man, as a result of evangelization and catechesis, to have first undergone conversion and accepted the faith.

309 An on-going education in the faith brings about a slow but radical transformation of man into Christ. To form in the christian a way of thinking based on faith means that we first set out with him to discover the living Christ, and after that educate him to see Christ as always present, and this means that he will come to see things as Christ sees them, he will love and give himself to men as Christ did, and he will live with Christ his communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

310 In this educative process where God and man encounter each other, the formation of the conscience, of the believer takes on a special value, so that he can make a positive and mature response to God's call. It is important also to educate him to a mature freedom but without exercising any undue pressure. In this way the necessary dispositions are created in the believer for his making a full response to God's action.

Catechesis, with its new methods, has its part to

play in this gradual growth, since it helps man to discover eventually what his free personal response to God's call must be; it also helps him to discover the extent and essential content of the moral order in the gospel demand for love; it leads him to opt for a life of profound unity, lived coherently, and to the concrete expression of this choice of evangelical charity in real living. In other words it forms the conscience in accordance with the moral principles contained in the commandments of God, while taking inspiration from the person of Christ, from the programme of life outlined in his sermon on the mount, and from his precept of charity, namely the love of God and the love of neighbour.

311 The specific originality of the christian code of behaviour consists then in its "reducing every ethical obligation, whether precept or counsel, to a single element which is, as it were, the soul of that code, namely a faith working through charity." [8] Today there is a search for new methods of putting across this originality more faithfully to believers.

Educating people to the faith remains for us a serious obligation, but today when we are moving towards a culture based on dialogue and an increasing participation of people at every level, the catechist must evidently be far more an "inspirer" than a "teacher," and he needs to imitate the goodness, constancy, and sense of duty of Don Bosco in order to bring salvation to the young. To educate you need others.

4. Developing an integrated and committed faith

312 It is not possible to plan an education in faith without making it an integral part of the whole process of

[8] GCD 64.

human development. Because of this, catechesis is directed more specifically towards a genuine development of the person. When faith is a fully integral part of the life of the believer, then there are no gaps in the christian conscience, but rather a profound unity making it able to judge and act with energy and enthusiasm.

313 The expressions "faith and life," "committed faith," "integrated faith," "faith-based outlook," "maturity of faith," so often found in pastoral writings of today, indicate the real nature of a faith which, in accordance with the vocation given to man by God, leads to a unification of man at every level, such that every increase in faith increases a man's stature, and every development in man is a move towards the divine.

314 It is faith that frees man from the radical slavery of sin, and from the personal and social disorders that are its consequences. Faith invites man to enter into the world of freedom offered by Christ, for it is through him that the slave of sin becomes the son of God, and learns to love as a christian, and to experience his own existence and freedom as a christian. In its turn human life with its burden of trials and worries and uncertainties can also experience, through the light given by God that faith brings, the active and transforming presence of Christ.

315 The obligation of seeking human advancement as a sign that accompanies the proclamation of the gospel derives from this dynamic continuity between faith and life. Such advancement must not be confused with evangelization, but nevertheless there can be no evangelization which is insensitive to human aspirations. The gospel would lack credibility if the christian did not attempt to face up to and resolve the great problems of the world today by coming to close grips with them. It is an "in-

carnational need" essential to christianity and willed by the Son of God who "dwelt among us." [9]

From the fulfilment of this "massive obligation we have of being coherent with regard to the gospel depends the future of christianity, especially for the younger generation." [10]

A committed faith will throw a special light on the question which divides believers from unbelievers, namely the way they conceive the freedom of man, and consequently his liberation. Whoever works to strengthen the faith of believers must bring to their attention the liberating power of the word of God, and the social and public dimension of the christian message; he should re-emphasize the fundamental importance of the cross, and educate them to see the need for vigorous struggle and even martyrdom.

316 The salesian who is committed to developing in young people and adults a faith that is an integral part of life, and anxious for human progress, gains new perspectives. New choices are being made which concern the problems of freedom and justice, peace and development, society and the world of work. Our work of renewal should follow the lines marked out for us by the Church, and we must carry it out in the practical way expressed by Don Bosco in these simple words: "Make upright citizens and good christians."

The danger of a rupture between faith and life is an ever present one for the believer, and neither can the salesian nor the community escape the temptation to separate religion and culture, prayer and work, liturgy and action, relationships and communion, with the risk

[9] Jn 1, 14.
[10] RdC 97.

then of failing to get across in a personal way the proclamation of the kingdom.

317 This dangerous dichotomy inevitably affects the believer's commitment to human advancement, and he thus no longer bears witness to the presence of Christ in the history of the world.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CATECHETICAL LANGUAGE OF THE COMMUNITY

1. Catechizing through the action of authentic communities

318 The Church we want to establish and build up is fundamentally a "communion" between christians who come together in God's name to listen to the word of God, and to celebrate the eucharist in union with the bishop. It grows in time and space as a result of the actions of men united together in joint responsibility, just like the first christians of whom it was said: "See how they love one another."

God, in fact, makes the practice of brotherly love a condition for the fulfilling of his promise to be present. And where such love is manifested in service, it becomes moreover a communication and a support of faith.

319 For all those who are open to faith, the community becomes the environment in which that faith can find nourishment. For those who are seeking faith the community proclaims the gospel through the teaching of its catechists and the way of life of its brothers. For those who are growing in the faith, the community communicates a force of witness which enlightens and persuades. For those instead whose faith is in danger, the community brings help and support, and creates by means of fraternal correction the ideal atmosphere for conversion.

320 The christian community becomes in this way the "sign" and the setting for the proclamation of the word of God, the living "norm" for the formation of the con-

science of believers, and the "sacrament" through which Christ acts in the world.

How necessary then does it become to build up the community, *to educate confrères to be in the community*, and to train them to share in its life. When religious instruction is accompanied by this commitment to the education and the growth of the common faith, then we have a real catechesis.

All this has consequences too for the "religious community" which in this matter is no different from any other christian community; indeed it ought to be an example and model for all communities.

Again what has been said has consequences for catechesis, which needs to be carried out in such a way that those preparing for baptism, pupils and faithful are conscious of being creators of their community. The priest, the educator, the catechist are not the only ones to proclaim the message; those who listen also take part in it.

321 But if communities are to become truly apostolic and if each individual is to become integrated into the christian community, there is a need today more than in former times of the right method: "the group" method. In the "group" each individual feels himself to be a responsible member and one who is listened to. In the "group" common attitudes help faith to maturity. In the "group" living examples are accepted as authentic values, and the reality of salvation becomes an experience of life.

Don Bosco and the salesian system have always educated by the "group" method. Thus the preventive system, the family spirit, the "sodalities," the older boys committed to acting as leaven in the mass, are all reasons in our tradition for a re-discovery of the "group" as a new way of evangelizing.

2. **Initiation into the liturgical mystery**

322 "In the liturgy the faithful come together, and offer humbly to God the fruits of their acts of charity, justice and peace and receive in return the words of life and grace to live in the world of today the truth in charity in union with Christ." [1]

Catechesis gives the believer the experience of the liturgy; it educates him to understand its human expression, to perceive the sign; it disposes him to the encounter with the Father through Christ, and to the encounter of the people of God with each other.

323 The liturgy in its turn becomes catechesis and with its down to earth language expressed in words, in hymns, in gestures, rites, actions: it reaches towards and involves the whole man, heart, intelligence and the senses; it proclaims aspects of the mystery of Christ; it embodies the integral experience of the faith, transforming action into contemplation; it presents the believer with the opportunity of healing himself, of feeling that God has saved him. In this way it provides a guide for the christian in every circumstance.

In the liturgical renewal catechesis has a specific function — to stimulate and to enlighten: above all it is a reminder to those responsible of the nature of the word of Christ that converts and transforms; it gives rise to calm discussion and healthy disagreement, and produces a change of life; *it is the sign of a true passover*: the tombs burst open and those who were dead rise up. Our liturgical assemblies require that the word we present under the form of preaching and of prayer be proclaimed with all its force and truth, and they likewise demand

[1] GCD 48.

that there be a more careful preparation, possibly in *community* for the homily.

324 Through catechesis we remind all the baptized that the liturgical celebrations are the sacramental expression of the life and history of christians. We therefore enable them to understand the bonds that exist between the eucharist and the obligations of the community, between the Mass and the liturgy of life, between the liberation from evil asked for in prayer and the liberation brought about in society, between the liturgical gesture of peace and true peace brought to the area in which one lives. The faithful are constantly reminded that the kind of liturgical celebration which does not transform, which is not sincere, and becomes routine, is merely an alienating influence.

325 Prayer too expresses this link between experience and faith: through catechesis the heart of believers is gradually opened to the sentiments of Christ in his filial prayer to the Father and to the attitude of Mary at the Annunciation, an attitude of adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition. This leads to a renewal in personal prayer.

326 To a greater extent than in earlier generations, the young people of today who are committed to their faith become bored with a type of liturgy that seems to them solemn, or even magical, and scarcely concerned with the present time.

On the other hand in their small groups, which are a "vital necessity" [2] for young people, they have liturgical celebrations which seem to arise from a mania for novelty.

For them catechesis needs to find a language which

[2] GCD 76.

is more flexible, modern, and intelligible: it needs to encourage "their own personal efforts, considering them a contribution that the new generation makes to the Church. In this way they will be helped to overcome the temptation to drift away from the Church.[3] To enter more fully into the spirit of the liturgical reform, and with the good of youth in mind, catechists ought to be aware of the variations allowed in the official liturgical rites, and the numerous forms of paraliturgical celebrations, such as *bible services, agapé, biblical vigils, penitential services, shared homilies, group preparation for the homily, musical forms of liturgy,* etc. In this way they can bring to life ideas that can amply satisfy the creativity of the young without falling into arbitrary and abusive innovations.

"Give encouragement," "make the use of the sacraments easy," "show the beauty, greatness, and holiness of religion," "never force anyone," act in such a way that the young "are spontaneously drawn to the sacraments, and approach them willingly, with pleasure, and with profit;" these are clear expressions of the preventive system which reveal the educative sensitivity of Don Bosco and outline his sacramental pedagogy.

3. Joyful proclamation of the gospel

327 To evangelize means to proclaim real, experienced joy, because the mystery of Christ, God incarnate, who died and rose again, now intimately penetrates human life. The gospel is message of joy because it gives us the power and the courage to overcome all sadness.[4]

Faith is the source of joy, and joy always accompanies real faith. Consequently one of the characteristics of catechesis must be our joyful witness in our work,

[3] GCD 82.

[4] Rom. 9, 2.

in the liturgy, in the community, in life; and even when we have to suffer. Our faith must show us that the gospel is a breath of hope: hope in the Lord, who is amongst us, and who is to come at the end of time; hope for eternal life which has already begun; hope that brings a joy that no one can take from our hearts;[5] hope that inspires our everyday efforts to realize our human vocation. Modern man is really in need of a spark of this evangelical joy. "Catechesis provides the answer to this acute need, showing that joy bursts out and flowers in the Church and has its roots in the hope that comes to birth and is fulfilled in Christ." [6]

328 Here more than anywhere else it is necessary to rediscover the genuine spirit of Don Bosco, which enabled both the salesians and the boys to experience faith as *happiness* and we must rediscover also the ability of the community to increase the penetrating power of this joy. The joy that echoed in every corner of the Oratory was made a means of acquiring holiness: "We make holiness consist in always being cheerful;" this interior joy found its expression in the playground and in the refectory, and especially on feastdays; it became a climate and a way of life of apostolic friendliness; it was rooted in the heart of the Church in the eucharist; it was brought into strong relief by the hope of heaven beyond the bitter end of death; it was guided by the natural presence of Mary.

329 As a calm and confident educator and catechist the salesian carries with him this tone of festivity, happiness and joy into every aspect of life. His catechesis is clarified by this cordial witness which is the fruit of christian hope. The salesian community radiates friendly human

[5] Jn 16, 22.
[6] CIC Rome 1971.

warmth, sympathy and enthusiasm which opens the way to peoples' hearts. Renewal must lead to us rediscover the characteristic way of announcing the "joyful news" of freedom and salvation, which the salesians must convey to youth and to the men of today. After personally tasting, loving, and enjoying his faith, the salesian can then communicate the secret of his happiness to others.

4. Forming new religious educators

330 The expectations of a Church and a society in evolution increase the urgency of the demand for a catechesis capable of forming responsible christians, of revealing to each one the real meaning of life and of showing God's plan to men.

With this vision before us, we cannot forget that *every christian must be a catechist*; rather we must act in such a manner that the education of men in the faith is also a first step in the formation of christians ready to proclaim the gospel message. Thus the evangelized are quickly transformed into evangelists, and the believers into witnesses; and the people of God, the ordinary christian is seen as a powerful reservoir of power.

331 The originality of the function of catechist demands specific attention on the part of the one who is responsible for pastoral action. The "catechist" is *one sent by the prophetic community*, he is a consistent witness of Christ, he is an interpreter of the signs of the times: he "teaches," i.e. he helps others to grasp and understand the reality of God who reveals himself and gives himself; but above all he "educates" i.e. he *helps people to develop their christian personality to the full.*

332 As "educator in the faith" the catechist needs a careful theological, anthropological, and methodological preparation, without neglecting the various techniques;

as an "inspirer of the ecclesial community" he needs to complete his formation in communities that profoundly believe, hope and love; these two facets of the catechist it must be remembered, involve on-going formation and up-dating. In fact, "any pastoral activity that is not sustained by people who are well formed is doomed to failure. The formation of the catechist has moreover priority over the renewal of the texts and over the strengthening of the catechetical organization." [7]

There is a great need for these apostles of the word in all walks of life, in families, in schools, and in places of work, because the need for God is always and everywhere present. The Spirit of Christ, which is in the world to free it and to save it, calls evangelists and catechists from all sectors, but above all it calls them from communities of intense ecclesial life, where the word of God is listened to and lived, where people are aware of the enormous problem of evangelization and catechesis, and where there is someone who can form catechists.

333 The demands of world evangelization and the precise mission of the salesian Congregation require us to discover and to stimulate the prophetic power which the Holy Spirit has infused into every community for the benefit of the Church. Every salesian, besides being a catechist, must consider himself as one who forms catechists. *Every salesian community must study how it can evangelize as a group* and become a centre for promoting catechists. Seen in this light the community should inspire the laity to serve the local church, instilling in youth the desire for apostolic action and encouraging them as soon as possible to commit themselves to the religious education of others.

[7] GCD 108; cf n 71.

One could say that the "vitality of the christian community depends decisively on the presence and on the value of the catechists, and expresses itself in a special way in its ability to prepare them." [8]

334 "All this urges us to a vigilant and intense renewal." It demands a catechesis open-minded in its attitude towards new cultures and new problems, to a world that is now secularized and pluralistic; open-minded in its attitude towards the drama of atheism and to the problem of religious indifference; a catechesis, in brief, which is attuned to the Church of today, where God continually questions and calls.

"Our work begins today and will never finish. This is the law of our earthly pilgrimage in time." [9]

[8] RdC 184.
[9] ES 68.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

1. The Salesian Congregation and its mission of evangelization

335 At this particular period in the history of the Church, the salesian Congregation must turn more decisively to catechetics, i.e., to educating in the faith, and take steps to see that *each community renews* itself in such a way as to become an "authentic community of evangelization."

336 The Congregation will therefore make every effort:

— to rediscover and renew this essential aspect of its mission;

— to help in the support and maintenance of those organizations engaged in research, etc. in this field, such as the Catechetical Institute of the PAS and other centres of the same kind;

— to assist those organizations which are trying to spread the word of God through the use of mass media;

— to arrange meetings and reunions where experts can discuss these matters.

All this will be done according to the rules laid down in the General Catechetical Directory.

2. The province — "a community at the service" of evangelization

337 Now that the XX General Chapter has defined the 'provincial community,' it is evident that its structures must help the confrères in this work of evangelization.

It is therefore the duty of *the whole province* to give a new impetus to catechetics, both communities and the individual confrère, to form personnel, and to re-organize in a way that will favour this type of work.[1]

a) *The first Provincial Chapter* after the XX General Chapter should look into the contribution made by each community in this matter of teaching the faith and decide what changes are to be made and get rid of any opposing factors, which compromise the efficacy of the work.[2]

b) *The provincial and his council* should arrange as soon as possible for some priests and brothers of the province to be given the opportunity of preparing themselves for this work by attending courses arranged by the local church, or should study with the provincial conferences other plans for bringing them up to date.[3]

338 c) *Every province* should have its own specialized service whose main task would be to stimulate the catechetical work of each community, to keep the confrères up to date in the field of catechetics, and to coordinate all the activities of the whole salesian family in this regard. For this purpose the work of experts in catechetics is indispensable.

At the present day spiritual retreats and courses for different groups, young and old, religious and secular, demand better qualified preachers. Those confrères who have a gift for this kind of work should be prepared for this apostolate and should then place themselves at the service of the different communities.

[1] Cf GCD 103.
[2] Cf GCD 99-107.
[3] Cf GCD 108-115.

3. Every salesian community is a community that evangelizes

339 Since the XX General Chapter emphasizes the renewal of salesian communities, each one of these must develop a new mentality and outlook; it must adopt a new 'community" style of thought and action and present itself to the world in a new guise. It is necessary for it to respond to the new needs because the *extent to which it is evangelical will be the measure of its being salesian.*

340 To this end every community must become:

A community of listeners: listening together to the word of God, meditating together on the scriptures and the art of living; this represents a completely new outlook and should be encouraged during retreats, shared homilies, and the like.

A probing community: engaging in a periodic and thorough revision of the efficacy of the apostolic work being done, and the role of each one, in the field of catechetics; examining in particular the great difficulties being experienced in the work of evangelization and especially in the "teaching of religion."

A community in the local church: all our work in catechetics must be done in union with the local church which needs our help and collaboration, and not in separation from it; we must also follow the instructions of the local Catechetical Directory, if one exists.

An educative community: a direct realistic approach to the teaching of catechetics requires the collaboration of all the members, using all the means available (visual aids, meetings, co-ordination, etc.) which will enable the community to become an up-to-date catechetical centre.

A community of action: the community itself must be the moving spirit behind all this work, seeking the

help and co-operation of the laity — especially our older pupils — and preparing parents and other educators as teachers and catechists. Financial priority should be given to the preparation of catechists rather than to the erection of buildings, even though the latter be destined for this particular work.

4. Every salesian is an catechist

341 Every salesian is always and everywhere a teacher of religion by reason of his vocation and mission. This means that during the time of his formation he must have guides who will help him to weld together the teaching of sacred science and of secular subjects, and likewise his community life with the direct pastoral apostolate. Once he has acquired this art he can place himself with enthusiasm at the service of the community for the rest of his life in the all-important work of evangelization and catechetics.

Document 4

PASTORAL RENEWAL OF SALESIAN ACTION AMONG YOUTH

INTRODUCTION

342 "It is for you young people, for you above all, that the Church with its Council has lit a light, a light which brightens the future, your future. Be generous, pure, respectful, sincere. And use your enthusiasm to build a better world than the one we have! Look at the Church and again you will find the face of Christ, the true hero, humble and wise, the prophet of truth and love, the comrade and friend of the young." [1]

The Congregation is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church since, following Don Bosco, she transmits this light to the young, especially to the poor.

Right from the very beginning it was characteristic of Don Bosco, and with him his salesians, to adapt to the needs of the times. The mission of bringing up the young to be "honest citizens and good christians" was always accomplished in ways which corresponded to their real needs. So were born and develped the many varied forms of activity and service within the Congregation.

Today we salesians are the heirs of an extraordinary amount of good done by the Congregation. We also inherit obligations undertaken in an ever-changing world, along with a vast field of work in which new situations and needs challenge and require our apostolic enterprise. This creates a problem at the time of renewal, a problem that is made worse by a critical situation for vocations, which also affects our own Congregation.

343 The reflections of the salesians in the Provincial Chapters and General Chapter have revealed three general aspects of the problem which must be faced, with

[1] Cf Vatican II: Message to mankind.

some indication of a solution to be discerned in the answers proposed:

— the pastoral aim of our activities;
— the pastoral up-dating of salesian communities;
— the reshaping of our activities and service.

344 a) **Pastoral aim of our activities**

We salesians have undertaken many varied activities — free time activities, schools, forms of assistance, etc — to meet the needs of the young in their particular situations. We have given these activities *a full meaning*, as factors of total development.[2] But these activities do not in fact always serve their overall purpose sufficiently well, and this for many reasons. To remedy this we need to realize *effectively* that our every activity, in community or personal, is justified only if it is *aimed, organized and carried out* in view of the evangelization of the young.

345 b) **Pastoral up-dating of the salesian community**

If we are to 'pastoralize' all our work, authentic apostles and *apostolic communities* are indispensable. No constructive influence is possible unless it is supported by an adequate pastoral preparation and an apostolic spirituality. The young people of today are more than ever aware of the swift and constant changes in our evolving world. This ties us to a constant attitude of adaptability and creativity so as to respond promptly to new situations and more especially to anticipate them. All this implies love and total dedication to the young, as with Don Bosco. It implies study and reflection, humility and the courage to begin again every day.

[2] Cf Document 1 (Salesians in the Church) & 3 (Evangelization & Catechesis).

346 c) **Reshaping of our activities and service**

The renewal of our activity requires a careful study of our present work and responsibilities, and a look to the future. Besides the validity of our works and their correspondence to situations, we must consider the priority and urgency of the needs.

This courageous and thorough reshaping of our work, carried out at various levels as an expression of the pastoral up-dating of our communities and activities, will give a new appearance to the Congregation, an appearance in which the young will see a reflection of Christ.

The Special General Chapter has considered this problem. Rather than dwell on the necessarily fragmentary and limited consideration of each present salesian work, it has chosen to take the basic and common elements of all salesian work for the young.

The principles put forward in this treatment apply explicitly to young people. They are also valid however for adolescents and pre-adolescents. These are referred to specifically only when they require separate consideration.

347 The General Chapter is convinced that our activities can only become truly pastoral through the balanced application of these essential elements. It is convinced that in the present situation the key to renewal consists in putting *pastoral community life and action* with its aims and methods right in the centre.

348 The document underlines various aspects of our pastoral activity:

— the principles which inspire it;
— the characteristics of our service;
— attitudes and action;
— objectives and method: the gospel of freedom;
— the principal structures in which it is carried out.

CHAPTER ONE

BASIC PRINCIPLES

349 These principles, to which salesians must constantly return for the renewal of their work among the young, provide the unifying and dynamic basis of their pastoral enterprise. By personal reflection and community dialogue on these principles salesians will find the pastoral up-dating and adequacy that they cannot do without.

a) Our pastoral renewal must start from an understanding and a personal and community acceptance of the *demands of the gospel,* in a continuous attitude of individual and collective conversion to the Father in the love of our brothers.

b) The renewed vigour of the Conciliar Church urges us to renew our service in openness to new forms of dialogue with all that joy, hope and tension that forms part of the lives of the young.

c) The fundamental criterion for the renewal of our salesian work is the salesian mission to the young, especially to the very poor, following Don Bosco's pattern of dialogue and love. With his burning love, pouring from the heart of Christ, Don Bosco spurs us on to serve the young. He stimulates us to a deeper discovery of the pastoral values, searching for, meeting, mixing with, understanding, entering into dialogue with and evangelizing. He inspires an active fidelity to these values.

d) As Don Bosco found his riches in the young, so today the salesians rediscover in their service to the

young the richness of their own identity. The *psychological and social situation of young people* today is more than ever in swift evolution. Hence renewal of salesian work requires from us:

— a great sensibility and ability to see and understand juvenile trends;

— a deep penetration into the phenomenon of the new youth culture and questioning, as an indication of a sociological transformation;

— a great understanding for the deviations and 'idolatries' of youth reduced to a purely natural level;

— dedication to the liberation and up-lifting of young people of the under-developed areas, in a social and moral as well as economic sense.

CHAPTER TWO

CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR PASTORAL SERVICE

350 Salesian work for the young is a COMMUNITY and ecclesial SERVICE offered to all young people in general and to each one individually, in his own real situation of life and environment. In the light of this:

a) The young, especially the very poor, are at the centre, taken in the social and cultural background of the place where they live.

b) THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY IS AT THEIR SERVICE. It animates and co-ordinates a complex of activities and services with a pastoral aim. These are carried out within the *Educative Community*, in the wider context of the ecclesial community in which the young people live.

351 A service offered to the young

Don Bosco had a true respect for the personality of a youth, towards whom he always had the attitude of a true servant: "Youth are our masters..."

The salesian never puts aside his office of pastor and of guide, both encouraging and exacting. But he offers his pastoral service in a family and fraternal atmosphere of reasonable and responsible autonomy and freedom. Knowing that young people today want more than ever to play an active part in their own destiny, he never forces them to accept things passively. Instead he encourages them to collaborate actively in the dis-

covery and development of the various original gifts that each one has by nature.[1]

On the other hand he recognizes the weakness of youth. While always respecting their personality, he assists in the strengthening and use of true liberty by suitable and environmental means. As a true agent of change, the work of the salesian helps them to form a more just and fraternal mentality.[2]

352 A real service in the actual situation

In the whole world salesians have to face very different situations. Our work must take into account our responsibilities in the face of the problems and hopes arising from the new social, cultural and religious situations of the world of youth.

We are asked to start not only from the condition of our own work in general, but above all from the real circumstances of youth we serve, in the family, in situations of culture, of relations, of spiritual life etc. And all this in such a way as to suit the style and content of our service (with continuous inventiveness) to the changes in their needs and requirements. Our pastoral service in fact must be aimed at the needs and requirements of the person rather than at the satisfaction of structural demands.

A total service

353 Ours is a total service, for it is offered to all people young without distinction of age, social condition, belief, or political opinion. Our preference is for the needy, in the widest sense.

[1] Mt 23, 14-30.

[2] Cf BM XVII 10-114; AGC XIX 102, 108, 111.

In this regard we accept the words of Paul VI: "Poverty is no longer just a matter of money. It is also the lack of qualifications, the lack of relationships, physical and mental handicaps, family upheavals and all the frustrations that come from being unable to belong. Isn't it the man who does not count who is your poor man today? The man who is never listened to, who is pushed around without consultation, the man whose awful loneliness can drive him to some irrevocable gesture of despair?" [3]

This total service covers all *the true requirements and real needs* of youth, in body, heart and soul. An integral formation requires as much as possible an integral service, even when this is offered in a variety of forms and with a variety of content, according to possibilities.[4]

The need for culture, for lodging, for activity and company in free time, for educational environments full of vitality should spur us on to develop an attitude of truly creative service.

With adolescents and pre-adolescents our activity will be diversified with a progressive and balanced openness to the values and situations of the young.

a) Progressive maturation of young people

354 Young people have to pass from their natural insecurity to the maturity of grown up men and women. It is all a process of maturing in body and mind, and of personal relationships, which develops into an ever more generous giving of oneself to God and to others.

This requires that young people be progressively freed from ignorance of normal development in regard to the mystery of life; from slavery to self in living out their

[3] Paul VI, July 1st 1970.
[4] AGC XIX 183, 189, 199.

instincts and sentiments; from every tendency to shut themselves into their own private world, which is not always serene. For all this they need someone to confide in, someone to whom they can open up about all their problems.

It is indispensable to enlighten young people on the weakness inherent in man's nature. Hence they must become convinced of the need to master their own inclinations, to control their curiosity, to strengthen their will by freely going without some comforts and pleasures (including lawful ones), through constant and fervent prayer to him who is always their trusted friend.

But this is still not enough. After the meeting with themselves comes meeting with others. The child and the adolescent need to be helped to open themselves out to discover the values of others and to give themselves to others. The salesian must help them to love God as a father, to seek the friendship of Christ, to turn to the example and help of the Blessed Virgin and to discover through faith the presence of God in man.

The salesian then must help young people to unite his powers of body, mind and heart in one ideal. This ideal is to be the best expression of self-giving either in family life or a closer service of God which will engage all the generosity of the heart, in an atmosphere of deep faith and joy.[5]

b) Mixed groups

355 The social climate of today and the need for an integral education suggest that in certain places and circumstances we should take on mixed groups and activities, with all the reserve and responsibility they entail. This will be a reply to an educational need which requires

[5] AGC XIX 194, 198.

us to accept the complete young person, immersed in his own world, and raise him up in every respect.

These activities provide and excellent opportunity for young men to acquire an attitude of respect and delicacy towards women, especially at the age in which they become the object of a new attention and emotion.[6]

In this regard provision must be made for the training and maturity of the confrères, the collaboration of qualified lay-people, and for suitable accommodation.

However, the activities of truly educative mixed groups must tend to develop formative and social interests. This will open the way, in the right atmosphere, to further developments determined by the realities of the situation and by the maturity and capabilities of the young people and their educators.

356 The programming and reviewing of the initiatives and activities of mixed groups should be made by the community, in accordance with the relevant criteria and methods laid down by the joint pastoral action of the diocese and the province.

Relations with the family

Salesian activity should take the young *in relation to the family*, in order to integrate, supplement and rectify its educative influence.

It is the task of the communities to maintain collaboration and a deep understanding with parents in their shared responsibility and action. There are various forms of this collaboration. The importance of this union between the family and ourselves in the formation of the young should spur us on to a renewal.

[6] AGC XIX 196.

357 A Community service

The formation of true pastoral communities, based on shared responsibility and collaboration, is one of the principal objectives of our pastoral renewal.

In the first place comes the *Consecrated Community* in the Risen Christ, since this is the fundamental source of salesian action. Our service, besides fidelity to God, is also a witness to our brothers and to the young.

All the *Educative Community* then must be integrated into our work. Besides ourselves, the parents, lay workers and the *young themselves* are active members, *united in dialogue and shared responsibility at various levels* in all the phases of the work of education. This work should be carried out in a real family atmosphere, with a personal but not individualistic commitment.[7]

Our service should be offered to the young in the context of their *natural groupings in life and work.* We should seek to develop all their potentialities from the inside, from their interests, according to their rhythm and through the action of the whole group which works on itself and unfolds on the exterior.

358 An Ecclesial service

Salesian work is part of the pastoral work of the Church. In this sense our service to the young is of itself ecclesial. We recognize however that the ecclesial dimension of our service should be thought of in wider terms.

Faced by the fact of youth that is quietly drifting away from the Church, and which does not understand her mentality, her language and her laws, we ought, not only as individuals but principally as a congregation, to

[7] AGC XIX 186.

be spokesmen of the anxieties of youth in regard to the Church, and of those of *all the Church* in regard to youth. This entails research, experiment and study.

To act *"seriously"* in this specific field of its apostolate, the salesian congregation should ask the competent ecclesiastical authorities for all the necessary faculties, among them that of *adapting the liturgy to youth,* as missionaries do for peoples of different culture.

359 The salesians, in a spirit of collaboration and of active participation, should share in the pastoral work of the local churches, bringing to it the richness of our Founder's special charism.[8]

This they will do by participating, as far as possible actively, in the various Church organizations and movements which are concerned with youth. Our total presence, our sensibility and our real driving force should be the expression of our ecclesial service.

On the other hand it will be the duty of each salesian community, by means of its educative work, to bring the great ideas and directives of the Church into the world of youth.

[8] CD 35.

CHAPTER THREE

PASTORAL ATTITUDES AND ACTION

360 The salesian community, in the light of the present day situation of youth and of the nature of our pastoral service, should be brought to a deep renewal *of its pastoral attitudes and situations*, seeking to re-live Don Bosco, sent by God as father and teacher of youth.

In renewing their pastoral attitudes and situations, as a living expression of the preventive system, salesians should adopt the methods appropriate to the needs proper to each stage of development, pre-adolescence, adolescence and youth.

a) Pastoral attitude of research

361 The salesians work among hundreds of thousands of young men and boys. But we are so often embarrassed at the thought of the great numbers who avoid the Church and who are a prey to alienating situations.

It is true that many young men are already helped in their formation in our houses. But a salesian house, even when it is open to the needs of local youth, *is not fulfilling its apostolic mission in the community* completely if it remains the only place where salesians can meet the young.

Like Don Bosco, and imitating the zeal and love of the Good Shepherd, the salesians must seek out the young where they are, going to where they live and

work. In certain places and in certain circumstances, groups of salesians, going beyond our usual practice and in accordance with the planning and consent of the local and provincial communities, will have to engage in a *true work of missionary searching*, entering into the life of youth groups and activities apart from our own works.

The Special General Chapter invites us to multiply the kinds of presence and service of salesians among the young. Hence it considers as true salesian action all that a salesian community does for the young in the spirit of Don Bosco, whether all together or through some of its members, *within or apart from our own work*, or in activities organized by ourselves or others.[1]

The character of this service must stem from the prudent and COURAGEOUS RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY in agreement with the superiors (provincial, council, chapter) within the pastoral work of the local church, and after studying the real situation of the youth of the place and the solid possibilities of the community.

b) An attitude of meeting

362 Seeking out the young makes for personal contacts with groups and with each individual. In this the salesian will follow the example of Jesus, who loved and sought after personal contact. His approach will be one of humility and trust, modelled on the goodness of Don Bosco. Thus he will base his pastoral relationship with the young on respect for the person, a warm, heedful and ready acceptance, the ability to listen with real interest in their problems, ambitions, diversions, initiatives, etc.[2]

[1] Cf AGC XIX 104.
[2] Cf MB XVII 107-114.

Salesians should seek this progressive contact with the young above all in the places and activities *where they behave most spontaneously.* In a spirit of manly simplicity they should seek to be collaborators and friends of the young, so as to achieve a true spiritual contact, deep and respectful, after the style and example of Don Bosco.

Our pastoral zeal will urge us to keep seeking for occasions to meet the young people who are farthest from God, even when so often they are within our educational communities. This attitude requires humility, respect for freedom of conscience, willingness to suffer and opportune sharing of their lives in the things they like best.

c) An attiude of presence

363 Our meeting with youth must not be merely occasional, even when full of goodness and ready respect. We must achieve a permanent presence in their world, like Jesus, who "pitched his tent amongst us," and like Don Bosco, who created a real family with the young. And we should likewise give them the possibility of living their "world" also within our works.

At all costs therefore, we salesians of today must be faithful to this active presence, a presence which inspires and brings new life, which meets the needs of the young, and respects their true liberty. In this way we shall rediscover and relive the true meaning of *salesian assisting.*[3]

Furthermore, the congregation should look into itself to see whether the presence of salesians among the young produces a good effect on those especially who set the pattern of life for others (university students, groups of workers or the poor, young immigrants etc.). New work

[3] AGC XIX 60, 108, 186.

and experiments will be needed to establish a presence in these sectors of youth.

The collaboration of lay-people will enrich our presence among the young. It will enable us to allot our personnel according to the real needs of the young people of the area, with experiments in youth centres, factories, and poor areas of cities.

d) An attitude of understanding

364 The world of today's youth is something new. Its values and expressions are very different from our way of observing and living. Our lasting presence and sharing in life will necessarily bring salesians and the young to a mutual, lively and real understanding.[4]

Following the example of Christ, Don Bosco sought to love and understand the young in their real situations. He understood their possibilities and resources, the limitations and weaknesses deeply rooted in their nature. We salesians should get to know the trends and requirements of youth, the social upheavals they are caught up in, the moral and idealogical difficulties and dangers of their environment, their style of life, the workings of their life together, their external show of happiness and their internal faults and weaknesses.[5]

To promote this understanding, the community should endeavour *to be fundamentally "young" and human, able to value all the richness of youth in today's society.*

We need to study, to reflect, to observe, to live with and to listen to the young individually and in groups, avoiding constant condemnation and refutation of their values and attitudes. We must judge and understand them in relation to their own background and mentality.

[4] Cf MB XVII 107-114.
[5] Cf AGC XIX 183.

The basis of all understanding is not so much ideas and arguments as love.[6]

e) An attitude of dialogue

365 It is not enough to reach an understanding with young people. We must also gain their confidence and so arrive at a dialogue in the search for what is good.

Following the method of the gospels, Don Bosco practised different forms of dialogue in his *preventive system* through the channels of 'reason, religion and kindliness...' 'Without forcing the pace,' he sought to make the young gradually take responsibility for their formation, as free men and as christians.

The dialogue of salesians with the young is a *constant and patient stimulus* to their interior liberty, and initiative, in a vital relationship of fraternal communion.

On the personal level the salesians practise dialogue in individual conversations, as educators in giving guidance and council, allowing the young "freedom to express themselves" or as pastors in personal talks, including confession, on the problems of the life of faith, prayer and apostolate.[7]

The salesian should not forget that dialogue is not just a matter of words, but above all of witness and the EXAMPLE OF LIVING.

Our pastoral action should help the young to pass from the word to that life which stems from the word of God, light of the world, made man and living among us.

The salesians, 'sent like Don Bosco from God to the young,' place themselves by the side of the young to offer them help in the name of Christ the Liberator.

[6] Cf MO 36; AGC XIX 192-194.

[7] Cf *Sistema preventivo* in Regulations 92-94.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FREEDOM-GIVING GOSPEL MESSAGE [1]

366 The pastoral attitudes and methods of our service to the young must be co-ordinated in view of a specific aim: *'Education to a committed faith.'* [2]

Christ lived human reality *to the full*; every man is called to live his own reality in Christ. This implies a continual 'Passover' (Christ's paschal action) from a selfish mode of life to full communion. The freedom-giving gospel of the Church leads to this by means of the Proclamation of the Word (religious teaching), the Celebration of the Word (liturgy), and the Living of the Word (groups, communities).

The formation of a 'committed faith' has its own dynamism which must involve all these elements. Here is the key to the pastoral renewal of our communities and of the whole Congregation.

We meet with adolescents and young people gathered in more or less spontaneous groups in schools, youth centres, hostels, boarding schools and apostolic movements (Y.C.W., Catholic Action, etc.). If we are to find our true place as educators, the only way is through a real study of these groups and the discovery of the trends we should help forward.

If salesian communities fail to organize their activ-

[1] This part is given a fuller development in the document on Evangelization and Catechesis (Document 3).

[2] AGC XIX 182.

ities in the light of this dynamism they will be left only on the fringe of the real life of the young, even where the nature of the work entails close spatial proximity.[3] In these conditions the liberating message of Christ will neither bring about the transformation of the young, nor commit their lives in faith.

Here is a brief analysis of the complementary elements and steps in this dynamism.

a) Starting from the facts

367 Our pastoral service must start from the real conditions of the people served. In the case of adolescents and pre-adolescents it is their interior world which needs to be structured, changed and opened out to the people and things around them.

The young man, on the other hand, finds himself caught up in a definite environment and process of history. He feels the pressing need for a transformation in the conditions of social life.

The first step is to discover the relation and the influence (and hence responsibility) of our action on this real state of the young. It is the natural field in which further progressive tasks can be undertaken. Because of this, all our activity *within or outside our own works,* must be co-ordinated as an authentic agent of *change* in order to establish the kingdom of God.

b) In groups - thought and lived

368 We find young people, immersed in natural groups, frantically chasing various objectives, which very often possess only superficial and alienating interests.

Our pastoral service must take up the task of supporting and animating groups, bringing them down to

[3] MB XVII 107-114.

reality, offering initiatives of real interest to the young, stimulating their creativity and the discovery of the christian values which are often already present there.

If the opportunity is taken, ordinary life offers occasion for the activity of groups in various sectors: social, cultural, apostolic, recreational. Through these activities we help young people and groups to formulate problems and to reflect on them.[4]

The deepest questions of life, as raised in this group-reflection on the basis of activity and experience, give us a platform for communicating the faith. They create a need in the young person for universal and definitive answers and solutions.

This *dynamism of reflection and activity in the group* helps the young to become aware of the real situation of their life in the world.

c) Through the Word of God

369 *The Word of God* studied and meditated on personally and in the group leads the young to find the response to the approach of Christ. In contact with the Spirit of God through the christian experience of community, he begins to share in the genuine communion of faith and acquires a progressive christian conscience.

370 *Awareness* entails an analysis and judgement of oneself and the environment. It stimulates the young to progressive commitment both in the discovery of christian and human values and the rejection of negative values in their own lives and in unjust social situations.[5]

The Word of God, accepted in individual intimacy and given fresh life by the community in prayer, nourishes the progressive conversion of the young person. It brings

[4] Cf *Sistema Preventivo,* Regulations 91.
[5] Cf AGC XIX 195.

him to the maturity of a mentality imbued with the beatitudes, and it frees him from the outlook of a consumer society, in bondage to utility and pleasure.

We must adopt the *renewed and up-dated* means which offer young people the possibility of meeting the living Word of God: the liturgy, study and meditation on the bible, personal reflection, group revision of life, short but deep talks with the educator, the 'good night' as a means of throwing light on the christian value of events.[6]

d) In the Liturgy

371 The Word of God, living and effective in the liturgy, enables young persons to discover and identify with the Risen Christ. It arouses in them the paschal attitude of death and resurrection to life. Grafted into Christ, living and present, they believe and share in the resurrection as in an actual happening.

Through the cross Jesus becomes truly free and by rising from the dead he becomes for ever the liberator of mankind. In the liturgy the young unite themselves in Christ to their brothers. They discover the sense of a struggle for freedom from their own sin and that of others, as from a situation of injustice and negation of the new man.

The Body of the Risen Christ, received in the fraternal banquet of the Eucharist, transforms the life of the young, frees them from selfishness and spurs them to some form of commitment to others, with a 'sense of interior festivity and visible communion with the whole of mankind.' [7]

[6] *Sistema Preventivo,* Regulations 94.

[7] Taizé: Pronouncement of the *Council of the Young*; *Prev. System,* Regul. 92.

The penitential liturgy in sacramental confession brings the young to experience the joy of reconciliation with God and with their brothers, and that true freedom which is also "a constant striving towards holiness, towards the absolute of the love of God and of our brothers." [8]

372 Today more than ever before we must help the young to rediscover the value of prayer in dedicated living. It gives fresh vigour to faith; it enables them to listen, to seek out and to follow the Spirit; it builds up interior life and creates community in and with Christ.

In the certainty that Christ is living and present, in the enlightened and joyful struggle for goodness, the young can live *a serene and positive purity*, as a true liberation from all selfishness, the fullness of love and enthusiasm for apostolic commitment.

Like Don Bosco, we salesians should consider it our special feature and characteristic to have a renewed commitment especially today, to promote purity in the young, as a sign of the presence of Christ working in them.[9]

By the side of the young stands Mary who is the Mother and Helper of their lives and of the Church.[10] She is their model in christian commitment. With her "fiat" she gives them the example of being at the disposition of God's plan of life by which he willed to free all men in Christ. Faithful also in this to Don Bosco, as salesians we renew our undertaking to bring the young, right from their early years, to a devotion and love for Mary Help of Christians. To this end we relive and renew the most varied initiatives.

[8] PAUL VI, *Discourse Pax Romana*, 22-7-71.
[9] Cf AGC XIX 195.
[10] Cf AGC XIX 190.

e) For an apostolic commitment in community

373 Conversion through the word of God and transformation through the liturgy makes youth groups into *true christian communities*, dedicated to real, integral service to the most needy. Thus they learn to discover, love and build up the Church, as an effective sign of communion and service. By this service they become witnesses and faithful messengers of the gospel that makes man free, and so they relive the undertakings of their confirmation.

In the heart of christian groups it is our task to help the young to live their social duties, from their every day work to the struggle for the liberation of their brothers and the reign of justice and love in themselves and others.

To this end, contact and even integration with existing christian movements will be very helpful. This gives the young a great sense of effectiveness, a progressive awareness of the Church, and a greater guarantee of continuity.

True social and political commitment should spring from reflection and prayer in the word of God, practised in common. It is not for us to predetermine definite paths for young people, but our action must give them the light to discover objective situations of sin, to discern the underlying questions, to turn to the gospel, to reflect calmly and objectively, and to choose the right course of action, always renewed, which corresponds progressively to the demands of the gospel.

Our help must always be at hand, as demanded by our mission of pastors in their communities.[11]

374 Like Don Bosco, we must dedicate ourselves to guid-

[11] Cf OA passim.

ing, forming and developing apostolic vocations in the Church: *group leaders and priestly and religious vocations.* This is the crown of all pastoral work the young: to help them to recognize their proper place in the Church, to chose a committed mode of life on the basis of this christian vision.

This specific pastoral work for vocations presupposes and is grafted on to our general pastoral youth work. It requires a real effort to examine the value of our action and to restructure it.

Without neglecting larger places and groups, we must have a special care for the formation of the most promising young people. This task should be assigned to confrères well qualified in the knowledge of the present values of youth, but above all who have a great spirit of faith. By example rather than by words they will know how to arouse love and dedication to the gospel in the hearts of the young.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOME STRUCTURES WITHIN WHICH PASTORAL ACTION TAKES PLACE

375 The treatment of salesian pastoral action among the young takes place within certain structures which ought to incorporate its characteristics, and in which the educating community can realize the necessary pastoral attitudes.

Our treatment will be concerned only with those structures which are most widespread, either by reason of the reaffirmation of their relevance or their greater correspondence to local needs. This does not exclude the validity of any other form which embodies the mission and spirit of Don Bosco among the young.

We shall also consider the question of action in non-salesian structures.

Oratory/Youth Centre

376 The confrères almost unanimously confirmed the priority and relevance of this work.[1] A generally precarious situation is reported of oratories almost everywhere. An effective fresh start is proposed. This entails an up-dating of methods and an openness to all youth the salesians care for, and a sensibility to local conditions.[2] This work is one of the most genuine proofs of the assimilation

[1] ASC 203 p 47.

[2] AGC XIX 134-140: *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*, Fr. Ricceri, 105-107.

of Don Bosco's outlook by the Congregation. Its great adaptability had led to a great versatility and variety of organization.

Its most common traits are:

— the existence of numerous groups of young boys and youths, especially the needy, with various appropriate organizations and activities;

— various degrees of human and christian maturity and of commitment in individuals and groups. Likewise various levels of participation in the life and activities of the Oratory-Youth Centre;

— a complex of varied activities, developed, as an educative use of free time;

— a spontaneous family atmosphere in which the salesians, their collaborators and boys share everything, creating a lively sense of trust and belonging.[3]

We find a great diversity throughout the Congregation not only in organization but also in name. We have Oratories, Youth Centres, Youth Clubs, Don Bosco Clubs and so on. For practical reasons the Special General Chapter makes no attempt at a world wide uniformity of terminology. Every province or region will use the name it thinks most suitable in the local circumstances.

This work is a community service which has as its aim the evangelization and religious instruction of the youth in a certain area. Its activities are mainly free-time activities, organized in open forms, interwoven into the boys' lives, suited to their psychology and catering for their most lively and varied interests.

It has a much more obvious missionary dimension than other forms of youth work. Its pastoral action,

[3] MB XVII 14.

besides embracing the families, extends to youths, boys and children outside its walls.[4]

377 It is indispensable to create an *educative community* [5] in the Oratory-Youth Centre. Provincials should give priority in assigning salesians to this work, who are gifted with pastoral creativity and suited to team-work. Lay collaborators, besides filling the administrative posts that can well be entrusted to them, enrich our pastoral action in animating various groups, in religious instruction and in other formative activities. Besides this, they give a special witness to christian living in a form different from ours.[6] A special effort should be made to obtain the collaboration of parents.

In the Oratory-Youth Centre helpers should be trained from among the boys and youths who show more ability and qualities for the various duties that can be entrusted to them.[7]

The salesian and lay personnel should be properly trained, and should undertake continuous in-service training.

378 In this work we salesians seek to offer the young the opportunity of overcoming self and of discovering and developing their own resources. Hence, rather than preoccupying ourselves with things which "attract" the boys, we ought to arouse in them an awareness of the great questions of life and awaken their hidden ideals. We must guide and live their transformation, helping them along the way of real achievement, more with the witness of our example than with our words.[8]

[4] Cf no. 363; MB VI 11, 542; VII, 54-55; XIX, 216; DESRAMAUT, *Les constitutions salesiennes de 1966*, 29-32.

[5] Cf no. 357; AGC XIX 139.

[6] Cf no. 368.

[7] CISI, *La comunità educativa* 15.

[8] MB II, 530; III, 620; IV, 514.

It will always be our concern to create an ideal setting for a meeting of educator and subject, seeking at the same time to form in them the mentality of the "new man" in Christ, so as to establish the kingdom of God. This therefore will be a new mentality of commitment to justice, which will make of the salesian work in which it has grown up a true agent of change in human and social conditions.

The different conditions of the Oratory-Youth Centre offer our pastoral action many means, values and opportunities for the complete formation of boys and youth. These activities enable us to give a recreational and formative aspect to the use of their free time. The different groups find the most varied possibilities of cultivating their talents, of developing their social sense by living and working together, of growing in appreciation of spiritual values and of sharing in the process of freedom-giving evangelization.

Since the help and christian formation we give the boys *must be rooted in their* lives, we admit the participation of girls in those activities which seem suitable, bearing in mind the real needs of different places.[9]

379 Not all the boys or youth groups who come to the Oratory-Youth Centre have the same level of human and christian maturity and commitment.

A flexible organization should allow the existence of groups with a more serious commitment, both in the religious and social field. We must recognize that one of the present difficulties that beset this work is precisely the lack of possibilities for the young people to undertake some worth-while action to satisfy their ideals of helping their neighbour and serving God as laymen.

As the social and geographic conditions in cities are

[9] Cf nos. 355-356.

always changing, so we too must continually review and redimension the action of the Oratory-Youth Centre in its various forms, adapting it to the new demands.

The activities of the Oratory-Youth Centre should be an integral part of the joint pastoral action of the local church. It should have a special relationship with the salesian parish, if it in its area. There should be suitable agreements and the necessary links with lay movements and apostolic organizations, and also with civil youth organizations.

Schools

380 "Our world is subject to deep and rapid changes in all sectors of life. The population explosion, the socialization and regional planning of all activities and social and cultural improvements have all had significant repercussions in the scholastic field. They have provoked crises concerning the nature, function, content and method of education. In many countries a complete reconstruction of education is in progress, to bring it in line with the needs of the new culture. We are all aware of the seriousness and extent of this unrest which involves a large part of our traditional educational field. Possible solutions to this complex problem should be studied and adopted in agreement with the individual Episcopal Conferences which our schools come under." [10]

Special attention should be given to the actual state and mode of operation of our schools, mainly because many confrères cannot see how they fulfil the conditions necessary for a full pastoral apostolate.[11]

The Special General Chapter therefore calls on the individual provincial and local communities to see whether in our many schools, including the technical and trade

[10] CD 35.
[11] PeP ist 6 & 8.

schools, the conditions are fulfilled for a *true salesian apostolate* [12] as laid down by the XIX General Chapter and by this document.

381 The Second Vatican Council has given the catholic school a very valid role in the present crisis. It is above all a *community* imbued with the gospel spirit of *freedom and charity*.[13]

It is the task of everyone, educators and boys, to build up a living community, with the collaboration of parents.[14] But the salesians have a special part to play. A priest, as minister of the word and of the sacraments and as a pastor, has his own proper role. His work as a teacher should fit into this role.[15] The lay confrère, especially in the technical and trade schools, has the responsibility of giving the boys a christian outlook on work.[16]. This helps the boys to enter into their professional world, with all its problems, without losing sight of supernatural values. In this it is a great help to maintain contact with those apostolic movements which are concerned with the working class.

382 For the school to be a *community*, teaching cannot be just a technical matter: it must be a *meeting between persons*. The teachers are required to respect the varied gifts and individuality of each pupil. Their presence among the boys should be a direct presence of witness, education and gradual evangelization. Only thus can the school be an apostolate in which they are masters of life in truth, justice and love.[17]

[12] AGC XIX 105.

[13] GE 8; Cf Letter of CARD. VILLOT to the President of APEL (Osservat. romano 13 Nov. 1971).

[14] Cf no. 356.

[15] PO 4-6.

[16] GS 67.

[17] Cf MB X 1018; XVII 442.

The scholastic community is a community open to dialogue. In it a boy can develop his personality in a creative manner. Always within the community, he can deepen his own searching until he discovers the true meaning of creation and of history, which is hidden in the subjects he studies and the craft he learns.[18]

Dialogue also concerns a boy's future. The choice of a state in life or of a profession is of the utmost importance. *It is the task of the entire pastoral action of the community* to help the boy to know his own vocation, to deepen his appreciation of its motives and to prepare to live it fully.

Our schools will take the greatest care to seek and guide good vocations to the priesthood and religious life from among the half million boys who attend them. Neither can we put aside their task of forming christian leaders for society, professionally and technically able to be a christian leaven among others who have not had a christian education.

383 Salesian schools should preserve their traditional popular character which avoids all economic, social and racial distinctions. When boys of different origins and character come to us and live together in an atmosphere of understanding and dialogue, there results an enrichment of education and the formation of truly christian friendships.

The provincial with his council, after hearing the views of the local community, should examine ways of solving the financial problem so as not to exclude poor and needy boys. Where this is not possible he should study the possibility of changing the type of service that the community offers to the young.

The SGC insists that our schools should be *full time*

[18] Cf GS 61.

schools. They should encourage all those extra activities which can complete the formation of the boys, in the family spirit that belongs to the salesian house.[19]

These activities should not be over-formalized. All the educators, salesians and laymen, should collaborate in them. According to the maturity of the boys the development of associations should be encouraged, with different groups for reflection and life.[20]

384 They should also be *open* to the more urgent local needs for the education of poor boys and for technical and academic qualifications for the working class, especially for those under-privileged in this respect. Using all the means suggested by a creative imagination, we should promote more human and just ways of living, which are consequently more christian.[21]

Special care should be taken not to create in the boys the ambition of always 'going one better' in material things instead of 'being better.' Likewise we should avoid every evasion or alienation from the social background of the pupils. Hence the schools should form a real part of local society.

Salesians should try to exert a positive influence on scholastic evolution and keep it under constant review and renewal. Hence they should propose and promote in the educational community a constant check on syllabuses, on methods, on the culture transmitted, on the values entailed, on relations with the social system, on the image of man which is formed, on religious education and on pastoral vocational guidance.[22]

[19] Cf no. 364; Cf also CG XIX "Boarding & Day Schools."

[20] Cf no. 357.

[21] GE 12; GS 60, 66, 85; PC 13, GE 9; OA 11.

[22] Note of the Holy See Re: the themes of the international Year of Education, Feb. 1971; Fr. Ricceri, *Relazione gen.* 110; ASC 252.

Our schools should work in intimate co-operation with other educational institutes at all levels within the joint pastoral action. Where possible, competent salesians should seek to have a voice, directly or indirectly, in the direction of the regional or national educational system.[23]

385 To fit our schools for the aims stated above will be to give them a new dimension, both qualitatively and quantitatively. If a careful study shows that one of our schools does not meet these requirements it will be our duty to the Church, to civil society and to the Congregation *to courageously renew it or close it,* in agreement, if necessary, with the local ecclesiastical authority.[24]

To avoid such a critical situation salesian schools should adopt those truly pastoral attitudes which, in the spirit and educational system of Don Bosco, turn a school into "a boys' parish." There the salesian, in seeking, by contacts through his presence, with understanding and dialogue will bring his boys to the gospel which frees and saves them.

Hostels and Boarding Schools

A hostel *is an institution in which the boys go to school or work outside the salesian house. The* boarding school *(or college) is an institution in which the boys go to school in the salesian house itself.*

a) The service which they offer to youth

386 The hostel and boarding school meet the needs of many families which are obliged to send their sons away

[23] GE 12.
[24] CD 35; AGC XIX 105.

for their education or work, or who wish to provide a more intensely christian education for them.[25]

As regards hostels, we should also mention those for workers or university students who are far away from their families.

Boarding schools also meet one of the most serious present problems in the field of education: that of orphans and abandoned boys.

Besides considering the social service rendered by these houses, we must also consider their scope for pastoral action, if we are to establish their validity relative to the present day salesian mission. They offer the boys a view of life and a moral and religious training which they would not otherwise get. They help them to prepare for an active and conscious participation in school life, or in work, and then in society, with a christian and apostolic outlook.[26]

All this means that it is valid to retain hostels and boarding schools, as long as the right conditions are created in the *educational community* for the pastoral attitudes spoken of in this document.[27]

b) Pastoral renewal of hostels

387 The houses should be such as to promote the family atmosphere that is so necessary for this kind of salesian work. Each age-group and category should have its own accommodation. The rules of discipline should be in accordance with the age and development of the boys.

The educators, salesians and laymen, who work in hostels, should try constantly *to keep up to date* in all that regards their work. They should be in frequent

[25] Cf AGC XIX 111.
[26] Cf AGC XIX 105, 111.
[27] Cf nos. 363-368.

contact with the schools and places of work the boys go to, since they go to school or work outside.

The boys must be helped when possible to keep in frequent contact with their teachers. They should also be allowed to go home frequently so as to develop natural relations with their families. In accordance with their age and development they should participate in the organization of the life of the hostel.

Activities should be planned to form adolescents into self-reliant autonomous and consciously responsible christians. These *should not be restricted* to life within the hostel. They should *lead to a dialogue* based on the problems of society which are reflected in the schools and workshops they go to.[28]

In this way they are prepared for their mission in the family, in society and in the Church.

c) Renewal of Boarding Schools

388 We cannot think of the renewal of our houses for boarders unless we think of them *in terms of life rather than in purely scholastic terms.* Only within an educative community, utilizing the situation of the boys, can pupils and educators live together serenely and cheerfully, with spontaneous attitudes, and achieve a gradual but ever more intense readiness for mutual collaboration.[29]

Boarders must be trained as persons with a free and active conscience, so that they can gradually come to live a christian life in ever greater depth, showing an outstanding quality of responsibility, as men who will soon have to make serious decisions before God, themselves and society.

[28] AGC XIX 111.
[29] GE 8; AGC XIX 108.

389 Salesians should be convinced of the necessity of the gradual participation of the boys and, when possible, of their parents in the organization of the life and activities of the boarders. The boys should be considered as *sharing responsibility for the educative work* of the school. They should be trained for the responsibilities they will progressively have to take up during their stay with us.

Various initiatives should be planned in association with them. In accordance with the three principles of our system: reason, religion and kindliness, we should *avoid every unjustified imposition*, especially as regards the life of prayer.

Formation for social and apostolic life, with which the family should as far as possible be associated, finds a fruitful field in the boarding school. There are many responsibilities which can be entrusted to the pupils. Through the formation of more committed groups, led by the teacher, the boys come into contact with the various problems of the region. All this requires a flexible organization.[30]

One problem requiring special attention is that of perseverance. Deep convictions must be formed. We must always keep in mind the life the boy will have to lead when he leaves the school, rather than his life in the school, especially as regards religious and liturgical formation.[31]

390 The SGC therefore calls on the provinces to encourage well conducted experiments in boarding schools *organized in various ways and adapted to the needs of the young people of today.*

Service outside our houses

391 Many young people cannot be reached through our ordinary works, but only in their natural environment

[30] AGC XIX 108; GE 4.
[31] GE 4.

and in their own spontaneous style of life. In accordance with the educational and pastoral directives of the local Church, and sent by the local or provincial community, the salesians should bring to these young people a direct presence of christian witness — education. However, *it must always be the community which takes responsibility*, and this safeguards continuity in the work.[32]

Under this service we can list chaplaincies and the assistance we give to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to our co-operators and to past pupils. There may also be other needs of the local Church in which salesians are invited to help, as in institutions or apostolic movements outside our houses, or in the creation of communities giving a special service in pastoral youth work.

The provincial, with his council will provide for these needs, within the practical possibilities of the province.[33]

392 The Special General Chapter believes this question to be so important and topical that the whole provincial community should be aware of it.

For this reason, while reserving to the provincial and his council the freedom to provide for the apostolic needs of each house, the Special General Chapter believes it opportune that the question of salesian service outside our houses should be treated *courageously and realistically* by the provincial chapter, which would take into account the situation and needs of our works.

For practical measures entailed in these doctrinal and pastoral guide-lines, see the constitutions and regulations.

[32] GE 2.
[33] AGC XIX 154-167.

CHAPTER SIX

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

393 Some extracts from the General Report of the Rector Major on the state of the Congregation and from the various documents that came in from the provinces prior to the Special General Chapter form the basis for a plan of action in connection with our renewal.[1]

a) In applying the deliberations of the XIX General Chapter in connection with our pastoral work, the fruitful nature of this type of activity was soon obvious in many parts of the world, where it took on a far deeper and incisive aspect. The main reason for this was that the whole programme of work was planned and subsequently put into effect by the community as a body.

b) This was not the case however in other places where the whole spirit of the XIX General Chapter was generally overlooked or applied only reluctantly.

This was partly due to the lack of co-responsibility on the part of the community which found it difficult to make an objective revision of its work and aims. In addition to this no effective collaboration with the laity was achieved. They should be the ones to take over much of the administration that up to now has been done by us, thus leaving us free for a more direct and open pastoral dedication.

Instead, we have unfortunately allowed other important but secondary matters to occupy us to too great

[1] FR. RICCERI, *On the State of the Congregation* p 103-110.

an extent, such as discipline, economy, scholastic and sports results, etc.

c) It could be that a good preparation for, or the inclination to meet specific pastoral needs was lacking. Apostolic inventiveness was also missing. The salesian mission in many areas has unfortunately not been able to find that NEW PRESENCE which a changing world demands. *Much of the work of the XIX General Chapter has remained a dead letter.*

394 In the light of all this and with the hope of a more fruitful application of what has now been presented, the Special General Chapter gives the following practical directives:

A. Pastoral action

395 1. The renewal of pastoral work in the Congregation and in each province will be obtained, in the opinion of the Special General Chapter, if the following points in the doctrine of an EDUCATIVE COMMUNITY are put into practice:

a) co-responsibility in the running of affairs on the part of religious and lay *educators*, of the *pupils* and their families;

b) The programming and periodic revision of all the educative work of the community;

c) the creation of a real family atmosphere in which the active and fraternal presence of the educator is indispensable;

d) the division of the boys into groups according to age and degree of preparation.

396 2. The salesian educator, being responsible before God and society for the most suitable type of practical ser-

vice on behalf of the young, must always be ready to try out new forms of pastoral activity. This creative spirit will find its best outlet in the local and provincial communities which will both guide and stimulate it.

397 3. An essential element of our pastoral activity and its natural consequence is the promotion and care of possible religious and priestly vocations and youth leaders. This is one of the more immediate and responsible service we can offer.

B. Types of service at different structural levels

398 Provincial Chapters and Councils should study the present state of affairs in relation to their service to the Church and Youth. In the light of their findings they *should take the necessary steps to bring about whatever changes* might be needed in the work being done, both as regards amount and complexity as well as its aims and geographical situation.

To this end the following principles should be applied:

a) the main criterion to be followed in deciding whether a work should continue or be closed down is the possibility or otherwise of carrying out real pastoral activity there. To continue a purely mechanical and pastorally inefficacious form of activity which merely wears out the confrères is inadmissible;

b) the work must meet the needs of the area where it is situated;

c) large and complex works should be broken up into sections, each with its own sector of operation and, if necessary, its own personnel;

d) work for the young outside our own schools and houses will depend on the urgency of the need for our service in the joint pastoral activity of the local

church, and the possibility in the light of our other commitments.

399 2. Youth Centres and Services should be organized at provincial national, or regional level as the case may be; they should be staffed by qualified salesians engaged full-time in such work.

Document 5

SALESIAN WORK IN PARISHES

CHAPTER ONE

CHARACTERISTICS OF SALESIAN PARISH WORK

1. Salesian Mission and the parish apostolate

400 The apostolic zeal of our Father, still alive in the hearts of his sons, and the pastoral needs of the local churches, have led our Congregation to accept more parish work; but such a ministry is an authentic salesian apostolate only if we remain faithful to our mission and continue the special work of our Founder for the young and the poorer classes.

401 In responding to the call of the Church to dedicate ourselves to the care of the people of God in more effective and direct ways, we find in the parish ministry great possibilities and favourable conditions for fulfilling our specific mission, the education of young people of the poorer classes.

We can in fact make more effective contact with the young and come to know them better when we meet them in their natural environment and acquire a first-hand knowledge of their real problems in life.

In a parish we are in touch with the child throughout the whole period of his education till he reaches maturity, and at the same time we have a direct and continuous relationship with his family. Such a relationship is all the more necessary at the present day, because when young people live in a de-christianized social milieu, education is of little avail unless at the same time we

try to re-evangelize the family and the society of which they form a part.

The complexity of parish work and the search for the best way of evangelizing a whole area makes it possible to unite the activities of the different groups that make up the salesian family into a fruitful common apostolate. These groups can then become integral parts of the much wider pastoral apostolate of the diocese, and hence an expression of ecclesial unity.

We recall with a sense of gratitude the confrères who have kept the salesian vocation alive for years in various countries where circumstances made parish work their only possible field of apostolate.

They feel themselves fully and authentically salesian in the life they lead and the mission they fulfil, and are convinced that by following Don Bosco with generosity they have increased the effectiveness of their pastoral activities.

2. Obligation of renewal

402 The Council points out that there can be no renewal of our communities unless they participate in the life of the Church.[1]

In practice this means wholly uniting ourselves with the local church, not only by bringing our particular charism to parish work, but also by sharing in the common responsibility for the one mission of salvation in accordance with the gifts which God has lavished on his Church.

Consequently every provincial community wanting to renew itself must consider how it can take a fuller part in the joint pastoral action of each diocese, what the characteristics of its service should be, and how

[1] PC 2.

effective it is, especially in the parish youth apostolate.

But it must be remembered that there are priorities to be observed with respect to the different works undertaken by the Congregation and so, although the special circumstances of particular countries will be kept in mind, the first priority in every province must be given to the direct apostolate for the young.

403 The General Chapter, aware of the large number and variety of our parish obligations,[2] asks us to remember that the kinds of pastoral work we undertake in our parishes must fit in with those of the local church of which they form a part.

In view of this there is a need for general criteria for parish renewal, and we here put forward some proposals for maintaining unity of spirit and style in the variety of situations that exist.

To be effective, a renewal must involve persons, fields of action, programming, and the method and manner of approach.

3. Persons

404 For a Church working for the good of men, neither new structures nor new methods are of primary importance. What need to be renewed above all are the dispositions of the salesians themselves, their preparation, and the trend and vigour of their work.

Parish work is complex, and it calls for a sufficient number of properly trained confrères if there is to be an effective apostolate amongst the different kinds of people to be found in flats, schools, factories, clubs, families, and especially in the youth section, where the local church expects so much from us.

[2] We have at present 665 parishes with 7,440,000 parishioners.

405 Where possible therefore a parish should have a religious community of its own, whose members live, pray and work together in an environment which makes it possible for them to attain complete human, priestly and salesian maturity. Such a community should continually re-examine its pastoral methods to prevent them from becoming obsolete or ineffective.

To enable him to build up a community of brotherhood and charity, the parish priest needs to have not only outstanding pastoral ability but also the qualities proper to a salesian superior.

406 The chief characteristic of a salesian parish is that it be administered by a religious community which wants to live its specific mission in the Church. We are characterized by what we are: by our mode of life as brothers, and by carrying out our apostolate as a common task, after the manner of Don Bosco.

407 Hence the salesian community attached to a parish will:

a) try to be a sign and a witness, in the district in which they work, of the spiritual values based on the evangelical counsels that must inspire the whole life of a parish community;

b) make it evident that all their work is animated by the DA MIHI ANIMAS of Don Bosco, making themselves "all things to all men" simply and without reserve;

c) for the benefit of all, but especially the young, the poor and the lapsed, revive the extraordinary religious figure of Don Bosco whose aim was to be "the parish priest of the young who had no parish." [3]

[3] MB III 197.

CHAPTER TWO

FIELDS OF ACTION

The concrete situation

408 Living as we do amongst the people, we find to our sorrow that the thoughts and energies of men are concentrated almost exclusively on this world, and that for many of them God is either of no importance or a stranger.

"Increasing numbers are in practice abandoning their faith. To reject God or religion, or in practice to do without both, is no longer an unusual or isolated phenomenon as it was in the past." [1]

Even when the state of religion is better, there still remain ambiguities and uncertainties. What we are now facing is neither a society which firmly upholds christian principles and whose only problem is how to behave in accordance with them, nor a society so dechristianized that it needs new structures to re-evangelize it.

In such a situation it is the young who are most likely to go astray, for they seem to be moving forward to a future in which a convinced and active faith neither exists nor matters any more.

And it is precisely in such a society that the parish has to work.

409 Today the parish is accused of being less a community than an institution, of being indifferent to the problems of modern man, of failing to evangelize the

[1] GS 7.

people living in the parish, of being still a centre of priestly power giving little responsibility to layfolk, and of preserving a rural-type structure no longer suited to an urban development. This is caused by the size of its juridical and territorial structure and from top-heavy functions.

The search for a solution

410 We can meet all these objections if we join in the effort at renewal which is taking place in every local church, and so bring about a more open and vigorous evolution of the parish structure.

Today priests having the care of souls are increasingly called upon to carry out their work in a more collegial way (priest councils), either as part of a wider pastoral set-up (zones, deaneries, vicariates), or for particular groups (workers, immigrants, etc.). In the same way salesians must be more versatile in realizing that their mission is for young people and the poorer classes.

We must therefore revive in our apostolate not only Don Bosco's spirit of self-sacrifice but also his inventiveness and courage in meeting new situations with new methods. Structures must be appraised in the light of the possibilities they offer for saving souls; the signs of the times compel us to adapt them to the needs of the people.

The General Chapter invites all provincial communities to consider what specific service the salesians working in parishes can give to meet the needs of local churches. The Chapter also points out several preferred fields of work where there is need of the creative spirit of our Founder to "open new avenues of approach to the world of today and proclaim the gospel." [2]

[2] PO 22.

a) Working-class parishes

411 When the Church calls us to do parish work, big working class districts should be accepted by preference, because they offer greater opportunities of serving the young and the poor.

Many of these areas are becoming increasingly dechristianized and present difficult pastoral problems which compel us to find better ways of preaching Christ and bearing him witness. In circumstances like this small groups of confrères are able to get vitally involved in the concrete social situation, and can thus develop their joint action, "reach the poor in their actual circumstances and share their anguish and their hopes." [3] It is the duty of the provincial community, in agreement with the bishop, to investigate the feasibility of these miniature mission groups, to programme their work and to keep in touch with them.

b) Parishes for young people

412 We are very interested in the evolution of the parish as a christian community, outside the traditional juridical and territorial limits, whose pastoral activity is directed towards a particular group. With this in mind we shall be ready to answer the call of the bishop to run parishes for young people, such as apprentices, university and other students, members of the armed force, etc.

This kind of apostolate is not meant to make the young inward-looking, but to create at youth level an effective ecclesial service fully integrated into the overall apostolate of the local church.

There may be also the possibility of confrères joining teams of secular priests for some particular task in the

[3] ET 18.

field of catechetics, or as chaplains to various youth movements, e.g. YCW, YCS, Legion of Mary, etc. In such cases the confrères should be ensured the possibility of a real community life. They should not be merely nominally attached to a community.

c) Pastoral action among workers

413 Pastoral action and witness amongst workers is one of the tasks which characterize our vocation to be of service to the most needy.

Priests and brothers called to this mission must first deepen their knowledge and understanding of the working classes and their problems, needs and hopes; of their attitude to the faith and to the Church.

While following the directives of the local churches they will try to establish ecclesial communities so devised as to respond adequately to the religious and social conditions of the workers.

An indispensable basis for this will be the formation of an effective missionary lay apostolate that includes all that is christian in the workers' ideals of comradeship and pride, and that is committed to manifesting clearly in the world of work the novel and liberating power contained in the gospel message.

The confrères engaged in this apostolic mission should consider it an advantage to continue living in community, both for the moments of prayer that it affords as well as the opportunity it gives them of deepening their priestly and religious life, and reflecting together on their individual experiences.

d) Parishes for emigrants

414 The phenomenon of the migration of labour, now so striking in its extent, cannot leave us indifferent, because it involves very large numbers of young people who

thus become uprooted from every family, religious and civil structure that could have been a valid support for their faith.

Salesians who take care of these young emigrants should be able to work in collaboration with the salesian communities of the countries from which they come (by means of courses of preparation and guidance) and of the host nations (by using every means to integrate them into the new social milieu).

e) Pastoral repercussions of tourism

415 The phenomenon of tourism, involving millions of people, is in itself a good thing, but those who are pastorally involved in it need to understand its intrinsic values and make positive use of them. Hence we must aim at forming mature lay people who will be real "travelling heralds of Christ" wherever they go, and will know how to offer to the tourist the active hospitality which the Council so strongly recommends.[4]

Local communities therefore should commit themselves to an apostolate on behalf of tourists, many of whom may be foreigners. They must be helped to become part of a new christian community, even though only for a short time. In this matter salesian parishes have special possibilities of pastoral collaboration at both national and international level, e.g. by the setting up of centres of information that could be of special value to adolescents.

Councils of parish priests should look for ways of co-ordinating their pastoral activities in this regard.

[4] Cf AA 11-14.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PARISH AND ITS COMMUNITY

« For if I preach the gospel,
that gives me no ground for boasting.
For necessity is laid upon me.
Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! »[1]

The Programme

416 The Church is presented by the Council in terms of communion, and the people of God as a community created to be "an instrument for the redemption of all." [2]

When therefore salesians are called by the bishop to the pastoral care of a particular zone or a particular group of the people of God, they take on before the Church the responsibility of sharing with the laity the creation of a community of brethren, united in love, to listen to the word, celebrate the Lord's supper, and proclaim the message of salvation.[3]

A missionary effort of this kind which follows our Lord's command is urgently needed at the present time, but is calls for community not only where worship is concerned but also in its state of life and in its action. This will enable it to share with the priests pastoral care for the lapsed, the unbelievers, and those of other faiths.

In this way the parish, under the guidance of the parish priest who represents the bishop, becomes an

[1] I Cor 9, 16.
[2] LG 9.
[3] Cf LG 26.

integral part of the universal Church, for it is a living cell of the diocese and its 'privileged' manifestation.[4]

But to be always a credible sign of the local church, it must express and live the mission of that church by entering fully into the pastoral realities of its area and region.

Hence salesian action must foster inter-parish and inter-diocesan communion, using its own particular vocation and characteristic approach to take part unreservedly in the overall pastoral plan of the bishop, the "visible source and foundation of unity," [5] and blending structures and activities to offer a wider-ranging and more expert service, especially to the young and in the catechetical sphere.

We must be exemplary in our search for this community dimension at every level, not only because of the organizational advantages but because the very mission of the Church itself calls for it.

The fundamental elements

417 Community life, evangelization and catechetics, and the liturgy are the basic elements by means of which the people of God, at whose service we place ourselves, is built up into the mystical Body of Christ and the kingdom of the Father, through the action of the Holy Spirit.

A) *Community life*

Community life comes first not merely chronologically but because every pastoral activity takes place within a community which is always in process of ecclesial growth. Hence if a parish, whether territorial or for specific groups, is to "represent the visible Church established throughout

[4] Cf SC 42; AA 10.
[5] LG 23.

the world," [6] and achieve its mission of giving life through the gospel to its surroundings, it must grow into a community.

Since however every community is built on worthwhile ideas to the attainment of which all can bring their own contribution, and since such communities require mutual acquaintance and friendly exchanges between their members, it is evident that the parish community as such is too large to overcome the inevitable anonymity or to develop brotherly relations and a real participation of all in the life of the community itself.

On the other hand, if the Church we wish to build is a mystery of communion, it is very necessary that small christian communities be formed which, like "signs and instruments," will foreshadow this mystery.

It is the law of the seed and the leaven.

418 In these small ecclesial groups (or basic communities) formed by families, domestic churches, youth groups, and associations of various kinds, it is easier for people to get to know, love, and help each other, as well as to deepen their understanding of the faith and the gospels in a true brotherly spirit, and finally to come to realize the urgent need there is of bringing the good news to all their brethren.

The permanent deacon will find a valuable place in such communities as an inspirer and guide. But it is vital that they resist the temptation to become inward-looking and to isolate themselves from the real problems of life and the local church. They must therefore keep in touch with other groups and do this in a parish context, for the parish should be the natural focal point for such encounters.

In this way the parish becomes the family of God

[6] SC 42.

which, through its link with the bishop, gathers together the basic christian communities and makes them into a single people to celebrate the eucharist, which is the life of them all.

419 The chief practical means for the formation of the basic communities are:

a) the liturgy and gatherings for listening to the word of God, meditating on it, and drawing practical conclusions;

b) shared prayer to strengthen union between brothers who give thanks to the Father in Christ;

c) the exercise of practical charity towards the old and sick, the poor, outcasts and unemployed, immigrants, and in general all those who lack health, affection, or property;

d) an active participation in the life of the district, town and nation, to help in their development and in the solution of problems that always arise when people live together, and above all "to awaken consciences with regard to human misery and to the demands for social justice made by the gospels and the Church;" [7]

This social obligation is essential for those who want to live sincerely and coherently the charity and faith which is meant to be a witness to man's full salvation. Faith must be put at the centre of life's problems to show that religion is concerned not with fantastic or extraordinary things out of this world, but with the things that are the concern of everyone, though in different ways;

e) the formation of co-responsible lay missionaries. This must be one of our basic pastoral aims, in imitation of our Founder who moulded so many apostles. His

[7] ET 18.

secret for creating a community and preserving its family spirit was to see that each one pledged himself "to strive to increase the love of God in others." He used to say: "Do good to one another; it will show that you love one another like brothers;" [8]

f) a very special care for the young, and a zeal for priestly and religious vocations as being of decisive importance for the future of the community. Young people should be helped to discover and live their personal vocation in society and in the Church as a response to God's love in the service of their brothers. They need to be given motives and values rather than norms. Emphasis should be placed on supernatural means by educating them to a frequent reception of the sacraments and to a life of prayer, both liturgical and personal. They should be encouraged to feel the Church to be part of a christian community, especially through the practice of charity. The work of seeking and guiding vocations must always be carried out with delicacy and with full respect for the action of God on souls.

B) *Evangelization and catechetics*

420 For this topic reference should be made to what has been said by the General Chapter in the appropriate document. Here it is only necessary to emphasize that in our pastoral undertakings we must never lessen our concern for the salvation of all the souls in the parish and for making contact with the lapsed to re-enkindle their faith. A christian community which fails to be missionary or to evangelize is no longer a community of the Christ who "has given his life that all might have life and have it more abundantly." [9]

[8] MB XII, 601.
[9] Jn 10, 10.

421 Serious thought should be given to the question of the instruction of adults, especially when they come to church to be married or for the baptism or first communion or confirmation of their children. They should be led individually to reflect on their faith, and this reflection should be prolonged by regular meetings with others whose faith is at a like level.

422 The renewed role of catechetics and its effective organization in the adult and youth sectors must converge and meet in the family, considered not only as the object but more especially as the subject of pastoral action.

The family must be brought to fulfil its christian duties as a means of educating the young in the faith, since it is precisely through the family that "the young are brought into civic partnership with their fellow men, and into the people of God." [10] Parents should be "the first preachers of the faith to their children," [11] and the first catechists. Similarly each married person will become an educator and help for the other partner in the course of their christian life.

Finally, if the christian family is the place where the faith is really accepted it follows that the whole family will bear witness to the gospel. To this end, groups to intensify family spirituality should be encouraged. Parents who are willing should be trained to undertake pastoral action in the community, especially by preparing those who are engaged (and young people in general) to be married. In this way the family will become a 'domestic church,' a 'first seminary,' [12] an 'open community,' and will thereby rediscover in the faith a new dimension of love, of liberty, and of service with and for others.

[10] GE 3.
[11] LG 11.
[12] Cf LG 11; OT 2.

C) *Liturgy*

Without any doubt the culminating point, the beginning and end of community life, is the liturgy. Evangelization and catechetics build up the community by bringing it together to listen to the word of God and the preaching of what Christ has done for us.

423 The liturgy makes present what it proclaims by the joyful celebration of the risen Saviour who, there in our midst, urges the community to live his paschal mystery in the world. The liturgy is primarily the work of God the Father in Christ for the assembled community; it is also a service of love which God manifests to his people by efficacious signs of salvation; and it is also our thanksgiving and in some sense our response to the Father in communion with our brothers in Christ.

424 The liturgy must always be a worthy and effective expression of the community through the full, active and joyous participation of all the faithful.

A 'young' liturgy, with the youthful characteristics of dynamism, rhythm and probing, could become a means of permanent 'reconciliation' between the young and adults, thanks to the mediating effect of the education given by the salesians.

425 In this field there is a precious tradition to be preserved and strengthened: a sacramental and liturgical formation which promotes a fraternal life based on the eucharist. The frequent reception of the sacraments is a guarantee of evangelical zeal and missionary spirit in the community.

In the great unified liturgical design of the Church, Mary the Mother of God has a position of the first importance, for she carries out her service of God and her mission in the Church as the help of christian peoples by bringing together all her children in unity. Once we

have understood the intimate bond that unites Mary with the mystery of Christ and the Church, and the part that God has assigned her in the history of salvation, we shall be stimulated to foster devotion to her, especially in the liturgy, in accordance with our finest traditions.

We therefore invite the faithful to have a filial love for Mary, and a sincere imitation of the virtues of her who is the Mother of God and our mother also.

Pastoral characteristics

426 For a general renewal of our mode of action we must rediscover the characteristics of the spirit of Don Bosco. We therefore emphazise some of those characteristics which seem indispensable to the parish ministry.

427 a) *The family spirit.* If the work of the salesians is to make them one with the people who are the object of their mission, it must be inspired by qualities of genuine brotherhood, affection, open-hearted friendliness, and accompanied by a simple, cordial and human approach.

This familiar manner will lead them to seek exchanges with the diocesan clergy and other religious institutes, to foster cordial relations with them, and to offer them help. It will lead them to engage in dialogue with unbelievers, and especially with those who have some influence in the area because of their political or administrative position or their social activities.

428 b) *A consideration for individuals and for groups,* so as to take full advantage of their collaboration. Don Bosco was always a man for human relations, for dialogue, for friendship. He was always looking for enthusiastic collaborators, even from amongst his own boys. We too must be generously 'open' in sharing responsibility in our pastoral work with lay people, who have "a proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church." [13]

[13] AA 1.

To do this we need, as a community, to draw up a plan of pastoral action, and then put it into effect. This means that we must think always in terms of service, so as to further the active participation of each one in forms proposed by the local church.

Pastoral and administrative councils and pastoral assemblies must be signs of communion and an authentic expression of ecclesial participation. In the matter of the apostolate and the assuming of those responsibilities open to the laity, our chief collaborators should be the salesian co-operators, because they share more directly in our spirit and mission.

429 c) *Kindness and sound judgement.* All our actions, especially in the administration of the sacraments, must be characterized by kindness and sound judgement.

The sacraments are not our property; we are only the dispensers of them. Indeed we ourselves have great need of the divine gifts we dispense to others.

We must demand faith of those who receive the sacraments, otherwise they will become something merely superstitious or magical. Remember the text: "Do not throw your pearls..."[14] on the other hand we have to be careful not to "quench a smouldering wick." [15]

Christ instituted the sacraments to bring pardon and salvation to all. There will be cases when one must refuse a sacrament, even at the cost of personal sorrow; but where uncertainty means a risk Don Bosco advises us that it is better to err on the side of mercy than on that of rigour.

430 d) *Joy.* Care must be taken not to lose or waste a very characteristic quality of the salesian spirit: that

[14] Mt 7, 6.
[15] Cf Is 42, 4 in Mt 12, 20.

of joy, of the spontaneous and imperturbable cheerfulness that marked the climate of Don Bosco's Oratory.

We can intensify this joy especially by means of the feasts which we celebrate in the liturgy — feasts which commemorate the hopes and events of the history of salvation.

An atmosphere of unspoiled youthful happiness will make it easy for all to experience the joy of living in a spirit of thanksgiving to God for his liberality towards us.

In this way the celebration of feast days will re-enkindle hope and optimism in the whole community and make it a more constructive presence in the world.

431 The General Chapter invites all the confrères engaged in the parish ministry to intensify their zeal in accordance with the spirit of Don Bosco. It also hopes that every salesian parish will be similar to the one mentioned in the minutes of the Superior Chapter on 22 April 1914, Don Albera being present, à propos of the acceptance of the parish of St Leonard in Messina: "The major superiors, on learning that the parish consisted mainly of poor and working-class people, judged that it would be for that reason an authentically salesian apostolate, meriting God's blessing and able to do great good for souls," [16] accepted it.

[16] CERIA, *Annali* IV, 119.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICULAR PROBLEMS

432 1. Parish and Oratory-Youth Centre

It is obvious that "the parish apostolate embraces as a necessary and indispensable element the youth apostolate of the oratory." [1] The Oratory-Youth Centre, while being open in a missionary spirit to all the youth of the area, must concentrate more particularly on contacting and forming the youth of the parish.

For this reason the rector of the oratory will be the priest in charge of the youth of the parish, and he must integrate his work and that of his collaborators (both salesian and lay) into the joint pastoral plan for the area, under the guidance of the parish priest.

The effective presence and position of the parish priest among young people and their groups must derive not from the juridical title of his office, but from the esteem and ascendancy he has obtained as a result of his competence in the matter of youth problems, of the effective help he offers, and the friendliness and understanding he shows.

433 2. The parish and other salesian works

A second problem of great practical importance concerns the relationship between the parish and other salesian works, and the maintenance of mutual harmony. Difficulties can arise in connection with common life, the planning and carrying out of the parish apostolate, the tasks assigned to the confrères, and financial questions.

[1] AGC XIX, 130.

It must always be remembered that the pastoral and missionary parish in post-conciliar thought is a community of the faithful presided over by the parish priest who has direct responsibility for them, and where the laity have the right to an active participation at organizational level, and in certain matters at decision level.

The parish community as such has needs, powers and activities quite different from (and more extensive than) those of the educative youth community.

The elements of solution proposed here evidently cannot be applied to every local situation. These must therefore be scrutinized and adapted to the individual cases by the provincial with his council, after consulting the communities involved.

434 *a*) Where the pastoral work of a parish is so vast and diversified as to require a reasonably large number of confrères, and where there exists the possibility of a clear separation of activities, locale and finance, then a separate community with the parish priest as its rector should be juridically established to run the parish. The resulting two communities, while remaining juridically distinct, should find ways of maintaining a close fraternal and apostolic collaboration.

435 *b*) Where circumstances make it desirable to separate the two offices of rector and parish priest in a single community, the rector is the one who is responsible for (and the spiritual guide of) the whole religious community, including those engaged in parish work:

— these latter confrères will strive to live the community life, except when the demands of their parish apostolate prevent it, and they give what collaboration they can to the work of the whole community, but without prejudice to their own specific duties;

— the rector will so arrange matters that co-responsibility and the participation of all the community

in the pastoral activities of the parish are co-ordinated by the parish priest in agreement with his closest collaborators of the great parish community, of which the religious community is also a part.

As regards administrative relations, the norms should be determined for each house by the provincial councils, with the approval of the provincial chapters, taking into account any arrangements made with the local ordinary and any obligations towards the parish community, the religious house, and the provincial community:

— but more important than jurisdiction and duties expressed in regulations is the agreement that springs from a fruitful co-existence of the various active groups who readily understand each other at a personal level and help each other in a brotherly fashion.

436 *c*) But the ideal solution could come rather from changes in perspective and mentality. In certain situations there could exist the right conditions for devising an overall pastoral programme centred on the parish, no longer seen as just a salesian work flanking a college or school but itself the heart and focal point of our service for the local ecclesial community.

Seen from this standpoint the parish becomes a field of action which has as its centre a community of salesians to whom the Church entrusts its mission of spreading the kingdom of God. But this means that the foundation of everything is no longer the 'works,' but the living vitalizing presence of the salesian community, which gives itself fully to the task of evangelizing an entire zone, and of building up a christian community in which the young are the most favoured part.

It is now no longer a question of dividing communities but of uniting wills, intellects and means, so as to inspire a more fruitful work in which structures are made to fit in with the apostolic tasks.

Under the guidance of the rector, who co-ordinates the work of those responsible for the various sections while taking into account each one's specific task, the community determines the overall pastoral action needed and the activities to be undertaken, and chooses those 'works' which best correspond to the concrete evangelical needs of the area.

The salesian house becomes in this way part of a new kind of service which is organic, unified and co-responsible, and which seeks the human, civil and religious development of the district of which it is a part. It becomes an open dynamic centre of pastoral action by co-ordinating and energizing all the pastoral activities (including that of the school) so as to benefit in the first place the young people of the area.

A continual attention to the "signs of the times" will lead to the up-dating of the kind of work which can no longer meet the needs or the concrete situations of the christian community.

437 3. **Reshaping**

Social changes can profoundly modify the working-class character of parishes entrusted to us, or make our possession of them less justifiable because they give less scope to our particular kind of apostolate, or the kind of service we wish to give to the local church.

In such a case it becomes necessary to examine all the elements of the situation to ascertain in a prudent and realistic way whether it is possible to hand back the parish to the diocese. If this cannot be done, our apostolic work, now through force of circumstances being exercised in a social milieu not of our choosing, should be directed towards bringing both the young and adults to participate actively in the establishment of a more just society, which can then become an instrument for the evangelization of other poorer-class areas.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

438 1. Co-responsibility in the local church

There is an urgent need on the part of all of us to make good use of an important element of renewal afforded by Vatican II, i.e. the rediscovery of the local church at all levels, from the parish right up to the episcopal conference. Consequently, in any plan of action in each province and house, priority should be given to the way we can best take our place with complete generosity in the local church.

Our "exemption" should be looked on more as an opportunity for service than as a privilege — something to increase our availability as we carry out our mission.

The salesians engaged in parish work should be on the look out for ever better and more efficient ways of fulfilling their apostolate.

Today parish work is beginning to take on an aspect more sociological and sectional than territorial; salesian parishes should encourage this change which can offer a field of action more in keeping with the purpose of our mission.

We should therefore prepare ourselves for this new type of sectional activity on behalf of youth, emigrants and workers.

439 2. Renewal

To make the parish more dynamic and give it a missionary slant, it is necessary:

— to rid it of many of those structures which give it an aspect more of an administrative unity than a community;

— to make it a central source of evangelization and catechesis through the formation of a truly missionary-minded laity, a centre of dialogue with outsiders, of help to the poor, and of open welcome, putting the emphasis more on example than on organization;

— to carry out programmes that are not so much laid down as freely chosen according to local needs, in consultation with the laity who share our responsibility in pastoral work;

— to give it a "youthful" appearance with a modern and well organized oratory section opening its doors to all the youth of the area with a missionary zeal which should be its chief characteristic;

— to transform it into a real communion of different fraternal and living communities, taking special care about the formation of the constituent groups.

440 3. **Formation**

The full acceptance of this last point will bring about a *radical revision of the whole gamut of pastoral work and a real conversion* to the ecclesiology of Vatican II.

The apostolic slant of the salesian mission demands that all its members in their years of formation should have the opportunity of preparing themselves for whatever type of work they may be called upon to undertake in the pastoral field. This must be done both on a practical level and by study of the methods and problems connected with the service of the Church.

Before a confrère is appointed to parish work he should be given the indispensable preparation of study plus an adequate period of practical training in an actual parish.

This preparation should not be limited to a cultural and practical formation, but should also be both spiritual and pastoral.

Document 6

THE MASS MEDIA IN SALESIAN PASTORAL ACTIVITY

CHAPTER ONE

THE PHENOMENON OF THE MASS MEDIA

"...We are on the threshold of a completely new era in the use of mass media."[1]

442 For the christian "the wonderful technical inventions" [2] which promote and develop social communications are instruments prepared for him by divine providence "to foster union between men on their earthly pilgrimage."[3]

443 The mass media (the press, cinema, radio and TV) have developed beyond all measure; they can reach every class of man and bombard him incessantly with ideas in every field. They are major forces in the rapidly changing events of the history of mankind.

They place man firmly at its centre; they make him more aware of his personal dignity and of his right to freedom of speech, to be adequately informed, and to engage in discussion and criticism.

But if man is not trained in the proper use of the mass media, he is likely to suffer a massive assault which could well destroy his personality. And he then suffers the consequences: superficiality and a tendency to radical ideas; a lack of objectivity in his critical sense and spiritual liberty; confusion in interpreting news, in evaluating policies, in assessing the trend of events; and even a loss of faith and moral dignity. He runs the risk of

[1] CP 181, 187.
[2] IM 1.
[3] CP 12.

becoming emotionally disturbed and ending up in a blind alley. Moreover the mass media undermine his self-reliance and create in him artificial needs.

444 These dangers arise not only from the good or bad content of the material supplied, but more particularly from the uncurbed restraint they exercise on the human personality. "Under pressure of controlled planning in the field of information, the overall effect of the mass media is to deform the conscience without the individual being aware of it; little by little it invades all his mental processes and dictates attitudes which he believes to be spontaneous." [4]

445 The mass media have contributed a great deal to the proliferation amongst the young of spontaneous groups for sport and recreation, for artistic pursuits, for work, for mutual co-operation and support, and even for opposition and resistance. At times the mass media can incite them to experiment in areas far beyond their own family and social context, and embrace modes of life and conduct which only unsettle them and alienate them from themselves and their surroundings.

[4] Segreteria di Stato a "Settimana sociale di Francia" 1955.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

"He who fails to make good use of the possibilities offered by these media to extend the message of the gospel to the greatest possible number of men, is not obeying the command of Christ."[1]

446 The Church, established by Christ to bring salvation to all men and spurred on by the necessity of propagating the gospel message, has not hesitated to make use of "the wonderful technical inventions which the genius of man, with the help of God, has extracted from creation." [2]

By her immediate adoption of the press and radio it is clear that the Church, with maternal solicitude, not only accepts and uses them, but even offers her collaboration so that these instruments, these "gifts of God,"[3] may become truly efficacious in uniting and in furthering the progress of mankind.

447 The Second Vatican Council in its various documents, and especially in *Inter Mirifica*, has pointed out the indispensable utility of these instruments. It instituted the celebration of "World Day" to impress on the faithful everywhere their obligations in this field. It created the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications; and for the application of the principles and norms concerning the mass media it published, with the collaboration of experts from many nations, a pastoral instruction on the subject.

[1] CP 126.
[2] IM 1.
[3] *Miranda prorsus* in AAS XXIV (1957) 765; CP 2.

448 The Instruction: "Communio et Progressio" of 23 May 1971, which was prompted by the Council, emphazises the change of perspective which has taken place in the Church. A positive christian approach has replaced the former reserve as far as the mass media is concerned.

All this is in perfect harmony with the essentials of christian revelation. The Son of God, the perfect image of the Father, became in his incarnation the "perfect communicator" [4] who reveals to men the mystery of his love and makes them sharers of his very life; "with the institution of the eucharist he made him a gift of the highest form of communication that could be shared by man." [5] He, therefore, is the exemplar of every expression, of every image, of every technique used by man to bind himself to his fellows and to communicate with them.

449 Along these lines "the People of God keep abreast of the events which form the warp and woof of history, and turn their face with great trust to the future, both as receivers and transmitters. Indeed, they already foresee the promise of the new spacial era of social communications." [6]

[4] CP 11.
[5] CP 11.
[6] CP 187.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CONGREGATION

"I beg and implore you not to neglect this important part of our mission."[1]

450 Don Bosco showed great courage and apostolic zeal by his forward looking attitudes in this field. "The press was one of the principal undertakings divine providence entrusted to me; I do not hesitate to call this means divine since God himself made use of it in the regeneration of man." [2] These are the words of Don Bosco in his circular to the salesians of 19 March 1885; they form a compendium of his thought and work, and are a kind of "Magna Charta" for the activity of the salesians in this field.

His love for the young prompted Don Bosco to devise every possible means of creating an environment which would contribute to their complete formation. He saw in the theatre a valuable element for this formation and for the development of the youthful personality, and in music a vehicle for the communication of healthy ideas and a means for creating a climate of happiness.

To the future Pope Pius XI the Saint declared: "In this field Don Bosco always wants to be in the forefront of progress," [3] by which he meant that to intensify his apostolate of the press he would always be the first to adopt the new and most modern techniques.

[1] Ep IV, 321.
[2] Ep IV, 318-319.
[3] MB XIX, 322.

451 Don Bosco affirmed that the press was "one of the principal ends of the Congregation." [4] With these words he charged the Society with the task of publishing and diffusing books and periodicals especially aimed at the young and at the masses. What was lacking however was an overall programme. Salesian activity in the editorial field is now concentrated on publications which sustain and further our apostolate (e.g. the *Salesian Bulletin* and other publications which lend support to various worthwhile initiatives); on periodicals aimed at the formation and diffusion of a christian point of view; on a specialized press (catechetics, youth apostolate, etc.); and finally on textbooks which seek to penetrate the scholastic and intellectual world with the gospel message.

452 In keeping with the educational mission of our Founder, the Congregation developed in its early days both music and drama as elements of recreation and formation. At the present day we are witnessing a revival of interest in the theatre and in music on the part of the young, but they are fields in which we have no longer any effective presence.

The appearance of the powerful mass media, especially as a means of recreation, found in the Congregation an attitude of reserve and preoccupation, and this led to the issuing of a number of restrictions in the early years. But the apostolic value of the media, the need to attract the young to our oratories and youth centres, the fresh formative and educative dimensions which the mass media assumed, prepared the way in the Congregation for a more open and less nervous approach.

453 The XIX General Chapter reaffirmed that the mass media held an important place in our apostolate and

[4] Ep IX, 320.

formulated a vast programme for making the confrères aware of this fact. Much valid experience was thereby gained; "but there was no systematic, co-ordinated involvement on a par with the importance and timeliness of the mass media, so useful for the renewal of our apostolate." [5] This blockage was caused by the wide disparity in this area from one nation to another, the complexity of associated problems, a misunderstanding of our involvement, and the lack of qualified personnel.

[5] RICCERI, *Relazione sullo stato della Congregazione*, 147.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PREPARATION OF THE SALESIAN

"Today everyone must have a formation which will give him a proper understanding of the basic principles which control the use of the instruments of social communication in the community."[1]

454 Candidates to the salesian life must therefore be given a *gradual and opportune education to good taste, a critical sense,* an awareness of the moral obligations involved in the choice of the reading matter, films and TV programmes which can enrich them both intellectually and spiritually.

A long preparation is needed. Salesians should consider the mass media as an acquisition with obvious pedagogical and pastoral advantages for humanity. They should convince themselves that their intelligent and enlightened use can become a form of apostolate and, what is more, an eminently salesian apostolate.

For an ever fresh and vibrant presentation of the gospel, for an essential and forceful catechesis, for a more youthful and brighter liturgy, and also for a more effective and educative dialogue, the salesian must study and learn to use the language of his time and of his environment, and *in particular the language of radio and TV which is so attuned to the mentality of the young.*

455 Salesians in formation should be instructed in the intelligent, conscious and responsible use of the mass

[1] CP 64.
[2] CP 52.

media in the service of souls. Only in this way can they later present themselves as guides and counsellors of the young. This is something which must be attained gradually and in the light of faith, the directives of the Church and the teachings of Don Bosco. They should also be prepared to "exercise a proper self-control, otherwise they may be so taken up by the artistry of the works presented or by the curiosity they arouse that they may end up by neglecting their duty and by wasting their time." [2] During all these phases therefore it will be necessary to provide, with due proportion:

— a general formation for all;

— a specialized formation for those who will act as leaders in the mass media activities of the house, the province, or the local church;

— a scientific formation for those who will become involved at the production level, either as writers, editors or publishers of printed matter, or as advisers or reporters in the field of the cinema, radio and TV.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUR CONTRIBUTION: EDUCATION

"Religious institutes should take note of the multiple and important responsibilities which devolve upon the Church in the field of the mass media, and should carefully consider the form their own concrete contribution to this apostolate should take."[1]

Liberation

456 Every form of social communication is something of value and worthy of cultivation as an expression of a human "word" assimilated and coupled to the divine word. It is not therefore the instrument itself which should be condemned when it is made to serve an evil purpose, but only its misuse.

We should note the enormous influence of the mass media on our daily lives. We read newspapers, books and magazines; we listen to the radio, to records and to tapes; we rush to the cinema, the theatre and to television sets. Mass media are necessary not only for our recreation and amusement, but also for the spreading of culture, for combating under-development, for the civic and political formation of citizens, and for the building in charity and unity of the kingdom of God.

It is also true that because of the poor quality and even scandalous content of much of the material, the desire for profits, and the shameless and immoral publicity to which the latter gives rise, the fundamental values of human lives are put at risk and misunderstood.

[1] CP 177.

It follows then that our specific task is to mount an operation to educate the young by removing all the negative elements produced by the abuse of the mass media. Our educational effort will be aimed at facilitating, and if necessary stimulating, in their young minds a *spontaneous and active liberation,* and at leading them towards the ability to make a "free and personal choice." [2]

Co-responsibility

457 Today a reaction has set in in every aspect of education. The educator must elicit from his subjects a response, and hence *develop their critical sense, both aesthetic and moral;* hence he must place his subjects in an attitude of dialogue with the mass media.

The young must first of all be trained in the use of the language of the mass media; they must be trained to look beyond the instrument and see the communicator who expounds an ideology, a system, the ideas of a pressure group; they must be brought into dialogue with him by means of suggestions, interviews, discussions, criticism, individual and group letters, visits, and so on.

We shall have attained the desired end of our educative work when, in our youth groups and *in our communities, the concept of co-responsibility has taken firm hold.* This means that we shall no longer be satisfied with the passive acceptance of our own interpretations and critical judgements, but only with the active collaboration of our audience, and *above all of our young people,* in the manner of selecting, discussing and evaluating the mass media.

[2] IM 9.

Creativity

458 The educator must know how to rouse the creative imagination of the young. The means and the occasions are many and diverse: notice-boards, magazines, literary clubs, camera clubs, study groups, stamp collecting, film discussion groups, musical and dramatic societies, round-table discussions, contacts with specialized schools or with other groups having similar interests. These are all extra-curricular activities of which we should make full use. This is the very summit of all our educational efforts — to develop in the young the genial and generous use of their individual talents.

THE PLACE OF THE LAITY: FURTHERANCE OF THEIR CONTRIBUTION

459 The salesian Congregation considers the advancement of the laity, and especially the co-operators and past pupils, as one of the most important aspects of its renewal in the Church. We should therefore enter into dialogue with them and collaborate when it is a question of promoting the mass media. We should make them feel collectively responsible, and urge them to undertake duties which were previously considered the exclusive preserve of religious. "Above all, it is the task of the laity to introduce christian and human values into the mass media, so that they can fully realize the great expectations of mankind and fulfil the designs of God." [3]

[3] IM 3.

CHAPTER SIX

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

To commit ourselves more effectively to the proper use of the mass media, we propose three specific lines of action:

460 1. The member of the Superior Council in charge of this section should set up a central secretariate which will: act as a centre of documentation in connection with mass media; arrange for the proper co-ordination of whatever is needed for the establishment and use of mass media; study ways and means of collaborating with other organizations working in the same field according to the directives of the Church.

The setting up of similar centres at inter-provincial, national and provincial level is desirable with the support of our co-operators and past pupils; these would have as their principal objective the support of those associations in the field of mass media which keep a watching brief on radio and television programmes from the moral and educational point of view.

461 2. Our publishing houses and printing works must always be conscious of their principal aim, which is the spreading of the gospel message among the people and especially among the young. This is one of the ways in which confrères attached to these works fulfil their salesian and apostolic vocation.

462 3. Salesian publishing houses of the same country or language should aim at a spirit of mutual co-operation and an exchange of ideas and personnel on an international basis.

Document 7

SALESIAN MISSIONARY ACTION

FOREWORD

"Go forth and make disciples of all the people."[1]
"I have come that they may have and have it more abundantly."[2]

463 Today we are experiencing a period of crisis in the Church and in the Congregation. At the core of the crisis lies the decline of missionary vocations and a weakening in the enthusiasm and drive for the missions.

On the other hand we are living in a period which is highly favourable to a strong revival of missionary effort. The crisis in the Church, instead of being a sign of the decline of the missions is really a sign of increase and development. This calls for new approaches and new guide-lines made necessary by the changing times and conditions, by the rise of national and international organizations created for the development and progress of man, and by the need for restructure.

In this situation one element emerges which offers encouragement: the generosity of the young. They do not lack the proper dispositions; they lack only a clear picture of the missionary ideal, of the motivation to inspire them. It is up to us to try to enlighten them, to help them to understand that the spreading of the gospel by responding to the noblest aspirations of man becomes thereby a force for progress.[3]

Several projects which have had their origin in our Congregation offer us some indications of the re-awakening of interest in the missions. These hopeful signs are:

[1] Mt 28, 19.
[2] Jn 10, 10.
[3] Pope Paul's message for Mission Sunday 1971.

the generosity of the Volunteers for Latin America, the first missionary projects of the Volunteers of Don Bosco, the setting up of the lay mission movement 'New World;' the interest groups of young people are taking in the Third World, the campaign for salesian solidarity, the practical results of the activities of the salesian procures and mission offices. This undeniable renewal of interest in the missions may help some of our confrères to rediscover their own salesian vocation.

What the Council says is very true: "The grace of renewal cannot come to fruition in communities if they fail to extend the action of their love to the ends of the earth, showing towards those who live far-off the same concern they show for their own members." [4]

This revival will serve then as a kind of thermometer for the pastoral vitality of the Congregation and an antidote to the blight of easy-living. We must bestir the missionary conscience of every salesian, re-study our present methods, totally involve the Congregation, so that by following the example of Don Bosco we may multiply the number of missionaries.

[4] AG 37.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

464 1. Missionary vocation of the Church

The missionary vocation of the Church springs from its very nature and is founded on its apostolicity. The Church received three great complementary mandates from the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit: to carry on the mission entrusted to Christ by the Father;[1] to preach the gospel to every creature [2] to raise up disciples.[3]

465 2. What the missions are

To preach the gospel and to establish the Church among those peoples, or groups of peoples, who as yet do not know Jesus Christ this is what ordinarily goes under the title of "mission." Hence, missionary activity differs from pastoral action and from the ecumenical apostolate.

Included also in missionary activity is that service which we render to the ecclesial community still in formation.

The preaching of the gospel and the consequent re-establishment of the Church in areas which have become completely de-christianized is also part of the mission activity of the Church.[4]

[1] Cf Jn 21, 21.
[2] Cf Mt 16, 15-18.
[3] Cf Mt 28, 18.
[4] Cf AG 6.

The fact that the whole Church is by its very nature missionary, does not exclude that some of its members (priests, deacons, religious laity) should not be set aside and dedicated to an apostolate which is strictly missionary; rather it requires it.[5]

466 3. Contributions of Vatican II towards this renewal

The new directives of Vatican II require greater adaptability on the part of the missionary.

Vatican II sees the *non-christian world in a new light.* It invites us to respect non-christians in their freedom, both human and religious; the missionary should try to discover in the non-christian religions whatever may serve as a preparation for the gospel in order to bring them to the fullness of Christ.[6]

Atheism sometimes shows itself as a reaction to the faithlessness and failings of christians. It is up to the missionary to demonstrate the ever-lasting truth of certain principles and human values which we have neglected.[7]

The *concept of evangelization* thus becomes enlarged. It is no longer a question of proclaiming the gospel; it is a question of the spirit of the gospel penetrating human realities. It follows therefore that the general advancement of the human race falls within the range of missionary activity.[8]

467 The *meaning of ecclesiality* has also been renewed. The doctrine of *episcopal collegiality* has produced a wider

[5] Cf AG 27; ES III n 6.

[6] Cf DH 4, 10, 12; AG 13; LG 16, 17; NAE 2 bc.

[7] Cf AG 10; GS 19-21; NAE 5.

[8] Cf AA 5; GS 42; AG 8; Fr. Ricceri in ASC 261 p 35 seq. Also *Messaggio per la giornata missionaria del 1970*; J. Joblin, *Chiese locali e sviluppo* in "Civiltà Cattolica" 1971, III p 352.

comprehension, a closer union and collaboration among the various episcopal conferences in the service of the gospel.[9] The co-responsibility of the people of God demands that missionary activity involve, in a spirit of solidarity with the hierarchy (bishops, priests, deacons), religious and the laity.[10] Ecumenism, with its consequent dialogue, invites us to promote, with the understanding of the competent ecclesiastical authority, a form of co-operation with the different christian confessions which work on the missions.[11]

The missionary Church does nothing more or less than continue on in time and in the midst of all peoples the work of the incarnation and the redemption. Hence the necessity of proclaiming the word, of conversion, of faith and of baptism for salvation [12] is always valid and timely. While according the greatest respect to liberty of cult, the Church affirms in the decree 'Ad Gentes' that it possesses both an indispensable duty and at the same time a sacred right to spread the gospel.[13]

468 4. Missionary pastoral action

Vatican II has compiled a 'missionary pedagogy' which will help to build up the Church among the people.

Missionary activity, in the mind of the Church, begins with a dialogue undertaken to make the acquaintance of those who are to be evangelized, and to make them our friends. Such an endeavour entails not only a "giving" of what we possess, but also "an acceptance of whatever is of good in the local culture." [14]

[9] Cf ES III n 17.
[10] Cf LG IX n 17; AA 2.
[11] Cf AG 15.
[12] Cf AG 5-7; DH 2.
[13] AG 7.
[14] AG 11-12.

The period of the catechumenate begins with a gradual formation leading to a total christian vision. During this period it would be of help to be able to give a christian interpretation to those values which the people already possess in their culture.[15]

In the meantime *the local community* begins to assume a definite form. The work of the missionary aims at bringing into being communities of faith, of religion and of charity, and to endow them with the three indispensable elements: catechists, clergy, and religious vocations.

We have to help the new church reach maturity so that it can be profoundly integrated in the social and cultural context of its own people, thereby acquiring greater strength and stability. In this way it will acquire its own particular personality with a liturgical richness and an apostolic creativity all its own.[16]

This gradual growth to maturity undoubtedly requires, on the part of the missionary, a constant and intelligent re-examination, flexibility in planning, and a humble adaptability.

[15] Cf AG 15-19.
[16] Cf AG 19-22; ES III, n 18.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MISSIONARY CONGREGATION

469 1. A reply to the Council's call

Vatican II has sent out to all religious institutes of the active life, and even to those not strictly missionary, an appeal for them to collaborate in the establishment of the kingdom of God among the people on the missions. It extends this appeal also to the contemplatives and secular institutes.[1] Hence, even if the "missionary drive" were not clearly rooted in salesian tradition we should still have to respond generously to this explicit appeal.

470 2. Its missionary charism

When Don Bosco was young he cherished the idea of consecrating himself to the missions. This thought never left him. He always felt a strong inclination to bring the light of the gospel to the non-christian. Don Cafasso blocked the way by saying to him: "You should not go to the missions." [2]

Don Bosco however never gave up his missionary dream and he realized it through his sons. "He would often exclaim: 'Oh, if only I had plenty of priests and clerics I would send them to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego because those people are the most abandoned.' " [3]

The motives which more than any others determined Don Bosco to begin the missionary activity of his Congre-

[1] Cf AG 40.
[2] MB II, 203-204.
[3] MB III, 363.

gation were the spiritual needs of the emigrants and the ideal of bringing the gospel to those who so far did not know it.

471 Don Bosco wanted his Congregation to have a strong missionary character. In 1875 it was he who chose from among his salesians the ten who would be sent to America. Before he died he had already sent off ten missionary expeditions. At the same time the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians also left for the missions, where they have since worked side by side with the salesians. At Don Bosco's death, in 1888, the salesians overseas numbered 153 or almost 20% of the membership of the time.[4]

The successors of Don Bosco, faithful to the spirit of their Founder have always given special consideration to the missions of the Congregation.[5] The XIX General Chapter underlined the fact that the Congregation ought to breathe new life into the ideal of Don Bosco who wanted the work of the missions to be the constant concern of the Congregation in such a way as to form part of its nature and scope.[6]

[4] Elenco generale della Pia società salesiana 1888.
[5] Cf CERIA, *Annali* II-IV passim; ASC, index under "missioni."
[6] ASC 244, January 1966 p 178 seq.

CHAPTER THREE

PASTORAL DIRECTIVES

472 The heart of Don Bosco filled with joy when he saw the Congregation consolidated and, even though small in numbers, active in the work of spreading the kingdom of God.[1] The Special General Chapter noted with great satisfaction how the salesians are engaged in missionary activity. To assist in the difficult task it has laid down the following guide lines.

1. The salesian on the missions.

Every missionary ought to feel the obligation of studying in depth the missionary doctrine of the Church, especially the decree 'Ad Gentes,' and consider it his official directory.

To render his apostolate more effective, the salesian should seek to cultivate and live a profound missionary spirituality which would consist of fidelity to the work of evangelization, of courage in his apostolate, of patient joy in the spread of the gospel, and of constant trust in the help of Mary, the Mother of the Church.

He should consider as being timely the recommendations Don Bosco gave to the first missionaries. He should therefore seek to carry out his work in the style of the Founder. He ought to show that he is as flexible as Don Bosco was in adapting himself to every new circumstance by being courageous, enterprising, creative, open to every fresh initiative.

[1] Cf MB XI 386.

He should give the greatest importance to the catechism, to the preparation of catechists, teachers and leaders, and to the fostering of vocations. Where such works are not possible his humble witness of service and holiness will act as an evangelizing influence and prepare the way for the kingdom of God.

In developing countries where the young constitute the most numerous and most promising element, the salesian missionary should pay the greatest attention to the apostolate of youth. A most helpful contribution to the development of these peoples will result from an education to freedom and the raising up among them of christian leaders.

473 2. Formation of the salesian missionary

We ought to concern ourselves greatly with the training of the personnel of the salesian missions: along with those qualities which are highly appreciated by society,[2] we should also inculcate in them the *sense of community* and a greater openness of spirit to the human environment, and this as a service especially geared to the poor.

Right from the start the missionary should become a man of prayer, inspired by a lively faith, possessing an unshakable optimism and a sincere love for his fellow man. If he works in a spirit of self-sacrifice and apostolic zeal, always united to Christ in obedience to the Father and in union with the hierarchy, he will most certainly continue the mission of the Son of God.[3]

474 With regard to his doctrinal formation, the study of the sacred scriptures and catechesis must have priority, since these are indispensable for the transmission of

[2] Cf PO 3.
[3] Cf AG 24 seq.

the gospel message. A knowledge of the history of the religions of the world will facilitate dialogue with the non-christian cultures. The future missionary should also be introduced to the science of missiology and the anthropological sciences, together with a careful study of the local languages and cultures. All these, where possible, should be introduced in the environment of the mission itself.[4]

It would be useful to round off his theological formation, even if he is a priest, with some specialization in what are termed the "human sciences." [5]

Attention should also be given to his social formation, and he should acquire some critical knowledge of the ideological, economic and political systems widely in use in the countries of the world, and in particular in the countries of the missions.

Those salesians who are temporary volunteers should also receive an adequate preparation for their service on the missions.

475 3. Relations with the home country

Whilst we recognize the absolute need of complete identification of the missionary with the nation in which he works, we still hold it necessary for him to cultivate in a newer and broader sense those bonds that bind him to his province and to his own country.

The destination of the new missionary is decided by the Superior Council, but every province, in allowing one of its members to follow his missionary vocation, does not simply grant him the *nihil obstat* to go to the missions: it sends him in every sense of the word. This

[4] Cf AG 26.

[5] Cf CARD. AGAGIANIAN in "Bibliographia Missionaria" 34 (1970) quad. 13 p 22.

brings into relief *the common missionary vocation of the province*, represented and expressed in these its privileged sons, and the missionaries feel that they are being followed, assisted and supported by the province of which they form the vanguard. Such bonds of course are spiritual and not juridical.

Every temporary return to one's own country (which should have neither the intention nor the appearance of a tour) should serve to strengthen these spiritual bonds and to offer the missionary the opportunity of fulfilling his duties to his family and of restoring him physically and spiritually, as well as allowing him to bring himself up to date on affairs.

The province of origin should consider it its duty to welcome these missionaries with fraternal hospitality on their return and to offer its generous assistance to them, be it temporary or permanent. On his part the missionary will offer his contribution to the *development of awareness of the missions in the province.*

476 4. New missionary endeavour

In order to co-operate with this grace of renewal in the entire Congregation, the salesians should live the missionary spirit in their daily lives, holding themselves generously available for an eventual call to the missions.

We must stimulate this missionary spirit in our works. From the very beginning of their formation we should present to the young salesians the ideal of the missionary in an objective and attractive manner, clearly demonstrating its value. We should spread the knowledge of and promote the missionary undertakings of our Congregation; we should study the lives and the personalities of our great missionaries, and above all we should cultivate that apostolic zeal and spirit of supernatural generosity which forms the foundation of every missionary vocation.

Of special importance is the encouragement and preparation of the laity, especially the young co-operators and past pupils, who might offer their missionary and technical work as volunteers. Their preparation could be expressed through local organizations which have this scope, even though they may not be ours.

We should evaluate the youth movements in the service of the missions: they exercise a strong attraction on the young. And in order that they may carry out a true service, they must be trained with clear missionary motivation.

477 The Special General Chapter appeals to all the provinces and even to those who are poorest in numbers of salesians so that by obeying the invitation of the Council [6] and following the courageous example of our Founder, they may contribute, even in a temporary manner, to the spread of the kingdom of God.

[6] Cf AG 40.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

478 1. To encourage, co-ordinate, and promote salesian missionary work at all levels, our society has a central office or secretariate for the purpose, under the direct supervision of the Councillor for the missions.

479 2. The Congregation should provide for the training of specialists in missionary and similar work. Besides being at the service of the missions, they will also help to keep the missionaries abreast of new ideas and developments.

480 3. The missions are an object of general interest to the whole Congregation. Every confrère therefore is in one way or another connected with this work. Only in this way can we bring into effect the 'solidarity' in the provision of both personnel and finances so warmly recommended by the Rector Major. Hence:

— provincials should be generous in allowing such confrères as have the necessary qualities to consecrate themselves to missionary work if they so desire;

— each province should cultivate missionary vocations by presenting the salesians as a missionary Congregation and promising the fulfilment of their ideals to those who want to do such work;

— the different communities should keep themselves informed of the missionary problems of the Church and of the Congregation; let them cultivate a true salesian spirit in each house and thus create an atmosphere in which missionary vocations can develop; let projects be also undertaken for the benefit of the missions.

SECOND SECTION

Our life of communion

Document 8

THE COMMUNITY OF BROTHERHOOD SALESIAN AND APOSTOLIC

481 The salesian family comprises among its members salesian religious. These are men who follow a special vocation, live in a fraternal, apostolic community and dedicate themselves totally to God by the profession of the evangelical counsels, thus making themselves available to fulfil their special mission in accord with the salesian charism.[1]

482 They are called to live more intensely the mystery of the Church which is the communion of men with one another and with God, in view of a mission. As this communion manifests and fulfils itself through a fraternal manner of life, so the mission finds its fulfilment in apostolic services.

Consecration, mission, communion of life and apostolate complement each other, as inseparable elements in one and the same dynamic reality. Thus in community the salesian religious achieve a true balance of human and supernatural elements; they follow Christ "more nearly" [2] and embrace a state of life which "is not opposed to the true progress of the human person but of its very nature greatly assists it:" [3] the community for its part, "like a family united in the lord, enjoys the lord's presence." [4]

The particular stamp of salesian community life is the family spirit as conceived and lived by Don Bosco and as enriched and developed by his sons.[5]

[1] Cf LG 44 a.
[2] PC 1.
[3] LG 46.
[4] PC 15.
[5] Cf St pr. pp 187-201.

CHAPTER ONE

FRATERNAL COMMUNITY

A) *HUMAN VALUE OF THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY*

483 Requests from the confrères

Very realistically the confrères have condemned coldness and superficiality in personal relationships since, where these exist, community life fails to satisfy the members' aspirations, or to promote fraternal union and apostolic work, or to foster vocations.

On the other hand there is reason to complain of the reluctance of many members to take part in community activities and meetings.[1]

Consequently the confrères request that there should exist in the community an atmosphere of greater human warmth characteristic of family life:

— of real friendship based on respect and mutual esteem,

— of apostolic co-responsibility permitting all to take part in dialogue,

— of openness to the world, the Church and the Congregation in the formulation of programmes and in community decisions.[2]

They have in mind a very positive charity that embodies itself in the demands of particular situations,

[1] *Ricceri on the state of the Congregation* p 19 seq.

[2] Cf replies to istanze 110 of PeP.

environments, activities, times and people, thus making fraternal friendship really possible.

There is no intention here of denying the primacy of the supernatural but rather there is an affirmation of the prime importance of the human factor in giving the world a witness of the reality of community charity and apostolic service, even though this must naturally be associated with the acceptance of certain limits and personal sacrifices arising from our fraternal life and mission.[3]

484 Openness to the signs of the times

Nowadays the twin phenomena of socialization and personalization make us conscious that men are striving more than ever to achieve bonds of relationship with their fellowmen by means of which they hope to expand their own personalities and at the same time play a bigger part in social and personal development and progress.

As religious, we are called upon by the Council to bring ourselves up to date through "an adequate knowledge of the times, peoples and needs of the Church." [4] We must then renew ourselves in our community and personal lives, so as to make our active work more effective.[5]

485 A Community for the salvation of men

This movement towards greater social and mutual contacts must not remain on a purely human level nor become mere mob-activity, while the desire for greater personal expression must not be allowed to degenerate

[3] Documentation of the Special Provincial Chapters.

[4] PC 2 d.

[5] Cf GS 4-10; AA 14; DH 15 c; MM 45-64: St. pr I n 10; 15, 16, 21.

into selfish individualism. To avoid these dangers, the members must develop their contacts within the community so as to form a more integral part of it without losing their own individuality. Through reciprocal relationships within the community, it is possible to achieve that personal approach which produces co-responsibility, decentralization, pluralism, and subsidiarity. These factors stimulate creativity, make it possible to consider others as fellow-workers, bring personal activity into the heart of our common task through free and open dialogue, and in this way make our mission more effective and enrich those who participate in it.[6]

486 A Community for maturity

Men gradually achieve maturity and contribute to the maturity of the community in which they live when they are in an environment which satisfies their fundamental aspirations, such as their capacity for dialogue, collaboration, the good use of their talents, attention to their desires, their spirit of initiative etc.[7]

Signs of the maturity of the individual are: openness towards others, respect for reciprocal bonds of justice, the fulfilment of obligations, participation in work, interior adhesion to discipline, and fidelity to a freely-accepted rule.

The community itself gives proof of its maturity when instead of isolating itself, it shows itself capable of establishing cordial, fully human relationships with other people and other circles which have claims upon it by reason of its life and work. Thus is established a useful exchange of personal and community riches in

[6] Cf GS 6, 25; PC 14.

[7] PeP II Special Provincial Chapter.

a task which shows itself ever more opportune and up to date.[8]

487 A Community of authentic friendship

Since the absence of human virtues and qualities and the neglect of the corresponding values drive communities and confrères to a state of crisis, it follows that fraternal friendship based on loyalty, honesty, collaboration, co-responsibility, generosity, capacity for renunciation, desire for team-work, must be considered an important aim of community life, and it must be fraternal friendship which creates the climate which enables the confrère to feel at home and esteemed for his own sake.[9]

The community originating from a divine vocation and from apostolic service, must constantly endeavour to realize among those who comprise it a true communion of fraternal affection and friendship, which will bind to it all the members without exception.

Moreover since the religious community does not escape from the dynamism proper to every human group, it must value the helps which the human sciences give (psychology, sociology etc). By applying such helps, a more harmonious and balanced community will result, in which the action of grace will be more fruitful, and our mission facilitated and made more effective with each member cheerfully playing his part.

488 Community meetings

Where there exists a union of souls, a true fraternity and friendship, there is a natural tendency in every human group for this to show itself and ever gain strength and

[8] Cf Reply to istanze 110 of PeP.

[9] Cf AGC XIX p 86; reply of Second Provincial Chapter to prop. 115 of PeP; ET 39.

intensity in and through common reunions and tasks performed in common.

These meetings are consequently of the utmost importance, in religious communities as elsewhere, whether they be at fixed intervals or prompted by particular needs or situations. Each member can help to increase fraternal understanding by diligence in attending such community gatherings — whether for prayer, dialogue, for work or life (meals, recreation, up-dating etc.). On the other hand each member through his absence, *would deprive himself of something valuable, show a certain lack in his relation with others, and run the risk of ending up on the fringe of the community.*

B) *SUPERNATURAL VALUE OF THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY*

489 A human and religious community

God has taken the social nature of man into account and fixed his supernatural destiny in the Church, which is a communion of men bound to each other and to God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The religious community eminently fulfils this notion of community; it is a participation in the life of the Trinity and should become a witness to it. In it dialogue becomes a common search for the will of God, which requires each one's free personal adherence.

It can be seen as a more profound response to the desire for community living which is such a mark of the Church and of the world today especially among the young, as a fruit of conciliar renewal and as a remarkable return to the spirit of the early days.[10]

[10] Cf PC 15 a; Introduction to Constitutions 1966 p 37.

490 An apostolic community and a religious community

God's plan of salvation is achieved in the Church, which was born when Jesus gathered the apostles around him, men of different backgrounds, characters and aspirations, whom he considered as his friends and brothers and with whom he shared work, mission, community of goods, extraordinary charisms and his own relationship with his Father; he formed a real family with them.[11] One can easily discern in Jesus' manner of acting the pattern for religious life in community. It is therefore called "apostolic" and represents the prime way of "following Christ." [12]

Christ can in this way be considered as the founder of religious community life — more by what he did than by what he said.

491 The first community of Jerusalem

The first community of Jerusalem has also been proposed as the model for religious communities. It developed under the guidance of Peter and the apostles as a fraternal community around Mary, Mother of Jesus and of the Church.

All the members were "of one heart and one mind" in hearing the word of God, in prayer and celebration of the eucharist, in sharing their goods, and in charity to the needy.

The successive vicissitudes of the Church have demonstrated that religious communities are in the best position to maintain this type of witness.[13]

[11] Cf Mk 3, 13-35; LG 19.

[12] PC 2 a; MIDALI, *La nostra vita comunitaria*, edition lit CISI p 78.

[13] Acts 2, 42; 4, 32; LG 46 b; PC 15.

492 The religious community in the ecclesial community

The religious community is a form of communion according to the ecclesial teaching of Vatican II which lays stress on the notion of 'people of God' and 'mystical Body' whereby in the Church 'there exists a wonderful communion in which variety does not harm unity but serves rather to manifest it.' [14]

This is how we must understand the statement of the Council that religious life 'while not belonging to the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless belongs to its life and holiness.' [15] i.e., to its charismatic structure particularly under the aspect of communion.

493 Supernatural charity the soul of the community

Communion is engendered and nourished among the confrères by the practice of charity which Christ proclaimed as the condition for his presence. Charity is the greatest witness to heavenly realities when it is practised by a community which gathers together in faith, goes forward in hope, and lives in love.

Amongst other advantages, the religious community gives its members 'a fraternal association in the militia of Christ, and liberty strengthened by obedience. Thus these religious can securely fulfil and faithfully observe their religious profession, and rejoicing in spirit make progress on the road of charity.' [16]

The religious through their charity communicate to one another not only the benefits derived from baptism and confirmation but also such as stem from their profess-

[14] OE 2; Cf GOZZELINO, *La vita religiosa come segno e testimonianza* in "Per una presenza viva dei Religiosi nella Chiesa e nel mondo," Torino LDC 1969.

[15] LG 44 d; PC 2; LG 44 b; PC 1, 5.

[16] LG 43 a.

ion, through which 'they manifest to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below: likewise they witness to the new and eternal life acquired by Christ, and they foretell the resurrected state and the glory of the heavenly kingdom.' [17] Moreover when the Church gives its approval to a religious family, it recognizes the bonds of charity which join each community with all the others scattered throughout the world, already united with one another by their identity of charism, of mission and of spirit, as also by the communion of all the other benefits they possess.

494 A community of imperfect men

Each member can enrich the others by his gifts or else, because of the 'mystery of evil' conflicting with grace,[18] he can impoverish them by his limitations; in the latter case charity could step in with patience, pardon and fraternal evangelical correction,[19] especially in the case of those whose character and temperament can cause difficulties to common life.[20]

As the community is composed of imperfect men, it calls for the exercise of personal sacrifice. All are required to contribute by work and sometimes by suffering to ensure its continued growth.

It is only through the united efforts of all that the community can advance towards a greater completeness by overcoming the daily difficulties and tensions which inevitably arise and which are part and parcel of community life itself.

The community, like the Church itself, must always

[17] LG 44 c; ET 7.
[18] GS 13, 1 ab.
[19] Cf Mt 15, 18; ET 38-39.
[20] Cf ET 38-38.

keep itself disposed towards reconciliation and repentance; thereby it participates in the Paschal Mystery of Christ and collaborates with him in removing its many stains and wrinkles, through a constant confrontation with the gospel through the practice of the 'revision of life.' [21]

495 Community of consecrated men

Ecclesial communion has its origin in baptism. Religious profession seeks to express this communion in concrete fashion and so directs the religious ideal expressed in the three evangelical counsels towards life in community, to which it already tends by its very nature.

In particular, the religious:

— through *chastity* opens his heart to a delicate, unselfish love towards his brethren; voluntary celibacy is the source and strength of a true brotherhood born not of the flesh and blood but of God;[22]

— through his *poverty* he puts his personal possessions, material and spiritual, at the disposal of the brethren, with a detachment from private interests. In this way each enriches the others by his poverty and gives witness to the love of God through community fraternal charity;[23]

— through his *obedience* he joins other minds and hearts in the common quest for the will of God, and with them binds himself to direct his life towards God and Christ, taking his share of responsibility for the common mission.[24]

[21] Cf AA 30 h.

[22] Cf PC 12; ET 13-14; MATURA, *Celibato e comunità*, Queriniana 1969.

[23] Cf PC 13; ET 21; OPTATUS A VEGEL, *Povertà*, Queriniana 1969.

[24] PC 14.

C) *THE SALESIAN SETTING FOR COMMUNITY LIFE*

496 The first salesian community

Don Bosco was supernaturally inspired to create a community of religious from within his family, of which the specific function was to act as a life-giving stimulant for the self-same mission.

He attained his objective by degrees, establishing bonds of friendship with the better boys, testing them in practical works of charity towards their neighbour, next binding them by promise and finally guiding them on to religious consecration by vows.[25]

Thus the first salesian community came into existence. In it Don Bosco appeared as master, animating force, father and guide raised up by the Holy Spirit and maternal affection of Mary Help of Christians, and he was accepted as such by all his sons.

497 The community in the constitutions

In the Constitutions Don Bosco wanted to include all those elements which characterize a community of religious united fraternally to achieve an apostolic mission:[26]

— christian perfection was the ultimate purpose of the Congregation;

— mission towards the young, especially the poorer ones: "praesertim si pauperiores sint," and hence the apostolic character of the society;

[25] BM VIII, 596; STELLA, *Don Bosco* v 2 p 153; 350-351; WIRTH, *Don Bosco et les Salesiens* p 103, LDC 1970; DESRAMAUT, *Don Bosco et la vie spirituelle*, LDC 1970 p 29; CERIA, *Annali* I p 30-33; MIDALI, *Carisma permanente di Don Bosco*, LDC p 97; ASC XIX pp 95-100.

[26] Costituzioni art 12; Cf DESRAMAUT, *Les constitutions salesiennes*, vol 1 p 16.

— religious consecration through the profession of vows which establish the 'communion;'

— common life sustained by fraternal charity making the members "one in heart and mind;"

— love and service of God;

— equality of the confrères: "priests, clerics and laymen." [27]

498 The salesian community in the thought and practice of Don Bosco

In 1869, in the comments which he made to the first salesian community, concerning Pius IX's approval of the Congregation, Don Bosco stated that the destiny of the institution was bound up with the practice of common life: this consists, he continued, in the joy experienced by brethren living in harmony: 'habitare fratres in unum:'

— in unum locum, physically in every manifestation of the common life;

— in unum spiritum: "there must be unity of mind and will, i.e. charity;"

— in unum agendi finem, which is the attainment through obedience of the common mission: the scope of the society which is the moral and scientific education of poor and abandoned boys.[28]

The advice which he left as a souvenir in his will [29] can be seen also as the conscious inspiration of his activity as founder and superior. He showed a great capacity for dialogue, for sharing responsibility, *even with the youngest of his helpers*; he knew how to harmonize in apostolic and missionary work the different skills of persons who

[27] BM XII, 152; BRAIDO, *Religiosi nuovi per il mondo del lavoro*, SEI p 27.

[28] MB IX, 571 seq; see also constit. art 13.

[29] Cf MB XVII 257, 265.

were temperamentally very different: he could find the right job for everyone suited to his temperament ability and formation, so that all felt satisfied.

499 The family spirit

The family spirit is a basic element in the salesian community. This spirit informed all Don Bosco's work; it was something alive, a fact of life for his first helpers, and thus salesian tradition was shaped and formed by it from the very beginning.

It would seem that this unmistakable prerogative consists in a climate of shared affection based chiefly on mutual esteem and confidence and leading on to fraternal rapport and sharing of all they possess by the confrères. It is maintained by reason, kindness and the spirit of faith which creates the freedom of the children of God.

Some of the fruits of the family spirit are a fraternal manner of exercising authority and obedience, dialogue and co-responsibility in initiatives and work.[30]

Within the family setting, young confrères merit particular attention, to enable them to integrate their energies into the rhythm of the common life and thus mature them for the task of continuing the salesian mission; they in their turn, by their own special perceptiveness, can sometimes clearly discern the problems that events pose for the community life and action.[31]

500 Charity more urgently directed to those in greatest need

The family spirit reveals itself most remarkably in the particularly attentive charity it shows towards those most in need of it, viz. the sick and the elderly. Members see in their suffering confrères the sign of Christ the redeemer: they welcome them, surround them with af-

[30] Cf Document 1 re: Salesian Spirit p 77.
[31] Cf *Regola San Benedetto* n 3.

fectionate care, and help them to understand the value of their role of sacrifice and prayer in sustaining the common apostolate. As regards the elderly confrères, the community offers them gratitude for the work they have accomplished, and enlists their help in tasks of which they are still capable, and seeks the benefit of their advice and experience. The understanding, comfort, prayer and delicacy of the community can strengthen and enlighten those who are wavering in their faith and vocation.[32]

Guests shall be honoured as coming to us in the name of Christ.[33]

501 Optimism and joy [34]

In the salesian community the keynote is *optimism*, an optimism derived from a supernatural vision of salvation, from abandonment to providence, and from faith in man and human values according to the christian humanism that the Church recognized in Don Bosco. *Joy* is also a mark of the salesian community, a joy supported by hope which is the fruit of interior peace and the enjoyment of shared goods.

502 The superior in the salesian community

Like Don Bosco the superior is the centre and animator of the community of his brethren. He exercises his authority by way of service *paying due attention to the abilities and charisms of each member, and keeping in mind the common good and the development of the community.* He shares responsibility with all the confrères in the fulfilment of the common mission, with fidelity to the rule

[32] Cf replies to n 110 PeP.

[33] Mt 25, 35-46; Heb. 13, 2; ET 31; Cf MB IX, 39; XI, 313; XIII, 850 etc.

[34] Cf Document 1 p 77.

and to discipline whose guardian he is and by fraternal correction,[35] but above all he must 'preside in charity.' [36] He must in fact be a brother who, in imitation of Jesus, takes his place among his brethren as a revelation and sign of the fatherhood of God.[37]

503 Constant evolution of the salesian community

As the successive changes in the constitutions and regulations testify Don Bosco's sense of realism led him to a *continual up-dating* of his communities; his practical sensitivity induced him to adapt to the constantly changing situations and to the different environments in which his work was spreading, though he was careful to preserve its aim and spirit.[38]

Don Bosco has thus impressed *a particular dynamism on his communities, welcoming and encouraging opportune experimentation.*[39] The salesian community arose from among the young and is directed towards them. *It will go on renewing itself through adaptation to varied circumstances in the manner desired and practised by the founder.*

Thus there has come into existence a community which, according to the mind and practice of Don Bosco, is not uniform but flexible; in it the confrères have the rector as their guide to enable community life to run more smoothly and to plan and co-ordinate apostolic activity.

[35] ET 25; Const. n 102; also Document 12 re. Obedience.

[36] IRENEUS, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 3.

[37] "(Abbas) Christi enim agere vices in monasterio creditur" San Benedetto.

[38] WIRTH, *Op. c. chap.* 8, 9, 10, 12, 18; DESRAMAUT, *Les Const. salesiennes.*

[39] Cf *Annali della società salesiana*, I, ch. 2; here we are given a descriptio of the transfer of the Oratory from the Ospizio, to outside schools, school in the oratory, foundation of colleges, closing of works, e.g., Marassi, Mirabello etc.

CHAPTER TWO

APOSTOLIC COMMUNITY

504 The salesian mission in the church

Salesian religious exist as communities of consecrated men called to an identical mission, and thus fulfil an apostolic function and participate in a particular way in the mission of the Church.

Christ and his apostles lived together in common to preach the kingdom and bear witness to it: the community at Jerusalem did the same to establish the kingdom in being; and similarly *salesian community life is established to fulfil an apostolic role* in the Church, as an extension of the charity which unites the confrères to each other and to Christ.

505 Community open to the church

The salesian community participates in the life of the Church, is a sign of communion with it and also shares in its mission of salvation. It is therefore alert to the needs of the universal Church, with which it keeps in close touch, and is careful to adapt its structures to its apostolic task, that its special charism, part of the riches of all the people of God, may be applicable to the times and places in which it operates.[1]

Consequently salesian communities, avoiding any ghetto mentality which would turn them in on themselves, and cultivating at the same time their own charism, will

[1] Cf LG 44 b; PC 1, 2, 8; CD 35; ES 2, 22-40.

collaborate with the local church and other religious families by their witness and pastoral action as a 'specialized body' providing an apt service of a special type, whose autonomy is recognized by the Church through the granting of exemption.

506 World, provincial and local communities

Just as the universal Church is expressed in the pluralism of the various individual churches and basic groupings, so the salesian Congregation is made up of provincial communities which are the setting in which these operate that *provide the concrete place and manner in which the salesian vocation is fulfilled.*

The communion between these groups is deepened and fostered by their common charism and mission, by the spirit of Don Bosco, by the sharing of possessions and experiences, by solidarity on all levels, and by the service rendered to the pastoral work of the Church.

THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COMMUNION between the individual communities and for their insertion into the salesian service we render to the local church.

507 Outward-looking community

The community shares in the dynamism of the Church and is intended for and open to the service of its fellows, offering to all the benefit of the graces which the Lord has showered on us. It joyfully cultivates and enlivens with its faith the relations which bind it to other people and backgrounds whether through kinship, inspiration, work or ideals, or on the grounds of duty, suitability, friendship or charity.[2]

[2] Cf LG 45 b; CD 35, 3; reply of Provincial Chapter to n 113 of PeP.

By these external contacts, the community expresses its relationship with the world but is also enriched by the integration of fresh spiritual values into its mission and is thereby the better able to fulfil its apostolic action.

This must be the case especially with our boys and lay-helpers in all the different kinds of work and activity, forming with them an *educative community*. The confrères inspire this work from within, dispensing the riches of the salesian communion and *extending the family spirit also to the boys* through the ever-more perfect application of the preventive system. In this way an atmosphere is created in which vocations can grow.

508 Community and apostolic life

Salesian community life is directed towards our apostolic mission. Hence the composition of the community, its structure of life, work, organization, and timetable should be such as to facilitate the work of the apostolate in so far as community life, its needs and forms of expression have a bearing on it.[3]

Every community must make the effort to overcome the inevitable tensions which arise in religious life, so that its individual members manage to achieve as Don Bosco did, a union between the demands of common life and those of the apostolate, two distinct but indivisible facets of apostolic charity.

To ensure an orderly development of community life and greater efficiency in the apostolate, it would be a good thing if the members were to have a certain stability in the offices they hold.

509 Unity and pluralism

A characteristic of the Holy Spirit is the pluralism of the charisms which he confers for a specific mission

[3] Cf ES 2, 25; CD 35, 1.

in the Church; hence the individuals in the community must always bear in mind the unity of the common mission, while the *community* itself, under the guidance of the superior, *must be aware of* and as far as possible *respect the variety of personal charisms and gifts* [4] making use of them for the common good.

It is this deference which makes the community's apostolate more fruitful and enables it to measure up to the manifold needs of the world and of the Church, without being forced to stifle personal initiative.

For his part the individual salesian seeking to adapt his particular charism to that of the community, can discover in himself new resources and original means of expression hitherto undreamt of.

510 Towards new forms of community

The Church calls on the religious communities to organize themselves according to the requirements of new situations and to try out experiments in the renewal of community life and in up-dating their apostolic mission.[5]

Hence our communities large and small must be renewed, so as to be "constantly animated by prayer, and marked by the generous mortification of the 'old man,' by the disciplines necessary for the formation of the new man, and by the fertility of the sacrifice of the cross."[6]

For us religious of active life, the prime witness must be service on behalf of the Church's own mission.

[4] Cf I Cor 12, 13; I Cor 14, 12; Rom 12, 6; PC 1 b; ET 32, 33; CAMBIER, *Realtà carismatica ed ecclesiale nella vita religiosa* in "Per una presenza viva dei religiosi nella Chiesa e nel mondo," Torino LDC 1969 pp 229-281; see also reply of the Provincial Chapters to n 32 of PeP.

[5] Cf PC 2; 3, 4; ES 2, 6; ET 2, 5, 6.

[6] ET 41.

This is the touchstone we must use in evaluating various experiments, such as "fraternities" or "small groups" or "small communities" as they are called.[7] These are to be considered as something created by the needs of the times in which we live, and a call of the Holy Spirit to be welcomed with docility.

The NEW FEATURE of this type of community is the intense communion among its members, but more particularly the call to insert itself into special types of life and work, where a witness of charity and christian enterprise is needed especially among people on the fringe of society. This work can take on a permanent form and can have a salesian slant as the little group cares in a special way for the young people in the area where it lives and works. It acts in conjunction with the province and confrères, and in turn with the local church.

511 From all these points it is evident that we can describe the SALESIAN RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY as a group of people called by the Holy Spirit to live their baptismal and religious consecration in common through a particular mission in the Church, and who find in Christ the purpose of their existence, and who regard their witness of the paschal mystery to the world as their motive for the particular service they offer to their brethren, especially poor and abandoned youth, according to the charism of Don Bosco.

Thus the community, fruit of the grace of God, becomes a *sign* of the ecclesial communion, an *instrument* for pastoral action, the *fullness* of interpersonal relationships, and a *way of life* in the realization of the salesian spirit.

[7] Cf PAUL VI, *Discourse to Superior Generals*, 22 Nov. 1960 (Bollettino UISG, 1 and 2 trim 1970); ET 26, 35, 40.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

512 1. The provincial community

The General Chapter is of the opinion that the renewal of our religious and salesian life must be based fundamentally on the REDISCOVERY AND RE-EVALUATION OF THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY as the bond of union between the different local communities, the other provinces and the whole Congregation. This new outlook allows the salesian to become more convinced of the spirit of solidarity between all the confrères of the province, and encourages him to carry out his apostolic work in the context of the local church.

It is the duty of the provincial chapters and councils to define the common aims of the province as a whole, and then to study how these can best be carried out and to make the necessary decisions, beginning with the most urgent cases.

513 2. Renewal and simplification of the local community

As the General Chapter XIX emphasized the figure of the salesian as such, so the Chapter XX has concentrated its attention on community.[1] The community is at the very heart of the renewal which this Chapter has been concerned to bring about in the Congregation in response to the specific requests of the confrères.

Guided by this spirit which demands a new approach

[1] Cf Second Special Provincial Chapter a.

and organization, after careful study but without undue delay [2] the following experiments should be tried out:

a) the breaking up of large communities into separate communities, or at least their division into smaller groups;

b) simplifying works that are too complex, so that the activities of the confrères may be more homogeneous;

c) the making of a distinction between the sections where the community lives and where it works, as long as this does not hamper our work and is considered to be possible, convenient and for the common good;

d) forming separate communities made up of confrères who are all doing the same specific kind of work for co-operators, past pupils, chaplaincies etc, or who are working amongst the young but outside our own premises (e.g. in schools, clubs, youth centres etc.) or who are doing special work in the local church.[3]

514 **3. The composition and functioning of the communities**

A) IN FORMING A COMMUNITY THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT:

— the requirements of the apostolic service we provide;

— the fundamental laws of psychology which regulate the life of a community, facilitate apostolic work and promote charity;

— the need for a certain stability which will help to keep the community together and promote continuity — saving of course the legitimate demands of religious discipline.

[2] PC 4; ES 2, introduction.

[3] Cf ET 33; 27 First Prov. Chap. and 10 Second Prov. Chap. together with a large no. of confrères have requested this.

B) As far as the running of the community is concerned:

— each community will organize its life and activity in accordance with the general and provincial regulations;

— each confrère will abide by whatever has been arranged and will avoid destructive individualism.

515 4. Small communities

As already mentioned in the doctrinal section, experimentation with 'small' communities is permitted but the following conditions must be observed:

a) they remain part and parcel of the provincial community through which they are linked to the Congregation and to the local church;

b) they are not a challenge to the religious life, but a response to the *need for a better way of offering our service,* especially in areas where evangelization is difficult and where the religious needs of the young are neglected;

c) they are therefore in line with our vocation and mission, because their aim is to give a new impulse to the missionary ideal of Don Bosco;

d) 'rather than offering their members an easy kind of life the work is more exacting.' [4] Those confrères considered suitable for trying out this type of work must bind themselves to a strict evangelical life with 'a reciprocal and fraternal acceptance of responsibility;' [5]

e) the feasibility and actual nature of these communities is left to the study and decision *of each province,* including also the question of the exercise of authority in them;

[4] ET 40.
[5] ET 40.

f) the provincial and his council will make a periodic examination with the group concerned of the progress of the experiment, and should the lack of success or progress require it, will suggest new experiments likely to produce better results;

g) finally, the members of these groups should be ready to return to normal salesian communities to enrich them with their experiences. All forms of 'small communities' or 'fraternities' which are merely expressions of escapism from normal community life, or a means to solve personal problems or to satisfy a spirit of individualism, are not to be allowed.

516 5. **Communication within the Congregation (and outside it)**

The following directives are made with a view to keeping the confrères adequately informed:

A) LOCAL LEVEL:

a) arrangements should be made for community meetings where all are *free* to express themselves and there is the possibility of discussion, but always there should be respect for the opinions of others and the common aim of seeking God's will;

b) there should also be some means of passing on whatever items of news concern the life of the community.

B) PROVINCIAL LEVEL. A detailed news-letter should be distributed, which will constitute a 'forum' for an exchange of views and other topics of general information for the common interest of the province.

C) WORLD LEVEL. There should be timely publication of matters of interest to all the confrères especially those of world-wide application or when *there is a question of something that might harm the Congregation or that could be wrongly interpreted.* In this latter case it is the

duty of the superiors to issue an objective account of the incident in question which every confrère has the right to know about. Each confrère however must be conscious of the fact that all communication inside the Congregation or among outsiders *must be such as to help and not hinder the common good.* It must never be used for purely selfish interests, especially when these conflict with the common good, the apostolic mission of the Congregation, our family spirit, or due respect for persons and truth.[6]

[6] Cf CP 29, 30, 42.

Document 9

THE PRAYING COMMUNITY

CHAPTER ONE

PRAYER IN A CHANGING WORLD

517 A fact to take note of: today in the Church in regard to the life of prayer we have with us a crisis which is serious and preoccupying, yet at the same time it brings with it significance and promise. This crisis has repercussions also for us in our own circles.

518 We believe it is possible to pick out the causes of this crisis. On the one hand we have a whole range of circumstances and facts that have their origin in the different types of milieu (sociological and cultural, ecclesial, salesian...) in which we salesians are necessarily caught up. This happens both at the personal and the community level. On the other hand we have the deep crisis of faith that is causing turmoil in the world in its state of change and in the Church in its process of renewal. This clearly affects us too.

There are then difficulties connected with prayer. This is above all the case when we consider the change of the image of God and consequently in the manner of conceiving the relationships between man and God.

519 All these difficulties can thrust themselves in a negative sense (and indeed they do so) into our life of prayer, both the community and the personal prayer.[1] But at the same time — and we wish to stress this with particular emphasis — they present a fortunate occasion for a serious examination of conscience and for a renewed dedica-

[1] Cf Fr. Ricceri, *State of the Congregation*, p 27, 29, 31-32.

tion to our prayer-life. This is the very centre, indeed it is the true secret of the renewal of our salesian vocation today.

520 *At the personal level,* these difficulties can help us to purify our faith making it rest for its foundation on the word of God. As well as this they compel us to make a truly personal thing of our faith; this faith then reveals itself as an encounter and a personal commitment to a supremely loved THOU demanding from us an attitude of constant availability. This purification of our faith and the turning of it into something personal will help us to overcome that temptation, which is particularly strong today, to think prayer useless and then to simply substitute it by service, even generous service of our brothers. The attitude of availability will in its own turn allow us to make that steady progress from a life of prayer to an authentic *prayer-life.*

521 *At the community level,* the difficulties amidst which we find ourselves have already, here and there, stimulated positive research into new forms of authentic piety. These then should help us to rediscover the irreplaceable value of our community in our life of prayer. In effect community prayer produces various effects. It becomes a guarantee of the presence of our Lord amongst us;[2] it allows us to go on all the time discovering the presence of God living in the history of man and in the world; it also urges us on more strongly to an apostolic community effort and dedication which is marked by greater boldness and readiness to seize every opportunity.

522 *Our apostolic work* will have to draw fruit from these serious difficulties. In fact if we want to "reveal the

[2] Cf Mt 18, 20; Jn 13, 35; 17, 21; also *Institutio generalis de Liturgia Horarum* n 9.

authentic countenance of God"[3] in an adequate and valid way we must rediscover *new forms* of relationships to him. These must be forms more in harmony with the ways of thinking of modern man, and particularly of the youth of today. We must also teach youth — and this more by personal witness than by word — that prayer, even from the human point of view, is an authentic need of man. We must show that it is necessary in order to acquire and guarantee peace of heart, to hold on to a balanced interior spirit and *to have that real personal experience of true joy.*

[3] GS 20 c.

CHAPTER TWO

OUR RENEWAL IN THE LIFE OF PRAYER

Heartfelt appeal for renewal

523 In a situation like the present one, which is at once both preoccupying and promising, we are called to a renewed commitment to our life of prayer. We are convinced that "faithfulness to prayer or the abandonment of it mirror the vitality or decadence of the religious life." [1] We are convinced that only a *spiritual rebirth* and not a mere set of new structures will give the go-ahead to a new era in the history of the Church. The Church invites us to cultivate a type of prayer, and above all mental prayer, which is really valid in its quality and which is in full correspondence with that spirituality which is the mark of our vocation.[2]

We must overcome all trace of danger of formalism. We must feel ourselves urged on not "by a law to be kept, but by the awareness of the intrinsic importance of prayer in itself and of its pastoral and ascetical usefulness." [3]

524 The obligation to renewal must be actualized at the personal and community level. The two aspects of prayer (personal and community) are really inseparable. We cannot set them against each other or eliminate one at

[1] ET 42; Cf ET 45; Don Bosco, *Introduction to the Constitutions*: Practices of Piety.

[2] Cf ET 2, 21; PC 3 a, 8 c.

[3] *Laudis Canticum* in AAS 83 (1971) 543; Cf *Institutio gen. de L.H.* n 9.

the expense of the other. Rather we have to integrate them together into one vital unity that enriches both.

525 Both the individual and the community share responsibility in that process of acquiring spiritual maturity to which we have all dedicated ourselves by our religious profession. The Church "in receiving the vows of those who make their profession" [4] takes to itself the responsibility for their vocational task. Each one of us must therefore feel responsible for fostering the development of the apostolic vocation of the community "as such." A praying community cannot establish itself as such if its members are not personally men of prayer. It is in the measure in which we are such men of prayer that the praying community becomes a living reality. In this regard every single person should bring his irreplaceable contribution to the different moments of a community meeting for prayer, even by the mere fact of his physical presence. His presence always has the value of witness and mutual stimulus.

526 The rector, as guide of the community, has a particular responsibility in the question of the life of prayer. In his conferences, in his private discussions, and above all by his example, he must rouse in the confrères a sense of need and a taste for prayer. He must seek to create suitable conditions that will favour prayer, safeguarding the right of each confrère to prayer. In consequence of this he should avoid entrusting them with burdens that could detach them from prayer, and he should help them to remove any such obstacles that may have arisen.

The prayer of apostolic religious

527 Our life of prayer must above all receive its inspiration from Christ our lord and Mary our mother under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[4] LG 45; cf ET 7.

528 Our Lord Jesus is the *supreme man of prayer*. His is the prayer that is the norm for all ages and times. During his life on earth he continuously gave us examples of prayer; the evangelists show him to us frequently in the act of praying; we see him taking part in the community prayer of the Temple and the synagogues and in the private prayers recited by pious Israelites.[5] Even risen from the dead and ever living "he prays for us" [6] there with the Father.

"The daily activity of Jesus was closely linked with his prayer, indeed it sprang from it" [7] in such a way as to reveal "that prayer was what animated his messianic ministry and his paschal passing over." [8]

529 The substance of our prayer is an insertion and a participation in the prayer of Christ. Together with all the Church this prayer prolongs the glorification of the Father in the redemption of man. Jesus by his resurrection has fixed it for ever in eternity.[9] Prayer enables us to discover the living meaning of our adoption as sons of God. It is the basis of our apostolic service directed to all men, our brothers, particularly towards poor and needy youth. Precisely because we are sons of one common Father we are brothers and servants of all.[10]

Prayer must not only enable us to win in those moments of temptation and depression of the apostolic life, but it must maintain kindled in us the joy and en-

[5] Cf Mk 11, 25 seq.; 14, 19; 15, 36; 19, 13; Mk 1, 35; 6, 41-46; 7, 34; 8, 7; Lk 2, 41-49; 3, 21-22; 4, 16; 5, 16; 6, 112; 10, 21 seq.; Jn 6, 11.

[6] Heb 7, 25.

[7] *Inst. Gen. de L.H.* n 4.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Cf *Inst. gen. de L.H.* nn 6-7.

[10] Cf Mt 5, 45; 23, 8; 25, 40-45; Lk 9, 48; I Jn 3, 1.

thusiasm of our total self-giving to God in the service of youth and the people.[11]

The Holy Spirit

530 In our apostolic life the Holy Spirit, the one and only Master of the interior life, gives us "the grace to uncover the countenance of our Lord in the hearts of men." [12] He it is who guides us in the difficult work of searching out and finding God "even in the conditions of existence today, marked by a faster and faster pace of life, and by the din and the promptings of the momentary passing realities." [13] The world however must indeed be a reality "present at the very centre of our life of prayer and self-offering." [14] We must therefore learn from Jesus, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to contemplate the plan of redemption for all humanity in the heart of our heavenly Father, in order that we might make this plan also actively our own. Like Jesus we must learn to tie ourselves to God in our apostolic activity and to burn with apostolic zeal in our prayer.

Mary our Mother

531 Our Lady, united to Christ as no other creature was, stimulates us to imitate her docility in faith towards the Holy Spirit. It is in this way that Christ grows in us and that we can feel ourselves to be "sons in the Son" in our dealings with the Father. In us, in the likeness of Mary, grace received must become grace developed and in which we play our part. This must happen above all in the apostolic commitment which we took on with our religious profession.

[11] Cf II Cor 1, 4; LG 43; Don Bosco, *Introduction to Const.* "Practices of piety."

[12] ET 44.

[13] ET 33.

[14] ET 49.

Characteristics of our spirituality

A) DON BOSCO'S LIFE AND THAT OF THE SALESIAN AS TRUE LITURGY

532 Don Bosco showed in himself and wanted for his sons a piety that was simple, concrete and deep.[15]

The revealed word assures us that the real Temple [16] in which the *liturgy of the apostolic life* is celebrated is the community of faith (the true family which binds us and our young people together). It consists in the joyous announcement of the Good News which is Jesus Christ,[17] the centre of all history and the final meaning of human existence.

533 Don Bosco lived it "in the spirit of truth," [18] practising "a religion that was pure and unspotted" [19] in a life totally consecrated to the service of poor and abandoned youth and in his dedicated unceasing task of destroying sin, the cause of every evil in the world.

534 By untiring work, which Don Bosco wanted as a distinctive mark of our spirituality, he inserted himself into "the priestly people who reign on earth." [20]

It was in fact by work that he made it his intention to collaborate actively and efficaciously with God's saving plan, thus obeying the command "to have dominion over the earth" [21] in order to transform it to the service of man. By work carried out in a spirit of love he glorified God and offered himself as "a host that was living and acceptable in a real act of spiritual cult." [22]

[15] Cf Constitutions 152, 153, 155.
[16] I Cor 3, 16-17.
[17] Cf Rom 15, 15-16; Phil 2, 17; Col 3, 17; SC 10-12.
[18] Cf Jn 4, 24.
[19] Jam 1, 27; Cf MB XVIII, 258.
[20] Revelations 5, 10; cf Regulations.
[21] Gen 1, 28.
[22] Cf Rom 12, 1.

It was precisely his *concrete and existential faith* that was the foundation of this bringing together of basic elements which led him to a profound *union with God* and which made of him *a real contemplative in his activity.* It led him to discover God in the reality of each day, and goaded him to the never ceasing task of liberating, by means of work, all those realities so often soaked in sin.

535 We must interpret the importance given by Don Bosco to the practices of piety in the light of this spiritual attitude. For him they were also, over and above their function as means of personal sanctification, moments of training in order to collaborate ever more intensely in the work of transforming the world according to God's plan.

536 This bent of the spirituality of Don Bosco seems particularly suited to our world today and an urgent necessity for our own renewal.

Only by celebrating the liturgy of our apostolic life in all its fullness shall we overcome any danger of sheer humanism. We will do so by praying in such a way that even our life of duties undertaken and of activities will become a stimulus and indeed the matter itself of our prayer.

The times of community prayer, the liturgical celebrations, the eucharist in a special way, will not be an interval or a flight from the concrete reality, but they will constitute its "culmination and its source." [23] They will be the most effective and intense sacramental expression of human history and of our apostolic work.

537 Then that will become a reality in us which was already so in the life of Don Bosco, and which is stated in the "Laudis Canticum:" "The entire life of the faith-

[23] SC 10.

ful constitutes a true *leitourghia* by means of which they offer themselves to God and to men in a service of love, uniting themselves closely to the action of Christ who by making his dwelling amongst us and offering himself has sanctified the life of all men." [24]

B) Our personal and community life of prayer

a) *Renewed vision of the praying community*

538 Those moments of strong explicit prayer in which the faith, unity and apostolic charity of the community find expression, food and renewal are absolutely necessary for each community. These are moments of reunion in prayer of our "little church," that expression of the great "praying community" which is the universal Church.

539 Our fraternal and apostolic community comes to be and is constituted as a real praying community when, *as a community*:

— it is consciously aware that all of us together are causing our Lord to be present and that we are really participants in this presence;

— it sees the common response to the love of election on God's part which has made us brothers;

— it sets up a living and sincere dialogue, not however with a general God of some sort, but with the God "of our history" who expects from us a community undertaking the specific mission he has entrusted to us. The dialogue is one of searching out in Faith, of collaboration in Hope, in the total availability of the Love of Charity.

The community dimension in its own turn must be one of the most precious fruits of the mystery of the indwelling of the Trinity in our hearts, a truth too great for words.

[24] *Laudis Canticum* in AAS (1971) 533.

b) *The word of God that calls us together and questions us*

540 The apostolic salesian community, called together by the word of God, lives its life centred round this same word. It allows itself to be illumined, guided and constantly questioned by it.

From the moment when the word of God became Man the authentic word of God is always one that takes flesh in history.[25] It is continually revealing the mystery of God and his love for us, his saving plan, the divine promises of his kingdom which we, helped by the risen Christ, must convert into reality. This word of God, more particularly by frequent reading of Holy Scripture as also by means of the signs of our time, reveals to us what God wants from us and calls us to make it present in human history.

It is therefore a concrete word, which questions our community and each of us personally on the here and now of our existence. It is a "living and effective" [26] word, "working unceasingly" [27] and of necessity calling for a reply which will be expressed in our personal and community life.

This constant discovery within the ordinary daily life of a Christ who is living and at work, and who reveals the deep and ultimate meaning of the world and of man, this fruit of an evangelical faith and mentality, is made possible in a very particular way thanks to the practice of the *Revision of Life.*

c) *The change of heart*

541 The word of God calls us continually to a change or conversion of heart and spirit [28] which being the sovereign

[25] Jn 1, 14; 8, 35; Rom 1, 3; Gal 4, 4; Heb 1, 2; 13, 8; DV 4.
[26] Heb 4, 12; Eph 6, 17.
[27] DV 8 c.
[28] Cf Lk 13, 3-5; also Decree *Dum canonicarum* re: practice

grace that it is, should be constantly requested from the Lord, Father of mercy.

The authentic nature of our response will be brought into relief on the one hand by frequent celebration of the sacrament of penance at the personal and the community level, and on the other by a life of austerity as an expression of our penitential attitude.

We affirm that our penitential attitude, in line with the spirit of our own Founder, has an ascetical character that is conspicuously apostolic. Don Bosco left us a programme very dear to his heart, "Work and Temperance." He asked us to be ready to endure "heat, cold, thirst, hunger, toil and scorn, whenever these things serve for the greater glory of God, the spiritual profit of our neighbour and the salvation of our own soul." [29] He encouraged us to practise that penance required in trying to make the preventive system work perfectly.[30] This for us is a specific aspect of the apostolic life celebrated as a real liturgy of life.

d) *The eucharist centre of the apostolic community*

542 The eucharist is the climax and the source of action and holiness in the Church. In an objective way then it is the living centre of the praying community.

It is true that christian prayer does not exhaust itself in the eucharistic liturgy alone, but it prepares for it, accompanies it and follows it. Above all, it helps to create in the heart those same sentiments that Jesus had at the Last Supper and on the Cross, so that we, like him, might become "an eternal offering." [31]

and administration of the sacrament of penance to religious (Dec. 8, 1970).

[29] Constitutions 188.

[30] Cf Regulations 97, 109.

[31] Heb 9, 28; 10, 10-18; Cf Lk 22, 19.

In a spirit of faithfulness to the constant tradition of our family, we must feel the need to establish again the "centralness" of the eucharist in our personal life and that of our apostolic community dedicated to educating youth, in the richness of a vision renewed in accordance with Vatican II.[32]

543 In this renewed vision the eucharist appears above all as the "sacrament of ecclesial unity." *In the unceasing task of constructing the community* it is precisely the eucharist that is the fundamental and decisive instrument, the "sign and cause" of that unity,[33] at the same time both the leaven and that which is demanded by unity. It is, in other words, the sign of that unity which is the goal of our life. It is such however, in the measure in which in reality we already live and dedicate ourselves to the task of arriving at communion with each other. Only in this measure is the sacrament also a "cause" of unity.

Communicating ourselves with Christ signifies accepting into ourselves *not only his "Flesh" but the whole of his "Person."* Namely it means to commit ourselves to model our own mentality so as to think as he thinks about life (the beatitudes), about men (the new commandment), about God (the Father). It means to will *that* which he wills (the will of the Father), to will the good of *those* he does (all men), and to do so *as* he does (even unto death). In particular it signifies the making of the word listened to in the liturgy the life of our life.

On the other hand the eucharist is the point of departure and the point of arrival of all the apostolic

[32] Cf Don Bosco, *Preventive System* II; Reg. 92; MB 6, 185-388; 7, 795; 12, 610-641; 17, 271-272.

[33] LG 11 a; cf LG 3; 7 b; 11; 26 a; CD 5 b; PO 6 e; UR 2 a; ET 47-48.

activity of the community. And so in the light of and with the strength of the eucharist "pastoral charity" [34] must be constantly strengthened and developed; the same applies to the apostolic drive of the salesian community and also of each of its members.

All these central aspects in the ecclesial dynamic quality that is proper to the eucharist are expressed admirably in the eucharistic concelebration. It signifies and at the same time causes the unity of the whole Church, the unity of the priesthood of Christ participated in different forms and at different levels by all the members of our apostolic community.

Finally, we must value in a special way as intimately connected with the eucharistic sacrifice those sacrifices that the christian life in general, and the consecrated apostolic life as such, bring with them. The fact is that "at the moment of our religious profession we are offered to God and the Church in intimate union with the eucharistic sacrifice." [35] This brings it about that "the trials we shall meet, the misfortunes and unjust sufferings that strike down our confrères" take on a real apostolic and redemptive significance.[36]

e) *Liturgical prayer*

544 Christ's priestly role is extended by means of the Church which unceasingly praises the Lord and intercedes for the whole world "not only by the celebration of the eucharist, but also and specially by means of the Divine Office," the hymn of praise and thanksgiving, the prayer of intercession and of petition which "Christ united to his Body lifts up to the Father."

[34] PO 13 d; 14 b; 15 b; Cf SC 10 a; CD 15 b; 30 f; UR 2 a; AG 9 b.

[35] ET 47.

[36] ET 48.

Faithful to the example of Don Bosco who, in his own day, was seen as, and indeed was, a real innovator in the field of liturgy for youth, *we accept the trends and the Church's new approaches in the liturgical field with real enthusiasm and we make them ours* in a practical active way.

In particular a community celebration of the Divine Office "is to be preferred to the individual and almost private form when possible," [37] since "when a community is united for the reciting of the Divine Office it manifests the very nature of the Church at prayer and appears as a truly wondrous sign." [38]

f) *Devotion to Mary Help of Christians.*

545 The long and uninterrupted marian tradition of our family, founded on the conviction that "Mary did it all" because she is the "Foundress and the one who sustains" our work, must continue to give its character to the spirituality and apostolic mysticism of the sons of Don Bosco.[39]

It is in the field of the Church on its pilgrim journey that, according to Vatican II, we must place the marian heritage that is the specific commitment of our family. We must see to it that the devotion to Mary Help of Christians, by reaching the depths wished by Don Bosco, attains the full scope given it by him.

Our times are no easier than his,[40] and our era, like his, is painfully troubled by radical changes.

In the social change of direction that the world today is asking from the Church, the presence of Mary, Mother of the Church and Helper of the baptized, is an impulsive

[37] SC 83-84; *Inst. Gen. de L.H.* nn 6-7.
[38] SC 27 a; cf *Inst. gen. de L.H.* nn 9, 26, 32, 37, 40.
[39] *Laudatis Canticum* in AAS 83 (1971) 532.
[40] MB V, 155; XIV, 18; XVII, 439.

force and an effective stimulus. The act of invoking Mary as "Helper of Christians" corresponds fully to some of the deepest hopes of contemporary man.[41]

Devotion to the Help of Christians should arouse in us, as it did in Don Bosco, an ardent apostolic zeal in the struggle against sin and against a view of the world and of man alien to the Beatitudes and the New Commandment.

In our hands, this devotion must be a powerful instrument to rouse up a dynamic "sense of the Church" in the baptized of our day.

546 In all Don Bosco's pastoral work, as also in his spirituality, there is a lively and eschatological sense of life lived with the attainment of eternal salvation in view.

This spiritual attitude informs salesian work and more particularly salesian piety, which he wanted to have a strong youthful slant, to be enriched by community participation, by paschal joy, by a spontaneous adherence to actual life, with simple and lively prayer accompanied by festive and inspiring music.

When organized in this way, prayer services — and especially the celebration of the eucharist — had in Don Bosco's mind the decisive effect of assuring and anticipating in faith the definitive meeting with the Father.

h) *Personal life of prayer*

547 Our spiritual life does not exhaust itself by participation in the sacred liturgy alone, and not even in extra-liturgical community prayer.[42] We have need of a true, authentic, living personal prayer.

[41] MB VII, 334.

[42] Cf DH 1, 4; 11; 15; GS 2 b, 3 b, 4 d; 6, 9, 23, 24, 25, 30, 55, 95; AG 7 c; 8; NAE 5; AA 8; 14 b.

This personal prayer is nothing other than a profound loving dialogue between God who initiates it and we who accept it.[43] It develops unceasingly in the measure in which the presence in us of the Holy Trinity and our participation in the divine life are real living realities to which we advert.

548 Personal prayer is an absolute necessity in order that community prayer, particularly the liturgical one, might be ever more fruitful, and in order that we might avoid a participation in it that is mechanical and a sheer formality. It then becomes a real indispensable preparation for fully living the liturgy. At the same time it is thus an extension of and a witness to the fact of having lived the liturgy authentically.

In moments of discomfort, of uncertainty and of crisis, and these are not absent from the apostolic life, as also in the great decisions to be taken, personal and intimate prayer will be the light to make clear the path and the strength to walk along it. The more the difficulties increase, the more shall we have to strengthen the quality of this communication with our Father in imitation of Jesus who in Gethsemani, tortured by anxiety, prayed more fervently.[44]

549 Personal prayer, which must accompany the diligent reading of Holy Scripture and receive the substance of its food from it,[45] will find some of its most significant manifestations in the following ways: in those moments in which we recollect ourselves "in our room to pray in secret to the Father:" [46] in that daily meditation which is of such vital importance for our apostolic commit-

[43] SC 12.
[44] Revelations 3, 20.
[45] Lk 22, 44.
[46] DV 25.

ment: in the dialogue with Christ our Lord really present amongst us in the eucharist when we go to visit him: in the examination of conscience made each day which will allow us to discover our real situation before God concerning the commitment we have accepted with our religious profession: in the love and devotion as sons towards Mary Help of Christians and Queen of all apostles.

550 One particular aspect to underline is that involved in the type of personal prayer most loved by our Patron St Francis of Sales, brief spontaneous prayer or ejaculatory prayer. According to him, it is in ejaculations that "the great task of piety is founded." [47]

Don Bosco too attributed great value to this form of prayer, even as an occasional form of substitution for mental prayer.[48]

If an interior attitude of faith and love habitually accompanies us in our apostolic activities, we shall be impelled to express spontaneously to God, with our heart more than with our lips, that which love suggests, even in the most critical moments of our work.[49]

[47] SC 12.
[48] *Oeuvres,* III p 100.
[49] Constitutions 155.

CHAPTER THREE

FORMATION IN PRAYER

551 Christian prayer, a real gift of God, is also the fruit of instruction.[1] The one Master of it is the Holy Spirit who, present in us, cries out from the depths of the heart "Abba, Father!" Nevertheless a pedagogy of prayer is also necessary because that same Spirit asks from us as free men effort and collaboration.

552 Formation in prayer requires that we cultivate a real initiation both in the fundamental elements of prayer (liturgy, and also biblical and spiritual theological initiation) as well as in certain conditions which show themselves to be particularly decisive in this regard. Of these, we draw attention to purifying the heart, self-denial, interior peace, and in a special way "the silence of all one's being." [2] This last is not a simple absence of noise and of words, but it is born from the need of always advancing more in intimacy with God "loved above all and without limit;" [3] it is a silence which can place us in the condition of really listening to God, and of identifying ourselves ever more with his plan of redemption.

According to the teaching of Vatican II,[4] the salesian must be initiated, not only into the spirit of prayer, but into prayer itself, a prayer consisting not only of simple discussion type reflections, but of communion of heart. It is 'to speak of love with *one* whom we know loves us!' In fact in prayer, it is not a case of reflecting

[1] Cf Lk 11, 1.
[2] ET 46.
[3] LG 44 a.
[4] PC 6 b; ES 2, 21.

on some truth, but of placing ourselves, in deep simple faith, into the presence of God our Father or of the risen Christ, listening to his word and allowing it to penetrate into us, seeking his will in order to conform to it ever more.

In particular, the young confrère, even from the first years of his formation, must be initiated into the apostolic character of our prayer, so that he may make of his life a real and constant liturgical celebration. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the help of spiritual direction, he must feel encouraged to progress in the way of prayer in order that he might arrive with enthusiasm at the summits of holiness in the apostolic life in imitation of Don Bosco.

553 Furthermore the pedagogy of prayer must tend to create in the salesian, in a form that is wholly special, those attitudes that will assure a real and growing life of prayer.

It presupposes therefore formation for a serious consecrated life in the midst of which prayer really stimulates to solid and well defined apostolic tasks and commitments. It also presupposes the experience of a rich and deep community life as a condition which in a special way is the determining factor for the dialogue experience with God in prayer.

Since christian prayer, in so far as it is a personal dialogue with a God who gives himself freely, is a movement that is profoundly free and the fruit of a serious personal choice, *we must form to a just and spontaneous authenticity in prayer.* We must educate for an attitude of constant research into the motivations that stimulate us to meet and have dialogue with God as individuals and as a community. *It should be an attitude that is continually flexible and creative in its seeking out of prayer that which is always new and renewed.*

In this way we avoid any danger of formalism, mere

habit and passivity in the practice of the common and obligatory forms of prayer. These will be enjoyed as the fruit of a progressive personal conquest.

554 Formation in prayer life must progress in graded stages in such a way that it moves along in harmony with the different phases of psychological development and vocational commitment into which that growth which is our formation is divided.

Prayer is a living reality continuously at work and by this very fact it can never be something completed and rounded off. This fact about prayer calls for an attitude of continuous and permanent formation in all of us. It is necessary therefore that each province should provide all those means and helps for its confrères which will ensure that there is a progress which is constant, at depth, and always renewed.

Finally, the pedagogy of prayer requires the timely preparation of real masters of the spiritual life.[5] They must be able not only to instruct wisely, but also, and above all, to draw with them, by their example, the young confrère to a prayer that is lived, continuous and dedicated. It is also necessary that they should have real pastoral experience and the ability to relate to other people.

555 In imitation of Don Bosco's docility to the Pope's teaching let us set ourselves to put into practice the advice of Pope Paul VI: "Be really aware therefore of the importance of prayer in your life and learn to apply yourselves generously to it. Faithfulness to daily prayer always remains for each of you a fundamental necessity and it must have the first place in your Constitutions and in your life." [6]

[5] Cf PC 18; OT 5 a; ES 2, 21.
[6] ET 45.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

555a Within a year of the close of the Special General Chapter, every confrère should be given the opportunity of a 'Spiritual Week' on the various themes and central problems of the Chapter.

555b Courses of an ascetical-pastoral nature (*second novitiate*) should be organized by groups of provinces, and these should last approximately six months. Attendance at such courses should be left to free choice and offered preferably to confrères who have already been engaged for several years in the active apostolate.

555c Each province should send a reasonable number of confrères for courses in spirituality in the next six years.

555d Other practices of piety, in accordance with salesian or local tradition, are left to each provincial chapter to decide. Among these could be the First Friday, the 24th of the month in honour of Mary Help of Christians, the last day of the month in honour of Don Bosco, the Way of the Cross on the Fridays in lent, salesian and patronal feasts, prayers for the dead, etc.

555e Each community should expand the biblical, theological and spirituality sections of the library of the house.

555f It is hoped that a real community of life, faith and mission in each house will favour the practice in the most opportune way of the practice of the *Revision of Life*, especially in times of monthly and quarterly retreats.

This *Revision of Life*, if well understood, is a practice which educates the mind in an evangelical way and helps us to find in the ordinary round of our daily life the Living Christ, who is working himself and who calls others to work with him.

THIRD SECTION

Our consecration

Document 10

SALESIAN CHASTITY TODAY

FOREWORD

556 The renewal of the religious life in the Church demands from salesians the task of making relevant their message of purity.

It is a matter of urgency for them to become part of an evolving society by trying to enrich it with those values which are especially part of our vocation.

The XIX General Chapter has already pointed out, in no uncertain terms our task in this matter: 'both as a Congregation and as individuals, salesians must be acutely aware of the fact that they have a special message of purity to transmit to the modern world. They have a message too for youth whom they must help to train to be vigorous in their practice of purity.' [1]

In the hope of making an effective response to the requests of confrères,[2] and contributing to an ever more vital transmission of this message, the Special General Chapter has taken inspiration for its doctrinal and pastoral ideas for renewal from the teaching of the Vatican Council II and from the salesian traditions.

[1] AGC XIX pp 84-85.

[2] Cf "Ecco ciò che pensano i salesiani della loro Congregazione oggi" vol II pp 96-111; Pre-capitular Scheme 11 b, pp 34-41.

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORLD SITUATION TODAY AND ITS BEARING ON OUR CHASTITY

557 Some of the values of the modern world that have led to progress and the enrichment of human life are much appreciated by young people.

We mention them briefly: growth developments of the human sciences and of modern social customs have greatly increased the value that must be given to the human person — it is called 'personalization' and it touches all levels not excluding his sexuality which assaults him on every side and is reflected in youth in a strikingly marked way.[1]

558 At the same time we are witnessing the re-evaluation of a community humanism — socialization [2] — that attempts to reinterpret human relations in terms of total equality of persons and sex. In particular it is worth noting the existence of a general and precocious tendency towards life in common for mixed groups, by way of preparation for life.

It also needs to be pointed out as a combined effect of this personalization and socialization, a fact that has strong influence on youth, namely the increased presence of women and their participation in every sphere of activity outside the domestic circle.[3]

[1] Cf GS 12, 25, 27; Pre-capitular scheme 11 b 'salesian chastity' nn 1-9; St pr pp 22-26.

[2] Cf GS 24-26; St pr p 22-26.

[3] Cf GS 9, 29, 49, 60; AA 9; St pr p 32.

559 These values offer a vast field for salesian action but not without repercussions on our own religious life and its activities. Hence it becomes very necessary for salesians when faced with the questionable manner in which these values are presented, to react always and everywhere as true salesians without hesitation and without worries of conscience.[4]

It may also happen often that our mission brings in its wake responsibilities that entail greater collaboration with women, religious and lay women alike.[5] The similarity of the apostolic aims, the work itself, the common difficulties and sufferings, and the consequent need for mutual support can give rise to risks that must be neither underestimated nor faced superficially.

Then there is the case of confrères who live in a state of disquiet, either because the new social and cultural conditions have brought them to a situation of crisis, or else when faced with the sacrifices that religious chastity imposes on them they are tempted to repudiate their obligations.

Help offered for their recovery, although at times difficult, must be neither neglected nor delayed. It should be evident that it is not just a question of safeguarding such confrères, mere preservation could bring dissatisfaction and frustration in its wake, it is rather a matter of supporting them and of helping them to persevere in the task they have begun.[6]

[4] Cf RICCERI, *Report on the general state of the Congregation*, pp 6-9.

[5] Op. cit., pp 117, 157.

[6] Op. cit., pp 38-42.

CHAPTER TWO

PERSPECTIVE FOR A RENEWAL OF THE LIFE OF CONSACRATED CHASTITY IN CELIBACY

560 1. Attitudes with regard to human values

Vatican Council II sets out for us the most recent attitude of the Church to human values. Dealing with the values of created things, it is easy enough to see that they are specifically related to chastity — sex, love and marriage. The Council is clear in its acceptance of such values, without any hint of pessimism or manicheaism.[1]

IT IS THE PATH TO RENEWAL TO BE FOLLOWED.

561 In particular the constitution 'Lumen Gentium' sees in christian marriage a way of life which can and must lead to an increase in faith, hope and charity. In this way it becomes possible to attain to the one holiness which is offered to all by the Holy Spirit of God.[2]

In its turn 'Gaudium et Spes,' whose doctrine embraces the world, declares that 'Christ has poured out the abundance of his blessings on married and family love,' a love flowing as it does from the source of divine charity and patterned on the model of his union with the Church.[3]

Again 'Lumen Gentium' underlines the fact that the profession of the evangelical counsels brings with it the

[1] Cf LG 11, 32, 41; GS 12-14; 27-29; 47-52; 60; 67; GE 1, 8.
[2] Cf LG 41.
[3] GS 47-52.

'renunciation of goods that most certainly are of value in themselves.' [4]

From all this it necessarily follows that the free choice of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom, instead of resulting from a low opinion of marriage, draws strength and its preference from its intrinsic value — from the mysterious and sacramental value of the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, in which can be found the raison d'être of both religious chastity and of christian marriage.

562 The same document places proper emphasis on the positive aspects of the human body [5] and the part that sexuality must play in the development, maturation and the gradual manifestation of the human personality. Since God created the sexes as complementary, one to the other, with the mission to preserve, propagate and protect life,[6] he offered them also the way of showing and experiencing this reciprocal love and make it fruitful. But he also made it possible for man to give up this love and fulfil himself through another love he chooses in preference, that of Christ Jesus and of his neighbour. This helps us to understand and enables us to assert that chastity consecrated in celibacy instead of involving the renunciation of the capacity of human love and its enrichment, places the religious in a deeper and more vital relationship of love with God.

Far from diminishing and frustrating a man it can fulfil him. It can deepen in him a capacity for dialogue and communication.[7] It can inspire a man to transcend the forces of sexuality and become part of that love which surpasses every created love. It can bring him

[4] LG 46.
[5] Cf GS 14; CD 12.
[6] Cf GS 49-51; GE 1, 8.
[7] Cf GS 19, 92; DH 9-10.

more easily into direct communication with God.[8]

2. Need of maturity to live in consecrated chastity

563 The doctrine of Vatican Council II concerning the relationship between human values and religious chastity emphasizes the need for a slow and progressive work — parallel to the psychological process for developing personality — which will make possible a mature choice of an evangelical celibacy lived in a fully conscious way as a total self-giving to God. This presupposes a genuine and serene reverence not only for sexuality and human love, but also for women the collaborators of man in the mystery of salvation.

For this the Council demands that the candidates for the life of consecrated chastity for the sake of the kingdom [9] should be able to give themselves to God with an undivided heart... and have a proper understanding of the duties and the dignity of christian marriage, which is a sign of the union of Christ with the Church;[10] and yet they should know how to appreciate the superior excellence of virginity consecrated to Christ which makes a complete gift of both body and soul to God through a mature and deliberate choice of pure magnanimity.[11]

Thus seen in the light of the gospel, celibacy for the kingdom appears as a choice of a real life, unique and well worthy of a man who is called to it. When accepted and lived in its fullness 'it is capable of developing the whole human person' [12] and brings him towards '...the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' [13]

[8] Cf PC 1, 5, 12.
[9] Cf Mt 19, 12.
[10] Cf Eph 5, 32.
[11] OT 10.
[12] PC 12.
[13] Eph 4, 13.

564 It is worth remembering however that to open oneself to receive this singular gift of celibacy is to accept a task which never ends. The weakness of the human condition is always there to prove it. It is for this reason that the Church most opportunely suggests that there be no neglect of 'those ascetic norms which are guaranteed by the experience of the Church, and which are no less necessary in the world of today.' [14] In the same way those called to this way of life should 'renounce those things which are in themselves lawful but not expedient' [15] and turn aside 'by a kind of supernatural instinct from those things which could endanger chastity.' [16]

There is this to add, that in spite of continual vigilance over oneself the force of the sexual part of us continues to show itself in different ways. At such times the need is to quiet the tension by faith and by love in the consideration of the value of the steps taken and its relationship to fidelity to the choice of a way of life which aims at reproducing that of Christ on earth.

565 3. **Value of evangelical celibacy**

Vatican Council II not only re-assessed the value of the vow of chastity in the religious life and in the Church but it also opened up new vistas.

In the Conciliar Documents there is a revealing innovation, the order in which the religious vows are professed is changed. Traditionally there was — poverty — chastity and obedience — this order is now laid aside in preference for chastity — poverty — obedience.[17]

Indeed the dogmatic constitution of the Church when

[14] PO 16.
[15] OT 9.
[16] PC 12.
[17] Cf LG 43; PC 12-14.

it points the way and traces out the direction for reaching the only holiness there is to which all the faithful are called, makes this selection: after martyrdom, it says of the counsels which the Lord gave to his disciples for their observance, 'among them there excels the precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father [18] so that with an undivided heart[19] they may the more readily consecrate themselves to God alone by virginity and by celibacy.' [20]

In its turn the decree 'Perfectae Caritatis' deepening and completing the previous doctrine attributes to this gift a special function in the Church — the universal sacrament of salvation — in so far as it considers it 'a particular sign of heavenly riches, and the most efficacious way offered to religious to dedicate themselves generously to the service of God and to the works of the apostolate.' It underlines the intimate connection with the practice of 'true fraternal love' among members of the religious community.[21]

566 The importance given to these elements by the Council gives explicit confirmation of the value that the evangelical tradition has always given to celibacy for the sake of the kingdom and it adds to the renewal of our life of chastity a strength that reinforces the salesian effort to live and transmit wherever we are — especially to the young — the luminous message of purity.

[18] Mt 19, 11; I Cor 7, 7.
[19] I Cor 7, 32-34.
[20] LG 42.
[21] PC 12.

CHAPTER THREE

REDISCOVERY OF CERTAIN THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF CHASTITY

1. Theological dimension

567 Religious chastity is a gospel reality. It is born, grows and develops as a power flowing from the Incarnation, which frees from corruption and the uncertainties of the world.

It is a grace, still more, a privileged gift of the Father to all who ask for it.[1] By inviting them to follow him, Christ himself shows that not everyone is able to understand the value of renouncing marriage, but 'only those to whom God gives his grace.' [2]

Not all are called to imitate, and in certain measure to show men 'that form of life that the Son of God embraced when he came into the world to do the will of the Father and which he offered to his disciples who were to follow him.' [3]

He who accepts this gift opens himself to an intimacy with Jesus Christ and enjoys his special presence to the point of becoming a sign and symbol of the charity which unites the Saviour with the Church and which in its fullness will only appear in heaven.[4]

[1] Cf LG 42-43; PC 5, 12; OT 10; PO 16.
[2] Mt 19, 11.
[3] LG 44.
[4] Cf PC 12; LG 42; ET 13.

He who lives in faith and love the gift of gospel celibacy expresses through his baptismal consecration all the richness of the paschal mystery in a singular and eminent manner.

568 This close bond between evangelical celibacy and the Pasch of the Lord is full of consequences and requirements. Here are some:

— Pasch is before everything else a mystery of liberation. Man dead with Christ, rises to a new life freed from the bonds of sin;[5]

— so also chastity; to arrive at the richness of maturity and a new life, it has to pass through the darkness of renunciation, through suffering and through a liberating death;

— thus the Council affirms that the 'observance of perfect continence touches the deepest instincts of human nature' and warns religious that 'strengthening themselves to keep faith with their profession' and 'having belief in divine help, they do not trust their own strength, but practise mortification and the custody of the senses.' [6]

2. **Community - Church dimension**

569 The Passover of the Lord is not only a mystery of liberation, it is also and primarily the mystery of 'covenant and communion.'

It frees us in order to bring us together with all our redeemed brothers to the communion of life with the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.[7]

Religious chastity by the power it draws upon from its relation to the paschal mystery brings us to the per-

[5] Rom 6, 1-11.
[6] PC 12.
[7] 1 Jn 1, 3.

fection of charity to God and to our brothers. It cannot be kept in isolation neither does it ever close in upon itself. It has a need to reach out to others, in prayer, in love and in action. It is the sacrament of charity, sign of brotherhood and service.

This vital force shows clearly the community dimension of religious chastity. It must express itself in this community if it is to become at all fruitful and then the community in its turn contributes to its support and makes it come alive.

Religious chastity creates a characteristic style of inter-personal relationships in the community, it gives rise to new bonds of solidarity and it makes the community fully and universally open to the demands of love.

570 For this reason the fraternal community — in which there is always consecrated chastity — becomes joyously and generously open to the vaster community of the Church and of men through its evangelizing activity, whether missionary or through education or in the help it gives to others. For us the salesians we go to youth, especially poor youth in need.

In this service our chastity, through the community in which it lives, increases our power and frees the fervour of charity from all that hinders it.

3. **Eschatological dimension**

571 A genuine religious community — fruit and support of chastity, sign and anticipation of the kingdom whose advent and fullness we await — is an ideal that the members of every renewed salesian community must strive after, as the members live and work together day by day. The loftiest eschatological realities of christianity are made present and visible in a prophetic and expressive manner in the salesian community that lives its vocation to consecrated chastity. Such a community in fact ex-

presses and anticipates here on earth the virginal union with Christ the elect will experience on his return. In the meantime it gives witness to a way of life with relationship based on love and total availability towards our brothers, and it is a sign in a world which will pass away, of that future life to which God calls us. Thus it represents to the eyes of the believer that wonderful marriage which unites 'the Church to Christ... her only Spouse' and that will only be shown 'in the future time.' [8]

With good reason salesians and every salesian community can give witness to the heavenly riches they even now possess in an incomplete way through faith, and which they hope to possess totally when the promises of God are fulfilled. Our chastity will show itself alive especially to the boys and with it the power of the Holy Spirit and the liberating love of God, and the lovablness and availability of Jesus Christ. Finally so as to strengthen this witness the salesian will try to model himself on Mary the 'image and the beginning of the Church which is to have its fulfilment in an age yet to come.' [9] He will call upon her frequently, will try to imitate her example, remembering that her life 'is the model for all.' [10]

[8] Cf PC 12.
[9] LG 68.
[10] PC 25.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOME SALESIAN ASPECTS OF CHASTITY

572 Don Bosco chose to live a life of evangelical celibacy in order to express his great love for God and to carry out his mission as father and pastor to poor boys according to his vocation as a priest. His total self-giving to the Church and especially to youth fostered a quality in him which was as genial as it was creative and productive of new works, he found optimism and joy in his apostolic work and his zeal showed itself in inexaustible drive.

The very high regard he had for chastity is seen in the enthusiasm and emphasis with which he was accustomed to speak about it whether in public or in private. He looked upon purity not just as another virtue, but as a concrete way of loving God and as a life style that presumes and contains within itself all the virtues. This is why he placed it at the very centre of his teaching on education.

As a founder he considered purity decisive as an element in the religious life: 'It is by means of chastity,' he wrote, 'that the religious achieves his objective of being consecrated to God.' [1] He demanded from his sons the witness of chastity as the characteristic sign of the life and of the apostolate of the Congregation; 'what should distinguish us from all others' — this is the teaching of Don Bosco — 'what must be the special characteristic of our Congregation, is the virtue of chastity. It has to become the pivot of all our actions... we need an

[1] MB XIII 799.

invincible modesty and great chastity... this will be the triumph of the Congregation.' [2] 'The Lord would destroy the Congregation if we were to fail in matters of chastity.' [3]

The re-reading of these words of Don Bosco in this context throw light on perennial gospel values, and the pages written by the saint on chastity transmit all the rich actuality of his teaching for today. In the introduction to the Constitutions (1966) we read: 'The virtue supremely necessary, the great virtue, the angelic virtue to which all others form a crown is the virtue of chastity. Who possesses this virtue can apply to himselfthe words of the Holy Spirit — 'together with her all good things came to me.' [4]

It is not here necessary to underline the fact that Don Bosco was himself the living example of his own teaching — showing thereby that it can be done and the power of witness.

573 It is in the light of this teaching and example that the salesian lives, day by day, his own life of service in the Church and for his boys. For him, as for Don Bosco before him, chastity will be seen as the incarnation of love, which comes from God and leads back to him.

In the salesian way of life demanding evangelic chastity as its basis there is a particular commitment to charity.

In the letter of Don Bosco from Rome written in May 1884, he asserts the necessity of loving the boys and to be loved by them in return so as to guide them the more easily along the path leading to a christian formation. 'The boys are not only loved, they themselves must know that they are loved.' [5]

This one of the foundation stones of the salesian

[2] MB XII pp 244-245; cf X 35.
[3] MB XIII 83; cf XI 299.
[4] MB V p 167 seq.
[5] MB XVII p 110.

system — rooted in reason, religion and loving kindness — which makes of education a work of love.

For this reason Don Bosco insisted that before entering the Congregation one must measure and assess one's own strength. He has to love all together and each one separately as living signs of the love of God and of the kindness and humanity of Jesus Christ.

This is the way of our chastity. Boys growing to manhood through the salesian who loves them will find light, strength and enthusiasm enough to grow in purity and through it also in his christian life.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

1. Support for chastity provided in the renewed salesian community

574 It is urgent and necessary that the salesian community whilst seeking to renew itself from every point of view should strengthen those aims which will help each confrère to live a celibate life of consecrated chastity and bear effective witness to it.

The General Chapter emphasizes the following points which are of obvious importance:

a) in accordance with the mind of Don Bosco, every community must be a family where each confrère feels perfectly at home, where he is accepted and loved, where his qualities and gifts are recognized, and where he has his own specific part to play in the pastoral work of the community. In this family, rich in supernatural goods, the salesian should find *those values which any family naturally offers to its members*, especially while they are young, to lead them to full maturity and keep them efficient;

b) there must prevail at all times a friendly atmosphere which can give birth and subsequent growth to friendships rich in comprehension, human warmth and christian spirit;

c) in moments of weakness special help will always be available to advise, offer fraternal correction, and encourage the confrère to overcome his personal difficulties. In this way the community as a whole will be enabled to provide an example of evangelical witness to all.

2. Evangelical celibacy - an authentic and original way of life for today

575 No one can *ignore or underestimate* the objections raised today against the choice of a celibate life. These have to be faced especially, though not exclusively, during the years of formation,[1] and they cannot be solved in a superficial or sentimental way nor be discussed only from a dialectic angle in an effort to overcome some passing difficulties or moments of crisis. The salesian knows that the ultimate reason for his choice is his preferential love for Jesus Christ. He also knows that as this choice has been made in answer to a divine call, he can always count on the help of grace.

Therefore whilst he goes conscientiously about his duties and willingly accepts the trials associated with his renunciation, he remains strong in the ideal he has embraced and integrates into a harmonious whole the gifts of nature and of grace which make up the man of God.

And so, as he moves towards the conquest of his ideal, he will experience the fact that the choice he has made is indeed a valid, original and up-to-date way of life.

3. Chastity - an incentive and guarantee in our pastoral work for vocations

576 It is the bounden duty of the Congregation *to give to the young a special message of purity* the source of priestly and religious vocations. This is as much our task today and in the future as it was in the first century of salesian history; indeed there is greater urgency today than in the past. The effectiveness of our pastoral work for vocations will always remain linked with the transmission of this message.

[1] Cf PO 16; PC 12; OT 10; *Sacerdotalis coelibatus*; AGC XIX 83; RICCERI, *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*, pp 6-9; Schema precapitolare 11 b, p 43.

If our boys can see that the salesians live this life of chastity with joy and perseverance, they will begin to appreciate the sign it represents; they will also become aware of its value and beauty, and will not be discouraged by the arduous task involved if ever the grace of the Holy Spirit should move their hearts to follow Christ and hear repeated those words: "Come, follow me" (Matt. 19-21).[2]

[2] Mt 19, 21.

Document 11

SALESIAN POVERTY TODAY

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE CONGREGATION

577 A) The theme of poverty brings us face to face with one of the key problems that the Congregation has to confront at the present time, with one of the tasks that is considered a basic sign of renewal.[1]

We would like to grasp the more important aspects of the increased sensitivity of the confrères, and the troubles and expectations of the whole Congregation.

578 B) In their new rules the salesians want a more genuine poverty, one not merely made up of lifeless juridical norms, but one that is clearly *evangelical*; they want to see an end to the "poverty of permissions," and the way open to an honest imitation of the poor Christ.[2]

And while they deplore the extension in the Congregation of the disturbing phenomenon of the middle class mentality with its quest for comfort,[3] they want to see a poverty that is a concrete witness to personal detachment and to solidarity with the world of the poor.

On the other hand a need is felt for greater *personalization* in the practice of poverty: "a more adult poverty," one which is practised in a responsible and conscious manner is highly desirable.[4]

579 C) The salesians are especially sensitive to the *collective witness* of poverty. As a matter of fact the poverty

[1] Cf I CIS II, p 112.
[2] Cf I CIS II, p 114-116.
[3] Cf I CIS II, p 133-134; RICCERI, *Relaz. gen.* ... p 12.
[4] Cf I CIS II, p 117.

of individuals must necessarily be conditioned by the poverty of the institutes themselves.

580 D) There is a general consensus in the Congregation that we must refute with solid facts the repute of wealth that we have acquired in some places.[5]

Serious questions must be faced:

In view of the changing sensitivity of the times, is the impression of grandeur in many of our institutes compatible with a life of effective poverty?[6]

Should not our solidarity with the poor bring us to share their lives, their insecurity, their struggle for liberation?[7]

Are our works a *service* that always answers the new needs of the poorer among the young?

E) There is a growing awareness that the community itself, no matter on what level, world-wide, provincial or local, should be a witness to poverty:

— with a style of life that is simple and austere [8] characterized by the example of generous and constant work;[9]

— with the exclusion of any collusion whatsoever with the rich and the powerful;[10]

— with a determined struggle against every form of luxury, gain or excessive comfort.

F) More especially we salesians are in agreement in declaring that our poverty must be directed *along the lines of our mission*: as a matter of fact as sons of Don

[5] Cf PeP istanze 136.
[6] Cf PeP prop 143; I CIS II, 127-129.
[7] Cf I CIS II, p 121.
[8] Cf I CIS II, p 127.
[9] Cf I CIS II, p 120; Ricceri, *Relaz. gen.* etc. p 12.
[10] Cf I CIS II, p 129.

Bosco we have assumed a historical obligation of service to poor youth.[11]

In this sphere the salesians are becoming more and more aware of their responsibility vis-à-vis the problems of under-development and, in general, of the efforts to achieve human and christian progress in the field into which they are called to work out their mission.[12]

581 Faced with the complexity of the problems enumerated we are fully convinced of the need for change, of the urgency and the breadth of the decision to be taken: the Congregation "must change its course," [13] but we are fully conscious that this will be the result especially of a renewed mentality, of a readiness to listen to the signs of the times, and fidelity to the gospel and to the spirit of Don Bosco.

1. The cry of the poor

582 Let us listen to the signs of the times in the "cry of the poor" which is today louder than ever, and dramatic even to the point of violence.[14]

In a world that is totally given over to progress we cannot but be aware of the tragic picture of poverty made up of personal want and collective misery, of abandonment and moral degradation.

583 The insistent appeal of the poor comes especially from the masses *in the under-developed countries of the world.*

Here poverty shows itself in the large majority of our brothers, most of whom are still young, and who, in spite of their fatiguing toil, do not succeed in attain-

[11] Cf I CIS I, p 80 seq.
[12] Cf I CIS I, p 92-94.
[13] ASC Ricceri 261, p 1109.
[14] Cf ET 17.

ing a level of life in keeping with human dignity, but who are forced to live in a state of profound alienation and of uncertainty.

The very economical and political structures which are tied up with the dynamics of the consumer-society bring about conditions of poverty characterized by exploitation and inequality between the classes, by the lack of proper housing, and by undernourishment leading to misery and starvation.

This reality is often accompanied by other forms of life on the fringe of society be they social, cultural or moral, characterized by such phenomena as illiteracy, family disintegration and delinquency.[15]

Even in developed countries we hear the cry of the poor amidst the contradictions of the *"consumer civilization."*

On the one hand we find serious social injustices that give rise to groups of individuals who live on the fringe of society; on the other hand, where the standard of living is higher, we encounter a degrading form of moral poverty. The victims of this latter, insensitive to the values of the spirit and to joys of sharing, make idols of money and pleasure, and become alienated from their fellow men, falling easy prey to sexuality, drugs and delinquency.

584 In the socialized world where the tendency is towards an ever more effective equality among the social classes, and work is elevated to the dignity of "the honour, right and duty of every citizen" we find contradictions and deviations which lead to the myth of economic progress, the idolatry of work, and the limiting of personal freedom: this gives rise to the worrying risk of the impoverishment of spiritual values, especially among the young.

[15] Cf PP; CELAM Medellin; CLAR Pobreza.

In addition to all this our attention is drawn by the phenomenon all around us of *urbanization*: in the disorderly growth of the cities we find the new poor, grouped especially in the slum regions of the outskirts; new forms of exploitation and dominion are fomented and conditions of sub-human life are created and here, the weaker ones, especially the young fall easy prey.[16]

585 Faced with this painful picture of poverty, we salesians (drawn by the poverty of Jesus and following in the footsteps of our Founder, who was deeply involved in the situations of his own times), are called upon to question ourselves, so as to produce "a change of mentality and attitudes." [17]

2. **The image of poverty in Jesus**

586 Our poverty is a free, original and *human choice* that can only find meaning in the mystery of Christ. It is the imitation and the sharing of the poverty of Jesus, the Son of God, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." [18]

In his life and in his words we discover even if it is paradoxical, the redemptive value of the emptying of self [19] and the gospel meaning of being poor in response to the christian ideal.

587 Deeply rooted in Israel, and thus closely linked to "the poor of Jahweh," [20] Jesus *proclaims the beatitude of poverty* [21] as a religious attitude to life, as a recognition

[16] Cf OA 8-13.
[17] GS 63; Cf ET 17.
[18] 2 Cor 8, 9.
[19] Phil 2, 7.
[20] Soph 2, 3; 3, 11.
[21] Mt 5, 3.

of the fact that earthly goods are God's gift to all men and as a joyful search for the kingdom [22] based on trust in the promises of the Father.[23]

Consequently he appreciates things, he uses them with simplicity,[24] but he also preaches *renunciation and detachment* from earthly goods,[25] from the members of one's family,[26] and even from life itself [27] for the sake of the kingdom and as an expression of total availability for the mission.[28]

588 So that his message of interior poverty might be more fully welcomed, he freely chooses to be "the son of a carpenter," [29] belonging to the working classes and sharing the conditions of the needy.[30]

Jesus loves the poor and he teaches us to see him in the needy person.[31]

He makes the *evangelization of the poor* the object of his entire mission, so that they may be freed from their oppression.[32]

With the audacity born of love, Jesus denounces in a prophetic manner the abuses of the rich and the powerful.[33] He seeks no privileges for himself [34] and he lays the foundations for a new social order.[35]

[22] Cf Mt 6, 3.
[23] Mt 6, 25.
[24] Cf Mt 11, 19; Mk 2, 19.
[25] Cf Mt 6, 19; 19, 21; Lk 14, 33.
[26] Cf Mt 10, 35-37.
[27] Cf Lk 9, 24.
[28] Cf Mt 10, 9 seq.
[29] Mt 13, 55.
[30] Cf Mt 8, 20.
[31] Mt 25, 37.
[32] Cf Lk 4, 18.
[33] Cf Lk 6, 24; 13, 31-34.
[34] Cf Mt 17, 24-27.
[35] Cf Lk 6, 27.

And finally he teaches the beatitude of giving, proclaiming that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." [36]

The message of Jesus remains active and moving in the first christian communities for whom *poverty becomes "communion"* expressed in the sharing of temporal goods and service to the poor. This is the result of the unity in mind and heart of the earlier communities. Communion and service create in the community that serenity and joy which is an anticipation of the definitive joy of the christian and a "powerful witness of the resurrection of the Lord." [37]

3. "The spirit of poverty and of love the glory and sign of the Church of Christ." [38]

589 Faced with the "cry of anguish" [39] of the poor of our world, the Church acquires a new awareness of its mission:

> "Christ was sent by the Father to bring good news to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to seek and to save what was lost. Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all those who are afflicted with human weakness. Indeed she recognizes in the poor and the suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering founder. She does all she can to relieve their need and in them she strives to serve Christ." [40]

In the Church we religious are called upon to give the clearest possible testimony of the message of poverty, of the love of Christ, and of the true face of the Church herself:

[36] Acts 20, 35.
[37] Acts 2, 42 seq; 4, 22 seq; 6, 1 seq.
[38] GS 88.
[39] PP 3.
[40] LG 8.

"Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who more closely follow and more clearly demonstrate the Saviour's self-giving by embracing poverty with the free choice of God's sons..." [41]

Vatican II and more recently the magisterium of the Church shows us the meaning of religious poverty and they help us to uncover in it the gospel mystery and those aspects that are more appreciated by our own time and age.[42]

a) Following Christ

590 The poverty of the religious is first of all *an act of faith.*

In following the poor Christ, religious live the evangelical mystery of poverty as people who recognize that their whole life is a gift from God and "entrust themselves to the providence of the heavenly Father." [43]

They appreciate earthly goods as of value but relative, given to man for the development of his personality and for the service of his brothers. And so they use them with simplicity and detachment,[44] "not permitting themselves to be ensnared by the seductive wealth of possessions, of knowledge, and of power," [45] but giving to the goods of the earth the significance and the purpose manifested in the eternal plan of God.[46]

b) Witness and sign

591 The interior evangelical disposition translates itself into concrete and shining witness.

[41] LG 42 d.
[42] Cf PC 13; ET 16.
[43] Cf 13 b.
[44] Cf PC 13; ET 18.
[45] ET 19.
[46] Cf AA 7.

Tending towards holiness with "joyful and balanced austerity" [47] the religious "suffers in his daily life the trials, even external ones of authentic poverty" [48] which make him effectively one with the world of the poor, to the point of his going to join them in their condition, to share their anxieties.[49]

This witness of effective poverty becomes for our fellow men the sign of the liberating presence of Jesus in the world, of the primacy of the kingdom of God [50] and of the divine value set on earthly goods and of all human progress.

c) Charity and the service of the poor

592 Religious poverty has its roots in charity.

Interior detachment and exterior austerity are no ends in themselves; they proceed from love and translate themselves into love.

And so the religious "loves the poor with the tenderness of Christ." [51] Here the religious reflects the preoccupation of the Church herself who "recognizes in the poor and the suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering founder. She does all she can to relieve their need and in them she strives to serve Christ." [52]

In the service of humanity along these lines, since concrete solidarity with the poor forbids all compromise with any form of injustice,[53] it is the special task of religious at the present time to "awaken consciences in the face of the drama of misery and the needs of social justice as set out in the gospel and the teachings of the Church" [54]

[47] ET 30.
[48] ET 18.
[49] Cf ET 18.
[50] Cf Mt 6, 33; LG 44.
[51] PC 13 e.
[52] LG 8.
[53] Cf ET 18.
[54] ET 18.

and to do all he can to promote human ennoblement and the development of peoples.[55]

d) Work

593 Living by one's own work is today a form of life that is especially expressive of real witness to poverty in a generous service.

"Subject to the common law of labour," [56] religious "witness its human significance" [57] and they make use of it to earn their own livelihood and to give concrete help to the poor.

e) Poverty, communion and participation

594 Religious poverty becomes a witness and a sign to an eminent degree if lived in community.

Religious, in imitation of the first christian community, manifest the spiritual bond that unites them, by placing the fruits of their labours at the disposal of all.[58]

The Church points to this collective witness of poverty with particular urgency. It will manifest itself both in the fraternal sharing of goods among the confrères and the institutes, and also in the other needs of the Church,[59] leading to the avoidance of all "counter-witness' in the community (luxury, excessive wealth, accumulation of goods).[60]

[55] Cf PP 12 passim.
[56] PC 13.
[57] ET 20; PP 27.
[58] Cf ET 20.
[59] Cf PC 13.
[60] Cf PC 13.

f) New forms of poverty

595 It is in this spirit that the Church makes an appeal to the inventiveness of religious and asks them to adapt courageously the existing forms of their poverty to the needs of the world of today, to search out "new forms of poverty" [61] so that their poverty may become more realistically fruitful.

4. Don Bosco poor on behalf of the poor

596 "I prefer to be poor... I think more of paradise than all the wealth and money in the world." [62]

The life of Don Bosco the poor man is lived from the time when little Johnny addressed these words to the heirs of Don Calosso right up to the time of those other words spoken on his death-bed to Don Viglietti:

"Have a look in my pockets... I want to die in such a manner that people will be able to say: Don Bosco died without a penny in his pocket." [63]

Don Bosco, the son of Mamma Margaret who was herself a perfect model of poverty,[64] was poor by vocation and also because of the firm conviction that had its roots in his acute evangelical sensitiveness.[65]

We find the expression of the characteristic traits of this poverty in an unshakeable trust in divine providence, in austere simplicity, exemplary temperance, an almost sacred regard for thrift and economy which led him to

[61] PC 13; ES II, 23.
[62] MB I, 217-218.
[63] MB XVIII, 493.
[64] Cf MB I, 296.
[65] Cf ASC 253 (Ricceri) p 541.

look upon money as a gift and an instrument of doing good.

During the whole span of his life he was detached from earthly goods and money, but with a spirit of joy even in the midst of privations so as to be more available and freer to give himself.

Don Bosco, himself so poor, wanted a poor Congregation as well and one totally committed to the service of poor youth. He maintained this explicit, decisive and absolute determination without the slightest deviation or hesitation for the whole of his life.[66]

The warm words written in his last will and testament still re-echo:

> "Love poverty... our Congregation has a wonderful future prepared for it by divine providence ...When we begin to live lives of comfort, our Congregation will have run its course." [67]

597 Don Bosco taught his sons a poverty that was both genuine and functional, and directed towards the fulfilment of his mission.

This poverty implies:

— personal detachment and the diligent search for correct means to maintain works for poor boys;

— courageous confidence in God and tireless work as if everything depended on us;

— little for self but much for the work;

— looking for and appreciating money, but spending it all at once in the religious conviction that God will provide for the morrow.[68]

[66] Cf ibid.
[67] MB XVII, 271-272.
[68] Cf STELLA II pp 413-414.

Sensitive to the signs of his times which gave much credit to hard work, and urged on by interior zeal, Don Bosco wanted a Congregation that was established on tireless hard work:

> "We are living in times in which it is necessary to work." [69]
>
> "Even the wicked know how to appreciate us when we really work unselfishly and untiringly."[70]
>
> "Prayer is always necessary, but today work intense work, is also necessary; otherwise we shall head for destruction." [71]

More than anything else he wanted all his activities, as well as the work of his salesians to be exclusively exercised on behalf of poor youth:

> "The world will always receive us with pleasure as long as our concern is always for those children who are poor, the needier ones of society. This is our true wealth that no one will take away from us." [72]

Among the recommendations given to the first missionaries, Don Bosco gave an injunction that still re-echoes today for all his sons:

> "Take special care of the... poor... Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food and abode, and you will be rich in the sight of God, and will win the hearts of men." [73]

598 The whole salesian tradition re-confirms the basic

[69] MB XIII 126.
[70] MB XI 168.
[71] MB XIX 157.
[72] MB XVII 272.
[73] MB XI 389-390.

traits of this picture of poverty as lived by the Father and passed on as a precious heritage to his sons.[74]

[74] We would like to bring to light a few elements of salesian tradition having recourse to the sayings of the successors of Don Bosco.

— Poverty is an indispensable *sign* of our apostolate: "Our work will be useless unless the world sees and convinces itself that we are not after wealth or comfort" (RUA *Circolare* 31 Jan 1907 p 438).

— Salesian poverty includes a personal ascetism of detachment and renunciation. Cf RICALDONE in ASC 82, p 91 passim; ALBERA, *Circolare* 23 April 1917; RICCERI in ASC 253, p 549 seq.

— Our works, "money like every other possession of ours must be placed *at the service of our mission*" in ASC 253, p 574-559.

"Dear sons, I beseech you... to give your attention to the multitudes of children who are begging for help and who surround you on all sides...; you should be ready to make any sacrifice to alleviate their sufferings and to rebuild them in body and in soul" (RINALDI in ASC 57, p 967).

— *Work* is "the glorious livery of the salesian," "the great unmistakable heritage left us by Don Bosco." (RICCERI in ASC 253, p 563).

— An essential means for the exercise of poverty is the common life, in view of which the "salesian becomes one with the whole community." (RUA, *Circolare* 31 Jan 1907, p 441).

In this spirit we should cultivate solidarity both with the poor and between houses and provinces (RICCERI in ASC 253, p

— As a goal that is particularly urgent and real for the salesians of today "the struggle against under-development" is suggested as something "that touches the very essence of the Congregation" (RICCERI in ASC 261, p 1110-1111).

CHAPTER TWO

BASIC FEATURES OF SALESIAN POVERTY

599 The evangelical need to follow Christ, the invitation of the Church to pay heed to "cry of the poor," the teachings and the magnetic example of Don Bosco, all these are for the salesians but the beginning of the renewal of their poverty. Desirous of responding to the entreaties of the gospel, the Church and the world of today, the General Chapter presents the Congregation with a description of the basic features of renewed salesian poverty.

600 We are of the opinion that two features are really essential today to the poverty of the salesian religious: WITNESS AND SERVICE.

These two forms of incarnation of poverty are demanded and they are mutually complementary: witness cannot be a mere empty external exhibition, nor can service of the poor be rendered with the ostentation of wealth and power.

Both witness and service have a common root: *charity*, charity towards God that is translated into charity towards our neighbour as a gift from God to our brothers.

As a matter of fact Christ "became poor so that we might become rich;" that is, he willingly took upon himself the condition of poverty, giving witness to it as a humble worker and in solidarity with the poor. But he did this with the intention of giving himself totally to men. In the same way the witness of poverty on the part of the religious, having its origins in the love of God and neighbour, must of necessity express itself in the gift of self and in the effective service of the poor.

Charity gives drive to every form of poverty: it ensures that our witness is both modest and obliging, and our service both humble and transparent.

601 1) SERVICE

Our poverty has its foundation and its full meaning in the light of the salesian mission.

Following Christ who had come "to preach the gospel to the poor," the salesians who are sent out in the name of Don Bosco to impart a christian education to "poor and abandoned youth," give expression to their poverty first and foremost as a total giving of themselves and of all they possess in the service of needy youth.

"Today more than ever Don Bosco and the Church send us preferably to the poor, the under-privileged, the ordinary people." [1]

This salesian service is accomplished especially in work, in apostolic activities, and in our various undertakings.

602 **a) Work**

Work is the most eloquent and concrete expression of salesian service on behalf of poor youth.

Sensitive to the trust given to us by our Father when he said: "Today work is absolutely necessary, and not just work but hard work," the salesian gives practical expression to his poverty by taking his work seriously, remembering that those who do not have to earn their living by work are the rich.[2]

603 **b) Apostolic activities and our works**

Our apostolate and our works are the service that we salesians, in fidelity to the charism of Don Bosco,

[1] AGC XIX in ASC 244, p 81-82.
[2] Ricceri in ASC 253, p 44-45.

offer to those in need in those places where we have been called by providence. And so the choice of activities, the location of our works, openness to the needy, the services that we render, all these must be the mirror of our poverty.

Consequently all the enterprises so characteristically salesian must be focused on this basic service which the salesians render in the Church.

This type of service will also lead some salesians to reach out more directly to the poor, to live with them and to share their sufferings.[3]

In particular, as a real response to the needs of our time, salesians in all activities and works of the Congregation must become ever more conscious of their obligation;

— in regard to "under-development" to provide a true "education to freedom," an instrument of human and christian progress;[4]

— in the world of comfortable living and socialization to provide here too "education to freedom" from the worship of material things, from the degrading forms of moral poverty, and from every form of technological depersonalization.

604 2) WITNESS

Imitation of the poor Christ, after the splendid example of Don Bosco leads the salesian as an individual and the community as a whole to live a style of life that is a concrete and meaningful witness to poverty.

Self-donation and unselfish service, while showing that we place our persons and all our possessions at God's disposal in our brothers, demand a life of detachment and of real poverty; this makes us one with the world

[3] Cf ET 18.

[4] Riccери in ASC 261, p 68.

of the poor and credible witnesses of the message of the beatitudes.

605 a) Personal witness

The salesian, living in accordance with the beatitude proclaimed by Christ gives a personal manifestation of his own poverty in *voluntary renunciation as well as in interior and effective detachment from earthly goods.* He does all this in a spirit of joy full of confidence in the word and the promise of God the Father.

This personal commitment to poverty which the salesian lives "not just in word, but in deed and with love," [5] is an indispensable condition for building up a community that is poor and for making service of one's brothers efficacious.

Consequently every salesian, sustained by the prophetic strength of faith and by a keen sense of responsibility, lives a life of real poverty:

1) in a way of life *on the personal level* that is simple and austere, which refuses those comforts and conveniences that are commonly associated with the middle class;

he remembers and re-lives the temperance that was characteristic of Don Bosco regarding living-quarters, food, clothing, holidays and travel, and even the temperance he practised when sick; and he is ready to share in some way that insecurity which accompanies the life of the really poor;

2) *in tireless work,* that takes on the appearance of total commitment to the mission;

3) *in the use of things*: he sees his time and his talents not as something personal, but as something con-

[5] MB XV 184.

secrated to God and placed at the disposal of the brothers: his profession of poverty does not prevent him from retaining for his own personal use with the permission of the superior, those things that are required for an efficacious apostolate; nevertheless in his management of money and material things he never forgets that he is poor and that he must be content with what is necessary.

606 **b) Collective witness**

The witness of poverty is particularly meaningful when lived in community. "To be poor," St. Francis of Sales tells us, "means living in community." [6]

Imitating the living example of Jesus and of the early christians, for whom poverty meant to give, to share, i.e. in charity understood as sharing, the salesians come together in community, placing all their talents and personal qualities and the fruit of their work in common so that all may be used in the service of the poor.

In this way our poverty becomes *community of goods* for the service of the poor, something that is essentially tied in with the salesian mission; it is not a mere renunciation of economic goods, rather it is a special way of using them for the benefit of youth and the poor; in other words it is a sign of our practical charity for the needy.

But we must not forget that the credibility and the efficacy of our "community of goods" entails true collective witness of detachment and real solidarity with the world of the needy on the part of the whole community. "Communities as such should aim at giving a kind of corporate witness to their own poverty." [7]

This corporate witness will be lived in practice:

[6] Oeuvres de St François de Sales, Ed Annecy, vol IX p 229.
[7] PC 13.

1) *in an austere style of common life*: we must feel that we are closer to the poor by being frugal in food, by refusing all that is superfluous, and by aiming at functional simplicity in our buildings. We will be helped in this by contact with poor boys, with simple folk, by honest dialogue with them and by sharing their sufferings and difficulties;

2) *in the manner of possessing*: we place everything that we have and are in common for our mission; truly sharing the use of goods and their administration, we all feel that we are responsibly involved in the poverty of the family;

3) *in the generous expression of solidarity* with the houses and provinces of the Congregation and with the Church and the world in their need.

607 As a powerful means towards an effective witness to poverty and as an incentive to continual renewal, salesians should faithfully carry out a *periodic community assessment*. This would consist in a sincere review of the kind of witness and service they offer, and in doing this they would humbly and loyally place themselves face to face with the ideals proposed by the gospel and their mission.

Don Bosco has left us salesians a whole programme of life in his own motto: "*work and temperance.*" Like him we too in offering a service of *tireless work* and a life of *joyful temperance* will be giving to all who come in contact with us a witness that cannot be contradicted.

3) SOME SPECIAL QUESTIONS

608 1. Evangelical poverty or socio-economic poverty?

In the exercise of poverty we are often faced with an important objection: Is religious poverty a mere interior attitude of renunciation and availability for service

("evangelical" or "apostolic" poverty) or should it necessarily involve an effective solidarity with the poor even in the socio-economic sense?

So as to give a correct answer we must distinguish:

a) *poverty as privation* of the goods of this world, which are necessary so that men may live in a human manner: as such it is something evil. It is denounced in scripture as something that is contrary to the will of God and often the fruit of injustice and sin;

b) *evangelical poverty* as a basic attitude of every christian, is the attitude of openness to God, of the availability of one who places all his trust in God. It involves appreciation of the goods of this world, but not to the extent of finding satisfaction in them, since the superior value of the goods of the kingdom is recognized;[8]

c) the poverty that Vatican II desires from religious is a *poverty-sign, poverty-sacrament,* a poverty that wants them to be committed in an unmistakable manner to be "poor both in fact and in spirit." [9]

Just like all other christians, religious tend towards evangelical poverty. So as to be a sign in the Church of the blessedness of this poverty, they freely and lovingly take on themselves the self-same social conditions of the needy of this world and they share in their privations. They do this to witness spiritual liberty vis-à-vis earthly goods, to serve the poor and help them in their efforts to free themselves. In this they follow the example of Christ who shared all the consequences of our human condition in order to save us.

609 d) Without any doubt we must bear in mind that the concrete picture of the socio-economic poverty of the

[8] CELAM Medellin 14, 4.

[9] PC 13.

religious and consequently its value as a sign depends on the diversity of the charisms of the individual religious families. Allowance must also be made for different environments and countries, different cultures and civilizations as well as particular situations.

This simply means that the exercise of poverty is subject to the principle of *pluralism* and it must be courageously outlined by each religious Congregation. Within the Congregation itself the responsibility lies with the regional or provincial communities, with reference to the needs of the different places and the urgency involved. True as this may be real solidarity on world-wide level must never be neglected; this sense of solidarity leads us to discover and share in spirit the tragic conditions of poverty that exist in distant lands.

610 2. **Witness or service**

There is yet another worrying question that troubles the salesian in his exercise of poverty: how is it possible to reconcile a witness of poverty leading to total solidarity with the world of the poor with the functional and structural requirements of education? Is it possible to be poor in an institute which in some places takes on the appearance of grandiosity? The solution of this conflict, which sometimes takes on the proportions of a real "question of conscience" regarding fidelity to the salesian vocation, would appear to be along the same lines as that given by Don Bosco himself. He showed the salesians of his day a type of poverty which was authentic, but at the same time functional, and always directed towards the accomplishment of the mission. With the daily exercise of this poverty Don Bosco whilst remaining austere in his individual and community life did not hesitate to look for all the means necessary for the developing of his work.

As a matter of fact, by becoming involved in the mission of the salesians, we are of the opinion that the *first and most important witness of the salesians is the very service itself* which they offer to youth, especially to the poorer elements, through their own labour and by placing all their talents and everything they may possess at their disposal.

In rendering this humble, generous and evident service which moves us to give constantly to the needy, we are necessarily led to avoid all counter-witness, which would place us in open contrast with those whom we set out to serve and would annul the effectiveness of our activity.

611 3. Formation in poverty

Poverty is a choice that demands a delicate and formed conscience. This is so because our daily effort to maintain fidelity is continually menaced by an almost unconscious attachment to the bourgeoisie.

Thus there must be a real education in poverty that must begin in the formative years of the young confrère and be continued and enriched throughout the whole life of the salesian.

We would like to outline some aims of this formation.

612 a) Outlook

It is necessary to develop in the young salesians, right from the earliest years, an outlook that is able to discern the essentials of salesian poverty:

— sharing in the mystery of the impoverishment of Christ, to the extent of a sincere renunciation of the goods and the ostentation of this world;

— total availability of the person in the fulfilment of the mission;

— conversion from an individualistic mentality to a social preoccupation with the common welfare;

— a special love for the poor.

613 This mentality should be translated into action in daily life within the formative community.

The young salesians will be trained in a very practical manner to live his poverty every single day:

— in a life of austerity and sacrifice;

— in fidelity to study and their training to regard work, even manual work, as a means of gaining one's livelihood;

— in generosity in sharing;

— in the consciousness of the world of the poor, of the workers, learning to think along with them, entering into friendly and open contact with them, and sharing in the efforts to integrate them into society.

And finally the young salesian should be trained in the responsible use of money, fully introduced into the knowledge of the economic aspects of life and invited, when it is appropriate, to take part in the administration of the whole community.

4. **Administration**

614 To promote the spirit of poverty in the Congregation, the General Chapter cannot remain indifferent to the financial and administrative aspects of the life of the communities.

The community in fact possesses those goods that are necessary for it to comply with the requirements of its mission; the Church asks us also to give corporate witness to poverty in the possession and use of these goods.[10]

In addition to being a necessary requirement for a

[10] Cf PC 13; ET 18.

correct evaluation of the goods at the service of man,[11] wise administration is also instrumental in giving clear witness to poverty.

Our religious poverty demands that our administration be such as to exclude the accumulation of and excessive preoccupation with material goods, and to discourage speculation, gigantic enterprises, and every form of counter-witness.

We know that we are administering the goods of the poor, in keeping with the words of Don Bosco: "Remember that what we have is not our own but it belongs to the poor; woe betide us if we fail to use it properly." [12]

The General Chapter offers a few indications that will serve for the renewal of the administrative aspects of our houses:

615 *a*) administration and economy are the *task of the whole community*: all the confrères should feel truly responsible for and involved in the economic running of the house; because of this the means of community sharing in the administration must be developed (estimates and accounts, schedules, community audits...);

616 *b*) for greater efficiency of service certain confrères are entrusted with ordinary management but the choice of confrères is made with the approval of the rector and under his control; confrères who assume administrative offices perform a true service to the whole community; they sacrifice their time and energy in work which is tiring and thankless so as to create for the whole community those conditions that are necessary for more effective pastoral activity.

[11] Cf GS 65.
[12] MB V 682.

They should make every effort to get acquainted with the principles and the norms of a healthy administration; they should remember that they should not act like proprietors, because they are merely the trustees of the goods of the community; their administration should be conducted with great care for the good of all, and infused with justice and charity;

617 *c*) finally salesian administration, characterized by service, will be always open to the collaboration and participation, in ways and forms that are deemed most expedient, of lay experts and of all those to whom we render service.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

With regard to the renewal of poverty, the General Chapter proposes some practical directives, on the pastoral and apostolic level, which it considers to be particularly urgent.

618. 1. Readjustment of our work

The General Chapter stresses the importance attached by today's world to a collective sign of poverty, and the urgency of a renewed commitment on the part of the whole Congregation in its fidelity to the image of poverty as desired by its Founder.

It recommends therefore that

the provincial chapters, which should be convened as soon as possible to arrange how the decisions of the General Chapter are to be applied, should consider the following points as fundamental in the work of re-adjustment:

a) a serious examination of the state of poverty in the province as a whole;

b) a decisive rearrangement of our work, according to the requirements of our particular mission, under two complementary headings:

— a greater social awareness in our apostolic work for a better world;

— a geographical rearrangement of our work among the socially poor;[1]

[1] Cf Document 1 n 1, chapter 1 "I destinatari della nostra missione."

c) amongst our plans for readjustment in the next six years, a primary place must be found for the cultural, professional and pastoral qualification of our confrères, who constitute our only riches.

619 2. **Experiments**

Accepting the invitation of the Church to bear witness to poverty in new ways, and realizing that a really efficacious renewal is often enough the result of initiatives of particular groups of people, the General Chapter encourages opportune experiments in new forms of witness and service among the very poor according to the missionary spirit of Don Bosco, and the readiness to offer our help wherever there is more urgent need.

These experiments, on both provincial and local level, must have the approval of the provincial and his council.

620 3. **Our buildings and poverty**

The life of poverty, as an obligation of the whole community, binds each and every member in a common responsibility. To reduce this responsibility to a practical plane and to make sure that our institutions bear witness to poverty it may be useful:

a) to separate the administration of the work itself from that of the community; and, if possible, make a distinction between the living quarters of the community and the rest of the work;

b) to seek the collaboration of the laity in the administrative section of the work, eventually electing lay representatives to the board of administration;

c) to give to those who are in any way associated with our work a periodic account of its economic situation.

The General Chapter would like provincial chapters and councils to study the possibility of applying these suggestions in their own local conditions.

621 4. **War on the soft and easy life**

In order that the poverty of each salesian should be a sign of his following of the poor Christ, the General Chapter invites every confrère to be resolute in opposing the soft life.

Each one should joyfully accept an austere way of life, depending on his superiors for money and personal needs, and accepting willingly the inevitable limitations and privations associated with the life of one who is poor. Each member should bear in mind that his personal poverty is a constituent element in the building up of a poor community. The General Chapter especially invites all the confrères to renew in themselves that assiduous and enterprising spirit of work which, according to Don Bosco, was to be an expression of our evangelical poverty.

Each member should feel obliged to follow a daily timetable of work not inferior to that of any labourer. Indeed in our present difficult situation each one should be willing to work overtime to help towards the qualification of our personnel and the maintenance of our essential work.

622 5. **Insurance**

The salesian community lives by the work of its members and puts all its trust in the help and assistance of divine providence.

But since we participate in the life of the working class, it would be as well to make use of health insurance and other forms of social benefits according to local usage.

The General Chapter invites the provincial chapters to study the possibilities in the light of local circumstances.

623 6. **Solidarity**

To produce a real spirit of solidarity amongst the confrères and the different communities in the Congregation, the General Chapter suggests:

a) that the provincial communities should make determined efforts to remove obvious differences in the level of poverty between houses of the same province;

b) that provincial conferences should study with sincerity and charity how to help with personnel and finances etc., the poorer provinces of the group;

c) that following the example of the primitive Church, and as a practical demonstration of fraternal charity, each province, notwithstanding its own financial limitations, should study how it can help to solve the economic problems of the Congregation as a whole.

Document 12

SALESIAN OBEDIENCE TODAY

CHAPTER ONE

DEMANDS OF RENEWAL

"Through the profession of obedience religious offer to God a total dedication... unite themselves to the saving will of God... moved by the Holy Spirit to imitate Jesus Christ. Superiors should exercise authority with regard for the human person... in such a way that the religious co-operate with an active and responsible obedience".[1]

624 The need to deepen and renew the understanding and exercise of obedience and of authority is something really and urgently felt by many confrères. They ask that renewal to be carried out with fidelity to Don Bosco in accordance with the suggestions and the spirit of Vatican II, and in keeping with the historical context of the times in which we live.

The world today is characterized by a combination of phenomena that exert a powerful influence, even in the religious field, upon the concepts of obedience and authority and their practice.

The value of the person is strongly asserted. Intrinsic as it is to human nature and proclaimed by the gospel which raises man to the dignity of God's son, this value is deeply felt and emphasized today. Man asserts his adult maturity for he does not want to be a mere object of history, but he wants also to be a subject of the history of which he is part. He asks for the recognition of his liberty, of his right to choose his own course of action and of exercising his own spirit of creativity.

[1] PC 14.

The ever increasing *inter-dependence* between men compels them to unite and to feel their co-responsibility as both individuals and as a group.

A *secularized* society asserts the autonomy of temporal values. The rhythm and the present nature of history makes us feel the need for diversification in our activities and for taking into account each one's capacities. Obedience and authority are often seen as instruments of efficiency and utility. Hence their use should both foster and harmonize the creativity and enterprise of communities and individuals, by acknowledging and utilizing the capacities of all.

625 *A number of structures no longer meet today's needs in an adequate manner.* Those who have the responsibility of governing experience increasing difficulties in carrying out their task and sometimes they adopt a purely passive attitude of not interfering, of not acting, of not taking the necessary measures, even when they ought to.

The various elements and tendencies, characteristic of modern society, have a considerable part to play in the evolution now taking place in our Congregation, and this includes obedience and authority. Under the stimulus of strictly religious motives, and also because of the needs of the modern age, some progress has been made in the search for an active and responsible obedience; in the beginnings of a fraternal dialogue; in the exercise of co-responsibility.

However, as always in times of profound transformations, ideas and attitudes appear that are unbalanced and irreligious; a kind of intolerance of all forms of authority; an anti-establishment attitude; a weakened sense of religious discipline; widespread contempt almost for the efficacy of the rules: and, on the other hand a difficulty which superiors experience of adapting fully to the new ways of exercising authority.

When faith is weak or perhaps is undergoing a crisis, a mentality begins to appear which no longer clearly perceives the *superior values of religious obedience.* In this way there is danger of conceiving authority and obedience too much in purely human terms.

626 What is wanted now is *a renewal in our notion of obedience* which will take into account the just needs of the times which will respect the values of the person and the community, and which will reaffirm with vigour its supernatural value. We need a renewal with regard to the way we practise obedience, so that there will be a more serious attempt to pursue as a community the ends of our religious life, and fulfil our mission.

What is wanted is a way of wielding authority which makes it a real service in the gospel sense, to each individual, to the community, and to the mission of the Congregation. There is the wish too, for a more determined application of the principles of subsidiarity, of decentralization, and of co-responsibility.

CHAPTER TWO

OBEDIENCE TODAY

A. PRINCIPLES

627 Religious obedience is a concrete expression of our christian faith. This means that it is much more than relationship of a simple social dependence of the subject on the superior. It is the genuine vocation of a disciple who is committed not only to the imitation of but also to a sharing in the life and mission of Jesus Christ, the centre of all human salvation. Jesus' obedience to his Father sums up his life and the easter mystery of his death and resurrection. It reveals at one and the same time his identity of *Son* and *Servant,* and shows him united in an ineffable and absolutely unique way to the Father and hence his total submission to him. Our obedience draws its real origin from our baptismal incorporation in Christ and in the love uniting him to the Father and our brothers.

628 The Church which "in Christ is a kind of sacrament or sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind" [1] in her earthly journey is always listening to the Spirit. She continues Christ's obedience by her fidelity to his mission "of establishing among all peoples the kingdom." [2]

Because it is a religious community the salesian community as part of the Church, shares its life,[3] and filled with the Holy Spirit, wishes to live intensely this dis-

[1] LG 1.
[2] LG 5.
[3] Cf PC 2.

position of Christ of listening to the Father and of an obedience that saves.

On entering the Congregation the salesian having made the vow of obedience takes completely as his own the will of God, and commits himself with Christ to being entirely at God's service, and to living in a community of brothers according to the Constitutions he has freely accepted.

629 Since religious obedience is a vital element of the Church "the mystery of salvation" it is a disposition which is also a sign for the use of those who are sons through baptism, so that they can live totally submissive to the Father. Religious obey men, not for what they are in themselves, but because they can help them to follow Christ and to show them concretely what God's will is: "they submit their wills to another person on God's behalf in pursuit of an excellence surpassing what is commanded. Thus they liken themselves more thoroughly to Christ in his obedience." [4]

630 We find the will of God in the many "signs" which manifest it. The more important of these signs are the happenings and concrete situations of the present moment, whether they be of general importance like "the signs of the times" or of particular importance like the needs, the emergencies, the demands and the problems of each hour, place, community and individual. These signs however cannot always be interpreted with clarity and ease. To discover their meaning we need above all an attitude of faith with the light it brings. The *gospel* is the supreme rule and the first means when carrying out this search, while the magisterium of the Church, aided by the Holy Spirit, gives us authentic guidance in this sphere.

[4] LG 42.

The *Constitutions* form another instrument which is specifically ours. They are, so to peak, *our gospel viewpoint* for understanding realities in depth. The fact that they have been approved by the Church is a guarantee for us that they give us a practical and safe road to follow, while at the same time they unite us in a spirit of obedience to the Church.

631 A sign of special importance for us is the *spirit and the mission* of the Congregation. We know that the plan of our father means that our life is lived within certain well-defined limits. This leaves us however with plenty of scope for research but the plan involves certain limitations, and so gives us a true indication of what God wants from us. Whatever therefore opposes the mission and the spirit of the Congregation cannot be God's will for us.

Within these limits, there is a specific role, seen as a practical sign of the divine will for the community at all levels, and for the superiors who guide it responsibly in fidelity to the gospel, the Church and the Constitutions. Among our superiors the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, will have the first place.

B. THE EXERCISE OF OBEDIENCE

1. In a spirit of communion

632 Our search for the will of God will be above all an act of *community*. Relations between confrères who do different types of work must be imbued with the family spirit, which is characteristic of the salesian community and makes it one in heart and soul. Such confrères do their duty in a spirit of humble service,[5] while being aware of their limitations and human weakness they seek

[5] Cf LG 32; ET 25.

to live their consecration together by fulfilling their mission in a spirit of generous and joyous self-donation. Thus, in the service of the common good, obedience and authority are exercised as two complementary aspects of an actual sharing in the offering of Christ: for who exercise authority there is a question of serving the brothers according to the Father's plan of love; while by the acceptance of their directives, religious follow the example of the divine master and thus collaborate in the work of salvation.[6]

2. All co-responsible

633 Christ has given to the Congregation the invitation of working to bring his kingdom about and to carry out a saving mission among men. Each and everyone of us is responsible for making charity live in the community, and for fulfilling our common mission in the world, as well as the personal mission which is one's individual vocation.

Vatican II has stressed the principle of co-responsibility in the Church and in each Congregation. This co-responsibility is carried out in both life and action in three stages: *search, decision and execution.*

Search

634 The search for the will of God is no easy task for the community and for the individual, if we consider the obscurity of faith and human weakness. Hence the importance of *community dialogue* in which each confrère can in all sincerity and loyalty contribute according to his talents and knowledge but always bearing in mind the good of the community and of the souls entrusted to them. This will be done not only in order to reach

[6] Cf ET 25.

important decisions but also for considering questions affecting daily life.

In a constructive spirit of open dialogue and genuine availability, everyone should help the superiors to fulfil their difficult task of guide and their work on behalf of the confrères. By means of a frank exchange of ideas and in fraternal unity all will work together to find out what is the will of God; the search will be carried out in a particular case by the superior together with the confrère concerned when it is a case of an individual problem; and with the community when the decision to be taken concerns it directly.[7]

Decision

635 In ordinary life many decisions arise spontaneously from common opinion. When it is necessary the superior as moving spirit of the community and because of his duty of guiding the confrères towards an active and responsible obedience [8] but also of deciding and also commanding what must be done [9] will proceed in such a way that his final decision will be the natural outcome of the interplay of ideas. In many cases however he will have to try to obtain a unity of wills and of hearts even in a diversity of opinions. For the more important decisions he should canvass the opinion of the competent council, or of a group of confrères or of the whole community, whichever seems necessary. Sometimes where the house council itself has only a consultative value the superior in his wisdom will take its opinion into account when making his decision. Even though the decision need not reflect the majority opinion the superior should decide differently only when he has clear and valid motives

[7] Cf ET 25.
[8] Cf PC 14.
[9] PC 14.

for so doing. He however has chief responsibility for the community, as also for its relationship with the whole Congregation, with the local church and with the outside world.

636 Co-responsibility carries with it the application of the *principles of subsidiarity and of decentralization* even in decision-making. When a general directive is enough, then apart from the encouragement and co-ordination needed, further decisions must be left to those responsible whether individuals or teams. This will help to prevent *paternalism* on the one hand and *infantilism* on the other, and make possible a respect for and a true growing to maturity.

Execution

637 It is at the moment of execution that obedience is translated into action, and brings to light the riches of personal initiative and the generosity of sacrifice. The whole community or the individual concerned, will unite freely, responsibly and actively with the Father by deeds, that is, by carrying out what has been decided. They should do this as an act of faith always, but especially in cases where the decision does not accord with their own opinion. They should do it freely and willingly, with loyalty and responsibility. They will take what steps are necessary within the limits imposed by the directives given, co-operating fully and cordially as loving members of a family even when the work is very varied. While community decisions need only to be taken occasionally, their practical execution will involve in each one the virtue of obedience. Its value as witness will be discovered especially in the remorseless daily round, the unceasing availability it demands and the generous and joyous giving of oneself to the mission commanded. With such a disposition a real spirit of communion can be

created, a spirit which is essential if we are to fulfil, in a co-responsible manner, God's plan in our daily life.

3. For the Church

638 Communities which are alive to the needs of the local church of which they are a vital and active part, should share in the pastoral plan for the whole area, and do so in obedience to the bishop while remaining true to their own spirit and mission.[10] Each confrère must realize that he is working within the limits imposed by obedience, for the saving mission of the Church and carrying out therefore in his job an authentically ecclesial work.[11]

4. The obedience of free and mature persons

639 Co-responsibility when exercised at all levels in accordance with the directives of Vatican II (which in this too wants the dignity of the human person to be acknowledged) will help the religious to grow in maturity. In the earlier stages this maturity will appear in free and fraternal discussions, and in constructive and respectful criticism. It will also appear when decisions are accepted co-responsibly in a spirit of faith and community love which overcomes all individualism. In its execution this maturity is manifested by loyalty, personal initiative and one's own creativity, by solidarity and team spirit, and by fidelity to the common mission. Obedience will no longer be a childish act, but a mature disposition: it will not be a renunciation of the will and the personality but rather a resolute will to carry out God's will in preference to one's own desires. This is the way for men to become truly free.

[10] Cf CD 35.
[11] Cf ET 50.

5. Conscience and obedience

640 Where all the confrères are sincerely committed to living the gospel spirit generously, in fidelity to the teachings of the Church and the example of Don Bosco, in a co-responsibility based on a real meeting of minds in a family spirit, the exercise of obedience and authority can be very much facilitated. However because of human weakness and human limitations some difficulties, even grave ones, can arise. At times there can be a conflict between the *authority of the superior and the conscience of the religious*. In such a situation help can be found in the principles and doctrinal directives, derived from faith, given recently to religious in *Evangelica Testificatio*. "Need we repeat that conscience on its own is not the arbiter of the moral worth of the actions which it inspires? It must take account of objective norms and, if necessary, reform and rectify itself. Apart from an order manifestly contrary to the laws of God or the Constitutions of the institute, or one involving a serious and certain evil — in which case there is no obligation to obey — the superior's decisions concern a field in which the calculation of the greater good can vary according to the point of view. To conclude from the fact that a directive seems objectively less good, that it is unlawful and contrary to conscience would mean an unrealistic disregard of the obscurity and ambivalence of many human realities. Besides refusal to obey involves an often serious loss for the common good. A religious should not easily conclude that there is a contradiction between the judgement of his conscience and that of his superior." [12]

641 Whenever there is a contrast between what the religious holds to be the will of God in his regard and the

[12] ET 28.

obedience, the life and commitment of the community; between the view he has of certain situations of the mission and of the apostolate and the view of the superior and the community, *there should be open and patient dialogue*. The solution cannot be imposed unilaterally by the superior. The community can also be consulted. The conscience of the individual must be respected but at the same time the community unity and the values of religious life have to be safeguarded. In the cases where dialogue with the immediate superior has not brought a solution it is advisable to consult competent people, if necessary chosen by common agreement. When no solution is found appeal must be made to higher authority.

If it should happen that after all this the religious has to forego there and then or even always what he believes to be desirable, it will be good for his faith if he remembers that he made his religious profession freely. Because of this he should accept sincerely and coherently the dispositions and the directives of the Congregation speaking and acting through its responsible channels. Such acceptance is so necessary that it cannot be refused if one wishes to continue to be a living member of the salesian Society.

6. **Ascetical aspect of obedience**

642 Religious obedience presupposes a disposition of attention and docility to the interior voice of God. This demands from us a constant purity of heart, and an overcoming of self in accordance with the spirit of the beatitudes. Participation in the community union and mission can demand from us detachment from our own projects and enterprises and the loyal acceptance of those of the community and of the superiors; it can require us to set aside our own desires however legitimate and profound they may be, all things that can make obed-

ience a real crucifixion. It would be well to remember that the ultimate reason for obedience is found in our intimate participation in the life of Christ who was obedient even to death on the cross, and who through obedience merited his resurrection and our redemption. By his obedience the religious like Christ offers in oblation what constitutes the deepest core of his personality, his *will*. In this same oblation however he finds the supreme realization of himself on a supernatural level and the greatest fruitfulness with regard to God's kingdom.

643 In order to realize or maintain his oblation he must often have recourse to that source of charity which is also the continuation of Christ's oblation, *the Eucharist*. He will meditate upon the splendid and encouraging example of Mary's obedience [13] who more than any other creature shared in the easter mystery of the redemption by her total acceptance of the saving will of the Lord and her offering of herself together with her Son for the salvation of mankind.

[13] Cf LG 56, 60, 63, 65.

CHAPTER THREE

AUTHORITY TODAY

644 *Every community* (local, provincial and global) is called to give witness of docility and availability to the will of God. In these communities the members obey according to the different functions that each exercises.

An essential role in the community is authority, for it is needed to build up and maintain the union of ideals and of hearts in charity, to help in the interpretation of what is the will of God with regard to the community and each member and to guide and co-ordinate the work of the confrères in the fulfilment of their mission. "...The presence and acceptance (of superiors) are indispensable in every community." [1]

The Constitutions approved by the Church,[2] are the source of the superiors' authority.

Every superior must carry out his duty in a spirit of evangelical humility.[3] He must set an example of fidelity to God,[4] and have a profound sense of responsibility realizing that he will have to answer to God for his brothers.[5] Our model is Christ who mirrors the Father's love for mankind and who came not to be served but to serve.[6]

[1] ET 25.
[2] Cf LG 45 a.
[3] Cf Mt 20, 28.
[4] Cf 1 Pet 5, 3.
[5] Cf Heb 13, 17; PC 14; CD 15.
[6] Cf Mk 10, 45.

645 In the salesian community (Congregation, province, house) the superior represents Christ who unites his followers in the service of the Father.[7] He remains a brother among brothers and seeks in and with the community that is ever obedient and docile, the will of God in accordance with the Constitutions. At the same time he is the moving spirit and the guide of the community.

646 To exercise evangelical authority among his brothers means that the superior is there *to serve them,* after the example of Christ who gave his life for all men.[8]

The service the superior gives to the members of the community is manifold:

a) to be the guide of a religious community means to commit oneself seriously to the renewal of the specific common vocation, to probe deeply into its spirit, and to revitalize its mission according to the real needs of the times and in the light of the gospel and the founder;

b) since the bond which unites the members of the community is before all else charity,[9] the superior will do his utmost to foster and maintain fraternal communion. He will manifest his goodness of heart as a sign of the charity with which God loves his brothers;

c) he will dedicate himself principally and generously to the care of his community; like a good shepherd he will see to it that every confrère has all that is necessary or useful for his spiritual life.[10] He will endeavour to equip himself well for carrying out his task of teacher of the community, especially with regard to the religious life and the particular apostolic mission of the community. In this way he will be able to gain as well the res-

[7] Cf PC 14.
[8] Cf Lk 22, 26-27; Jn 13, 14; ET 24.
[9] Cf PC 15.
[10] Cf ET 26.

pect and sympathy of the confrères thus making obedience easier;

d) it is the duty of the superior to promote a good salesian spirit and sound religious discipline, in accordance with the Constitutions, and to do this for the benefit of the whole community and not just *to obtain order through a merely formalistic observance.* In this task he will seek the real good of the confrères rather than their approval. Every member of the community should co-operate by accepting with sincerity and constancy the obligations incurred by the confrères by their religious profession. The superior should be capable of assessing personal situations and circumstances so that he can act with prudence and great understanding;

e) the religious life does not exempt religious from temptations and crises. The superior should help the confrères to be faithful in fulfilling their religious and apostolic duties. He will seek to look after them, to win them over, to guide and encourage them by his word, example and prayer. Whenever the need arises he should rebuke and correct them but with tact, at the right moment, and above all with brotherly charity;

f) the superior has the duty of seeking the will of God with regard to the community and the confrères. He should initiate dialogue and guide it in an atmosphere of faith and charity; he should sum up the discussion by making appropriate decisions; and he should encourage all to carry them out faithfully. When he makes a decision he should remember his own fallibility and hence take into account the opinions of others. In things of greater importance he should not make a decision without consulting his council. He should act with prudence and with courage; and in the uncertainties of daily life he will find help in a deep faith in God, the example of Don Bosco and the directives of the Constitutions;

g) it is a duty and a charity of the superior to be always at the disposal of the confrères, so that he can listen to them and guide them. This he should do above all in that personal dialogue with the confrères which is so much a source of light and consolation, of courage and support;

h) he will encourage within his community a sense of being united with the other communities, with the province and with the Congregation, by means of information made available, by respect, esteem and affection shown and even, when necessary, by a readiness to give brotherly assistance.

647 Besides being fully aware of his responsibilities and his duties the superior must realize, especially today, because of the increasing complexity of salesian activity that he ought to share and apportion the responsibility throughout the community. Each confrère has a particular responsibility which he shares with the other members, for the good of the community and the mission.

CHAPTER FOUR

DON BOSCO'S WAY OF SPEAKING AND ACTING

"Obedience is the basis on which the whole of our Society is built... if obedience reigns we shall form one body and mind to love and serve God".[1]
"Charity will be the habitual characteristic of the superior... this will facilitate a family of brothers united around the common father".[2]

648 Don Bosco by his words and example is our guide for the renewal of the notion and exercise of our obedience and authority. His ways of thinking and expressing himself were naturally conditioned by the mentality and customs of the times in which he lived. When however we study Don Bosco as a whole and all his teachings and his conduct towards his salesians then we can find in him essential ideas for that renewal which is wanted today. Sometimes these ideas are fully developed, at other times only partially but still capable of elaboration.

He is convinced that obedience helps us to achieve the aims of the consecrated life, to bring about unity especially of minds. In particular he frequently points out how obedience is a complete willingness to accept work that God asks of us for the furtherance of his kingdom and the salvation of men, and that it also helps us to carry out the mission given us by God in a spirit of

[1] Don Bosco's talk to the members of the salesian Society, 11 March 1869, BM IX 573.

[2] Letter of Don Bosco to the salesian communities at Valdocco, Mirabello and Lanzo, 9 June 1867, MB VIII 829.

fraternal collaboration and more effectively. "If we as members of this body, that is our Society, accommodate ourselves to whatever task we are given to do, and if this body is animated with the spirit of charity under the guidance of obedience, it will contain in itself the principle of its own existence as well as the energy of doing great things for the glory of God, the good of souls, and the welfare of the members." [3]

649 The *family spirit* is a fundamental idea and guiding principle of Don Bosco. In his writings and talks he referred to it frequently; it encouraged him when beginning his work and as it progressed; he would remind his salesians of the need for it whenever he saw any signs of deviation. He wanted his community to be a well-balanced, orderly family living in harmony, with love reigning supreme, and inspiring its life, its work, and all mutual relationships. In it the superior was to be a friend, a brother, a father. He once wrote to a salesian whom he had just appointed as rector of a house: "Go in the name of God, go not as a superior, but as a friend, a brother, and a father. Let your power to command be charity, so that you will be able to do good to all and harm to none." [4]

And to Don Rua, the rector at Mirabello he gave this rule of action: "Seek to make yourself loved rather than feared; when you command or correct make it always clear that you are motivated by the good of the confrères and not by caprice." [5]

650 While he wanted in his communities a family spirit

[3] Don Bosco's talk to the members of the salesian Society, 11 March 1869, MB IX 573.

[4] A letter from Don Bosco to Fr. P. Perrot, the new rector at La Navarre, 2 July 1878, MB XIII 723.

[5] MB VII 524.

that was serene and open, Don Bosco nevertheless demanded real obedience from his followers; an obedience that was authentic, full, generous, ready, humble, simple, sincere and cheerful. In his conference to the confrères at Varazze on the strenna of 1872 he spoke of "true obedience which leads us to embrace cheerfully those things we are commanded as good because they are imposed on us by God." [6]

For him a full obedience was one founded on faith. He himself was obeyed easily and willingly, because he was greatly loved and esteemed. But he insisted that obedience to himself or to other superiors must not rely too much on sympathy or other human motives; he wished the motives to be higher ones derived from faith "Obedience must not be something purely personal, but religious. Don't obey merely because such a superior commands, or because the command is graciously given, but be obedient because you are sure you are doing God's will." [7]

Don Bosco, who was so resolute in asserting the meaning and value of obedience, showed by word and example that whoever is superior must always be ready to give a true, humble, dedicated, loving and ever-willing service to all the confrères entrusted to his care. "Let us treat as though they were our sons those over whom we have any authority. Let us place ourselves at their service, just like Jesus who came to obey and not to command. We should be ashamed to give the slightest impression of domineering and should not rule others except to serve them with joy. This was how Jesus acted towards his disciples." [8]

[6] MB X 1037.

[7] MB X 1112; conference given by Don Bosco to the salesians 16 September 1875, MB XI 356.

[8] Letter written by Don Bosco to the salesians, 2 January 1883, Ep IV, 205 n 2395. Don Bosco is speaking of the type of

At the same time, Don Bosco declares that anyone who has the responsibility of being superior has real authority. He has the task and the responsibility of making decisions and of giving the necessary orders. He is to be the guide and moving spirit of the community, of the confrères and of all their activities. "If a society like ours is to make any progress it needs to be well organized; there must be those who command, and those who obey. In the body there must be a mind that controls its movements." [9]

651 The relations between Don Bosco and the confrères were not those of a father with his young children. He always treated them with delicacy and respect, even if they had lived and grown up with him right from their earliest boyhood, and he always gave recognition to their talents. He entrusted important tasks to them, treated them as adults and placed them in positions where they felt encouraged to grow in maturity. He thrust them ahead with confidence; he gave them their instructions and accompanied them with advice and encouragement, but at the same time he urged them to act on their own responsibility. He was not deterred even by their youth and inexperience; he knew that by giving them important duties he would make them his collaborators and mature and capable men. *It is to his credit that he turned unassuming men into real personalities.*

652 Don Bosco created a vast and complex work that can truly be called "his;" but when he spoke and worked with his collaborators he made them realize it was the

relationship he desired between salesians and their pupils, but it also gives an excellent expression to his desire regarding the relationship between superiors and confrères.

[9] Don Bosco to the members of the salesian society, 11 March 1969, MB IX 573-575.

"work of all." He asked and showed real appreciation for the participation of all in his work and mission, and not only at the time when they were actually carrying out what had been planned and arranged. Between him and his sons there was a genuine, trustful and continuous dialogue. Thus he kept no secrets from them while at the same time he kept them informed of everything and never hesitated to ask their opinion and he always listened to it. "The fact that he kept no secrets from them filled them with even greater affection for him and his work, with immeasurable gain for that essential solidarity and union which is strength." [10]

And when the salesian Constitutions were to be the subject of collegial decisions, he submitted his own personal ideas and plans for examination and approbation by the competent bodies.[11]

The *Biographical Memoirs* gives full documentation of the manner of speaking and acting of Don Bosco; his successors and the General Chapters have made reference to his teachings in their directives and exhortations.

653 The confrères ask today that all that is genuinely valuable in the teachings of Don Bosco become the inspiration and the norm of our communities. They believe that the essential and profound meaning contained in his teaching is in harmony with the spirit of Vatican II the needs of the times and their own aspirations.

[10] *Annali* I, 307.
[11] MB XIII 243.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

Education in the renewed concept and practice of obedience

654 An active and responsible obedience demands a clear understanding on the part of every confrère of the new manner of practising this virtue of religious life, which today requires greater depth and a greater spirit of faith.

To create this new mentality it is recommended that:

a) the confrères be made aware of this renewal by means of conferences, community meetings and suitable readings;

b) all authority should be exercised in such a way as to favour that requisite maturity in the confrères which is necessary for the responsible commitment in community;

c) each province and each community should set about this work of renewal on a systematic basis.

Training in the exercise of authority

655 An ever increasing need is felt of capable and well-prepared superiors at all levels. This demands an adequate preparation. The proper fulfilment of the office of superior should therefore be the result of a careful formation which includes:

a) a remote preparation, during which by means of personal study, discussions and the exercise of authority at subordinate levels one learns how to speak with others, to collaborate and to take responsibility;

b) a proximate preparation by means of prayer,

spiritual retreat and attendance at suitably arranged study courses;

c) a periodic up-dating through meetings with superiors.

Training in dialogue

656 In the daily life of the family and in all apostolic work there must be a spirit of dialogue.

This demands:

a) an effort to establish inter-personal relationships in confidence and respect; to accept one another without prejudice, and to reduce to a minimum the instinctive attitude of self-defence;

b) an opportunity for all to participate and collaborate in the life and activities of the community;

c) sincerity, a spirit of faith and humility to accept the opinions of others, avoiding the misuse of discussions to get across one's personal ideas or those of a particular group.

Training in this spirit of dialogue in order to make it more fruitful, can be helped by suitable literature on the subject, community discussions under the guidance of the superior or other competent person, and the technique of group dynamics.

FOURTH SECTION

Our formation

Document 13

FORMATION FOR SALESIAN WAY OF LIFE

1. The Present Situation

657 The rapid evolution of society, which often happens in a disorderly fashion, together with the ensuing change of mentalities and of structures, makes a profound impression on the formation of candidates to the salesian life, and on salesians themselves. The young men in formation some more some less reflect the situation and problems of the world today.[1]

In general the climate in our houses of formation is much the same as that prevailing in the majority of similar institutions: we find a spirit of generosity, sincerity, authenticity, awareness of the needs of the contemporary world, eagerness for freedom, fear of being psychologically conditioned by houses of formation, intolerance of rules and of any authority that is not fraternal, thirsting for experiences and yet fearful of being cut off from life, hesitation to become involved in ties that bind too far into the future, lack of an authentic apostolic mystique, which provokes, as a reaction, an activism that often ignores or fails to understand recollection, silence, prayer; little appreciation for study that is not regarded as *'pastoral.'* [2]

Hence it is not easy for those responsible for formation to fulfil their delicate task. It becomes more difficult when there is no continuous atmosphere of family spirit reigning between confrères in formation and those

[1] Cf *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*: Intro. 2.
[2] Cf op. cit., p 63.

responsible for formation, and when differences of opinion and ways of acting increase and divide the members of the staff themselves.

These and other difficulties, not always successfully overcome, lead to the following consequences: the number of confrères, especially the young, who leave the Congregation, increases.[3] The number of novices is very much reduced in these last years.[4] There are young men who do not find sufficient motivation to make up their minds to enter the Congregation. Candidates for the aspirantates in many provinces have dropped considerably in number.[5] Some have been closed.[6]

Though well aware of this alarming situation of world proportions which intimately concerns the very life of the Congregation, the Special General Chapter with an optimistic eye considers what has been done, and fosters the hope of resolving these problems positively, relying on the good will of all, both of young men and of those responsible for formation.

2. Scope of this document

658 As a help to the solution of the important problem of formation, the Special General Chapter does not propose to produce a general theoretical tract on human, christian, religious and priestly formation. It merely wishes to give the general outlines of a salesian *'Ratio Institutionis,'* which can be developed by the various provinces in agreement with the norms of the local churches and the needs of the various countries. Hence it merely indicates guidelines which, in the field of formation, allow for applications corresponding to the needs of our times, in fidelity to

[3] Cf op. cit., pp 33-34.
[4] Cf op. cit., p 56.
[5] Cf op. cit., p 43.
[6] Cf op. cit., p 62.

Christ, to the Church and to the genuine mind of Don Bosco.[7]

In this task, the Special General Chapter has taken as its starting point the difficulties, the needs and the aspirations that the confrères expressed through the *Special Provincial Chapters* and the replies to *'Problems and Possibilities.'* Throughout the whole treatment of the topic of formation, it has tried to bear in mind and answer these vital questions raised by the Congregation. It has studied both Vatican II and the post-conciliar documents. It has wanted to be faithful to the mind of Don Bosco. These are its central terms of reference.

3. Importance of formation

659 The importance of formation is fundamental. On it depends, to a large extent, the personal realization of every salesian and the unity of spirit of the whole Congregation. It has a decisive incidence on renewal because 'the suitable renewal of religious communities depends very largely on the training of their members.' [8]

It directly regards the personnel in formation, but also whatever affects and concerns all the confrères, for each one at his own level is engaged in a process both of continuous personal adaptation to the requirements of our mission and of continuous spiritual growth, and is also responsible for the vital communication of the salesian mission and spirit by means of his own witness.

4. Formation centered on the salesian religious vocation

660 Throughout the entire period of formation the common elements and the basic principles of the salesian religious life will be stressed in a really meaningful and

[7] Cf RC Intro.
[8] PC 18.

coherent way. In fact both the brothers and the future priests, each in his own way [9] all share in a full and identical manner *in the same salesian religious vocation.*
However, fidelity to this common vocation ought not to prevent the states proper to the brother and to the priest from being safeguarded.

In this document more insistence will be given to formation to the common salesian vocation. However we must not forget that whilst for the candidate to the priestly life the Congregation is called above all to re-structure or, better, to improve the formation curriculum already laid down for the most part by the Church; *for the brothers it is a matter very often of building up, or of even creating that formation procedure* that will guarantee the harmonious and complete development of their human and religious personality, in view of the educational and apostolic mission to which they are called within the Congregation.

[9] Cf LG 43.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ASPECTS OF FORMATION

661 1. *Every man receives from God, in a personal way, the invitation to make his own being an historical, free and responsible response to his creative and saving act.*[1]

Every vocation, as a manifestation of the incalculable richness of God, ought to be profoundly esteemed and cultivated with the greatest care.[2]

All Christians, in virtue of their baptism and confirmation, share in the priestly,[3] prophetic [4] and royal role [5] of Christ.[6] To each one of them the Father confides a particular task in the Church of Christ, which corresponds to a vocation in the midst of the People of God.

662 2. *The Christian, by means of an authentic education in the faith, perceives in the everyday reality of his life, read in the light of the gospel, his own specific vocation in the Church.*

Hence the essential of pastoral care of vocations is an authentic christian education,[7] which enables the young men to perceive in their ordinary lives, understood in the light of the faith, their own specific vocation in the Church.

[1] Cf PP 15.
[2] Cf *Relazione* op. cit., p 6.
[3] Cf LG 10, 34.
[4] Cf LG 12.
[5] Cf PO 2.
[6] RF 5.
[7] Cf OT 2.

Our Society, which has received the specific mission of evangelizing youth, is called to realize this vocation work within the Church. In a particular way, it has the mission of helping youth to define their own position and to discover their own roles in the human community and in the Church.

Salesians should take special care to help in the formation of those whom the Lord has called to a total consecration to himself for an apostolic mission.[8] Provided that a young man finds it with the right conditions and assistance,[9] the following can be suitable and sufficient environments to foster the attainment of the level of vocational maturity required for entry to the novitiate: the family, the school, associations, and youth groups of a formative and apostolic character.[10] The aspirantate, as an environment characterized by an intense vocational orientation, is still a valid form to help youth discover their own vocation and consciously correspond with it.

Vocation orientation, whilst it achieves the fundamental aim of helping all boys to discover and develop their own vocation, will still be the natural source of new members for the Congregation.

663 3. *The candidate to the salesian life and the salesian in formation, seek in the Church a sure way and a stimulus for the up-to-date development of their vocation.*

The basic guide-line of the Church on the formation of religious is that each institute must maintain and dynamically develop in its members, according to its particular character, the authentic spirit of its Founder in line with its mission.[11]

[8] Cf PC 24; RF 7.
[9] Cf RC 5.
[10] Cf OT 2.
[11] Cf PC 2; RC Intr.

These and other guide-lines given by the Church, above all n. 18 of *Perfectae Caritatis*, are to be borne in mind and applied in the formation of salesian religious.[12]

664 4. *The candidates to the salesian life and the salesian in formation achieve their christian and religious development following the supreme law of the gospel.*[13]

To follow Christ and imitate him is the fundamental obligation of all the baptized, since it is through baptism that they share in the very life of Christ.[14] To follow Jesus more closely and to imitate him more perfectly is a choice made by those baptized persons, viz. religious, who have received from God the special charism of the religious vocation. This vocation is realized in a total offering of themselves for a specific mission of service to men for the good of the Church; it does not represent an exceptional gesture at all but is the constant rule of their lives, lived not only *affectively* but also *effectively*, i.e. in concrete and habitual forms of life.[15]

The young salesian, a product of the times in which he lives and works, must answer this specific call of God. It is the task of his formation to help him in this complete gift of himself to God by following and imitating Christ. To achieve this, his formation must be centred on the person and mystery of Christ, and founded on the mystery of the Church and a living experience of faith.[16] It must be carried out in a spirit of prayer and nourished at the genuine sources of christian spirituality: — the sacred scriptures and the liturgy, and above all the mys-

[12] Cf PC 18; RM ES OT RF; Ratio delle varie conferenze Episcopali Nazionali.

[13] Cf PC 2 b.

[14] Cf Rom 6, 3-4.

[15] Cf *Per una presenza viva dei religiosi nella Chiesa e nel mondo*, LDC pp 227-228.

[16] Cf SC 9.

tery of the eucharist,[17] the fount and apex of the christian life.[18] Mary, most holy, ought also to be presented in the mystery of the word incarnate and of the Church [19] and in her role of Help of Christians.[20]

665 5. *The candidate to the salesian life and the salesian in formation achieve their personal development taking into account the concrete situation of the present world with its needs, since they live and act in it as men, as christians and as salesians.*

The sum total of the needs and aspirations of our age strongly influences every true formation.[21]

Don Bosco had to a very high degree a sense of awareness of the needs of the times: in view of this he mapped out the salesian Society and knew how to adapt it to the social and spiritual aspirations of his times. His first collaborators were formed in this spirit. Today it is a matter of urgency to revitalize this characteristic, especially in the sphere of formation.

Like Don Bosco, the salesian must be able to read the signs of the times. Modern society, with its rapid and profound changes, demands a new type of man,[22] capable of overcoming the uneasiness caused by changes, and of continuing to look for solutions rather than take refuge in ready-made answers; disposed to learn and to face up to new situations, to enter into dialogue with an open mind, to accept the fact of inter-dependence and to practise solidarity; capable too of distinguishing what is permanent from what is changeable, without going to

[17] Cf PC 6; ET 47.
[18] Cf UR 15.
[19] Cf LG 54.
[20] Cf LG 62-67; PeP, ist 181.
[21] Cf GS 4-10.
[22] Cf RF 2.

extremes; and capable finally of living as a religious in a secularized world.

The structures of formation, adapted to the needs of the times, of places and of the people involved, will need to be pluralistic, decentralized, flexible and functional.

In fact a young man ought to be formed in contact with the real environment in which he lives: his family, young men of his own age-group, and true salesian life with its apostolic activities. All this is to be carried out with a view to the service he will have to give, in harmony with his personality and his individual characteristics.

In an atmosphere of open, constant and sincere dialogue,[23] he will feel co-responsible for his own formation and, in proportion to his own maturity, for the running of the house.

666 6. *The novice or salesian in formation imbibes in an authentic, personal and vital way the spirit, style of life and work proper to the permanent charism of Don Bosco.*

All this will require a living synthesis and a certain style of spiritual life, of balance and of human relationships. These are all elements that represent so many traits of the personality of the salesian, and which ought to be seen as the objectives of his specific formation.

667 *a*) The salesian style of spiritual life should be:

— centred on God the Father and Christ the Saviour;

— expressed in a style of charity, inspired by the kindness of St. Francis of Sales;

— sustained by a concrete faith that enables one to discover God our Saviour in history and in human events;

— nourished by a hope that is a fount of optimism and of joy, even in the midst of difficulties and sufferings;

[23] Cf RF 24; Intr. 2.

— enlightened by a piety that is simple, eucharistic and marian;

— engaged in a really ascetic life of work and temperance;

— and finally lived in a form of consecrated life in which evangelical chastity is manifested in an educational style of loving kindness, obedience is practised in a family spirit, and poverty is lived as temperance, untiring work and service to poor youth.

668 *b*) The style of *human balance* of the sons of Don Bosco is marked by a willingness to adapt to the circumstances of an intensive and variegated work programme, by simplicity and austerity of life, by an ability to fit in with plans easily and gracefully, by joy and optimism, and by a desire of continual self-improvement.

669 *c*) The style of *human relations*, full of joviality, sincerity, loyality and enthusiasm, makes the salesian capable of communicating with people, especially the young, with an understanding attitude, ready for dialogue and service; capable too of genuine friendship, with spontaneity and delicacy.

This style of brotherly relations, characterized by *family spirit*, ought to make the salesian community one of fraternal love, based on the identity of ideal and mission, which harmonizes obedience with freedom, overcomes natural likings and antipathies, which recognizes and promotes the richness and the worth of each of its members, which makes friendship possible and which has in its life of prayer and its listening to the word of God, especially in the celebration of the eucharist, its foundation [24] and at the same time its most beautiful expression.[25]

[24] Cf PO 6.
[25] Cf PeP 70-71.

670 7. *The novice or the confrère in formation acquires this salesian spirit by being initiated into true salesian life and by exercising himself in the apostolate proper to our mission.*

According to Don Bosco, a salesian, even during his novitiate, ought not be formed in isolation from real salesian life. For him the exercise of those works that will be carried out for the whole of his life plays a decisive role in formation, for his is a Congregation of educators, not of contemplatives or penitents.[26] He wanted the young to be formed by living a real salesian life of apostolic work proper to our Congregation.

Hence the salesian spirit that the confrère in formation must acquire is assimilated in the exercise of our mission, which is to evangelize youth, especially the poor and abandoned [27] and to form them according to the spirit of the preventive system. This spirit is lived and almost incarnated in the life of the salesian community.

671 8. *Following this formative process which lasts the whole of one's life, the salesian will succeed in living in the salesian spirit, the mystery of human salvation, harmonizing, as Don Bosco did, two fundamental aspects of one sole reality*:

a) the realization of one's own personal aspirations, and of one's baptismal and religious consecration;[28]

b) perfect solidarity with the human community, especially of the young, with their problems and aspirations, ever in evolution, and in keeping with the salesian mission amongst all men, christian, non-christian, and non-believers, in a total service of love and witness.[29]

[26] Cf STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, vol II pp 386-392.

[27] Cf Const A 1.

[28] Cf LG 46.

[29] Cf LG 40-44-46.

672 9. *In the formative process in a community united by charity and under the leadership of the superior, those confrères responsible for formation have a specific and necessary mission to accomplish.*[30]

The success or failure of the renewal of formation depends very much on the capacity of those immediately in charge of formation. Hence confrères chosen to hold a formative role in the Congregation ought to be keenly aware of the extent to which the formation of the students depends on their way of thinking and acting.[31] Furthermore, those responsible for formation should always manifest both by the example of their lives and by word of mouth an attitude of unreserved fidelity to revelation, to the magisterium of the Church and to the directives of the Congregation, in whose name they form young salesians.[32]

As far as possible the group of formation personnel should include people with different and complementary personalities, since it is only in this way that various models of behaviour can be offered to the young men in formation.

The formative community should constantly take its inspiration from the first apostolic communities and from the homely community of Valdocco, animated by the quickening presence of Don Bosco and by the spirit of kindness of St. Francis of Sales.

Those with a formative role and the young men in formation should live in close communion of life, action and spirit under the leadership of the superior.

But formation must be the result of the harmonious action of all the confrères, both of the local and of the provincial community. Everyone should feel that he

[30] Cf OT 5.
[31] Cf OT 5; PC 18.
[32] Cf RF 87.

belongs to the *formative community* in such a way as to communicate by the example of his own life the authentic values of the salesian vocation,[33] and to foster amongst the students joy in their own vocation.[34]

[33] Cf OT 2.
[34] Cf OT 5.

CHAPTER TWO

DELIBERATIONS OF THE CHAPTER

A. GENERAL ASPECT OF FORMATION

1. Some aspects of human formation

673 The human maturity of those in course of formation should be developed in a way that will produce an interior balance indispensable for the religious and salesian life.

Some indications on this point are given here below:

a) Use of psychological and pedagogical sciences [1]

A regular and systematic use should be made of psychological and pedagogical aids (psychological charts, medical cards, etc.) in the context of a theological approach. It should not be restricted merely to difficult cases.

This will help the young brothers to get to know themselves better and will favour their development. It will also be a great boon to those in charge of formation, helping them to adapt their approach to individual cases.

But in all this we *must not forget our bounden duty to respect* personal freedom, the dignity of the individual and professional secrets.

b) Contacts with the family [2]

674 During the time of formation, as in the whole of salesian life, relations with one's family must be maintained. Just how this is to be done and the frequency

[1] Cf RC 11; RF 39; Enc. *Sacerdot. coelib.* 63; OT 11.
[2] Cf RF 12.

of visits will depend a great deal on the needs of filial love, the efficacy of such contacts and the exigencies of religious life. The families should be helped to collaborate in the maturing of their sons' vocations, whilst respecting their freedom.

c) Maturing in human relations

675 They should develop a sense of mission and a constant disposition to be of service, which will enable them to treat everyone, young and old, with understanding, discretion, and kindness.[3]

To facilitate an effective sexual maturity everything of an artificial and negative nature should be avoided, particularly in contacts with women. It is true that simple contact with the feminine world is not in itself a solution to the emotional problems; indeed, if badly conducted it can be damaging. But young salesians should educate themselves with the help of those in charge to adopt a natural attitude, unequivocal and clear, in order to understand just what consecrated celibacy means.

d) Extra-curricular activities

676 Following the example of Don Bosco, due importance should be given to physical and cultural activities which, though not strictly belonging to the academic curriculum, can be of immense help in formation, e.g. gymnastics, sport, music, declamation, theatricals, etc. Special attention should be paid to artistic formation, as this is of great importance in pastoral youth work and liturgical action.

2. Growth in faith: integration of faith and life

677 To get to grips with the ever-changing perspectives in man's relationships with the world and with God, an

[3] Cf OT 11 a; RF 51.

adequate training in faith is needed. Therefore this period of formation should:

— present earthly and human realities as values that have in themselves their own consistency and goodness which ought to be recognized as such;[4] it is in the world that God works out our salvation;[5]

— purify the faith of those in formation by means of a clear distinction between the essential and what is only accessory;

— teach them how to find in the word of God the right assessment of the world and its values, and to hear in created nature the voice of God;[6]

— point out to those being formed the presence — not always recognized — of the risen Christ in the world and in men, to enable them to show to a secularized society that God is the only absolute good.

In this way there will be produced a vital synthesis between human effort and religious values.[7]

3. **Spiritual guidance**

678 Recognizing the importance of spiritual direction during formation and to facilitate its practice and make it ever more efficacious and profitable, the Special General Chapter reminds all that:

a) it is essential to distinguish between the two sections of spiritual guidance: *communal and personal* (i.e. of the conscience);[8]

b) in a community with the task of formation the superior is in charge of the spiritual direction of all the

[4] Cf GS 36-41.
[5] Cf GS 62.
[6] Cf GS 62; RF 58.
[7] Cf GS 43.
[8] Cf OT 8.

members of the community. He does this through conferences, 'good nights,' public and private exhortations, talks, and the exercise of paternal authority.[9]

Over and above this the superior is also the 'magister spiritus' of the young confrères in formation; in other words his is the ultimate responsibility for the work of formation in the community and in the individual members;[10]

c) on the personal level, the salesians in formation have the right to choose their own director of conscience. In accordance with the mind of the Church [11] and following salesian tradition and the example of Don Bosco, the superior of the community is also the spiritual director proposed to, but not imposed on, each confrère.[12] It is obvious that a serious preparation is indispensable for such an important mission; nevertheless the young confrères in formation may also make use of confessors and other capable confrères.

When fraternal gatherings are used in a common effort to discover God's will they favour charity, make the apostolate more fruitful and bring a spiritual joy to the common life. But psychology, experience with souls, and the constant practice of the Church all teach that though they can help they cannot take the place of spiritual guidance.

4. **Personal experience**

679 To keep this formation in touch with reality — most important for personal development and a future apos-

[9] Cf ASC 244, p 99.
[10] Cf ASC 244, p 96.
[11] Cf OT 8.
[12] Cf ASC p 95.

tolate — the General Chapter wishes to emphasize some aspects which are essential for sound formation:[13]

a) The house of formation and its environs

For the young confrère's contact with society to be natural, the house of formation itself, at whatever level, should take an active part *as a salesian community* in the life of the local church and neighbourhood wherever it is carrying out its cultural and apostolic mission. It would not be sufficient for the integral formation of the young confrères if individually or in groups they merely made contact with the neighbourhood.[14]

b) Social-cultural environment of formation and specialization

The basic formation of all, whether priests, possible future deacons, or lay religious, should take place, unless special reasons require some exception, in the social-cultural environment where their future work lies. Specialization can take place abroad, but preferably only after some years experience in the apostolate.

c) Use of mass media [15]

The use of the means of social communication is an indispensable channel for a wider contact with human reality. The intellectual, spiritual and technical preparation of young confrères in the right use of these means should be intensified. This will help them to face the complex problems of the modern world which demand an answer from the Church.

d) The young confrère and apostolic work for youth

A gradual and well prepared participation in youth-work, preferably under our own auspices, is to be favoured.

[13] Cf RF Intro. 2.
[14] Cf RF 12.
[15] Cf IM 16.

This is necessary to give the young confrères an idea of the problems of youth today and of their evangelization. But its main purpose is to strengthen their own salesian spirituality and give a pastoral slant to their studies. All this should be done *under the responsibility of those in charge of formation.*

e) Manual work

Those in formation should also prepare themselves for a life of sacrifice by generously offering their help in the ordinary manual work of the community. This enables them not only to bear witness to poverty, but to understand the real difficulties of life in the world. Work outside our own environment however *must have the authorization of the provincial with the consent of his council.*

5. Community Life

To ensure that the community of a house of formation is a really formative one, the following points should be observed:

680 #### a) A community of fraternal love

The real values of obedience and liberty can become integrated in the life of the community only through authentic and brotherly exchanges backed by a common identity of ideals and mission.[16]

Nowadays many seem to think that a community should be built on 'homogeneity.' By this they mean a special affinity of character, ideas, mentality, etc., and a friendly spontaneity. There is no doubt about the human value of all this, but the needs of charity on which a religious community should be built [17] demand that

[16] Cf ET 25-27.
[17] Cf PC 15.

real homogeneity should be sought not on natural affinities but on the desire *to live together in Christ.* The young confrère therefore should be helped along these lines to experience a real community of love by accepting unconditionally the brothers God has given him, *with all their good and bad points,* and by overcoming his likes and dislikes. Real and deep friendships can and should develop in a community of brothers, but they cannot be considered a binding requisite for the formation of the community.

681 b) A celebrating community (i.e. eucharistic celebration) [18]

The formative community must be a praying community, and the Mass should be at one and the same time its heart and the best expression of its unity. The holy Mass therefore should be the centre and pivot of the whole period of formation. But the daily Mass must not be reduced to a mere external obligation; it must be the result of a convinced and intended participation which is a sign and index of that spiritual maturity so necessary for the religious life.

This kind of participation is the result of education in a living faith (catechesis).

682 c) Community dialogue

Formative activities should be carried out in the atmosphere of an open, constant and sincere community dialogue. The very nature of the formative process requires this, because it involves a vital communication and assimilation of values.[19] Only in this way can the hopes and aspirations of those in formation be made to confront the realities of the practical salesian life in an

[18] Cf ET 48.
[19] Cf RF Intro. 2; RF 24.

atmosphere of fraternal collaboration and co-responsibility. One result of this will be a natural limitation of personal values for one who lives in community.

683 **d) The formative community**

It is important to understand that no single formula will automatically solve the problem of building up the *formative community*. The young confrères must begin to understand, and this above all from the good example of those in charge of them, that the so-called 'communion of spirit' is arrived at only by the patient work of self-renunciation and an openness to others. This is probably the most important experience they must undergo and they should be directed towards it by means of opportune community reflections.[20]

e) Those in charge of formation

With the intention of seconding the desire of the Church [21] and keeping in mind the request of the Congregation, the General Chapter lays down the following:

684 *a*) In order to be genuine and efficacious guides of the young confrères, those in charge of formation should have had a period of practical and apostolic experience; they should be individuals who are at the same time both very understanding from a human point of view and endowed with a supernatural spirit; they should be easily approachable — this is something of great importance today. They should also try to cultivate, after the example of Don Bosco, a balanced character, self control, an open mind, sincerity, optimism and serenity.

685 *b*) The confrères destined for this type of work must

[20] Cf RF 46.
[21] Cf PC 18; OT 5.

have a well-ordered preparation in the various sectors of salesian life:[22]

— *on a doctrinal level*: a sound theology of the religious life and of church-world relations; the essentials of apostolic spirituality and contact with modern culture;

— *on a pedagogical and psychological level*: a fundamental knowledge of pedagogy, an understanding of modern youth, and education in human relations;[23]

— *on the salesian level*: an intimate knowledge of the spirituality of Don Bosco, the preventive system and the life of the Congregation;

— *on the pastoral level*: a practical working experience of our apostolate.[24]

686 *c*) The personnel in charge of formation must always be abreast of the times. Centres of salesian spirituality should be founded which among other things will help future members of formative communities to prepare themselves from a salesian point of view for their work.[25]

7. Doctrinal and technical formation

687 **a) Seriousness of intellectual work**

Professors and students should approach their intellectual and professional studies with that degree of seriousness that will enable them to announce the gospel message to the men of our time, bearing in mind the ever-increasing demands of modern culture.[26] They should remember that this 'doctrinal formation must not consist simply in an exchange of ideas but must tend rather to a real interior formation of soul.' [27]

[22] Cf RF 34.
[23] Cf RF 35.
[24] Cf RF 37.
[25] Cf RF 31-36.
[26] Cf RF 59.
[27] Cf OT 17.

688 **b) Intellectual formation of brothers**

In the formation of brothers, theology should permeate all their culture. Indeed it is in the light of theology that formation and instruction acquire their deep significance. The level of theology however will be proportionate to the grade of culture attained in the other branches of study and qualifications.

Brothers should likewise be acquainted with philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, catechetics and other sciences, all of which are indispensable in the formation of an educator, and especially a religious educator. But it must always be kept in mind that formation must be apostolic and pastoral, and involve practical application of the principles studied theoretically.

689 **c) Link between profane and religious culture**

All the doctrinal and technical formation should be such as to bring about a proper synthesis between serious, profane culture (seeking and respecting human values), and a solid religious formation, even from a cultural view-point. Cultural and technical formation should not be an end in itself but should rather lead the confrères in formation to the attainment of a complete human and christian development.

690 **d) Salesian teachers in non-salesian institutes**

Whenever possible salesians should obtain places on the teaching staff of those institutes, seminaries and study centres frequented by our confrères.[28]

e) Salesian study-centres

These should have an adequate and well qualified salesian staff, supplemented by non-salesian professors whenever necessary or opportune.[29]

[28] Cf RF 21.
[29] Cf RC 38.

f) Permanent formation and refresher courses

In the overall arrangement of studies in each province, provision should be made for initiatives which will guarantee a permanent type of formation, and a cultural and professional adaptability to the needs of the times.

B. STAGES OF FORMATION

691 1. Continuity of the formative process

The different phases of formation should be linked one with the other. To ensure this there should be a co-ordination of all the stages of formation on a provincial basis and a periodic exchange of ideas and views between those working in this sector.

692 2. Vocational work

a) Projects in spiritual formation and service

These, as well as social, missionary and apostolic action amongst the young should be developed; they help to predispose their hearts to the divine call. They should be frequently reminded of the pressing needs of the Church and of the world, and especially of the young people of the [30] present day. Respect for their personal freedom should not prevent us from helping them.

b) Adult vocations

Following the example of Don Bosco every effort should be made to help those candidates for the priesthood or the religious life who find it difficult to follow their vocation because of their age.[31]

[30] Cf OT 2.
[31] Cf Const. A 6.

c) Collaboration in work for vocations [32]

We should enlist the collaboration of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the co-operators, Volunteers of Don Bosco, past pupils and other associations, and the families with whom we are in contact, in promoting vocations.

d) Presenting our salesian vocation in its two forms

Whilst promoting vocations in general, let us not forget our own salesian vocation of both the priest and the brother (lay religious). Brothers as well as priests should take part in the work for vocations.

e) Candidates for the salesian lay-religious life

The various provinces should as far as possible encourage vocations to the brotherhood amongst the pupils of our technical schools. Likely boys should be looked after by a lay religious himself and should carry out an apostolate amongst the other pupils.

f) Examination of the success of vocation work

The number of vocations is a gauge of our apostolate amongst the young. Lack of vocations (priestly, religious, or as lay leaders) is a sure sign that we have failed to help the young to find their true christian involvement during the stages of their education. A serious examination at provincial and local level of the whole question of vocations would help the province, every community, and the individual confrères to realize their individual responsibility in this regard and encourage them to set an example that will help the young to respond to a possible call of the Lord with great generosity.

[32] Cf RF 8.

3. Preparation for the novitiate

693 Should a candidate ask for a trial period before the novitiate, this should readily be granted. Such a period might even be advised by those in charge of formation in certain cases, and possibly even outside the houses of the Congregation. In deciding what method to follow, the assistance and guidance of the candidates should be clearly provided for.[33]

4. The novitiate

694 **a) Relations between novices and professed**

These should be as natural as possible because formation, especially that of the novitiate, must be the result of the common effort of all the community.[34] The latter must be a real 'formative community' and as such be able to show by its way of life the authentic values of the salesian charism.[35]

b) Clothing ceremony

The clothing ceremony, or bestowal of some distinctive badge, should be left to the decision of each province.

5. Admission to first profession

695 **a) Standards required**

The following criteria should be followed for admission to the vows. The novices should have:

a) sufficient health, and a qualification that will make them useful for salesian work, or (in the case of younger candidates) the ability to acquire one;

[33] Cf RC 4-12.
[34] Cf RC 28.
[35] Cf RC 5.

b) adequate development in the art of human relationships. This will help them to esteem the personal dignity of their confrères, especially from the point of view of spiritual values;

c) a complete and balanced emotional life that will enable them to relate to other human beings in a serene and selfless fashion, and to use with inward freedom the healthy human values of one's life context, as sources of creative joy;

d) such a deep christian experience as to enable them to recognize the Father and Christ as the only reason for their existence, and to consider all other values as merely subordinate to the work of salvation;

e) a knowledge of the salesian spirit sufficient to inspire them to accept with enthusiasm the mission proper to our Society and to place all their energies at its disposal.

b) Responsible entry into the congregation

Entrance into the salesian religious life signifies for the candidate an undertaking so serious that it must be the result of a personal decision taken in collaboration with the community rather than a simple unilateral decision of '*admission.*' It is true that only the superiors can admit a candidate to vows and orders in the name of the Church and the Congregation,[36] but this action of the superiors, the expression of their judgement or opinion is fundamentally a help offered to those in formation to enable them to take a responsible decision before God, the Church and their own conscience.

[36] Cf OT 2.

6. Period of temporary vows

696 **a) Tirocinium**

So that the vital experience of the tirocinium may be truly formative, it should be done if possible in groups. The beginner should find in the community, and especially in the superior, an attitude of understanding, encouragement and support which will favour his development.

697 **b) Renewal of vows**

In considering the question of the renewal of temporary vows the superiors should make a clear distinction between the process of maturing in the individual, and his unsuitability for the salesian life. Therefore those who do not give hope of ever being admitted to perpetual profession, should not be allowed to renew their temporary vows.[37]

698 **c) Re-admission without a second novitiate**

Whenever a member who left the Congregation legitimately, either at the end of his temporary profession or with a dispensation from his vows, asks to be re-admitted, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council can admit him in conformity with the prescriptions of Renovationis Causam no. 38, 11, without the need of repeating his novitiate.

A temporary departure before the perpetual vows should not be considered a normal phase of formation but an exception to be made only in those cases where a personal review of his position on the part of the religious requires it.

[37] Cf RC 6.

d) Preparation for final profession

The perpetual profession, as the culmination of religious commitment, should be preceded by a convenient period of preparation.[38]

7. On-going formation - training plan

699 Each province or group of provinces should draw up a training plan, so as to ensure the availability of confrères who are specialists in the different kinds of salesian activity.

[38] Cf RC 9.

CHAPTER THREE

TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS

700 1. The Special General Chapter has limited itself to pointing out the principles which shall govern salesian formation; it desires the existing norms to remain in force until the various provinces, in accordance with art. 106 of the Constitutions, have decided on their own plan. In the meantime provincials and their councils shall make only those changes which they feel to be necessary and urgent in the light of what has been said in this document (i.e., the document on formation).

701 2. *During the next six years*:

a) provision must be made as a matter of urgency for the necessary up-dating of the confrères. This will be done through the official magisterium of the Congregation, and by the organization of intensive courses of study and reflection, and of other activities, especially at provincial level;

b) all the brothers should be given the possibility of frequenting regular courses of theology and catechetics which will make them more competent in the teaching of religion.

CHAPTER FOUR

SALESIAN PONTIFICAL ATHENAEUM (Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano - P.A.S.)

Practical Directives of the Special General Chapter

702 The Special General Chapter ratifies the general trend of the Statutes of the P.A.S. in respect of its structure as a Salesian Pontifical University with the following principal characteristics:

A. *as a university*:

a) primary concern for teaching and scientific research;

b) academic autonomy within the limits laid down by the statutes, and the economic support necessary to ensure its efficiency;

c) a teaching staff adequate in numbers and qualifications;

d) open also to external students, ecclesiastic and lay.

B. *as pontifical*:

a) at the service of the Church for spreading christian ideas and promoting knowledge in the specific field of the salesian mission;

b) faithful to the catholic magisterium and tradition.

C. *as salesian*:

a) directed and sustained by the salesian Congregation, in the light of the ecclesial context of Vatican II;

b) at the service of the Congregation for promoting its mission and unity at the level of scientific research and teaching;

c) primarily for the formation of salesian personnel;

d) a centre of stimulation, teaching and research in the following fields:

— education, with special emphasis on the system of Don Bosco;

— pastoral work for the young, and catechetics;

— salesian spirituality, especially as realized in and by Don Bosco.[1]

703 2. The Special General Chapter declares that the specific object of the P.A.S. *must be the study on salesian lines of youth and its problems*, chiefly from the following aspects: theological and pastoral, catechetical, educational, psycho-social, etc.

For this reason every faculty and institute of the P.A.S. in its approach, methods and content of its courses, shall aim clearly at this object.[2]

3. The chief scope of the P.A.S. is to give to its salesian undergraduates a university formation, conferring degrees and other qualifications, with a view to the different forms of apostolic work proper to our Society and the preparation of teachers for studentates of philosophy and theology.[3]

4. The accurate selection of confrères, both professors and students, for the P.A.S. is of the greatest importance, both as regards stability in vocation, personal equilibrium

[1] GE; Normae quaedam; Regulations 321,323; Statuta Generalia: art 2, 1; 2, 2; 3; 3, 5; 6, 7; 21, 22; 27, 1.

[2] SGC document 1-4; Sta. gen.: art 2, 2.

[3] Regulations, art 322; Sta. gen.: 2, 1-2; 27, 1.

and religious spirit, as well as their qualifications and intellectual aptitude and ability.[4]

704 5. The Superior Council, on which the P.A.S. must directly depend through the Councillor for Formation or a delegate, will study a system of exchange of professors between the different salesian centres of higher studies throughout the world, so as to promote:

a) a stable provision for the basic staff of guaranteed international character;

b) reasonable assistance by those provinces in a position to provide teachers for limited periods, without prejudice to their own needs.[5]

6. Since the P.A.S. is at the service of the whole Congregation, *the provinces are obliged to provide both teachers and students* at the request of the Superior Council.[6]

7. Bearing in mind the primary objective of the P.A.S. and its fundamental importance for the renewal of the Congregation, every province shall undertake *to send students to the P.A.S. periodically*, subsequently keeping in close touch with those in charge there.[7]

Temporary directives

705 8. The Special General Chapter *has decided that the Superior Council should nominate a post-capitular commission in immediate dependence on the said Council, which will put into effect whatever is necessary for the renewal of the P.A.S.; in particular its task will be*:

[4] Regulations, art 326.
[5] Stat. gen., art 3, 4; 5; 20, 4; 30.
[6] Regulations, 328.
[7] Regulations, 325.

a) to draw up a plan within a prescribed time for effecting the necessary reforms of the P.A.S., to ensure that it shall fulfil its role as a university and attain its objects of a salesian and formative nature laid down by the Special General Chapter;

b) to revise the statutes so as to bring them fully into line with the directives of the General Chapter and the mission of the Congregation;

c) to consider which faculties and institutes of the P.A.S. should be strengthened, created or suppressed, and to take the necessary steps to bring about the re-adjustment;

d) to make suitable plans to guarantee the development of the "centre of studies on Don Bosco," and to consider the advisability of setting up a "Higher Institute of Salesian Spirituality;"

e) to consider the question of a revision and unification of the administration of the P.A.S., and to seek the means most suitable for guaranteeing a definite economic autonomy sufficient to sustain its specific objects;

f) to draw up norms which will ensure, in accordance with the statutes and in the light of the post-capitular situation, a proper re-shaping of the teaching and student body. Amongst other things these norms shall indicate:

1. the respective competence of the religious and academic authorities, especially in the matter of the selection and preparation of professors;

2. the previous academic course obligatory for all proposed members of the teaching staff;

3. the 'academic quota' of study, work, publications, etc., required of all professors;

4. the procedure to be followed, and the competence and responsibility of academic and religious auth-

orities in the matter of promotion, transfer and dismissal of professors;

g) to consider, how the houses of residence and formation can be separated from the academic centre, so as to ensure the realization of the fundamental objectives of both;

h) to consider, in consequence, the desirability or otherwise of the P.A.S. continuing to exist as an independent province;

i) to determine the procedure and the fixed periods within which the practical directives decided on by the Special General Chapter in the light of the diagnosis prepared by the Capitular Commission for the P.A.S. shall be carried out, so as to make it possible to present to the next General Chapter an exhaustive evaluation of the work of the next six years.

FIFTH SECTION

Organization of our Society

Document 14

PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA OF ORGANIZATION OF OUR SOCIETY

CHAPTER ONE

OUR STRUCTURES

706 1. The religious life is of its nature charismatic, for this reason it has a spiritual dimension and here its vitality is to be found. From the very fact that religious are human and have specific goals to attain together there is the need to have an organization as in any other society and this has need of structures.

2. These structures must be at the service of the community and of the individual members so that they may be able to fulfil faithfully their vocations. For this purpose from the beginning our Founder fixed the main structures and expressed their consequences in the Constitutions.

3. Our structures have the concrete purpose of sustaining the life and activity of the Congregation, by creating a series of stable bonds linking the roles and functions of the salesians, and by establishing a series of internal and external relationships to help them to attain their goal.

4. They should help to realize the two complementary elements: those *of unity and plurality*. In fact our structures should make possible the expression of the diversity of personal qualities and the values of every community and region, and facilitate adaptation to the educative and pastoral demands of the different social-cultural circumstances and of the local churches. Pluralism of ideas, of opinions, of endeavour, of work, of activity, of the forms of concrete living, demand of our structures a greater spiritual and juridical unity because our mis-

sion is one, our consecration is identical, as also is our spirit; and the diversity of abilities and duties ought to be directed towards the exchange of ideas, collaboration, and that unity which is fraternal and ecclesial communion.

707 5. Our constitutions and regulations because of their structural nature, presuppose a continuity and stability in time, but with a dynamic rather than a static character, like that of a living organism. They are *fixed* in so far as they must respect the end, the spirit, the character proper to our Congregation and its best traditions,[1] but at the same time they are *changeable* with regard to the way of life, prayer, activity and government [2] in order to allow the Congregation to flourish, to develop and to adapt to the times.

6. Since the structures are dependent upon our specific vocation and not vice-versa, any renewal must maintain fidelity to the spirit of our Founder and to the concrete demands of our religious and apostolic life. When properly assessed, our structures have a special importance in the field of practical work. In practice it is these structures that allow renewal to take place, or strengthen or weaken it, because they formulate and transmit the common lines of thought and action.

7. In the overall structural framework, besides those concerned with government there are the structures of our activities, of formation, of economics, of adaptation, of contacts, etc. These are considered elsewhere in the appropriate sections. The essential ideas of these different structures are expressed in the articles of the Constitutions. Here we limit ourselves to the structures of government, which have as their main aim the organization

[1] Cf PC 2; ES 2, 6.
[2] Cf PC 3.

and smooth functioning of all the others, and as their immediate object to establish the organs of government and consultation, and to render effective the service of authority in order to co-ordinate the duties, the initiatives and the activities of all the salesians.

8. The subject matter that these structures are concerned with has a style and a language of a juridical nature, but it is still true that they exist for a pastoral purpose. In point of fact our Congregation belongs to the Church and in this communion we become one; hence our structures, even those of government, have the purpose of effecting this communion of all salesians and so of reaching out to the objects of our mission — primarily the young.

CHAPTER TWO

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

A. Ecclesial sense

708 As a living part of the people of God, the salesian Congregation fulfils a mission of ecclesial interest. We must therefore listen to the words of the other members of the Church, in which all share in the work of development and in the general good. We must not be content merely to listen carefully to the advice of bishops, other salesians, and other Congregations and movements, especially those concerned with boys from the working classes, but we should explicitly *seek* it.

As a consequence it behoves each provincial and General Chapter to be convinced of this necessary openness and to study the best ways of realizing it in practice.

B. Adaptation

As pastoral requirements are always changing we must be ready to re-examine our own methods from time to time and make the necessary adjustments. This however should not be done in a haphazard way which would only disturb the equilibrium necessary for community life, but with due care and attention, and the preparation of a clear plan for actuating and adapting ourselves to the new forms. Whenever this adaptation necessitates radical changes we should not attempt them without due care and attention and the provision of time for study and for prudent and serious experiments.

The favourable outcome of such experiments can be

guaranteed only if we are clear about the purpose behind them, the means at our disposal, a frank assessment of the results on the part of the whole community, and the courage to make any modifications which might be necessary. We must be on our guard to see that whatever is initially *only an experiment* does not automatically develop into an irreversible choice.

C. **Technical services**

Lack of preparation and a makeshift attitude are no substitute for proper organization. Use must be made of the advice of experts and the service of technicians when planning our work. To assure them absolute freedom in their work of research, investigation, study and experiment, they should have no juridical authority; their usefulness lies exclusively in the technical services they can offer.

D. **Characteristics of our structures**

709 Whenever the different organs of government feel the need of creating new structures of modifying existing ones in conformity with the authority given them by the Constitutions and General Regulations, they should make sure that these are sober, functional, and clearly defined. The scope and extent of the undertaking must be adapted to the times, places and urgency of the work in hand. This demands a certain flexibility which will facilitate changes that may become necessary as the project develops.

Document 15

STRUCTURES AT LOCAL LEVEL

CHAPTER TWO

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

1. The local community assembly

710 Where convenient in the judgement of the local community, there should be established the 'communal and pastoral assembly' made up of the salesians and their collaborators, *including the boys*.

As far as possible it should be representative of all sections of the house engaged in pastoral and educative activities.

This assembly will try to create a spirit of communal and personal co-responsibility, among all those who are working towards a more efficient fulfilment of salesian work and activity.

It will be a consultative body and should meet *at least twice a year*.

The details of its composition and mode of operation are to be decided by the individual communities.

711 N.B. When the confrères are consulted about the choice of members of the provincial council, they should keep in mind also those lay religious capable of holding such an office, and the advantage of having them as members of the council.

2. Pastoral structures

712 Our structures aim at being pastoral in nature.

They exist in order to help the community and its work to become a christian leaven in its surrounding area.

They should favour the integration of faith and life,

because our human mentality, conscience, activity and relationships with others — indeed the whole man — have need of conversion by the saving word of God.

Our work cannot be constructed on the basis of a separation between the sacred and profane.

Our structures must show how all things worth doing are intertwined and yet united in Christ.

But whilst it is true that the sacred and profane are distinct, they are not divided and should not be carried on in such a way that one section ignores the other.

The salesian therefore will not adopt a unilateral attitude either in regard to the profane (studies, mass media, sport, free time) or the sacred (prayers, religious teaching, chapel, apostolic work).

He will not, for example, give undue emphasis to the scholastic side to the detriment of the formative-apostolic aspect, and vice-versa, but he will try rather to harmonize all the needs of the pupils.

In this way not only shall we have a better chance of caring for the 'whole human person,' but we shall also be more in line with Vatican II, which states that the greatest mistake being made today is the separation of faith and daily life.[1]

If it is true that the work of salvation through education depends first of all on men, or better, on educators, then we want to offer them structures of a kind *that will be a help and not a hindrance to their authentic pastoral work.*

[1] Cf GS 43.

Document 16

STRUCTURES OF GOVERNMENT AT WORLD LEVEL

CHAPTER ONE

THE MIND OF DON BOSCO

713 Structures of government serve only as a means to achieve certain ends in a society. According to the diversity of the level, they should highlight and underline certain values even if these are not absolute and cannot be separated from the sum total of all the other values in the same society. The structures at world level must guarantee, defend and promote one of the greatest of these values, i.e. the *living unity* of the Congregation. This appears quite clear both from the mind of Don Bosco and from the specific functions of central structures in a Congregation which, like our own, is world wide.

714 The ideas of Don Bosco have for us a very special importance because they are an indication of the spiritual patrimony which we cannot neglect, even in the realm of structures. In fact they show us the line we must follow to achieve our renewal.

Don Bosco wanted a *true religious Congregation* and he wanted it *well organized* in such a way that there should be side by side *with an informal manner of exercising authority,* a structure pedagogically built around the person of the superior. For Don Bosco the task assigned to the superior of maintaining unity is a primary function. Its purpose is to guarantee harmonious development and to ensure the permanence of the charism, the spirit and the work. For Don Bosco unity was an indispensable condition for the survival of the Congregation.

We take some relevant quotations from the many to be found in the Biographical Memoirs and in his letters.

715 *a*) The Congregation was born with a clear understanding of the importance of its unity. In the letter to Archbishop Fransoni [1] it is stated:

"*To preserve unity of spirit* and discipline, and to put into practice means which have proved useful for this purpose, we have formulated some rules, after the manner of a religious society..." [2] In the letter to Canon Zappata, the Vicar General, Don Bosco gives as his specific reason for founding the Congregation the "*greater need for a secure and definite link to unite our spirits* and preserve unchanged those customs which will prove most useful for the good of souls." [3]

As soon as the Congregation was approved (1869), Don Bosco gave a conference outlining his programme and revealing his concern to ensure unity as a basic and indispensable element: "...For a Congregation like ours to prosper, it must be *well organized.* A religious Congregation, like the human body, is made up of a head and members, some subordinated to others, and all of them subordinated *to the head.* There must be only one head, since there is only one body; if we had two or three heads to this body, it would be a monster." [4]

716 *b*) For Don Bosco, unity took practical shape around *certain pillars* which were the rules and the superiors, seen as the incarnation and the guardians of the rules: "Amongst us the superior must be everything. Everybody must help and assist the Rector Major in every way. Everyone must form a single group around him. The Rector Major has *the rules; from these he must never deviate, otherwise there is no longer one centre* but two: the centre

[1] June 1860.
[2] BM VI 631.
[3] Ep 1, p 263, 23 March 1863.
[4] MB IX 672.

consisting of the rules and that consisting of his will. Instead the Rector Major must be the rule incarnate, so to speak: the two must form one reality. And what applies to the Rector Major in regard to the whole Society, applies to the rector in each house. He must be absolutely one with the Rector Major and the members of his house must in turn be one with him. He too must be the embodiment of the rule..." Then after recognizing the necessary autonomy in the discharge of each one's office, he writes: "But we must always look to the centre of unity." [5]

717 *c*) Looking to the future, Don Bosco foresaw some real dangers to this essential unity. And so he warned his sons and recommended that the links between the Oratory and the individual houses should be drawn closer. "I am afraid," he said, in November 1878, "that these ties are getting weaker. As long as we have as rectors in the colleges men who have been educated by Don Bosco himself, things will go well. But now we are getting rectors who have spent only a short time with Don Bosco and there is the danger that we shall see these cordial relations diminishing..."

To avoid this danger and to consolidate unity, he added: "The Superior Chapter must be relieved of these duties which regard only the Oratory, and must be actively concerned with all our colleges..." [6] And he concluded with a surprising statement: "Up to now we have gone ahead in such a free and easy manner that if we went on in the same way any rector so inclined could start a schism. Today of course such a thing cannot happen because of the affection everybody bears towards Don Bosco." [7]

[5] MB XII 81: from Don Bosco's talk on the occasion of the meeting of rectors, 3 February 1876.

[6] MB XII 885.

[7] September 1877.

In the first General Chapter Don Bosco had already expressed the same fear: "We are still in the early days. Our numbers are not very great, and up to now the Oratory has been the one centre for everybody. But as we go ahead, unless we study every means for stengthening this link, we shall soon find ourselves in a different state in which there will be unity among us no longer. We must do everything possible to bind ourselves together in one single spirit." [8]

718 *d*) The structures and organization Don Bosco gave his Congregation and especially this insistent demand for unity were not simply a product of the centralizing tendencies of his times. They were an intrinsic necessity arising from the concrete set-up that he wanted to give to his Congregation. In a conversation with Don Barberis he brought out the difference between our Congregation and others which had at their beginning the help of learned persons who were associated with the founder: "With us," said Don Bosco, "it is different. They have all been taught by Don Bosco. They are the fruits of thirty years of incessant and exhausting work, but it has had this advantage: since they have all been educated by Don Bosco, they all follow the same methods and system."

And after pointing out several drawbacks inherent in the other method, especially regarding the lack of unity, he concluded: "No one will understand the importance of this point unless he has thought carefully about what exactly Congregations and religious orders are. But if he ponders over the causes of the growth and decline of the different orders, and on the divisions which so many of them underwent he will find that it

[8] MB XIII 286.

all happened because of a lack of a homogeneity right from the beginning of the order's foundation." [9]

In 1864, when sending Pius IX the project of the Constitutions, he wrote this preface: "The purpose of this society, as far as the members are concerned, is none other than to invite them to be united in spirit among themselves so as to work for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls." Then he added a request for jurisdiction on the following grounds: "The members of the Congregation have as their object the exercise of the ministry towards the young, a delicate and difficult task, and one moreover learned by experience and long study, and especially by living and dealing with the boys we wish to take charge of. This experience and unity of spirit would be very difficult to acquire and maintain unless the Superior General had full jurisdiction over the members of the Society." [10]

719 Historically then the salesian Congregation was born and developed from an original nucleus (the Oratory at Valdocco) of intense community life, with a single vital centre of unity, the person of Don Bosco. This relationship with their Father and Founder was maintained even when the first nucleus split up and made foundations in Europe and America. These new foundations, while possessing the necessary autonomy required by the work they had to undertake, and their own distinct identity which they acquired in adapting themselves to local conditions, always remained united to the mother house. Indeed they considered it a condition for their survival to maintain constant contact with the centre, from which they received inspiration and energy.

This "unity relationship" had as its vital term of

[9] MB XII 221; cf also XII 300.
[10] MB VII 623.

reference the person of Don Bosco. When he died it became focused, so to speak, in veneration, esteem, respect, filial affection and submission to the Rector Major, who was always called the successor of Don Bosco. It was a concrete way of expressing the uninterrupted link which joined them to their Founder and Father.

The link with Don Bosco, or better the continued presence of Don Bosco in our works, was expressly recognized by Pius XI. After reading the decree on the heroicity of the virtues of our holy Founder, the Holy Father revealed his admiration for our unity and expansion in the world: "It is very comforting to think that this great and marvellous development goes back directly and immediately to him. Yes, he himself continues to be the director of it all, not simply the distant father, but the author who is always present, always operating in the perennial vitality of his directives, of his methods, and especially of his example." [11]

[11] MB XIX p 82.

CHAPTER TWO

UNITY AND DECENTRALIZATION

720 Today, a hundred years later, the Congregation has, through the goodness of God, attained world-wide dimensions. Side by side with the legitimate plurality of our work, in the rich diversity existing between provinces scattered throughout five continents, there is felt an urgent need to clarify and to reinforce the essential ties of unity, to keep intact the original project of our holy Founder and maintain the life and efficiency of the Congregation.

Our mission and consecration to God, the spirit which animates us, the bond of charity, the love for our Founder and Father, are all component elements in our unity.

Unity at world level finds its first expression in the Constitutions. These mark out for the whole salesian world the fundamental outlines of our credo, our life and our mission. But they are not sufficient by themselves. There must also be an efficient central government which promotes and assures the necessary co-ordination, which encourages and favours the convergence of the different currents, by their nature divergent, into an organic unity.

At the different levels (local, provincial and world wide) the centre which in Don Bosco's mind guarantees unity is the respective superior. For the Congregation, considered in its totality, this "centre of unity" *par excellence* is the Rector Major with the Superior Council.

For this reason, without wishing to deny or misinterpret other values and elements in the organization and structure of the Congregation at world level, we have been at pains to emphasize the fundamental value of unity. Indeed it would be no exaggeration to say that the structures at world level are the "structures of unity."

This prospect demands from all the confrères an effort at understanding and goodwill so as to overcome a certain narrow-mindedness which imprisons them inside the necessarily limited and restricted horizon of their local or provincial community. Such a narrow view prevents them from seeing in all its richness the world-wide dimension of the Congregation, which is, as it were, an efficient and docile body at the service of the Church. Indeed it oftens happens that the legitimate demands of life, pastoral activity and the necessary adaptation to the geographical and socio-cultural circumstances, easily gives rise to tensions and forms of expression which can in fact compromise unity.

The unity we are discussing is a unity of ministry which must organically unite everyone in the same vocation.

Today there is an urgent need to increase our union with each other. Unity of ministry requires as its indispensable, complementary and integrative element, *decentralization*, which is the concrete, practical expression of *subsidiarity*.

Leaving to the lower organs what can be done by them, the central government, besides its function of supplementing and correcting, must keep these powers which it cannot renounce without causing directly or indirectly a split in our essential unity.

Decentralization makes provision for the necessary distribution of power. Thus we have a more rapid and less complicated solution of problems, increased efficiency and a more comprehensive valuation of personnel.

The concrete realization of this decentralization is more evident in the structures at regional, provincial and local level: this is where decentralized powers find their expression. But an orderly and fruitful decentralization must be brought about gradually and, in accordance with the practice of Don Bosco, must be preceded by a suitable period of experimentation.

CHAPTER THREE

PARTICIPATION AND CO-RESPONSIBILITY

721 The superiors at world level are also the expression of the participation and co-responsibility of the whole Congregation. Through the different superiors elected by the General Chapter the effective will of the whole Congregation is expressed: and so it experiences its unity and universality.

Another expression of this participation and union is found in article 8, according to which the superiors at all levels participate in one and the same authority and exercise it in union with the Rector Major for the good of the whole Congregation. It must be remembered that amongst us the authority of the different superiors does not immediately derive from the designation by the members, but has its origin in the act of the canonical erection of the society. Therefore there exists in the whole Congregation only one nucleus, only one centre of authority. And this authority received from the Church, comes through the elective will of the General Chapter to find its centre, according to the Constitutions, in the office of the Rector Major and the Superior Council. The nomination of superiors at provincial and local level formally depend upon this ministerial centre. This does not mean that the superiors at these various levels have their authority delegated from the Rector Major. They have their own ordinary power, which comes however from the one source.

In the article referred to another very important aspect is emphasized: i.e. the preoccupation and interest which all the superiors must have for the good, the unity

and the increase of the whole Congregation, over and above their immediate concern for their own field of action and for their own communities.

722 Participation assumes more and more concrete forms in the different consultative bodies made up of experts or superiors according to their competence and office. Such bodies must be organized from the centre to promote the good of the Congregation, to clarify the more complex problems and to seek for solutions.

In its more stable form, we see this participation in the work of the Superior Council which shares with the Rector Major concern for the government of the whole Congregation. The participation of its members is an expression of co-responsibility, and in some cases has specific obligations as, for instance, when their deliberative vote is required. This is the case in matters of greater importance for the life and functioning of the whole Congregation (the nomination of superiors, the opening and closing of houses, provinces, etc.) Besides this specific participation the members of the Superior Council have special duties assigned to them by the General Chapter: these they must carry out under the responsibility of the Rector Major.

In this way the central government assumes its own proper characteristics, with two functions of special importance: *communication* and *service.*

The task of the superiors, and particularly those entrusted with special work, is fundamentally one of co-ordination and communication. Their duty is to promote, stimulate, guide, encourage, animate and offer a valuable technical service through the different secretariates and technical offices. In this manner the whole Congregation puts itself at the service of each individual community.

CHAPTER FOUR

REGIONAL STRUCTURES

723 To obtain a greater union of the provinces with the centre, and a more satisfactory cohesion and functional co-ordination among the provinces themselves the XIX General Chapter introduced "ad experimentum" the figures of "Councillors entrusted with groups of provinces" (called Regional Councillors) and "Provincial Conferences." [1]

On the whole this experiment can be considered to have had a positive result. This is evident from judgements expressed in the first provincial chapters.[2]

Even the second provincial chapters with 88.11%, and the confrères with 77.87% confirm its validity. In the "statement on the condition of the Congregation" we read: "We consider that the continual contact of the Regional Superiors with every part of the Congregation has been providential in enabling us to know the real state of things, in guiding us and helping us towards a solution of difficult problems, in providing the centre with information about the experiences of the provinces and interpreting their desires." [3]

In the course of this experimentation it became clear that after some understandable uncertainty in the first years, a necessary settling down period, in which their

[1] ASC n 244, p 21 seq.

[2] "With the exception of two provinces, all the others confirm the need for a Regional Councillor. Nineteen provinces want them to be increased in number with well defined duties;" see Radiograph of first provincial chapters, IV p 95.

[3] Statement on the condition of the Congregation, SGC p 160.

duties lacked precise definition, the so-called "vertical link" worked quite well, but the "horizontal link" proved less satisfactory because of certain real and intrinsic difficulties.

In practice, in most of the regions, there was lacking that indispensable common denominator (the same social, cultural, geographical conditions, affinity of races, languages etc.) which could facilitate horizontal relationships in these provincial conferences. This is why such conferences existed only when there was a large group of provinces belonging to the same nation, as in the case of Italy, Spain, Brazil, Argentine and India.

In almost all these cases there were definite advantages: "Experiences were compared, problems of common interest were considered, and practical and idealogical unity was achieved. A certain co-ordination and collaboration in various activities was obtained. Some defects were also brought to light, as for instance too much discussion of problems without any definite conclusions being reached as to what action should be taken, a lack of unity in the execution of collegial decisions etc." [4]

Convinced therefore of the substantial validity of the experiment, the Special General Chapter reconfirms this structure at regional level, improving it and making it more precise.

It gives to the Regional Councillor a more clearly differentiated role as representative of the provinces whose interests, good etc. he must promote. But to strengthen his position as member of the Superior Council and put it on a par with the other members — and this seems indispensable for the discharge of his duties — it did not consider it good that he should be elected solely by the regional group of provinces concerned.

[4] Fr. Ricceri, *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*, p 162.

At a horizontal level, a precise distinction was made between "a provincial conference" and "a group of provinces." There will be a provincial conference only when the affinity and similarity of problems and situations permit a closer bond between some provinces.[5] In all other cases there is only a "group" in which the link of the province with the centre is predominant. But other forms of inter-provincial link-up and co-operation is not ruled out but rather encouraged.

[5] Art 61.

CHAPTER FIVE

STRUCTURE OF DECENTRALIZATION

724 *a*) The regional structure is *one of decentralization.* It provides in fact a juridical platform for transferring (in accordance with the requirements of the times for a greater efficiency and a less complex exercise of authority),[1] to intermediary levels those powers and functions which before were exercised by the centre. Two significant points should be noted here:

1. the office of the regional councillor not only makes it possible that in decisions taken by the Superior Council the requirements, desires and situations of the different provinces be kept in mind, but also that such decisions can be made through continuous dialogue with the individual provinces;

2. the conferences, when they function properly, have a vast scope and can bring about much more efficacious action than in the past, through their analysis and study of problems, their co-ordination of common salesian effort in such sectors as formation, qualification, up-dating, discipline, apostolic initiative, etc.

b) Obviously a juridical structure is no guarantee of perfect functioning. The reality is still in the course of formation and must be constructed little by little. Before this structure produces the results the Congregation expects from it, it will be necessary:

1. that everyone make an effort to rise above the narrow and restricted vision which sees and interprets everything exclusively in relation to his own province

[1] ES 2, 18.

and which loses sight of the openness he should have, not only for the needs of the local church and the world community, but also for the needs of the neighbouring provinces. With these there could and should be mutually advantageous dialogue with each province offering its own collaboration, contribution and resources for the enrichment of the others;

725 2. that right from the start there be an incessant promotion of a spirit of unity and charity. This will enable every form of particularism and collective egoism to be courageously overcome, and concern for the good of the whole Congregation and of the provinces in the respective group or conference will be properly and generously broadened.

c) The deliberations regarding these conferences and inter-provincial co-operation will be effective only if the superiors concerned have:

1. the indispensable qualities for creating among themselves a real and fruitful collaboration, i.e. an openness of mind which will enable them to view the problems with a wider and deeper vision and in a larger and more transcendent context rather than in their plain, immediate reality;

2. a disposition which makes relationships and dialogue with others easy and sincere.

Document 17

ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

726 The first duty of the members is to safeguard the basic values which constitute the end and characterize the activity of the salesian society, i.e. to preserve intact the genuine religious and apostolic content given to them by the Founder.

This task is confided to communities of men who, in order to live, act, organize themselves, begin and continue apostolic activities, must have economic resources, the very things from which they have detached themselves by their vow of poverty. It could therefore happen that religious would attach themselves anew to these things, make misguided use of them, be incapable of appreciating the intricacies involved, or waste them through lack of understanding or due preparation, or through neglect or abuse.

It is easy to see therefore what importance attaches to the selection and training of good administrators, and how indispensable it is to provide at every level a well-ordered administration, capable of proper control and using modern techniques proportionate to its importance.

Such an administration, whilst borrowing many of its structures and methods from the field of business and commerce, must nevertheless embody the norms and moral principles proper to a religious Congregation. In all their activities the members will look upon temporal goods as a means for attaining the specific aims of the Society.

Those in charge of the management of such goods, as well as being scrupulously careful to provide a sound administration which ensures the collective and individual observance of poverty, will act as custodians of the goods of the Church and will not allow any arbitrary or personal use of them.

By bearing constantly in mind that what they are administering is the precious fruit of the work of the confrères and a tangible sign of that providence which, through the generosity and sacrifices — sometimes beyond all calculation — of our benefactors enables us to carry on, they will be able to preserve a loving fidelity and bear witness to poverty in a way that will draw down the blessing of God on the Society, inspire trust in the confrères, and stir up benevolence amongst men.

SIXTH SECTION

Co-operators and past pupils

Document 18

THE SALESIAN CO-OPERATORS

CHAPTER ONE

DECLARATION OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER TO THE CO-OPERATORS

in reply to their message of 2 July 1971

727 *Dear co-operators,*

We, the members of the Special General Chapter, have received the sincere and troubled message you addressed to us. We have carefully studied your words and thank you for it.

On the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 130 years after the start of our work, the Special General Chapter approved a document on the identity and vocation of the salesian Society today.

This document entitled "The Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church," has given full treatment of the salesian family in general and of the various groups which constitute it in different forms and at different levels of activity.

Among these groups you, the salesian co-operators are listed in a special manner.

In the light of your message and of the document we have approved, we would like to give you our frank reply.

What we put forward is not a document but rather a collection of reflections on the principles we have dealt with and approved, so that together with you we can come to conclusions and decide upon concrete obligations.

1. Today's historical context

728 First of all we can tell you that we, like you, are conscious of our new social and ecclesial context and the decisive consequences that result from it, because of our mutual relationship:

a) the evolving social world in which we live urges us to avoid any form of isolation or self-sufficiency and demands the unification of all forces to reach the ends proposed. This must be brought about in a more effective manner;

b) within the Church the re-discovery of the People of God as the central concern in the history of salvation, brought as a consequence a new attitude to the laity, they were now to take their proper place of co-responsibility together with the hierarchy and religious families. This now offers us the opportunity of realizing the great project of Don Bosco — the union of all those who had the will to work with him and in his way for youth.

We believe that in the social and ecclesial context in which you have asked us for help to discover your own identity within the salesian family, it in no way runs counter to the original design of Don Bosco — the result of his timely intuition — but makes it the more urgent today.

2. Discovering identity

To discover the true identity of the co-operators, the problem demanding our immediate attention, we must go back to the original idea of Don Bosco himself.

729 Faced as he was with the presence of many evil forces, the more harmful because they were united, and also faced with an abundant harvest before his very eyes, his heart was moved to prepare a whole regiment of apostles, united and disciplined for a work, both decisive

and efficacious for the salvation of youth now abandoned and in great need.

Some of those who offered themselves, responding to a call from God, decided to remain 'permanently at the Oratory, to live a common life with Don Bosco and put themselves under his command.' [1]

Others instead, drawn more to the life of other christians, 'lived in their own homes' each committing himself according to his state and opportunity to an apostolic life which in some way reflected, completed and enriched that lived by the former group. All indeed as they committed themselves for service on behalf of youth committed themselves to work 'in the salesian spirit.' [2] The form their work was to take would not be identical, it would vary according to the actual situation of each one, and the real need of youth in a particular place and at a given moment.

In the mind and heart of Don Bosco, then, the salesian family is one. The original unity of this family has its roots in the existence of a common spirit and mission of total service to the young and to working people. Thus it shows itself, to be at the higher level, a real community in which all members are integrated according to their proper qualities and specific functions, and in the different forms of life possible in the Church.

730 The co-operator as Don Bosco imagined him, is a true salesian-in-the-world, that is a christian, be he a layman, lay religious or priest, who, even if he has no religious vows, follows a vocation to holiness by offering himself to work for the young in the spirit of Don Bosco, in the service of the local church, and in communion with the salesian Congregation.

[1] P. STELLA, *Don Bosco*, vol 1, p 140.
[2] Cf First General Chapter Jan. 1877.

This reappraisal should now bring us to a radical change of outlook.

In fact it is necessary to see clearly that being a salesian co-operator is to answer a true call: it is to accept an authentic salesian vocation, to follow a true apostolic vocation. "Through divine grace you have been enlightened and called to share in the mission of the Founder, in accordance with your state of life..." [3]

731 Don Bosco went on developing the idea of this vocation. In his various writings we find him expressing himself on this point with strong and decisive words.

The vocation of the salesian co-operator is essentially a call to serve in the Church. The salesian co-operator has not been thought up as a helper to the salesian Congregation, but as a helper of the Church in the many needs that arise. Your "real scope is assisting the Church, bishops and priests, under the guidance of the salesians." You are "instruments in the hands of the bishops." [4]

The kind of service demanded by your vocation should be appropriate and flexible, that is it should be directed towards a more rapid and more effective service of youth wherever they find themselves in danger. Your service is boldly offered to those who have need of it. The forms of your service will depend on the needs that from time to time face you and you should never draw back from difficulties of any sort.

The salesian way of doing things normally requires your presence among those you are helping: you should always be there "wherever there is evil to be prevented or good to be accomplished." [5] The lay character of the larger part of the co-operators assures this beneficial

[3] Document 1.
[4] MB XVII 25.
[5] Bollettino Salesiano, January 1878.

christian presence everywhere, something that is more urgently required today than ever before.

Finally salesian service is realized *in unity*. Impressive indeed is Don Bosco's insistence for unity among his followers: "If there has ever been a time when union among good christians was judged useful for spreading and sustaining good and obstructing evil, today it is so necessary as to be indispensable."

We must all "bring about union with one another and with the Congregation. We should be united in striving for the same goals and by the same means... We should unite ourselves as members of the same family with the bonds of fraternal charity." [6]

This move towards unity was a dominating preoccupation in Don Bosco's mind, and in it there is a truly fundamental nucleus that guarantees in a particular manner the union of all and the apostolic efficacy resulting from this union. The Rector Major the common head and father of the salesians and the co-operators is this centre. As the successor of Don Bosco we find in him a stabilizing influence, the surest guarantee of an organic and productive unity.[7]

3. **Who we are who are for you**

732 We are "your religious brothers." You have mentioned this in your message and we acknowledge it with joy and understanding, for the simple reason that Don Bosco was the first to say so and he often referred to it: "The members of the salesian Congregation look upon all the co-operators as their brothers in Christ Jesus." [8]

We have indeed taken note of our specific and decisive role in the salesian family:

[6] Ibid.
[7] Cf Regolamento 1876, V 3.
[8] Regolamento 1963, p 13.

1) we believe we are the sure and steadfast link expressly desired by Don Bosco as a guarantee of unity in the same spirit, of apostolic effectiveness in our common mission, of perennial vitality in the work he founded, of enthusiasm for vocations and strength in establishing a vast, well-organized movement for the welfare of poor and endangered youth;[9]

2) we believe that we have to be more and more the power-house of this apostolic movement of baptized people, who in the spirit of Don Bosco place themselves entirely at the service of the Church for the salvation of youth.

Hence, we feel that you are concretely involved with us in the problems and apostolic anxieties of our Congregation, to the point of thinking that without you, not only could we not carry out the fullness of our mission, "because of the lack of personnel and material means," [10] but we would not even be what Don Bosco wished and wanted us to be.

4. What you are for us

733 In the draft of the deliberations drawn up personally by Don Bosco for the First General Chapter in 1878 (the manuscript is still preserved) we read words that throw ample light on the nature of your association in relation to the salesian Congregation: "*The Association of the salesian co-operators* is a most important association for us, it is the *very soul of the Congregation.*"

It would be impossible for us to think up grander words, or ones which better express who you are. Hence we are convinced that if these words are not to become a dead letter we have to take them very seriously and

[9] MB V 691; VII 611; X 663; XI 85.
[10] Capitolo Generale I 1877.

draw from them the conclusions they contain for our renewal.

In the light of this declaration we feel the necessity to be always true to ourselves, that is to be always more salesian and more religious.

Your close presence urges us to greater and more dynamic fidelity to the common salesian vocation which we ourselves want to live as religious, that is as baptized individuals who have set themselves the ideal of evangelical life: chastity, detachment in poverty, availability in obedience.

On the other hand, you co-operators in the mind of Don Bosco will be co-responsible with us within the sphere of your vocation, for the future of the salesian family. You are our first and essential collaborators, different from other lay collaborators: "You are our collaborators in whatever is to be done for the glory of God, but especially where we lack personnel or material means." [11]

5. Our obligation today

734 In this decisive moment of renewal which in spirit brings us near to those feverish hours experienced by Don Bosco when he was founding his family, all of us feel called to help you however varied or well-defined the task may be.

We think just as you do that "the time is ripe." We believe that we must look after the seedling which Don Bosco planted 100 years ago; we must take definite steps forward in producing, especially in this field, the "finished product" the creation that Don Bosco conceived and outlined by a stroke of genius.[12]

We have become fully aware of the fact that we

[11] Ibid.

[12] Cf MB XI 309.

would be traitors were we not to succeed in this undertaking: and we are convinced that it is with good reason that you have sent us your appeal. With deep fidelity then to our Founder we declare ourselves ready and eager to "revitalize your association so that the splendid project set on foot by our Founder may be restored." [13]

This fidelity itself urges us to enable you to "become conscientious, honest collaborators together with us, not under us; not only as faithful and docile executors, but as individuals capable of apostolic responsibility." [14] But always, it should be well understood, in the ecclesial context of common pastoral activity.

This work will permit us "to restore at every level, as you yourselves suggest, a truly mutual and fraternal relationship, which will constitute from now onwards a new style of salesian life both inside and outside our educative communities." [15]

6. Realizing this task

735 Analogous to our own, your salesian formation whether spiritual or apostolic must be the first of our urgent pastoral tasks. In this way we feel that we are complying with your desire, namely to "make an authoritative invitation to the salesian priests so that in their capacity as preachers and spiritual directors, they make themselves available for the formation and spiritual direction of the co-operators."

The goal of this formation should be the full realization of the specific task which awaits the greater part of you as lay people, and that is, the christian transformation of things within our reach in a salesian manner.[16]

[13] Message 2 July 1971.
[14] Ricceri.
[15] Message cited above.
[16] Cf LG 36-37; AA 7.

We cannot and we must not take your place by doing ourselves what is yours by right.[17] But we do wish to be near you, so as to be able to help you, without excessive direction, so that you can take your place and perform your task in the common undertaking of building up the Church.[18]

Yet another step, in keeping with that splendid plan so dear to the Founder, will be your sharing with all the consequences that derive from this, in the planning, realizing and evaluation of the pastoral plan of the salesian community to which you belong.

736 The local delegate will always be near. But we want to stress as strongly as we possibly can that in keeping with Don Bosco's idea all the community should take to heart the task of finding members for your association. The community has to be interested in setting up and holding together our salesian co-operators in order to ensure the welfare of the young which is the essential motive for our presence wherever you are.

To deal more concretely with this renewed vision and to assure you of our common effectiveness, the Special General Chapter has decreed that a commission made up of salesians and co-operators prepare a draft of new Rules for local experimentation which would be a synthesis of those drawn up by Don Bosco himself and incorporate the new vision of the laity in the Church.

We must here recall that away and beyond all organization, however necessary, absolute priority must be given to our pastoral care — the formation of the individual co-operator.

7. Some areas of your work in the common mission

These reflections lead us to the point where we can draw attention to some spheres of the salesian mission

[17] Cf GS 43 b.
[18] Cf AA 25; AG 21.

which we can share more and more with you, even if with different goals:

1. attention to those sectors and problems where youth today finds itself in greater need of spiritual and social direction;[19]

2. preoccupation with family problems in general and more especially those dealing with education of children or the preparation of young people for marriage;[20]

3. serious concern about catechetical instruction in its present form — utilizing those means which correspond to the needs of the secularized society;[21]

4. search for and the fostering of vocations — the priesthood — for religious life, especially for missionary vocations;[22]

5. commitment to world justice, making use of all means politically and socially acceptable;[23]

6. participation in world apostolic movements, especially those connected with the welfare of the young;

7. christian influence on means of social communications.[24]

These tasks and others too can be undertaken by you in the schools, clubs, youth centres and other institutes of the Congregation, in addition there is also opening in environments not specifically salesian.

In particular we shall take steps that your activities be more fully directed, according to your own possibilities, preparation and the demands of our own educational work;

[19] Cf GS 7; AA 12; Regolamento 1876 IV 4.
[20] Cf GS 52; AA 11; GE 3.
[21] Cf LG 35; GS 62; CD 30; AA 10; Regolamento 1876 IV 1.
[22] Cf PO 11; OT 2; Regolamento 1876 IV 2.
[23] Cf LG 36; GS 75; 88, 90; AA 13.
[24] Cf IM 13; Regolamento 1876 IV 3.

we shall also study how best to entrust to you other apostolic activites that are more in keeping with the lay nature of your association.

* * *

We are deeply grateful for your closeness to us, your affection and your trust.

You will be pleased to know that the Special General Chapter has already sent out an appeal to all confrères, sincere and to the point, it will also be welcomed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

We are always united to you in prayer and in the love that all of us bear our Founder. May our Blessed Lady help us all.

Rome, Christmas 1971.

CHAPTER TWO

DECLARATION OF THE SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER CONCERNING THE CO-OPERATORS

"...practical directives for renewing among salesians their interest in and commitment to the co-operators...".[1]

Dear Confrères,

737 The Special General Chapter has dealt, along general lines, with the salesian family and the various groups which form it: this treatment is noted in the document on the identity and vocation of the salesian society today, a document that is entitled *"The salesians of Don Bosco in the Church."*

Previous to this the General Chapter had received a message, Rome 2 July 1971, it had been composed by a representative group of co-operators from various nations. The message expressed things deeply felt and vital, towards the end you find these words: *'either now or never again.'*

We have answered this letter in a frank and clear manner. But now we wish to address you personally in an equally open way. We would like to mention to you some practical developments of the principles contained in the document that was approved by us, and we do this in the hope that some concrete proposals and conclusions may be reached.

[1] Document 1.

738 We would like first of all to give expression to a preoccupation that we feel at this time. The XIX General Chapter gave us its own document on the co-operators, a document that was approved by acclamation as gesture of homage to Fr. Ricceri who had just been elected as new Rector Major; but, if we are to be honest with ourselves, the results have not been very encouraging.

On the other hand, if we are to judge from the data that has come to us from the different special provincial chapters, there is a certain feeling of uneasiness, a kind of discomfort in the Congregation as a whole, but one that is mixed with a keen desire for a true and definitive rediscovery of the personality of the co-operator as conceived by Don Bosco. On all sides there is a longing for some decisive action to give rebirth to this association of these "true salesians-in-the-world."

We ask ourselves what is the reason for this and we believe that we must answer in this fashion: the stroke of genius of Don Bosco regarding the co-operators has not as yet been understood by everyone in its depth and in its consequences. Hence it is necessary to study the idea of our Founder once again to discover the real identity of our brothers, the co-operators. Here are a few points to meditate upon.

Faced as he was with the presence of many evil forces, the more harmful because they were united, and also faced with an abundant harvest before his very eyes, his heart was moved to prepare a whole regiment of apostles, united and disciplined for a work both decisive and efficacious for the salvation of youth now abandoned and in great need.[2]

Some of those who offered themselves, responding to a call from God, decided to remain 'permanently at

[2] Cf Bollettino salesiano, agosto-sett. 1877.

the Oratory, to live a common life with Don Bosco and put themselves under his command.' [3] Others instead, drawn more to the life of other christians, 'lived in their own homes' each committing himself according to his state and opportunity to an apostolic life which in some way reflected, completed and enriched that lived by the former group. All indeed as they committed themselves for service on behalf of youth committed themselves also to work 'in the salesian way.' [4] The form their work was to take would not be identical, it would vary according to the situation of each one, and the real need of youth in a particular place and at a given moment.

739 In the mind and heart of Don Bosco the salesian family is one. The original unity of this family has its root in the existence of a common spirit and mission of total service to the young and to working class people. Thus it shows itself, to be at the higher level, a real community in which all the members are integrated according to their proper qualities and specific functions and in the different forms of life possible in the Church.

This means, and we must acknowledge this with all clarity, that the salesian vocation is "salesian" before it is "religious." This also means that the salesian charism extends beyond the limits of our Congregation. The co-operator therefore, according to Don Bosco's original idea is a true *salesian-in-the-world,* namely a christian who follows his vocation to holiness by involving himself, even without religious vows, in work for youth or ordinary working people, in the spirit of Don Bosco, for the service of the local church and in communion with the salesian Congregation.

And this is the reality that can bring about renewal

[3] P. STELLA, *Don Bosco,* vol 1 p 140, n 34.
[4] First General Chapter 1877.

and we have to think seriously upon it if we are to have any hope for a really true and stimulating rebirth of the co-operators. *We stand in dire need of a radical change of mentality at all levels.*

As a matter of fact, as long as the co-operators are looked upon as something extraneous to us, as mere occasional helpers, as lay people who are useful yes, but not really indispensable, as lay people who when all is said and done we cannot do without if we want to give full expression to our apostolic work; as long as this is our attitude we will have shown that we have not understood the mind of Don Bosco; neither will we be in a position to bring to fruition his original and splendid project.

Who the co-operators are for us

740 In 1877 Don Bosco prepared an outline of his plan for the 1st General Chapter. In that draft he declared clearly that the association of the co-operators "is the soul of our Congregation."

This really bold assertion by Don Bosco, has we believe a practical value for us today. The image of the co-operator in fact, as Don Bosco wanted it, does not diminish in any way our own reality as salesians and as religious, but rather it demands a still deeper authenticity.

a) This image should add to our vocation as salesians a dynamism and a vigour of a special stamp. Indeed, if the co-operators, as *salesians-in-the-world*, must be zealous, energetic, and efficient, how much more so must we be? Did not Don Bosco want us to be like a power house, the guarantee of this dynamic apostolic action?

b) As religious, we can and should be, both the "signs" and "witnesses" in accordance with our specific vocation, first and foremost for our brothers, the co-operators.

741 In their turn they should feel moved and encouraged to be involved in an apostolic life: they can cast their eyes on us who have been so taken up by it that we have given ourselves completely in chastity, poverty and obedience.

In the mind of Don Bosco, as seen in his writings, the co-operators are co-responsible with us, in keeping with the character of their specific vocation, for the destiny of the salesian family. They have understood this and mentioned it in their message. This means that they are our first, direct and necessary collaborators, essentially different from other lay collaborators: "...our collaborators in whatever is to be done for the greater glory of God, but where we lack the personnel and material means." [5] Without these collaborators we may say, we are not what Don Bosco planned and wanted us to be.

On the other hand, Vatican II teaches that the laity should share with priests and religious, especially if they happen to belong to the same religious family [6] one way or another, a more realistic outlook so that the efficiency of pastoral work may be increased.[7] Using the language of his time Don Bosco wrote that the co-operators ensure that the Congregation" fights the battles of the Lord with more audacity." [8]

Hence the co-operators have been called to give us a specific and essential contribution in order that we may understand all the more realistically what the world is, and that we may work in it all the time following the salesian way of life.

[5] Don Bosco, Progetto per I Cap. Gen. 1877.
[6] Cf PC 22; AA 25.
[7] Cf LG 30, 31, 36, 37; PO 9; GS 43; AA 25.
[8] Bollettino salesiano, genn. 1878.

What we are for the co-operators in the mind of Don Bosco

742 We are their brothers in religion. "The members of the salesian Congregation should look upon our co-operators as so many brothers in Christ Jesus..." [9] It is truly interesting to see how the co-operators have understood this and how they have stressed this same point in their message.

The Congregation consequently has a certain part to play, a part that is both specific and unchangeable. It is called to be the centre of unity for all those who feel drawn to pursue the youth apostolate according to the spirit of Don Bosco. It is to be the dynamic principle of this "unity" which is somewhat like the dominant idea Don Bosco had and which is presented to us as a very urgent and meaningful need in these times of ours.[10] "...We must be united with one another and with the Congregation... Let us then unite ourselves by fixing our eyes on the same goal and in using the same means to reach it... Let us unite ourselves as members of one family, bound by charity that urges us to help one another and support one another in our work for our neighbour." [11]

And so for our co-operators the Congregation is the safe and steadfast bond which Don Bosco expressly wanted as the solid guarantee of unity and fidelity to his spirit, of apostolic effectiveness in our common mission which he entrusted to all of us, of apostolic audacity, of response to the needs of our times, of perennial vitality in the works he founded, and of courageous progress in one

[9] Regolamento, IV.
[10] Cf MB X 1311; Boll. sal., agosto-ott. 1877.
[11] Bollettino salesiano, genn. 1878 p 1-3.

large and well organized movement for the salvation of poor and abandoned youth.[12]

Our commitment

743 In our determined work of renewal, which draws us very close to those difficult hours Don Bosco faced when founding the Congregation, we are all called to a manifold but well-defined task towards the salesian co-operators:

a) first and foremost, the task of living to the full and of seriously cultivating the salesian spirit, so that we can awaken and develop in our co-operators a deep salesian apostolic vocation;

b) the task of studying this figure, as Don Bosco had imagined it, in its most genuine form so that we can produce the "finished product" of the plan which was only outlined by our Founder;[13]

c) the task of revitalizing the association so that it may finally correspond to "the wonderful project that was so dear to our Founder;" [14]

d) the task of ensuring that the co-operators become "conscientious collaborators and whole-hearted co-workers, who work side by side with us, and not under us: not just as faithful and docile executors, but individuals who are capable of shouldering apostolic responsibility," [15] all this however within the context of the overall pastoral plan.

These tasks will enable us to "establish on all levels a really fraternal relationship which will fashion from now on a new style of salesian life both inside and outside the educative community." [16]

[12] Cf MB V, 692; VII, 622; X, 663; XI, 85.
[13] Cf MB XI, 309.
[14] Message cited above.
[15] RICCERI.
[16] Message cited above.

How to accomplish this

744 *a*) Analogous to what we must do in our own ranks, our very first pastoral care will be to undertake the salesian spiritual and pastoral formation of individuals. Above and beyond every preoccupation for organization which is also necessary, our first pastoral care will be the formation of individuals. In their message this was precisely what the co-operators asked for. In words that leave no room for misunderstanding they ask us to make ourselves "available for their formation and spiritual direction."

b) A second urgent need we must feel is this. We must see to it that they are given in all seriousness and with all the consequences that flow from it a share in the planning, realization and evolution of the pastoral plan in those salesian communities to which they belong.

Their presence, under special circumstances and for well defined problems, on the councils, be they local or provincial, will both enrich the deliberations and be an eloquent proof of the seriousness we are giving to renewal efforts.

c) To be engaged in real pastoral activity particularly under the aspect of recruitment in the ranks of the young. As a matter of fact to accept the commitment of a co-operator is to follow a true *calling*; hence it is to accept a genuine *apostolic vocation*. And so greater attention should be paid to the quality rather than to the number of the candidates.

Even if the increase in numbers be rather slow, their enthusiasm will always remain high, for our work will grow in security and efficacy.

d) The aim of their formation is to help them attain a standard whereby in the spirit of Don Bosco they are able to fulfil competently their specific mission of christ-

ianizing temporal things [17] which they have to accomplish whether they work along side us in our institutes, or in activities under their own direction.

e) To attain the greatest apostolic and pastoral efficiency among co-operators the local delegate must always be near by. Given the importance of this sector it is clear that the delegate of the co-operators will be a member of the counsil, in accordance with articles 188-189 of the Constitutions. But we wish to stress particularly the fact that in the mind of Don Bosco, it is the whole community that must undertake the responsibility to be fruitful in fostering vocations for the association. It is the whole community that must be sincerely interested to train and involve the co-operators as an instrument ("longa manus") that will assure better results in the youth apostolate, an apostolate that is the essential motive for our being present in any particular place.

745 Before ending we would like to renew once more our heartfelt appeal:

— let us rediscover the thought of Don Bosco who was always daring in his plans and courageous in carrying them out...

— let us give new life to this association, adhering to Don Bosco's genuine ideal...

— let us re-launch this movement of ours so ardently desired by him, by adopting equal enthusiasm and courage to surround ourselves with christians who are really imbued with the desire to work for the salvation of youth and people of the working classes.

We should not be surprised on the other hand by the fact that not all of us will fully understand the im-

[17] Cf LG 36-37 AA.

portance of this appeal and of the new attitude that we must take. Don Bosco himself had the same experience: his own first collaborators misunderstood him in this regard... As a matter of fact, in 1874, when he first spoke of this project of the co-operators to the members of the Chapter, several voiced their objections, looking upon the association as just another confraternity, or a simple sodality, similar to the many that existed already, and as such of little or no importance. But Don Bosco only smiled at all this and then said: "You have not understood my idea at all." [18]

One hundred years later, after a careful study of the documents of Vatican II is it possible that we could deserve the same rebuke?

Dear confrères, in this re-launching which is in complete harmony with the needs of the Church and the signs of the times and at the same time an act of fidelity to Don Bosco, may we be helped by her who has always been and remains always the Foundress of our work and our Help, the Mother of God.

[18] MB X 1309.

Document 19

SALESIAN WORK FOR PAST PUPILS

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE PAST PUPILS ASSOCIATION

746 The origin of the past pupils' association, as is well known, can be traced back to the initiative of a small group of twelve artisans of the Oratory of Turin who, with Carlo Gastini at their head, came to Don Bosco to express their heartfelt gratitude to him on his feastday, 24 June 1870.

Within a few years this spontaneous and informal practice became a tradition. The "attraction" for the saint passed on to his sons and found its practical expression in the past pupils' movement, today spread throughout the whole world.

A continuous movement, strengthened by the theology of the laity of Vatican II has given a more organic form and new apostolic possibilities to the association, which was the first of its kind.

The organizational structure of the association consists at local level of the union or branch; groups and cells; at the provincial level — the Federation; at national level, the National Federation; and at the international level, the World Confederation.

Membership of the association is open also to past pupils who are not catholics; obligations arising from our faith naturally are not binding on them.

747 The association obviously does not include within its ranks all past pupils — but it acts as their representative and interpreter.

The past pupils who join the association can and should be considered:

1) the primary means of contact with the great mass of past pupils — a leaven and at the same time a means to bring back those who have strayed from the practice of their faith;

2) an aid, by no means secondary, in the work of education of the Congregation, for here it can find co-workers well qualified by their expertise in their own particular field and above all by their own christian witness.

CHAPTER TWO

PAST PUPILS' VIEWPOINT

748 The Statutes of the World Confederation of past pupils states that the movement "springs from the interest and affection which binds the past pupils to the salesian family for the purpose of maintaining and developing the insights received at the school of Don Bosco. Thus the salesian spirit will be spread by individual and collective action and the values received from the salesians imprinted on their lives." [1]

The concluding motion of the Centennial World Congress (1970) proposed that "the *Organization of the past pupils of Don Bosco,* born and nourished through his inspiration and that of his sons and successors, preserve these characteristics, and that in dialogue with the Rector Major and superiors, it take its part in the mission of the Congregation and of the Church.

The congress recommends that within the salesian communities, status and authority be given to the *Delegates for the past pupils* and that more time and the necessary means be made available so that they can fulfil more effectively their irreplaceable function of moral and spiritual guidance." [2]

749 The document containing "The more important ideas and directives of the Centennial Congress" emphasized:

a) the pressing importance of the problem of youth,

[1] Introduction *Statuta Confederaz. mondiale.*
[2] Proceedings *Congresso Mondiale,* p 207 seq.

in view both of its extent and gravity today, with a view to participating in the specific mission of the salesian Congregation;

b) the need of preparing the pupils to become members of the association of past pupils and the necessity of meeting the special needs of youth today who no longer wish to be passive members of an organization but desire responsibility in the running of the association and its activities." [3]

In the memorandum presented by the World Confederation to the first commission of the Special General Chapter on the 30 July 1971 in section III A (a) it is stated "whenever a salesian educates and instructs a boy, preparing him for manhood, he is forming a future past pupil. Hence advantage should be taken of every opportunity for making known and appreciated the *association of the past pupils.*"

750 The views of the past pupils can therefore be summarized as follows:

a) all past pupils belong to the salesian family in view of that special bond forged by their being educated in a salesian school, oratory, house of formation, etc.;

b) the Congregation should be more keenly aware of its responsibility and should seek to impart a greater awareness and concern among the confrères for this area of salesian work which should be considered one of the more important sectors of its apostolate;

c) past pupils should assume more direct responsibility in the running of their association;

d) delegates should be able to fulfil effectively their duty of spiritual assistance and their function as the

[3] Proceedings *Congresso Mondiale* p 287.

link between the past pupils and the salesian community and hence should also be members of the house council.[4]

751 The past pupils intend to play their part in the mission of the Congregation and of the Church:

1) as witnesses to the pupils and their families of the validity of the education received;

2) through active collaboration in the Congregation's work of education;

3) by seeking to spread salesian spirituality;

4) through a special effort within the *association of past pupils* for the return of those who have lapsed, within school and family environment for the welfare of youth, in collaboration with other organizations of past pupils of catholic schools;

5) by greater involvement in social, political and ecclesiastical activities.[5]

[4] Memorandum presented to the I Commission A 30 July 1971: n III C, 3 b.

[5] Memorandum cited: n I B.

CHAPTER THREE

OUR RESPONSE

"The past pupils are the result of our work, the fruit of our effort, the reason for our existence. It is clear that a congregation dedicated to education we do not educate for the school but for life. Real life for our pupils begins when they leave our houses." [1]

"If through a genuine renewal we made more of our apostolate among the past pupils, I believe we would be making one of our most important contributions to the Church and society today." [2]

752 The Special General Chapter, in its search for ways and means of renewing the apostolate of the laity, is glad to acknowledge the expression of deep attachment to the Congregation and readiness to be of service, made by the Centennial World Congress [3] on behalf of the past pupils. The Chapter wishes to endorse the appeal made to it to promote among the salesians effective interest in the association and decisive action on its behalf.

The Special General Chapter, therefore, in order to meet one of the great needs of the salesian mission in education today and in line with the recommendations of the World Congress, invites all confrères especially those who deal with pupils in the upper school, to take particular note of their special responsibility in respect of the past pupils.[4]

[1] Don Rinaldi quoted in AGC XIX p 160.

[2] Ricceri in ASC n 262-270.

[3] September 1970.

[4] Ricceri, *Relazione generale sullo stato della Congregazione*, p 139 seq.

1. Basis of our involvement

753 *a*) Our mission as christian educators and salesians is the fundamental reason for our involvement with the past pupils.

b) The Second Vatican Council has outlined the duties of christian educators towards their former pupils in the declaration on christian education: "Even after students have completed their time at school, teachers should continue to assist them with advice and friendship and also by establishing special groups genuinely inspired by the spirit of the Church." [5]

c) When providence sends a boy to our institutes there arises between him and the salesians a relationship which will never end, and from which our continuing responsibility springs. The past pupil must feel he can always rely on his educators to help him in important decisions and in the carrying out of his family, professional and social responsibilities.[6]

d) Every educational undertaking, as that of the salesians, must make its contribution to that renewal called for by the Council in the training of the laity. Characteristic of the Church today is the active involvement of the laity. Consequently, the renewal of the Congregation must be linked to a closer and more effective co-operation with the past pupils.

It is in this wider context demanded of the Church today that our activity among the past pupils finds its true significance.

e) It is our duty to continue the work of Don Bosco, who inspired, sustained and encouraged the organization of the past pupils. He considered the formation of youth,

[5] GE 8.

[6] Cf *Rector Major's letter to the salesians* in ASC n 262.

not as an apostolate which ends with the school days but as a preparation for life.

2. Our duties towards the past pupils

754 Our relationship towards the past pupils arises spontaneously from the friendship which unites us in one single family. In response to the appeal of the past pupils for more apostolic involvement we declare our readiness to provide that spiritual guidance needed for an ever deeper christian life and to give to each according to his capabilities the opportunity for an authentic apostolate.

For this reason we should maintain close contact with them in their family, professional and social life; we should seek to guide and encourage them to assume responsibility in public life and in the mission of the Church; and we should invite them to co-operate with us in the work of the Congregation.

This involvement with the past pupils must be considered not as a marginal but as an integral part of the life of the house.[7]

Hence:

755 *a*) The whole community (rector delegate and confrères) should show interest in all past pupils, whether members of the association or not, and should invite and welcome them to share in the life of the salesian family. Past pupils should experience in every salesian a friend, educator and guide. The community should offer every possible assistance in the organization and activities of the association and give the more committed greater scope for apostolic activities.[8]

b) The delegate, as the representative of the rector

[7] AGC XIX 163.
[8] AGC XIX 163.

and the whole community, has an important and irreplaceable role in respect of the past pupils as co-ordinator of activities in this sector. The importance of his primary task of spiritual assistance is universally recognized by the past pupils; and hence the need to choose carefully confrères for this office.[9]

c) It is the duty of every salesian to ensure that his pupils have an adequate knowledge of the *past pupils' association* so as to facilitate their becoming members of it. In this way they will be able to work out in their lives that spiritual and apostolic commitment for which the whole of our education should prepare them.

d) The past pupils feel, as individuals and as an association their responsibility to take an active part in the christian renewal of society. The salesians share this awareness and desire to promote, as far as lies in their power, this mission of the past pupils to the world.

In view of their spiritual responsibilities to the association the salesians will:

a) endeavour to assist the past pupils to study and confront with courage the particular problems of the local church and society;

b) to help them to offer themselves to the cause of social justice and assume their responsibilities in public life in accordance with the recommendations of the local hierarchy.

[9] AGC XIX 162.

CHAPTER FOUR

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN PAST PUPILS AND THE CONGREGATION

756 Conscious of the invaluable assistance received from the past pupils in the fulfilment of their mission, the salesians wish to assure the past pupils of their continuing support and friendship:

a) the past pupils bring to the Congregation the riches of truly authentic human values of which lay people have direct experience in their family, professional and social lives. Contact with past pupils enables our communities to be more open to the needs and problems of life and hence of our own work among the people of today;

b) past pupils can be invaluable co-operators in the task of education of each salesian community, both among the boys and their families, and by taking part in and bringing to the various councils of the house their experience and professional or technical skills;

c) this co-operation with past pupils can be extended to all sections of apostolic activity through which the Congregation is at the service of the Church and society.

Thus the past pupils share, each according to his capabilities, in the specific mission of the Congregation and, through the human and religious values lived out by them in the spirit of Don Bosco, extend its influence and efficacy.

"Love your association; be faithful to it; and above all seek to radiate its spirit to others. Witness springing from the teaching of Don Bosco will be clear, generous,

and open and bring with it serenity and joy. Of this witness our world has urgent need. The Church asks this of you today through the authoritative voice of the Vatican Council II." [1]

[1] Paul VI to the past pupils, 23 September 1970.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES FOR THE RENEWAL OF SALESIAN WORK FOR THE PAST PUPILS

757 1) All the confrères should recognize their responsibilities towards the past pupils and in particular the need for a steady preparation of the present students to become worthy past pupils as good christians and upright citizens.

2) The salesian community must be alive to the problems of the past pupils, and to this end a member of the house council should be appointed to take care of them.

3) Every community should be ready to accept whatever help, co-operation and advice the past pupils can give. This includes also a healthy criticism of our methods of education and of our work for boys.

4) The first duty of the Congregation towards the past pupils and their leaders is to inspire them with the apostolic spirit of Vatican II. This can be done by means of common study.

5) The past pupils should be encouraged to take a more direct and responsible part in the work of the Congregation on behalf of the local church. In this way, whilst still engaging in the activities proper to their own association, they could also become co-operators, but this must be by their own free choice.

6) Salesians recognize the *association of past pupils* as a duly constituted body of laymen with the rights

and duties proper to such a group; this was emphasized during their World Congress. It is left to their officials to see to the government of the association, and in general to accept the responsibility for its corporate life.

7) Salesians should be acquainted with the Statutes and Rules of the past pupils so as to be able to offer all possible assistance in making the association functional at all levels — local, provincial and worldwide.

8) In drawing up the programme of the activities of the house, a place should also be found for the work connected with the local past pupils.

9) Special attention should be paid to the care of the new recruits, i.e., those who have just left our institutes and are still finding their feet in the world. They should be helped as much as possible, especially when in moral or material difficulties and when they are compelled to live at a distance from their families because of their work or studies. In this way they will gradually be enabled to take their proper place in society, in the church and in the world of work.

758 10) Every salesian work should have a local centre for the past pupils, with its own delegate and office.

11) When necessary or opportune, one or more of the officers of the association at the appropriate level (local, provincial, national or world) should be invited to take part in salesian council meetings, though only with a consultative vote.

12) The leaders of the association should be encouraged to play their part in the affairs of the modern world by collaboration with other organizations (ecclesiastic, civil, local, provincial, national, international) and particularly with other associations of past pupils of other religious Congregations, so as to make their contribution to the shaping of the modern world.

13) The following suggestion of the XIX General Chapter should be put into practice: "We should commence in the course of formation to prepare the confrères to grasp the importance of the past pupils' movement, and through practical study to become acquainted with its organization and activity." [1]

[1] ASC 244, 163.

Document 20

POST-CAPITULAR PROGRAMME

The most urgent items

759 1. Before leaving the General Chapter let provincials, and delegates meet together at provincial, inter-provincial or national level to decide on some common points, leaving at the same time ample scope for the creativity and initiatives of the individual provinces in connection with the general objectives.

760 2. The provincial chapter will be the focal point of renewal. Its preparation will be the most opportune means to enlist the participation of the confrères in the study and the implementation of the Chapter decisions.

3. The provincial with his council will fix the date for the convocation of the provincial chapter, which must be completed within a year of the closing of the Special General Chapter.

4. It would be better however to have the elections of the delegates of the houses and the province as soon as possible (after the confrères have had the opportunity of reading the Chapter documents and taking part in general meetings as may be thought best).

5. As soon as such delegates have been elected they should:

a) study the documents in depth;

b) collaborate with the rectors, to ensure that the local communities understand not only the decisions but the line of thought of the General Chapter;

c) play their part according to their possibilities in organizing meetings for groups of confrères.

6. As soon as the delegates have been elected the provincial will call an informal meeting of the rectors and delegates to consider what has to be done and to ensure proper co-ordination of the work.

7. Where convenient preparatory commissions should be set up to study the various themes.

To these commissions confrères should send their proposals and study contributions for the application of the Chapter directives, and for the decisions to be made at provincial level, and also for the drawing up of the Provincial Directory.

761 8. If the delegates to the General Chapter are not already members of the provincial chapter, they should be invited to be present as experts.

9. The provincial chapter must make its decisions in accordance with the tasks assigned to it by the General Chapter.

The more important decisions concerning re-shaping, the possible re-siting of works, the directory, etc., should be preceded by exhaustive study on the part of technical commissions.

If necessary the provincial chapter may spread its work over two sessions.

10. The deliberations of the provincial chapter, after ratification by the Rector Major and the Superior Council, will be reviewed after three years by another provincial chapter as prescribed by the Regulations.

11. Provincial conferences (re-organized should the Rector Major, after consulting with those interested, deem it desirable) should take the necessary steps to implement as soon as possible the immediate tasks assigned to them by the General Chapter. Every effort should be made to avoid the promulgation of fresh documents and declarations.

12. At a convenient time the Rector Major and some members of the Superior Council will arrange meetings with the provincials of the different regions to take stock of the progress that has been made in the implementation of the directives of the General Chapter. Before this meeting takes place the provincials must send to the Superior Council a report prepared by them and their Council and approved by the provincial chapter, setting out how the decrees of the Special General Chapter are being applied in their provinces.

Other suggestions

762 1. *Quarterly and annual retreats.*

a) These should be based on the study and explanation of the Chapter documents dealing with our mission, religious life, and salesian spirit.

b) The collaboration of all confrères, and more especially those of the houses of formation, should be enlisted in the preparation of these retreats.

c) At the end of the annual retreat all should solemnly renew their vows according to the new formula.

2. *The book of the new Constitutions,* accompanied by the personal letter of the Rector Major to each confrère, should be presented with some solemnity, as for instance, during some religious function, or on a day of recollection or retreat.

On this occasion attention should be drawn to the fact that even "the best efforts at up-dating will be all in vain unless they be animated by the spiritual renewal" of each confrère in his determination to follow Christ more closely (PC).

And this personal determination necessitates no additional decisions on the part of assemblies or chapters,

but should show itself at once in all those who really have at heart the welfare of the Congregation.

763 3. *Newsletter.*

a) A newsletter for the confrères of the province should be published:

— to draw attention to particular points of the Special General Chapter;

— to carry suggestions, and proposals of the confrères;

— to provide information about what is being done in their own and other provinces in the field of renewal.

b) Copies of the newsletters of the individual provinces should be sent to the Superior Council which in due course will circulate a digest of the principal initiatives undertaken in the field of salesian renewal.

4. *Brothers — Lay religious.*

a) As a sign of support for what the Special General Chapter has said with reference to brothers — lay religious, efforts should be made, at least in those provinces where the proportion of brothers is similar to the figure for the whole Congregation, to include a brother amongst the provincial councillors.

The same principle should be followed in the case of house councils.

b) During the first two years immediately following the chapter there should if possible be meetings of brothers to study those points in the documents of the chapter which particularly concern them with a view to the suggestion of practical applications.

These meetings should be held in each province and all brothers should take part in them; thereafter similar meetings should be held in groups of provinces, with the

participation of brothers elected in each; finally, there should be a world congress with representatives from each region.

764 5. *Council of the community.*

The delegate of the house to the provincial chapter should attend the meetings of the house council when the latter considers the programming of the work of renewal.

6. In the same connection it might be opportune to request the bishops to let us know what are the most urgent services that the local church expects from us in so far as our mission is concerned.

Each community should examine its relationship with the pastoral action of the local church and look for better and more appropriate means of sharing in that same activity.

7. The provincial and his council should study the feasibility of setting up one or more local communities composed exclusively of confrères determined to give themselves enthusiastically to the task of renewal.

Such communities could become models as well as an inspiration for the other communities.

Document 21

DECISION OF THE S.G.C. CONCERNING THE FACULTIES GIVEN IN THE MOTU PROPRIO ECCLESIAE SANCTAE, II, 1, 7

I. Faculties given by the M.P. Ecclesiae Sanctae II, 1, 7

765 1) The *Motu proprio* 'Ecclesiae Sanctae,' II, 1, 6 gives the General Chapter "the right to alter, temporarily, certain prescriptions... by way of experiment, provided that the purpose, nature and character of the institute are safeguarded. Experiments which run counter to common law — and they should be embarked upon with prudence — will be readily authorized by the Holy See as the need arises. Such experiments may be continued until the next ordinary General Chapter which will be empowered to grant a further prolongation, but not beyond the date of the subsequent chapter."

2) And no. 7 of the same document adds:

"The same faculty is granted to the General Council for the space of time between the said chapters, according to the norms which they themselves shall decide."

3) The object of this faculty obviously embraces the prescriptions of the old Constitutions which have been incorporated into the new Constitutions and Regulations, as well as experiments contrary to common law, which have been prudently undertaken with the authorization of the Holy See.

In this matter the Special General Chapter has decided that the exercise of the power given by the M.P. 'Ecclesiae Sanctae,' II, 1, 7 needs a decision of the Superior Council, approved by at least 2/3 of the members.

II. Special powers delegated by the Special General Chapter

766 As far as the other chapter deliberations are concerned, the Special General Chapter authorizes the Super-

ior Council (under the same conditions as above: 2/3 majority) to MAKE GOOD ANY EVENTUAL SERIOUS GAPS IN THE TEXT OF THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS AND REGULATIONS, FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT OF THE WORK OF RENEWAL UNDERTAKEN BY THE PRESENT SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER.

767 The faculties referred to in paragraphs 1 & 2 will retain their validity until the next General Chapter, which will have to decide whether they should remain in force.

The constitutional faculty, by which the Rector Major can "for practical purposes" interpret the Constitutions, remains valid.

Document 22

MESSAGE FROM MEMBERS OF THE XX GENERAL CHAPTER TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

Dear Confrères,

768 As the Special General Chapter draws to a close and we prepare to return to our own communities, we would like to send a message to all of you whom we have felt so close to us in spirit during these seven months of work. Your presence with us in spirit has provided both an incentive to us and imposed a question which has dominated the whole Chapter: "We salesians — who exactly are we in the Church today?"

There has been a steady rhythm of study, research, discussion and reflection. We have found new paths to tread, but every day we came closer, little by little, to the joyful rediscovery of our proper identity, the image of our Father and Founder and his true idea of the Congregation.

It was not easy. We have come to realize that it is the Lord who has built the house, and for the purpose he has made use of our weakness. With the support of prayer and the eucharist we have come to the conclusion that our renewal is a project we must carry out with our eyes fixed always on Christ and in conformity with the happy intuition of Don Bosco. Before us we have seen outlined, as did Don Bosco, the image of Christ-Emmanuel: a friendly and understanding Christ who eats the bread of the poor, who lives in our communities, who gives himself to little ones; a Christ who prays to the Father.

And in this way we have met a Don Bosco who is God's witness, a man chosen by the Father to make men understand how much God loves them. "With a sense

of humble gratitude we believe that the salesian Society came into existence not as the result of a human project, but through the initiative of God himself" (Art. 1, new Const.).

769 Reconsidering our vocation in the light of Don Bosco's charism, we became aware that we were engaged on "a delicate work of rejuvenation, which had to be carried out with the greatest respect and care. It was as though we were cutting into the living body which had given us our rebirth." (D. Ricceri).

And thus we arrived at the new Constitutions. They are not the exclusive work of the members of the Chapter, but the work of the whole Congregation, of the combined study carried out in local communities and provincial chapters in three long years of work; they are the fruit of prayer and suffering on the part of all the salesian family, sustained always by the motherly presence of Mary, the Virgin most faithful.

In the capitular documents you will find the unchanging Don Bosco; you will find the same Congregation remoulded by the happy and serene fidelity of the old, by the strength and drive of mature confrères and by the intuition and spontaneity of the young. You cannot fail to hear in the new Constitutions the voice of the confrères who built up our salesian traditions — they have prayed and suffered in silence for this time of grace; our saints and our martyrs of yesterday and today. But especially you will find there Don Bosco himself, with all the richness of his apostolic heart and of his loving intuition in respect of the young, Don Bosco with his sense of fidelity to the Church.

Don Bosco, a man of God and God's man for the young, who entered into their world with the boldness of the Spirit and became "a prophet, foreseeing future needs and setting us on a path which defies time and

years" (Paul VI, audience to Special General Chapter).

It is true that we have produced documents which bear the imprint of our weakness, but we know that the Holy Spirit who willed to express himself through our words is greater than all of us, and this gives us confidence to believe that the Chapter decisions will give light and strength to our salesian vocation; that they will be the sign of unity, a path to sanctity in the history of the Church. In the Constitutions all the tongues of the Congregation become a single voice, so that we can all feel ourselves to be 'cor unum et anima una.'

770 We end these days of grace in a new awareness, spurred on by the charity of Christ and the fervent desire of Don Bosco towards the disturbed but wonderful world of the young. Even though they do not know it, the young are crying out to us: "We want to see Jesus." *We* know it; they want to meet the living Christ. They want to see him with their own eyes, and to touch him with their hands. "We must have the necessary wisdom and knowledge to find our way into the twisted and confused psychology of this new brand of youth, and the kindness and patience to reconstruct it in order of grace and human wisdom (Paul VI).

Today more than ever we must believe in the relevance of the educative tradition of Don Bosco which 'embodies perennial riches which do not grow old. And it is not difficult to discover the reason why, because these incomparable traditions of human and christian pedagogy find their roots in the gospel, where we see Christ lowering himself to raise creatures to God, becoming weak with the weak to raise men to truth and goodness; and this not with an authority imposing the law from without and with a heavy hand, but with the meekness and seriousness of one who explains the law of God as the expression of his love, a condition for our salvation; a

law which the educator obeys as well as the pupil. In other words, Don Bosco found the secret in charity, which is as it were the compendium of all his work of education' (ibid.).

All this demands as a first requisite a conversion of the heart, the point of departure for every sincere renewal; it requires a *community* commitment to renewal. (This is the age of community-witness!) It is a difficult task because a true evangelical community is a challenge to the selfishness of the human heart. The road is difficult, but it leads to the recognition on the part of the young that in their midst there is One who speaks to them and whom they can recognize.

When we look at the many problems which affect the foundations of the faith, of the Church and of the Congregation, we feel a sense of dismay — but our hope must not on this account grow less. This is the hour of true hope, which does not mean closing our eyes to difficulties and dangers but opening the heart to the changeless word of God, and coming down to the world with the certainty of his presence.

And with our hope must go courage. Let us go together into this world where Our Lord wants us to be at the present day his chosen witnesses and the bearers of his love.

May Mary Help of Christians, the mistress and inspiration of Don Bosco, confirm with her maternal assistance our programme of renewal and place her seal on our fidelity.

Rome, 5 January 1972.

Second Part

APPENDICES

Letter of Cardinal J. Villot, Secretary of State of His Holiness to the Rector Major

SECRETARIATE OF STATE
No. 182803

From the Vatican 26 April 1971

Very Rev. Father,

The Supreme Pontiff has learnt with satisfaction that on 10 June at the new Generalate on Via della Pisana, Rome, you will begin the work of the Special General Chapter of the Congregation founded by Saint John Bosco.

For this event, so very important in the history of the Salesian Society as a sign of its perennial youthful vitality and of its desire to measure up heartily to the directives of the Holy See and of Vatican Council II, His Holiness desires to express his good wishes and assurance of prayers that the meeting of such numerous and seasoned religious who bring with them the experiences, the response and the expectations of the great family of Don Bosco scattered throughout the world, may produce the results desired by yourself, the superiors and the confreres.

The Holy Father is aware in fact that your Institute is holding the Chapter at a particularly historic moment, one full of promise but not without difficulties and crises. These latter are either external, because of the transformations taking place in the society in which we live and which make the penetration of the Christian message more difficult; or internal, because of the repercussions which these changes have had in general on the religious life as it questions itself, its purposes, its achievements, and specifically also on the great Salesian Family. In fact when one thinks of the enormous burden of the world problem of youth, to whom you dedicate your best energies, the turbulence which possesses and agitates young people, the seeming futility attributed to traditional pedagogical methods, and the need that is widely felt and experienced for new educational techniques, one cannot help but be aware of what immense problems have to be brought to the consideration of the Council Fathers.

Whilst applauding the noble undertaking which proposes to up-date

the apostolic and religious directives of the Salesians, the Supreme Pontiff at the same time stresses that the solution of the most urgent problems is to be sought above all in the conscientious study and willing application of the Council documents relative to the priestly and religious life understood as a total consecration to Christ and to the Church in the service of souls. In the case of your Congregation this will regard the special dedication to young people so as to help them to be themselves, to live their own human and Christian experience authentically, helping them to find in the friendship with the Divine Redeemer which they cultivate with loyalty and feeling, the pivot which animates their complete formation, centred in the sacramental life of the Church and in charity towards their brothers. But such a programme — which is none other than that of the founder of your religious family — cannot be fully applied without re-discovering the genuine spirit of Don Bosco which has hitherto given an indelible impression to his works and has been a most fruitful principle of good for the Church and for humanity, the directing force of every energy in the care of youth; and even today this is and remains the chief task of those who, like the Salesians, love the young and desire to preserve their strength intact in the service of the Gospel ideals, in defence of sound values pertaining to the individual, the family and society.

Whilst renewing the good wishes and advice addressed to the members of the Salesian Congregation in the recent audience of 3 April 1971 (cf. *Osservatore Romano,* 4 April 1971), the Vicar of Christ is pleased to express to you and to your collaborators his lively gratification and encouragement regarding the direction and stimulation which will come from the Chapter and the aims proposed for it. In particular the Holy Father realizes your daily anxiety and solicitude, he appreciates the fact that your work is neither easy nor restful and he wishes to assure you that at this delicate moment he is close to you with his fatherly benevolence and prayers, invoking upon you God's almighty help through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and of Saint John Bosco, whose solemn office you have inherited, so that heaven may not fail to protect and inspire the Family founded by him.

The Holy Father accompanies these good wishes with the auspicious Apostolic Blessing which he wholeheartedly imparts to you, to the Chapter members and to all the confreres of the Congregation.

I express my own cordial good wishes for the good work and I take this occasion to confirm my religious respect for your person.

Yours devotedly in Our Lord,
J. Cardinal VILLOT.

The Rector Major's opening address at the Special General Chapter

My dear confreres,

It is difficult to hide the many feelings that move me deeply at this moment. There is the sentiment of joy at seeing confreres from the most diverse and distant regions all present here with the same ideal, moved by the same spirit in the name of our common Father. There is a feeling of satisfaction because your presence in this hall is a visible manifestation of the crowning act of the long and laborious plan of preparations for this Chapter. I experience too a lively and solid feeling of confidence that by the grace of God, *viribus et cordibus unitis,* we shall happily find the way to fulfil the truly exceptional mandate entrusted to us by the Congregation in compliance with the Church's desire.

Unfortunately we have to note with deep sorrow that some confreres who are particularly dear to all of us are absent from this assembly, not permitted to live with us during these days of fraternal, Salesian and constructive charity. They suffer intensely on account of this enforced absence but at the same time they find in their love for the Congregation the strength needed to transform their suffering into a holocaust of prayer for all of us and for our labours.

Together with this invaluable form of prayer they offer the Congregation the no less precious gift of their fidelity. Let me quote from a recent letter from behind the Iron Curtain:

« Believe us when we say that we never loved our vocation more than we loved it under tribulation... We assure you of our fidelity, promising our humble but fervent prayers that the General Chapter may bring about a salutary renewal and a betterment of life in the great family of Don Bosco ».

Our affectionate thoughts of admiration and gratitude go out to all these dear brethren, wherever they are and in whatever way they are restricted in exercising their rights as free men. From them too we take warning and example regarding that fidelity to the Congregation which is all the more tangible and generous when bedewed with tears and suffering.

« The Lord be with you! »

Officially announcing the opening of the Special General Chapter in accordance with article 138 of our Constitutions, I can find no better and more pleasant greeting that this: « *The Lord be with you!* ». Jesus our Lord has assured us: « Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, I am in the midst of them ». I had already written those words when I thought of consulting the *Biographical Memoirs* to see what our Father said to our confreres gathered together at Lanzo on 5 September 1877 for the *First Chapter* of the Congregation. Here are his words:

« Our Divine Saviour says in the holy Gospel that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there one can find Him in the midst of them. We have no other purpose in this meeting than the greater glory of God and the good of souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. We can therefore be certain that Our Lord is in our midst and He will guide things in such a way that everything will redound to His greater glory ».

As you see, there is a coincidence of thought and feeling which incites us to accept and live intensely that greeting which comes not so much from myself as from our Father: « The Lord be with you! ».

Ours is an extraordinary service

Our Lord has brought us together here along the mysterious ways of His Providence. Why? The reason is a simple one.

We have been called here to render an extraordinary service to our beloved Congregation. Certainly, taking part in a General Chapter is always an exceptional task, but participating in this particular General Chapter we feel that ours is a truly extraordinary and in fact unique service. As we all know, this Chapter is quite different from all the others. It is a « special » Chapter called for by the Church, which has laid down norms, directives and standards for its preparation and realisation Moreover, the Church has also clearly indicated its purposes and objectives. Following in our Father's footsteps we are fundamentally committed to the faithful carrying out of the Church's desire.

The preparation has been extraordinary: it went on for three years; the extent of consultation was vast so as to get to know the mind of all the confreres in the Congregation concerning is numerous problems; vast too the participation and study contribution of individual confreres, groups and communities; the two Provincial Chapters (as also this General Chapter itself) had an increased number of members. But that is not all.

It is only right to mention the excellent work done at the two Provincial Chapters and by their respective study-commissions in an atmosphere of liberty, respect and dialogue, as also the intelligent, patient, generous and self-sacrifing work accomplished by the various Central Commissions. I would like particularly to mention also the general gratitude of all towards those splendid confreres who worked indefatigably for several months at Villa Tuscolana, near Rome. In an atmosphere of Salesian brotherliness and exemplary community prayer they dedicated themselves to the truly exceptional and laborious task of patiently drawing up the basic or guide-line documents you have already received. To them and to all those who, in whatever mode or measure, have given their contribution to the preparatory work, and to Fr. Scrivo, the Regulator, who animated and coordinated all this immense labour, we extend our own thanks and those of the whole Congregation for the invaluable service rendered.

The venue

Speaking of the special preparations involved, we cannot pass over in silence the technical matter of the buildings. After the XIX General Chapter decided that the Generalate be transferred to Rome, the possibility of its being used for General Chapter was gone into. However, to accommodate two hundred and fifty or more people and provide all the necessary services was no simple matter. The solution seemed to be to have two places: the Generalate and a house for retreats and meetings. With an act of trust in Providence the work was begun.

It must be confessed that more than once we had cause to worry. Unforeseen obstacles and difficulties arose which hampered the timely completion of the buildings and equipment needed for the Chapter members and for the functioning of the whole organizing complex of the Chapter itself. We can say in fact that quite a record has been set in that, notwithstanding numerous and huge difficulties, at least the essential services are now ready in the twofold complex of the Generalate and the adjioining house for retreats and meetings. I am sure I voice your feelings in here expressing a well-merited vote of thanks to our Economer General, Fr. Pilla, who allowed himself no rest in battling against obstacles of every kind, determined to overcome them at any cost. Our thanks also to his immediate and valuable collaborators.

True, not everything is as yet perfect in either the Generalate or

the other house but your spirit of understanding, adaptation and sacrifice will know how to make up for whatever is lacking.

Our fundamental and special task

This being stated, it is extremely important that we all be fully conscious of the mandate confided to us by the Church and the Congregation.

The basic task of each Chapter member is this: we have been called here as legislators for the whole Congregation, with the mandate to search for and find what is best for the common good of the Society as a whole. The duty is incumbent upon each of us to secure that common good, if necessary by sacrificing our own particular interests. This, it seems to me, is the spirit that should animate each capitular legislator who respects this absorbing mandate of universal character.

The scope of this Chapter makes it something really special because, as you know, its purpose is to actuate an « appropriate renewal » adapted to the religious life of our Congregation. Those two words contain an enormous programme involving huge and complex problems which we are called upon to study and resolve. It is enough to read article 3 of *Perfectae Caritatis* to see how vast and even universal is the scope given to the General Chapter in the matter of renewal:

« The manner of living, praying, and working should be suitably adapted to the physical and psychological condition of today's religious and also, to the extent required by the nature of each community, to the needs of the apostolate, the requirements of a given culture, the social and economic circumstance anywhere, but especially in missionary territories.

« The way in which communities are governed should also be re-examined in the light of these same standards.

« For this reason constituions, directories, custom books, books of prayers and ceremonies, and similar compilations are to be suitably revised and brought into harmony with the documents of this sacred Synod. This task will require the suppression of outmoded regulations » (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 3).

That compendious enumeration alone could, as experience has shown, give rise to a certain reaction: Must everything be changed? Must nothing of our past remain? It is wise then to go back to the substantial root meaning of the word « renewal » itself. It is not a matter of destroying the Congregation or substituting it by another, nor does it demand a new foundation. We are not here to form a new

Congregation, for we have neither the charism nor the mandate to do so. It is the same identical Congregation that is called upon to reanimate itself whilst remaining essentially what Don Bosco wished it to be according to heavenly inspiration and as it has developed along the lines of sound tradition.

It is question here of the delicate operation of rejuvenation. Precisely on account of this it requires extreme attention and maximum respect since a scalpel must be applied to the actual living body which has generated us. Those who gird themselves to undertake this operation must, as it were, put on new clothes and be imbued with the charismatic spirit of our Father. Let us at least undertake this task with a delicacy composed especially of humility and deep respect, filially intent on interpreting the mind of our Father without falling into the temptation of substituting ourselves for him.

Duce Ecclesia! We shall tread on solid ground by relying constantly on the Church's guidance, for she offers all those helps that facilitate the clarification of our mandate as legislators of the renewal of the Congregation.

A secure guide in the magisterium

The first help it provides is simultaneously a guarantee of well-founded work. This is to be found in the conciliar and postconciliar documents and then in the papal and hierarchical magisterium. For the rest, the Church itself in calling for the renewal of religious institutes clearly points out that this must be inspired by the Council, the whole Council as understood and represented by the words of Paul VI: « a spirit that is at once renovating and innovating ». Needless to say, among the conciliar and postconciliar documents we should primarily give constant and deep attention to those that concern us directly. However, it is obvious that we should not restrict our continuous attention merely to those statements. Through its documents we must be aware of the whole Council as completed especially by the Pontifical Magisterium which has in recent years been rich in its teachings and in its constant up-to-date recommendations, especially regarding renewal. It would be a grave sin of omission and a sign of infidelity to our Father, who was so filially attentive to the words of the pope, were we to ignore that authoritative and magisterial word which includes all the interesting and renovating literature dealing with the renewal of the religious life on authentic conciliar lines.

As Chapter members we shall also find an indispensable help in Salesian literature. I appreciate that there will not be time for everything but still we should be able to read up on so many essentially Salesian matters. We cannot take up definite positions on even basic problems without such good support. To this end the programme of work will certainly be organized in such a way as to allow at least a minimum of time for such necessary study.

We are dealing with God's affairs

At this stage I feel it is necessary that we should once more take deep and clear cognizance of our task, for from this there will flow consequences that are essential to the success of the enterprise in which we are engaged.

Dear confreres, I do not presume to posture as a master before you but the heavy responsibility imposed on my shoulders as the successor of Don Bosco obliges me to recall first to myself and then to you the words of the Apostle: *Videte quod tractatis* — « Pay heed to what you are doing ».

Ours is not a gathering of shareholders in a firm; it is not a political assembly with contrasting economic interests, prestige and ambitions. Here we are the Church, or better an assembly of consecrated men, re-united in God's name, vowed totally to a supernatural ideal; we feel we are men of faith whose concerns are deeply rooted in that faith and whose activities, including those of the here and now, are fully enlightened, animated and motivated by faith.

We are not here because of any mere human concerns; ours are the interests of God, of His Kingdom, of His Church. We are here primarily concerned with the souls of our confreres and those confided to our care. Even if we have to discuss questions of organization and economy, this will be only in so far as they are necessary instruments in our mission. All the sociological, statistical, historical and philosophical sciences which we make use of are merely utensils in carrying out the mission to which we are consecrated — a spiritual, supernatural mission. If we do actually realize that we are here to treat of God's affairs, of souls, then we shall not need to convince ourselves that all the many human means which we can put to use will be of little value in fulfilling our mandate if we are not on God's wavelength — more explicitly, on a supernatural level and outlook.

Renewal and holiness

Certain obvious and useful considerations follow upon this. Regarding the General Chapter the word « renewal » has suffered much abuse. However, not even the most perfect plan of renewal would be successful if it were not to be set in motion in the actual life of the individual members. This actual living of all the valuable implications of renewal has a name: holiness. It must be clearly stated that as consecrated people our specific and professional vocation is and always will be to aim at sanctity more earnestly than the ordinary baptized Christian. The Church, the Council and the postconciliar period have all reminded us of this fact.

But our own Don Bosco did not weary in repeating the same fact to our predecessors. In a circular letter on 9 June 1867 he wrote firmly: « The first object of our Society is the sanctification of its members. Let each one impress this well on his mind and heart, starting with the Superior General and right down to the last member: no one is necessary in the Society; God alone is the Head and the absolutely necessary Master » (Ceria, *Epistolario di S. G. Bosco,* Letter 559).

The very foundation of our Congregation demonstrates the need and desire for this deep renewal summed up in the word « holiness ». Straight off then let us ask ourselves with extreme honesty and a sense of responsibility: How does the Salesian of today respond to this categoric commitment and need? How can he be faithful to this engagement in the new situation and climate created in the world in which he has to live and work today? Does our Salesian entity, as it exists and functions today, succeed in giving each confrere that supernatural status of which he has absolute need? How can we succeed in producing and in communicating the genuine apostolic vitality which in the past so stimulated the Salesian? Is our Salesian organism suffering from a certain lassitude? It is true that one notices in communities a certain attitude and mentality tending towards a wordly, secularized and materialistic life, towards a christianity that is « easy, without sacrifices, without duties, without renunciation, without superiors, without pain » — all of this is alien in word and deed to the demands of a consecrated and Salesian life. What are the reasons, all the reasons, for such a situation? And then let us ask ourselves if the ways and means offered by the Congregation to the Salesian today to help him towards holiness are proving adequate to the new situations of our times. How are they being utilized? Is it not perhaps necessary to substitute them with other efficacious resources still inspired towards great zeal for sanctity and perfection?

Truly Salesian renewal

The same questions should be asked regarding apostolate, authentic apostolate primarily among the young and especially among the poor, the needy and abandoned. In his message to our Chapter the Holy Father reminds us of this authoritatively, saying: « When one thinks of the enormous burden of the world problem of youth, the turbulence which possesses and agitates them, the seeming futility attributed to traditional pedagogical methods, and the need that is widely felt and experienced for new educational techniques, one cannot help being aware of the immense problems that have to be brought to the consideration of the Chapter Fathers... ».

The Provincial Chapters showed that these very elemental and basic problems are to be found in a wide variety of shades in the whole Congregation.

I repeat, the Congregation must and wants to recondition itself, above all in its religious, spiritual and apostolic life — and you understand what a range of values is contained in these words. But I would like to add at once that such values must be renewed on Salesian lines and for the Salesian himself, taking into account his spirit, his mission and his particular make-up (which is different from that of the Little Brothers of Jesus, the Jesuits, Opus Dei, etc.). Let us be realistic then, neither closing our eyes to our deficiencies and weak points nor lingering upon them except to eliminate them.

« Recta sapere »

Such being our problems, it is not merely evident but absolutely necessary that we unite our hearts in prayer as the Apostles did in the Cenacle.

As the Special General Chapter drew near, all sections of our multiple family felt more intensely committed to prayer, convinced of the absolute need of divine help. From all over the world I have received assurances and evidence of this immense chorus of prayer and I have in mind especially those souls who have offered up to God nor only their sufferings but even their very lives. Grateful for such charity, we today feel comforted and full of hope. But obviously we cannot delegate to others our own duty of prayer consequent upon the special responsibilities awaiting us.

The philosopher Peter Wust at the end of his life left his disciples this message: « With absolute certainty I have discovered the key, the magic key of Wisdom: it is prayer ». At our present great task

we too require the wisdom that comes from God, and therefore all the greater is our need for the key of prayer.

Our Lord has said: « The Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who pray ». And what is the Holy Spirit if not the infinite Wisdom of God? Let us therefore have recourse to Him day by day so that, enriched by His wisdom, we may understand aright (*recta sapere*), i.e. see clearly in order to judge wisely and hence come to right decisions. We have besides the good fortune of living these extraordinary days together and our community encounter with God will unite us even more than our work, for Our Lord has assured us that our prayer will thus be tremendously enriched and exalted.

But there is even more: each day we shall be united around the eucharistic table. For us it will not be just a more or less meaningful drama but rather the re-living of the mystery of Holy Thursday with the same faith as the disciples. United with, in and through Christ, nourished by the same food and drink, we shall feel encompassed by His solidarity. Having brought our problems and doubts and our daily life to the eucharistic table we shall take away from it that strength and help (*robur et auxilium*) which we so greatly need.

But even our personal and community prayer and the Eucharist itself would be hampered in their divine effect were we to present ourselves to God without that humility which is the *sine qua non* for the reception of His grace: *Resistit superbis, humilibus dat gratiam*, says Our Lord.

Humility: premise for construction

Precisely because we are convinced of this law of humility, we must be careful in defending ourselves against the *ego* of self-love which is ever prompt to nudge other things aside, camouflaging itself eloquently and persuasively.

Speaking to bishops, cardinals and to the Pope himself on retreat, Fr. Voillaume in commenting on the words of Jesus, « Unless you receive the kingdom of God as a little child, you will not enter therein », explained that those words implied complete humility of intellect and poverty of heart. And that is precisely the attitude and spirit which each of us must bring to the Chapter.

It is necessary to draw attention to the fact that dialogue, which is so important and irreplaceable for the efficacious study of problems, is founded above all on humility and hence on respect for one another and on mutual trust. It will be fruitful if no one considers himself omniscient or to have a monopoly of truth, and it cannot consist in expecting the unconditional surrender of the other side.

This implies therefore that the mind of each one should be charitably disposed not merely to hear but above all to listen to the others.

Still on the subject of humility, I would like to add another word: with our own personal humility let us also bring to the Chapter what we may call a collective or collegial humility. On account of his approaching Beatification it gives me great pleasure to quote Don Rua, who wrote thus to the Salesians in a circular letter dated 29 January 1894: « It is certain that when we examine the actual state of our Pious Society we shall easily perceive many imperfections, but God permits this so as to keep us in holy humility ». One can hardly say that Don Rua was a triumphalist!

But what of ourselves? With that « holy humility » we must be loyal and frank in recognizing the deficiencies, infidelities and miseries to be found in the Congregation, shunning the pre-conceived and basically proud notions of those who do not wish to face up to less pleasant realities. This does not mean that we are to set ourselves up as judges to condemn the men and concerns of the Congregation. Rather it should mean for all of us an examination of conscience prompted by our love for the Society which we desire to be *sine macula et sine ruga.*

Fidelity

I would say that fidelity is consequent upon the humility which ought to guide our activities in the Chapter. It urges us to raise our minds to, or better still to adhere with firm and unhesitant confidence to what is important: God, the Church, the Congregation. In doing so we must renounce our own selves, our own affairs, our own views.

This word « fidelity » is going to recur frequently in our Chapter work, just as it did in the preparatory documents. « Fidelity », it has been written, « is the endeavour to keep contact with the rock from which we have sprung forth, simultaneously as we strive to reach the goal we are aiming at ». Fidelity therefore is the continual rediscovery of the profound and inseparable link that unites these two pivots. Fidelity means penetration beyond the smoky veil of superficiality into the very *raison d'être* of what we accept and profess. Briefly, it is a law of life. The meaning of fidelity therefore must not be confused with customary practice or immobility, for it demands a restraining attitude of awareness that is animated by the light of experience.

It is important that each of us here persuade himself that in times of renewal such as we are living and working in, fidelity is an essentially positive and dynamic attitude. It is not and must not

become a mere passive acquiescence to whatever has been inherited or has become part of our patrimony, but rather it should be an active care to use it and bring it to maximum expansion. Fidelity is in no way related to jealous immobility or timid traditionalism; rather it is intertwined with activity, reflection and meditation. Basically, fidelity is the expression of love (in our case love for Don Bosco and the Congregation)), a true love that is intelligent and genuine and which in anxious that the person or thing loved should not become a mere archeological specimen but rather remain itself, vigorous with a life that is active, dynamic and fruitful.

But we must also convince ourselves that fidelity cannot have any connection either with a certain type of inadvisable progressivism which desires novelty for novelty's sake; which unconsciously leads to confusion; which credits and accepts every hypothesis as proven or provable; which, in the name of open-mindedness empties and laicizes both the Salesian and his mission.

Having said that, I appreciate that in practice discussion is always something very delicate, just as the positive situations to which these principles must be applied are likewise delicate and complex. But precisely on that account we must go ahead with a great sense of responsibility so as to avoid extremes at either end.

One sole heart

Dear sons, at the beginning of my talk I invited you to make of our fine big family here a cenacle that is alive and active, but it cannot be such without that fervent brotherly charity which constitutes its soul. The principal nourishing source of our fraternity will certainly be the eucharistic celebration diligently and fruitfully lived. But many other spiritual and even human elements will contribute towards keeping alive amongst us the atmosphere of that charity which unites hearts in understanding, forbearance, collaboration and joy.

We have one specific and particularly interesting motive for making all of us constructors of our cenacle of charity. In a book on renewal I read these unforgettable words which come from a person of vast experience of religious life and of General Chapters: « Renewal cannot be accomplished without charity. Renewal in fact signifies greater love and then better structures so as to give impulse to this greater love ». How greatly misguided are those who think that love for reform justifies the violation of charity.

We believe in charity and wish to adhere to it in its fullest sense even though we hail from every corner of the world and belong

to so many different cultures, civilizations and customs. Our age-range is rather wide, our ideas and points of view will not always coincide, but all this can be overcome by our spirit of brotherliness. Not for nothing do we say and feel that we are sons of the same Father.

Unity through combined strength

The most precious and coveted fruit of our cenacle of charity will be the fulfilment of Christ's prayerful testament: *Ut unum sint,* words that have re-echoed from our Father's lips since the very origin of the Congregation. Hardly had Don Bosco received from Rome in 1869 the longed for approbation of the Congregation than he called our first confreres together and held a long conference on the theme *Vivere in unum,* enlarging on the many motives and aspects of living as one (*M.B.,* IX, p. 571 seq.). Here and now I feel I must repeat the grave words of our Father: Let us live and work with a will towards unity — let us create a true communion of hearts.

I realise that we each carry in our hearts the disturbances, tensions, entreaties, the impatience and the numerous aspects of crisis that are upsetting the Church and human society and our own Congregation. As I said before, we bring with us here a combination of causes, mentalities, sensibilities and worries that are often quite diverse. But our very diversity will prove a providential asset if we act on the higher level of truly genuine communion.

Nevertheless no one should think of, still less desire, a preconceived, we might almost say a prefabricated unity, an artificial unanimity worth nothing. Let us rather consider and aim at a unity that is secure because it is sincerely desired, sought after and even gained by suffering — and I say this deliberately. On opening the great Catholic Synod of Federal Germany Cardinal Doepfener appealed for unity, quoting the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians: « Be zealous in preserving the unity given by the Spirit ». But he also pointed out that just before that the Apostle had invited those Christians to bear with one another in fraternal love, to accept one another. « Those words », said the Cardinal, « presuppose conflicts, divergence of ideas, controversies, points of friction ». As we know, all that is in the ordinary run of things, which would not be normal otherwise.

But if we are animated by true and positive fraternal love, and especially by a pure and sincere love for Don Bosco and the Congregation, the mutual toil and suffering in search of truth will make us accept one another and find a point of contact and identification

even in such great problems; together then we shall seek for the best solution, which will be the happy outcome of the integration of the diverse and invaluable energies present at this Chapter.

Courage and confidence

Dear Chapter members, I trust you will forgive this long discourse. I hope that its length has not been detrimental to the utility of the things I have said with brotherly heart for the sole purpose of doing my own dutiful service to our common Mother, the Congregation.

And now, to work — with courage and confidence! In a spirit free from all triumphalism or over-simplification let us confront the problems that await us. Let there be no fear in facing up to those problems, mountainous though they may seem, nor let there be any discouragement or pessimistic defeatism. Our Chapter should proceed along the lines of realism and courage. But what kind of courage? Let it be the fearlessness which is a virtue, the virtue of the strong and wise, that true fortitude which cannot be separated from wisdom. The result therefore of fortitude and wisdom happily united, this courage cannot be confused with the blustering rashness that rushes into the unknown. Ours then must be above all the courage of strong men who think before venturing. But there is more to it that that. We feel that Our Lord's words to the apostles apply also to us: « Fear not, it is I! » And let us remember, as Fr. de Foucauld wrote, that « Jesus is master of the impossible », with command over people and things, one who gives to those who abandon themselves to Him a sense of security and peace amidst the waves. « Let nothing disturb you! ».

Reason for trust

Rightly too have I recommended confidence. We have many and strong forces in the Congregation, in all categories, at all levels, of all ages, in every corner of the earth. You become aware of this when you get to know the Congregation, the whole Congregation in all its component parts.

I would like especially to point out that in the Congregation we have a section of youth with ideas, attitudes, needs and sensibilities which are often very different from those of the preceding generations. Sometimes youth is the victim of insecurity, of an exasperated and problematic situation, of a secularism which obscures or wipes out

the supernatural. Nevertheless among these young people there are also some elements which are splendid in every way: they live their consecration with generosity, they sincerely love Don Bosco and the Congregation even though they see the defects and inefficiencies; they are ready to give themselves to the point of sacrifice; they have a solid and convinced piety; they are our hopes for the Congregation of tomorrow. Let me continue.

The Church has confidence in our Congregation, a trust that emanates from one who knows us on what we might call a universal plane, a confidence that sometimes makes me almost afraid. In the last audience granted me, once again Paul VI used expressions that embarrassed me when I thought of our many deficiencies, but he wanted to confirm his own great confidence and that of the Church in our Congregation.

When I speak to the Generals of other orders and congregations I am able to re-assess that judgment in the light of reality, including all those deficiencies that we must not ignore or underestimate. Among other things I can see that we are all struggling with very similar difficulties. But we Salesians still have reasons for confidence that are both familiar and altogether special. Perhaps the fact is unique that in the origins of our Congregation there is an unquestionably exceptional supernatural presence. Speaking of the Congregation, its birth and development, Don Bosco said verbatim: « One can say that there has been nothing that was not known beforehand. I took no step in the Congregation until some supernatural fact counselled it; no change or improvement or obstacle occurred which was not preceded by an order from Our Lord. From this fact I think it well not to consider the man... What does it matter to me if people speak well or badly about this? What do I care when men judge me in one way or another? All that is necessary is that the works of the Lord be made manifest! » (*M.B.* XII, p. 69).

The following impressive statement by Don Bosco will therefore cause no surprise: « Among all the religious congregations and orders perhaps ours has more of the word of God » (*M.B.* XVI, p. 305).

That being so, how can we possibly suspect that God will forsake the Congregation at the very moment it is being called to renewal by the Church and therefore by Don Bosco, that He will leave it without that presence of inspiration and guidance which He gave it so generously at its origin? We have every right to count upon God's help: *Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini!*

Mary our guide

We must seek to deserve that help but we shall secure it more easily through the Virgin Help of Christians. In the life and mission of Don Bosco, even if for different reasons, two figures are inseparable: youth and Mary. On the morning of the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1887 Don Bosco seemed to be looking back upon the difficult pathway of his life. Then he said to his deeply moved Salesians: « We have walked securely: we cannot go wrong. It is Mary who guides us! » (*M.B.* XVII, p. 439). Don Bosco repeated this truth frequently, for it was confirmed over and over again: « Mary was always my guide! »

If that was so for our Father, surely Mary will be a guide to us also who, in unconditional fidelity to Don Bosco, wish to work during these months so that the Congregation may emerge from this Chapter *qualis esse debet.*

With unlimited trust in our Father and in Mary, with all the fervour of the apostles in the Upper Room, let us gather about her as we repeat with filial and humble hearts: « O Mary, you were our Father's secure guide at the birth and development of our Family. Be so to us also who are aware of our weakness and insecurity as we tread the path traced out by Providence to bring our beloved Congregation to that true and faithful renewal which will be for it the revival of spring! ».

Presentation of the « Report on the General State of the Congregation »

Dear Chapter Members,

I am here to fulfil the mandate of the XIX General Chapter which, in article 31 of its regulations, stated: « At one of the first meetings of the Chapter the Rector Major will give a general report on the state of the Congregation ».

As this is something new, I have tried to find the best way to reply to and interpret the wish of the XIX General Chapter. I say « interpret » because obviously a report on « the state of the Congregation » could take on various forms unless otherwise clearly indicated. Because of this difficulty and in my anxiety to make it beneficial to all I have made use of the collaboration of the Superior Council.

Collaboration of the Superior Council

It is here opportune to state that we have always worked collegially and with obvious results and benefits — and this applies not only to the present report but to all other problems of note. I am in fact more than ever convinced that today especially it is possible to confront problems usefully and resolve them adequately simply by getting together in a free, serene and respectful confrontation of the different angles, points of view, and assessments. I have always noticed that such exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of total freedom and yet mutual respect and esteem always leads to the best solution possible at which the Superior could arrive.

And it is precisely this method, clearly indicated and encouraged by Vatican II and by our XIX General Chapter, that I have sought to follow with the cordial, fraternal and constructive collaboration of all the members of the Council. And here I believe it to be my special and pleasant duty before this solemn assembly to acknowledge this fruitful work accomplished about me by the members of the Superior Council. I think I can say that we have always worked in unity of aim in order to serve the Congregation in its interests

and in particular to carry out the inspiring deliberations of General Chapter XIX and to infuse and circulate its spirit of renewal in the Congregation.

As you will notice from the reading of this report, this task, begun and carried on immediately after the Chapter, met with difficulties of various kinds. One of the problems was this: whilst a start was being made to actuate the deliberations of General Chapter XIX there was already abroad what someone has called the postconciliar wind. In fact the Congregation found itself as it were in the eye of the cyclone right at the very moment in which it had put in motion the apparatus destined to render operative General Chapter XIX which was already in a position to benefit by many points of Council documents.

This coincidence, it is well to recall, has had quite considerable repercussions and consequences, aggravated by the fact that simultaneously we had to mobilize and convoy our forces for almost three years in preparing for the Special General Chapter willed by *Ecclesiae Sanctae*. Certainly it has been a great benefit besides a duty to the Church and the Congregation, but one cannot deny that through force of those circumstances quite a few deliberations and directives of the XIX General Chapter could not be carried out.

Characteristics of the report

Returning to the report presented, as I have said it is the fruit of the combined work of all the members of the Council. They first gave suggestions and ideas for its presentation and then, each according to his own competence, all the first-hand information at their disposal on the various points dealt with. The report was then collegially re-examined and discussed, re-drafted and finally coordinated by the Rector Major according to the remarks and observations received.

In spite of this work the report has no pretence to be perfect and exhaustive. Apart from the difficulty and uncertainty deriving from the fact that this is the first time such a document is being presented, it has to be stated that big difficulties of various kinds arose. Let us mention just one.

The Congregation is a living and composite reality, with situation differences which are often considerable. From this fact arises the problem of presenting a report which, without wasting time in a detailed analysis, will give a faithful image of the actual state of the Congregation. However, I feel that in spite of its deficiencies and limitations, not only is this report an act of obedience to General

Chapter XIX but it can also offer us a kind of thumbnail sketch of the Society. The Special Provincial Chapters had at hand a similar compendium of the mind of the Congregation.

In spite of its limitations this report can be called a radiograph of what the Congregation is actually doing and how it is acting in the various sectors of its life. I have used the word « radiograph » but perhaps it is inexact, for it does not present even a panoramic photograph of the Congregation. A photograph is essentially static, capturing just one moment of reality. This report which I offer to your attention is instead something forceful. It does not try so much to pin down the actual state of the Society today as rather to show in forceful perspective how it has arrived at its actual state during the evolution of these past six years.

Besides being expressive the report is a summary, at least relatively. As you will notice, however, precisely because it is a summary its one hundred condensed pages combined with statistics presented in a special leaflet. These, correctly read and interpreted, serve to give an up-to-date and documented panoramic view of the Congregation in all the essential aspects of its life. Particular aspects and details of the life of the Society are illustrated and, when occasion offers, will be developed gradually as the Chapter comes to deal with each specific subject.

To conclude this preface which I have considered necessary, I think and hope that the report which the Rector Major presents to you in the name of the Superior Council will, among other things, facilitate your work in so far as it offers you not merely a sectional view of the life of the Congregation but one which is general or at least very wide, even if not quite complete, and at the same time one that is up to date within the bounds of possibility. From it you can realize the type of soil that is going to receive the seed, the very real situations that prevail, and the expectations of those to whom you will have to present the deliberations of this Chapter.

Centre of the Congregation's interest

The report has a certain sequence and consequently follows a line corresponding to the rich directives emanating from General Chapter XIX.

One of the most significant, most productive and most binding norms given us by that Chapter was that the Salesian is at the very centre of the Congregation's interest. In placing the Salesian at the centre it obviously intended to make him more Salesian, a better Salesian; it aimed at raising him in his entire being as a baptized

person, as someone consecrated, as an apostle, as one specifically dedicated to continue the mission of Don Bosco in his spirit and with his style of doing things.

Actually the Congregation is not its works but its Salesians; the Society is active and fruitful only in so far as each Salesian responds to the ideal which the Church and the Congregation places before him.

Although such a view, responding as it does to heartfelt and very valid aspirations in the Congregation, has found some response and development, it cannot be denied that it has fallen short of our expectations. This is not the time to make a profound and detailed diagnosis of the truly complicated causes which are also connected with situations extraneous to the Society and which have limited the energetic actualization of this vital directive of the Salesian as the centre of the Congregation's interest. What one can say however, with humble and serene sincerity, is that some progress has been made in this direction.

The report, even though it may not clearly seem so, does actually accompany and present the aspects and events in the life of the Salesian, a life of consecration, of prayer, of fraternal and practical living together, of apostolate.

Stages of formation

The Salesian at profession is not automatically the finished product. Hence we have successive periods of formation with all that that implies. But if it is true that there is a time-period dedicated specifically to formation, it is no less true that even after such a time there remains in all the need and hence the obligation of what is today called « ceaseless formation ». The experience gained at the so-called Second Novitiate course for thirty priests at Caracas proved completely the vital importance of this « ceaseless formation ».

The report touches on all the stages of formation which concern the life and future of the Congregation in the light of the experiences of these difficult times, which for a variety of well-known reasons have placed before the Congregation and particularly before those responsible for formation at all its stages, new, complex and urgent problems without end. The present phenomenon, with diverse and even notable gradations throughout the world, has acute and sometimes grave stresses in certain regions. The report seeks as realistically as possible to give a picture of the situation. But as I have already said, one must keep in mind the often notable diversity of situational circumstances to be met with in the Congregation.

In my opinion, in dealing with the theme of formation in the light of our own experience and that of others, especially in recent years, we must completely review the whole cycle of Salesian formation right from the very first signs of a vocation until the attainment of its essential aims, together with its continuous nourishment and renewal. The errors of the past, even the recent past, should help us correct these mistakes with the necessary courage and a healthy realism in order to forge new paths that will help the Salesian of our times to live his vocation authentically, with strong conviction, in detail and fruitfully.

Still dealing with formation, in the report you will find a section treating of the problems of the P.A.S. Reading those pages you will realize at once that the subject is of special importance. Representing as it does the whole Congregation, the Chapter must not only get a responsible view of the situation but it must study at least in broad outline the solution of the problems posed. I feel that in the ligth of experience this major assembly of the Congregation will have to indicate responsibly what the Society expects and demands from the P.A.S., what directives it intends to give so that the very grave sacrifices being made by the Congregation for the support of the life of the P.A.S. may produce adequate results that are not only intellectually and culturally sound but at the same time apostolically Salesian.

Crisis of vocations

The sad subject of the vocations crisis will be found treated with abundant data in the report. It deals not only with the diminution of the flow of new vocations but also with the sad phenomenon of those who leave the Congregation at various stages.

It is always painful to see confreres leaving us, but more so when it concerns those who are mature in age, perpetually professed or priests. We deal here with a phenomenon afflicting both male and female religious orders and congregations and the whole Church. Perhaps not all are aware that, according to the figures we have received, our Congregation, although it has suffered acute losses in the last three years, has nevertheless one of the lowest percentages of loss on the statistical scale of the large male congregations.

A point that has notable influence in determining our situation is the fact that the all-inclusive number of newly-professed, whilst considerably reduced in comparison with what may be called the boom years for vocations, has nevertheless remained at a steady

level which gives a discreet proportion of compensation for the losses due to departures from the Society.

Obviously however, this fact should not make us close our eyes to the grave reality confronting the provinces and the Congregation. On no account must we obscure or underestimate the phenomenon of the truly serious and sometimes almost chronic haemorrhage suffered by various provinces, simultaneously with the ageing of personnel and the inability to cope any longer with tasks previously carried out.

The problem imposed by the vocations crisis is neither simple nor easy and it is definitely linked up with many other problems, some of which at a superficial glance may seem foreign to it.

As you will see in the report, steps have already been taken to confront this problem at various levels as it exists today, but I think I can say that we have still a long and difficult way to go. We have to equip ourselves with a great deal of humility to examine realistically and see clearly, as far as depends upon us, the past and present causes of this haemorrhage so as to tackle the whole problem in all its component parts decisively, correctly and at the proper time. We can say that this Special General Chapter has the life and future of the Congregation in its hands and therefore it must get to the bottom of the problem and crisis of vocations and all the facts connected with it.

The contribution of so many qualified men from such diverse regions, rich in the most varied experiences and especially animated by firm and sincere love of Don Bosco who lives and is perpetuated in the Church through the Congregation, will be invaluable in re-invigorating in the Society that twofold fruitful, spiritual and apostolic vitality which, whilst mitigating on the one hand the sad losses that occur, will on the other attract and make itself esteemed among the youth of our times.

Salesians coadjutors

Speaking of « the Salesian », of vocations, of crises, the report rightly pauses to illustrate the situation concerning our very dear confreres, the Salesian coadjutors, as seen under various aspects and at various levels. Let me state at once that in the Congregation we have in every continent many wonderful coadjutors, including not only those mature in age but also very young ones who are exemplary in every way: generous and very often truly self-sacrificing workers, many greatly gifted through a cultural and technical

formation which has enabled them to undertake various difficult offices splendidly. Their presence in the structures of government and education has been a decidedly positive one. I feel it my duty to witness to their religious and Salesian life, lived as it is so coherently, conscientiously, and so often in suffering. I say « suffering » because of the fact that they do not always receive the direct or indirect help they have the right to expect.

Having said that, I must state that in addition to losses it is a grave fact that the number of coadjutor vocations is small — to such an extent that very many provinces have no coadjutor vocations in the novitiate or beyond. This void should not leave us indifferent. Whilst admitting the varied causes of the situation I feel that a lot depends on ourselves. In the light of the whole realistic situation the Chapter will certainly not fail to pinpoint these causes so as to find the most suitable ways and means to eliminate them or at least diminish them. With the highly distinguishable characteristics that neatly differentiate him from the lay members of so many other congregations — a point not always or everywhere appreciated — the Salesian coadjutor constitutes something very special. As I have said on other occasions, the Congregation would not be what Don Bosco conceived and wished it to be if through some absurd hypothesis it were to be deprived of the absolutely essential element of the Salesian Coadjutor.

This subject therefore must certainly be deeply studied here, looking to Don Bosco and the constant line of development through his successors, at the same time taking into account the renewed assessment given by Vatican Council II to the layman in the Church and in religious life, and the various consequences of this.

Salesians and poor youth

To live his special vocation, whether as a person or as a living element of the community at local or provincial level or at that of the whole Congregation, the Salesian must carry out the mission confided to the Society by Providence. The ideas « Salesian » and « mission » are necessarily concomitant. Hence the second part of the report is on Salesian activity. You will find it illustrated with the criteria already stated, namely the sectors within which our apostolate in the world is framed and developed.

It is unnecessary to recall that this apostolate, whilst it has a very special bias towards youth, and in particular the poor and needy,

is still valid even though developed (right from its beginnings) in a variety of ways.

With regard to apostolate among poor youth, works of social assistance and promotion, we have asked all the provinces for one final effort in this laborious preparation for the General Chapter, namely to provide as complete and up-to-date a report as possible — not just a dry, disjointed list but rather an account which objectively presents and describes the aspects and implications of all the activities undertaken by communities, groups or individual confreres in various forms of service to the poor and especially the young.

I would here like to thank the confreres in the various provinces who undertook the systematic collecting of all this informative material. But I feel that at this moment I am interpreting the unanimous sentiment of the assembly in expressing the Congregation's gratitude to the thousands of confreres who in every place and in the most diverse and daring forms, with a sense of total dedication deeply combined with humility and simplicity that does not seek for thanks or publicity, look always to Christ and to Don Bosco and are the good samaritans of so many poor and needy brethren.

Not long ago, speaking to me of our confreres (poor among the poor) who work in the immense and miserable slums of Tondo (Manila) which he had visited, Paul VI repeated in accents of deep and sincere emotion: « They are heroes! They are heroes ». Many other confreres deserve this elogium with those of Tondo. In fact, thanks be to God, the confreres of Tondo are not the only ones in the Congregation who work thus with sacrifice and that joy that derives from faith. We hope that the Chapter will give strong impetus to increase their number and also that supernatural charity which is the uniquely efficacious spur capable of carrying on such generous Salesian activities.

Returning to the documentation of the activities on behalf of the poor, I think that the Chapter members will find in it sufficient material to gauge the true position of the Congregation in this field so congenial to the Society and to which such a great section of young people in the Church and in our own environment are rightly very sensitive. This documentation will be put at the disposition of the Chapter members in its original form as it came from the various provinces. In these accounts you will find not only many praiseworthy things but also notable lacunae that betray a weakened and perhaps in certain cases a deadened sensibility. Obviously it will be the Chapter's task to find new forms in order to give where necessary a renewed and courageous impulse to the work of service on behalf of poor youth in the footsteps and spirit of our Father.

Youth centres

A propos, of this irreplaceable apostolate of ours which is mainly and generally directed towards youth, I think it opportune to emphasize two facts which seem to me to be very indicative and closely connected.

In 1967 the Rector Major launched the idea of having a youth centre in each province, even if necessary by transforming some existing work. The idea was that each province should have at least one work which was substantially faithful to the idea of Don Bosco's Oratory, adapting it courageously to our times and putting it at the service of today's young people, together with activities corresponding to the real and various needs of the times. This invitation clearly implied above all an effort and commitment to seek new ideas that correspond to the needs of today.

In all truth and sincerity I must admit that the appeal was not very successful. Whilst giving due acknowledgement to what was done I must state that it was not much, apart from the fact that in certain cases some ventures were youth centres only in name. I mention this not so much because not many new youth centres were opened as for the fact that all this is indicative of much deeper and preoccupying situations and motivations to which I call your attention in the report to the Chapter.

Re-dimensioning results

In compliance with the decision of General Chapter XIX, after long and deep preparatory study, the Rector Major with his Council invited all the members of the Congregation, through the various organs of government, to collaborate in the realization of that vast, complex and vital operation which went under the name of the re-dimensioning of our works. Even if imperfect it was nevertheless a first tentative step to interest all the members of the Congregation in its problems.

What were the results of this operation? We must admit sincerely that they were not really brilliant. Moreover, a serene and careful study shows that the many causes for the lack of success can be reduced to a fact which we must admit with all humility, namely that in the various parts of the Congregation the psychological and technical preparation for a clear and courageous confrontation of the mass of problems imposed by re-dimensioning was lacking. People were simply not able to gauge accurately the many values and spiritual, apostolic and formative interests which it not only wished

to defend but to strengthen, keeping in mind the actual situations in which the Congregation lives and the prospects which it will inevitably encounter in the near future. In fact it was not a question of just closing houses but of studying everything so as to find an operative plan that was realistic, farsighted and long-ranged, and and in all this the reduction of works was only a part or rather a point of departure. But as I have said, people were not yet sufficiently prepared and mature enough for an enterprise of such proportions.

Nevertheless I must say that these recent years have seen a positive evolution in this matter. Evident proof of this can be found in the fact that in not a few provinces the work of re-dimensioning was later taken up again, often at Provincial Chapters and with criteria decisively different from the rather negative ones previously used. This is an evident sign that, even though slowly, correct ideas do go ahead progressively and find acceptance in minds open to truth and to the common good.

At any rate the re-dimensioning did one good thing in almost totally blocking the opening of new houses — but what resistance was made to this idea!

The lack of immediate success in re-dimensioning due to the reasons stated is, I feel, a realistic warning: when drawing up plans of work one must always keep in mind the foundation on which they must rest and above all the men who must understand and who can realize those plans.

Leaders

Closely connected with re-dimensioning is the problem of leadership at all levels of the Congregation. It is well to admit at once that this problem is also felt outside the Congregation, in the Church and in civil society and in extremely important sectors such as politics, industry, economy, syndicates, etc. There is no point here in giving all the complex causes for this.

Examining our own environment we are all daily aware of the difficulty in finding leaders who respond to the needs of today in our communities and works. These difficulties are aggravated first of all by the great number of key-posts to be filled, for it is not only provincials and rectors who have directive tasks. Think for example of provincial and local *vicarii,* parish priests (about 700 parishes!), headmasters, Provincial Economers, Masters of Novices, directors of oratories, etc.

A good approximate computation comes to this conclusion: for every two to three Salesians one should be a leader. This we admit

can explain so many situations, so many deficiencies in the most varied sectors of our life, religious and pastoral, organizational and administrative. It is true that we have begun to give a kind of specific preparation to new provincials; here and there for some years now courses have been organized for new rectors and others responsible for particular departments. This is very good but it does not resolve the problem, which is so very vast and has deterrent repercussions in the life of the Congregation.

The lack of capable leaders, grave as it is in itself, gives rise to other notable situations, e.g. the disproportion between personnel and tasks. As has often been clearly stated, there has been an excessive quantitative development through multiplication of works, sometimes simultaneous with an evident diminution of vocations and with other difficulties we can easily imagine.

On account of the haemorrhage afflicting the Congregation in these times I feel there is need of extreme courage in restricting our frontiers and in studying our choices well. Only in one way can the Congregation give attention to its vital need for growth in quality and depth, namely by the careful qualification of the confreres which is today more necessary than ever and above all in the spiritual, theological and pastoral fields as well as in the cultural, professional and technical spheres. I think, for example, of the need we have of confreres prepared in spiritual theology, catechesis, liturgy; I ponder on how we can prepare people for the various sectors of social communications and in the first place the press. It is true that here and there this grave necessity is recognized and effort is being made, but not enough. In my opinion the Congregation needs action that responds to definite plans with realistic criteria.

I trust that the Chapter members will once more take up these preoccupations already brought to light in our XIX General Chapter and will give the Congregation clear and precise directives for the solution of these two vital needs: the qualification of Salesians especially for the houses of formation, and at the same time the adequate preparation of leading personnel for the needs of today.

The Missions

A word on the Missions.

Each year a good number of priests have responded to the Rector Major's appeal for Latin America. In order not to upset the balance of strength in the provinces of origin many requests had to be turned down, but those we were able to send brought valuable aid to

numerous missions which were in serious and urgent need. Huge problems still remain.

Whilst Asia in general, and especially India, is moving towards a certain self-sufficiency regarding indigenous vocations, Africa is finding it difficult and I think that the Chapter, in treating of the Missions, should give its attention to this enormous continent which offers us a field that is not only vast but also open to evangelization.

The problem of Latin America is a grave one on account of the responsibility deriving from historical grounds and because of our own considerable numbers there. In the audience I had with him Paul VI said: « Help Us to save Latin America! ». We can sense all the grief contained in that paternal invitation and commitment which touches our hearts. Don Bosco would certainly not have remained insensible to it. Yet we cannot hide the tangible and constant weakening of our forces in Latin America even in spite of the aid from Europe. The Chapter must concern itself with this great and difficult problem but I think that its very difficulty itself impels us to find adequate solutions elsewhere. One solution, it seems to me, is that we must seek to prepare layfolk, especially from our own works, so as to obtain understanding and proved collaborators in all the various sectors of our apostolate. Unfortunately, hitherto little has been done by us to enlist the precious contribution of our laity.

Recently something definite was begun here in Rome for the serious preparation of layfolk to collaborate with us in the countries that need help, but I trust that after the General Chapter not only in Europe but in Latin America itself and the other continents serious attention will be given to promote similar enterprises, utilizing experience already gained. This will benefit those who receive the help of these layfolk and no less the laity themselves who will feel greatly enriched in a spiritual, apostolic and Salesian way.

Fraternal solidarity

I cannot omit at least mention of Fraternal Solidarity. As has been repeated in word and writing, this enterprise has as its scope to break down certain psychological barriers and to develop a communal missionary sensibility which expresses itself in positive deeds. In its wide sense it also rings true to *Perfectae Caritatis* and the idea of Vatican II. The economic aid thus donated to many of our works which were in grave difficulties has certainly given tangible evidence of this initiative. And so I wish to thank the

provinces, communities and confreres who, understanding the meaning and scope of the enterprise, came forward, even at the cost of sacrifice, to meet the needs of deserving confreres and works.

But solidarity cannot stop at financial aid, even though that is appreciated. People are coming to understand that it must extend also to fields and sectors much more demanding but also more enriching for those who give and those who receive. It will be the mark and result of that charity which is at the basis of the whole of renewal in the Church and in the Congregation.

Following the directives of *Perfectae Caritatis*, by means of the fruits of our solidarity compaign we have also given fraternal help outside the Congregation to dioceses in Vietnam, to bishops and religious in Pakistan and India, and to various social works in Brazil.

Social apostolate

From a reading of the report on the social apostolate it will be seen that whilst much has been done in our activities on behalf of the Cooperators a great deal still remains. This will be effected through the Vatican Council directives for the apostolate of the laity as well as through the very precious potential of multiple conscientious and qualified collaborators which we can find in our layfolk, of whom we have ever greater and more serious need. This, in my opinion, is a most vital and interesting point which is also connected with the thought of Don Bosco. The Chapter must study it deeply so as to come to clear conclusions.

As regards the Past Pupils, progress has been made in various parts of the Congregation to organize and assist them but our sensibility on this subject must be developed at all levels of responsibility. The case of our Past Pupils is not a superfluous activity depending on the viewpoint of this or that individual; it is the natural and necessary completion of the years and years of education, work and sacrifice of so many Salesians. Hence this is a responsibility which the community as such must assume, even if individual persons are commissioned for it. Neglect of this activity creates a void and a mutilation of our entire educative work.

Regarding the instruments of social communication also you will notice that efforts have been made to go ahead according to the norms and directives of Vatican II and the hierarchy. It should be noted that this sector of the apostolate forms part of the specific scope of our mission in the Church. A very serious and as yet unresolved problem is the preparation of personnel suitable for this form of apostolate today, for they are more than ever needed under

every aspect. But even here this goes back to the re-dimensioning of our works, to their grading and to the qualifying of the confreres.

Government and structures

We come now to the government and structures of the Congregation, as they are called today.

Even if not in great detail, you will find in the report an adequate account of the considerable work accomplished in these years at all levels, and especially regarding the evolutionary maturing and translating into new styles and standards of government. This transformation will appear all the more notable when compared with the customs and mentality itself that existed only a few years ago but which gave way before the deliberations of General Chapter XIX which were authoritatively confirmed at Vatican Council II.

The ideas which formed the basis of all this work emanating from the centre and spreading out beneficially in the Congregation were these: co-responsibility, mutual interest, participation, information, dialogue.

In harmony with these ideas were the very many meetings of the Rector Major with provincials, provincial counsellors, rectors and confreres responsible for particular sectors (e.g. houses of formation) in the various continents; also the numerous meetings of the other Superiors of the Council at Provincial Conferences and with other groups and categories of confreres. It has been remarked that never before has there been such frequent and intense contact between the Centre and periphery as in these years. That remark is true and I should add that these encounters, held in an atmosphere of brotherly understanding and for the sake of mutual discussion of problems *in loco,* are, when well prepared and planned, a very efficacious instrument for a government which desires to obtain not so much the carrying out of decisions, whether imposed from above or from afar, as the search for the best solutions in the light of reality in the actual places and times and using the results of common and varied experience.

A very positive aspect of this collaboration and co-responsibility has been the consultation of the confreres in regard to the selection of men for special responsibilities. In the great majority of cases one noticed prudence and maturity in judgment and consequently well-pondered and wise suggestions. Like so many others, this experience has proved a very positive one and it will be defined and perfected by the General Chapter. I think we can say without hesitation that we are on the right road.

Economy

The last part of the report concerns economy.

In this delicate sector the Economer General has been in continual contact with the Rector Major and his Council and he has followed the directives of the Constitutions, namely to give guidance and service to the provinces, to administer goods not belonging to any specific province, and to take care of concerns proper to the general direction.

The report gives you an ample account of what has been done to provide both provincial and local administration with an organization corresponding to the importance and delicacy and in many cases to the complexity of administration.

Meetings at all levels, courses, and uninterrupted consultation with continual contact between centre and periphery have been excellent aids in improving many situations in the administrative-economic-financial area which needs adequately prepared personnel. Deficiencies of various kinds still remain, due to different causes. I think the Chapter will have to insist on improvement in this area which gives such necessary service and is so useful to the community and to its apostolic work.

In the second place, as mentioned, the Economer General's office has given service in the general administration, a work deserving our grateful appreciation.

The report will certainly serve to discountenance those fantastic stories published here and there to the detriment of the Congregation, for it gives the actual facts which are in great contrast to them.

The first striking point in the report is this: the General Direction has no fixed source of income either in the Congregation or in property in order to meet the urgent expenses regarding its activities. As can be seen in the statement of assets and liabilities the General Direction, with all its worldwide bourdens and commitments, lives on whatever Providence sends through benefactors, who are very often people of modest means, almost exclusively in Italy; the contribution of any house, whilst appreciated, is a mere drop in the ocean of its needs.

The charity of benefactors

In practice therefore the General Direction depends on charity and one might ask what would be the consequences of a cessation or even a slackening off of this source of help. Don Bosco, who always went ahead between debts and benefactors, will not allow his

sons to lose their good name and the good cause which drew down God's blessings on him even in material aid. In any case I think the question needs to be asked also in view of the transfer of the General Direction to Rome and in the eventuality that the Chapter may wish to seek other arrangements in regard to the maintenance of so many of our works in the world which at present depend upon the Centre for support.

Whilst it is clear that we should be able to live by our work, it should also be clear that for diverse reasons our work is often not able to maintain all of our institutes (e.g. I think of the enormous difficulties encountered by some provinces in providing for the expenses of personnel in formation), still less open new ones. This refers especially to certain types of work, e.g. technical schools, charitable institutes, retreat houses, the Athenaeum, or the Generalate. In these and other similar cases the Congregation has need of benefactors, persons or social entities which in one way or another can assist us financially.

Just now I have in mind as an example the enormous amount of good effected by our missionary houses which for decades have sent hundreds upon hundreds of confreres all over the Salesian world — the number has been estimated at about two thousand and fifty. Some houses of this kind, e.g. Rebaudengo, Bernardi-Semeria, etc., bear the names of those great benefactors who enabled us to build and equip them. There are many of them, not only in Italy but in almost all countries where our works exist and live through the generosity of such benefactors. Even recently we have been able to open certain works only because of help given by new benefactors.

However, such help, wherever offered, has never in any way conditioned our apostolate, methods and liberty of action. We have never become involved or entangled in operations or situations inconsistent with our condition as religious and Salesians. No matter what pressure comes from certain particular situations, we certainly cannot divert to other purposes those properties and donations accepted solely for ends consistent with our mission.

I understand modern sensitiveness to this point and I am convinced that far from ignoring it we should keep it well in mind and draw the necessary consequences. The Chapter will certainly deal with this argument, which has echoes and repercussions of great import in so many sections of our mission. But I think it would be unjust and unreasonable above all to pass judgment according to the standards and sensibilities of today on things that have happened in the past.

Precisely in regard to present day situations, sensibilities and

requests, we should proceed calmly and prudently, with a discerning mind which knows how to distinguish things of value and moment from what are not. I feel that Don Bosco would certainly act thus at this juncture in reading correctly the signs of the times.

But I must conclude. Obviously economy has its due place and role as a functional instrument in the life of the Congregation but it is certainly not its central problem.

Central problem: the Salesian

I think you will all agree with me that the central problem of the Congregation on which the Chapter must concentrate its interest and from which all its other problems derive is the Salesian himself, his identity, his mission, his formation, his style of life and all the values that converge there. The Salesian is the living structure and true cause of the Congregation — he is the heart, the life, the *raison d'être* of the Congregation. For this reason let me express once more a firm convinction based on the Council and the whole post-conciliar magisterium and on my own experience gained in meetings with Superiors General. It is one which has been suggested to me also by the numerous and extremely varied contacts I have been able to have in the different continents with hundreds upon hundreds of confreres. My conviction is this: the enormous amount of work done by the Congregation to prepare this Chapter will have been in vain, as also the no less necessary and heavy work to which we are now committed; if — *quod Deus avertat* — there does not come forth from this Chapter a Salesian positively and vitally renewed.

However, with full confidence we can say that such an hypothesis lacks all foundation. The report which I have presented and commented upon, with all its positive and negative aspects, presents the most realistic and existential picture of the Congregation possible but it should not tempt you to indulge in sterile criticism. It is presented merely to offer you a solid platform from which to go forth with renewed energy after a courageous and fruitful review of affairs, so as to actuate the programme which Paul VI already gave to the Congregation at the end of the XIX General Chapter in the happy phrase: *Progredire!* It is good for us to repeat that word today because it seems to me to be the ever-living and ever present echo of Don Bosco's own phrase: « We must not slacken off! ».

May the Virgin Help of Christians help us to utilize sensibly this twofold fatherly invitation: that of the Church through the Pope, and that of our Father Don Bosco.

The Rector Major's address of homage to the Holy Father on the occasion of the audience given to the members of the General Chapter

Holy Father,

six years ago, before the Vatican Council II celebrated its closing session, your Holiness was kind enough to grant a special audience to the members of the XIX General Chapter and to address to them a very precious exhortation. On that occasion in your opinion, the central theme was the repeated invitation to « forge ahead ». During these six years past, which have not always been easy, that call has been our guide and stimulus.

As a source of enlightenment and support in our efforts have also been the directives that Your Holiness sent to the Chapter last April, in the form of the apostolic exhortation « Evangelica Testificatio » which we received at a most opportune time, and still more recently the documents of the Synod.

But each member of this Chapter felt deep down in his heart an ardent desire for an encounter with Your Holiness, to hear yet another word of encouragement and of enlightenment in the task that we are bringing to an end and in the no less ardous task that awaits us after the Chapter, to confirm our filial devotion and obedience to the Pope and to receive his apostolic blessing.

On behalf of those here present, and of the entire Congregation that they represent, I wish to express to Your Holiness our gratitude for all the kindness that once again you have shown to the humble sons of Don Bosco.

Our task which was prepared with the widest and, I would even say, hectic participation of all the salesians spread all over the world, has lasted for more than six months; and only now with the election of the new members of the Superior Council has it entered into its final stages. We have carried out these activities with the guide-lines of the Church, with the Council and with the teaching authority of the Church in mind. Our aim during these days has been to bring about in our religious life that renewal of which Your Holiness shows the Church the perfect example as well as the safest

and most fruitful paths. It has been our constant endeavour during all these activities to remain faithful to Don Bosco, to our mission and to our devotion to the Pope. First of all fidelity to Don Bosco, man of God and also man of tireless activity. We are convinced that the miracle of his undertakings stems solely from his faith, accompanied by a spirituality that was as simple as it was deep and fruitful; a faith centred in Christ and hence ardently eucharistic and filially marian. Now fidelity to Don Bosco necessarily presupposes fidelity to the mission God entrusted to him, and which we have inherited from his zeal: youth, especially the poorer youth and the working classes. From this follow all the implications and problems that dedication to our educative mission in the Church and in the world of today bring with them.

Your Holiness is well aware of the love that Don Bosco had for the Pope and for the Church, and how in all circumstances he wanted to be their obedient and faithful servant. It has been the aim of the members of the Chapter to make their own, at this present time, the attitude and the sentiments of our Father and Founder.

Firmly adhering to these norms the Congregation can venture with the courage and the audacity of Don Bosco, to use new ways and means to develop in this modern world that christianizing and saving activity that he was responsible for in a different social context. And all this especially on behalf of youth, today the object of so much hope even if at times coupled with anxieties and worries.

We are not anaware of the difficulties and perplexities which await us along the path of renewal. We do not want to be overcome by discouragement or weariness. Our belief in the cause we have made our own in the life of the Church gives us strength and endurance.

Holy Father, before closing I would like to make a twofold offering which has but one meaning and purpose. This morning we had the joy of concelebrating in the basilica of St Peter's: all the concelebrants offered holy mass for Your Holiness' intentions. I would also like to make you an offering for the more needy countries and for the situations that cause you most sadness and are closest to your heart. It is the result of the sacrifices and mortifications of many salesians scattered all over the world who would like to express, just as the concelebrants did this morning, their sharing in the worries that are yours as the Supreme Pastor and Father, and architect of both peace and unity.

Holy Father, accept this twofold offering as our filial Christmas homage.

Now we look forward to receiving light and encouragement for the hard work that lies ahead from the word of Your Holiness and from the apostolic blessing that you will impart.

I would like to request this special blessing on my own person, aware as I am of the burden arising from the renewed confidence of the Chapter in me for the government of the Congregation; I ask it for the Very Rev. Fr. Ziggiotti, Rector Major emeritus, for the members of the new Superior Council whom I now respectfully present, and on the whole salesian family that finds itself united with us in this act of devoted attachment to the Vicar of Christ, and desirous of bringing about this renewal in the spirit and under to auspices of the Church.

Rome, 20 december 1971

Discourse of His Holiness Pope Paul VI at the audience given to the members of the Special General Chapter *

Venerable confrères and Sons of Don Bosco:

We have a twofold motive for speaking to you. We shall leave aside the first and concentrate on the second. The first one would be a personal one: reminiscences, encounters, various dealings... obligations that link my person and my recollections to your spiritual family. And the other, derives from the office that providence has entrusted to Us, this other title, in virtue of which we certainly wish to address a few words to you, words that can only echo those uttered just now by... what do you call him?... Major Superior?... (Rector Major)... Rector Major... we must be precise... (laughter). And if the theme of our last encounter was that of « progress », it will well accord with what I am about to say to you now, and this time with greater reason, since in the years that have elapsed, I have had plenty of opportunities of knowing about your activities and your good selves; and I say to you now « PERSEVERE, persevere, be faithful.» So be it.

I cannot however entirely overlook the first item, that is, those memories that come spontaneously to mind in thinking of Don Bosco, and which might well form a page of an autobiography.

When did I come to know Don Bosco? I did not know him personally; I may be old but I am not as old as that (laughter). When I was still small I remember that in my father's study, right in front of his desk, there was a picture in a corner; we children used to have to climb up on a chair to get a closer view of it; it was a picture of Don Bosco, and underneath was this phrase written, I believe, by Don Bosco himself... « At the end of life we gather the fruit of our good works. » How many times we looked at that picture and we read the name of one who was then neither beatified nor canonised, but already famous and well-known: and what is more, well-known within my own family circle.

**The part printed in italics represents the impromptu impressions and and personal memories of the Holy Father.*

One of my uncles, this also is something quite clear in my memory, studied medicine at Turin; and I don't know how it happened but he later came to marry one of my aunts; both of them died later at Milan: he knew Don Bosco and Don Bosco is supposed to have said to him: « You will be the doctor of my body and I will be the doctor of your soul.» These are words which have become part of the family patrimony so to speak, and they always made a deep impression on me. And then later we come to various people I have known personally and over these I shall pass very briefly, beginning with dear Don Cojazzi; for Don Cojazzi had the merit, not unmixed with trials as so often happens in the christian life, of becoming friendly with a nephew of mine. His name was... what was it?... Fr. Louis. He was a very lively youngster and this is something those who did not know him cannot appreciate. To put it in a nutshell, he never studied anything (laughter); he was too full of life; bursting with energy. His mother, a worthy and holy woman, entrusted him to me. I was a little older. I was just ordained. And so we tried to knock just a little sense into his head, at least enough to pass the examinations (laughter). The outcome did no credit either to the pupil or the teacher. But that good mother kept a prudent, intelligent eye on him and she encouraged him: outings, excursions, what have you. I don't know the particulars but in one such outing he met Don Cojazzi. And that was the birth of a salesian vocation. And I went with him to Turin, etc. And the outcome was that he spent 17 years in Macau. But I still remember when he came home after the 17 years: his father was already old but he loved his son with an affection that had increased over the 17 years he had been away from the family, away from home; ...and a missionary at that. Another thing: when he was about to depart this youngster said to his mother: « If only I had a car to take out there with me. » And his mother saw to it that the car was waiting for him at Venice on the ship. At that time a car was really something. Anyway, when he got off the plane at Ciampino on his return, I remember that he had completely changed in appearance. He had become a man; he even had a beard; and his father didn't recognise him. « Can this be Luigi! Are you really my Luigi? » And he broke down in tears as so often happens in meetings of this kind with so much affection and emotion. But we had better get on or we shall never finish. And now we come to those I have known here in Rome. As you know I was once the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Group of University Students in Rome. But do you know who my predecessor was? It was Don Munerati who later became Bishop of Volterra, and that was enough for us to meet at the little

chapel of San Giovanni della Pigna which had become the chapel of the University Students of Rome. The students were very few; but there were some and every Friday they would meet at San Giovanni della Pigna.

And I was their assistant and I heard a lot of stories that I won't repeat, about things that had happened in the time of my predecessor who, I say, was Fr. Munerati, the famous canonist who became Bishop of Volterra, native of Verona, I believe. But he also had his own Rule; ...after all he was a salesian... and what mattered most to him when he was still Ecclesiastical Assistant, ...and I have been told this by those who had seen and heard it... was to close the meetings at 8:00 o'clock because at 8:15 he was supposed to be at supper (laughter)... those were stormy days not unlike the ones we are living in at the present time; there were no clashes of the kind we know today, but at the same time there was never any agreement... and on one occasion he had the wonderful if somewhat ingenuous idea of saying: « Listen, lads, go to Benedict... Benedict was the sacristan, a wonderful little man... give him this note; and he wrote « Please give the bearers of this note two bottles of wine so that we can end our meeting with a drink.» They were off like arrows; in an instant they were back again; but they did not return the note which they kept in their pocket (laughter). And so every so often without a word to Fr. Munerati they want back to Benedict (laughter). And he in all good faith produced the wine. When at last Fr. Munerati found out what was happening he burst out « Here, what's going on? » And thus the incident came to an end. But the other episodes have not come to an end, because subsequently I had so many occasions of meeting your confrères. I would like to mention Fr. Biavati, for example; ah; there he is; good! And there was Fr. Sinistrero, another great man who is now at Villa Sera, unless I am mistaken. And I've no need to recall the late lamented Fr. Tomasetti, and his successor Fr. Castano. And many others.

But since Fr. Ricceri has said that one of your prerogatives, one of the characteristics of your vocation is to take care of the poor, of the young, of those who get no attention anywhere else, (you have to provide the help and attention that society and the Church are not in a position to extend to certain classes), I will tell you of one of the latest encounters which has left a deep impression on me and filled me with commotion and joy and which took place in that well-known but unfortunately most miserable quarter of Manila; what's it called, Tondo? Yes, Tondo. To visit them was to pass through hovels in a swamp, but the salesians were there. And I

remember that one of them spoke... naturally he spoke in his own tongue; then it was translated; I was deeply impressed by that heroic dedication so sound and effective, and exercised at such a level that it were difficult to descend much lower.

And all honour to you therefore, dear confrères and sons of Don Bosco. You are on a great highway and this is the reason that my word to you is this: FORGE AHEAD, DON'T STOP, PERSEVERE, because you are really and truly on the path marked out by your Founder, which is none other than that marked out by the Lord himself and therefore)...

We greet with affectionate respect the members of the Salesian Special General Chapter gathered in Rome for the up-dating of their Constitutions, and eager, before leaving for their respective posts, to testify their filial devotion to the Vicar of Christ. We thank you warmly, beloved sons. It is always a source of joy for us when we are given the opportunity of meeting the sons of St. John Bosco. Today's visit, however, on a solemn occasion such as this, which shows present here before Us the representatives of the seventy three salesian provinces scattered over the world, brings back to our mind, deeper and more moving than ever, the significance, the role and the commitment within God's Church of your great religious family. We think of the immense flowering of works and activities due to the zeal and the sacrifice... sometimes heroic... of your confrères.

Precisely when we feel ourselves almost overcome by so many difficulties, so many vexations, so much unfaithfulness, by so many clashes over nothing, in brief by so much wretchedness and misery, precisely because we are human, and it becomes almost overpowering; on these occasions the only comfort the Pope has is that of opening the window, a metaphorical window of course, and looking out over the panorama of fields of work cultivated like yours. The salesians are there in the Church! Of course there are also religious families as well, but we are not talking about them at present. Ah! we feel fresh and confident again and we feel almost palpable proof that the Lord is with us, that he is really utilizing the hands of the Church for this work of evangelization which never ends and which never will end as long as the world exists.

But we see it under an aspect that fills us with joy and gratitude. The work is flourishing, the work is spreading, the workers are good, they are faithful, they are united, they are truly representative of that tradition that today is discussed on all sides, a tradition that has its roots in Christ, that found an interpreter in Don Bosco who

gave it new life, a tradition that is continued through us. Thanks be to our Lord and God! And we take up the task with renewed trust, and for this it is my duty to thank first of all the Rector Major, the Rector Major emeritus, and all the rest of you, and I do it all the more sincerely in the name of Christ.

We think of so many needy young people who find in your institutes wholesome education and the possibility of finding a worthy place in civil life. We think of the vast fields of the missions, where your institute has won such high merits. I have been Archbishop of Milan and I have some personal knowledge of you, no? I think of Sant'Agostino and the other wonderful institutes like the one at Sesto San Giovanni. Oh, what a wonderful sight to see so many young apprentices preparing themselves for the world of work, but tempered like good steel to face life fully equipped as men and christians. And when we were about to leave Milan we had the joy of giving you yet another headache, that of establishing a parish, that of St. Dominic Savio; I made the decision but I did not have the pleasure of seeing it functioning; this is just to show you what appreciation and what proofs we have of your activities — the living and active witness you give to the gospel.

How many reasons to thank the Lord and to congratulate you! May you be blessed for it all, beloved sons.

(The blessing that we intend to give you at the end is not just something conventional; I want it to be a real out-pouring of the heart and, if God accompanies it with his grace, an efficacious source of consolation, of sanctification in your vocation, to increase your energies and to give you just a little bit of happiness in what you are presently doing or will do in the future. Difficulties will most certainly not be wanting on your path; but may you always be in a position to carry with you the secret of knowing that we serve Christ Jesus and that we carry him with us and that we share him with others.)

The Church of God is proud of your diffusion, of your evangelical example, of your generous apostolic dedication.

But it is clear that the continuity and the efficiency of your work will not be attained without a courageous revision, a thorough adaptation of your Constitutions, to give your Congregation that open and up-dated character that the demands of our conciliar renewal and the necessity of the times require.

It is just to this task that you have applied yourselves in the past six months. We know that in the long and laborious discussion of your Chapter you have already worked out the canons of your

« aggiornamento.» We know how fully and how completely you have dealt with the various problems. Now all that remains for us to do is to recommend to you to treasure all this study and apply resolutely the prescriptions you have undertaken to observe.

But our affection for your Congregation and the importance of its position within God's Church induce us to express to you some thoughts that your visit awakes in our mind. It is not a question of new reflections because they have already been discussed in the course of your gatherings. But repeated by Us at this significant meeting, they will give you and your confrères the comfort of knowing that the Pope is in spiritual harmony with your directives.

You certainly intend, as the Council prescribes and as the raison d'etre of every religious institute dictates, to think again upon your origins, first and foremost. *(How strange and yet how delightful! To discover the youth of a Congregation, it is necessary to go back to its old age, i.e. to its beginnings and this sometimes takes us back hundreds of years. That's the way it is with the things that belong to the kingdom of God: the origins.)*

This is the first renewal: a more keenly felt need to live one's religious vocation authentically in conformity with the original spirit. The tree lives by its roots. And there is no doubt that your most vital roots are the example and teachings of St. J. Bosco. No opportune adaptation must ever forget or, worse, distort the characteristic appearance that the Founder wished from the beginning to stamp upon your institute. And therefore the education of youth evangelization of unbelievers, catechetical apostolate, love of the Pope, devotion to the Blessed Virgin, remain the characteristic features of your Congregation. Love them dearly, so dearly as to consider them a precious heritage of which you must be legitimately proud, and which you will wish to preserve intact (*even if flourishing with new forms and new works*); today especially when a destructive mentality tries to subject every institution, even the most sacred to corrosive examination and complete and ruthless criticism.

At this point, because of the affection we have always borne for youth and now still more because of the paternal and pastoral charity of our apostolic office, we cannot but rejoice at seeing you confirm your concern for the young, particularly the poorest and the neediest.

It has been well said! They are restless; for some reasons they are either rebellious, or tired. What kind of psychology is growing

up in them! Whatever it is it should make our love for youth increase. Don't check this love, don't let it decrease. We have to be wise and prudent enough to be able to find the key that will enable us to enter into the twisted and entangled psychology of this new youth; and to possess the friendship and the patience to reshape them in the order of grace and human wisdom to be youngsters of a generation that will be worthy of achieving a good result and a worthy place in history. At this point We could make an important digression, one however that you do not need. It is this. It might be asked whether after a hundred years it is not high time to abandon positions originally taken up? Or in other words, might not perhaps your way of teaching, of approaching youth, of working, be out-dated? It is not. St. John Bosco was a prophet, he was able to anticipate the needs of the times, he set you on a path that challenges all time. And today you find yourselves in the vanguard of education both civil and christian to form youngsters into good and strong men.

At the same time however the question rises spontaneously whether the educative tradition of Don Bosco, who lived in times so different from our own, is still relevant today; whether his methods have still an appeal in our day, and whether it meets the needs of young people today, so precociously aroused to sensitivity, awareness, choice of the values of life, and at the same time so full of difficult and complex problems. This doubt is at once answered by a real fact, which is the presence of your oratories, your schools, your vocational institutes, widespread everywhere and still so alive and flourishing.

A little incident... We might as well insert it here. Last year, when We went on that long trip to the Far East, We made a short stop during the night at Teheran... that's correct, isn't it?... for refuelling; and I remember as if it were only yesterday going from the plane through the people who surrounded us, not very many, it is true, but when all is said and done, it was very late at night and we couldn't expect very much especially in the dark; yet all of a sudden we heard someone say in Italian: « Oh, Don Montini, the helper of young people. They were your own boys from the Salesian School of Teheran. They were even there! Yes, these may be little things but they do tell you that Our heart is filled with joy and emotion which are for us testimony of what you are and of what you are capable of accomplishing.

This means that the human and christian principles on which Don Bosco's educative system is based, contains values that do not age.

It is not difficult to discover their secret, since this incomparable example of a christian pedagogical humanism, as we already had occasion to tell you in another memorable meeting, « plunges its roots into the gospel, where we see Christ humble himself to raise the creature to God, become weak with the weak to lift man up to truth and goodness, not with the extraneous authority of one who imposes the law heavily but with the authority of one who meekly and bravely sets forth God's law as the expression of his love and the condition of our salvation, and obeys the same law with the person being educated. In other words Don Bosco found his secret in charity, which is the summary, as it were, of his educative work.» (Address to the PAS 26 October 1966) We have a last recommendation to make. In face of the risk of excessive activism and the influence of secularization, to which religious communities, especially communities like yours that are dedicated to active work, are more exposed than ever today, see that care of your spiritual life, prayer, the spirit of poverty, love of sacrifice and the crose, always have first place in your lives. If the desired *aggiornamento* were not to bring back apostolic dynamism to a closer contact with God, but were ot lead it to a surrender to the worldly mentality, supporting short-lived and changing fashions and attitudes, to imitation of the world in its various forms and without discernment, then it would be necessary to reflect seriously on the severe words of the gospel: « If salt becomes tasteless what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men. » It seems to us that the spirit of your saintly founder, who in his life was so open to the needs of young souls but always so united with God, asks you specially to make this particular effort; and we are certain that, as always, more than always, you will accept the impulse given by him.

And now a wish and a prayer. May Mary most holy, the Help of Christians, the star of Don Bosco, his inspirer, his guide, the comforter in all his enterprises, pour forth her light on the great salesian family, renewed not only in its external structures, but even more in its genuine spirit. May she increase more and more, beloved sons, your love for souls. May she make you aware of the urgency and the multiplicity of the needs of Holy Church. May she guide you along the path to new spiritual heights. May she bring you one day to the possession of Christ and of his glory, to whom your whole life is dedicated. And may the apostolic blessing that we willingly impart to you at this moment, descend liberally and comfortingly upon each one of you, on your work, and on the whole of your Congregation.

Special General Chapter
Rector Major's closing address
5th January, 1972

After living together for nearly seven months, after praying, working and suffering together, often wearied by fatigue and difficulties of one kind and another that arose from the apparently never-ending work, but always with the common purpose of responding in the most effective way to the mandate given us by the Church and the Congregation and spurred on by a love greater than any difficulty — the love of Don Bosco and the Congregation — today by the grace of God we see the crown placed on our toil: the XX General Chapter — the Special Chapter — comes to an end.

And its closure takes place in new and significant circumstances; there are present today official representatives of the other groups that make up our great family: the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Volunteers of Don Bosco, the Cooperators and the Past Pupils. This is something that gives us great joy because it marks the beginning of a more intense, more purposeful and more efficacious collaboration, the fruit of that unity of spirit and of mission which in different ways and in different degrees binds us together and unites us as children of the same father, Don Bosco.

I am especially glad to be able on this solemn occasion to present officially to our good Cooperators the Declaration made by the Special General Chapter in reply to their message to us, and it is my earnest hope that both message and reply may help to bring about, through a better understanding of the role of the laity in the Church which is so much desired at the present day, a renewed commitment and a reinvigoration not only on the part of the Cooperators but even more on the part of the Salesians, from whom the Cooperators await that special spiritual leadership and guidance of which they feel so great a need.

It also gives me great pleasure to present to our Past Pupils the declaration which embodies the piedge of the Chapter in their regard too. You also, on different grounds and in different ways, are closely linked with the Congregation; every day provides new evidence of this fact, and I trust that this declaration will serve not merely to strengthen the bonds that bind us in mutual affection, but

will make of your Confederation through the efficacious action of the salesians a living, active and penetrating force, diffusing in society that christian and salesian sense which is the most valuable thing that you received during your education in the house of Don Bosco.

To the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians I have already and very recently conveyed our best wishes at the opening of their centenary year. I repeat those good wishes on this solemn occasion, and with me I associate all the members of the Chapter and of our whole family.

To the Volunteers of Don Bosco, happy at the recent recognition of their Institute by the Holy See, we express the hope that soon they may become an institute of pontifical right and that their members may ever grow in strength especially from a spiritual point of view, and that their unique and far from easy apostolic work may flourish in the spirit of Don Bosco.

And now, returning to our Chapter which is coming to an end, I do not think it an exaggeration to describe it as a « spiritual event » of outstanding importance for the whole salesian family, and especially for the Congregation which has the responsibility of reanimating the various groups that make up that family. It is undoubtedly one of the most significant events of the hundred years of our history. We can truly say that God has indeed visited us, and this despite — or even through — our very weakness, our shortcomings, our mistakes and our sins.

The link made by the Holy Spirit with our Father and Founder has been confirmed and renewed. A feeling of wonder and gratitude, and indeed an inner conviction based on all that we have received in these past months makes us proclaim: « God loves us ». Our Lord *wants* our special vocation in the Church. Our Blessed Lady is with the Congregation now, as she was at its beginnings.

And this knowledge leads us to preserve Don Bosco's optimism, to keep a serene trust based on faith even though we are well aware of the difficulties of the present day. We are witnessing a change in cultural values; the signs of the times are moulding a new kind of man; the process of secularization compels us to make a profound revision of many traditions that are dear to us, but it is also true that « God is with us » to suggest the opportune response to future needs as they arise. This took place first of all for the Church with Vatican II, and it has happened for us salesians in this Special General Chapter. We can bear witness to the fact.

If we are really convinced of this, then before we go back to the daily grind with its hundred and one pressing problems, let us

confidently put our trust in the words of Jesus: « The Spirit will teach you everything; he will bring everything to your mind.»

But if we accept the fact that through the goodness of God and despite our many shortcomings, our individual and common mistakes, we have played a part in an exceptional spiritual event of which in a mysterious way the chief architect, precisely because of this sense of deep faith we must also accept without reserve or mental restriction of any kind the clear obligation that the Chapter imposes on us. And what is that obligation?

The Special General Chapter imposes on all, and especially on us capitulars, a constant obligation of renewal. The task imposed by « Ecclesiae Sanctae », the preparation and enactment of the whole of the Chapter, were directed to a single objective: the renewal of our salesian vocation in the Church. We might say that this Special Chapter, by giving us an official place in the pentecostal action of Vatican II, requires of us a more dedicated and authentic vocational sense in accordance with the definition of renewal given by the Council: « An increased fidelity to one's proper vocation. » (U.R. 6)

The big questions about our vocational identity: Who are we in the Church? What kind of witness do we have to give? What is our special work? — all these have been answered by the Chapter at every level and from every point of view; these answers must now be translated fully into action in our lives as we set out with determination on the long path that still lies ahead of us. And as we begin we must be on our guard against some very real dangers that could weaken and even make impossible the great work of renewal.

The Special General Chapter tells us that in our renewed communities, after our common discussions and investigations there comes the moment for making responsible decisions, and once that has been done the time for discussion and experiment is over and there begins the serious constructive operation in which we all work responsibly together to put into effect what has been decided on.

This is what happened in the Special Chapter itself. There was a period of common research and then we reached definite decisions, sometimes with a very large majority but always with a majority more than sufficient, decisions which are binding on all of us at every level, wherever we are in the world and whatever our work.

It would be a painfully negative attitude and certainly no sign of love for Don Bosco and the Congregation to emphasise only those items that reflect our own point of view. Renewal comes from the complexus of doctrines and norms of conduct which form an indivisible whole for salesians and provinces of all the world and every part

of it, for university professors and for teachers in elementary schools, for old and young; they are not just indications and pious exhortations, but are binding on all of us and in their every part. And this applies especially to the Constitutions and General Regulations.

The Chapter and its deliberations, beginning with the Constitutions, if they are to be efficacious in bringing about this renewal, must be accepted in their totality, without parentheses, without arbitrary changes or personal interpretations, exactly as they are — with the abundant explanations provided by the doctrinal sections.

I would go even further. During the discussions certain theses, certain opinions, certain trends were bolstered up by quotations from the Bible, from Council documents, from salesian sources, from theology and canon law, but inaccurately and sometimes with distortion of the context. This must not happen with the capitular documents. Let us all try to be sincere in such quotations, to interpret the overall will and desires of the Chapter which are to be found not in the variegated views expressed in discussions — often contradictory and open to challenge — but in the decisions. We must always avoid using quotations from the Chapter in such a way as to invoke its authority to support our own personal ideas which may be partially or even totally opposed to its true thought. There must be a real « conversion » on the part of everyone to the totality of the Chapter's mind, even in those items which do not accord with our own point of view. This is how we shall really bring into being that salesian « communion » that we have talked about so much in our assemblies.

A word also about two other attitudes which could seriously compromise the work of renewal and against which we must be on our guard. The first is indifference, which could arise from many causes, and the other is the disappointment which is likely to affect those who have been expecting from the Chapter something it cannot give. The Chapter of its very nature could not fail to reaffirm vigorously and decisively the austere demands of a religious life that has been really renewed.

The Special Chapter, going back to the gospel and our salesian beginnings, calls us again to follow with generosity the poor, chaste and obedient Christ; it brings us back to the interior renewal based on true prayer and a committed spiritual life which are the necessary premise for the enthusiastic apostolate to which our mission calls us. And all this means that we must set to work, to get on with the job, to shake off any feelings of indifference and methodically mobilize our energies with faith and enthusiasm — not an empty and inane enthusiasm but one based on practical ideals. Our en-

thusiasm springs from a mature understanding of what is at stake, but is at the same time strengthened by a strong yet humble faith, a faith which lends great courage, the courage to be constant, the courage of Don Bosco's « contra spem in spem credidit », to enlighten minds, to conquer hearts, to commit wills, remembering that our work would be all in vain unless in ourselves we presented an exemplar of the renewed salesian of the General Chapter.

My dear confrères and sons, after spending together seven months of heavy work we now have to split up, but it is no paradox to say that we must separate *united.* It was inevitable during our work that our ideas and desires, our assessments of people and things, might lead to divisions amongst us, but from now on we must be united. Let us completely forget, let us not take back to our provinces, any recollections other than those of charity, of trust and communion; let us think of the young, the large numbers of the young, hungry for love and often also for bread and in need of everything, of the young who look to us for strength and light and guidance. Let us always remember that they are essential to our mission, both as those to whom that mission is directed and as our future brethren. In us who are older they look less for authority than for example; they want to see in us men dedicated to them, able to show them by our example the way to follow. This is an idea of an old statesman, not a believer but wise none the less, and a past pupil.

And so to these young people, who are at the same time the reason for our mission and also our hope, let us present ourselves *united,* in our ideas, in our methods, in the task given us by the Special Chapter and in the charity we take away with us at its conclusion. Let us show them the way; let us smooth out the obstacles on the road which tomorrow they must follow. This is the reason we exist.

And with that I have finished. I want to express my thanks to all, to everyone who has been connected with the Chapter, and especially to its architects, to its more outstanding « victims » who have carried an enormous weight; and I ask you all to take my greetings with you wherever you go. And I would like to end with a final thought of her who has been present at every moment of our history with her motherly intervention, Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians. And may Don Bosco see always in us his true sons, and be lavish in the fatherly blessings he showers upon us.

Chronicle of the XX Special General Chapter

The confrères are already aware of the progress of the XX SGC from reading the Newsletters in the different languages. And so this chronicle is limited to a brief review of the principal events.

1. The Spiritual Exercises in preparation for the SGC, which were made by the Chapter members in private, were followed by a day of recollection on June 9th. The preacher was Fr. Robert Moretti, a Carmelite, from the « Teresianum » in Rome. Concelebrated Mass at which the Rector Major gave the homily brought the day to an end.

2. The members who took part in the Special General Chapter are listed elsewhere. The Provincials and Delegates from the provinces of Hungary and Czechoslovakia were unable to attend.

The Rector Major sent out special invitations to certain confrères to be present as observers without voting vights: these are listed in Appendix 8. Also listed in the same appendix are those who were invited as experts.

3. The XX SGC was held in the seat of the new Generalate (Via della Pisana, Rome). It began its work with a solemn concelebrated Mass on 10 June, the feast of Corpus Christi, followed by the opening session. This was presided over by the Rector Major; also present at the presidential table were Bishops Carretto and Prata, as well as Fr. Gaetano Scrivo, Moderator.

Also present at the opening session were the Mother General of the FMA with her Vicar, the President of the Don Bosco Volunteers, members of the National Council of the Past Pupils, the Co-operators and the Salesian Youth Movement.

After the recital of the *Adsumus,* the Secretaries were nominated (Fr. Alexander Machuy and Fr. John Baptist Lucetti), the message of Card. G. Villot, Secretary of State to His Holiness, and numerous expressions of good will which had been sent to the Rector Major by various authorities and confrères were read.

The Rector Major's opening address is given in Appendix 2.

4. In the next few days work began immediately with the Rector Major's presentation of his *Report on the state of the Con-*

gregation (cf. Appendix 3) and the formation of the commission for the revision of the rules of the Special General Chapter and of the informal groups to study the pre-capitular schemes of Frascati.

Then commissions and subcommissions were established to work out, study, and develop the basic themes of the Chapter; these are well known to the Congregation after the consultations of the previous two years (1969-1970).

At the request of the members of the Chapter three further subcommissions were established to consider « Evangelization and Catechesis », « The Oratory as the pattern of renewal of Salesian action », and the « PAS ».

5. During the work of the Chapter which in part coincided with the celebration of the Synod, there was no lack of:

a) *Visits of well-known people:*

...Cardinals: Hildebrand Antoniutti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious and Secular Institutes; Gabriel Maria Garrone, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education; Angelo Rossi, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations; Michael Pellegrino, Archbishop of Turin; Raul Silva Henriquez, Archbishop of Santiago (Chile); Stephen Wyszynski, Primate of Poland; Joseph Hoeffner, Archbishop of Cologne.

...of many bishops, including Mons. Andrew Pangrazio, diocesan Bishop of our Generalate and the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Italy; and Bishops from Africa, America, Asia and Europe.

...of lecturers: Fr. G. Beyer, Dean of the Gregorian Pontifical University; Bro. C. Carretto, Fr. F. Brocardo, Fr. E. Marcoaldi and Fr. D. Bertetto (the last four for the Monthly Retreats).

...of Dr. Joseph M. Taboa da Lago, President of the Confederation of Past Pupils; Professor Aldo Angelini, Vice President of the Confederation of Past Pupils; Professor Augustus Vanistendael, President of the Past Pupils of Belgium and Secretary General of CIDSA; Avv. Nicholas Ciancio, President of the Past Pupils of Italy; Mr. Hofacher, Secretary of *Adveniat.*

b) *Special events:*

...June 21st, St. Aloysius, feast-day of the Rector Major: this day was the occasion for a happy celebration characteristic of the family spirit of salesian life.

...June 29th: feast of the Holy Father; in the afternoon the Chapter members went to St. Peter's to assist at the Holy Father's Mass.

...In the month of September: a day of fasting for our brothers in Pakistan.

...Dec. 8th: a family celebration to mark the priestly golden jubilee of Fr. Renato Ziggiotti, Rector Major emeritus.

6. The members of the Chapter normally began the day with concelebrated Mass, either together or in language groups. Most mornings and afternoons were taken up by general assemblies or subcommission meetings. The day was brought to a close with evening prayers followed by the « good night » given in turn by superiors, provincials and delegates from the different parts of the salesian world.

Work in the general assembly covered:

...the approval of the regulations for the general chapter (20 June);

...the election of three Chairmen (Bro. Mario Seren Tha, Fr. Edward Fox, and Fr. Julian Gouriou, 26 June);

...the setting up of the Central Co-ordinating Commission (CCC) made up of the President of the Special General Chapter, the Moderator, the three Chairmen, Presidents of the Commissions and a Chapter Secretary;

...the setting up of new « Special Commission »: the Commission for Information of the Confrères; the Commission for the Constitutions and Regulations; the Commission for the Post-chapter work; and of other restricted groups: for the drawing up of the document relating to the Past Pupils, the declaration to the Co-operators, and the study of the problem of defections.

...plenary sessions: at first these were held in a second hall, and then from the beginning of July, in the Aula Magna, with its modern equipment including an electronic secret voting device, a simultaneous translating system and a device for recording requests to speak.

...the presentation of the Schemes: these were first of all subjected to a general discussion followed by a vote as to whether the document could be accepted as a working text; this was followed by a second evaluation after a careful re-thinking « per partes », and the in-depth study of special problems which had appeared as a result of the observations sent in by individuals or groups (for one scheme the number of suggestions reached 1000); after straw votes when necessary, definitive approval was finally reached in yet another twofold process involving the submission and examination of further comments and the first and second final votes.

7. During this part of the proceedings some important events took place.

a) On 6 December 1971 the Rector Major falling into line with a recent vote, placed his own mandate in the hands of the assembly which had been especially convoked for this purpose. He said:

« After the approval of the article of the Constitutions of scheme 18, which fixes the length of the term of office of the Rector Major at six years, out of a sense of respect for the Congregation which you here represent, I have reached the following decision "coram Domino".

« In spite of the fact that I was elected by the XIX General Chapter for a period of twelve years and that the new norm does not have any retroactive force, nevertheless I am placing my own mandate in your hands so that with the greatest freedom you may be able to express through your vote what you think best in the Lord for the good of the Congregation.

« So that you may have sufficient time for reflection during the day, I am requesting the Moderator to make arrangements so that during the fourth working session today you will be recalled to vote on the matter I have just mentioned.

« May our Father Don Bosco help us and may the Immaculate Help of Christians enlighten us all.»

At 18:00 hours that same day the general assembly with an overwhelming majority expressed its wish that the Rector Major should continue in office for another six years.

b) Between December 9th and 11th the election of the new members of the Superior Council took place.

The following were elected:

— Vicar General of the Rector Major: *Fr. Cajetan SCRIVO.*
— Councillor for Salesian Formation: *Fr. Egidius VIGANO'.*
— Councillor for the Youth Apostolate: *Fr. Rosalio CASTILLO.*
— Councillor for the Adult Apostolate: *Fr. John RAINERI.*
— Councillor for the Missions: *Fr. Bernard TOHILL.*
— Economer General: *Fr. Roger PILLA.*

— Regional Councillors for:

Italy and the Middle East: *Fr. Aloysius FIORA.*

The Antilles, Mexico, Central America, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia & Chile: *Fr. Joseph HENRIQUEZ.*

Argentine, Brazil, Paraguay, & Uruguay: *Fr. Joseph GOTTARDI.*

Austria, Germani, Belgium, France, Holland, Yugoslavia, & Central Africa: *Fr. John TER SCHURE.*

Spain & Portugal: *Fr. Anthony MELIDA.*

U.S.A., England, Ireland, Australia, India, Thailand, China, Japan & the Philippines: *Fr. George WILLIAMS.*

For Poland the Rector Major will make direct provision.

c) 20 December saw a long-awaited and happy parenthesis in the activities of the Chapter, a Mass concelebrated by all the members in St. Peter's with a large representative group of the big salesian family, and afterwards a meeting with the Holy Father in an unforgettable special audience. (Cf. Appendix 4 & 5).

8. During the Christmas season the work of the Chapter drew to a close.

The articles of the Constitutions and the Regulations were finally approved (with a two thirds majority vote) as were also the various Chapter documents which had been given their definitive form in the different sub-commissions.

The Chapter closed or January 5th 1972. The members assembled for the last of the 140 plenary sessions in the Aula Magna. The whole salesian family was represented. The Rector Major presented their document to the Past Pupils and the Declaration to the Co-operators to their representatives in bringing to a close « the spiritual event of the Special General Chapter.»

At the end of the Rector Major's address, the Moderator, with the consent of the assembly, formally declared the Special General Chapter closed.

A plenary concelebration later in the morning was the final act of the Chapter, setting the seal on all the labour and hopes for the future.

List of the participants at the Salesian Special General Chapter

1. RICCERI Don Luigi - *Rector Major*
2. FEDRIGOTTI Don Albino - *Prefect General*
3. BELLIDO Don Modest - *Catechist General*
4. PILLA Don Ruggero - *Economer General*
5. PIANAZZI Don Archimede - *Councillor General*
6. SCRIVO Don Gaetano - *Councillor General*
7. FIORA Don Luigi - *Councillor General*
8. GIOVANNINI Don Ernesto - *Regional Councillor*
9. SEGARRA Don Isidoro - *Regional Councillor*
10. TER SCHURE Don Giovanni - *Regional Councillor*
11. TOHILL Don Bernardo - *Regional Councillor*
12. GARNERO Don Pietro - *Regional Councillor*
13. CASTILLO Don Rosalio - *Regional Councillor*
14. LUPO Don Tiburzio - *Secretary General*
15. ZIGGIOTTI Don Renato - *Rector Major Emeritus*
16. CASTANO Don Luigi - *Procurator General*

GROUP ONE: *Provinces of Italy and the Middle East*

17. MAGNI Don Dante - *Provincial - Italy-Centrale*
18. VIGANO' Don Angelo - *Delegate - Italy-Centrale*
19. SEREN THA Mario - *Delegato substituted by* GAMBA Luigi 9/10 - *Substitute - Italy-Centrale*
20. BAVA Don Mario - *Provincial - Italy-Subalpina*
21. ZANELLA Don Lodovico - *Delegate - Italy-Subalpina*
22. DEFILIPPI Angelo - *Delegate - Italy-Subalpina*
23. BONGIOANNI Don Egidio - *Rector of Mother House - Turin*
24. MOULUPI Don Arturo - *Provincial - Italy-Adriatica*
25. DI MEO Don Vincenzo - *Delegate - Italy-Adriatica*
26. COZZI Don Stefano - *Delegate - Italy-Adriatica*
27. ARACRI Don Cesare - *Provincial - Italy-Campano Calabra*
28. L'ARCO Don Adolfo - *Delegate - Italy-Campano Calabra*
29. MARTINELLI Don Antonio - *Delegate - Italy-Campano Calabra*
30. RAINERI Don Giovanni - *Provincial - Italy-Ligure Toscana*

31. NATALI Don Paulo - *Delegate - Italy-Ligure Toscana*
32. SANGALLI Don Giuseppe - *Delegate - Italy-Ligure Toscana*
33. BERTOLLI Don Giuseppe - *Provincial - Italy-Lombardo Emil.*
34. SANGALLI Don Giovanni - *Delegate - Italy-Lombardo Emil.*
35. MARACCANI Don Francesco - *Delegate - Italy-Lombardo Emil.*
36. SARTOR Don Tullio - *Provincial - Italy-Novarese*
37. LUCETTI Don Giovanni Battista - *Delegate - Italy-Novarese*
38. DE MAGISTRI Don Luigi - *Delegate - Italy-Novarese*
39. DE BERNARDI Don Secondo - *Provincial - Italy-Romano Sardo*
40. JACOANGELI Don Porfirio - *Delegate - Italy-Romano Sardo*
41. BIAVATI Don Cadmo - *Delegate - Italy-Romano Sardo*
42. LICCIARDO Don Demetrio - *Provincial - PAS*
43. DHO Don Giovenale - *Delegate - PAS*
44. JAVIERRE Don Antonio - *Rettore Magnifico - PAS*
45. MARRONE Don Antonio - *Provincial - Italy-Pugliese Lucano*
46. RUOCCO Don Alfonso - *Delegate - Italy-Pugliese Lucano*
47. VERDECCHIA Don Amedeo - *Provincial - Italy-Sicula*
48. NICOLETTI Don Stefano - *Delegato - Italy-Sicula*
49. FRATALLONE Don Raimondo - *Delegate - Italy-Sicula*
50. LANARO Don Giuseppe - *Provincial - Italy-Veneta Est*
51. ZULIANI Don Antonio - *Delegate - Italy-Veneta Est*
52. TRENTI Don Zelindo - *Delegate - Italy-Veneta Est*
53. BOSCAINI Don Luigi - *Provincial - Italy-Veneta Ovest*
54. COLLI Don Carlo - *Delegate - Italy-Veneta Ovest*
55. POJER Don Guido - *Delegate - Italy-Veneta Ovest*
56. MORAZZINI Don Guglielmo - *Provincial - Middle East*
57. CHARBEL Don Antonio - *Delegate - Middle East.*

GROUP TWO: *Provinces of Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Jugoslavia, Holland, Poland, Hungary, Central Africa.*

58. PENZ Don Francesco - *Provincial - Austria*
59. SCHWARZ Don Ludovico - *Delegate - Austria*
60. OERDER Don Carlo - *Provincial - North Germany*
61. HELBING Don Reinardo - *Delegate North Germany*
62. BURGER Don Francesco - *Provincial - South Germany*
63. SÖLL Don Giorgio - *Delegate - South Germany*
64. FEUERLIEN Don Riccardo - *Delegate - South Germany*
65. MOUILLARD Don Michele - *Provincial - South France*
66. DESRAMAUT Don Francesco - *Delegate - South France*
67. KLENCK Don Edmondo - *Delegate - South France*
68. LORRIAUX Don Giorgio - *Provincial - North France*

69. GOURIOU Don Giuliano - *Delegate - North France*
70. GIRARDI Don Giulio - *Delegate - North France*
    substituted by:
    LECOMTE Don Uberto da 16/6 - *I substitute - North France*
71. COENRAETS Don Paolo - *Provincial - South Belgium*
72. VIVIER Don Pietro - *Delegate - South Belgium*
73. VANSEVEREN Don Ruggero - *Provincial - North Belgium*
74. QUARTIER Don Maurizio - *Delegate - North Belgium*
75. DESMET Don Luciano - *Delegate - North Belgium*
76. RAIJMAKERS Don Giovanni - *Provincial - Holland*
77. VAN LUYN Don Adriano - *Delegate - Holland*
78. PAVICIC Don Nicola - *Provincial - Jugoslavia-Zagabria*
79. GULESIC Don Francesco - *Delegate - Jugoslavia-Zagabria*
80. ZERDIN Don Stefano - *Provincial - Jugoslavia-Lubiana*
81. DERMOTA Don Walter - *Delegate - Jugoslavia-Lubiana*
82. DZIENZIEL Don Agostino - *Provincial - Poland-Cracow*
83. NOCON Don Guglielmo - *Delegate - Poland-Cracow*
84. MAJEWSKI Don Miecislao - *Delegate - Poland-Cracow*
    substituted by:
    RUBINKIEWICZ Don Riccardo dal 27/9 *Subst. Poland-Cracow*
85. ZOLNOWSKI Don Felice - *Provincial - Poland-Lodz*
86. STYRNA Don Stanislao - *Delegate - Poland-Lodz*
87. PRUS Don Stefano - *Delegate - Poland-Lodz*
88. VAN ASPERDT Don Francesco - *Provincial - Central Africa*
89. VERBEEK Don Leone - *Delegate - Central Africa*

GROUP THREE: *Provinces of Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Antilles, Central America*

90. PINHO Don Emanuele - *Provincial - Portugal*
91. MAJO F Don Giuseppe - *Delegato - Portugal*
    substituted by
    CASTRO F. Don Carlo Alberto dal 23/12 - *Subst. - Portugal*
92. ANJOS Don Amatore - *Delegato - Portugal*
93. CANALS Don Giovanni - *Provincial - Spain Barcelona*
94. MANERO Don Antonio - *Delegate - Spain-Barcelona*
95. OLIVAN Don Francesco - *Delegate - Spain-Barcelona*
96. PUYDENA Don Luigi - *Provincial - Spain-Bilbao*
97. PEREZ ALVAREZ Don Giuseppe L. - *Delegate - Spain-Bilbao*
98. BASTARRICA CELAYA Don Antonio - *Provincial - Spain-Cordoba*
99. ALTARJOS GARCIA Don Antonio - *Provincial - Spain-Cordoba*
100. NUNEZ Don Gian Narciso - *Delegate - Spain-Cordoba*
101. ARAGON Don Michele - *Delegate - Spain-Cordoba*

102. IBANEZ Don Giacomo - *Provincial - Spain-Leon*
103. LAGUNA Don Aureliano - *Delegate - Spain-Leon*
104. GONZALEZ GONSALEZ Don Antonio - *Delegate - Spain-Leon*
105. ALONSO Don Emilio - *Provincial - Spain-Madrid*
106. OCANA Don Giuliano - *Delegate - Spain-Madrid*
107. RICO Don G. Antonio - *Delegate - Spain-Madrid*
108. HIDALGO Don Antonio - *Provincial - Spain-Sevilla*
109. LOPEZ Don Giuseppe - *Delegate - Spain-Sevilla*
110. DIAS RIVAS Don Ambrogio - *Delegate - Spain-Sevilla*
111. MELIDA Don Antonio - *Provincial - Spain-Valencia*
112. CARBONELL Don Giuseppe - *Delegate - Spain-Valencia*
113. MENDIZABAL Don Ismaele - *Delegate - Spain-Valencia*
114. BORGONOVO Don Mario - *Provincial - Antilles*
115. RIVAS SANTOS Don Fabio - *Delegate - Antilles*
116. SANTUCCI Don Ugo - *Provincial - Central America*
117. ZUNIGA Don Luigi - *Delegate - Central America*
118. PERUZZO Don Armando - *Delegate - Central America*
119. AGUAYO Don Paolo - *Provincial - Mexico-Guadalajara*
120. JUAREZ Don M. Adalberto - *Delegate - Mexico-Guadalajara*
121. CARRILLO Don Mariano - *Provincial - Messico-Mexico*
122. RODRIGUEZ Don Mauro - *Delegate - Messico-Mexico*

GROUP FOUR: *Provinces of England, United States, Asia, Australia.*

123. FOX Don Edward - *Provincial - England*
124. WILLIAMS Don George - *Delegate - England*
125. MCPAKE Don Martin - *Delegate - England*
126. EGAN Don Michael - *Provincial - Ireland*
127. HICKS Don Michael - *Delegate - Ireland*
128. MALLOY Don John - *Provincial - USA-East*
129. TYMINSKI Don Joseph - *Delegate - USA-East*
130. MONZILLO Don O'Neil - *Delegate - USA-East*
131. JUSTEN Don Bernard - *Provincial - USA West*
132. RIBOTTA Don Michael - *Delegate - USA-West*
substituted by
KRANJOS Don Fr dal 20/11 - *Substitute*
133. JENNINGS Don Terence - *Provincial - Australia*
134. FORD Don Norman - *Delegate - Australia*
135. MACHUY Don Alessandro - *Provincial - Hong Kong*
136. ZEN Don Giuseppe - *Delegate - Hong Kong*
137. CARPELLA Don Giuliano - *Delegate - Hong Kong*
138. FERRARI Don Luigi - *Provincial - Philippines*

139. COGLIANDRO Don Alfredo - *Delegate - Philippines*
140. DUARTE Don Dionigi - *Provincial - India-Bombay*
141. CASTI Don Giuseppe - *Delegate - India-Bombay*
142. STROSCIO Don Rosario - *Provincial - India-Calcutta*
143. NICHOLSON Sig. Maurizio - *Delegate - India-Calcutta*
144. CASAROTTI Don Mauro - *Provincial - India-Assam*
145. FANTIN Don Enrico - *Delegate - India-Assam*
146. MANJIL Don Ittyachaen - *Delegate - India-Assam*
147. PANAKEZHAM Don Tommaso - *Provincial - India-Madras*
148. DI FIORE Don Luigi - *Delegate - India-Madras*
149. PAPES Don Antonio - *Delegate - India-Madras*
150. DELL'ANGELA Don Stefano - *Provincial - Japan*
151. HONDA ZENICHIRO Don Gennaro - *Delegate - Japan*
152. COLOMBINI Don Giovanni Battista - *Provincial - Thailand*
153. SMIT Don Antonio - *Delegate - Thailand*

GROUP FIVE: *Provinces of Brazil, Colombia, Equatore, Venezuela.*

154. TEXIERA Don Decio - *Provincial - Brazil-Belo Horizonte*
155. CARRARA Don Alfredo - *Delegate - Brazil-Belo Horizonte*
156. GRUEN Don Wolfango - *Delegate - Brazil-Belo Horizonte*
157. CAMPOS Don Gerardo - *Provincial - Brazil-Campo Grande*
158. CASTRO Don A. Secondino - *Delegate - Brazil-Campo Grande*
159. BIASOLI Don Daniele - *Provincial - Brazil-Manaus*
160. BERTOLUSSO Don Lorenzo - *Delegate - Brazil-Manaus*
161. QUILICI Don Mario - *Provincial - Brazil-Porto Alegre*
162. SUCHARSKI Don Marcello - *Delegate - Brazil-Porto Alegre*
163. CARVALHO Don Antonio - *Provincial - Brazil-Recife*
164. AMARAL Don Evaldo - *Delegate - Brazil-Recife*
165. DE BONIS Don Salvatore - *Provincial - Brazil-S. Paolo*
166. FERREIRA DA SILVA Don Antonio - *Delegate - Brazil-S. Paolo*
167. PERAZA Don Fernando - *Provincial - Colombia-Bogotà*
168. PERESSON Don Mario - *Delegate - Colombia-Bogotà*
169. RODRIGUEZ FORERO Don Giacomo - *Colombia-Bogotà*
170. GONZALES Don Gabriele - *Provincial - Colombia-Medellin*
171. GOMEZ Don Rigoberto - *Delegate - Colombia-Medellin*
172. GIL Don Ildefonso - *Provincial - Equatore-Quito*
173. VALVERDE Don Carlo - *Delegate - Equatore-Quito*
174. BOTTA Don Angelo - *Provincial - Equatore-Cuenca*
175. CALERO Don Giacomo - *Delegate - Equatore-Cuenca*
176. HENRIQUEZ Don Giuseppe - *Provincial - Venezuela*

177. VELASCO GARCIA Don Ignazio - *Delegate - Venezuela*
178. DIVASSON Don G. Angelo - *Delegate - Venezuela.*

GROUP SIX: *Provinces of the Argentine, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile and Perù.*

179. MORENO Don Eraclio - *Provincial - Bahia Blanca*
180. VECCHI Don Giovanni - *Delegate - Bahia Blanca*
181. SANTECCHIA Don Benito - *Delegate - Bahia Blanca*
182. SOL Don Giovanni - *Provincial - Argentina-Buenos Aires*
183. FOGLIO Don Pietro - *Delegate - Argentina-Buenos Aires*
184. GALANT Don Salvatore - *Delegate - Argentina-Buenos Aires*
185. GHIGO Don Francesco - *Provincial - Argentina-Cordoba*
186. BARUTTA Don Tommaso - *Delegate - Argentina-Cordoba*
187. MERINO Don Giovanni - *Delegate - Argentina-Cordoba*
188. HERNANDO Don Emilio - *Provincial - Argentina-La Plata*
189. MOURE Don Argimiro - *Delegate - Argentina-La Plata*
190. GLOMBA Don Giovanni - *Provincial - Argentina-Rosario*
191. TESSAROLO Don Francesco - *Delegate - Argentina-Rosario*
192. TOTI Don Andrea - *Provincial - Paraguay*
193. HEYN Don Carlo - *Delegate - Paraguay*
194. GOTTARDI Don Giuseppe - *Provincial - Uruguay*
195. LECUONA Don Ettore - *Delegate - Uruguay*
196. CASANOVA Don Giorgio - *Provincial - Bolivia*
197. ARTALE Don Ermanno - *Delegate - Bolivia*
198. VIGANO' Don Egidio - *Provincial - Chile*
199. CUEVAS LEON Don Sergio - *Delegate - Chile*
200. CALERO DE LOS RIOS Don Antonio - *Delegate - Chile*
201. VALEBUONA Don Emilio - *Provincial - Perù*
202. BLONDET Don Cesare - *Delegate - Perù*

OBSERVERS

1. ACQUISPACE Don Mario - *Delegate of the Provincial for Viet Nam*
2. AINSWORTH Don William - *Delegate of the Provincial for South* Africa
3. RUZZEDDU Don Mario - *Delegate of the Provincial for Korea*
4. ZAVATTARO Don Giuseppe - *Delegate for the Rector Major for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*
5. ANNOE' Sig. Ernesto - *Central Italy*
6. BURGRAEVE Don Ruggero - *North Belgium*
7. CORO Sig. Giuseppe - *Central America*

8. COZATTI ch. Dilermando - *Brazil-S. Paulo*
9. DAROS Ch. William - *Argentina-Rosario*
10. FERRER Sig. Giuseppe - *Philippines*
11. FIANDRI Ch. Mario - *Italy-Romana*
12. SUESCUN Sig. Antonio - *Spain-Madrid*

EXPERTS

1. AUBRY Don Giuseppe - *France-Lyons*
2. LECLERC Don Gustavo - *PAS*
3. SOMMA Don Pasquale - *Argentina-Cordoba*
4. STELLA Don Pietro - *PAS*

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