

# acts

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Egidio VIGANÒ Our fidelity to Peter's successor	5
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2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	2.1 Fr Cajetan SCRIVO The Provincial Directory	35
	2.2 Fr Luke VAN LOOY Some priorities of salesian mis- sionary commitment	44
	2.3 Fr Sergio CUEVAS The Salesian Bulletin	50

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3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	None in this Issue	
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4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major	60
	4.2 Chronicle of the General Council	61

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5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS	5.1 Decree concerning the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Pius IX Letter of Rector Major to the Pope	64
	5.2 New Provincials	66
	5.3 Salesian Bishops	68
	5.4 Fr Ricceri's diamond jubilee of ordination	68
	5.5 Brotherly solidarity (46th Report)	70
	5.6 Deceased confreres	71

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## 1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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### OUR FIDELITY TO PETER'S SUCCESSOR

An opportune invitation. - Don Bosco's very concrete "Church sense". - A new style of exercising Peter's ministry. - A difficult situation. - Some reflections on Lumen Gentium. - Our attitude of fidelity becomes a task to be carried out. - Mary Help of Christians and the Pope.

Rome, 3 September 1985

Commemoration of St Gregory the Great

*My dear confreres,*

I am writing after returning to Rome from a visit to our communities in Chile, Bolivia and Peru. In these provinces, which are gaining new life from a promising vocational upswing, I had the joy of handing the confreres the rewritten text of the Constitutions and General Regulations, an event which was felt to be both exceptional and memorable. The communities concerned experienced a moment of profound unison with the heart of the Founder Don Bosco, the beatings of whose evangelical heart were heard again in his "living testament" newly approved by the Apostolic See.

I would like to remind you all of the firm purpose we adopted on that occasion for an adequate preparation for the celebrations of 1988:

to concentrate our initiatives during the intervening three years on the Book of our Rule of life, in study, in deep personal reflection, in community assimilation and in active witness. The whole Congregation should feel the initiative to live a kind of "Second Novitiate" to relaunch in a modern and prophetic way the apostolic spirit of our Father. At a distance of a hundred years from his death we want this spirit to be alive and flourishing in his sons!

As you are aware, the renewed Constitutions were approved by the Apostolic See on 25 November 1984, the Solemnity of Christ the King. This is a date which binds our religious profession more closely to the ministry of Peter, which gives ecclesial authenticity to the life plan we profess and which endorses as genuine the charism we bring to the People of God.

In this light I have thought it opportune to accede to the request of not a few confreres (from various Provinces) to set out some reflections on our "ecclesial awareness", which "we express — as the Constitutions say — in an attitude of filial loyalty to Peter's successor and to his teaching".<sup>1</sup> This theologically based attitude of reverence and "devotion" for the Pope, which Don Bosco has left us as a precious heritage, is a constituent element of our spirit. We want to renew our awareness of this.

1. C 13

I invoke the special intercession of Pope Gregory the Great, on whose liturgical commemoration in the Church's calendar I have begun this letter. May this great Pontiff, who first gained renown in the political life of Rome and then became an exemplary and fervent monk, and who brought several "Roman" virtues to the exer-

cise of the highest ministry in the Church, help us to acquire a deeper understanding and appreciation of the fundamental function of the Papacy in the Church of Christ. It is a specialized service, inserted by Christ in the heart of history to enlighten, exhort, stimulate, guide, confirm and continually bring up to date the emancipating message of his Gospel.

### **Don Bosco had a very concrete “sense of Church”**

The ecclesiastical awareness of our Founder was concretely expressed from a pedagogical point of view in some strong and practical rules of conduct as far as faith was concerned. He expressed them in all simplicity in three great attitudes which gradually took on the name of “devotions”: to *Jesus Christ* the Saviour and Redeemer, present in the central action of the Church — the Eucharist; to *Mary*, Model and Mother of the Church, seen in history as the Help of Christians; and to *the Pope*, Peter’s Successor, placed at the head of the College of Bishops for the pastoral service of the whole Church.

These are really three inseparable aspects which mutually illumine each other, and converge in the person of Christ, the Lord of history. Neither the Marian dimension nor the ministry of Peter can be the isolated object of a particular devotion, and if here we speak specifically of our adherence to the Pope we do so to meet a requirement of method; but evidently we do not consider it a theme detached from the others. Every confrere is invited to meditate on the

Christological and ecclesial mystery in its overall sense.

Blessed Luigi Orione, who was formed in the same sense of Church as was our Founder, wanted the members of his Institute to have a "fourth vow" of total obedience and adherence to the Pope. Because of the difficulties experienced at that time he was not able to obtain this, but his sons have done so in a recent General Chapter, and have thus given to their Institute a more faithful charismatic identity.

We Salesians do not have a fourth vow of obedience to the Pope, but we live the spirit of such a vow. Article 125 of the Constitutions states explicitly: "The Salesian Society has as its highest superior the Supreme Pontiff. Even by reason of the vow of obedience, the members are filially submissive to his authority, and available for the good of the universal Church. They welcome his magisterium with docility and help the faithful, especially the young, to accept his teachings".

The contents of another article of the Constitutions (C.13) help us to read C.125 in greater depth through the life-giving element which animates us.

Worth underlining is the use made in both these articles of the qualification "filial", and also the insistence on availability and docility which must characterize our apostolic activity, especially among young people. All this demands courage and dedication: according to Don Bosco, "No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake".<sup>2</sup>

2. cf. C 13

The two articles, C.13 and C.125, can be considered the synthetic expression of all the rich

3. ASC, 24 May  
1951, n. 164

salesian tradition that here we can do no more than mention. Fr Peter Ricaldone has collected its most significant expressions in his well-known circular: "Know, love and defend the Pope".<sup>3</sup> There we find abundant material which enables us, even today, to discern without difficulty in the heart of Don Bosco an extraordinary and courageous commitment to fidelity to the ministry of Peter.

Our Father was convinced of the need for this and gave his conviction explicit expression. He rejected the formula "Pius IX yes, but not the Pope"; nor would he have been any more pleased with that other expression (more in vogue at the present day): "The Papacy yes, but not this Pope". The first was shrewdly political; the second is ambiguous and allows one to sit on the fence.

The successor of Peter to whom Don Bosco adhered was the living Pope ("this" Pope) who guides and teaches the People of God here and now at this particular point in history; he was convinced that to him, the living Pope, refer the words of Christ in the Gospel and the unfailing assistance of the Holy Spirit. The two formulas quoted above do not express the true christian faith; rather do they disguise the implications by favouring subjective interpretations.

Don Bosco, with his practical pedagogy, is unambiguous in bearing witness to the ecclesial dimension of his faith and in educating his boys in the same way. There is no danger of failing to perceive his basic conviction. Even when some of the things he says appear to be linked with the mentality of his own time because expressed in a literary genre no longer current, the eccle-

sial awareness that permeated his heart stands out with ease and clarity.

Hence in the course of the laborious and scrupulous rewriting of the constitutional text carried out in recent years there was no hesitation about asserting our "filial loyalty" to the Pope<sup>4</sup> and the corresponding "docility" to his magisterium;<sup>5</sup> and this means that we can conclude without any shadow of doubt that the love and adherence to the ministry of Peter is a component of the spiritual heritage left us by the Founder that cannot be renounced.

4. C 13

5. C 125

In the circular of Fr Ricaldone already referred to can be found ample justification for the many adjectives used to describe Don Bosco's love for the Pope: "supernatural, zealous and conquering, filial and sincere, obedient and submissive, self-sacrificing and heroic. He was, in addition, the Pope's strenuous defender".<sup>6</sup> These are not just pleonastic expressions; they correspond to different aspects of a solid witness lived out through many long years.

6. op. cit. passim

Think, for example, of what Don Bosco wrote on the history of the Popes; of how much he did in connection with the proclamation of infallibility at the time of the first Vatican Council; of his heroic act of obedience to Leo XIII in the unfortunate controversy with Mgr Gastaldi; of what it cost him in the failing health of his last years to fulfil the wish of the Pope that he should build the Temple of the Sacred Heart at Castro Pretorio in Rome. This heavy undertaking, the last of his life, merits a brief comment. Fr Cerruti, who was close to Don Bosco throughout this heroic act of deference to the Pope, testified under oath in the process for beatification: "I

am intimately convinced that the overwork and the sufferings he endured (during the long journeys he made begging for money) shortened the life of a man who was already enfeebled and worn out by work".<sup>7</sup>

Without any doubt Don Bosco wanted to leave his sons the living heritage of a concrete and theological "devotion" to the successor of Peter.

In the "Summary" of the presentation made to the Apostolic See on 3 February 1874 by Don Bosco himself concerning the life and identity of the Pious Society of St. Francis de Sales, he writes as follows: "The fundamental purpose of the Congregation, from its first beginnings, has always been *to support and defend the authority of the supreme head of the Church among the less well-to-do classes of society, and particularly among young people at risk*".<sup>8</sup>

And in the first Italian translation of the text of the Constitutions recently approved by the Holy See,<sup>9</sup> in article 1 of chapter VI (despite the delicate political situation of those years) he writes: "The members shall recognise in the Supreme Pontiff their arbiter and absolute superior, to whom they shall, even in virtue of the vow of obedience, be in everything and in every place at all times humbly and respectfully submissive. Nay more, every member shall apply himself with solicitude to uphold his authority and to promote the observance of the laws of the Catholic Church and of its supreme head, who is the legislator and Vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth".<sup>10</sup>

We are speaking, dear confreres, of an attitude and style of spiritual conduct which is suited to the Congregation's specific mission. An

7. op. cit. p. 69

8. Opere Edite, Ri-stampa anastatica, vol. XXV, p. 380: N.XV, Riasunto della Pia Società di S. Francesco di Sales nel 23 febbraio 1974, p. 44

9. Turin 1875

10. cf. « Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales » - 1858, 1875. Critical text edited by Francesco Motto, p. 113

apostolic movement of universal extent like ours, dedicated by its very charism to pastoral work for youth, needs for its own internal consistency to be in line with the very nature of apostolic dynamism of the Church. To carry out pastoral work means, in fact, to commit oneself to evangelizing activity under the guidance of Pastors in "hierarchical communion" with the Pope, the head of the College of Bishops.<sup>11</sup>

11. cf. LG 22

### **A new style of exercising Peter's ministry**

But between Don Bosco's time and the present day the exercise of papal service has been going through a practical and progressive process of evolution of ideas which implied revision, clarification and even renewal.<sup>12</sup> The awareness of such a process must also form part of our love for and our adherence to the Pope. If anyone is loath or hesitant to accept this statement, he need do no more to convince himself of its truth than compare the exercise of the papal ministry by a great pre-Vatican II Pontiff like Pius XII, with the present practice of John Paul II.

12. cf. e.g. J.M.R. Tillard, "L'evêque de Rome", Paris, 1984

From the last century to our own decade of the '80s, the exercise of the primacy has had to meet not only the challenges of profound social political and ecclesial transformations, but also new needs of doctrinal maturing and pastoral prospects, which present it at the present day with new situations and circumstances which have provoked tensions and called for serious study. Let us try to recall in synthetic form some of the more significant elements.

— The end of the Papal States, with the complex struggles which had gone before and the delicate problems which followed for decades afterwards, certainly conditioned the way in which the Papacy functioned.

— The successive purification and progressive simplification in favour of a greater pastoral thrust have increased the incisiveness and authenticity of the ministry of Peter, and have intensified its prophetic service, particularly in the field of social teaching.

— The succession of contemporary Popes, outstanding for their high qualification and for their holiness, has clarified and perfected the image of papal service in the face of growing secularist rationalism, and has strengthened the dimension of universality.

— The extraordinary event of the second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican has brought about a deep renewal in the whole of ecclesiology in its substantial aspect of "mystery" and in its constitutive lack of conformity to type, animated by the unfailing presence of the Spirit of the Lord. From that time we are witnessing a continuous renewal of the Church, even in the exercise of ministries and in charisms.

— The simultaneous proclamation by the Council of papal primacy and episcopal collegiality has led to some important innovations, with the possibility of still further developments in the exercise of Peter's ministry. An example can be seen in the establishment by Paul VI of the Synod of Bishops.

— The Vatican vision of the "Universal Church" as a communion of particular Churches

excludes the simplistic caricature of the whole Church as the "diocese of the Pope": the power of Bishops, says *Lumen Gentium*, "far from being damaged by the supreme and universal power, is rather defended, upheld and strengthened by it".<sup>13</sup>

13. LG 27

From this it follows that the exercise of the papal ministry must be a true "service of communion" giving confirmation and direction to its collegial nature and harmonizing interventions of the power of primacy with the proper requirements of subsidiarity.

— An ecclesiology of communion, too, recognizes and respects the lawful diversities which enrich the building of the universal Church. Hence the Papacy, the visible foundation of the unity and catholicity of the Church, is committed to the promotion of a pluriform communion while avoiding the insidious dangers of uniformity.

— Vatican II has also created a new and vast ecumenical context which, among other things, will call for new considerations and dialogue on the delicate topic of the ministry of Peter. This leads to a deeper study and a more understandable formulation of the relevant doctrine.<sup>14</sup> It is true that the Council affirms unequivocally that the primacy of the Pope belongs constitutionally to the mystery of the Church of Christ in its historical structure, but the formulation of such a truth may be susceptible of clarification: "Just as the terminology of the Council of Ephesus", writes a competent scholar, "was profoundly changed by that of Chalcedon so as to say the *same* thing *in a clearer way*, so it is logical to think that the reality (concerning the primacy

14. cf. e.g. "Papa-  
to e istanze ecumeniche", EDB,  
Bologna 1984

of the Pope) expressed by the last two Councils with their particular terminology can be expressed in other more understandable terms".<sup>15</sup>

— Finally, the Council's opening up to non-Christian religions and to the vast throng of non-believers is demanding of the role of the Pope previously unknown innovations of service, which we can see to have been begun both by the widening and reform of the Vatican departments, by the auspicious apostolic journeys of the recent Popes,<sup>16</sup> and by courageous pastoral and cultural initiatives with representatives of different peoples or through some forms of mediation in the field of justice and peace.

The sum total of all these innovations, which are not without associated tensions and problems, is having an effect on the exercise of the ministry of Peter, not in the sense of putting in doubt or diminishing the reality established by Christ, but in order to make its functioning more adequately adapted to the progressive social and ecclesial transformation which has taken place.

The enumeration of these motives for a change of style must help us to reinterpret with diligent loyalty the spiritual testament left us by Don Bosco. Awareness of the present process of renewal in the exercise of Peter's ministry is an indispensable condition for acquiring a renewed sense of Church.

With Don Bosco and with the times! Our filial adherence to the Pope must feel itself rooted today in a living Tradition which is nourished at the crystal clear sources of faith but which move forward in profound harmony with the growth of the knowledge of the Church itself as time progresses.<sup>17</sup>

15. von Balthasar, "Il complesso antiromano", Queriniana 1974, p. 221

16. For an example of a reflection on the visit of John Paul II to Turin, cf. ASC 1980, n. 297, pp. 45.65

17. cf. Del Verbum 8

## **A difficult situation**

The fascination of the above-mentioned innovations, the resulting reawakening of certain tensions, a certain pseudoscientific rationalism, ancient and modern prejudices, would all want to make an attitude of a habitual critical reserve or a leaving out of consideration the magisterium of the Pope appear to be a sign of a mature personality. Anyone on the other hand showing sincere adherence can easily become considered as out of date.

Here it is not only a question of that "anti-Roman complex" already analysed in the well-known book of Urs von Balthasar, but also of a growing animosity to "this" Pope of the present day.

It seems to have become the fashion to give ready credit to malicious interpretations concerning the person of the present Pope: his magisterial statements are played down, sympathy is shown for ideological positions he condemns, gratuitous statements are made about his cultural mentality which is said to be out-of-date and restraining; there are some also who put too high a value on hermeneutical research (which of itself is important and enriching) to such an extent that they steadfastly leave out of consideration any magisterial mediation; they forget that "the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God", as is stated in the Constitution *Verbum Dei*, "has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ".<sup>18</sup>

Those who consider the "historical" interpretation of the sources of revelation as a scientific

overcoming of their “dogmatic” interpretation, disregard the nature of the christian faith. They consider the dogmatic view as a kind of prescientific stage which, after their researches, should be placed in parentheses as though it were a hypothesis now become archaic. And so they do not consider that revelation itself, properly speaking, is the true source of what is the object of faith, and that faith is fundamentally an act concluded with the entire Church, within the ambit of its living tradition accompanied by the service of the magisterium.

In fact “the faith is not only a face to face relationship with God and Christ, but also a contact which opens communion with those with whom God himself has communicated. Faith therefore is not only an ‘I’ and ‘thou’, but also a ‘we’. In this ‘we’ lives a memorial which has led us to find again what we had forgotten: God and the One he sent. To put it in other words, there is no faith without the Church. Henri De Lubac has shown that the ‘I’ of the profession of christian faith is not the isolated ‘I’ of the individual, but the collective ‘I’ of the Church”.<sup>19</sup>

It is not an attitude of faith to ignore the living presence of the Spirit who unfailingly assists the ministry of Peter, nor to “democratize” his activity within the People of God in such a way as to render practically superfluous the function of the Pope.

The harm caused to people and especially to young people by pastoral workers or professors who oppose, undervalue, or mock the pastoral direction of the present successor of Peter, is serious from a pastoral point of view. Such behaviour bewilders and little by little separates

19. Ratzinger, “Trasmissione della fede e fonti della fede”, Bologna 1985, p. 20

psychologically from the truths of faith and from right conduct people who are still well disposed but lacking in doctrine, and makes them victims of a tidal wave of secularism. Under the effect of such factors a culture which until yesterday was impregnated by the Gospel, seems today to be undergoing a process of self-emptying: at its vertex we find "atheism", then a "demythologized reinterpretation of Christ", then lower down a "popularization" of the Church, then a "reappropriation" of the Word of God, and finally a radical rethinking of the "ministries", no longer in the light of the christological mysteries with the primacy of the Pope, but rather in psychological and sociological terms.

Not without reason is "postchristianity" spoken of, i.e. a mentality which is concerned only with the rationalism that accompanies scientific progress and has no need of historical Revelation. It is not always explicitly felt, nor of the same intensity of conviction, nor always expressed at the same level, but its influence pervades the great means of social communication and extends insensibly, like an oil stain, even in some sectors of believers, and perhaps even among ourselves.

A sign of such influence is precisely that of indifference, of a certain irony or antipathy to the role of the Pope as the unifying centre of ecclesial communion and as the first pastoral guide of the entire mission of the People of God.

It is not a case of denying the possible defects inherent in the human exercise of every ministry. The manner in which a Pope fills his role and even some particular plan of his are not necessarily to be considered objects of infallibility. "Every possible programme", writes von Baltha-

sar in the work already quoted, "remains limited internally by contingencies which are of this earth and debatable (in comparison with the universality of the Kingdom of Christ), whether we are speaking of a plan of Leo I or Gregory I or Hildebrand and Innocent III or the last Popes of the Church's States".<sup>20</sup>

20. op. cit. p. 56

But it is one thing to try to make a historical evaluation of a pontificate of the past (against the light of a sufficient background), and quite another to dissent from or pay no attention to the pastoral guidelines of the Pope of the present time, and thus contribute to the weakening among the people of his charism of ecclesial direction. At the present day we are witnessing disastrous consequences of criticism of this kind and of dissent, especially in the moral sphere, where the divergence is stronger between the secularist mentality (a "new ethic") and the magisterium of the Pope. One sees public opinion getting ever further away from the very foundations of christian morality, to such an extent that the ethical criterion is no longer the Gospel, but statistics, the civil law, or manners of behaviour accepted by society. There is a widespread easy discarding of values which renders very difficult the ministry of Peter and of pastors, presenting it as something alien to what is considered the present progress of "reason" and to the thrilling future of the "history of freedom".

At a time when the importance of the papal role itself is considered matter for discussion, it would not be acceptable conduct from a pastoral point of view, nor an expression of the genuine sense of Church, nor a demonstration of an objective understanding of faith, to opt out from a

position of filial loyalty, of convinced and updated adherence and of courageous defence of the person and ministry of the Successor of Peter.

In a situation like that of the present day which is so problematical for pastoral work, Don Bosco would certainly not be found sitting on the fence nor a critic of how things are done, but would be outspoken in declaring his own loyalty.

### **Some reflections on the document *Lumen Gentium***

At a distance of twenty years from Vatican II it is worth looking back to see what the Council had to say about Peter's ministry. The affirmations represent the living thought of today's Church. It is not our intention to go into the discussions on the complex theme of ministries among the People of God. Some publications in this regard based on debatable hermeneutics have been the object of official disapproval.<sup>21</sup>

What we want to do is to re-read from a spiritual point of view the Council's statements, rising above all suspicion of rationalism and getting beyond any antisacramental 'a priori' attitude which excludes mediation from on high. I invite you, dear confreres, to read again with attention, even publicly in community,, the third chapter of the dogmatic Constitution on the Church. It will give rise to a useful and enlightening reflection which may help someone to rediscover the true sense of Vatican II.

As we have already said in passing, the petrine ministry in the Church belongs to its very "sacramental" constitution. In the great "Sacrament of salvation" which is the "Body of Christ" in history, Jesus has placed, as a visible expression

21. cf. e.g. Schillebeeckx, "Il ministero della Chiesa", 2<sup>a</sup> edn., Queriniana 1982

22. LG 18

of his irreplaceable role as Head, the apostolic College in which Peter is constituted “the lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion”.<sup>22</sup> The believer therefore must be able to look upon the figure of the Pope from this “sacramental” viewpoint of the globality of the Church.

In an ecclesial view of “mystery” (which includes the divine presence in human reality), we can consider with regard to the petrine ministry — as it appears in *Lumen Gentium* — three complementary elements: its institution on the part of Jesus Christ, the sacramental realism of the Collegiality of the Bishops as a reality inseparable from the Primacy, and the permanent assistance of the Holy Spirit.

— In the first place, of vital interest to the conscience of the believer is the fact that *Jesus willed, planned and personally prepared the ministry of Peter*, as the rock and foundation of his Church for all ages. This statement reached its precise and fundamental formulation in the last two Vatican Councils: “This sacred synod”, says *Lumen Gentium*, “following in the steps of the First Vatican Council, teaches and declares with it that Jesus Christ, the eternal pastor, set up the holy Church” and consecrated the Apostles and their successors the Bishops, establishing Peter and his successors as their head. “This teaching concerning the institution, the permanence, the nature and import of the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and his infallible teaching office, the sacred synod propose anew to be firmly believed by all the faithful”.<sup>23</sup>

23. LG 18

The whole of Chapter 3 of the Constitution describes in detail the hierarchical structure wil-

led by Christ and animated by his Spirit; particularly significant is what is asserted about episcopal collegiality and the primacy of the Pope.<sup>24</sup>

Today a Catholic, as von Balthasar writes, "can wriggle as much as he likes, but he cannot go back before Vatican I which was reaffirmed by Vatican II (LG22). As is the case with all definitions, the only way open is that of integration in a bigger and vaster totality. And this totality is the indefectibility of the believing Church, of which the petrine ministry is a particular aspect. It is no exaggeration to say that on this point Vatican I has closed a door, and has done it so well that no one can open it any more without bringing down the whole edifice, the whole structural framework of Catholicism. To behave as though this door could be opened by chance is to live a lie".<sup>25</sup>

— Secondly, *the sacramental realism of episcopal collegiality as a reality inseparable from primacy* brings the believer to consider that the true "sacramentality" of the Church is expressed in short in a well determined human existence; a reality which one can touch and be aware of, situated in time and space here and now, in relationship to concrete persons and definite roles. Vatican II has helped to give to this "sacramentality" the concept of the objective goal of the efficacy of the seven sacraments. The latter are the intermediaries which lead to the construction of the one true and great Sacrament which is the Church, is so far as it is the "Body of Christ" in the world. Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist make of me, in my concrete human being, a living member of this Body of Christ. We in fact are the definitive sacramental dimen-

24. cf. especially  
LG 22, 25, 27

25. op. cit. p. 124

sion because we are the signs and bearers of the mystery of Christ!

Now the sacrament of Order, which consecrates Bishops to the fullest extent, incorporates a historically defined College of Pastors, i.e. it incorporates those who are consecrated into a pre-existing reality which has a peculiar nature of "hierarchical communion" (an "Order") in which there exists and has always existed, by disposition of Jesus Christ, the Primacy of Peter: "The holy synod teaches", says *Lumen Gentium*, "that the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness, namely, which both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and the language of the Fathers is called the high priesthood, the acme of the sacred ministry. Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, the duties also of teaching and ruling which, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college".<sup>26</sup>

26. LG 21

This is why it is not possible to conceive of an authentic episcopal collegiality without the primacy of the Pope, nor of a particular Church in detachment from the universal Church; nor of a federation of different and autonomous local Churches, instead of a communion of Churches which are original but gathered together in unity. Moreover, the apostolic College and the body of Bishops (with those consecrated for the subordinate ministries of the priesthood and diaconate) are, in Christ's Body which is the Church, the signs and bearers of the special function of Christ as the "eternal Shepherd", the living head of that Body. They are therefore a sacramental

expression of the function of pastor or shepherd which belongs to him as head; in fact, "in order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of ministries".<sup>27</sup>

27. LG 18

But if the Lord willed the ministry of Pastors as a collegial body, guided by Peter, this means that pastoral responsibilities must always be accompanied by an impelling inward desire for communion with the Pope, a convergence of conscious solidarity with his function of guidance, agreement with his teaching which, on the other hand, is an expression of the permanent living values of Tradition and of the indefectible intuition of faith of the whole Church.

— Finally, *the permanent assistance of the Holy Spirit* makes of the Pope's ministry an inestimable gift for the People of God: the "charism of direction". Christ himself sends, with explicit decision, his Spirit to the person of Peter and his successors: "I have prayed for you... and you must strengthen your brethren"<sup>28</sup>; "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these others do? Feed my lambs, tend my sheep".<sup>29</sup>

28. Lk 22, 32

29. cf. Jn 21, 15-17

The Holy Spirit is present in history because he has been sent by the Father and by the Son; Pentecost represents the fullness of the mystery of Christ: "The Holy Spirit", says *Lumen Gentium* again, "was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that he might continually sanctify the Church... Guiding the Church in the way of all truth, and unifying her in communion and in the works of ministry, he bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her and adorns her with his fruits".<sup>30</sup> The initiative and creativity of the Holy Spirit in

30. LG 4

the People of God are inexhaustible, never in contrast but rather always in favour of the mediations instituted by Christ; charisms and ministries are planned together by the Lord so that they may grow harmoniously throughout history: "The organic communion of the Church", states *Mutuae Relationes*, "is not exclusively *spiritual*, i.e. so born of the Holy Spirit that this spiritual birth is of its very nature prior to and responsible for all the functions of the Church, but the Church is at the same time *hierarchic* since, by a vital impulse, it is derived from Christ the Head. The very gifts that are dispensed by the Spirit are precisely willed by Christ and of their nature they are directed towards the fastening together of the Body, by vivifying its functions and activities".<sup>31</sup>

31. MR 5

The role of the Pope therefore (together with that of the Bishops) is linked to an objective assistance of the Spirit of the Lord in the concrete occasions of the exercise of their ministry: "In order to fulfil such exalted functions, the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit which came upon them, and by the imposition of hands they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration".<sup>32</sup> To fail to bear this in mind would be to water down the faith.

32. LG 21

We must remember, at the end of these brief reflections on some points from *Lumen Gentium*, that an urgent need is felt at the present day for a renewed theology and spirituality of the presence of the Holy Spirit in history: it would be a great help to the attitude of believers, even as regards the ministry of Peter.

## **Our attitude of loyalty becomes a task to be carried out**

We have recalled the importance assumed in our salesian life by "filial loyalty to Peter's successor" and have illustrated it with some reflections from the Council. We have pointed out the innovations in style witnessed at the present day, and have taken note of some practical difficulties experienced in this regard in a secularized society. All this gives us seriously to think and puts us, in a certain sense, in a state of alert.

The two articles of the Constitutions which we have re-read together<sup>33</sup> express the ecclesial dimension of our "spirit" and of our "charism". Article 13 speaks of adherence to the Pope as a living element of the "salesian spirit", or in other words of our "original style of life and action".<sup>34</sup> The spirit of Don Bosco animates and inspires our practical activity. And so loyalty to the Pope will not be for us a mere interior attitude, but must become an apostolic task to be carried out. Rightly does article 13 conclude by saying: "We educate young christians to an authentic understanding of the Church and we work assiduously for its growth".

Article 125 in turn speaks of the "Salesian Society" as such. Considering its apostolic activity as a participation in the mission of the Church, it asserts that our vow of obedience binds us explicitly to the supreme authority of the Pope, and hence we "welcome with docility" his magisterium. Here too, because of the very nature of the salesian vocation, obedience and docility are not reduced to the merely internal life of the communities, but become prolonged and

33. C 13, 125

34. C 10

transformed into an apostolic task. This article too concludes by saying that the members "help the faithful, especially the young, to accept the teachings" of the papal magisterium.

And so our "devotion" to the Pope becomes a task to be fulfilled; it invites us to undertake a true apostolic work in this field.

How are we to do it? If we look at Don Bosco we shall feel ourselves stimulated and set on the right road for doing the job. With his own practical mentality and as a pastor and educator he did it by his writings, by the witness of his life, by social communication, through educational activity, through so many apostolic undertakings, and through widely differing enterprises which went well beyond the immediate interests of the Congregation.

Here I would like to suggest some practical aspects, in which local communities and provinces should feel themselves invited to draw up programmes of concrete initiatives in this regard.

The better to highlight such suggestions I give pride of place to a concrete and stimulating *youth spirituality*, a vigorous and energetic gospel project for the young, capable of animating our presence everywhere and of giving life too to a "salesian movement" drawing its inspiration from the pedagogical and pastoral options of Don Bosco.

It is a question of launching and making attractive those values which express the vitality of the message of Christ at the present day: true ideals, demanding behaviour, practical aims, along the lines of the letter of John Paul II to young people, so as to put paid to the growing danger of the "man without a vocation".

Is it not possible that in more than a few of our works the mystical excitation is lacking in what we are doing for and in youth groups? My use of the word "mystical" does not mean that I am inviting you to promote intimist or eccentric activities; it implies rather a courageous conviction about the force of the Gospel, accompanied by a contagious kind of witness resulting from meditation, perseverance, enthusiasm and spirit of sacrifice.

Our vocation as "missionaries of the young" should intensify in all hearts a true vital energy, a strong faith communication, an enlightened sincerity in challenging the trend towards middle class ways and habits, permissiveness and secularism. A confrere or community lacking in this kind of mystique will never be able to give life to a real present day "movement".

Fortunately we can thank the Lord that among us there has been the development of group experience and activity and that positive and mature conclusions have emerged in this connection (as is clear from the latest aid issued by the Youth Pastoral Department: "The Salesian Plan for Group Activity — A progress report on an ongoing experiment": Document 9).

One of the components of a salesian youth spirituality must be precisely a strong "sense of Church" with appropriate attitudes to be created, developed and translated into lived experience. Certainly in the plan and practice of Don Bosco a privileged place was occupied by a committed adherence to the Pope, based on knowledge, love and the welcome reception of his ministry as successor of Peter. This component, if well presented and promoted will give to the youth spi-

rituality a concrete Church experience, clarity in the shaping of their lives and new motives for prompting activity.

But the transmission of a spiritual project for the young will be the result only of a personal and community intensity of life in the Spirit on our part. Hence the need for a constant enrichment of ourselves by updating and developing the sense of Church of our Founder. Here is a basic task for all of us.

For this purpose I now set out some points which I think to be strategic but which, unfortunately, I have noticed are ignored here and there to some extent.

— First of all there is *the concept of the Church as a "Mystery"*, as presented by Vatican II: "The society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality which comes together from a human and a divine element. For this reason the Church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word".<sup>35</sup>

A truly conciliar ecclesiology, which shows up the sacramental nature of the Church, is the foundation of our adherence to the Pope. We know that there are some deviant ecclesiological ideas about, which, even in the best of cases, favour a minimalist interpretation of the ministry of Peter.

At the present day, to be attentively aware of the real presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in its life, in its mediations, in its mini-

tries, in its charisms, is an indispensable condition for being in tune with the Council.

As a consequence of a genuine ecclesiology of the Mystery we must update our *image of the Pope as the first and supreme Pastor*.

Vatican II presents the hierarchical dimension of the Church, not in a sociological context — neither “monarchical” nor “democratic” — but rather from a “sacramental” standpoint, as a reality of service to the People of God enlivened by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and therefore considered and understood only by the intuition of faith. The figure of the Pope is of one who has a power which is not despotic but a service of truth and charity in a special participation of the saving authority of the risen Christ, who is the true living and actual Head of the Church, its “Eternal Shepherd”.

The Pope is not alone; the universal Church is not a diocese; episcopal collegiality, as we have seen, is not a joint-stock company but involves of its very nature the primacy of Peter.

We know, I repeat, that the manner of exercising the primatial ministry is at the present day passing through an interesting process of renewal. Such an innovation must intensify our attention and our study so that we can remain up to date and competent in a vital aspect of our spirit. There are too many people about who see the present evolution as no more than a social and cultural phenomenon, leaving aside its sacramental reality as a mystery instituted by Christ. It is another motive therefore for deepening our cultural and ecclesiological knowledge together with a constant reflection of faith.

— Another point we have to attend to is the

*inclusion of the teaching of the Pope in our evangelizing activity.* The magisterium of the Pope is expressed in various ways. We must be able to accept and retain it according to the sense he himself intends, which can be deduced both from the matter concerned, the tenor of its verbal expression and the kind of document, in accordance with the well-known and proper norms of interpretation.

Importance must be given to Encyclicals, to Apostolic Exhortations, to certain particularly significant guidelines, to the Notes or doctrinal Instructions issued particularly through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and to addresses and interventions of special significance. To follow attentively the magisterium of the Pope is one way of keeping oneself up to date on problems and on the directives of the Church, to practise the faith in dialogue with the challenges of the times, to rethink the Gospel as a message of salvation and not just as a fact of religious culture.

Here we have a vast field of urgent and indispensable commitment, at a time of epoch-making changes in which appear uninterruptedly unpublished theories, deviant practices, and complex problems. Every community should find a way of keeping itself well informed and up to date.

If we did not live this continual effort to keep in tune, we could not say that we were truly bearing witness to the spirit of Don Bosco.

— Finally, in welcoming the teaching of the Pope, I think that pride of place must be given, because of the pastoral and pedagogical character of the salesian vocation, to his "*moral directives*"

and his "*social teaching*": two sectors of extraordinary educational urgency, the first more strongly present in developed societies permeated with permissive ideas, the second felt to a greater extent in the third world thirsting for liberation.

As pastors and educators we must be competent in the matter of christian criteria for human conduct. One hears worried references to the "moral drama", to radical about-turns made acceptable by anthropological sciences, to new values emerging in a post-christian culture, to the waning of the traditional ethic.

It will certainly be far from easy to solve all the moral problems of the emerging cultures; adherence to the teaching of the Pope concerning right human conduct will provide doctrinal light and valuable pastoral guidelines.

And then, the maturing of the process of socialization, which presupposes the awareness and active participation of citizens in the management of the common good, has given extraordinary importance to themes of justice and peace and to the political dimension of the life of individuals and peoples as a whole. Ideologies have sprung up in this field which tend to influence and dominate culture. Hence the attention and circumspection with which the social teaching of the Church, especially through the ministry of the Pope, must be handled. If we want to bring a gospel influence to bear on structural changes, to prepare young people for the world of work and to animate political administration with christian spirit, educating to solidarity and peace among people, we need accurate knowledge and adequate ability for communication of the social

teaching of the Church. I have the impression that this is unfortunately a field in which many just limp along. We need to remedy this situation as a matter of urgency, not least because the Constitutions move us in that direction: we Salesians, "while not getting involved in ideologies or party politics, reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence; we cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity".<sup>36</sup>

36. C 33

As you see, dear confreres, if we look upon our "devotion" to the Pope as an apostolic "task" for the present day we shall feel a concrete invitation to commit ourselves more as believers, as pastors, as educators. I ask Provincials and Rectors to show constant concern that in every house there be due updating about the Church's magisterium.

### **The Help of Christians and the Pope**

The treatment of a theme so expressive of the spirit of Don Bosco would be incomplete without some reference to the strict linkage which unites the figure of Peter's successor with that of Mary.

I said at the beginning of this letter that the three peculiarly salesian "devotions" to Christ in the Eucharist, to Mary Help of Christians and to the Pope are the practical expression of the ecclesial awareness of our Founder, and constitute three inseparable and complementary aspects of a courageously committed faith.

The so-called "dream" of the two columns narrated by Don Bosco in May 1862<sup>37</sup> presents

37. MB VII 169-171;  
BM VII 107-109

from a prophetic viewpoint and in the stylized form of a historical event the ship of the Church guided by the Pope in a tempestuous sea. It finds safety in a double recourse to Christ and to Mary, present in history as the Host of salvation and the Immaculate Help of Christians, represented in the two solid columns furnished with anchors and mooring chains.

We know that it was precisely in the 1860's that our Father, moved by his intuition of what lay ahead in the social field and by his acute Church sense, intensified his devotion to Mary in her role of "Help of Christians": "It is the Catholic Church itself that is under attack", he wrote. "It is attacked in its functions, in its sacred institutions, in its head, in its doctrine, and in its discipline; it is attacked precisely as the Catholic Church, as the centre of truth and as the teacher of all the faithful".<sup>38</sup>

From this point of view Don Bosco sees the Madonna as the Mother of the Church, concerned especially to assist and protect the indispensable ministry of the Pope and the Bishops. And history bears witness to her innumerable interventions.

Here we can do no more than make some brief ecclesial reflections which illustrate the mutual relationship between Mary and Peter within the Church seen as "mystery".<sup>39</sup>

"The Marian and Petrine principles are coextensive in the Church": the whole Church is both Marian and Petrine, even though in an analogous and complementary sense.

Mary and Peter, in different ways, are entirely at the service of the People of God in the total gift of themselves; both of them join the aware-

38. cf. ASC 289 (1978), p. 22

39. cf. von Balthasar, op. cit. pp. 203-225

ness of their lofty mission with the humility "of the immolation" of their own lives.

Mary is a mother for all the Church; Peter is the foundation for all the Church.

Mary is "immaculate", the prophetic model of the life and sanctity of the whole Church; Peter is "infallible", the prophetic shepherd of the profession of faith and moral conduct of the whole Church.

Mary lives in the resurrection as the tireless "helper" for all the Church; Peter lives in the apostolic succession as the "guide and animator" for all the Church.

Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit in the fertility of charisms for the Church; Peter, assisted by the Holy Spirit, is the judge of the authenticity and ordered exercise of charisms for the Church.

Mary participates in the fullness of the paschal mystery which renders her "queen" throughout the ages for the building of the Church; Peter shares in the authority of Christ the Lord with a sacred power which makes him the "minister" (vicar, servant of the servants of God) in history for the building of the Church.

Mary is entirely turned to Christ so that the Church may be his mystical Body; Peter is the sign and bearer of the "headship" of Christ the Shepherd, so that the Church may be the great Sacrament of Salvation.

Mary and Peter therefore, the Help of Christians and the Pope, from different points of view and with complementary functions are now vitally directed to the Church, so that in it the mystery of Christ may attain its fullness.

If Mary ("Mater Ecclesiae") supports and helps

the Pope, Peter's Successor entrusts himself to Mary ("totus tuus") and witnesses to her regal motherhood.

Dear confreres, we, who have taken the Madonna into our home to ensure through her presence the renewal of the Congregation<sup>40</sup> and who solemnly entrusted ourselves to her in the last General Chapter,<sup>41</sup> must never forget that salesian devotion to her as "Help of Christians and Mother of the Church" implies, on theological grounds and according to the spirit of our charism, a "filial loyalty to Peter's successor and to his teaching" so as to educate and promote a genuine and concrete sense of Church among the poorer classes of society and especially among young people exposed to danger.

May Don Bosco be our inspiration and encouragement.

Our sincere and updated "devotion" to Peter's successor will add enthusiasm to our consecration, timeliness to our pastoral planning, and will lead to a flourishing of vocations.

I greet you in the Lord, and it is my earnest wish that in preparation for 1988 you may all grow constantly in your study, assimilation and witness of the renewed Constitutions and General Regulations.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,



40. cf. ASC 289  
(1978)

41. cf. GC22, n. 126

## 2. GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

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### 2.1 THE PROVINCIAL DIRECTORY

Fr Cajetan SCRIVO

**Vicar General**

The time is drawing near for the convoking of the Provincial Chapters foreseen by art. 172 of the Constitutions.

In the course of the plenary session of June-July of the present year, the Rector Major and the General Council have given some thought to this point, keeping in mind that the coming Provincial Chapters will be the first to take place after the promulgation of the new text of the Constitutions and Regulations.

It was agreed that it would be expedient first of all to call the attention of the provincial community to the practical directive issued by the GC22 concerning what was to be done after the Chapter: "Let the next (ordinary) provincial chapter have as its principal theme the Constitutions and Regulations and the implementation of duties following from them" (GC22, n. 2).

Particularly useful aids for the preparation and study of this theme, because of their doctrinal content and the concrete objectives they indicate, are the closing address of the Rector Major to the GC22 (GC22 nn. 5892), and his letter on "The renewed text of our Rule of life" (AGC 312, January-March 1985).

It was observed too that among the tasks entrusted to the

Provincial Chapter, a more careful attention needs to be given to the one indicated in C.171,4: “to formulate and revise the provincial directory in matters left to be decided at provincial level”.

At the end of their analysis, the Rector Major and his Council drew up the following clarifications and guidelines, which I pass on to you in the text as approved by the Council in its meeting of 19 July 1985, with the invitation to the confreres (and especially the Provincials and their Councils) to make them the subject of careful study and application.

## **1. Nature of the Provincial Directory**

1.1 To outline the nature of the Provincial Directory one must begin from C.191: “The life and activities of communities and confreres are regulated by the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Society. The latter is expressed in the Constitutions, which represent our basic code, the general Regulations, the deliberations of the general chapter, the general and provincial directories, and in other decisions made by competent authorities.”

It is clear from this article that the particular law of the Society comprises primarily the fundamental code or Constitutions referred to in can. 587, § 1; and secondarily all the normative documents which contain executive dispositions or applications of the fundamental code.

1.2 The Provincial Directory forms part of these normative documents and has the following special characteristics:

— it contains particular norms which represent practical expressions of general legislation in specific matters left to be decided at provincial level;

— the laying down of the norms contained in the directory belongs to the Provincial Chapter (C 171,4): this is an example of the principles of subsidiarity and decentralization;

— the norms contained in the directory have binding force only after the approval of the Rector Major and his Council, and only for the province concerned.

1.3 Without prejudice to the fact that the Provincial Directory is a text which is normative of its very nature, it would seem fitting that the norms be accompanied by a brief presentation and proper motivation, which stress the values of which the norms are an expression.

## 2. Content of the Provincial Directory

2.1 Some items have been explicitly assigned to the Provincial Directories by the Constitutions and General Regulations (cf. 2.2 below). But the directory may also contain other norms which the Provincial Chapter may consider opportune within the compass of the powers allotted to it by C 171,1 and 171,2.

It is clear too that any subsequent modifications of the norms of the Provincial Directory require a decision by the Provincial Chapter and the approval of the Rector Major with his Council.

2.2 It may be useful here to list the points left explicitly to the Provincial Chapters by the Constitutions and General Regulations, together with some comments which need to be kept in mind when drawing up the Provincial Directory:

**C 185:** "The role and duties of those responsible for the principal sectors of the community's activities will be laid down by the Provincial Chapter."

The article says nothing about including this in the Provincial Directory. Hence, although the obligation remains of doing what is laid down by the article of the Constitutions, it is up to the Provincial Chapter to decide whether to put the relevant decisions in the Provincial Directory or to express them as Chapter deliberations or executive decisions.

**R 58** refers to poverty and remits to the Provincial Chapters the task of laying down norms “with a view to establishing throughout the province a modest and effectively uniform level of community life, while taking into account special situations”. Three particular cases are indicated where regulations are required.

Here too nothing is said explicitly about the inserting of decisions in the Directory. But since the article of the Regulations asks the Provincial Chapters to lay down “norms”, it is evident that this is in fact matter for the Directory.

In meeting the requirements of **R 58** the Provincial Chapter would do well to keep in mind what is said in **R 65** concerning the examination of the state of poverty at provincial and local levels, and lay down some directives to regulate the frequency and manner of making the examination concerned. This is the sense of the practical directive of the GC21 (59a): “To better ensure and foster a greater sensitiveness to evangelical poverty, the Provincial Directories should establish a periodic self-examination (*scrutinium paupertatis*), determining the time and procedure. In this examination should be included an appraisal of work as an expression of poverty”.

**R 72 and R 74** concern the life of prayer. Although different expressions are used in the two articles — “in the manner laid down by the provincial chapter” (**R 72**); “the details will be laid down in the provincial directory” (**R 74**) — it is evident from a comparison of the two that the decisions of the Provincial Chapter are matter for the Provincial Directory.

**R 87, 88, 106** (cf. C 101). The three articles refer to salesian formation and speak of a “provincial formation directory”, which “applies the principles and norms of salesian formation to the concrete local situations” (**R 87**).

It should be noticed that this “formation directory” is not

a directory separate from the Provincial Directory, but is in fact a particular section of the latter.

From what was said earlier, especially with reference to C 171, it follows that the norms to be applied in connection with formation require the approval of the Provincial Chapter which must obviously be based on the “Ratio fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum” and other possible guidelines of the Provincial Conferences (cf. 3.3 below).

**R 162.** “The manner in which the substitution is to take place (of the delegates) for the general chapter will be decided by the provincial chapter.”

To meet this requirement the Provincial Chapter, after electing the delegates, will decide on the manner in which any substitution is to be made, keeping in mind the circumstances and the results of the delegates’ election.

It seems inadvisable therefore to include a norm in this connection in the Provincial Directory, but rather leave each Chapter free to make its own decision, provided that the decision be made before the election of the substitutes.

**R 167, 4.** “To establish standing orders for the functioning of the provincial chapter in accordance with canon law.”

Since there is question here of norms, it is obvious that they can be matter for the Provincial Directory, at least for those fundamental dispositions which need to be laid down for the sake of continuity. But it should be kept well in mind that they must remain within the well-defined limits of the “functioning” of the Provincial Chapter (the manner of its opening, the examination of the Provincial’s report [R 167,1], the tasks of commissions, the procedure for making interventions, etc.).

**R 190.** This article refers to provincial and local administration, with particular reference to certain sections of such administration.

Here again norms are involved which have been left to the Provincial Chapter, and which are therefore matter for the Provincial Directory.

For this task however it is explicitly stated that it may be delegated by the Provincial Chapter to the Provincial with his Council.

The reasons for such delegation are not far to seek. The drawing up of detailed norms in these matters require both time and technical competence. The use of such a delegation seems inevitable; the Provincial Chapter may add to it certain indications and conditions.

When such a delegation is made, the norms laid down in virtue of the delegation by the Provincial and his Council form part of the Provincial Directory, but are binding only after approval by the Rector Major and his Council.

It is appropriate that in the fulfilment of what is prescribed by R 190, R 62 and R 178 be kept in mind. The importance will be obvious to everyone of "the preservation of libraries, archives and other documentary material, because of their cultural and community value". Appropriate norms in the Provincial Directory will certainly be of use in filling gaps and correcting shortcomings which will be seen with the passage of time to be ever more serious.

**R 170.** "The manner of making the consultation for the appointment of the rector will be determined by the provincial with the consent of his council and in the light of any indications made by the provincial chapter."

From the article it is clear that the provincial chapter can choose either to give or not give indications concerning the way in which the consultation preceding the appointment of rectors is carried out.

If the Provincial Chapter should decide to give any relevant indications, these can be included in the Provincial Directory,

provided that they do not in any way impair the authority of the Provincial and his Council to decide how the consultation shall be made, nor compromise the confidential nature of the consultation itself, which is an act by which the confreres take part in and share the responsibility for the choice of those responsible for government (C 123) and not the exercise of a right of election.

### **3. Clarifications on three particular problems**

3.1 A first clarification concerns the educative and pastoral plan.

To the constitutional statement concerning the apostolic plan in its overall sense at provincial and local level (C 31, 44), there correspond various articles of the Regulations (R 4-10; 184,4) which are specifically dedicated to the provincial and local educative plans.

From the whole context it is evident that the educative and pastoral plan is distinct from the Provincial Directory in its nature, purpose, extension and content. It has the characteristics of a project providing a programme and guidelines, and is in consequence a separate document, distinct from the Provincial Directory.

The responsibility for drawing up the province's educative and pastoral plan has been committed to the "provincial community" (R 4). This means that the Provincial and his Council must follow the criteria of participation and involve in the process the various provincial organisms, including in accordance with C 171,1,2 the Provincial Chapter, to the extent to which the character of the plan and the situation of the province require it.

3.2 A second clarification concerns the Manual of Prayer called for by R 77.

This too falls outside the scope of a Provincial Directory: it is not meant to be a book of norms, but rather a manual and practical guide.

Moreover its preparation has been left to the provinces, provincial conferences or regions, and this is another sign that it is not concerned with “norms at provincial level”, decided on by the Provincial Chapter.

3.3 A third clarification concerns the relationship between a Provincial Directory and guidelines given by provincial conferences or regional structures.

Here C 120 should be kept in mind: “Our Society is made up of provincial communities, and these in turn are divided into local communities.” Hence there are three levels of government: world, provincial and local.

Regional structures and provincial conferences (C 144, 145; R 135-142) are not, of their nature, structures of government, but organism of linkage and coordination: this is clear particularly from the tasks assigned to the provincial conference (R 142) and from the third paragraph of R 139: “The conclusions of the conference are ordinarily orientative”.

Nevertheless the following paragraph of the same article states: “In special cases the conference can make binding decisions, which acquire their force only after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council”.

From these premises the following solid deductions can be made:

3.3.1 Our particular law neither foresees nor authorizes a Regional Directory, or a National Directory (of provincial conferences).

3.3.2 Our Constitutions and Regulations provide nevertheless for coordinating activity and the provision of guidelines at

regional level or that of the provincial conference. And in the latter case the possibility is foreseen in special cases of the enactment of binding decisions.

3.3.3 Provincial conferences therefore must operate within their own ambit in harmony with the spirit of our general legislation. But it is equally a duty of Provincial Chapters to proceed with prudence and wide overall vision, especially when dealing with matters which because of their consequences and implications have effects which go beyond the boundaries of the province and touch on national and regional interests (cf. R 142).

#### **4. Conclusion**

What has been said in 2.1 above calls for a sober sense of balance and restraint in drawing up the Provincial Directory. The obligatory matter to be inserted is already quite considerable: a measure of collegial self-control is needed in deciding what other norms are really opportune and necessary in the concrete situation in which the province is placed.

The final purpose should always be kept in view: the application to local realities of the principles and norms of the general legislation, so as to render more concrete and efficacious in the provincial community the commitment of fidelity to our Rule of life.

## **2.2 SOME PRIORITIES OF THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY COMMITMENT**

Fr Luke VAN LOOY

**Councillor General for the Missions**

The commitment to take to others the message of Christ and predilection for the young are the elements which characterize the vocation of a salesian missionary. Following the example of Don Bosco, he opens himself to the needs of the people and does all he can to acquire an understanding of their mentality and heart, especially the young ones.

In the course of the visits I have made to our missions in various parts of the world, I have been struck to see how much the salesian spirit is everywhere present, expressed in ease of contact with everyone, in the family spirit and in the fact that the missionary identifies himself with the culture of the local people, so as to bear witness to the love of Christ and the truth of the Gospel. From a structural point of view the Mission is organized around the Church, the school and the Oratory (or youth centre open to all), but to these many other activities are added for the good of the people.

The difficulties are more or less of the same kind everywhere: lack of adequate communications and of means of education, a constant preoccupation about the manner of putting across the gospel message so that it may be properly understood, the effort to reach a full interior understanding of the local culture and mentality. The missionaries share with the people a simple style of life in a spirit of poverty, and maintain their cheerful attitude and festive sense.

I think it true to say that it is in our missions that the 'popular' character of the salesian vocation is most in evidence. Many of our works are the centre of activities which give hope to entire populations.

All this evidently calls for a spirit of initiative and creativity on the part of the missionary and his community; it requires a great capacity for collaboration both within the community itself and with local groups, and also a good relationship with the local authorities.

In order to reply "in a salesian manner to the urgent needs of the peoples to be evangelized", constant and serious study is required to discern the real needs of the young and of the people in general and to meet them with pastoral charity. The remark of a certain missionary shortly after arriving at his mission centre makes one think; he said: "I did not come to the missions to teach in a school; I could have stayed in my own country to do that!" Maybe this confrere had not yet reflected on the many needs of the people around him, and not yet come to realise what the mission demanded of him; maybe it had not yet occurred to him that he was in an excellent position to dedicate himself to poor and abandoned youngsters.

Thinking over what is said in our Constitutions and the realities of the situation I have seen for myself in visiting the missions, I want to emphasize the two elements which must characterize every salesian mission: *commitment to pastoral work for the young and pastoral action in favour of the poor.*

## 1. Youth pastoral work

The Constitutions tell us that the salesian "encounters the young at their present stage of freedom" (C. 38): and this is especially true in the concrete situation in which the salesian missionary is called upon to work. *The point of departure is*

*always the young person*, met in the overall circumstances of his material, cultural, relational and social needs.

The ways and means which must be given priority in mission territory for this kind of work with the young so as to bring them to Christ, are precisely those which are characteristic of our own activity.

### 1.1 *The oratory and youth centre*

This is a setting in which every youngster can be helped in his human growth and in his path towards Christ. Its structural flexibility is such that it can meet youthful needs at any cultural or religious level.

### 1.2 *Schooling*

The salesian mission is concerned about the basic education of youngsters: very often this means commitment to instructional work through elementary schools, trade schools, elementary courses for illiterate adults, and even institutes for higher education.

### 1.3 *Evangelization and catechesis*

A direct or indirect introduction to the person of Christ, to the fundamental principles of the faith and to the values of a life lived according to the Gospel, is an integral part of the objectives of the oratory and salesian school. The missionary has the specific task of studying the ways in which this message can be put across in a way suited to the different local circumstances.

### 1.4 *The building of christian communities*

Missionary work tends of its nature to the building of christian communities. Now contact with boys and youngsters in general is a great help for the forging of good relationships

also with adults: it opens the door to contact with whole families and puts us at the centre of society. The involvement of youngsters in our work and our efforts to form worthy lay collaborators are certainly fundamental for the formation of a basically christian community.

In all this work it must be emphasized that there must be a *balance* between *education, evangelization and development*. Individual activities may be directed principally to one or other of these elements: catechesis and liturgy; schools and teaching in general; material development and urgent needs. But each section involves the others and they mutually complement each other. Education, evangelization and development are linked together and form the indispensable elements for every mission.

## **2. Poor neighbourhoods and the salesian mission**

Contact with youngsters is a great help to the understanding of local culture and a guide to a deeper knowledge of the language and customs of the people.

I want to point out three elements which must characterize the poorer class neighbourhoods which form the settings of our missions.

### *2.1 Culture, society, religion*

The desire to bring the Gospel to people and to insert it in local culture helps the salesian missionary to feel at ease among non-christians, in areas where other religions are in vogue and where different social and political systems may be the rule. He knows how to collaborate "with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity" (C. 33) and thus "create conditions favouring a free process of conversion to the christian faith, with respect shown for the cultural and religious values of the neighbourhood" (R. 22).

## 2.2 *Poverty of style*

The missionary “comes down to the level of the people so that he can accompany them in their upward climb” (Don Caviglia, ‘La concezione missionaria di Don Bosco’, p. 13), so as to give priority to persons and not get lost in the complexity of structural aspects. At the same time the missionary community must be able to present a humble aspect, moving forward slowly a little at a time at a rate in keeping with the rhythm of the people, while having the courage to plan for centres and institutions for education, evangelization and development when the need for such centres becomes evident or imperative.

## 2.3 *Fidelity even within limitations imposed from outside*

The salesian goes to the missions to stay there, often in conditions which prove unfavourable for the carrying out of his apostolate. In some countries the political and religious situation does not allow of free and authentic salesian work. Many salesians live in conditions of restricted freedom; but it is precisely such situations that seem to help them to be more fervent witnesses to the loving kindness of Don Bosco. They are a proof that Don Bosco’s system is efficacious in every kind of setting and that Don Bosco wants to save all at whatever cost.

In conclusion, the physiognomy of a salesian mission can be defined in the words “*home, parish and school*” (C 40) which the Constitutions apply to every salesian presence in the world. The mission is a realization of Don Bosco’s charism in a place not yet evangelized and often still in process of development. I would say that the mission is an *eminent way of living salesian life*. It calls for a deep knowledge of the Gospel and of salesian spirituality, the ability to adapt to circumstances, a deep study of local culture and a knowledge of the vernacular. The secret of success of a salesian mission can be summed up

in the following points: (a) community work in a common project; (b) evangelical and salesian spirituality; (c) collaboration with the local Church and involvement of the laity in our work of education, evangelization and development.

## 2.3 THE SALESIAN BULLETIN

Fr Sergio CUEVAS

**Councillor General for the Salesian Family and for social communication**

Art. 41 of the General Regulations gives a synthetic presentation of the Salesian Bulletin, setting out its principal characteristics and purpose and pointing out the commitment of the Congregation for its publication and circulation. It states:

*“The Salesian Bulletin, founded by Don Bosco, spreads knowledge of salesian spirit and activity, especially in its missionary and educational aspects.*

*It is concerned with the problems of youth, encourages collaboration and tries to foster vocations.*

*It is as well an instrument for formation and a bond of union between the different branches of the Salesian Family. It is edited in accordance with the directives of the Rector Major and his council in various editions and languages.”*

With the desire to implement ever more fully the task which the Regulations entrust to the Salesian Congregation in respect of the publication and circulation of the Bulletin, the General Council has studied the above article of the Regulations and underlined the guidelines it contains.

This present note gathers together the main points emerging from the Council's study, with some of the directives adopted which will be of use not only to those directly responsible for the editing of the Bulletin but to all salesians who are obliged to sustain and spread this “family review”.

## 1. The Salesian Bulletin, a novel creation of Don Bosco

The point of departure for a deeper study of the physiognomy and purpose of the Salesian Bulletin must obviously be the thought of Don Bosco who first conceived the idea and founded it, as is expressed in fact in the article itself.

It had first seen the light in 1875 with the title "The Catholic Booklover" or "Salesian Monthly Bulletin", but from the first issue of 1878 the front page was headed simply "Salesian Bulletin". At first Don Bosco attended to it personally, both to give to it the tone and direction he had in mind and because at that time he had no one to whom he could entrust its direction; we know however that very soon he delegated responsibility for the publication to capable collaborators (the first director was Fr Bonetti), but always in association with himself.

It may be useful to recall some of the remarks of Don Bosco which give a clear indication of the purpose and content of the Bulletin as he wanted them to be.

On the one hand he sees the publication as being aimed principally at the Cooperators. He describes it as the faithful companion, the assiduous mentor, the tireless apostle of the Cooperators (cf. MB XIII 81). And again as the soul of the Pious Union (cf. MB XIII 266). In the first issue (September 1877), addressing himself to the Cooperators, he gives an indication of the scope and content the Bulletin will have: "to provide information about what we have done or what we intend to do to attain the end we have set before ourselves". In this same line, in the annual conference of 1877, he says: "Hand in hand with this project we have decided to publish a bulletin which will pretty much become the Congregation's official publication and include many things we'll need to make known to our Cooperators. It will come out regularly and will link Salesians and Cooperators..." (MB XIII 81; BM XIII 61).

On the other hand Don Bosco sees the Bulletin as aimed at an ever growing number of readers, whom it will interest in

the work of the Oratories for young people and stimulate their collaboration, even financially. On 10 August 1877, in a conversation with Fr Barberis, Don Bosco says: "The Salesian Bulletin's aim is to publicize our activities as much as possible and show them as they really are. By winning popular goodwill for our works we shall obtain people's help (MB XIII 260; BM XIII 191). In the third General Chapter of the Salesian Society (1883) Don Bosco, speaking of the Bulletin, says again: "The Salesian Cooperators who are our benefactors are one thing; those who take the Bulletin regularly as a magazine are quite another. *The Bulletin is merely a means for making our works known and of binding good christians closely together in the same spirit and for a single purpose...* (MB XVI 412). A conversation between Don Bosco and Bartolo Longo is of interest: "Don Bosco: how have you managed to conquer the world?" "My dear friend, this is the secret": "I send the Salesian Bulletin to lots and lots of people, whether they ask for it or not" (MB XVII, 670).

The Salesian Bulletin therefore gives guidelines for Cooperators, especially as a starting point, but it can become wider in character: as well as the Cooperator, it is aimed also at the "good christian" who is interested in the salesian spirit and helps salesian work.

As regards the importance which Don Bosco attached to the Bulletin for his work, we can recall some of his other expressions. He calls it "the principal support of the salesian work and of all that concerns us" (MB XVII 669). To the Bulletin he links the future of salesian work: "The Salesian Society will prosper if we make sure we support the Salesian Bulletin and extend its readership" (MB XVII 645). He considers it "not only the principal means, but even a necessity for the Congregation" (MB XVIII 146). In the third General Chapter Don Bosco asserts: "If governments don't put a spoke in the wheel, the Salesian Bulletin will become a power in the land: not for what it is in itself, but because of the people it will bring together and unite".

## **2. The purpose of the Salesian Bulletin and those for whom it is intended**

From the first edition devised by Don Bosco, the Salesian Bulletin soon passed beyond the borders of Piedmont and Italy, and accompanied the Salesian Congregation as it spread around the world. While Don Bosco was still alive the first editions in languages other than Italian were published: a French edition was published in Turin from 1879, a Spanish edition in Argentina in 1881, and a Spanish edition from Turin from 1886. The number of editions gradually multiplied, and today the Salesian Bulletin is published in 35 different countries; it is the publication which the Congregation rates as of the highest priority for communication within the Salesian Family and for its relationships with the outside world.

The question may be asked: what precisely is the Salesian Bulletin at the present day? What are its objectives? What message is it trying to put across?

Article 41 of the Regulations provides an answer to these questions, indicating the principal aims which today's salesians have in mind in publishing the Bulletin: to be faithful to Don Bosco and at the same time meet the urgent needs of the present day. Let us try to give a brief summary of these aims.

It must be emphasized in the first place that in accordance with the thought of our Founder, the first objective of the Bulletin is to make known salesian facts and news, in so far as these form a living part of today's ecclesial realities and have a vital place in the social context; hence the salesian reality finds a place within the Church and society. Through the Bulletin the aim is to spread a knowledge both of the "salesian spirit" which is characteristic of the life and mission of Don Bosco's great Family, and of concrete salesian activity, especially in its priority areas: the education of the young and missionary commitment.

The presentation of this reality, avoiding purely devotional

aspects on the one hand and any tendency to triumphalism on the other, becomes the faithful description and grateful recognition of what God has done through the Salesians in the Church and for young people. The style of presentation will be dictated by the rules of good modern journalism.

The second paragraph of the above-mentioned article of the Regulations emphasizes a particularly significant point of this reality. Since the mission of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family is directed primarily to the education and evangelization of the young, it is clear that the Bulletin will be concerned with *what is of interest to young people*, especially as regards their human and christian formation.

It should be noted in this connection that the Bulletin makes no claim to be a review of study and research; it is essentially a publication providing information; nevertheless the fact that it is interested in youth problems means that it deals with these with reference to the social and ecclesial situation in which the young people live (cf. C.33), and therefore approaches them with a wide outlook and offers solid foundations based on lived experience as well as on the educational sciences.

In the field too of educational problems of young people, the Bulletin shows a particular interest in the *vocational guidance of the young*, by giving indications and presenting to educators models of consecrated and missionary christian life.

Another important purpose of the Bulletin, and one that harks back to Don Bosco's own idea as we have seen, is indicated in the third paragraph of the article of the Regulations: it is also "*an instrument for formation and a bond of union between the different branches of the Salesian Family*". Within the Salesian Family therefore the Bulletin serves not only to provide information, but aims also at formation (in the same spirit) and at being a connecting medium.

Here too comes in what the article says about "encouraging collaboration": we know how much Don Bosco used to insist

on participation through the Bulletin in what went on in the Congregation and in the Salesian Family.

This description of the aims or purposes of the Bulletin leads almost automatically to the identification of those to whom it is addressed, even if this had not been clearly indicated in the thought of Don Bosco himself (cf. n. 1 above). Although it has a special function within the Salesian Family, as already explained, the Bulletin is *available to everyone* in the sense that it is aimed at all (young or old) who want to know Don Bosco, his spirit and works, and who are willing to collaborate in any of the most diversified ways.

The fact too that the Bulletin is aimed at the man in the street means that it must have a typically characteristic style and form which makes it a *family publication easy to read*: this can be deduced also from a reflection on articles 6 and 43 of the Constitutions, which refer to the role of social communication among the Salesians in the evangelization of peoples. In the matter of language, it may also be recalled that this goes back to Don Bosco who had the happy knack of dealing with topics of an educational or social character with a clear sense of God but at the same time in the 'lay' style of a christian citizen.

### **3. Responsibility of the Rector Major and his Council**

The last paragraph of art. 41 of the General Regulations highlights the special responsibility of the Rector Major and his Council in respect of the editing of the Bulletin, so that it can attain in different situations the purpose desired by Don Bosco. The specification added to the text by the GC22 should be noted: it indicates explicitly that the attention of the Rector Major and the General Council extends to all Bulletins published in the world "*in various editions and languages*". This is in line with salesian history: in fact both Don Bosco and his successors have always considered the Bulletin as the bearer of a message

of unity and so have given it special attention. (It will be remembered that for quite some time the Bulletin was printed in Turin, even though it appeared in different languages).

Granted this general principle concerning responsibility, the particular linkage must be emphasized which binds the *Bulletin in Italian* to the Rector Major and his Council; because of the fact that it is edited at the centre of the Congregation it has always been more directly dependent on the General Council, even economically, and was always considered as a model and source for other editions. This evidently implies a special commitment on the part of the Superiors for the Italian edition of the Bulletin.

This raises two more questions: how do the Superiors exercise their responsibility with regard to the Bulletin? And secondly, how can a linkage between the different Bulletins be assured?

In reply to the first question, it can be said that the Rector Major and the General Council exercise their responsibility normally through the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication; there is therefore a linkage between the Salesian Bulletin and the Department for the Salesian Family and social communication, a relationship which evidently takes account of the characteristics of the Bulletin as a publication and an instrument of unity for the Salesian Family.

In practice a distinction must be made: the Director of the Italian Salesian Bulletin depends directly on the Rector Major through the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication. But in the case of the other editions of the Bulletin, in addition to the relationship with the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication *the Provincials or Provincial Conferences carry a certain responsibility* at local level which they exercise in the name of the Rector Major; there must therefore be constant liaison between the Director of the Bulletin and the Provincial and Provincial Conferences.

As regards the second question, to cultivate unity and ensure a proper linkage between the different editions of the Bulletin and in particular between the Italian edition and the others), the Department for the Salesian Family and social communication undertakes to assist and animate Bulletin directors around the world through opportune contacts and meetings. Ways of offering such help will be studied (rethinking perhaps the "Bulletin dossier" which existed some time ago) for providing input which will help in attaining the Bulletin's purpose. In this connection too some consideration can be given to the function of ANS which, in some fields at least, could provide linkage and assistance.

#### **4. The Director of the Salesian Bulletin and the Editorial Board**

A central figure for the attainment of the objectives set out in article 41 of the Regulations is certainly the *Director of the Bulletin*; he has the task of coordinating the work of his collaborators, both as regards the choice of material and as regards specifically editorial aspects. Although enjoying a certain personal responsibility and autonomy, the Director of the Bulletin is aware that he has been called to direct an instrument of information and animation, which the Regulations entrust in the first place to the responsibility of the Rector Major and the General Council. Conscious of the delicacy of his task, he will always act in agreement with the Superior (the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication and the Provincial) in choosing the best way for spreading knowledge of salesian spirit and activity.

Given the importance both of the message to be transmitted and of the techniques to ensure that it be done efficaciously, the choice of the Director of the Bulletin becomes of particular importance. He must be able to communicate and have had adequate journalistic formation, but especially he must have a genuinely salesian personality and be an expert in those aspects of

“salesianità” indicated by the Constitutions as characteristic of the Salesians for their insertion in the Church as apostles of the young. In particular: he must feel deeply within himself that he is an evangelizer of the young, especially of the poorest among them (cf. C.6), attentive to the needs of the neighbourhood and the Church (cf. C. 41), solid with the world and its history (cf. C. 7).

He must be down to earth and awake to the signs of the times (cf. C. 19) so as to plan for the integral development of man directed to Christ, the perfect man (cf. C. 31). The Salesian Bulletin is largely dependent on the spirit of initiative of the Director (cf. C. 19) who must combine creativity with balance as did the Founder (cf. C. 19).

From all this it is evident that the Director of the Bulletin has an important role to play, and in fact a great deal of work rests on his shoulders; this is certainly true but only serves to emphasize the fact that he must be able to obtain help and gather around him capable collaborators.

To this end it is opportune that every Bulletin should have its *Editorial Board*, which will work with the Director in his task of coordination and animation. Such a Board will be chosen, in the case of the Italian edition, by the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication in agreement with the Director of the Bulletin; for the other editions it will be selected by the Provincial concerned, in agreement with the Director of the Bulletin. The most important function of the editorial board will be that of attending to the general editorial policy and of periodically verifying it; it will also help in choosing good sub-editors and collaborators. As far as individual issues of the Bulletin are concerned, it will be well if the Director, before going to press, agrees with the Councillor General or with the Provincial responsible the final draft of the manuscript to be printed.

A final point concerns the promotion and circulation of the periodical and various organizational and economic aspects: they

depend on the one responsible for administration, with whom the Director of the Bulletin will be in close collaboration.

It is hoped that these indications of principle or of organization prompted by a reading of article 41 of the Regulations will lead not only in those immediately responsible but in all Salesians to an efficacious response, to that the Bulletin may be truly the instrument for a knowledge of the salesian spirit and work that Don Bosco wanted it to be.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

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### 4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

Immediately following the plenary session of the General Council, the Rector Major visited in the space of one month the confreres of three nations of Latin America: Chile, Bolivia and Peru. A very meaningful ceremony, repeated in several places, was the presentation of the renewed Constitutions: a community event endowed with solemnity and full of deep significance.

He left Rome 27 July, and went first to Santiago, Chile, where in addition to the usual programme of salesian animation he also had engagements at the Catholic University; the latter was celebrating the golden jubilee of its Faculty of Theology, and had programmed a series of conferences to be given by the former Deans of the Faculty. In this connection Fr Viganò gave an address on "Theology and religious life after Vatican II", and also took part in a question and answer session with professors and students of the Faculty. During the period of the visit, the Chilean Bishops happened to be holding a meeting at Santiago and they took the opportunity to invite the Rector Major to hold a discussion with them on the topic "A theological

and pastoral assessment of twenty years of application of the decisions of Vatican II" in view of the coming extraordinary Synod.

In Bolivia between 7 and 15 August he passed through the zones of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and La Paz, visiting towns and mission centres (Sagrado Corazón, San Carlos, Escoma).

Finally he called at various places in Peru: Lima and neighbourhood, Piura, Cusco (where the salesians of Arequipa, Ayacucho and those working in the missions of the Valle Sagrado had gathered) and Huancayo (where he blessed the new aspirantate for brothers).

As is usually the case in these journeys, he made contact for animation purposes with the FMA, VDB, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts (Fr Variara), Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki, Cooperators, Past Pupils, and conversed with various Apostolic Nuncios, Cardinals and Bishops. On 24 August he was back in Rome once more.

8th September found him at Turin to receive, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, the first profession of the novices of Monteoliveto. On the 13th of the

same month he went to Dublin (Ireland) for the Eurobosco meeting, and from the 24th to 29th he was in Germany for the "Integration Symposium" of Schönstatt: "A challenge for a third millennium culture".

## 4.2 Chronicle of the General Council

From 4 June to 26 July all the Councillors were back in Rome for the plenary session of the Council. After their visits of animation to the provinces in which they had been engaged for the previous several months, they met to verify proposals which had been put forward in the previous session and to make a deeper study of topics touching on the government of the Congregation.

As is always the case the agenda for the meetings was extensive: in addition to the examination of problems of provincial and local communities, various matters of general interest were dealt with concerning the life and mission of the Congregation and of the Salesian Family.

Among the first group of topics (*government and animation of the provinces and local communities*) the more significant points were the following:

— the appointment of Provin-

cial for five provinces (cf. 5.2, "New Provincials"), after a careful study of the results of consultations and a process of discernment on those proposed;

— an examination of reports on the *extraordinary visitations* carried out by the Regional Councillors between January and May 1985 (provinces of Argentina-Cordoba, Great Britain, Italy-Central province, Italy-Verona, Mexico-Guadalajara, South Poland, Portugal and Spain-Bilbao). The presentation of the reports by the Regional Councillors acted as a stimulus for a discussion in the General Council which led to the indication of various points offered to the Rector Major for his concluding letter to the province concerned;

— the appointment of numerous provincial councillors and the examination of other requests regarding houses or confreres; under this heading came the canonical erection of 14 new houses and the closing of 3 others).

A considerable time was given to reflection and deeper study of the second group of arguments, more general in character. The following are among the more important;

1. *The provincial chapters of 1986, and study of the "provincial directory"*.

The General Council dedicated several meetings to reflection on the provincial chapters foreseen for 1986, for which the GC22 has already prescribed the fundamental theme: a deeper study of the Constitutions and Regulations and the commitments deriving from them (cf. GC22 n. 2). The desirability was emphasized that each provincial Chapter should be particularly concerned about what the Constitution and Regulations remit to the "provincial directory"; the General Council clarified the sense of a "provincial directory", studied its nature and content, and drew up a document which is published in this number of the AGC by the Vicar General (cf. 2.1, p. 35).

2. *Regulations of the Association of Salesian Cooperators.* In view of the coming World Congress of Salesian Cooperators, a first draft of the revised Regulations for the Cooperators had been drawn up by an appropriate commission with contributions from the Association itself. The General Council, in virtue of a specific responsibility given to them by the Rector Major concerning the approval of the Regulations, dedicated some sittings to an examination of the draft, offering their own study contribution for a richer and more sa-

lesian definitive text.

### 3. *The Salesian Bulletin*

Two successive sittings were devoted to a deep examination of article 41 of the General Regulations which concerns the Salesian Bulletin, with a view to its fuller application. The Council studied in particular the purpose for which the Bulletin exists, those to whom it is directed and its desirable set-up; careful attention was given to the responsibility assigned to the Rector Major and his Council both for the Italian edition and for the numerous editions in other languages; concrete problems were also considered concerning the figure of the Director of the Salesian Bulletin and his collaborators. This topic too has given rise to a short document published by the Councillor for the Salesian Family and social communication (cf. 2.3, p. 50).

### 4. *The '88 Commission*

Continuing the work begun in the previous session, the special "88 Commission" has taken stock of the initiatives programmed at world level for the centenary of the death of Don Bosco in 1988. The competent provinces and provincial conferences will be contacted concerning the relevant initiatives.

5. *Verification of the activities of the various Departments*

In the light of the general programme drawn up at the beginning of the six-year period of office, each of the Councillors concerned presented a report on the work carried out in his own Department and on the principal problems to be faced; in this way it was possible to carry out a verification of what had been done

and lay down new guidelines for the future.

The plenary session came to an end on 26 July, with a celebration for the Rector Major's birthday. As is always the case, the session had been enriched by periodic moments of prayer and fraternal get-togethers. Saturday, 6 July, had been a day of retreat at Frascati.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS ITEMS

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### 5.1 Decree concerning the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Pius IX

#### Letter of the Rector Major to the Holy Father

*On the occasion of the promulgation of the Decree concerning the heroicity of the virtues of the servant of God Pius IX, the Rector Major addressed a letter to the Holy Father expressing the grateful thoughts of the Salesians: "in the history of our origins Pius IX appears as directly and intrinsically linked to the charism of foundation of the spiritual Family of Don Bosco".*

*The following is the text of the Rector Major's letter.*

Rome, 26 July 1985

To His Holiness  
John Paul II  
Roman Pontiff  
Vatican City

Most Holy Father,

The promulgation of the Decree concerning the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Pius IX (John Mary Mastai Ferretti), Successor of Peter from 16 June 1846 to 7 February 1878, has filled with joy

and gratitude the hearts of us Salesians of Don Bosco.

The long 32 years of the Pontificate of Pius IX, marked by complex social and cultural transformations and by the disturbing events of the papal States, are customarily looked at more from a social and political point of view than in the light of the history of salvation. This Decree will help us, at a distance of just over a century, to choose a better point of observation and to value the ministry of Pius IX in the context of his profound sense of God.

At the end of his Pontificate the Church appeared in a more authentic guise and more robust internally; with him there began a series of contemporary Popes who have given to the See of Peter a particularly vital and socially incisive dimension; the sense of faith has been strengthened beyond the rationality of the Enlightenment; an awareness has grown of the universal Church above the imminent dangers of provincialism precisely through the ministry of unity in communion on the part of the Bishop of Rome.

The magisterial role of Pius IX,

even though received more than once with little gratitude because of the complexity of opinions at that time, has had an incisive and historic effect of particularly fruitful projection into the life of the People of God, especially through the proclamation of the Marian dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the ecclesial dogma of the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. Noteworthy was the impulse given during his Pontificate to missionary expansion, and the courageous and constant effort that was made for the growth in the Church of religious life, both through the renewal of Institutes already in existence and through the emergence of new ones.

It is in this sector of evangelical life that we Salesians feel particularly grateful: Pius IX is the Pope of our origins, not simply as a spectator, but rather as the direct, wise authoritative and creative inspirer in the determination of the originality of the specific character both of the Society of St Francis de Sales and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and of the Association of the Cooperators. Don Bosco himself, writing to Pius IX on 10 March 1873 to ask for the approval of the salesian Constitutions, begins his letter with this significant state-

ment: "Beatissime Pater, Societas Salesiana, quam tu, beatissime Pater, opere et consilio fundasti, direxisti, consolidasti". In the history of our origins Pius IX appears as directly and intrinsically linked to the foundational charism of the spiritual Family of Don Bosco.

When the young priest Mastai Ferretti left Genoa for his long and adventurous journey in Chile (as a member of a Pontifical Delegation), the then Cardinal Lambruschini wrote of him: "God is very much at work in that most pure heart and is instilling into it in torrents the vital flame of heavenly charity". And when the aged Pontiff was dying, Don Bosco wrote from Rome (where he had been for some time) to Mgr. Edward Rosaz, the recently appointed Bishop of Suza, on the very day of the Pontiff's death: today has passed away "a most lofty and incomparable star of the Church, Pius IX... Before very long he will surely be raised to the altars". That was the spontaneous expression of a saint and friend who, through knowledge arising from similarity of nature, detected the heroicity of his virtues through a synthetic intuition of his whole existence.

Be pleased to accept, Most Holy Father, the joyful and heartfelt gratitude of the Salesian Family

for the approval of this Decree which opens the way to the altars for one of your predecessors, who was so eminent in his witness to pastoral charity carried out for so long in the ministry of Peter.

We are asking the Servant of God, Pius IX to make generous intercession for the Church, for the College of Bishops and for its head the Roman Pontiff, for all the Institutes of consecrated life committed at the present day to their evangelical renewal, and for this our humble Salesian Family.

With devout respect and filial gratitude in the Lord.

Fr EGIDIO VIGANÒ

*In reply to the Rector Major's letter, Mgr E. Martinez, Deputy Secretary of State, wrote as follows.*

From the Vatican, 6 August 1985

Very Reverend Father,

The Holy Father has received your sincere and prayerful letter of 26 July in which, in the name of all the members of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco, you expressed sentiments of fervent gratitude for the promulgation of the recent Decree concerning the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God Pius IX.

His Holiness has charged me to tell you that he has welcomed with sincere appreciation this auspicious proof of respect and esteem, to which he replies with great pleasure praying that on you and the whole Salesian Family may descend copious heavenly favours, as a sign of which he bestows his supportive Apostolic Blessing.

I gladly avail myself of the opportunity to declare myself with feelings of deep respect,

Devotedly in the Lord

E. MARTINEZ

## 5.2 New Provincials

*In the plenary session of the General Council during June-July 1985, provincials were appointed for the following provinces.*

1. BRECHEISEN August, Province of Munich (Germany)

Born at Obergessertshausen in Bavaria 15.06.1927, he made his novitiate at Ens Dorf where he also made his first profession on 15.08.1953. After his priestly ordination at Benediktbeuern on 29.06.1963 he was called to direct the community of Munich (St Francis de Sales) from 1969 to 1978 and was a provincial councillor for several years. In 1978 he became Rector at Benedikt-

beuern where he remained until his appointment as Provincial of the Munich Province in 1979. At the end of his six years of pastoral guidance he was confirmed in office on 21.06.85 for a further period of office as Provincial of the Southern German Province.

2. BRIONES Juan Antolin, *Province of Córdoba (Argentina)*

He was born at Baños de Valdearados (Province of Burgos, Spain) on 7.06.1935, entered the aspirantate at Baracaldo in 1946, was professed at Los Condores (Argentina) on 26.01.1953 and ordained priest at Cordoba (Argentina) on 26.11.1961. In addition to other animating responsibilities he was Rector at Cordoba (S. Antonio) from 1974 to 1980, and subsequently at Tucuman (S. Miguel). He was Vice-provincial from 1981, and in July of this year was appointed Provincial of Cordoba.

3. SANTOS Hilario, *Province of Bilbao (Spain)*

Born at Salamanca (Spain) on 2.06.1942, he made his first profession at Mohernando in 1958 and was ordained at Salamanca on 3 March 1968. He was a teacher and animator for some years until he was appointed in 1983 as Rector at Urnieta (College), and in 1985 at Pamplona. He be-

came a provincial councillor in 1984 and in June 1985 was appointed Provincial of the Province of Bilbao.

4. SPERA Ilario, *Province of Rome (Italy)*

He was born at Paliano (Frosinone) on 25.12.1933 and entered the aspirantate of Gaeta in 1947. He made his first profession at Varazze in 1953, and on 6.04.1963 was ordained priest in Rome. He was appointed a provincial councillor in 1976 and for several years was in charge of youth pastoral work and work for vocations. In 1980 he became Rector of the Pius XI Institute in Rome, a post he retained until his appointment as Provincial.

5. VIGANÒ Angelo, *Central Province (Italy)*

Born at Sondrio on 31.03.1923, he made his novitiate at Montodine, was professed in 1939 and ordained at Treviglio on 21.05.1950. A Doctor of Letters, he was a teacher and animator in various houses of the Milan Province before becoming Rector at Milan (S. Ambrogio) in 1960; subsequently, from 1966 to 1975 he was Rector at Turin (Leumann). In 1975 he was appointed Provincial of the Milan Province, an office he filled until 1981 when he became Rector at the postnovitiate

at Nave. In June of this year he was appointed Provincial of the Central Italian Province, based on Turin.

### 5.3 Salesian Bishops

The following transfers and promotion of some salesian Bishops have been made by the Holy Father in the course of the last few months.

#### 1. Mgr Fernando LEGAL

Bishop of Itapeva (Brazil) since 1980, he was transferred to the residential See of LIMEIRA (Brazil) on 9 May 1985.

#### 2. Mgr José GOTTARDI

Auxiliary Bishop of Montevideo (Uruguay) from 1975, he was promoted to the Metropolitan See of MONTEVIDEO on 5 June 1985. On 29 June 1985 in St Peter's Basilica in Rome, he received from the Sovereign Pontiff the pallium, the sign of metropolitan dignity.

#### 3. Mgr José Vicente HENRIQUEZ

Titular Bishop of Regiana and Auxiliary of Barinas since 1980, he was elected in 1984 Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela; he has now been appointed Auxiliary of the See of CARACAS (Venezuela).

#### 4. Mgr Emilio VALLEBUONA

Bishop of Huarez (Peru) since 1975, he was promoted on 4 September 1985 to the Metropolitan See of HUANCAYO (Peru).

### 5.4 Diamond Jubilee of Fr Ricceri's priestly ordination

Fr Luigi Ricceri, Rector Major emeritus and Sixth Successor of Don Bosco, has celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. On 19 September 1985, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome, he was joined in a solemn eucharistic concelebration by the Rector Major (Fr E. Viganò), by members of the General Council in Rome at the time and past members who had been Fr Ricceri's collaborators when he was Rector Major, by many Provincials and numerous other Salesians, FMA, VDB, Cooperators, Past Pupils and friends of salesian work. The concelebrants exceeded one hundred. Present too were their Eminences Cardinals Silva Henriquez, Castillo Lara and Stickler, who by their presence expressed not only a sign of their own affection but also a wider ecclesial presence; with them were Archbishops Rezende Costa, Javierre Ortas, and Bishop Amoroso, all SDB. Also present in sign of close friendship were the Minister

of the Interior of the Italian Government, the Hon. Oscar Scalfaro, and Senator Joseph Alessi.

In his homily the Rector Major, Fr E. Viganò, gave a brief outline of the 60 years of priesthood (and 70 years of salesian life) of Fr Ricceri, setting it in the framework of the reality of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ, who brought to men a new kind of love, and in the light of the charism of Don Bosco, whom his sixth successor had served so loyally and with such enthusiastic initiative. After recalling the far from easy times in which Fr Ricceri had been called on to exercise authority, the Rector Major dealt at greater length with commitments into which he led the Congregation so as to provide an adequate reply to today's needs: the exploitation of the Salesian Family (Fr Viganò made special mention of the contribution made by Fr Ricceri to the development of the DBV Secular Institute), social communication, the greater universality of the Congregation (including the transfer of the Generalate to Rome), and especially the organization and carrying out the Special General Chapter which had the task of reconsidering the identity and mission of the Congregation so as to respond to the requirements of Vatican II. All this called for a great expression of gratitude, and it

was fitting that this should take place in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart where at the end of his life Don Bosco came to understand the deep significance of the call he had received from the Lord.

Gratitude, expressed through Don Bosco and in his name, was also the theme of the brief address given by Fr Ricceri himself at the end of the Mass which was celebrated in a climate of intimate spirituality and close participation.

The fraternal meal which followed the eucharistic celebration took place in true family spirit and salesian joy.

We conclude this note with the text of the telegram sent to the Rector Major by Pope John Paul II, which aptly sums up the motives underlying this priestly and salesian family feast.

To the V. Rev. Fr. Egidio Viganò  
Rector Major of the Salesian  
Society of St John Bosco

Via della Pisana 1111  
00163 Rome

To the Rev. Fr Luigi Ricceri  
Rector Major emeritus of the  
Salesian Society, celebrating in  
joyful serenity the 60th anniversary  
of his Priestly Ordination,  
I send fervent good wishes on

this significant event, and while expressing sincere appreciation for his long years of faithful and fruitful service to the church, especially as Successor of Don Bosco in the wise and far-sighted guidance of that well-deserving Institute, I invoke from Christ the Eternal High Priest through the motherly intercession of Mary most holy Help of Christians a further outpouring of grace and heavenly consolations, as a pledge of which I send to him very willingly the requested apostolic blessing, which I also extend to You, Rev. Rector Major, to those present at the solemn celebration and to all salesians spread all over the world.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

### 5.5 Brotherly Solidarity (46th Report)

#### a) PROVINCES THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE SOLIDARITY FUND

##### LATIN AMERICA

Argentina - Cordoba province	L. 1,925,000
Argentina - Rosario province	3,500,000
Brazil - Belo Horizonte province	630,000
Central America - San Salvador province	5,264,875
Chile - Santiago province	3,084,000

##### NORTH AMERICA

United States - New Rochelle province	L. 9,900,000
United States - San Francisco province	29,592,500

##### ASIA

India - Bangalore province	2,500,000
India - Bombay province	151,600,000
India - Calcutta province	2,500,000
India - Dimapur province	1,000,000

##### EUROPE

Belgium - Northern province	18,299,500
Italy - Roma province (Testaccio)	500,000
Italy - East Venice province (Udine)	4,000,000
Holland	1,036,000
Anon	8,000,000

#### b) DISTRIBUTION OF MONIES RECEIVED THROUGH THE SOLIDARITY FUND

##### LATIN AMERICA

Antilles - Moca: completion of house	L. 20,000,000
Antilles - Jarabacoa: for musical instruments	10,000,000
Argentina (Rosario) - Funes: for a minibus	29,400,000
Bolivia - Cochabamba, Las villas: residence and church at Villa Mexico	10,000,000
Brazil (Manaus), Dominic Savio: additions to library	4,000,000

Brazil (S. Paolo), Bom Retiro: for technical school	L. 10,000,000	ASIA	
Central America - San Pedro Carcha: contribution to printing expenses	10,000,000	India (Dimapur) - Senapati: audiovisual for catechetics	L. 2,897,240
Central America - Nicaragua: for general needs	30,000,000	India (Gauhati) - Shillong Technical School: for an INTERTYPE	7,000,000
Colombia (Medellin) - Popayan: for the library and audiovisual material	9,000,000	India (Gauhati) - Bengtoli: for a Landrover '99	8,000,000
Mexico (Mexico) - Ayutla Mixes: for musical instruments	10,000,000	India (Gauhati) - Rangblang: for a chapel	6,000,000
Peru - Lima, Calca restructuring of parish, catechetical course, help to Lares parish	20,000,000	India (Madras) - Citaldel: contribution for magazine « Friends »	8,500,000
Uruguay Montevideo: Contribution for Salesian Bulletin	10,000,000	EUROPE	
		Middle East - Bethlehem for new provincial initiatives	5,000,000
		Portugal - Mirandela: general help for the work	20,000,000

## 5.6 Our dead confreres (1985 - 3rd list)

"Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ's peace... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission." (C 94)

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
L ACETO Cecilio	Santiago	9-06-85	81	CIL
P AMERIO Franco	Torino	21-07-85	79	ISU
P CARBONE Michele	Rimini (FO)	28-07-85	75	IAD
P CASTENETTO Nivardo	Mogliano Veneto	13-07-85	56	IVE
L COELMONT Antoon	Bonheiden	4-09-85	62	AFC
P COGONI Mario	Haifa	17-06-85	58	MOR
D CONTARATO Fortunato	Monteortone (Padova)	9-07-85	88	IVO
P CORNELIS René	Leuven	30-06-85	73	BEN
P FABRIS Giovanni	Mestre (VE)	27-06-85	80	IVE
P FORESTAN Antonio	Gorizia	11-07-85	78	IVE

NAME	PLACE	DATE	AGE	PROV.
P GIACOMELLO Giovanni	Legnago (Verona)	26-06-85	73	INB
P HALNA Jean-Baptiste	La Crau	25-08-85	80	FLY
L HEALY Maurice	Limerick	10-06-85	66	IRL
S KARAPARAHBIL Pinto	Siliguri (India)	16-08-85	18	INK
L LETSCH Heinrich	Regensburg	21-07-85	82	GEM
P LUIS Mendez José	Bahía Blanca	21-07-85	93	ABB
P MAYORAL Carreño E.	Santo Domingo	11-07-85	55	ANT
P McGINTY Patrick	Dublin	10-07-85	67	IRL
P MICHE Enrique	Bahía Blanca	19-08-85	90	ABB
P MINOZZI Alfredo	Terni	3-08-85	75	IAD
P NIELSEN Carlos	Tegucigalpa (Honduras)	17-08-85	79	CAM
L ODORETTI Gabriel	Buenos Aires	16-07-85	62	ALP
L OSES Luciano	Barcelona	19-08-85	55	SBA
P PACIFICO Michele	Napoli	8-09-85	71	IME
L PICCHIONI Mauro	Varazze	14-07-85	78	ILT
P PIUZZI Abel	San Ambrosio	26-06-85	67	ACO
P PODZIANO Alfonso	Eugenio Bustos	28-03-85	69	ACO
P PURDON Michael	Dublin	19-06-85	81	IRL
P SANTORO Emilio	Nizza Monferrato (AT)	17-07-85	69	INE
L SETTI Guido	Darfo (BS)	23-07-85	74	ILE
L SOLER Anglada José	Barcelona	1-08-85	87	SBA
P STACIUK Nicolas	Buenos Aires	22-08-85	64	ARO
P TEULF Franz	Linz	25-08-85	81	AUS
L TINTI Vito	Torino	8-07-85	75	ISU
P VALLE Ortiz Joaquín	Huesca	7-09-85	59	SBA
P VECCHIETTI Renzo	Vasto (Chieti)	20-07-85	75	IAD
P VIVES Jaime	Bercelona	8-06-85	58	SBA
L WILKINSON Reginald Thomas	Battersea (London)	4-08-85	83	GBR
P ZOTTI Erasmo	Noci (Bari)	9-09-85	74	IME