



**XXI GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY**

CHAPTER DOCUMENTS

ROME, 12 FEBRUARY 1978



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of the Salesian Society

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NOTE

The 5 Documents of the GC21 have been arranged in logical order which differs to some extent from the practical order in which they were prepared and presented in the assembly by the respective Capitular Commissions.

PRESENTATION

My dear confreres,

I am pleased that the first letter in which the new Rector Major greets you and meets you fraternally, even though briefly, should be the *promulgation* of the Documents of the 21st General Chapter. In choosing the official presentation of our chapter work for this first encounter we enhance and enrich our fraternal solidarity.

We feel immediately at home and at our ease because we are dealing with something directly linked with the heart and wishes of our Father Don Bosco, something both vital and intimate at the highest level. Such a meeting immediately creates an air of friendship; we are talking about the reason for our existence, the present-day meaning of our common vocation; we are touching the most delicate point of the fundamental choice that each one of us deliberately made at his religious profession.

We feel a proper appreciation of each other's significance and importance, because the General Chapter relies on the capabilities and responsibility of each confrere; in effect it outlines a future of which we are to be the architects and builders, and exhorts us to be calm but none the less resourceful in our task. And so this first meeting reflects the joy of our vocation and opens up a vision of hope.

We are in the period immediately after the GC21. We know very well that with the passage of time we become tired; but the present is a moment of youth in which it is lawful, and in our case even natural, for us to do a little dreaming. Even though somewhat laboriously and with the inevitable defects of any human enterprise, the chapter assembly has been a "moment of grace"; it must not pass unobserved ("timeo Deum transeuntem")!

We must let ourselves be stirred up and rejuvenated by the breath of the Holy Spirit; we must go back with Don Bosco to our origins, a time of 'dreams', when there was more emphasis on grace than on human calculations, when vitality was more evident than crisis, when there was more concern about future planning than brooding

over past failure. *Let us reawaken in ourselves the psychology of those times, confident in the intervention of the Lord who periodically renews our youth. Even those who are older, even the sick, even those who are tired and in the evening of life, let all feel at this time a deep gratitude to the Lord who renews us.*

With the GC21 he is making a new appeal to us: our vocation is not in fact a dialog of the past, now closed; it is always open in an attitude of conversion and hope to new invitations from the Spirit of God.

With this letter I present and officially consign to you the new chapter documents. The Constitutions tell us that "*all members will readily accept the deliberations (of the GC) which become of obligation for all as soon as they have been promulgated by the Rector Major*" (Art. 152). Let us therefore receive these documents with gratitude and loyalty.

I invite you to read attentively my concluding discourse to the members of the Chapter (n. 552-592), and to look upon it as a presentation; it will enable you to see at once in synthetic form the main lines of the Chapter's work. There are three principal objectives to which our duty of conversion must be directed:

- *we must become specialists in taking the gospel to the young;*
- *we must live as authentic religious with a mission to fulfil;*
- *we must take care of the process of on-going formation through renewed salesian animation.*

You will find in the text the launching sites from which our re-launching must take place: the Word of God, the Constitutions, the Preventive System, the spiritualization of the role of the Rector, correlative and complementary aspects in the figure of the confreres.

I want to draw your attention here to what I would call a strategic element: *the reactivation of the Marian aspect of our vocation*; she will ensure a climate which will render our efforts efficacious. A doctrinal and cultural revival of devotion to Mary Help of Christians, designed to insert the salesian family actively into the Marian movement of the present day, will enable us (even 'miraculously', as Don Bosco assures us) to realize a new flourishing of vocations, and the courage and clear thinking that we need so much today in the fight for the faith.

The Help of Christians will lead us, as in Don Bosco's dream at the age of nine and as always in the history of salvation, to Jesus Christ; she will help us to become, with and like Don Bosco, his faithful disciples; she will prompt us to make of our life an explicit testimony

to his paschal victory by which he saved the world, and with which we enthusiastically join all our energies — the fruits of intelligence and the initiatives of love — for the salvation of today's youth.

Dear confreres, let us look on these chapter documents as a message of grace for our life and work: *let us study them personally, make them the object of serious reflection in community, and draw up concrete programs for their practical application.*

I greet each one of you with affection and hope, and I ask each of you personally for your continual prayers and daily sacrifices for the new Rector Major: they will redound to the good of the Congregation. I thank you all for your work and fidelity, and I assure you of my personal dedication to all of you, through the daily celebration of the Eucharist.

May the love of the Father — rich in initiative, the zeal of Christ — generous in obedience, and the joy of their Spirit, enliven the heart of every confrere and refine the atmosphere of every salesian house.

Let us be one in faith and hope, united in heart and soul in the strength of mutual love.

And now the watch-word is: "To work!"

Affectionately,

FR Egidio VIGANO
Rector Major

Rome, 24 February 1978

SIGNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

art.	article
c., chap.	chapter
cf	compare
doc.	document
ibid.	ibidem
p., pp.	page, pages

1. *Acts of the Magisterium*

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
CD	Christus Dominus
CP	Communio et Progressio
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
ES	Ecclesiae Sanctae
ET	Evangelica Testificatio
GE	Gravissimum Educationis
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LG	Lumen Gentium
OT	Optatam Totius
PC	Perfectae Caritatis
PO	Presbiterorum Ordinis
PP	Populorum Progressio
RC	Renovationis Causam
RdC	Rinnovamento della Catechesi (Catechetical Renewal)
SC	Scuola Cattolica (The Catholic School)
SDV	Summi Dei Verbum
Syn.77	Message of the Synod on Catechesis
SCRIS	Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes
Oss. Rom.	Osservatore Romano

2. *Salesian abbreviations*

ASC	Acts of the Superior Council
ASGC	Acts of the Special General Chapter
AWCSB	Acts of World Congress of Salesian Brothers
BM	Biographical Memoirs
CC	Salesian Cooperators
Const	Constitutions
DB	Don Bosco
DBV	Don Bosco Volunteers (Volunteers of Don Bosco)
EE	Past Pupils, (USA Alumni)
Ep., Epist.	Epistolary of Don Bosco
FMA	Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
FP	Ongoing Formation
FS	Salesian Family
FSE	Faculty of Education Sciences (UPS)
GC	General Chapter
LAS	Libreria dell'Ateneo Salesiano
LGC	Letter of Grand Chancellor
MB	Memorie Biografiche
MHC	Mary Help of Christians
MM	Mass media
Op. Sist. Prev.	Opuscolo sul Sistema Preventivo di Don Bosco
Op. Ed.	Opere Edite (Edited works)
PAS	Pontificio Ateneo Salesiano
RCS	Report of Superior Council (on restructuring of Opera PAS)
RDF	Report of Formation Department
Reg	General Regulations
RF, RFIS	Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis
RI	Ratio Institutionis
RM	Rector Major
RRM	Report of Rector Major on State of Congregation
Sch Precap.	Precapitular schemes, GC21
SB	Salesian Brother
SDB	Salesians of Don Bosco
SGC	Special General Chapter
SGUPS	General Statutes of UPS
SP	Salesian Priest
Stat. Conf.	Statutes of Past Pupils Confederation
Syn	Synod
UPS	Salesian Pontifical University
VDB	Volunteers of Don Bosco (Don Bosco Volunteers)
YA	Youth Apostolate

DOCUMENT 1

SALESIANS EVANGELIZERS OF THE YOUNG

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SALESIANS, EVANGELIZERS OF THE YOUNG

The GC21 consigns this document to the confreres with the fraternal hope that in it they may find light and helpful encouragement in their task of witnessing the gospel and taking it to the young. "There are millions of them in the world," the Pope told us,¹ "often confused and bewildered by a multiplicity of discordant voices, who are waiting for your saving word; they are looking for the friendly hand of a brother, who will guide them with quiet certainty towards the Absolute."

To meet and reply to their expectations, this document was born.

1. It is a *practical document*, in the sense that it begins from the evaluation of the present *situation* and its problems, and leads to conclusions which it invites us to adopt to render our work more faithful and efficaciously apostolic.

2. It is a *family document*. The *conclusions are motivated* by reference to a framework of common values shared by all the salesian family. It is not a question of ideas divorced from actual salesian life, but of those found concretely in it. They become fully the constitutive elements of that life when efficacious evangelization is a consequence of fidelity on the part of the confreres; and when the latter find themselves in difficulties, that life suffers; it becomes impoverished and begins to fade away and asks to be revitalized.

For this reason the term "*frame of reference*" has been adopted; it is a picture to which that life can compare itself as to an exemplar, to which it can aspire as to a saving ideal. The document begins and ends with concrete facts. It is not in any sense a complete treatise; it is much less than that, but it may well be the more precious on that account because of its particular point of view and those to whom it is addressed.

¹ Paul VI to the GC21 (n. 477).

The document's very *composition or structure* bears this out. Each part deals with a practical problem, which it evaluates in the light especially of the Constitutions, and for which is then indicated the line of solution, followed by the practical directives which seem most urgent for a concrete conclusion.

- 4 3. It is a *meaningful document* for the present day. The Church is calling for our services at a moment in history when the emphasis is on evangelization. The originality and creativeness proper to our charism leads us to try to interpret and live this moment in a salesian way, because "no one can be unaware of the connection between our argument and the problems of education in the present day."²

Our charism must be one of the "designs" for meeting the needs of "modern youth, so thirsty for truth and far-reaching designs."³ The idea therefore that links the various parts of the document and gives them unity is our vocation as evangelizers, which becomes real when it is lived out in our pastoral and educative projects, restudied and put into practice.

- 5 4. This commitment is urged upon us by the letter which Cardinal Villot, in the name of the Holy Father, sent to Fr. Ricceri, and by the address which the Pope himself gave to the General Chapter in private audience. The points on which he dwelt and in connection with which the sons of Don Bosco "are filially submissive and at his disposal for the good of the universal Church"⁴ are interrelated with each other and give a soul and vitality to our document.

- 6 5. The Pope, after praising the choice of the general study theme of the GC21, spoke of Don Bosco, a sustaining and restraining presence who goes ever before us with youthful and dynamic tread. He recalled the reference in his Memoirs to Don Bosco's "priestly thirst" which made him want to "launch out among the young so as to know them intimately and so be able to help them keep away from evil."⁵

The thirst of his vocation, and young people and their condition, form the two dimensions of the life of Don Bosco. And "at a time which was so complex and calamitous" he lived them out as "a true champion of the history of Italy and of the Church."⁵

² Message of the Synod of Bishops on catechesis, no. 1.

³ From the text of the address of homage read to the Holy Father by Fr. Egidio Viganò (n. 464).

⁴ Constitutions art. 128.

⁵ Paul VI to the GC21.

6. This heavy responsibility arising from the charism which we also share lays on us obligations in the same direction: 7

a) We put to ourselves emphatically the problem of our fidelity in “following Christ in a total and unconditional way... by means of a generous, joyous and faithful practice of the evangelical counsels” in Don Bosco’s spirit, to show to young men and boys “a face that is not just a mask but the clear manifestation of a brotherly love reflecting that of God himself which is ‘greater than our own heart’” (1 Jn 3, 20).⁶ “Give first place to the religious spirit,” says the letter of Card. Villot.

b) “We maintain the special character of salesian work and pedagogy and this more especially because the requirements both in the Church and in civil society today appear to correspond more than ever to the particular apostolate of the sons of St. John Bosco, whose first interest and preference has always led them to dedicate themselves to the male section of young people.”⁷

c) We live this vocation and charism, following Don Bosco who was a “true champion,” as men of faith and dedication who through their acquired skill are able to reawaken the creative inventiveness of the gift of God.

7. The directing and correcting figure of Don Bosco and that of the Pope, who “points out the determining factors of our identity at a moment of change when it is not easy to see clearly”⁸ compel us to reflect on these decisive sectors, and lead us to make an objective evaluation with a consideration not only of the values and principles to be retained and developed but also of the urgent need to find suitable means for defending them. 8

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Letter of Card. Villot to Fr. Aloysius Ricceri, 29 Oct. 1977 (n. 448).

⁸ Intervention of Fr. Egidio Viganò in the Chapter assembly.

INTRODUCTION

- 9 "Preaching the gospel and catechizing are fundamental to our mission. As salesians we are all and at all times educators in the faith."¹

This service which "demands from our communities ability to announce, and courage to bear witness to the gospel," was proposed to us also in the message of the Bishops, meeting in the Fourth Synod. They are of the opinion that "in the next ten years catechetics will be throughout the world the natural and most fruitful terrain for the renewal of the entire ecclesial community."³ And they thank those religious communities who provide renewed hope "in the great spiritual fecundity for a world lived in the spirit of the Beatitudes."⁴ The Pope himself refers to the "immense contribution" made by those religious who are witnesses to sanctity, and dedicate themselves to making Christ known "with an inventive originality that excites admiration."⁵

- 10 This inventiveness and originality for us salesians arises from and is continually nourished by a double source: from Christ and his gospel, lived according to Don Bosco's spirit,⁶ and from the young who "are said to abhor all that is false and fictitious and to look only for the transparently true."⁷

We wonder whether we really believe what we proclaim whether we live what we believe, whether we truly preach what we live, attentive to the appeals coming from the young; whether we really bear witness to an effective solidarity with them and at the same time a solidarity with the Absolute which is God."⁸

¹ Const. 20.

² Ibid.

³ Message of Synod 1977, n. 4.

⁴ Message of Synod 1977, n. 18.

⁵ EN 69.

⁶ cf Const. 101.

⁷ EN 76.

⁸ cf EN 76.

"Following closely... *Jesus Christ*, we choose a deeply christian way of loving God and our brethren with undivided heart."⁹ For this we point in the first place to the *Constitutions*, faithfully put into practice, as a privileged criterion of our identity as individuals and as a community. And we affirm the necessity to know them, accept them and live them, so as to be able to present once again the riches of the apostolic heart and intentions of Don Bosco, "a man of God and God's man for the young."¹⁰

11

In this sense we reaffirm also the enduring value of *Tradition* which the Rector Major and General Chapter, in the light of the life of the confreres, interpret with authority and propose afresh in a new way. At present the ASGC have a special importance for us; although they bear "the imprint of our weakness,"¹¹ they are a valid attempt to bring Don Bosco close to the youth of our time, and they contain "the motivation of the Constitutions themselves and the principles from which they spring."¹²

Secondly we recognize in *youth itself* the other source of our inspiration in spreading the gospel. We salesians are sent to the young, and especially to the poorest of them, and we collaborate in the creation of a new society grounding to the full their life in faith.

12

We meet these young people in different countries of the world, and they present a great diversity with different standards of conscience and freedom; sometimes fixed and closed in on themselves because of the emargination caused by their poverty, sometimes a prey to contradictions and conflicts even of a violent nature, and occasionally following Christ and already at work on the building of a more human society.

In each and every one of these young people one can detect the need for truth, for freedom and human growth, and the desire (often no more than implicit) of a deeper knowledge of the mystery of God.¹³

They go through this experience as living parts of a setting called "*the youth situation.*" It is made up of tendencies and reigning

13

⁹ Const. 75.

¹⁰ ASGC 769.

¹¹ ASGC 769.

¹² ASGC Introduction p. ix.

¹³ Message of Synod 1977 n. 1.

values which make easier the growth in faith of their humanity, or make it more difficult.¹⁴

The *harmonious relationship* which is so necessary to educate them, liking what they like but without abandoning our adult role of salesian educators, becomes in this way both difficult and complex.

And yet the gift of God which is our vocation is a source of hope; we must update our skills, but even more must we believe in the force of the Spirit and the special gift he has given us to enable us to conquer every fear and not desert the difficult field of our youth commitment.

The GC21 therefore looks on the one hand at the young and perceives a happy coincidence between their expectations, the appeal they make to us, and our own mission;¹⁵ and on the other it looks at the new engagement of the Church to evangelization and discovers in our mission of taking the gospel to youth the fundamental characteristic of our identity.

- 14** But how do we set about this work of evangelization? As sharers in the evangelizing activity of the Church we believe in Don Bosco's charism and hence in our own particular way of evangelizing the young. This we do in a realistic way by means of the *salesian educational project*, the "Preventive System", rethought and reactivated with its operatives, content, aim, style and means in the various settings in which we work.

We are well aware that education and evangelization are specifically distinct activities of their class, but nevertheless there is a strict connection between them on the practical plane of existence. In Don Bosco and his preventive system salvation refers to the whole of the young person. It is freedom from sin and growth in Christ even to the level of sanctity, but it is also freedom from the many conditions of poverty and dereliction, of social and cultural subjection, so that the young may become "upright citizens."¹⁶

Today *Evangelii Nuntiandi* confirms this notion. The various elements in the process of evangelization ("presence, sharing the lives and fortunes of fellowmen, renewal of mankind, witness, open proclamation, commitment of the heart, entry into the community,

¹⁴ cf EN 19.

¹⁵ Address of Pope Paul to GC21 (n. 467-478).

¹⁶ cf EN 31.

reception of the signs, apostolic action"),¹⁷ far from being in conflict and even mutually exclusive in fact complement and enrich one another.¹⁸

We salesians, evangelizers of the young, accompany our work by accepting as a necessary preliminary the *evangelization of ourselves*. **15**

As individuals and as a community of believers we have a specific charism in virtue of which we dedicate ourselves to education.¹⁹ Set in the midst of the world we are often tempted by idols²⁰ and we know that we have an incessant need to listen to the word of God and be converted to it to nourish the heart by fidelity to the commandments in his love and with motives of hope and trust.

We need to conform ourselves to Christ in Don Bosco's spirit so that like him we may be enabled to evangelize by educating.

To this end each of us, in the religious and educative *community*, builds and cultivates, as far as lies in his power and with the help of his brethren, his own humanity and talents so that the community may be renewed. It becomes the place where God is present and communicates with us. **16**

To this end we joyfully accept his initiative to consecrate us with the love of the chaste, poor and obedient Christ, and we reply with the joy and alacrity of our collaboration.

To this end, when we come to recognize his presence and the gift he has given us, we love him, we give him praise and thanksgiving. But precisely because we are sent by him to the young, we feel that our prayer becomes also light and strength. We are enabled to discern in the world the action of God in the events and life of youth, the significance of our consecration for their salvation, and we feel the urgent need for our collaboration.

The community develops this progressive self-evangelization through the *ministries which animate it*, especially that of the rector. And in turn the community itself becomes an *animator* by inserting itself into the complexity of the social and ecclesial context of its neighborhood and promoting collaboration, so as to make a full and **17**

¹⁷ cf EN 21.

¹⁸ cf EN 24.

¹⁹ cf SC 89.

²⁰ cf EN 15.

timely response to God who sends it, and to the young who await it. To the extent in which this conversion is accepted, there will live in the community the soul of the "preventive system," which in addition to being a method of education is above all a spirituality; it is a love freely given, inspired by the love of God which forestalls every creature by his divine providence, accompanies him by his constant presence and saves him by giving his life for him.

- 18 The GC21 intends to draw attention to some problems existing in the life of the Congregation, as evidenced by the authoritative indication of the Holy Father, the data and urgent requests sent in by provincial chapters and individual confreres and felt by the Chapter members, or arising from the Rector Major's report. As far as possible it desires to evaluate their positive and negative aspects and give guidelines concerning points which seem to be of fundamental and practical importance.

It refers back to the picture of common and accepted values (Constitutions and ASGC) for the justification of certain attitudes it adopts, and to give meaning to the commitment it calls for from the confreres if they are to bear witness to the gospel and announce it to the young.

19 Practical directives

a) Let the provinces decide on ways for promoting the knowledge and assimilation of the revised Constitutions. Let them be accepted as the concrete criterion of our identity and the basis for revision of life and future planning at both personal and community level. Let them be made the object of days of retreat, of formation workshops, and times of prayer. (cf "*Formation to salesian life*" n. 240-342).

b) As a sign of unity and as an authoritative interpretation of our identity, let particular esteem be shown for the ASGC, the Acts of the GC21, the ASC, and the guidelines and directives provided by the Superiors. The best ways of doing this shall be decided at provincial level.

c) Let a knowledge of salesian history and spirit be fostered through the researches and publications of the Center of Salesian Studies, by the publication of a critical edition of the Constitutions of our Society, by a greater diffusion of salesian literature (translated and in popular form), with the richest possible exchange of news and initiatives (Salesian Bulletin, ANS, Provincial Newsletters). (cf "*Formation to salesian life*" n. 342; cf also practical directive n. 105c of this document).

YOUTH AND ITS CONDITION

Evangelization presupposes an adequate knowledge of the young

Work of education if it is to be concrete and offer a useful service cannot limit itself to general principles and vague guidelines. It must be precise as to content and method so that young people being educated may be shown that attention and respect taught us by the pedagogy of God who loves every individual, "calls each one by name,"¹ and makes him a protagonist of the Good News. It must take account of age, circumstances, culture and sex.

20

Evangelization proceeds therefore, and of ever increasing necessity, by way of an analysis of life-situations that influence the youthful personality. The models presented by the surroundings, the aspirations, the tensions and vindications which they induce, often find a ready reception in the mind of youth. They give rise to various emotions and attitudes, often at a subconscious level, which can prejudice or favor the educative process and the very understanding and acceptance of the gospel.

The object of this part of the document is to give a general account of the "youth situation," so as to prompt salesians, individually and as communities, to lend a willing ear to the voice of the world of the young and to keep it in mind in the educative and pastoral dialog of evangelization.

The situation

The Constitutions display a lively knowledge of the world of youth² and bid us be solid with them, to appreciate their values, to turn their

21

¹ ASGC 34; cf n. 44, 47, 52, 54.

² Const 9.

positive qualities to good account³ so as “to discover the gospel value” they already possess.⁴ The ASGC describe in broad outline the condition of youth⁵ starting from some of the signs of the present time.⁶

The revision which preceded the GC21 brings us back in fact to a realistic analysis of the youth situation. It confirms that the announcement of the gospel must be adequately embodied in the complex context of the present day. And in this connection it emphasizes the considerable difficulties experienced by some salesians in accepting and understanding the young, in tuning in to their wavelength when discussing their problems, in getting into educative dialog with them.

All this has an influence on the choice of those for whom we should be working.

It is disturbing to note in many of our works a diminution in the number of this preferential group, and that we seem to be choosing others who have less claim to our attention.

- 22** The reasons underlying these facts are obviously complex and at times vary with the place in which the Congregation is called upon to carry out its evangelizing activity.

We list some of them:

- 23** The *socio-cultural scene* has undergone rapid change in many countries; in others the same kind of change is imminent. The effect is to increase the level of confrontation and rupture between the young and adult generations. Particularly disconcerting are the heightened conflicts appearing in some aspects of society, which the young deeply resent:
- the glorification and exploitation of the individual;
 - the call for freedom, and its simultaneous repression in many instances;
 - the aspiration to higher values, and the challenge to values of any kind;
 - the desire for solidarity and at the same time the crisis of belonging; the growing drift towards anonymity and indifference;

³ Const 16.

⁴ Const 14.

⁵ ASGC 34-44.

⁶ ASGC 31-33.

- the rapidity of communications and diffusion of information, and the slowness of cultural and social reform;
- the search for unity and world peace, and the persistent conflicts in political, social, racial, religious and economic sectors;
- the exaltation of everything concerned with youth, and at the same time a cleavage at times between youth and whatever concerns work, involvement or responsibility.

The present *socio-economic situation* emarginates entire countries and even in the most developed nations isolates vast areas of collective poverty. One notes the great hardship of many young people of the poor classes, cut off from the society to which they should belong, deprived of economic and cultural benefits and of the full exercise of their responsibility. They are prevented from becoming fully men.

24

The Church reflects this deep and rapid cultural change. Internally a profound and wide revision of traditional culture has impaired the elaboration of human and christian values;⁷« faith has undergone a vast process of secularization, which calls in question the ways in which christian teaching has been formulated and its credibility.⁸ Local christian communities find it difficult to communicate with youth, which feels itself different, occupied with new interests but wanting to share responsibility.

25

Externally in the meantime, new visions of man are being elaborated which are difficult to reconcile with, or completely opposed to, the christian view. The ideology is so strongly presented as to claim for itself the total meaning of existence, taking the place of the christian teaching.

In a salesian setting the lack at times of a systematic and positive study of the reality of youth in process of change, and at other times and insufficiently updated re-elaboration of the values inherent in the salesian educative heritage, put a break on impulse and initiative, and sometimes lead to a prejudicial lack of understanding.

26

The fundamental aspect for evangelization

Very many young people, immersed in this vast process to the growth of which they themselves in part contribute, are striving to

27

⁷ Cf GC 54.

⁸ Cf EN 20, 63; GS 53.

find their bearings and pick out clearly the details of the picture of human and christian values for the purpose of their own maturation. They are like people who have gone astray and got lost. These are the ones to whom we dedicate ourselves with salesian generosity.

Nevertheless positive and promising signs are not lacking in the young and in youth groups, which if properly educated can in turn serve as leaven for the masses. In response to the invitation of the Council, they can "become the first and immediate apostles of the young."⁹

In line with the recent reflection of the Church, we hold that the decisive point is to encourage the deep and healthy aspirations of these young people by bringing to maturity their solidarity, explicit or implicit, with the gospel.

Youth has become conscious of itself and of its condition, and young people are maturing in their awareness of sharing and coresponsibility; not only because they are in a numerical majority — by the year 2000 they will form two thirds of humanity — but because they are "harbingers of the future";¹⁰ because the problems they pose, even though in a confused, clumsy and disconcerting manner, "will probably be tomorrow the problems of all";¹¹ and because they tend to become the active subjects of evangelization.¹²

- 28** They are sometimes openly critical of the institution itself and dissatisfied with the actual practice and religious experience they find in the ecclesial community. But they also make themselves sincerely available for research and comparison, with a marked propensity towards personal communication and dialog.¹³ They go back to the purity and root value of the gospel, and for this reason they question vigorously and sometimes inordinately the whole ecclesial community.¹⁴

Recently there has been noted a reawakening to the inner values of prayer, of contemplation, and of interest for the word of God¹⁵ which urges them on to action to improve the world. They are resolute in

⁹ AA 12; EN 72.

¹⁰ Syn 1974. 1977, n. 3.

¹¹ Syn 1974.

¹² Cf AA 3. Syn 1974.

¹³ Cf Syn 1974.

¹⁴ Cf Syn 1974.

¹⁵ Cf Syn 1974.

affirming an undeniable solidarity between faith and life;¹⁶ they are particularly sensitive about justice in the world; they demand a "christian industry in the formation of history";¹⁷ they carry the practice of the faith even into concrete action in the social and political fields.¹⁸

The salesian attitude

The recent study of the Church and its appeals, and the reflection made by the salesian family based on the sane and serene realism of Don Bosco, oblige the salesian community to reveal and evaluate the expectations of youth, to promote their human and christian maturation and avoid the risk of a common levelling down. One must keep in mind their specific needs and their link with the world of study or factory, of agriculture or employment. Special care will be given to those boys and young men who live in a context of economic under-development and marginalization. We work for them on the basis of a fundamental solidarity in continuity with the novelty of the Good News, which is salvation offered to all men "as a gift of God's grace and mercy."¹⁹

29

Practical directives

a) The gravity of the youth situation of our time and the insistent appeal of the Church and society obliges our Congregation, because of its specific mission, to mobilize the confreres in the next six years around the problems of the youth reality, and to make of them the primary objective of its renewal and its various activities.

30

b) As a premise to every educational and pastoral program, salesians need to be more sensitive to the *youth condition*, understood in its expectations which are most in line with the gospel, through an adequate and serious analysis and by means also of direct contact with the young.

c) At a provincial and local level an *organic project* is to be developed, capable of orienting the work of the whole community to the task of evangelization; it needs to be periodically evaluated and revised.

¹⁶ Cf GE 1; PP 21.

¹⁷ Syn 1974.

¹⁸ RdC 138.

¹⁹ EN 27.

PART 2

SALESIANS, BEARERS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Introduction

- 31 The task of announcing the gospel derives from "Jesus himself, the Good News of God, the very first and greatest evangelizer."¹ It flows from "the Holy Spirit, who is the principal agent"² of evangelization. It was rooted historically and is realized now by the witness and announcement of *messengers of the gospel*. Through them the Church "seeks to convert both the personal and collective consciences"³ of people of various cultures and introduces them to the gospel, "proclaimed above all by witness."⁴

A study of evangelization therefore requires us to look at the persons whose labors bear witness to the gospel message.

At the same time "evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is *one that is deeply ecclesial*."⁵ The gospel witness and announcement issues from the community, which while feeling within itself "a constant need of being evangelized"⁶ makes evangelization its own vocation.⁷ It stirs up, inspires and sustains diverse forms of collaboration in the one mission of evangelization.⁸

As salesians we share in the mission of the Church in the manner proper to us. We publicly confess that the Father's love has called and united us into a community for the evangelization of youth, carrying on a work of education inspired by the charism of Don Bosco and according to his Spirit: "We form a community of the

¹ EN 7.

² EN 75.

³ EN 18.

⁴ EN 21; cf 20, 41.

⁵ EN 60.

⁶ EN 15.

⁷ EN 14.

⁸ EN 15, 19 ff.

baptized. We seek to be obedient to the Spirit and strive to realize through our religious consecration the apostolic design of our Founder."⁹

Our religious life is lived in apostolic service: "the evangelical exigencies, the search for perfect love, the practice of the counsels, the common life are lived in the context of and according to the demands of the apostolic work to be accomplished and they contribute their value to it."¹⁰ We reaffirm the "vital integration" of these two elements which mutually influence and enrich each other.

The GC21 shares the conviction of the SGC that "the extent to which a community is evangelical will be the measure of its being salesian."¹¹ We have been engaged in and have been solicitous in verifying the exactitude of this measure. Hence this General Chapter wishes to indicate to the confreres some norms which in the next six years will be of help to the communities as they strive to announce and bear witness to the gospel among the young.

1. THE EVANGELIZED COMMUNITY

The very phrase, "evangelical community" well expresses the witness value that our community, open to the gift of God and to its growth from within and from without, offers to the youth of the world.

Each of our communities receive gratuitously from the Lord the gift of brotherhood, the consecrated gift of chaste love, poverty and obedience, the gift of urgent prayer for the coming of God's kingdom. Each community enjoys the fruit of the salesian charism and spirit. Each community is ready by its very life, more than by its words, to reflect the resplendent Word that it has received.

In accordance with the practical aim of the GC21, which is to verify rather than propose anew norms for community life, religious consecration, prayer, and apostolate, we are interested in drawing attention to a few problem areas that the experience of the past six years opportunely suggest for our consideration.

The emphasis which the SGC put on the community as the integrat-

⁹ Const 2.

¹⁰ ASGC 115.

¹¹ ASGC 339.

ing element of the salesian vocation¹² shows its central importance.

Hence its renewal is of primary interest.¹³ Accordingly, we will present the threefold aspects of renewal — brotherhood, religious consecration, and life of prayer — in conjunction with the theme of evangelization in and through the community.

1.1 The gift of brotherhood and evangelization

- 34 The purpose of the gospel announcement is to promote man's union with God and with his fellowmen.¹⁴ Therefore, the witness of a life of communion is a most important factor in evangelization¹⁵ because it is in a way an experience anticipating the very reality that evangelization hopes to achieve.¹⁶

In changing times when civil society and to some extent the Church itself is subject to tensions, conflicts and divisions, "it is especially necessary for religious to give witness as persons whose vital striving to attain their goal — the living God — has effectively created unity and openness in the depth and steadfastness of their life in God."¹⁷

The "new man" is born from God in the spirit of brotherhood. In this regard we salesians need only to recall the brotherly atmosphere of the first community formed by Don Bosco.¹⁸

When we speak of community we do not wish to limit the term to the local community where the personal relationships of the members with one another are more immediate. We mean also the provincial community which has the duty to foster the fraternal spirit in the local communities. In a sense the provincial community, which is much more complex than the local community, better represents the vastness of the salesian vocation and mission.¹⁹ Finally, by community we mean the whole Congregation²⁰ which shines forth in the universal Church as a distinct community of brothers.

- 35 We can safely say that in the last few years our community life has

¹² Cf Const 3.

¹³ Cf ASGC 512.

¹⁴ Cf Jn 17, 21-23.

¹⁵ Cf Jn 13, 35; 17, 21-23; At 4, 32-33; EN 77.

¹⁶ Const 80, 90.

¹⁷ ET 34.

¹⁸ Cf ASGC 496 ff.

¹⁹ Const 57; ASGC 512.

²⁰ Const 56.

undergone a maturing process in both its human and religious aspects in response to the initiatives of the SGC.

It is with satisfaction that we note from the reports of the provincial chapters that the directives concerning the community have met with positive results in the style of life and action as well as in the implementation of coresponsibility.

In many cases there has been a *growth* in mutual acceptance of one another and in cordial relationships as a result of the fruitful overcoming of tension and polarization. The development of the family spirit has often enhanced joyful occasions and serene circumstances. The family spirit has found genuine expression in significant charitable gestures, especially in regard to the care of sick confreres. The community sense has been increased by practices of coresponsibility as prescribed by our Constitutions, which have fostered communication, dialog and understanding even among confreres of different ages and cultures.

But *defects* are not lacking.

36

The GC21 considers it necessary to say a few words especially regarding individualism. The risk of individualism is very serious, and it is always close at hand. We can measure its seriousness by the fact that it takes confreres away from the community, from its structure and from its means of communication. In addition, it gives rise to the easy illusion of seemingly providing some confreres a style of life more appropriate for the following of Christ.

Individualism is manifested in the following ways:

37

- in the difficulty of inserting and integrating the individual within the community. The community often becomes an instrument within an organization which guarantees purely external security and advantages;
- in the lack of a deep sense of belonging to the community, with a corresponding difficulty to enter into sincere dialog. One does not listen, nor speak freely in such circumstances. This is due to the fact also that some confreres are not disposed to understand the importance and religious significance of meetings in common. There is no fraternal correction, according to the rule of the gospel; and a climate of distrust and mutual prejudice is accepted with resignation;
- in the failure to assume responsibility in the pastoral and educative work of the community, since this would interfere with the

- individual initiatives and activities arbitrarily taken up on one's own;
- in the phenomenon of “flights of affection” which deprive the community of the cordiality of brotherhood, of the typically salesian manifestations of gratitude, of the joy of festive celebrations and the like;
 - in an attitude of self-sufficiency in regard to the magisterium of the Church and of the directives of the Congregation. It is an attitude that creates factions and pressure groups;
 - in closing one's self off from the “communion of supernatural goods”: some confreres do not take part as brothers in hearing the Word of God and in sharing their own experience of faith.

Individualism can be overcome by means of vigilance and personal determination. But the community, inspired by proper authority, can help by using means apt to develop the person of each confrere:

- by the appreciation of the talents of each one;
- by the cordial and enlightened openness with which it values the work of God in the life of the confreres;
- by the most just distribution possible of the work of the common mission;
- by the coresponsibility of all;
- by the rightful place given to human means to increase the spirit of brotherhood;
- by the redimensioning of the communities in number and in the type of work, so as to favor closer and more friendly interpersonal relationships.

Without a doubt whatever helps us grow in a humane spirit is precious in building up a fraternal union and offers an opportunity for the expression of genuine love. Nevertheless the spirit of brotherhood is definitely a gift of God; and it is God who gives it. It is an awareness of God's presence in others, in all other persons. It is the giving witness to the work of God in the hearts of men. This is the witness we are called upon to give today, particularly to youth.

²¹ EN 21.

1.2 The gift of religious consecration and evangelization

The openness to the gift of brotherhood gives rise to a further discovery. "Don Bosco often noted how the sincere practice of the vows strengthens the bonds of charity and unity of action. But this is not all. He observed that by the intensive living of the evangelical counsels, we free ourselves from whatever might be of hindrance in the ready practice of that pastoral charity which inspires our mission, essentially devoted to the needs of the young."²²

38

Consecrated chastity, poverty, and obedience in the pursuit of the Father's Will is a manifestation of the service of God in the following of Christ, bestowing upon brotherly union all its vigor. It gives besides a prophetic testimony and witness of the gospel before the world and before the young.

Our self evaluation shows forth, as pointed out by the Rector Major, the effort of the vast majority of salesians, amid new circumstances and changes of the social environment, to live their consecrated chastity "with dignity and in a distinctive manner which is totally salesian." They truly wish to be the special messengers of purity in the presence of the world's youth.²³

39

The brotherly atmosphere and the family spirit which they engender is indeed an indispensable condition for the development of consecrated chastity and for the strengthening of determination in the face of difficulties. Mutual understanding and fraternal correction, accompanied by personal effort, prudence, and the use of psychological as well as supernatural means, all contribute towards a glorious and secure witness to the gospel and to the salesian charism.²⁴

On the other hand we have to report that "the practice and even the very understanding and image of this distinctively salesian characteristic has fallen in various parts of the Congregation, where it has been obscured or even ridiculed."²⁵ Ideas and attitudes, the permissive mentality, certain kinds of worldliness variously justified, the rejection of the ascetical norms indicated in the salesian Constitutions²⁶ and tradition have sapped at the life force of this virtue and

²² RRM 81.

²³ Ibid 82.

²⁴ Sch Precap 213.

²⁵ RRM 82.

²⁶ Const 79.

at its rich witness value both for individual persons and for the community.

Against such a background it is necessary to state again "the specific importance of the witness and proclamation of chastity for us salesians in the world of youth," especially because of the present cultural situation in this regard.²⁷

Only the love of God decisively calls one to religious chastity, and hence it requires vigilance as well. A deep spirituality is helpful in understanding and in leading a life of consecrated chastity, with a will to bind oneself to others in a purified and qualified love, as established by the charity of Christ. This is an entirely virginal or disinterested love, ready for sacrifice, free, all-embracing and inspired by mercy and hope. Our task is to respond in faith to the gift of grace received from the Father,²⁸ and to announce this love to the world of youth, who wish for unity and solidarity among men. In addition it is a proof that all spirit of brotherhood finds its source and completion in the free gift of the Father.

- 40** Regarding *salesian poverty* the evaluation notes among the confreres a positive and changed mentality in accordance with the balanced and moderate stance proposed in the Constitutions. Poverty consists not simply in an interior detachment, which permits one to be well provided while professing poverty, nor in a simple dependence in the use of material goods. Neither does it consist in a purely sociological condition where one does not have what is necessary to satisfy the basic needs of life. Poverty means a loving and practical fidelity to the primacy of the spirit and of brotherly love in a world where love of money and of success is the prevailing mood. The practice of poverty will deepen our sense of its value in an opportune way, when our lives are linked with and conditioned by the service we render to poor youth. Speaking of work and temperance, the Report of the Rector Major notes: "We observe with satisfaction that on the part of the vast majority of salesians temperance is manifest in the standard of living that characterizes them. It is certainly not below the standard level maintained in the various countries, but neither is it above the local level where they serve."²⁹

"We salesians are great workers, men in shirt sleeves who live on

²⁷ Sch Precap 213.

²⁸ Const 75.

²⁹ RRM 108.

work. There is no doubt, thank God, that we have thousands of confreres, even older ones, who give marvelous examples of work, both in humble assignments and in highly responsible ones."³⁰ And in these posts they share the lot and preoccupations of the poor, often seeking to get close to them and to experience for themselves the conditions in which they live. This effort, in fact, has given rise to several very encouraging undertakings.

"In a civilization and a world marked by a prodigious movement of almost indefinite material growth... the call of God places you at the pinnacle of the christian conscience. You are to remind men that their true and complete progress consists in responding to this call to share as sons in the life of the living God, the Father of all men."³¹

But our self-study points out on the negative side the need in our own spiritual life for conversion to this value of the gospel so well expressed and emphasized in our Constitutions. It records a weakening of the salesian sense and awareness of work and temperance. There is a tendency to "fractionation" and to a bourgeois life, a frame of mind indicating a kind of economic independence and autonomous administration, which is associated with the individualism of the consumer society.³²

Considering the common effort towards poverty, we have to note deficiencies in fulfilling two objectives, even though in both instances they lie within reasonable possibility. First, there is the "scrutinium paupertatis." And secondly, article 89 of the Constitutions: "All our activities, the location of our works and their availability to those in need, must reflect our poverty."

Poverty means sharing all that we have, all that we are, and all that we do. And this is the witness that will speak loud and clear—the very witness that the world and youth expect of us. In this regard the SGC spoke also of collective and communal poverty as absolutely indispensable.³³

Speaking of *obedience*, the SGC had "called for a renewal in the practice of obedience in harmony both with its supernatural value and with the new ways of practising it, applying this to the one who commands as well as the one who obeys."³⁴

³⁰ Ibid 111.

³¹ ET 19.

³² Sch Precap 211-212.

³³ Cf Sch Precap 211.

³⁴ RRM 116.

"There is in our confreres a great availability to serve. This is true of the vast majority of salesians even in cases of at times heroic obedience... This goes to show an edifying availability born of love and of faith. I take this opportunity to express the thanks of the whole Congregation to these generous confreres. As long as there are such men in our ranks, we can look with hope and confidence to tomorrow."³⁵

There are also some deficiencies—failings and crooked lines more in practice than in theory. There is some evidence, in fact, of an insensibility to cooperation and solidarity; a growing tendency for individuals to work on their own and independently; the feeling that working within and together with the community is a restraint and impediment. We have to note also a lack of understanding in some cases of the gospel meaning of authority and its relationship to fraternal union.

To make our witness credible our life of faith must be seen as obedience to God and a personal participation in the death and life of Christ. And we must recognize our urgent need of mediation to reach him, the mediation of the Church, of men, of brotherly union. Finally, this must take place in the spirit and in the renewed ways of common life and obedience, in dialog, in coresponsibility and in mutual collaboration on all levels.

In the beginning there was some mention of superficiality. In the case of obedience, as in chastity and poverty, it is necessary that the communities deepen their experience of faith in the religious life, through which the members "find in Christ the purpose of their existence, and who regard their witness of the paschal mystery to the world as their motive for the particular service they offer to their brethren, especially poor and abandoned youth, according to the charism of Don Bosco."³⁶

1.3 The gift of prayer and evangelization

- 42 The salesian community realizes that it exists only because it is a gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit; and by prayer it adores, praises, petitions and thanks the Lord.

It revives in this way the consciousness of its intimate and vital relation with God and renders itself more adapted to its mission.

³⁵ RRM 122.

³⁶ ASGC 511.

In this sense, prayer is "the very centre, indeed it is the true secret of the renewal of our salesian vocation today."³⁷ It "enables us to discover the living meaning of our adoption as sons of God. It is the basis of our apostolic service directed to all men... It maintains kindled in us the joy and enthusiasm of our total self-giving."³⁸ And it fosters and strengthens the witness of our brotherliness.

The renewed Constitutions and the SGC bring out the following:

- the need for personal prayer which becomes a pledge of authentic and deep union with God;
- the urgency of a greater appreciation of prayer in common;
- the necessity of a continued renewal of spirit, in content and form, in tune with the sensibilities and attitudes of the young and in close connection with pastoral tasks.

The report made by the GC21 from the material offered by the provincial chapters indicates that the salesians are showing a *growing appreciation for common and liturgical prayer* (concelebration, liturgy of the hours). They engage themselves with diligence and careful preparation for days of recollection and retreats in various forms. They promote group experiences in prayer for youth; and some take part with great fruit also in experiences of their own in various spiritual experiments.

With some preoccupation we must note also *some negative points* in regard to the community life, which at least to some degree fails to reflect sufficiently that renewal requested by the Church and the Congregation. In varying intensity there is need of deep and continuous conversion. Here are some areas in need of improvement: regular attendance at the common practices of piety by those confreres who too easily and without due reason excuse themselves; greater care in prayer by those confreres who tend to go too fast; and appropriate preparation for liturgical celebration of various kinds. There has been the lack of initiative to promote common prayer among salesians, boys, and others connected with our mission. To some extent there has been a negligence of the sacrament of reconciliation and other personal expressions of salesian piety. The need felt for greater spontaneity and creativity in common prayer has prompted some to find outside of the community prayer expe-

³⁷ ASGC 519.

³⁸ ASGC 529.

periences considered by them to be more authentic and meaningful. Generally, no provision has been made in a satisfactory way on a provincial level, to prepare leaders and animators for spiritual and liturgical exercises, capable of helping the communities in a time of change to preserve and deepen the salesian style of prayer.

- 44 In view of all this and for a greater witness to the gospel, we make the following fundamental recommendations:

1.3.1 *To deepen the apostolic significance
of our prayer life*

In each of us and in our communities apostolic action and the spiritual life have one source: "They are the fruit of the Lord's death and resurrection"³⁹ and they are enlivened by his Word.

In the light of this paschal mystery the salesian community seeks to combine its organized rhythm of prayer with its daily routine of activities in a "liturgy of life."³⁹ It detects traces of God's presence in the world, feels called to cooperate in the divine plan of salvation through its testimony and witness, recognizes its own limitations, seeks pardon for its failings, and renews its fidelity. It adores, praises, thanks and petitions the Divine Majesty, devoting itself with greater generosity to its apostolic mission of bearing the love of God to the young. It seeks more efficacious ways of stirring up the thirst for God in them, by praying, living and celebrating liturgical and salesian festivities with them. Above all it fosters the hearing of the Word of God which continually calls to conversion, especially through the sacrament of reconciliation. It gladly takes part in youthful expressions of prayer, encouraging creativity and the lively sharing of personal and communal experiences in prayer.

1.3.2 *Planning the times for prayer*

"It is necessary always to pray." This injunction certainly includes set times for prayer which are apt means to perfect our love in the accomplishing of the will of the Father.

In this context we can appreciate the expressions of the following article of the Constitutions: the salesians "have few practices of piety, but we pray without ceasing, and after the manner of Don

³⁹ Const 58.

³⁹ Const 67.

Bosco's own union with God aspire to become contemplatives in action by praying in simple heart to heart colloquy with Christ, with the Father conscious of his presence, with Mary our helper."⁴⁰

To foster this spirit of prayer the community schedules times for prayer. In this way we visibly and concretely prove our claim that God holds first place in our life and sends us on our mission for youth.

1.3.3 *Remaining faithful to salesian devotions*

The salesian community remains faithful to those devotions which Don Bosco especially promoted: the devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians.

The presence of Christ in the eucharist enables us to take part in the mystery of salvation. Our Lady "holds a unique place in the history of salvation and in the life of the Church."⁴¹ In the words of Pope Paul VI she is "the Star of Evangelization" who continues to guide the community in the fulfillment of its mission.

Finally, through the devotion to our Father Don Bosco confreres will be helped in imitating his continuous union with God in the midst of their labors. They will be faithful to him in leading a life of "salesian cheerfulness".

1.3.4 *Renewal of prayer*

Christian prayer is not only a gift of God; it is also the fruit of sound instruction.

The salesians wish to give great importance to everything which can be of help in the growth and renewal of prayer life. We consider retreats particularly suited for this purpose. The retreat offers a true opportunity for contact with God.

The salesians feel more keenly the need for an openness and for a well-balanced spontaneity and creativity in prayer, whether personal or communal. This will ensure a greater authenticity and prevent the danger of routine in prayer. The riches of the liturgy and the renewal within the Church offer excellent opportunities which we can profit from. They can be blended with the salesian spirit and become a genuine expression of our own charism.

⁴⁰ Const 48.

⁴¹ Const 65.

⁴² Cf EN 82.

Let the salesians pledge themselves to personal prayer in the firm conviction of its necessity. Personal prayer should come before common prayer and is a good preparation for it. Through prayer the mutual exchange of gifts in charity will thrive among the conferrers.

1.4 Animation of the community for evangelization.

Role of the rector.

- 46 The experience of the ecclesial community in the recent years of renewal is that it *must develop* in an atmosphere of coresponsibility. And it finds in the services which occupy it, especially in the "service of authority," one of the strongest sources of its growth in faithfulness to God and in the service of men.

After having considered some aspects of the salesian community in the field of evangelization, it now seems necessary to give serious attention to the need of an animating spirit within the community itself for its apostolic work. Indeed, it seems certain that our communities have an impelling need for a basic and growing vigor as they seek to live according to the gospel and to carry on the work of evangelization. This is one of the points insistently made by the Congregation in its self evaluation.⁴³

We speak of "animation." In its original meaning it is contrasted with the imposition of external force. It designates the inner energy and activity of the soul, which gives life, harmony, growth and cohesion to all the parts of a living organism sharing in the life functions of the various members of the body.

By "spiritual animation" of a religious community we mean whatever promotes the initiatives, conduct, and life of the specific vocation of a particular institute. It calls for active sharing and for mature and conscientious cooperation on the part of every member of the community according to each one's respective role and personal gifts. Successful "animation" therefore is shown by the increase of coresponsibility and by the recognition by members of the community of their complementary functions. It is expressed by an adult mentality and an advanced state of maturity.

In this sense "animation" seems to be closely linked with the ability to motivate and with efficacious suggestion—in a word with per-

⁴³ Cf n. 39 of present text.

suasiveness. It opens the way for dialog, communication and discernment. It fosters willingness to listen. For us salesians it appears as part and parcel of the system of Don Bosco—reason and kindness.

The “animation” of a christian community cannot be reduced to a technique or a mere method, though these may be useful. It must be founded on docility to the Spirit, who is the first “animator” of the people of God. For a religious community it is linked to the initial project of the Founder, who was raised up by the same Spirit. Hence for us salesians such spiritual animation is at once “religious” and “pastoral”.

“We are living in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit.”⁴⁴ Our times therefore require us to be able to decipher the untiring initiative of God in life and in history. We need inspiration to know the proper response in this situation. If so, we will design a work of wisdom which will indeed renew the apostolic activity of the congregation according to the signs of the times and the expectations of our confreres.

1.4.1 *The situation*

In the last few years we have reason to be encouraged by several positive developments in our communities: a greater “spiritual” sensibility and attentiveness to the Word of God; an increase in the sense of coresponsibility and a greater ability to dialog; the rise of various initiatives, some spontaneous and some organized, which promote good spirit in the community; provincial and inter-provincial cooperation in the work of formation; and the difficult attempt to create in every house a formative atmosphere.

On the other hand, perhaps as a consequence of a growing spiritual need, we have to lament some negative situations and certain blindspots which concern us: the falling off in some confreres of enthusiasm for vocations; the absence of unity and of a deep spirituality at community level;⁴⁵ the lack or inadequate functioning of some roles or structures within the community;⁴⁶ and above all, a certain emptying of the figure of the rector, accompanied by a weakening of personal and pastoral dialog, of spiritual direction, and of

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⁴⁴ EN 44.

⁴⁵ Sch Precap 207-208.

⁴⁶ Sch Precap 237-240.

the distracting of attention from more important duties to less vital ones, sometimes turning upside down the proper functioning of government.

- 48 This situation has occasioned the following insistent recommendations from the confreres:
- On the one hand to increase coresponsibility and the understanding of the respective roles of the individual confreres and members of the house councils in the religious and pastoral work of the community; and
 - On the other hand to prepare animators and to intensify the formative functions of the province, especially of the provincial and his council.⁴⁹
 - Finally, and above all, the confreres emphasize the necessity of clarifying the function and figure of the rector. They make reference to the manner of choosing and preparing him, to personal and communal spiritual direction, and to the simplification and the setting of priorities in regard to his duties.⁵⁰

All the points mentioned above have to do with animation and must be carefully studied. The GC21 has chosen to answer these urgent requests of many provincial chapters and individual confreres by more clearly delineating the figure and function of the rector, who is the principal animator of the Community.⁵¹

In doing this we do not intend to undervalue—but on the contrary to emphasize anew—the importance of coresponsibility. Indeed, there is an inner connection among the various roles and the various means of animating the community, which all revolve around the rector, who is their common point of reference.

1.4.2 *Frame of reference. Ministry of the rector.*

- 49 The rector can only function⁵² in the context of the community and of the pastoral work which it carries on in the salesian name and spirit. His function in no way implies any inequality in the common

⁴⁷ Sch Precap 227-235.

⁴⁸ Sch Precap 237-240.

⁴⁹ Sch Precap 241-244.

⁵⁰ Sch Precap 227-235.

⁵¹ Sch Precap 227-237.

⁵² Const 54, 182.

vocation but "a presiding over in charity,"⁵³ with a special obligation to service⁵⁴ for the advantage of the unity and corporate identity of the whole community.⁵⁵

"According to the will of Don Bosco and our uninterrupted tradition," the 19th General Chapter assures us "the rector constitutes, without a shadow of doubt, the center of unity and of initiative of all salesian work whatever its type or composition either as the head of the religious community and guide of the confreres, or as the one who encourages and sustains every activity, apostolic or formative, being first among those who would educate; or as the one finally responsible for every activity whether it be economic, technical, or in the field of organization."⁵⁶

"The concrete definition of this unifying and vitalizing activity of the rector," in the words of the same 19th General Chapter, "must include something which cannot be substituted, namely, the co-responsibility and mutual collaboration with other superiors, in the first place with his council."⁵⁷

The SGC also has emphasized the responsibility of the rector as the center of the community and his role as religious and pastoral guide.⁵⁸

1.4.3 *A complex role, with complementary functions.*

The office of rector is quite complex: all sections of salesian life converge upon it, at least for their final coordination. This includes the religious and spiritual, the apostolic and pastoral, the educative and cultural, the economic and organizational aspects of all activities. But there is question here of shared responsibility—apportioned and diversified according to complementary roles assigned to the different members of the community.⁵⁹ The rector must know how to respect and appreciate these responsible roles. While fostering the legitimate initiatives of the confreres, he shall take care to "keep himself free from commitments which could interfere with his fundamental duties towards the confreres."⁶⁰

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⁵³ ASGC 502.

⁵⁴ Cf Const 115.

⁵⁵ ASGC 714-716.

⁵⁶ AGC XIX, 32.

⁵⁷ Ibid 32-33.

⁵⁸ Cf ASGC 526, 678, 644-646.

⁵⁹ ASGC 647.

⁶⁰ Reg 153.

Today the vastness of some of our works, and the increased complexity of their operation on the one hand, and on the other a better understanding of the principle of subsidiarity, demand that we make the effort to define anew and, wherever possible, to simplify the difficult task of the rector.

1.4.4 *Some salesian criteria*

- 51 In this effort it might prove profitable to keep the following criteria in mind:
- the ecclesial and pastoral characteristics proper to a salesian community;⁶¹
 - the type of community spirit explicitly wished by Don Bosco;⁶²
 - the salesian tradition according to which the community is "guided in its apostolic task by a member who by his sacerdotal ordination and by his pastoral experience is able to direct it spiritually and orientate its mission";⁶³
 - the practical sense, by which an intelligent leeway is allowed to those persons holding key positions within the community.

1.4.5 *Priorities among the duties assigned to the rector by the Constitutions*

- 52 In the light of the Constitutions, and after a century's experience of their practice, it is not difficult to establish the following order of priorities in the duties assigned to the rector:

1st: *He is the preserver of unity and the custodian of our salesian identity*, in direct collaboration and in unity of spirit with the provincial and his council. He is "the sign of Christ uniting his followers in the service of the Father. He is at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers, who recognize his responsibility and his authority."⁶⁴

2nd: *He is the pastoral guide of the salesian mission* in a threefold function: as teacher of the Word, as sanctifier through the ministry of the sacraments and as coordinator of apostolic activity. He holds

⁶¹ Cf ASGC 78-84, 27-30.

⁶² Cf ASGC 713-719.

⁶³ Const 35; Cf also letter of Card Villot to GC21; Aubry, *Direttore salesiano secondo la nostra tradizione*, pp. 59-124, in *Contributo di Studio allo Schema III Roma 1977*.

⁶⁴ Const 54.

principal responsibility for the mission among the young and the people entrusted to his community; he preserves and renews the fidelity of the confreres in their pastoral commitment to the "preventive system"; he cooperates with the bishop and the diocesan clergy in the combined pastoral action of the local Church.

3rd: *He directs the work of education* and of human development required of his community in the scholastic and pedagogical fields and in cultural, social and cooperative projects.⁶⁵

4th: *He bears the principal responsibility* in the overall operation of the work (finance, organization, discipline, public relations, buildings).⁶⁶

Unfortunately, in more than one instance, our houses have witnessed somersaults in regard to the priorities just mentioned. In such cases an unbridgeable gap has separated the rightful description of the rector from his actual status, to the great detriment of the salesian spirit. Hence has arisen in no small measure the crisis which the office of rector has undergone.

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The GC21 therefore considers it essential to restore the priorities as outlined above. We are convinced from our salesian experience that the rector, rather than acting himself, must get others to act, stirring up the initiative of the confreres and inspiring a sharing of responsibility in every member of the community in the accomplishing of common apostolic goals. "The task of the rector is to portion out the work to be carried on, and then to see to it that it is done."⁶⁷ "The fundamental point is this—let the rector act as rector, i.e., let him know how to get others to work..."⁶⁸

Let the rector be a salesian rector, i.e., let him reflect the image, play the role, and act in the manner that Don Bosco, the supreme model of rectors, intended for him.

It is urgent to recapture this essential characteristic of the rector as the animator of the community, and as the "former" of souls who presides over the community in love.⁶⁹ Let the various tasks in the fields of organization, administration and discipline be left to others, following Don Bosco's practice with Don Rua.

⁶⁵ Reg 154.

⁶⁶ Cf Const 182; Reg 183.

⁶⁷ MB XIII 18.

⁶⁸ MB XIII 256, D. Bosco al GC1, September 1877.

⁶⁹ ASC 281, 37.

1.4.6 *Animation and its relation to authority*

- 54 For an authentic renewal of the office of rector it seems opportune to consider the role of his religious authority and the service he renders as animator of the community and of the confreres. He is in fact designated by the Constitutions as the superior of the local community, and "he governs it with the collaboration of his council."⁷⁰

The service of his authority aims at strengthening the vocation of each one as well as the sense of mission in the whole community and its single members. By his encouraging guidance he seeks to bring together under one common goal all the services which the community renders. For this purpose he undoubtedly possesses true religious authority in respect of all the confreres.⁷¹

Don Bosco remains the true model of every salesian rector. Like Don Bosco, the rector must be a father, a brother and friend, shepherd and teacher, and the center of unity. He inspires initiative and coordinates the various activities, seeking the necessary cooperation on every level, a truly prudent "superior" of a religious and apostolic community.

1.4.7 *New style of exercising his ministry*

- 55 According to this model, it seems necessary to renovate the style of exercising authority by the rector. Cultural changes require a genuine renewal in the light of the values that are emerging as signs of the times and as a result of the 2nd Vatican Council's deeper understanding of "service".

This renewed style brings about a sense of equality as brothers, rightful recognition of coresponsibility, respectful consideration of the adult conscience of each person, appreciation of the legitimate differences of mentality, sincerity and frankness in dealing with others, an atmosphere of affection and of service, ability to communicate, and some knowledge of the techniques of group dynamics. Above all, primacy must be given to "life in the Spirit" by daily striving to make Christ the center of the common life—in a word, a style of life that inspires respect for authority without being authoritarian.⁷³

⁷⁰ Const 182.

⁷¹ Cf Const 125 & Decr. SCRIS, Feb 1972.

⁷² Cf Cost 94.

⁷³ Cf Const 54, 93.

In the climate of this renewed style the rector must learn the discerning of spirits by prayer and counsel. By his personal study he must be well acquainted with the teachings and directives that come from the Magisterium, from the Constitutions and Regulations, and from the legitimate Superiors. Even in his time in the confidential recommendations that Don Bosco wrote for rectors, the Saint recommended: "In matters of greater importance, before making a decision, always raise your heart to God in prayer. In hearing any report, listen attentively, but seek to weigh well all the facts before passing judgment."⁷⁴

In this way he will be enlightened and guided to judge and make decisions with prudence in the face of the delicate and complex pluralism of ideas and conduct in religious life. Above all he will help his confreres through fraternal correction so that they live a life in conformity with the vocation they have chosen.

1.4.8 *Some means of animation*

Salesian traditions, and present-day sensitivity afford the rector opportunities and time for brotherly contact which in the simplicity of our family spirit have the potential of becoming strong instruments for encouraging and sustaining the community as well as individual confreres. Suffice it to mention a few of them: the gatherings of the council and of the assembly of confreres,⁷⁵ the meetings in common for prayer, for meditation, for fraternal reunions, for the programming of activities and for the monthly day of recollection; spiritual reading, considered as an aspect of ongoing formation; the conferences;⁷⁶ the "good nights";⁷⁷ the friendly talk with the superior;⁷⁸ and the like.⁷⁹

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1.4.9 *Co-responsibility of the community in the style of animation*

On their part the confreres should clearly demonstrate their determination to be a part of the community by their cooperation, each according to his proper role, in the initiatives undertaken by the

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⁷⁴ Ricordi confidenziali ai Direttori.

⁷⁵ Reg 154-155.

⁷⁶ Reg 157.

⁷⁷ Reg 43.

⁷⁸ Const 96.

⁷⁹ Cf Document on Formation.

community, avoiding any plea to be excused and inclination to passivity. Only by the active participation and by the sharing of responsibility by all the members, in fact, can the community be assured of the lasting and effective inspiration needed for the accomplishment of the "rule of life" that all have professed.

In those cases in which, after an open and patient dialog, there remains opposition between personal points of view and the decisions of the superior, the individual confrere should accept the outcome with obedience, with the maturity of an adult in the faith, remembering the example of the obedience of Christ for the sake of the Kingdom.

In these cases the confreres should not forget that the person called to lead a community (made up of imperfect men) is himself imperfect; he too, like the other members of the community, needs support and understanding. Their sincere cooperation and esteem will make his task easier and more fruitful.

1.5 Practical directives on the "evangelized community"

58 1.5.1 To renew "*rapport*" among individuals and of individuals with the community

a. The community should undertake annually a review of its life and activities looking to the future as well as to the past. This communal effort—which is to be considered among the most important and meaningful projects of community life—will engage the corresponsibility of all the confreres in a common plan of organization and in a needed evaluation of the common life.

b. In order to give an impetus to fraternal union which is indispensable for our community life, let each confrere set a high value on the 'friendly talk' with the superior, referred to in art. 96 of the Constitutions and the new article 71(a) of the Regulations.

c. Meetings should be arranged on a regular basis so as to foster an atmosphere of communion among the confreres. In this way there will be communication and the mutual exchange of information, making use of modern techniques.

1.5.2 To renew the sense of the *gospel-value of the religious profession*

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a. To better ensure and foster a greater sensitiveness to evangelical poverty, the provincial office should establish a periodic self-evaluation (*scrutinium paupertatis*), determining the time and procedure. In this examination should be included an appraisal of work as an expression of poverty.

b. To provide psychological and emotional balance for the confreres and a helpful environment for confreres in difficulty, each community should examine that way it practises the family spirit and whether it makes the proper use of "fraternal correction" as recommended in the gospel (Mt. 18, 15-17).

1.5.3 To renew the *apostolic dimension of our prayer*

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a. In the spirit of faith every local community should make a periodic examination of its life of prayer, evaluating its apostolic dimension, the forms it takes, its content and the participation in it of the confreres.

b. Times for prayer should be carefully arranged in conformity with the Constitutions and Regulations.

c. Every confrere should renew his effort to be faithful to personal prayer, to the sacrament of reconciliation, to the practices of piety in common, and to listening to the Word of God.

1.5.4 To renew the *common effort towards animation*

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The GC21 considers the above as one of the focal points of renewal and gives the following directives:

a. Every rector must seek to develop by prayer and reflection a clear understanding of his pastoral mission in the community, according to the norms of the Council.⁸⁰ Let him study personally and with his community the proper ways to fulfill his duties, with constant patience in the face of difficulties which will always arise. Let him be solicitous to establish rapport with all the confreres,⁸¹ especially by means of the "friendly talk" which has been presented, more than as a norm, as a simple and practical way of fostering brotherly union and of strengthening one's vocation.

⁸⁰ PO c II.

⁸¹ ASGC 356.

⁸² Cf Reg 71(B).

b. The provincial, as the chief animator of the province, should consider it among his principal duties to prepare an adequate number of animators for the various sectors of the province, thus providing "spiritual men" qualified to guide and enlighten consciences.

c. The provincial should seek ways and means in every community to simplify the duties of the rector according to the norms given above. Let him establish the areas of jurisdiction, as suggested above in order to clarify the complementary roles of the individual confreres, the members of the council, and of the assembly of confreres.

d. As soon as possible the Rector Major and his Council should see to the preparation of a Manual for Provincials and Rectors. This will clarify the parameters of authority, harmonize spiritual leadership with religious authority, and keep in mind the diversity of situations that might exist in different circumstances.

The Acts of the Superior Council and other special publications should offer practical directives, especially as regards the updating of spiritual direction for the confreres, taken singly and in community.

2. THE COMMUNITY AS ANIMATOR

62 According to the SGC, "the formation of true pastoral communities, based on shared responsibility and collaboration, is one of the principal objectives of our pastoral renewal."⁸³

This is first of all a valid statement for the salesian community itself, in which there must be a sharing of pastoral responsibility. In fact this holds for all true apostolic communities. "Our mission is entrusted to the community at provincial or local level."⁸⁴ "It follows that each salesian receives a part of the salesian mission to accomplish in so far as he is a member, and therefore in intimate solidarity with his confreres."⁸⁵

This is a valid statement also for the particular roles in animation which ecclesial and educative directives prescribe for different members within the community.

⁸³ ASGC 357.

⁸⁴ Const 34; ASGC 29.

⁸⁵ ASGC 29, 84.

It is our specific charism to lead and encourage the educative community. "Besides ourselves, the parents, lay workers and the young themselves are active members, *united in dialog and shared responsibility* at various levels."⁸⁶ Thus in varying environments⁸⁷ we carry on the evangelization that is required of us as educators.⁸⁸ "Responsible collaboration and a life which shares the gospel spirit are, of their very nature, a witness that not only builds up Christ in the community, but radiates him, becoming a sign for everyone."⁸⁹

The GC21 picks out three aspects of animation within the salesian community, considering them important means of implementing and deepening our evangelical mission:

- the influence the salesian community should exert on the educative and pastoral community;
- the contribution of the salesian cooperators and past pupils who have made "the gospel choice" (message of the past pupils to the GC21, A3, statutes, art 1), of taking part in the educative and pastoral work of the Salesians of Don Bosco;
- the collaboration of other laymen and laywomen.

2.1 The salesian community animator of the educative and pastoral community

2.1.1 *The situation*

Our self-evaluation gives positive indications that the seeds of renewal sown by the SGC have led to a better understanding of how much educative and pastoral action have in common with our mission. They are linked to the whole of our religious life, on the provincial and local levels.

As far as the communities themselves are concerned, there has been a real increase in the collective consciousness as well as in the awareness of the individual confreres.⁹¹ There has arisen a greater awareness of our responsibilities in the service to which we are called. Meetings and gatherings have multiplied in openness of

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⁸⁶ ASGC 357, 340, 750, 356, 395.

⁸⁷ ASGC 377, 381, 386.

⁸⁸ Const 39.

⁸⁹ SC 61.

⁹⁰ RRM 130-131.

⁹¹ Const 4, 52.

spirit and dialog, fostering the sharing of experiences and apostolic projects.⁹²

This renewal within the communities themselves has had repercussions outside, influencing also the educative community.

This is evidenced by the fact that there is a better integration of our pastoral work with that of the local Church and community. With the isolation of the past diminished or gone, there has emerged a greater share of responsibility by laymen, parents, and the young themselves, who have come to appreciate better the value and care of their own formation. Efforts have been made to clarify and construct together a *practical* program of education, establishing norms to put it into realistic execution. Thus attitudes of diffidence and distrust have been overcome, above all in cases where ideological differences have prevailed.

Finally, the need for a new kind of rapport between the various sectors of the educative community finds an echo in the deliberations of the provincial chapters which exhort the confreres to a more effective promotion of lay collaborators, especially of members of the salesian family, because "sharing responsibility with them increases our own competence and credibility."⁹³

64 Nevertheless there are *negative aspects* which prompt us to reflect and to make the necessary corrections. Besides the points made in dealing with the "community as brotherhood" we can add the following:

- at the level of the apostolic community, individualism and the spirit of independence; the lack of comprehensive planning and sufficient encouragement of pastoral activity within provinces and local communities. All this creates factions and diminishes corporate efficiency, especially when dialog is difficult and mentalities are remarkably different;
- at the level of the animating community, neglect of those human characteristics which give encouragement to the family spirit within communities.⁹⁴ This deals a destructive blow to the preventive system, with little understanding and appreciation of the consequent detrimental effects of the educational process and on the effectiveness of single factors at work within the educative

⁹² Const 53.

⁹³ Gruppo di maggio, Sch V, 14.

⁹⁴ Cf ASGC 485-486.

community. There are some who, for various reasons arising from a divergence of backgrounds, do not even understand the importance of renewal and integration. They are not ready to accept necessary changes and thus fail to contribute effectively to the whole project of salesian education.

Besides, there is some difficulty in creating authentic educative communities in works which present a variety much more complex than the traditional boarding or day school, e.g. youth centers, parishes and the like. In these cases the confreres have different timetables, work at different locations and bear diverse responsibilities. Hence living and meeting together is rendered more difficult. There are also situations where our work is hindered because of outside interference, whether social, economic, political or religious. In these cases it is extremely difficult to practise our educational system.

2.1.2 *Frame of reference*

In view of our self-evaluation and in the light of the SGC and of Church documents, emphasis must be given to the fostering and maturing of the educative community as a decisive element in the total pastoral perspective of evangelization.

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The most important contribution that salesians can make to evangelization is to *live as a genuine community*.⁹⁵ Indeed, the words of the SGC apply in the first place to the Congregation itself: "each community proclaims the catechism more by what it is than by what it says."⁹⁶

It is incumbent upon us to inspire with zeal for the salesian mission all those who are associated with us. This is the proper way for us to bear witness to the gospel and to strengthen from within the educative community.

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Article 5 of the Constitutions prescribes this for the whole salesian family.⁹⁷ As for the laity associated with us in our mission, the clear statement of Article 39 is well commented upon in the Rector Major's report "We must recognize, especially today, not just from necessity but for reasons of sound pedagogy and in faithfulness to the

⁹⁵ Cf Const 20, 28, 33; ASGC 29, 283, 288, 293, 296, 318-320, 436, 506.

⁹⁶ RdC.

⁹⁷ Reg 30-31.

Church, that we need laymen as conscientious and competent collaborators in our mission. In this way we will integrate the three aspects of our work: education, pastoral guidance, and witnessing to the gospel."⁹⁸

67 This animating role requires:

a) a lively awareness, in theory and in practice, of the *pastoral necessity of sharing responsibility in our work of education*. This requires openness, trust, and loyalty towards our co-workers. We must recognize that their circumstances of life differ from our own. We respect the roles which they must play in our work. We must seek out the multiple forms of collaboration and mutual help that their vocation and specific contribution offer us. Each salesian should be on his guard not to look upon their collaboration as an interference. They in no way hinder the various religious ties that bind the salesian to his community and to the superior.

b) a clear understanding of the *identity of purpose of our work of education and pastoral mission*. Both are to be accomplished in coresponsibility. "The different groups that make up the educative community are especially associated, according to each one's own competence, in the one project of christian education."⁹⁹ This requires the free allegiance of all those taking part in it, as well as common aims and convictions in all its members.¹⁰⁰

Fidelity in this work of education requires "a continuous self-examination and a constant return to the principles and motives that inspire it."¹⁰¹

68 c) *The awareness of the specific role of the salesian community*. "It is the duty of the whole educative and pastoral community to make sure that the distinctive characteristics of christian education do actually flourish in its midst." To achieve this "christian parents have a special responsibility."¹⁰²

But upon the rector, upon the salesian community and upon each one according to his position, falls the responsibility of leadership in preserving the salesian and pastoral identity of the educative com-

⁹⁸ ASC 279, 42.

⁹⁹ SC 70.

¹⁰⁰ SC 58.

¹⁰¹ SC 67.

¹⁰² SC 73.

munity, in faithfulness to their specific charism and mission within the Church. In achieving this the rector, after patient dialog, has the last word.

This task requires on the one hand a constant effort and a keen and increasing sensitiveness to the "world of education"; and on the other hand the presence of apostolic-minded salesian confreres, who working together give the salesian imprint and infuse zeal for the gospel into the educative community.

2.2 The participation of cooperators and of the past pupils who have made "the choice of the gospel," in working with the SDB in their pastoral and educative task

We are not concerned here with the general theme of cooperators or of the past pupils in their role in the salesian family. We are interested here only in one of the multiple areas of collaboration which are open to the initiative of the cooperators and those alumni "who have made the choice of the gospel" (Stat. Conf. art. 1). How do they fit into the educative and pastoral work of the salesians?

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2.2.1 The situation

The evaluation which the GC21 conducted attests that the Congregation in general realizes the importance of the presence of these collaborators. There is a growing awareness in this regard.

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The RRM speaks of "deeper relationships than in the past" and of "a much more active and effective cooperation with several of these groups."¹⁰³ One reason for this is that the cooperators and those past pupils with a deeper formation display certain basic characteristics of a salesian vocation. There are several examples of this.

One is the action taken by the young cooperators in regard to apostolic and missionary work, which right from the outset justified the hope that is being placed in them. Another is the work for education that the past pupils pledged in their message to the GC21.

In this regard the provincial chapters¹⁰⁴ insist on two things: that we entrust to lay collaborators educative responsibilities and definite works of apostolate; and that those assigned to these tasks should

¹⁰³ RRM 242.

¹⁰⁴ Cf Sch Precap 262.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid 262a.

preferably be chosen from within the salesian family.¹⁰⁶ This was also a directive of the SGC.¹⁰⁷

- 71 On the other hand, on the part of some confreres there is detectable an attitude of little interest as regards these collaborators of the salesian family. They are looked upon merely from the point of view of efficient organization. Their value as an aid in the apostolate is not given due consideration.

Apparently this happens for four reasons. First, because the unique vocation of each group has not been understood clearly and there arises the constant risk of exchanging or substituting the roles proper to each group. Second, because there is lacking a living and continuous experience of the society in which our youth lives and hence an inadvertence that lay collaboration in our work is all for the good. Third, because of the failure of "initiatives and activities undertaken without due study at the proper levels and left—especially in individual works—to the interpretation and enthusiasm of a single person."¹⁰⁸ And fourth, most importantly, because there has been either a total lack or an insufficient amount of "serious training and formation of these collaborators of ours."¹⁰⁹

2.2.2 *Frame of reference*

- 72 We are convinced that the presence of cooperators and of those past pupils who have made "the choice of the gospel"¹¹⁰ are important for our boys, for ourselves, and for our other lay collaborators.

A presence important for the young

— Every trained layman, in a community that educates in the faith, affords a better and more effective organization when salesians are lacking either in number or in competence. In addition such men exercise a specific role of education, diverse from but quite compatible with our own. Our Constitutions speak of "a special contribution."¹¹¹ Hence their presence, where possible and convenient, is an enrichment.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid 262b.

¹⁰⁷ ASGC 428.

¹⁰⁸ RRM 243.

¹⁰⁹ Sch Precap 263.

¹¹⁰ Message of Past Pupils to GC21.

¹¹¹ Const 39; Sch Precap 262.

— The cooperators and such past pupils fulfill this function well. The influence of the gift of their salesian vocations, together with the work carried on *in communion* with their brothers who live the religious life, demonstrates “different ways of serving the people of God, and integrating various vocations, so as to show forth the richness of the founder’s charism.” Here is “a particular model of christian pedagogy.”¹¹²

In these circumstances our boys can realize an authentic and complete human involvement. They will experience a sense of confidence, making them creative and happy persons—a sense of *mystery* that the consumer society dampens and squelches. At the same time they will feel impelled to live the values of the gospel which they see demonstrated in their very midst. Gospel values previously inexperienced, will become alive by the example of these men living in “the vast and complicated world of politics, society, and economics,” and throwing a different light on “the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media... the world of love, of the family, or professional work.”¹¹³

A presence important for ourselves

— When we think of the cooperators and of those past pupils who with us are efficacious agents of the wish of the Founder, availing themselves of an indispensable variety of ministries for the fulfilment of our common mission, we are led to re-think and re-discover the specific nature of our vocation as bearers of the gospel with its particular characteristics and we are moved to train these laymen who are our brothers, binding them to us to assure more effectively the salvation of youth.¹¹⁴

— But this is not all. Besides offering to us the example of their life and the joy of such an experience, there arises very useful communication in the case of those among them who are laborers or employed in any way in the workshops and undertakings of those salesians dedicated to education in our professional schools. Their presence and experience exerts an influence that spreads to others. In planning an ideal program of education, the salesians ought to take these important advantages into account.

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¹¹² ASGC 159.

¹¹³ EN 70.

¹¹⁴ ASGC 151, 103b, 736.

A presence important for our other lay collaborators

- 74 These men offer a practical model of the salesian style and spirit. By bringing them into the work of training and leading other lay collaborators, according to the thought of Don Bosco himself, we have a guarantee that the preventive system will not run the risk of losing its salesian identity and its evangelical efficacy.

2.2.3 *Guidelines for renewal*

- 75 Considering all these facts, we are encouraged to be more diligent and to improve our work for formation in the following two directions:

— *Let the salesian family make provision for its structures of formation.*

Where the salesian family exists in these diverse groups, often there has been missing a "togetherness" whether in regard to communication, or formation, or operation. The SGC expressed the hope "for mutual collaboration and communication between various groups." Among other things it hoped for collaboration in "the means that will be useful for our formation and information in view of the common mission assigned to us."¹¹⁵ The Department for the Salesian Family will have to shed light on, articulate and eventually coordinate a program of cooperation toward this end.

— *Let the salesians acquire a greater awareness and responsibility in the service to which they have committed themselves.*

We recognize the wide and growing gap between need and possibility. Sometimes it is really impossible to accomplish what we wish. But in the same way we should realize that some of us, with renewed vigor and hope, must be converted to a spiritual awakening to the fact of the salesian family. In his letter of presentation of the SGC, the Rector Major called this awareness one of "the centres of convergence in the actual postconciliar endeavor."¹¹⁶

The Constitutions and the ASGC invite us to take up this challenge. We must put more impact into the work of formation of the cooperators and past pupils. We must give more attention to them in the significant events of our salesian life and in the promotion of coresponsibility in our educative and pastoral work.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ ASGC 175.

¹¹⁶ ASGC p. xiii; Cf xviii-xix.

¹¹⁷ ASGC 744b.

2.3 The collaboration of other laymen in the educative community

Here we are referring directly to those laymen and laywomen who, though not belonging to the salesian family, share with the salesians the responsibility of implementing our work of education. In the first place there are the parents, who are the first educators. In the school there are especially the teachers. In the youth center there are the leaders and promoters of the various activities. In parishes and in the missions there are those who under various titles contribute time and energy to a more complete evangelization.

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Besides those whose vocation calls them to the salesian work, we must take into account the presence of the laity not only for the meaningful service that they render to the educative community, but also because of their great number.

In some parts of the Congregation, the disproportion between their number and that of salesians is steadily increasing, due to the constant increase of the first and the declining number of the second. This is a fact that carries the risk of loss of identity of our mission and calls in any case for a new and needed apostolate. And lay people have the right to exert roles of influence and coresponsibility. For this they ought to be prepared.

2.3.1 *The situation*

When lay helpers are convinced christians, their presence affords our youth a wider array of models of the christian life. They make it possible for the salesians to give more time to spiritual guidance; and they provide the opportunity for greater dialog and updating in the face of family and professional problems.

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Nevertheless there are some negative points. Some salesians are unprepared to work with laymen. Sometimes the choice of laymen has been made with a view to professional qualifications and competence to the neglect of pastoral considerations. At times reciprocal relations have been spoiled by a laborer-employer point of view, poorly devised and badly understood.

¹¹⁸ Cf Sch Precap 262.

¹¹⁹ Cf RRM 195.

2.3.2 *Lines of renewal*

78 A new look must be taken at the figure of the laymen working with us in christian education. Our attitude must be broadened. We need a new style of more intense collaboration with the laity and a united effort with them to help the educative community grow.

In mutual understanding we will more easily find avenues of accord converging on the work of education that inspires them as well as ourselves.

To know better this work and its spirit we ought to study and research together, in a dialog of partnership rather than as masters.

In this common effort each one should take care to retain his own identity. The salesian should not play the part of a layman, neglecting his religious duties and the common life. The layman should not be expected to behave like a religious, for he has his own duties of secular, family, and political life.

The method of choosing these collaborators is important. This should not be under the pressure of the moment; the determining factors should be the preparation, quality and competence of the applicants. The ideal would be to find persons easily incorporated into our apostolic program, especially if they have a salesian background or some experience in christian youth movements. We ought not to hesitate to invite them to become salesian cooperators. In any case they should respect the nature and the "Catholic" aspect of our environment and work, even if they do not take an active part in our apostolic program. There could also be unbaptized persons as long as they are sensitive to those educational and human values that the salesian method demands.

Every educative community should set appropriate time for the ongoing formation for these lay people. There should be periodic meetings and times of reflection on the salesian method of education and on the educative work of the community in which they are involved.

¹²⁰ Cf ASGC 710; Reg 168.4.

2.4 Practical directives

2.4.1 *The animating salesian community*

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The salesians should renew and promote the educative community in the places where they work (SGC 395), and engage the laity in pastoral corresponsibility.

2.4.2 *The involvement of cooperators and past pupils in educational and pastoral work*

a) On the provincial and local levels, provincials and rectors should restore spiritual and apostolic vigor to the communities, making them dynamic centers of activity. To accomplish this they should appoint as delegates those confreres with the adequate preparation and talent.

b) According to a plan drawn up by the respective councils (salesians, cooperators, past pupils), during the next six years the provincial should make known to the communities the measures to be taken regarding the pastoral formation and vocation of the cooperators and past pupils. Let norms be established and ways indicated in which they can share responsibly in our apostolic initiatives.

c) Let the salesians accept responsibility for the formation of animators for the salesian family, promoting from the initial stages of formation, knowledge about the family and communicating a sense of its value and importance.

2.4.3 *Collaboration of other lay persons*

a) On the provincial level a directory for lay helpers should be prepared, indicating the characteristics of our educative environment and the human, professional, christian and salesian qualities necessary for an educator within our system.

b) Updating courses on the preventive system for lay people should be provided to insure their more effective insertion into our educative communities and pastoral works.

THE EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND VOCATIONAL FRUITFULNESS

1. THE SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL PLAN

- 80 The evangelizing activity of the salesian is not characterized solely in terms of his charges and by the typical community manner in which it is carried out, but also by the particular organization of its *contents* and objectives and by the *style* of his work among youth.

Therefore the Salesians of Don Bosco cannot adequately grasp the meaning of their mission without sincerely reflecting on that educational and pastoral system which Don Bosco has left as a precious legacy.

It is like a "central aspect in the salesian youth apostolate," something that belongs to the very essence of our mission, "our style of expressing pastoral charity."¹ Actually we may consider it a sort of synthesis of what Don Bosco wanted to be, the nucleus of the pedagogic-pastoral program or plan worked out by him and entrusted particularly to the salesian family, the necessary focal point of the forms and characteristics of our pastoral action.

This call to the "preventive system" becomes all the more urgent today, when the members of the Congregation, scattered throughout the world, confront very diverse cultural situations in which to witness and proclaim the Good News and yet wish to preserve through the community effectiveness of their vocation, the vital bond with their Founder and a unity of spirit.

We must remember, first of all, that the system does not indicate only a set of contents to be transmitted or a series of methods or procedures for communicating them. It is not pure pedagogy nor is it solely catechesis. The "preventive system" as it has been lived by Don Bosco and by his followers is always like a rich synthesis of contents and of methods; of processes of human development and

¹ RRM 183.

also of evangelical proclaiming and of deepening of the christian life. In its goals, in its contents, and in its actual implementation it brings to mind at once the three words by which Don Bosco defined it: *reason, religion, kindness*.

Therefore, in the work of verification the GC21 felt the need to consider its degree of presence or effectiveness, and in some way it wanted to test its vitality, pointing up two fundamental features, vitally linked to each other in concrete everyday action:

- *The contents*
- *The style*.

1.1 The contents of the salesian educational and pastoral plan

1.1.1 *The problem: a uniform and differentiated proposal*

According to the insights of Don Bosco and the Congregation, confirmed also by Vatican Council II and by more recent papal teaching, particularly in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, genuine evangelization takes place within a plan that aims at the total development of man, at the integral growth of the individual and of groups.

This plan is also radically open and positively oriented toward full maturity in Christ: "As witnesses of Christ, the salesians cultivate the christian integral development of youth and adults of the working class."²

Between evangelization, liberation and education therefore there is a profound unity and solidarity. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*³ proceeds along this line. The 19th General Chapter had already spoken of "integral salesian humanism."⁴ Also the SGC took up this expression and spoke of "christian integral development" and of "christian liberating education."⁵ It is the very language of Don Bosco, who was fond of summarizing the program of life proposed to boys in simple but meaningful formulas. He speaks of "good christians and respectable citizens";⁶ he set his sights on the "health, wisdom and holiness"

² ASGC 59-61.

³ EN 29-33.

⁴ GC XIX, pp. 182-183.

⁵ ASGC 61.

⁶ MB 13, 618.

of his boys,⁷ and proposed a lifestyle consisting of “cheerfulness, study, piety.”⁸

- 82** The GC21 does not close its eyes to the difficulties involved in carrying out this plan.

It realizes first of all the extreme cultural heterogeneity in which the Congregation is performing its mission: countries with long-standing christian tradition and territories on the threshold of dechristianization; regions in which the first proclaiming of the Good News has need of consistent efforts at deepening the christian experience and the faith; immense subcontinents where educational and pastoral action confronts deeply rooted non-christian religions, let alone the extremely differentiated levels of economic development, of social stratifications, of political regimes, of traditions.

Rendering even more difficult the christian educational commitment is the resistance put up by the boys themselves and the charges in general, who live in environments that greatly condition them and create in them attitudes of suspicion and hostility in the face of any proposal of values, especially if these values are linked to religion and to religious institutions. Often it is a question of attitudes which are found among the baptized, which are no less hard to overcome than are the attitudes of boys who have been brought up in other ideologies or religious systems, with rooted biases and hardened prejudices.

These difficulties on the other hand cannot make us forget or overlook the “new signs of restlessness for the Divine in the heart of man.”⁹ Indeed, our educational proposal will be able to start from the signs of renewal and from the profound drives that seem to permeate the world of youth, especially “from their aspirations for creativity, for justice, for freedom and for truth, as also from their desire for shared ecclesial and civil responsibility, from their inclination toward the love of God and their neighbor.”¹⁰

- 83** All this must stimulate us even more to a vital reflection that will give added vigor to salesian educational and evangelizing action.

Attention to and respect for the diversity of situations and persons

⁷ Epist. 2, 465.

⁸ *Il pastorello delle Alpi* in *Opere edite (The Little Shepherd of the Alps in Edited Works)*, Vol. XV, pp. 332-333.

⁹ Syn. 77, No. 2.

¹⁰ Syn. 77, No. 3.

must not betray the plan of our Founder. It must remain an ideal point of common reference for a full, christian and salesian service rendered to the total man; with moderation and sound judgment, but also with courage and candor; without pushing the natural forces but without allowing the times of grace and salvation to pass by in vain.

Starting from a basic uniform plan will make it easier to engage in genuine salesian creativity which, by means of the provincial and local communities and personal responsibility, will be able to find the proper criteria for programs of education, of human development, and of undiluted and integral christian formation in *historic* fidelity to diverse situations and cultures.¹¹

1.1.2 *The situation*

It is not easy to make a verification of the educational and evangelizing commitment of the salesians over the past six years, owing to the complexity of the actual conditions in which the Congregation carries on its activity and the varieties of the institutions that have to be examined.

We can however bring out some general points.

The SGC has had a *positive* influence on the Congregation as regards educational and evangelizing activity. Not entirely and not everywhere has this developed with equal diligence; many elements of renewal are still at the early stage and are getting under way with great difficulty, or they are still at the painful stage of research and wishful thinking. But we have the impression of having set out on the way to regrowth and of being at a more serene time of reflection and of action.

In particular, we point to some trends that appear to be rich in hope: the rediscovery of the value and relevance of Don Bosco's pedagogical insights and of the salesian tradition; the increased sensitivity to and greater interest in boys of the working classes and the cause of justice in the world; a more pronounced commitment to evangelization and catechesis.

All this has led, if not everywhere and to an equal degree:

- to the creation of centers, organizations, teams, journals, aids for investigating and carrying out the salesian educational and pastoral program;

¹¹ EN 20, 38-39.

- to the felt need for a more serious and precise programming of our salesian involvement, also through the drafting of educational ("model") plans around which to unify the educational action not only of the salesians but also of the members of the salesian family and of the laity engaged with us in the mission (parents, teachers, animators, catechists...);
- to more lively and functional involvements especially in the area of catechesis;
- to the creation of new agencies of spiritual activity such as departments for education in the Faith, which have been set up in some countries.

We can also note:

- a more intense and responsible taking part in the environmental and cultural context;
- a closer participation in the local Church apostolate;
- a broader cooperation with the salesian family and the development of the movement of Young Cooperators;
- growth in the understanding of prayer and the liturgical life;
- a more concerned attention to some sectors of evangelization such as the mass media and christian activity in things temporal;
- a marked, effective and fully recognized contribution in the sector of catechetical and liturgical activity.

85 In addition to an undeniable process of growth and to elements of renewal, the provincial chapters note the presence of *aspects still missing*, of resistance to change desired by the SGC, and the persistence of superficial and negative attitudes.

In more than one case they report the absence of a concrete educational and pastoral plan based on community reflection open to the changed situations of the time, compared with the lines of our tradition. They note a certain neglect and ignorance of the basic elements of the preventive system of Don Bosco and an unbalanced interpretation of the same. They note at times a falling off in the force of witness and the lack of meaningful salesian experiences, capable of arousing the interest of boys and their enthusiasm.

In some cases there is uncertainty over the exact purpose of our pastoral action, so that some confreres are reluctant or hesitant to come to grips with an explicit christian proposal, even in respect of the rhythms and themes of growth. Consequently there are not always clear and precise ideas and judgments regarding certain

main points of Don Bosco's educational method: reception of the sacraments (particularly regarding the sacrament of reconciliation), Marian devotion, the simple piety of the people, the systematic and integral teaching of religion applied to all ages, according to the indications of the local Church.

Also noted is a poor understanding of the problems that the condition of youth and the working classes brings to the christian experience; as for example the broad-gauged pluralism of cultural models, difficulty with the language of youth and lower-class subcultures, yearnings for participation and shared responsibility at all levels, the thirst for equality and justice.

1.1.3 *The causes*

We are not considering here the causes linked to socio-political conditions which hamper the full implementing of the salesian pastoral educational plan: evangelization cannot take place everywhere with full liberty of forms and expressions.

But even where we find great areas for action, there are causes which limit and distort educational and evangelizing action. They can be reduced to the following: an insufficient "mental awareness" of and a halting openness to the needs of pedagogic and pastoral action which have been indicated by the renewal; a certain narrowness in cultural horizons and basic formation which makes it hard to perceive the changes in society, the appeals sent up by the world of youth and the working classes, the directions given by the Magisterium. At the root of certain deficiencies and limitations in our action it is not uncommon to find the prevailing presence of lay collaborators, at times inadequately trained and made aware of our plan, while the few salesians present are involved primarily in organizational and administrative tasks.

1.1.4 *Frame of reference*

An assessment of the current reality has a point of reference of the highest authority in art. 2 of the Constitutions, which outlines the mission of the salesians: "to realize through our religious consecration the apostolic design of our Founder: then in our own salesian way we try to become the signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are the poorest and most in need."¹² It is a "total" and "creative service," which "invests all *the*

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¹² Also: Const. 7, 17-33, 40. Reg. 1-2; ASGC 88-89.

true necessities and real needs of the boy in his body, in his mind, in his heart." It is an "integral formation" which entails a generous response to his manifold needs: "for culture, for lodging, for activities and living with others in his free time, for educational environments full of vitality."¹³

At the peak we find "evangelizing and catechetical activity," which "is the basic dimension of our mission. As salesians, we are all and at all times teachers of the Faith."¹⁴ "The salesian civilizes by evangelizing and he evangelizes by civilizing."¹⁵ Fundamental in this regard are the texts of the SGC and especially the already mentioned documents 3 and 4, *Evangelization and Catechesis*¹⁶ and *Pastoral Renewal of Salesian Action among Youth*,¹⁷ which manifestly harmonize with the encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, with the Second, Third and Fourth Synods of Bishops (respectively on *justice in the world, evangelization and human development, catechesis in our time*), and the recent document on *The Catholic Schools* of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

- 88 We recall at this point some objectives and elements essential to a salesian pastoral educational action faithful to the plan of our Founder and in dialog with the needs of our charges.

It will be the task of the provinces and of the local communities to take these elements and apply them with proper adaptations to the makeup of their own educational plans or projects at the level of the Oratories, Youth Centers, Schools, and other salesian involvements among the youth of the working classes.

The summarizing indication calls for a continual effort at rereading and reinterpreting, in the light of Don Bosco's thinking, the wealth of documents of the Sacred Congregation of the Church, where all the points indicated are found.

- 89 It might be well to attempt a classification by adopting as a criterion what Don Bosco affirms: "This system is based above all on *reason, religion* and on *kindness*."¹⁸ But more than just a basis for syste-

¹³ ASGC 353; more analytically ASGC 354, 178-182, 256-258.

¹⁴ Const. 20.

¹⁵ ASGC 134, 61.

¹⁶ ASGC 274-341.

¹⁷ ASGC 342-399.

¹⁸ Op. sul Sist. Prev., 1887, in *Opere Edite* (Booklet on the Prev. Syst., 1887, in *Edited Works*), Vol. XXVIII, p. 424.

mizing the contents, this basic principle indicates a triple joint inspiration that penetrates and enlivens each and every aspect of the educational and pastoral system of Don Bosco.

In fact, reason, religion and kindness should be the ingredients of the entire rich legacy of human and religious values which guarantee the genuine human, religious and christian development of individuals, according to the true theology of incarnation.

In terms of *personal growth*, we want to help the boy in particular to build a sound and balanced humanity, fostering and promoting: **90**

- a gradual maturing in freedom, in the assuming of his own personal and social responsibilities, in the clear perception of values;
- a carefree and positive relationship with persons and things that will nurture and stimulate his creativity and reduce conflict and tension;
- the capacity to maintain a dynamic-critical attitude in the face of events, to be faithful to the values of tradition and be open to the needs of history, so as to become capable of making consistent personal decisions;
- a prudently given education in sex and in love that will help him to understand their dynamics of growth, of giving and of encounter, within a plan of life;
- the quest and planning of his future in order to liberate and direct toward a precise vocational choice the immense potential hidden in the destiny of every boy, even in one less endowed as a human being.

In terms of *social growth*, we want to help our charges have a heart and mind open to the world and to the needs of others. To this end, we are educating youth:

- to be available, to have a sense of solidarity, to dialog, to participate, to share responsibility;
- to become part of the community through the life and experience of the group;
- to become involved in justice and the building of a more just and human society.

1.1.5 *A plan positively oriented toward Christ*

A similar plan in its contents, in its goals, in its style, may also be proposed and offered to those who do not share our vision of the world and who do not share our faith. On the other hand, there are **91**

quite a few salesians who are active in environments that are extremely secular or have not as yet been touched by the message of the gospel.

Even in these cases, the educational system of Don Bosco proves itself ingenious in its insights and endowed with the most diversified possibilities. Applied with flexibility, gradualness and a sincere respect for the human and religious values of the cultures and religions of our charges,¹⁹ it can yield abundant fruits on the educational level, it can create friendship and promote affection from pupils and past pupils, it unleashes great energies of good, and in more than a few cases lays the foundations for an open path of conversion to the christian faith.

All this however does not preclude the salesian from finding for each educational endeavor his inspiration and motivations in the gospel, the light that illumines him and the goal which ultimately leads him to Christ. The ultimate goal of every salesian educational action is to make people aware of God as Father, to find his will at all times, and cooperate with Jesus Christ for the coming of his Kingdom.²⁰

The salesian plan therefore aims at another growth: the growth in Christ within the Church. In our educational plan, "Christ is the foundation: he reveals and promotes the new meaning of existence and transforms it, empowering man to live in a divine manner, that is to say, to think, to wish and to act according to the Gospel, making the Beatitudes his way of life."²¹

A truly religious and christian course of action is developed in salesian educational and pastoral action, in continuity with the commitment to develop and promote the more specifically human values.

The two lines of action do not, in themselves, follow one another chronologically, and still less are they divergent; they bear on two essential aspects of man's unique vocation as outlined in God's plan.

- 92 On the *christian religious* level, salesian action strives to teach an aware and active faith,²² to revive hope, optimism (serving the Lord in gladness),²³ and the life of grace. It stimulates charity in a full

¹⁹ *Nostra Aetate*, No. 2.

²⁰ Cf Const. 21.

²¹ *Scuola Cattolica (The Catholic School)*, Nos. 34, 35.

²² ASGC 63, 64, 307-311.

²³ Cf Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino*.

experience of life sustained by a lively catechesis and by concrete and relevant preaching. It teaches one to discover and love the Church as an efficient sign of communion and service to God and to our brothers, and to see in the Pope the bond of unity and charity in the Church. It permits one to live the experience of joyful and youthful liturgical celebrations with an intense participation in the Eucharist. It promotes a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother, the Help of Christians, the Mother of grace, true model of a successfully faithful life and of serene and victorious purity.²⁴ It teaches and stimulates a true life of prayer with particular care to use those forms which are most accessible and closest to *youthful and popular piety*.²⁵

Finally, we find always present as an objective, almost as a synthesis and crowning of a progressive human and christian maturity, the vocational orientation with all its possible choices: lay, religious, priestly. It is the most precious fruit of an accomplished evangelizing and educational process (Cf *Vocational fruitfulness of our pastoral activity* n. 106-119).

In discussing the salesian educational plan, we must briefly reflect on what Don Bosco considered "the columns of his educational edifice": the sacraments of reconciliation and the eucharist, and devotion to the Blessed Mother.²⁶

1.1.6 *Sacramental and liturgical life*

In rereading the three biographies of boys written by Don Bosco, and considering the sacramental practice in the Oratory in the light of present-day sensitivity and of the doctrine of Vatican Council II, it is easy to grasp the wealth and topicality of some aspects and insistent points of salesian pedagogy.

For the *pedagogy of penance*, the continuity between the style to bring the boy closer to the educational process and that which he succeeds in establishing at the sacramental moment is characteristic of Don Bosco. It is the same paternity, friendship and trust which awaken in the youth an awareness of the movements of grace and a commitment to overcome sin.

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²⁴ Const. 65; cf *Marialis Cultus*.

²⁵ EN 48.

²⁶ Stella P., *Don Bosco nella religiosità...* (*Don Bosco in the History of Catholic Religion*), Zurich 1969, 1°, p. 319.

The sacramental encounter usually requires a prior educational understanding.²⁷

Don Bosco used to rightly say that confession was the "key to education," because by personally involving the boy it invited him to surpass himself. The regular frequency of the penitential encounter, the frank and serene dialogue, the resolution which promotes constancy provide an opportunity of exceptional educational value.

We must not forget the different opportunities shown in the liturgy or found in popular devotion or suggested by educational wisdom, to offer to youth moments and community celebrations of penance within a climate of joy and delight, as is befitting when remembering one's own salvation.

A second aspect which it is important to recall is the educational value of the *liturgical year*. The full and conscious sharing in the work of redemption is organized, in Don Bosco's thought, around the celebration of the liturgical year, that sets the pace for the life of the youthful community, showing the road to spiritual growth and the gradual commitment which one assumes in answering God's call. It is a concrete way of structuring an educational plan on the mystery of Christ. At the center we always find the meeting with Christ in the Eucharist.

All this within the framework of an efficient catechesis, that helps the boys to consider liturgical celebrations as a "sacramental expression of the life of Christians and of their history and therefore teaches them a continuity between the Eucharist and the community commitment, between the Mass and the liturgy of life, between deliverance from evil petitioned in prayer and liberation practised in society, between the liturgical peace gesture and true peace brought to where one lives."²⁸

"To encourage," "to provide the opportunity to profit from the sacraments," "to emphasize the beauty, the greatness, the sanctity of religion," "never to compel," but to act in such a way as to ensure that the youths "remain spontaneously attached to the sacraments, draw near to them voluntarily, with pleasure and with profit": these are clear expressions of the preventive system that tell us of the educational sensitivity and of the sacramental pedagogy of Don Bosco.²⁹

²⁷ Bosco, G., *Scritti Spirituali* a cura di J. Aubry (*Spiritual Writings* edited by J. Aubry), p. 176, notes 5 and 6.

²⁸ ASGC 324.

²⁹ ASGC 326.

1.1.7 *Marian devotion*

Mary was particularly present in the evangelizing work of Don Bosco, who saw in devotion to the Blessed Virgin an essential element of christian growth for his boys and his youths. He promoted devotion to her and celebrated her feasts with solemnity, creating around them a climate of serenity and joy and at the same time of strong spiritual power. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians is at the root of our origins and therefore also of our renewal.

The GC21, in a spirit of loyalty to Don Bosco and in the light of Vatican Council II and of the *Marialis Cultus* of Paul VI, invites all salesians to rediscover and to give full value to the presence of Mary in their own lives and in educational action among youth.

The Blessed Mother fulfills above all the function of an *educator*. Our Constitutions remind us that "the Blessed Virgin Mary plays her part in the education of these children of God."³⁰ In the life of our boys, she is not only the Mother that receives and understands them but is also a sign of victory against sin and a help in their daily life-struggle. "We make her known and loved as the one who believed, and who is ever ready to help the christians on their pilgrimage."³¹

A salesian is not satisfied with fostering for Mary "a strong filial devotion,"³² but like Don Bosco sees Mary as the *inspiration* of his educational work. Starting from his dream at nine years of age and during his entire life, Don Bosco learned from her the fundamental aspects of his system: a demeanor of gentleness and patience, of serene and shining purity, of work and temperance.

In their work of educating youth in faith, the salesians, starting from the holy scriptures and from the celebrations of the liturgical year, will know how to reveal "Mary as a *model of spiritual behavior* with which the Church celebrates and lives the divine mysteries," especially in the celebration of the Eucharist; in other words the Blessed Virgin hearing and receiving the Word of God with faith; the Blessed Virgin in private and community prayer; the Virgin who for her faith and obedience gives us the gift of Christ; the Virgin offering Christ to the Father...³³

³⁰ Const. 21.

³¹ Const. 21.

³² Const. 65.

³³ *Marialis Cultus*, 16-20.

Starting from the insistent pleas and needs of the boys, like Don Bosco they will know how to present Mary as the *model of christian life*, because "she totally and responsibly obeyed the will of God; because she received the word and put it into practice; because her action was inspired by charity and by a spirit of service; because she devoted her life to the worship of God, and made such worship her way of life; because she was the first and most perfect follower of Christ."³⁴ This also in view of a mature ecclesial awareness that Mary promoted in God's people.³⁵

1.1.8 *The priority commitment to catechesis*

- 95 No solid sacramental practice and no devotion can replace in the Church the processes of conversion and of itineraries of growth in faith. There is an unbreakable bond between evangelization and the sacraments: evangelization, as a catechesis, prepares one for the sacrament and, as a liturgical preaching, accompanies its celebration.³⁶

The primacy of evangelization and especially of catechesis was strongly reemphasized by the official documents of the Church after Vatican Council II, both at the universal Church level³⁷ and at local Church level,³⁸ as well as in the SGC.³⁹

Therefore, in accordance with what was stated in the 1977 Synod of Bishops, the salesians will intensify their catechetical commitment in all their works and activities, "so as to give it priority in their pastoral action... being willing to devote all their efforts to the same catechetical activity together with that of evangelization."⁴⁰

Catechesis of course presupposes an initial announcement-testimony of the salvific event of God in Christ and that first fundamental faith option which constitutes the process of conversion. In this context, the salesians, through catechesis and not only occasionally but organically and systematically, intend to guide the educational and pastoral communities to a more profound knowledge and a complete experience of the message of salvation. It will be pre-

³⁴ *Marialis Cultus*, 35, 21.

³⁵ LG 52-69.

³⁶ EN 44, 47.

³⁷ Cf, e.g., *General Catechetical Directory*, 1971.

³⁸ Cf National Directories.

³⁹ ASGC 274-341.

⁴⁰ Syn. 77, No. 18 (Conclusion).

sented as a joyful message to contemporary man, as a guiding light for his life, as a solution to his problems through the numerous mediations of christian wisdom.

Within this field of activity the salesians, following in the footsteps of Don Bosco who was vividly aware of the "needs of the times," will bear carefully in mind the situations of environments which have been either only slightly or not at all evangelized, even if already initiated to the sacramental life, and will give to catechesis that missionary dimension which goes back to the principles and bases of every true conversion. And they will, on the other hand, pay particular attention to all those forms which gradually lead to the promotion of a full christian maturity and increasingly greater commitments in the civil and church community.

1.2 The style and the spirit of the salesian educational and pastoral plan

The problem

Like Don Bosco, the salesian sees his educational and evangelizing mission not only *among* and *for* youth and the working classes, but *with them* and *through* them. This attentive and kindly presence opens for us the world of young people and of the working classes and leads us to become one with it in all the legitimate aspects of its dynamic make-up.⁴¹ It is therefore natural that the most profound requirements of evangelization and human development demand the entire preventive system, not only in its contents but also in its *style*. It should be understood in a broad and comprehensive manner, and not only with a pedagogic and technical outlook. In fact in the mind of Don Bosco and in the salesian tradition, the "preventive system" tends to identify itself increasingly more with the "salesian spirit": pedagogy, apostolate, spirituality which brings together in a single dynamic experience both educators (as individuals and community) and pupils, contents and methods, with clearly characterized attitudes and behaviors.⁴²

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⁴¹ Const. 16.

⁴² Cf Don Bosco's letter to Bishop G. Cagliero, Aug. 6, 1886; and to Fr. G. Costamagna, Aug. 10, 1886, Epist. IV, 327-329 und 332-336.

1.2.1 *The verification*

- 97 On this style therefore and on the close bond between it and the salesian educational mission, the GC21 calls for an evaluation. This is a condition of evangelizing authenticity and of real conformity to Don Bosco. To lose sight of this style would mean to lose a fundamental feature of our salesian identity; "Let the preventive system be our way of life"; "This must apply to the salesians among themselves, among the pupils and others, day students and boarders."⁴³

Various provincial chapters and the Report of the Rector Major⁴⁴ invite us to this responsible reflection.

Some *positive signs*, which should be remembered, emerge from the evaluation.

We note a certain revival of salesian studies on the preventive system and of experiences which directly draw us to it.

In the varied and sometimes confusing succession of new ideologies and educational practices, we note, within as well as outside the salesian family, a considerable demand for salesian pedagogy, which finds fruitful application also within the family, the public schools, youth movements, and the various formative and pastoral institutions of the Church.

The interest of the salesians for the preventive system has translated itself not only into an increased number of meetings, conventions, "dialogs," of great ideal and practical usefulness,⁴⁵ but also into the birth of new youth movements and into a renewed and more incisive presence in the educational enrichment of free time, of education, of teaching, of catechesis, of the apostolate, with organizational and active undertakings at both the national and international levels.

- 98 Nevertheless the obscuring, if not the total loss (at least in some areas), of typical experiences of the preventive system, is also reported: animating presence-assistance, living together with the young people, family atmosphere and style. Less time is spent among boys and plain ordinary people, less preoccupation is felt for them. The profound meaning of active salesian assistance appears to be less deeply understood, partly because of a misconception of youth's independence and of non-directive guidance; less family

⁴³ Cf Letters quoted above, Epist. IV, 332 and 328.

⁴⁴ Sch Precap. 253-258; RRM 183-185, 196.

⁴⁵ RRM 185.

spirit is created, at the very time when youth groups and movements favor primary and interpersonal relations; fewer undertakings are being promoted to create the characteristic salesian educational environment. Thus, in many circles many activities are either devalued or completely neglected, because they are wrongly considered unrelated to the substance of the actual educational and evangelical commitment: e.g. recreative or expressive activities such as the theater, singing, music, etc. Add to this: a widespread ignorance of the historical and scientific meaning of the system; an unsuccessful adaptation to the variety of situations; an insufficient updating in the light of the most reliable contributions of mankind's modern sciences; a dogmatic compliance with educational and apostolic methods which are not compatible with the scope and features of salesian apostolic service.⁴⁶

1.2.2 *The causes*

They may sometimes be remote as, for example, the experience of unilateral and mechanical practices of the preventive system which identify "preventive" with "negative-protective," "educational assistance" with "disciplinary supervision," "paternity" with "paternalism," "freedom" with "permissiveness," etc.

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An explanation may also be found in the insufficient availability of documentation and specific literature in the vernacular. A more radical cause perhaps is the decline of salesian religious identity and vitality, which could not fail to involve the preventive system, if it is true that in it Don Bosco "condensed all the spirituality of apostolic action for his sons."⁴⁷

1.2.3 *Frame of reference*

A specific point of reference is provided by arts. 25 and 40 of the Constitutions,⁴⁸ which are an echo of stimulating chapter guidelines.⁴⁹ But for a more precise evaluation of the situation and of the possibility of a full operational recovery, it seems appropriate to summarize the "qualifying" elements of the system.

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From *all leaders* in the field of educational and pastoral activity, an

⁴⁶ RRM 184.

⁴⁷ RRM 183.

⁴⁸ Cf Const. 16 and Reg. 3.

⁴⁹ ASGC 349, 188 and 88-105; especially 360-365.

attitude of research, meeting, presence, understanding, and dialog is required;⁵⁰ commitment to an ongoing education in adults, and cordial readiness for development in the young.

101 In *all educators*, whether individuals or communities, some dispositions and attitudes acquire fundamental importance:

- attention to the young as they really are, to their real needs, to their current interests and to the life tasks that await them; a liking for their world, the ability to welcome and to carry on a dialog with them;
- a respect and fair consideration for the values of the young and attention to the dynamic nature of their growth;
- the reasonableness of demands and rules, the creativity and flexibility of proposals;⁵¹
- the determination to elicit prompt compliance to values, not by a forced imposition but through ways of persuasion and love;
- the conviction, humanly and christianly encouraging, “that even in the most wretched youth, there is some point accessible to good; the first duty of the educator is to look for this good point, this sensitive chord and to profit from it”;⁵²
- the frankness of an integral christian proposal, even if adapted to differences in age, in cultural and spiritual level, in ability to listen and to accept.

102 The preventive system further requires *an intense and bright environment* of participation and of sincere friendly and brotherly relations; a family spirit of simplicity and frankness, in a climate of optimism and joy “as a reflection of the grace of God and of inner peace”;⁵³ a community means of human and christian growth, enlivened by the loving and sympathetic, animating and activating presence of the educators (“assistance”);⁵⁴ a wise pedagogy of free time. It therefore favors all the constructive forms of activity and of associative living (the sodalities in Don Bosco’s mind were supposed to be the “work of the boys”), and this also as a concrete initiation to the community, civil and ecclesial commitment.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ ASGC 360-365.

⁵¹ ASGC 362.

⁵² MB 5, 367.

⁵³ Paul VI to the GC21 (n. 474).

⁵⁴ ASGC 57, 363, 188; Const. 16.

⁵⁵ Const. 46; ASGC 94, 321, 368.

The apostolic commitment requires that the young become evangelizers of their own companions and friends. This enters here with complete spontaneity and compliance and constitutes one of the most successful insights of Don Bosco, a great inspirer of boy apostles and a genial inventor of religious sodalities. In associative living, boys find simultaneously an occasion to be leaders, a stimulus to creativity and inventiveness, and the ground for truly missionary action.

Finally the system will really act as "preventive"; we intend in fact to educate youth for the future, to anticipate the deeper needs of later years, through the gradual exercise and maturing of freedom. As far as possible, we want to be "present" among the youth even following the first period of formation.⁵⁶ For this purpose the educators "speak as loving fathers, serving as a guide at every occasion; they give advice and corrections with kindness,"⁵⁷ promoting the cooperation of the boys themselves, of the families and of all the available constructive forces.⁵⁸

These characteristic notes of our pastoral pedagogical legacy, wisely administered and appropriately integrated in an explicit message, from an indispensable and highly fruitful moment in the process of bringing the young and the working classes closer to the ways of faith.

In this atmosphere the compliance with and communication of the faith occurs not only through word and teaching but also through the environment; through the actions, attitudes and moments that set the pace of existence. Not only the salesian who educates and teaches catechism is an educator and a catechist, but also the confere who shares his life with youth in moments of relaxation and entertainment as well as of prayer and liturgical celebration. The salesian evangelizes more by what he does than by what he says. He gives witness both by his openness and availability to God and by the example of his sound, balanced, successful humanity.⁵⁹ In this too the salesian is faithful to the style of Don Bosco in whom the human qualities, the gifts of nature and the efforts of the will blend harmoniously with the gifts of grace and the extraordinary charism of a special vocation.

⁵⁶ Op. sul Sist. Prev. in *Opere Edite* (Booklet on the Prev. Syst. in *Edited Works*), Vol. XXVIII, p. 428.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 424.

⁵⁸ ASGC 321, 361-367.

⁵⁹ EN 30 ff.

1.2.4 *Lines of renewal*

103 A general and definite rebirth of the educational and pastoral style of Don Bosco is tied to a vast two-level commitment: practical-vital and theoretical-reflective.

Every salesian, be he a teacher or a leader of youth groups, conscious of the need of his presence in the group for educational purposes, will accept the sacrifices connected with the commitment of *active salesian assistance*.

This entails:

- paying particular attention to periodic personal contact with the individual boys so as to promote in each of them the need and the search for values;
- stimulating community cooperation among the boys at the more strictly religious moments of their encounters, in a way similar to what is done for the organization of the group's specific activity (teaching, sports, social activities, etc.);
- taking every care to promote within the group expressions of living faith: moments of prayer, readings and confrontation with the Word of God, preparation for liturgical and sacramental celebrations...

In educational and pastoral practice, all salesians will commit themselves to ensure that these elements of the preventive system which seem to have undergone a more noticeable decline will be urgently reactivated, with a watchful innovative sensitivity: presence-assistance, family atmosphere, education to faith and to the sense of prayer, the meaning of sacramental life, devotion to the sense of prayer, the meaning of sacramental life, devotion to the Blessed Mother, and love and loyalty to the Church and to the Pope.

In the individual local activities, based on the principle of the educative community, suitable undertakings should be initiated to stimulate and increase in their work the responsible cooperation of the educators, of the teachers, of the parents, of the youths, and of the technical and administrative staff: the council of the educative and pastoral community, conferences, meetings.⁶⁰

104 Hence the need for each community to prepare and update every year an educational and pastoral program, especially of an evangelizing nature, with particular regard to the concrete exigencies that

⁶⁰ See Assembly of the Confreres in Reg. 168 and in ASGC 710.

have arisen from the social environment. This program should be prepared together with the boys, with the others for whom we work and with the members of the salesian family. The program should clearly indicate the plan for the year, the goal that is to be reached, the main points around which will be placed the intermediate objectives with the contents; it should also contain a concrete distribution of assignments and responsibilities among the salesians and lay collaborators. Thus we will avoid individualisms and improvisations and facilitate the lively participation of the entire community and the availability of all sectors for the work of evangelization.

In these plans, besides the essential contents, which have been summarily indicated in the frame of reference⁶¹ there should also be some of the dimensions pointed out by many provincial chapters as particularly required by the "needs of the times": forming boys for a dynamic introduction into a pluralistic society; educating them to work for justice and peace;⁶² forming them to assume civic, social and political responsibilities; initiation to a progressive commitment of concrete service;⁶³ imparting to them the information and know-how necessary to make a critical and constructive confrontation with respect to the more important contemporary ideologies.

1.3 Practical directives

a) *Every province* (or group of provinces) will draw up an educational plan suited to local conditions as a basis for programming and evaluating its various works in line with the basic options made by the Congregation: oratories, youth centers, day and boarding schools, residences for students and artisans, parishes, missions, etc.

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To foster unity within decentralization, the Department for the Youth Apostolate, in the light of salesian experience and self-evaluation, will draw up the broad outlines of this master plan (objectives, content, method, characteristics...) with due regard to the diversity of geographical and cultural situations.

⁶¹ See Nos. 87-94.

⁶² Const. 19.

⁶³ ASGC 68; cf 54, 61.

b) The provincial, the provincial conferences and the regional Councillor, will promote meetings, study days or weeks, discussions, exchanges of educational and pastoral experiences, which will eventually be open also to teachers and educators who do not belong to the salesian family, for the purpose of spreading the knowledge of Don Bosco's preventive system, encouraging research into it, and furthering its updated implementations, taking carefully into account the conditions of youth and working-class people in the local environment, as well as the valid contributions of modern anthropological and pedagogical sciences.

c) In the spirit of *Perfectae Caritatis* (n. 2), and in the conviction that it is extremely important for our worldwide Congregation to constantly find its unity and authenticity in the spirit of our Founder and in our common striving to evangelize and promote the welfare of youth and working-class people, the GC21 makes the following DECISION:

The Superior Council will establish as soon as possible a *Salesian Historical Institute* which, by means of methods that are most effective, both ideally and technically, will make available to the salesian family, the Church and the world of culture and social action, the documents of the rich spiritual heritage bequeathed to us by Don Bosco and developed by his followers, and will promote at all levels a deeper understanding, elucidation and diffusion of that heritage. The whole Congregation will cooperate in implementing and continually strengthening this important initiative by providing personnel and available means.

2. VOCATIONAL FRUITFULNESS OF OUR PASTORAL ACTIVITY

In the salesian perspective all educational and pastoral activity contains as an essential objective a vocational dimension. As a matter of fact, the discovery of one's calling, the well-thought-out free choice of a program of life, constitutes the crowning goal of any process of human and christian growth. 106

The gospel message which unites God's people¹ is a calling to community; and for every believer to welcome the Good News is to accept a personal calling to take on the very mission of the Church according to one's particular vocation.²

The vocation apostolate will therefore be a ministry of evangelization with a special stress on the help and assistance to be given all the faithful to enable them to enter into God's plan with their entire being and personal free choice.³

2.1 The fundamental problem and its aspects

The progressive decrease in the whole Church of the number of priestly and religious vocations has awakened in the last decades an ever deeper reflection which has contributed to a better focusing on the true nature and importance of the problem. 107

In recent years the Salesian Congregation too has undergone the same crisis, and the findings of the provincial chapters bear witness to the fact that it cannot be considered as yet overcome. But for us too the self-study already begun by the SGC has shed a new light on the problem. We are indeed sadly aware of the scarcity of new recruits, which at times might cause concern for the future of our mission. But the light that comes to us from the reflection of the whole Church⁴ helps us to see this scarcity and numerical crisis as one of the signs through which God makes us aware of the essentials, for only a Church totally given to service, mobilized in each of its members according to the gift and vocation which the Spirit has

¹ Cf EN 15.

² Cf PO 6; EN 18; SGC 661-662.

³ Cf RdC 41, 43, 131.

⁴ Cf RFIS; SDV; *Ministeria quaedam*.

given to everyone, is capable of a serious dedication to evangelization. The personal vocation of each christian is therefore a vital problem for the Church, the problem of formation in faith, the problem of making oneself totally available for Christ. God is calling today as yesterday, and he who has an open heart will know whether God calls him to share more fully in his mission.

Hence it is not primarily a problem of numerical scarcity, but rather a fundamental problem of evangelization itself which will endure, no matter what the numerical situation of religious and priestly vocations may be in the future.

2.2 The situation

108 To avoid a misguided appraisal of the state of the Congregation we must note that, over the past fifty years, there have never been so many studies, researches, workshops on the vocation apostolate as in these last years. *We must acknowledge likewise that there has been a growth of consciousness and dedication in this regard.*

Therefore we must not look unilaterally or too pessimistically at the actual situation of scarcity, so as not to attribute to a lack of theoretical principles or goodwill situations which are due to other factors as well.

It is evident from the Report of the Rector Major on the general state of the Congregation⁵ and from the findings of the provincial chapters that the vocation apostolate has made considerable progress: a greater clarity of ideas, a more perceptive sensibility to the problem and a greater dedication in the provinces (if not in all the confreres) have been noted by almost all the provincial chapters.

Nevertheless some *weak points* undoubtedly remain and render our action at the present historic moment still insufficient:

- some signs of loss of direction as regards our salesian identity in the evangelization of youth;
- a missing or not so evident witness of evangelical life;
- lack of clarity vis-à-vis youth, in what concerns our mission (persons to be benefited by our apostolate, the salesian educational perspective, types of work, etc.);
- lack of pastoral skills which often renders us incapable of reaching out to youth in their personal differences (lack of a true

⁵ Cf RRM 205 ff.

pedagogy, of vocational ministry, and of assimilation of guiding principles, insufficient organization at the provincial level, etc.); — absenteeism, weariness, discouragement, disappointment of many confreres who perhaps look too exclusively at the human side of the situation.

The situation of today's youth: immersed in a changing culture, confused and exploited by interested parties, facing a Church of which they are unable to understand many aspects, they are asking us for a fuller and updated dedication that can respond to their need for a direction in life, for truth and for Christ.

2.3 Frame of reference

Basing itself on the Second Vatican Council⁶ and later documents of the Church,⁷ the SGC gave us in its documents and in the Constitutions a framework of principles and directives within which the Congregation can find a renewed course of action in the vocational ministry.⁸

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In one of his subsequent letters,⁹ the Rector Major encouraged the Congregation to work more intensely along the lines traced out by the SGC. On the same line of thought, a paper from our Department for the Youth Apostolate—"Guide to the Care of Vocations"—helped spur on reflection in the provinces.

The GC21 wishes to offer now to the confreres some guidelines for renewal in this important aspect of our mission to youth, pointing out goals which it considers key points of fundamental value in facing the present situation. It will at the same time give directives for the attainment of these goals.

Fundamental goals are:

a) *To pledge the Congregation*, the provinces, the local communities and each confrere to carry out their evangelizing mission by endeavoring to bring out the personal calling, which God addresses to every youth, *to become a mediator of a gospel message* that will reach

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⁶ Cf especially OT 2; PO 6, 11; PC 4.

⁷ Cf SDV, RC, RFIS.

⁸ Cf ASGC 50, 99, 250, 374, 382, 397, 576, 661-665; 692; Const. 12, 22, 107; Reg 72, 73.

⁹ Cf ASC No. 273.

all persons in their individuality¹⁰ and help them "to develop their own baptismal vocation in a daily life progressively inspired by and attuned to the gospel."¹¹

b) To revitalize concretely (in our attitudes and apostolic initiatives) one of the components of our salesian vocation: to offer our active services to the Church in *cultivating the vocation of those young people* whom the Lord calls to a priestly or religious vocation, to the various ecclesial ministries and to a commitment as lay leaders.¹²

c) Since as a community and as individuals we are one of God's gifts to his Church, we must be aware of our responsibility *to keep alive in the Church the salesian charism* in its many forms, actively cooperating with the Holy Spirit in fostering salesian vocations, whether religious or lay.¹³

2.4 Lines of renewal

111 As a basis for a concrete methodology to reach the objectives listed above, the GC21 believes we should introduce some options as guidelines for our endeavors to promote vocations:

1. To begin with those for whom our vocational guidance is intended.
2. To determine our fundamental pastoral choices.
3. To aim at a heightened vocation awareness without overlooking organizational needs.

2.4.1 *To begin with those for whom our vocational guidance is intended*

All young people, whom the Lord in one way or another places in our path, are looking to us for help in forming their personality and life "according to the gospel."

We must help them *at every age* in their efforts to discover and develop their vocation: in boyhood, preadolescence, adolescence and beyond, because each of these stages of life has its own phase of growth and entails proportionate decisions which every young man must learn and carry out in a responsible manner.

¹⁰ Cf EN 18.

¹¹ Const. 22; Cf ASGC 374; EN 24, 72.

¹² Cf Const. 12; MB XII, 87; ASGC 50, 374, 397; Const. (1966) 6.

¹³ Cf Const. 107; ASGC 169.

In fidelity to our salesian vocation¹⁴ it is imperative that we dedicate ourselves seriously, through activities and adequate structures, to follow up in their vocational development *all young people who show signs of a divine calling* to a life of consecration, either priestly or religious, and to a christian lay commitment.

- Following the present course of the Church, we must take practical steps to foster vocations to the various *ecclesial lay ministries*.¹⁵
- We will take special care of vocations to our Congregation and to the entire Salesian Family (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco Volunteers, Cooperators, etc.).
- We must stress today the necessity of a special concern for the vocations of *brothers*. This effort will help us to understand better and express the true meaning of the *salesian* religious vocation.¹⁶
- *Missionary* vocations have a privileged position in the salesian vocation apostolate.

2.4.2 To determine our fundamental pastoral choices

a) *To base our evangelizing, vocational endeavors on a deep prayer-conversion*¹⁷ which makes it possible to rekindle the many spiritual resources that each community possesses as a gift of the Spirit. This should not be an occasional occurrence but the habitual attitude of an ecclesial community ever in search of the will of God and constantly purifying itself in order to be faithful to its calling, a living witness first and foremost to the words of the Lord: "Ask the harvest-master to send workers to his harvest."¹⁸

b) *To face the problem, beginning with the person of the salesian, his community life* and the evangelizing quality of his witness. The authenticity of our christian and salesian life is fundamental, and so is the image of a Congregation which presents a "clear" salesian identity (unambiguous in its evangelical motivations, in the persons for whom it is intended and in its educational outlook), truly sensitive to the needs and aspirations of youth, and expressing itself in

¹⁴ Cf Const. 22; ASGC 50.

¹⁵ Cf EN 73.

¹⁶ Cf ASGC 692 ff.

¹⁷ Cf ASGC 540; ASC No. 273, pp. 32-39.

¹⁸ Lk. 10:2; Cf OT 2; SDV 12; RFIS 8, 9a.

joyful self-giving.¹⁹ The apostolic witness of each confrere will always be the most powerful incentive and the most efficacious mediation to inspire youth to make a generous response to Christ.

c) *To know and respect the spiritual nature of vocations.* The ministry offered to preadolescents, adolescents, young adults and adults in the formation of their christian identity ought to show the highest respect for the spiritual component of vocations (which we should know first of all from personal experience). It is God's calling, it is the action of the Holy Spirit which reveals itself throughout one's life, within the unique situations of one's personal and social history.²⁰

113 d) *To commit ourselves in all pastoral activities, especially those on behalf of youth, to include vocational guidance "explicitly" and "systematically" as an essential dimension of all our apostolate.* In this regard, we should not remain simply on the level of abstract principles but should truly rethink the planning, programming and educational methodology of our schools, activities, groups... Let this be a privileged vantage point in our catechesis and spiritual direction.²¹

It is a crossroads that should be given all due prominence for a true renewal of our vocational ministry.

e) *To have the courage to expose young people also to the most challenging vocations.* To respect God's plan for each person entails that, besides leading everyone to a knowledge of himself and of the human and ecclesial situation of the community in the light of faith, we should have the courage of total *honesty and integrity* to help him be open, in generous availability, to all vocations in the Church: lay commitment in the human situation, service in the various lay ministries of the Church, diaconal service, consecrated life, the ministerial priesthood.²²

A christian youth may not refuse to consider the hypothesis of a consecrated life and of the priesthood. Not to propose to him such possibilities would limit rather than respect his liberty. Don Bosco possessed the masterly art of highlighting the great needs of the Church, spreading enthusiasm for the missionary ideal and, as Jesus

¹⁹ Cf PC 24.

²⁰ Cf PO 11; *Sedes Sapientiae* II-III; RFIS 5-6.

²¹ Cf ASGC 374, 382, 419 e-f.

²² Cf RFIS 7.

did with the apostles, personally inviting young people to follow God's calling.

f) *To act with an open ecclesial perspective.* Every vocation is related to the mission of Christ and of the Church to build the Kingdom of God in the world of men through the ecclesial community. As salesians and as christians we work for the Church without any narrow-minded exclusivism: we aim at the general good of the Church. When dealing with vocations, this corresponds to one of our definitive goals.²³

The ecclesial dimension recalls also another important pastoral guideline: "The duty of fostering vocations falls on the whole christian community."²⁴ We work within christian communities from which the Lord raises vocations for the various tasks needed for building the community itself. In these communities we must be "animators" and sensitize people to this problem. Parishes, families, educative communities, groups and movements must provide the environment where vocations can blossom. This particular aspect should be revitalized among all the members of the *salesian family* by involving them effectively in this apostolate.

2.4.3 *To aim at a heightened vocation awareness without overlooking organizational needs*

In the provinces and in the local communities, a systematic *plan of sensitization* for the work of christian guidance of youth will be directed first of all to the confreres and component groups of the salesian family and the educative community, so that it will truly be a community activity.

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This requires, on both the provincial and local level, *serious planning* (with appropriate follow-up) for a vocational guidance work clearly articulated with the general program so as to make each of our activities a true work of guidance.

In every province there must be someone *responsible for vocation promotion*. It could be either one person or a group of persons who, because of their salesian witness, preparation, and esteem among the confreres, are in a position to be "animators" of the provincial and local communities. More than persons "delegated to perform

²³ Cf Const. 12; Cf RFIS 7.

²⁴ OT 2; RFIS 8.

certain actions," they should be channels of communication with ecclesial bodies, supplying new ideas and information to the various communities. The team that will eventually be formed should include members from all the branches of the salesian family (salesian priests and brothers, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco Volunteers, cooperators).

An important function of those responsible for vocation promotion is that of helping the provincial community develop and maintain an attitude of prayer and availability.

Because of his position as community leader, *the rector is the first one responsible for vocation promotion on the local level*: in a climate of faith and prayer let him periodically make a thorough study of the vocation apostolate.

Let there be also one or more confreres who will keep the christian guidance dimension ever present in our activities and programming.

- 115** a) *Some permanent elements* that we must always and everywhere bear in mind in our work:
- The family spirit, an atmosphere of liberty, friendliness, joy and faith, so characteristic of Don Bosco's pedagogy, ideally embodied in a salesian community which is cordial and open, especially to the young (Cf *Salesian educational and pastoral plan*).
 - Personal rapport, whether primarily as a careful spiritual direction or at the general level of community living.²⁵ "No vocation can blossom without the kindly interest of a priest" (Paul VI).²⁶
 - Vitalization of groups, the care of salesian youth movements and associations as indispensable situations for the experience of living together and for a vocational search.²⁷
 - Spiritual formation, at the very center of the whole personal development, with special attention given to formation in personal prayer, liturgical and sacramental participation, Marian devotion.
 - The unmistakably christian-apostolic lived experience of ecclesial responsibility (catechists, animators); knowledge and concern for the problems and needs of the Church and the world, especially the world of youth.²⁸

²⁵ Cf Const. 12.

²⁶ From Pope Paul's discourse to the World Congress for Vocations.

²⁷ Cf ASGC 692.

²⁸ Cf EN 72.

- The possibility of an experiential knowledge of the salesian charism and apostolate: on the level of lived experience, always and in all aspects of growth: on the more reflexive and systematic level, and at the more advanced stages of vocational development. Let formation “aids” be prepared for this purpose, making use of Don Bosco’s life, boys’ biographies written by him, lives of missionaries and outstanding salesians, etc.

b) *Some ‘moments’ of spiritual “concentration” necessary to keep alive the “vocational sense” in a person’s development.* 116

Our understanding support should be constant but diversified and in accordance with the interior experience of the young man’s vocational development. He passes from an initial phase of availability and search to one in which, after discarding many of life’s options, he concentrates on one of them and tries to test it.

On this “continuum” some moments of particular intensity are indispensable for serious reflection. The following stand out as more significant and useful:

- spiritual retreats focused on the search for the will of God in one’s life;
- prayer and reflection workshops, especially for an initiation to the liturgy and meditation;
- “program of life” encounters for specific help in examining the various options of the christian vocation;
- Camps for guidance (search, quest, etc.) in diverse forms;
- moments of sharing with the salesian community (to be fostered especially in the case of mature young men) in prayer, apostolic work, meals, etc.

c) *Some settings for our vocation apostolate.*

- Our works are the privileged environment for these guidance activities which represent a right for the youth directly confided to us in schools, oratories, parishes, youth centers, etc. For us they are therefore a duty and a commitment called for by our mission. 117
- Vocation promotion should take place also *outside our environments* as long as it is truly a work of educational guidance over and above the simple chance encounter. Vocations are expressions of the christian community which must be helped to recognize itself as the Church.

- 118 — For those young people in whom we have discovered the existence of greater sensitivity, availability and spiritual richness, a differentiated and specialized care is indispensable.²⁹
- a) The methodological form of the "aspirantate" (which today is wisely divided into two phases, one of guidance and general search, the other more clearly centered on the hypothesis of a salesian vocation) is always valid and in certain situations even necessary. But it is imperative that this, more than any other school, be a true salesian environment in which Don Bosco's educational inspiration be fully lived; that its educational objectives and goals be clear and periodically evaluated; that it can count on a personnel which gives to the young the witness of an authentic salesian life.³⁰
- b) The timely care of these youths *can be undertaken also in other ways*: communities of vocational referral, vocation clubs, periodic local and regional meetings, letting the young men live in some of our communities, etc. The main thing is that the process of vocational growth, reflection and verification be truly assured and guided.³¹
- c) Today more than ever it is necessary to think, as Don Bosco did, of environments in which we can foster the vocation of *those who feel the call to the priesthood or religious life at a more advanced age* (workers, university students, graduates, etc.).³²
- d) *The aspirantate and other forms are not mutually exclusive.* Let every province carefully consider which form or forms are best suited to its situation and then act accordingly. Let all be firm as to what is the responsibility of the provincial community, and should therefore not be left to the mercy of decisions made by single communities or individual persons.
- In all the above-mentioned environments, it is of capital importance *to involve the young men's families*, in this work of christian orientation to life, and to collaborate closely with them in order to create an environment favorable to the development of vocations.
- A unique role as a place of vocational guidance must be played by our *retreat centers and houses of prayer*. Let them not be simply

²⁹ Cf OT 3; RFIS 11, 13; Const 12; Reg 73; SDV 14.

³⁰ Cf ASC No. 273, pp. 40 ff; 28-29; RFIS 12-17.

³¹ Cf OT 3; RFIS 18; ASC No. 273, p. 46.

³² Cf Const (1966) 6; RFIS 19; ASGC 692 b.

places where we give hospitality to groups that come to pray; rather let them have if possible a team that works systematically to impart spiritual guidance.

Practical directives

1. Let provinces prepare as soon as possible their detailed plan of action in close association with the local Church and in accordance with the respective guidance plan they have drawn up. An integral part of this plan should be to cultivate in the confreres an increased awareness of what they should do to foster vocations. Let this plan be forwarded to the Department for the Youth Apostolate, so as to ensure an exchange of experiences among all provinces.
2. On the level of provincial conferences or groups of provinces, let professional training be given, with appropriate aids, to confreres who have the responsibility of teaching religion. Their preparation should enable them to make the necessary vocational dimension dynamically meaningful in our catechesis.
3. During the next six years, let those provinces which have the necessary means plan some concrete initiatives of vocational service to the local Churches.³³
4. To facilitate what is stated in Art. 72 of the Regulations and in (a) of these practical directives let the Department for the Youth Apostolate compile and send to the provinces an outline of what is required for drawing up a provincial plan of vocational apostolate.

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³³ Cf Const 12.

PART 4

EVANGELIZATION: SETTINGS AND METHODS

Introduction

120 The GC21 has reflected upon *Evangelization: witness and preaching* from the viewpoint of an on-going evaluation, concerning itself with what has been achieved and what still remains to be done in our effort to implement the SGC. This now brings us to concrete pastoral activity.

These constitute both the means and the areas of real life in which we are to carry out our evangelizing activity; they express this particular dimension of our salesian mission in its widely diversified ambients.

First we should recall the SGC's fresh approach to this subject:

It clearly demands that we focus our main attention upon persons¹ and upon a pastoral orientation in our task of education;² we are to view activities and structures as means of reaching those to whom we have been sent and of helping them assume the task of their own integrated development.

Timely still is the SGC's statement:

"But these activities do not in fact always serve their overall purpose sufficiently well... To remedy this we need to realize effectively that our every activity, in community or personal, is justified only if it is aimed, organized and carried out in view of the evangelization of the young."³

This GC21 therefore concentrates on *several settings* of our mission, not in order to repeat by rote the SGC's extensive teaching, but to seek solutions, to find an orientation, an added thrust towards renewal.

¹ Cf Const 26.

² Cf Const 27.

³ ASGC 344.

In those *settings which vary* in different regions of the world and which foster human development as well as evangelization, e.g. boarding institutions, hostels for students, workers, college men, the GC21 re-affirms the directives given by the SGC and asks those confreres who are involved in such areas, daily facing fresh and trying problems, to direct their educational and pastoral efforts towards an evangelization which will accord with Don Bosco's style as presented in this document.

1. THE ORATORY AND YOUTH CENTER: settings for evangelization

As the Congregation's "first and typical work" the Oratory has come under repeated scrutiny and time and again has been proposed by General Chapters¹ and other authoritative documents of the Congregation. The 19th and 20th General Chapters have specifically reflected upon those factors, internal and external, which today affect the pastoral efficacy of the Oratory; they have encouraged salesians to re-emphasize a renewal of existing oratories and the creation of new ones, even if other kinds of work must be left aside. **121**

After evaluating the evangelizing efficacy of the Oratory and Youth Center from statistics compiled over the past six years, the GC21 would like to offer some directives towards finding methods better suited to their function of evangelizing and advancing young people's growth in faith.

1.1 Reality, terminology, pastoral planning

Like every other life activity, the Oratory changes and adapts itself, taking on new forms. **122**

As evidenced by a quick glance at the pastoral realities of the Congregation, the terms "Oratory" and "Youth Center" have different meanings in different regions, meanings which arise from one and the same educational viewpoint and spirit but vary as regards the persons they reach, their immediate objectives, and the methods they use.

Both terms are vaguely defined in official texts,² so that ambiguities

¹ ASGC 192-272; 376-379 and references there indicated.

² Const 28; Reg 5, 7, 24.

arise, with the danger that when we speak of so varied and flexible a pastoral work, words written or spoken take on opposing meanings, expressive as they are of personal experience rather than objective criteria.

Not everything said of the Youth Center is applicable to the Oratory either in matters of membership, group rapport or educational methods. Salesian action in this field has so many names. The so-called Oratory or Youth Center cannot be implemented in the same way everywhere.

To bring some kind of clarity and make dialog and exchange of ideas feasible, we will use the following terminology:

- by *Oratory* we mean a setting created for boys, with membership open to all having its own objectives and suitable means;
- *Youth Center* is a setting meant for young men, to meet their needs; the emphasis is on group-relations; personal contacts are fostered; our task, both human and christian, embraces other activities, such as athletics and games;
- *Oratory-Youth Center* is a complex setting adapted to both boys and young men, in which methods and directions vary with the age of the persons concerned.

1.2 The present situation

- 123 The SGC has indicated the following objective for Oratories and Youth Centers: they are to aim at evangelizing and catechizing boys and young men of a particular locality, mainly through an open-ended organization of their leisure time.²⁷

This objective demands adequate and trained personnel as well as an ordering of activities which will safeguard the objective itself. Doubtless this calls for continuous adjustment and adaptation. The past six years' evaluation cautions us that whenever salesians have not kept in touch with young people, they have not initiated changes to meet their requests and interests, and so they have failed to show an effective presence.

Wherever we have lessened our efforts to help young people strive for christian ideals, those efforts have had to yield to a firm takeover, brought on by real-life situations, by programs made up entirely of sports, games, and social activities, with no clear christian orientation.

²⁷ Cf ASGC 376.

These limitations arise neither solely nor mainly from personnel assignments. Our approach to youth has been complicated today by a broadening variety of appeals to their leisure time which scatter their attention into varied activities and circles. Probably we too at a time when our personnel has shrunk, have not taken a firm pastoral stand in choosing personnel for this work so particularly salesian. And matters have not been helped by the crisis of catholic organizations³ and by the lack of an effective plan of action in many provinces.⁴

But regardless of these drawbacks, wherever Oratories and Youth Centers have strengthened or recovered their integrity, wherever they have devised means to reach the so-called "masses" or large numbers, groups and individuals, with formative programs for young people; wherever they have honestly presented the gospel message with plans of education in the faith involving prayer and an intense sacramental life—in all these instances the distinguishing marks of salesian pastoral work have stood out with extraordinary clarity, and the gospel has then become a vivid presence.

1.3 Setting, program, style

The basic traits which identify these pastoral works and bind them tightly to Don Bosco's original intuitions are: personal rapport of "friend" between salesian and youngster and the brotherly "presence" of the educator among the boys; the creating of an environment to facilitate such a meeting; varied activities to fill leisure time; a missionary "open-door" attitude to all lads who want to come in; a welcome for everyone, but with a proper attention to individuals and groups; a gradual education of the youth community for festal celebration; a striving for firm group-life and unity—all these elements are meant to concur in forming a wholesome human and christian personality.

Some of these traits, such as the open-door policy for everyone, or varied sport activities and trips, require that the educator be alert lest they become the dominant features, with consequent harm to the young people themselves.

³ RRM 203.

⁴ RRM 201.

1.4 The presence of girls

- 125 Our evaluation has shown a notable presence of girls in our Oratories and Youth Centers in some regions of the world.⁵ This presence is doubtless rooted in accepted cultures and social customs, and this must be kept in mind.

In occasional instances we have noted shaky educational principles, meagre grasp of the local church's pastoral program and lack of dialog with pastoral workers or religious institutions which have educational traditions of their own, and work in the same areas.

The concept of a *mixed Oratory* is not contemplated by the texts and norms of the SGC,⁶ both because of the age of those who come to the Oratory and because an open-door policy would admit groups for which indiscriminate mixing of the sexes would be unacceptable, and which would normally require separation and diversified activities.

In regard to *Youth Centers* we cite the Regulations⁷ and the SGC;⁸ social exigencies and the need for an integrated education suggest that "in some places and circumstances we should take on mixed groups and activities, with all the reserve and responsibility they entail."⁹ "This will be a reply to an educational need which requires us to accept the complete young person, immersed in his own world, and raise him up in every respect."¹⁰ Specifically, "the activities of truly educative mixed groups must tend to develop formative and social interests."¹¹ "Provision must be made for the training and maturing of the confreres, the collaboration of qualified lay people, and for premises suitable for this kind of activity."¹²

These directives maintain all their force.¹³ In particular cases, it is at present required that the matter be brought up to the community and to the local Church and that it be in accord with provincial directives.¹⁴

⁵ Statistics of the Works of the Congtn. Rome 1977, p. 54; cf also RRM 171b, 172b, 197.

⁶ Cf ASGC 51d; Reg 7.

⁷ Reg 7.

⁸ Cf ASGC 51, 355, 356, 378.

⁹ ASGC 355.

¹⁰ ASGC 355.

¹¹ ASGC 355.

¹² ASGC 355.

¹³ Cf also the indication given to the GC21 in the letter of Cardinal Villot (n. 000).

¹⁴ ASGC 356.

1.5 Guidelines

1.5.1 Reaffirmation of the validity of the Oratory and the Youth Center demands corresponding decisions to ensure needed personnel, trained and *united* with the *community*, receiving from it support, wholesome environment, and required means. The community should guarantee a measure of stability so that the confreere in charge may elicit from both youngsters and adults a response to pastoral concern in a diversity of roles. This will obviate those endless "emergency operations" which mean repeated fresh starts in programs of education and catechesis. Most of all, we recognize the need of salesian animators who can present our young people with a real challenge. The risk we run is that our Oratories and Youth Centers, which were begun to promote evangelization, will fail to open new christian horizons to our young people for lack of deeply religious incentives.

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1.5.2 We foresee the need on a provincial level of programming and regularly evaluating the Oratory's and the Youth Center's work, especially in educational projects, in organized religious activities, and in adherence to the policies of the local Church.

1.5.3 If the Youth Center is to be valid, as a *setting* for promoting the overall christian growth of the *young*, it must be organized along certain well defined lines, such as:

- division into groups, with an eye to the possibilities for formation and apostolic action, in which an explicit education in the faith can be developed;
- the formation of an educative community with the active and responsible participation of the young people, lay collaborators (especially parents) and salesians as animators;
- a proper organization of different activities so as to meet the need for spontaneity, and the demands of creativity and leisure time, so that the young people, inspired by christian ideals, may be able to take up apostolic and social work in the Center itself and in the neighborhood;
- an earnest effort in a missionary spirit so to arrange matters as to make effective contact with all the young people, especially those who tend to remain at a distance.

1.5.4 But the prime mover in all these matters is the salesian himself. The salesian in the Oratory and Youth Center is the good shepherd, the evangelizer of youth; he belongs not to himself but to them; he stays with them willingly and is the sign of God's love in their midst.

1.6 Practical directives

- 127** a) Every community should maintain its involvement with both the neighborhood and the local Church, preserving, strengthening, and fostering even new types of Oratories and Youth Centers as a typically salesian way of promoting human and evangelical values. Salesian parishes ought to see the Oratory and Youth Center as a distinctive element of their very own and fully incorporate them in their apostolate.
- b) Each Oratory and Youth Center should study and draw up its own plan of education, eliciting the interest of all concerned and beginning with a good, hard look at the local scene. This plan should be in harmony with the overall scheme of the province.
- c) Youth Centers must heed the norms of the SGC and confirmed by the present GC21 regarding coeducational groups and activities. Those who are in charge, as well as the community itself, must follow up on these activities and evaluate the results; the provincial council should give further directives if they are needed.

2. THE SCHOOL: a setting for evangelization

- 128** By evangelization in and through the school we mean not merely courses in certain scholastic and catechetical matters but in addition an in-depth study of ecclesial and cultural problems, such as the relation of evangelization to culture, culture to society, society to the school. Furthermore, for us salesians it means a renewed look into those traits which distinctly mark our presence on the school scene. The GC21 does not intend to analyze or probe the above problems at great depth but to ponder them a little so as to reach some practical proposals and recommendations. An enlightened response to these problems can help us to decide how we can meet them at a practical level.¹

¹ Cf CS 2, 12-15, 24-31.

2.1 The situation

During these past six years, as some of our schools have gone into experimental programs, we have seen a noteworthy effort to direct pastoral action towards the distinctive features of each school and of modern youth. Numerous salesians have been involved in this renewal; in many educative communities there have been concerted and positive efforts to bring parents, lay teachers, and students into closer collaboration. The salesian school is seen as a valid response in education, sought by many families; in not a few places the school has become a center of social development, unifying entire neighborhoods to reach common goals.

On the other hand, schools now feel new pressures; ever more complex structures, reliance on systems which sometimes preclude evangelical values, decreasing salesian personnel willing to work in schools, salesians being shunted into posts of planning administration, and organizing; increasing enrollments, demands for co-educational schools, growing numbers of lay teachers who have little notion of the preventive system; strained relations between culture and evangelization, problems created by new attitudes and pluralism. All these factors have caused confreres to think again about schools, and in not a few cases they remain confused.

Some feel that the school gives salesians little scope for evangelization, either because many social structures, dominated by unfavorable civil laws, bar them from serving poor boys who are their priority, or because the salesian pastoral image, especially that of the priest, is marred by the disciplinarian and classroom image, or because a certain proportion of our students seem impervious to any gospel message or values.

2.2 The Congregation reasserts the validity of its school-presence

The GC21 realizes that the root of these problems is to be found in the rapid and profound changes which have affected modern society and that this requires of those working in this field a new approach in order to make of the school an agent of change in society. We also realize we cannot give too detailed directives, since the school scene varies so much in its pastoral dimension from one culture to another,² and equally varied are the possibilities of evangelization.

² Ibid. 2.

However, in the face of this complex situation the GC21, basing itself on salesian traditions confirmed by the SGC and of the recent declaration of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, sees the school as a valid and unrestricted apostolate.

It will be well to correct some misconceptions which have arisen in various circles, even in the local Churches; the Catholic school is not something ancillary, to be shut down once an alternative is found.³ The Catholic school "is a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man."⁴ It gives a very definite view of the world, of man, and of history; in evangelization it has a distinct efficacy not found in other methods. Its aim is to assimilate culture into a christian vision of reality in an orderly and critical manner.⁵ It is a factor in the transformation of society, a force in the total liberation of the person. "Complete education necessarily includes a religious dimension. Religion is an effective contribution to the development of other aspects of a personality in the measure in which it is integrated into general education."⁶

The school offers countless opportunities to meet young people and establish a personal rapport with them; it makes for a community whose cultural traits are enlightened and permeated by faith-values. Our pastoral efforts extend to parents and lay co-workers, thus particularizing the gospel message in a single program of personal development. It asserts the right to alternative education in a society whose cultural leaders and whose monolithic school system preclude this right of parents in the education of their children.⁷

Therefore, the GC21 urges confreres who serve youth in schools, boarding institutions, and hostels to continue perseveringly in their work.

This message is meant also for those confreres who, in accordance with a properly received mission, are now engaged in education and evangelization in non-salesian school environments.

2.3 Specific salesian presence in the school

131 Don Bosco's pastoral style and his system of education have im-

³ Ibid. 20.

⁴ Ibid. 8.

⁵ Ibid. 38-43.

⁶ Ibid. 19.

⁷ Ibid. 8.

printed definite features upon the schools he founded and those which the Congregation subsequently has offered to youth. These features depend primarily on the type of student and are marked by a teacher-pupil rapport intended to foster closeness and trust, by a climate of calm creativity, by an openness to its neighborhood which promotes unity, and especially by its objectives in which the christian ideal of holiness is inseparably linked with human and social development in both student and community. Throughout the history of the Congregation, these characteristics have produced very different kinds of schools and made them valuable: schools with courses in the humanities and technologies, agricultural schools, adult evening classes, remedial classes, etc.

Regardless of shifting social and scholastic situations, this educational style must continue to form Don Bosco's presence among youth. Therefore the salesian school of today must maintain certain permanent characteristics.

2.3.1 It caters to the *common people*: this as regards students, locality, persons it deals with, its tone and style, its special concerns, its loving care for those who have nowhere else to go.

2.3.2 It fosters *freedom and openness*. The salesian school was born free and keeps itself free even when asking help of others. It asserts the rights of family and Church, especially if these rights have been curtailed or trodden underfoot. It welcomes those who choose to go the way of total liberation; it teaches universal principles of freedom; it is an efficacious agent in the transformation of the local environment.

2.3.3 The *education project is centered on the student*. The salesian school takes a student as he is and where he is educationally. It fosters his growth. In varied professional ways it gets to know his needs for physical development; it helps him face his problems and take responsibility for the decisions he makes. It does not restrict itself to the classroom, but combines study with training in art, sports, cultural, religious, and social activities.

2.3.4 *It aims at creating a youth community*. It strives to form a "family," as Don Bosco expressed it, in order to foster and strengthen personal relationships, esprit-de-corps, and friendship. It favors creativity, an atmosphere of study, joy, and trust. Parents and teachers share in this family too. In it students can *group together* for goals which are formative and helpful.

The salesian school becomes a setting of evangelization in the measure in which it succeeds in maintaining these standards.

2.3.5 *Teachers are to be found with their students*, in whose interests they take active part. They not only teach but "assist," i.e. they recreate, work, study, and pray with their students. They are glad to stay with young people and are able to share their problems. "Teachers in the classrooms, brothers in the playground." (Don Bosco)

2.3.6 *Connection with the world of work*, because the school teaches pupils a spiritual dimension of work, and maintains a cordial bond with the working classes. In many places it teaches the illiterate, provides evening classes for working people, offers professional training, and prepares young apprentices to enter the labor market with qualified skills.

2.3.7 *It possesses and teaches gospel values*: personal growth is fostered with real respect; religion has its proper role, and a youngster can approach God with joy; he can come to know and love Jesus Christ, and advance along the path of faith to holiness.

2.3.8 *It is vocation-conscious*. It assists each student to grow in God's plan. It helps him mature in his vocation as layman, religious, or priest, according as God sows the seed of a vocation in young hearts.

The salesian school becomes a setting for evangelization to the extent in which it succeeds in realizing these characteristics.

2.4 Lines of action

132 The SGC⁸ has pointed out some criteria and directives that are still valid, and which the present Chapter endorses. The wealth of experience of these past six years and the evaluation of the present school scene suggest the following lines of action which the provinces and the individual schools are invited to adopt and follow:

- Form an *educative community*, with salesians as animators and with lay collaborators, parents, and students as members. How it will function, at what level, and to what degree will depend on the individual situation. It belongs to the salesians to guide the process, so that the community may be evangelized itself and also bring its gospel values to others.
- Draw up a mutually agreed in-service program in christian formation for lay teachers and other collaborators in each school.

⁸ Cf ASGC 381-385.

- Expand and activate, with the entire educative community, a program of education which stems from the gospel and the teachings of Don Bosco.
- Put into effect the personal relationships characteristic of the preventive system. Helpful aids are: pedagogical guidance, informal teacher get-togethers, individual instruction, group activities, etc.
- Draw up a plan of education explicitly faith-oriented, abounding in ideas, to be offered to the students in a climate of freedom and wholesome pedagogy: catechesis, youth liturgies, sacramental encounters, prayer groups and action groups, spiritual retreats, exposure to apostolic initiative.
- As educators, salesian or lay, take an active share in educational movements now at work in every society for other projects in education; join forces with those who peacefully strive for free and equal schooling for all before the law.
- Insert our schools into the local Church's pastoral action by following its directives, uniting with groups involved in school pastoral work, and by supporting organizations which campaign for freedom in education.
- In our schools give clear preference to needy youth, and make honest efforts to relocate ourselves in areas of special poverty.

2.5 Implementation

The above indications will be meaningful only if the salesians at both local and provincial level are clear about the objectives of this pastoral action and frequently review them, always with the concrete goal of christian education in view. **133**

2.5.1 *On the local level* we must begin with essentials:

- The salesian staff must reserve for itself those key positions in school administration and departments which will allow them to instil a christian spirit into the educative community.
- More study must be centered on the role of Rector, Principal, and those in charge of pastoral work in the school, so as to define them within the provincial structure and thus facilitate changes from one school to another.
- Every school should draw up handbooks for teachers, parents, and students, containing policies which are to be followed; such handbooks simplify the making of periodic evaluations.

- Every school community should annually draw up a calendar of events and meetings, designed to overcome purely bureaucratic organization and create a "community environment permeated by the gospel spirit of freedom and love."

2.5.2 *On the provincial level* goals should be set, even though they may be of a long range kind:

- Prepare personnel for the school apostolate. This is specialized work which demands competence and talents that can be developed only by lengthy training in education and pastoral skills.
- Coordinate at the level of the whole province our lay collaborators and the parents of our students to make them aware of their coresponsibility in education. Each school should have a salesian charged with promoting the christian formation of parents. The one in charge of schools at provincial level has also the task of promoting parent organizations. Wherever such a provincial organization has been set up it has strengthened the sense of belonging, opened the way to a professional christian formation, and clarified the specific character of the salesian school in the eyes of the laity.
- The section of the provincial office concerned with schools should help the latter to draw up their educational plans and should study pastoral programs for the in-service formation of lay teachers.
- The GC21 calls the attention of provincial councils to Regulation 12 and requests them not to consent to the opening of our schools to girls without serious reasons. These reasons are to be sent to the Superior Council.

2.6 Practical directives

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- a) Each province or provincial conference should make the Holy See's declaration on the Catholic School and the documents of the local Church the subject of study and reflection.
 - b) With the cooperation and the proposals of each community, the province should develop a basic plan of salesian education to which each school of the province can conform. Thus while each school maintains and develops its own identity, unity will be promoted amongst them.
 - c) The Department for the Youth Apostolate, by means of a program of study and meetings, should make known the Congregation's best experiences in the scholastic field so as to promote apostolic initiatives amongst the salesians.

3. THE PARISH: Particular aspects of the salesian evangelizing presence

"In the spirit of our Founder's apostolic charity,"¹ salesians bring the gospel to youth also through the work of the parish, seen as a setting and a way of evangelization; within the categories of our "action and work,"² it has a specific place of its own, delineated at length in the SGC's 5th Document and synthetically expressed in art. 31 of the Constitutions.

Repeated reference to this document of the SGC is indispensable; it still retains all its force.

There are two main problems in this field: that of the number of parishes which our confreres administer, and their salesian quality.

3.1 The problem of the number of our parishes

The first problem is the numerical growth of our parishes.³ The Chapter has studied the statistics in making its evaluation of the situation and to draw up necessary guidelines for the future.

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Salesians are called to work in widely varying situations:

In *mission areas* the parish is the end-point of our work because even

¹ Const 31.

² Cf Chap IV Const.

³ The following figures are taken from the records of the CENTRAL OFFICE FOR PARISHES, at the Generalate:

At the death of Don Bosco (1888) there were 7 parishes; during Don Rua's period of office (1888-1910) 31 were added; during Don Albera's period (1910-1922) they increased by 33; during that of Don Rinaldi (1922-1931) they went up by 54; in the period 1932-38 (GC15) the increase was 40; from GC15 to GC16 (1947), an increase of 99; by the GC17 (1952) a further rise of 100; by the GC18 (1958) a further rise of 75; by the GC19 (1965) they had gone up by 152; by the SGC (1971) by another 150; and from the SGC to the GC21 there was a further rise of 141.

The total now reaches 882.

To these some other figures have to be added, e.g. the missionary parishes (65), the number of parishes of uncertain status (41), the parishes administered by individual salesians not in the name of the Congregation (87), or administered temporarily (18). Poland alone has 125 parishes; another 136 are in Central Europe: the reasons are obviously connected with the socio-political situation.

A final observation from the Central Office for Parishes: "It should be remembered that the concept of 'parish' is not the same everywhere." Examples are given of differences between Europe, India, and missionary territories in general. This may explain the apparently excessive number of salesian parishes.

if the Congregation expresses its presence by specialized works for youth (Oratories, trade schools), it is clear that the ultimate aim, as expressed also in our Constitutions, is "to plant the Church among the people."

We may at times find ourselves in *countries wholly destitute of clergy*, where christianity has so deteriorated that to involve salesians, especially priests, with a limited group, such as the young, would make no sense unless they concerned themselves with the christian life of the people and their environment by taking over their missionary and pastoral care. Such places are in a certain sense mission territory.³

In some countries, because of particular concrete circumstances beyond our control, the only pastoral action open to us is the parish. This situation must be viewed realistically because through the parish we can try to bring to life our other salesian works, making the parish a center of service to the people of the area, and using the entire salesian community to animate it.

In those regions which are pastorally well organized and thriving we can set up an Oratory-Youth Center only by accepting a parish.

We look upon the parish with interest because it helps us to reach young people in their natural environment, and to follow them through all the phases of their development; it is easier to involve parents and adults in the education of the young; it facilitates a natural participation in the local Church and the neighborhood; and it makes for a more direct pastoral contact than is possible in any other apostolate.

- 136** The SGC, recognizing the situation as an accepted fact, and going deeper into the concept of the salesian commitment in the parish, ruled out the exceptional element of the parish apostolate, but at the same time it underscored the priority which is to be observed in every new project and in every province: "Top priority is to be given to the apostolate immediately directed towards youth."⁴

So clear a practical directive of the SGC cannot be ignored.

Today the GC21 asks further questions. It addresses itself to confreres who labor in the parish apostolate⁵ and seek clarification of the

³ Cf CD 35.

⁴ ASGC 402.

⁵ Confreres engaged full-time in parish work in 1977 were 2199, and part-time about 1400. It is difficult to define what exactly is meant by "part-time". Cf Sarti, Statistical Data, pp. 73-74.

salesian authenticity of their pastoral efforts. It considers the demands at present posed by local Churches and circumstances, and those which will be posed in the near future.

Before taking on new obligations in the area of parishes, the criteria of acceptance which provincial communities must adhere to must be determined. These criteria require expression as "characteristics" which a parish must realistically guarantee.

3.2 The salesian dimension of the parish

In its evaluation, the GC21, responding to the query of several provincial chapters and confreres and keeping the Rector Major's report⁶ in mind, intends to clarify the meaning of "*acting in a salesian style*" in the parish apostolate. It addresses itself therefore to that complex of decisions and attitudes which form the sign of the authentic "salesian" presence and make up the typical salesian image, what we know as the salesian identity.

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The SGC had indicated one line of clarification: we live the parish ministry "as a true salesian apostolate in the measure in which we are faithful to our mission and actualize our Founder's charism in serving youth and the poor classes."⁷

The GC21 cites some characteristics of this spirit:

3.2.1 The *responsible agent of the salesian parish*, that which gives it life, is *the religious community*. The apostolic goal is to be realized together. The entire salesian community is the sign and bearer of our mission: "Our mission is entrusted in the first place to the community."⁸

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"The chief characteristic of a salesian parish is that it be administered by a religious community which wants to live its specific mission in the Church. We are characterized by what we are."⁹

This calls for a religious life which, with its rhythm of prayer,¹⁰ its

⁶ RRM 171, 214-219.

⁷ ASGC 400.

⁸ Const 34.

⁹ ASGC 406.

¹⁰ In the first Regulations for the parishes contained in the deliberations of the GC3 and GC4 and presented by Don Bosco in 1887, one reads for example: "Let the parish priest be solicitous in fixing a suitable time for the daily meditation and spiritual reading, and be sure that he is present regularly with his assistants. If possible let it be done in church so that the parishioners may be edified" (Don Bosco, *Opere Edite XXXVI*, p. 259).

brotherly communion, its shared responsibility of pastoral work, is truly a "sign and witness, in the district in which they work, of the spiritual values based on the evangelical counsels"¹¹ and the spirit of the Beatitudes.

This community spirit gives rise to a vision of a unified and co-responsible service of evangelization; it produces that salesian style of apostolic work and pastoral rapport which leads to the building up of the parish into a community, a "family of God."¹² From this spirit flows the parish community's program of action, its choice of ways and means to respond best to local needs. Every salesian thus feels he is part of a witness which is both his own and his community's.

- 139** 3.2.2 *The salesian parish exercises its priority of choice for boys and young men, especially the most needy.* Keeping in view the complete community, adults and young people who depend upon each other for human and christian growth, it is a question of granting privileged status within the salesian mission especially as regards those to whom we have been sent and the service we are to render.

a) In connection with those for whom we work, the SGC's practical directives concerning the orientation of our mission apply also to our parish apostolate: "This absolute priority of youth work will mean on the one hand that our activity on behalf of youth will take up the greater part of our time, efforts and personnel; and on the other, that even in our work for adults, according to their needs, we shall still maintain our primary preoccupation for the young."¹³

This means that the salesian *concerns himself primarily with boys and especially the most needy*, and through them he reaches the parents.

Furthermore, he brings boys into various parish activities, so that they may be an inducement to adults to play a courageous and responsible part in the work of the parish community, with the same preference for the young and poor.

b) The salesian parish builds up parish community with special emphasis on youth. The local Church has of course unifying pastoral dimensions which the parish accepts, but the salesian charism values the youth dimension as an element of renewal, growth, and vitality for the whole parish community.

¹¹ ASGC 407.

¹² Cf ASGC 417-518.

¹³ ASGC 180.

Within the centralized pastoral effort of the diocese with which we must always be in harmony and which we must support¹⁴ we offer our specialized skills and humble witness by inserting the young into the life of the local Church and thus broadening the scope of their activities.

This document of the GC21 has already reflected more particularly on the Oratory-Youth Center and deepened a characteristic concept of salesian action in the parish.¹⁵

Here we re-affirm that the Oratory Youth Ministry is for us salesians "a necessary and irreplaceable element" of our presence in the parish¹⁶ and that "special concern for the care of youth and the teaching of christian doctrine are our first concerns."¹⁷

3.2.3 *The salesian parish evangelizes in the spirit and style of our educational and pastoral project.* **140**

At its beginning our Congregation was "a simple catechism lesson." Preaching the gospel and catechizing are fundamental to our mission.¹⁸ Such a pastoral commitment obliges us to overcome past habits and fatigue; it keeps us in an attitude of openness, not restricted to the care of the élite but reaching to all.

Under this aspect, the salesian parish:

a) *implements a systematic catechesis*, beginning with that of baptism, which introduces families to the christian education of their children, and provides an opportunity to reach adults and bring its influence to bear on both family and parish. It involves not only parents but shares its responsibility with the laity. As it prepares the faithful for the sacraments it aims at creating an atmosphere in which faith can grow and so helps the entire community to mature through devout and serene attention to the word of God, through community feasts and through common prayer marked by joy and simplicity. It links everything with the phases of the liturgical year, with constant reference and application to the youth of the parish at every stage of their growth.

b) *does not separate evangelization from human development.*

¹⁴ ASGC 416.

¹⁵ Cf ASGC 432.

¹⁶ AGC19 130.

¹⁷ Reg 24.

¹⁸ Const 20.

Along the lines traced by Don Bosco it reaches out to all to serve all¹⁹ in union and sympathy²⁰ living out its evangelization and promotion of human values in a single movement of love.

The unique mission to which we have been called tends realistically "to blend the heavenly with the earthly city," and requires us as salesians "to communicate divine life while we render mankind's family and its history more human."²¹

c) *promotes the development of individual vocations*, assessing the gifts of individuals and directing them for the benefit of the whole Church. In so doing the salesian community acts out one characteristic of Don Bosco's life: the way he relied on people's individual talents for help and his confidence in their personal gifts and charisms. The community in fact fully accepts conciliar teaching on the laity's role in the Church's mission, as it entrusts them with various ministries.

"Within the inner Church community, the laity's action is so necessary that the Bishop's own apostolate cannot be fully achieved without it."²² This attitude is most helpful for the growth of the salesian family and of new groups of salesian cooperators. Don Bosco wrote: "It shall be one of the concerns of the parish priest to favor Catholic associations, especially that of the salesian cooperators."²³

Such clear insistence certainly does help the spiritual gifts of each one's vocation to blossom. Young people can more easily develop their choice of a life which is apostolic, religious, and priestly.²⁴

141 3.2.4 *The salesian parish is for the common people.* The reasons are:

- its location: preferably in populous urban areas;
- its style of operation: its closeness to people, its care not to become a ghetto community, closed to all but a few; its stress on liturgy and feasts in which parishioners can feel at home with naturalness and simplicity; its sensitive regard for popular devotions which it respectfully directs with the teaching of the gospel;²⁵

¹⁹ Cf Const 7.

²⁰ Cf Const 16.

²¹ ASGC 60, which quotes GC 40.

²² AA 10.

²³ Don Bosco, Op Ed. XXVI, p. 263.

²⁴ Cf Const 12 and Part 3B (Vocational Fruitfulness) (000).

²⁵ Cf EN 48.

- its openness to its neighborhood: with partiality to none, it shares the ordinary people's concerns, their joys and sorrow, their disappointments and hopes.

Conclusion

We suggest a re-reading of the Acts of the Third and Fourth General Chapters, presented by Don Bosco himself in 1887: "The sick, the young, the children are to be the parish priest's special concern. The best loved parish priest is the one whom children and the poor can approach."²⁶ And he goes on: "To preserve the Congregation's spirit, the salesian parish priest will not fail to be an apostle among the people entrusted to his care by God, by sanctifying himself he will gain many souls for Heaven."²⁷

3.3 Practical directives

- a) Let each parish promote and verify its particular salesian features, along the lines indicated (in this document), within the context of the local Church and in harmony with provincial organizations. 142
- b) Let each province, in its plan of redimensioning, consider the possibility of giving back to the diocese any parish which, on account of changed conditions, no longer offers opportunity for a typical salesian apostolate: either because it is not attached to a salesian community, or because it does not allow for priority to youth, or because it is not located in a populous area.
- c) No new parishes are to be accepted unless they meet the requirements set out in this document.
- d) The *confreres* destined for parish work should be given specific training which should emphasize and develop the values of our salesian style of living and working. Not only are they to be individually concerned with their continuing education, but they must periodically be given a chance to update their theological and pastoral studies.

²⁶ Don Bosco, *Op. Ed.* XXVI, p. 263.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 265.

4. THE MISSIONS

- 143 The overall theme of the GC21, the ecclesial thrust generated over the past few years especially by *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and the enthusiastic interest aroused throughout the Congregation in the centenary year of the salesian missions have given us cause for reflection and self-examination on the topic of the missions.

Such a reflection must necessarily refer back to the SGC, which drew up a document on "salesian missionary action,"¹ wrote into the Constitutions and Regulations some important articles on our missionary activity² and set up a corresponding Department for the Missions.³

The present document has specific objectives, determined and defined by the general study theme and by the GC21 itself, which is a Chapter of verification. Our purpose is to highlight the more significant points of the past six years and to probe certain elements at greater depth so as to come up with effective approaches which will guide our missionary endeavors for the next few years.

It is not the intention therefore to deal with the many aspects of our salesian presence in the missions, nor to trace, even from a salesian perspective, any general sketch of missionary pastoral action.

This General Chapter, which for the first time since the centenary of the missions, sees the meeting of representatives from the entire Salesian Congregation, feels the needful duty of giving praise and thanks to God for the wonders he has achieved through the sons of Don Bosco, sustained at every moment by Mary Help of Christians.

It wishes also to express lively and sincere admiration and thanks to the thousands of Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who in these one hundred years have written many a glorious page in the history of both our Congregations and have left us a heritage of courage, apostolic boldness, pastoral creativeness, untiring work, suffering, and even martyrdom. This is a priceless heirloom, a force which drives us on to new achievements.

¹ ASGC 472-480.

² Const 15, 24, 142; Reg 15-20.

³ Const 142.

4.1 The situation

It is not easy to compress such a complex of varied issues into a few lines, but it may help to highlight some particularly significant features.⁴

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First among them are those which bespeak vitality and the efficacious desire for an energetic renewal.

The centenary celebrations have touched off a variety of activities at world-wide, provincial and local levels, which have interested and often involved the whole salesian family: congresses, assemblies and symposia, specific projects, etc. Within this context, even though it goes beyond it, the publication of studies and works on the salesian missions deserves special mention, particularly the publications of the Study Center for Salesian Missionary History, and the documentary films on salesian missionary life and action.

Organizationally the period has seen the progressive structural development of the Department for the Missions.

But the most consoling and prominent achievements have been in the area of solidarity and of personnel: a solidarity and vitality reflected in the very significant number of confreres (about 270) who have gone to the missions over these past five years, and of those who, having volunteered their services for five years since 1965, have for the most part elected to remain on. This solidarity is highlighted in a special way by the contribution of personnel from some missionary provinces to others, a fact of rich ecclesial dimensions which opens new vistas for the future. The twinning of provinces should also be remembered in this connection.

These efforts are additional to the apostolic zeal and pastoral creativity of confreres and communities in mission lands. Another positive element which promises well for the entire Congregation, is the notable increase of vocations in some mission territories, e.g. in some countries of Asia, where the percentage of native personnel is now predominant (77%).

Significant too, though they are not numerous, is the presence of young laymen who are working as active missionaries in some continents.

Noteworthy efforts are being made at the Center and at local levels

⁴ Sources of this verification: RRM 248-277; Report of Department for Missions 1972-1977, 42 p.

to train missionaries, to have some confreres obtain degrees in mission studies, and to organize teams which will be ready to face seriously the actual challenge of the mission apostolate.

Many other concrete examples of solidarity must not be forgotten, e.g. financial support afforded by mission procures by special foundations, or by sporadic efforts of other kinds.

These features become all the more significant when we remember that they coincide with a period in history when the Congregation has been undergoing a crisis as grave as it was painful. That our missionary endeavor has kept alive is a sign of vitality and of hope which make their impact felt throughout the work of the Congregation.

- 145** Briefly but objectively we must now look back at *negative aspects which slow down* our mission action. In some parts of the Congregation mission concern leaves much to be desired and is a long way from arousing a real interest in the young people with whom we work.

We do not have enough qualified salesians who can give our reflection and our mission action a scholarly orientation.

Because many missionaries are either isolated or engaged in work which is either personal or too heavy, they do not have the chance of an ongoing formation, and all too few are the privileged moments of prayer and reflection which they can enjoy.

In some cases, certainly not due to any bad will, the mission work is organized in a way which reveals a lack of cultural preparation and an inadequate acquaintance with pastoral programs and missionary procedures.

There is little or no "salesian movement for lay missionaries": the Congregation has not made any great effort in this direction. To make matters worse, in not a few countries complications have arisen from outside the Congregation which block or gravely impede freedom of action and initiative.

4.2 Frame of reference

- 146** The results of the evaluation and reflection at the level of the whole Congregation, with our Missions' Centenary as a point of departure, bring to light certain elements which are closely allied to a new missionary consciousness and go in part beyond our salesian environment.

4.2.1 *Missions: situations and missionary style*

It is a fact today that in countries traditionally christian vast sections of the populace, and especially young people, live in a dechristianized environment and badly need an initial or at least a renewed evangelization. A situation of this kind calls for a changed notion of "mission geography." All countries can today be considered "mission territory." Hence evangelization of any sort takes on a missionary significance.

This wider view of "mission," this broadening of evangelization to include the entire action of the Church must not lessen the proper meaning of that *specific missionary presence* which the Church from its very origins has always seen as a pressing vocation.

A half-hearted openness to new peoples may one day be judged by historians as insensitivity. By keeping to itself christianity only lessens its own internal fruitfulness.

"At a time when there are not lacking those who think and even say that... the time of the missions is now past," writes Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, "the Church keeps her missionary spirit alive and even wishes to intensify it," because "she feels responsible before entire peoples. She has no rest so long as she has not done her best to proclaim the good news of Jesus the Savior."⁶

In the light of these affirmations, our reflections will be restricted to missionary action in its specific sense.

4.2.2 *Missions and our salesian mission*

The place of missionary action in salesian life has been clearly stated by the SGC and cited by the Rector Major on the occasion of the centenary.⁷ Briefly, they remind us that this specific meaning of missionary action constitutes "*an essential element, indispensable to and characteristic of our Congregation.*"⁸ "The missions *are not a work... to be listed with our other works... Neither are they an area of activity which comprise a certain number of works... In salesian tradition the missions are to be rated... as a privileged setting for the fulfilment of the salesian mission, and the associated spirit.*"⁹

⁵ EN 51, 53.

⁶ EN 53, 51-52.

⁷ ASC 267.

⁸ ASC 267, p. 13.

⁹ ASC 267, p. 20.

4.2.3 *Missionary work and salesian style*

Salesian service and style seem to fit perfectly the demands of the mission apostolate.

Experience has shown some *points of contact* which deserve our deeper consideration; among them: an intimate bond between evangelization and human development; preference for poor youth and the common people; ability to adapt and create; catechetical concern and simple, direct piety; a living presence especially attuned to human and religious values of local cultures; an easy human approach, marked by evangelical optimism, which arouses a sympathetic response and draws people to our own ideas.

4.2.4 *Important aspects of missionary work today*

To put their mission work into a contemporary framework salesians will have to take a new look at the meaning of "mission," and what it involves. Among other things this requires:

- an integration of human values with evangelization of local cultures with pastoral action;
- greater insistence on the reality of the local Church, and hence more energetic support and a great unity and coresponsibility with it;
- a determined effort to put mission action on a valid scientific basis so as to integrate its various components;
- the channelling of mission action towards more needy areas and those which are in a more sensitive and critical position for the world's future;
- the involvement of the laity in either direct missionary activity or in supporting roles so that in the mission regions themselves the evangelized become evangelizers.

4.2.5 *Missionary animation*

A revival of missionary spirit and mission action at the level of the entire Church, and for us at the level of the Congregation, requires that we face up to the basic problem of sensitizing and animating local and provincial communities to a more deliberate missionary consciousness, to renewing our service in content and method, to a missionary commitment which, to preserve credibility, must at one and the same time be directed to the community itself and beyond it.

Art. 16 of the Regulations entrusts the prime responsibility in this regard to the provincial and his council.

The GC21, reaffirming what was said by the SGC, calls attention to the multiple services which can be rendered by advisory boards, mission procures, or missionary centers, set up on a provincial or inter-provincial level: they keep interest high among confreres and all members of the salesian family; to arouse missionary vocations; to maintain contact with confreres who have left the province for the missions; to cooperate with the Central Mission Office, with dioceses, and other religious Institutes; they promote projects and solicit funds from government, church, and private agencies, etc.

4.3 Practical directives

The GC21 endorses the validity of what was laid down by the SGC, especially in what concerns animating mission action and the ongoing formation of mission personnel. It establishes the following lines of action for the orientation and renewal of our missionary activity for the next few years:

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a) The launching of missionary activity calls for concrete objectives and demands the adoption of strategy which is directed to those countries where missionary activity is most urgent. Therefore as we enter the second century of our missionary presence, recalling Don Bosco's prophetic wish,¹¹ without excluding the possibility of developing mission action in other needy and promising regions, the salesians will apply themselves to an appreciable stepping up of their presence in Africa.

b) Let every province commit itself to the stressing of lay participation, especially within the salesian family, in direct missionary work. To this end let them willingly prepare adequate, helpful aids, using also the technical services of other organizations, and keep themselves posted on similar projects of other missionary Institutes. The Department for the Missions, in cooperation with the Department for the Salesian Family and that of the Youth Apostolate will collaborate in the same sense on a world-wide level.

c) The present status of our missionary apostolate, the importance and extent of our commitment demand that we face up to the mission problem on the basis of serious scientific studies. For this purpose let a chair of missiology be set up at the UPS; let arrangements be made so that every missionary province may have some confrere qualified in this field.

¹⁰ Const 142; Reg 15-20; ASGC 480; Cf also doc on "Formation to salesian life".

¹¹ MB XVI, p. 254.

d) A missionary evangelizes before all else by his witness. To make this witness all the more telling, each missionary will try to be faithful to his duties within his religious community. By willingly taking part in workshops and updating courses, he will derive benefit for his spiritual growth, improve in brotherly intercourse, and gain in pastoral experience. Let it be the task of both province and local communities to afford confreres time and opportunity for this kind of reflection and updating, especially for privileged moments of prayer, which will help them to renew their understanding of their mission in the light of God's word.

5. MASS MEDIA: Means of evangelization

5.1 Relevance of the Mass Media

- 148 The SGC has expressed some views on the relevance of the mass media in ASGC, 443-445. It must be added that the mass media, because of the impact produced by the union of highly refined technology with sophisticated imagery, has taken on and actually plays a decisive role in shaping culture, social life, and mores.

Rather than just a vehicle or multiple means of communication, it is a dynamic and complex reality which has a vast and disproportionate power to convince, a power which enhances its message for good or for ill.

The mass media become over more a massive educating influence, shaping and begetting cultures. They elaborate and broadcast accumulated evidence which underlie new life styles and new criteria of judgment. The incisive force and ever growing penetration of the mass media have turned them into a real, authentic alternative educational process for entire sections of peoples of the globe, especially for the young and the poor.

5.2 The mass media and evangelization

- 149 "Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means... The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims 'from the housetops' the message of

which she is the depositary. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes."¹

5.3 Don Bosco's views

In his own day Don Bosco considered the press, the publication of good books and magazines, stage plays for youth, music and song not only as means for the service of educational pastoral works, such as oratories, hostels, schools, missions, but also as "original apostolic endeavors" directed of their very nature to the mission Divine Providence gave him for youth.²

Even at that time he was convinced that the young and the masses would be the most eager consumers and the first victims of a mass communication which could be manipulated at the will and service of others. This is what he meant by asserting that the good press was one of the Congregation's principal aims.³

5.4 The situation

The Rector Major's Report, that of the Department for the Adult Apostolate, and the pre-capitular documents of the GC21, on the basis of actual experiences, have singled out some elements of growth and renewed commitment in this field.

The Congregation's efforts in this regard have taken two directions:

5.4.1 A more mature, effective use of the mass media as a multiple means of salesian "communication." There has been an undeniable growth in the following sectors:

- the diffusion of salesian news meant for use both within the Congregation and the salesian family and beyond it (provincial newsletters, ANS, Salesian Bulletins, documentaries, audio and video cassettes, filmstrips);
- mass media for use in our apostolic and educative youth work, oratories, schools, etc.; in parishes and mission centers (cinema, closed circuit TV and radio); multi-media (audio-visuals; stage plays, music).

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¹ EN 45; cf CP 13; Synod 1977, 9.

² Cf Epist. IV, 318; Report of Don Bosco to the Holy See 1877.

³ ASGC 451.

5.4.2 The second direction in which the commitment of the Congregation has been extended is to the *production* of these materials, of multi-media aids, mass media programs in the service of the gospel, meant "to increase almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people."⁴ In this regard we list some works which seem to be privileged moments of creation, special spots of genius which have helped us realize our mission to the young and to the common people:

- publishing centers have produced and spread books, auxiliary aids, youth magazines;
- broadcasts and telecasts;
- research centers to produce programs of audio-visuals (records, cassettes, video-cassettes, films, filmstrips, posters, etc.), radio and TV. This is essentially salesian pastoral work.

We cite also the efforts made these past years to organize these centers on an inter-provincial, national, or regional level; also editing initiatives to strengthen and broaden their efficiency, while eliminating useless duplication of personnel and materials.

151 Documents and reports reveal the following *weaknesses*:

- in the training of salesians in communication arts: lack of overall plans, of programs, of personnel who are qualified to train salesians in the systematic use of the mass media;
- in the diffusion of salesian information: lack of "an authoritative stable and secure orientation" for our bulletins and salesian newsletters;⁶ lack of correspondents who feed news to the Center;⁷
- in the use of mass media in evangelization: disjointed individual initiatives not adequately supported by the community; lack of coordination of effort between centers of production and distribution centers; on provincial and national levels, lack of structures which will encourage and coordinate efforts with the Center; limited cooperation with Church organizations in the mass media.

⁴ EN 45.

⁵ Cf Sch Precap 185, 187c.

⁶ Cf RRM 239c.

⁷ RRM 239d.

But the *weakest and most sensitive area* is the distressing lack of confreres or teams of salesians who can utilize the mass media both in substance and style for the adequate evangelization of modern man. Teams who can plan, research, try pilot programs, and develop the mass media on a serious scientific basis, are either insufficient or entirely lacking.

Underlying this situation of course is the problem of shortage of personnel. But there is also a lack of foresight. We have been concerned with the provision of instruments and the setting up of structures and with the necessary technical and mechanical training, but we have not been equally concerned about the preparation of personnel to give these means cultural substance by research and planning.

5.5 Lines of action

The central structures (Salesian Family, Departments, and Secretariate) and provincial organizations should concern themselves, each at its proper level, with the training of salesians in social communications.

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This calls for basic programs in our different stages of formation and for specialized training for those confreres who are going to be in charge of this aspect of formation. Assigning confreres to specialize in social communications does not mean that we are dispersing our apostolic forces; we rather strengthen their effectiveness and multiply them.

Another line of renewal is to introduce the multimedia language of communication into our pastoral work.

Audio-visual aids, the art of the theatre, creative projects (painting, design, graphic arts) music and song, are not to be seen as complementary skills, helpful aids to be used only on occasion; they constitute a true language which must not be disregarded or underestimated in our dialog with the new generations of youth; because the latter appear to take most willingly to these forms of communication.

Experience proves that the use of these new means of communication is very effective and productive not only in school and in art courses but also in our endeavors to catechize and educate to prayer and liturgy.

To avoid duplicating expense and labor, it will be good for provinces and regions to consider pooling their work. This will enable pro-

vincial conferences, various groups, and provincial communities as a whole to apply their best potential to create and consolidate specific aspects of the mass media in different countries, in agreement with the bishops' programs and joined in one organic whole to produce multimedia material which will be adapted and helpful to young people (radio-TV, publications, joint youth productions, cinema and TV program centers, etc.).

To sensitize our various apostolates to this new "language" and to change their attitudes, our schools, youth centers and parishes should promote courses for systematic training in critical approaches to the mass media's cultural and news programs; and greater use should be made of the mass media as an ordinary means of educational communication. In particular, more creative use of audio-visuals and dramatizations should be made in teaching and in catechesis.

More emphatically the mass media should concentrate on developing rapport between culture and evangelization.

To hasten and intensify our contribution to a more adequate social communication, we should initiate courses of career training for young men who are oriented towards the mass media as a profession.

5.6 Practical directives

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a) In dependence on the Department for the Salesian Family, the Secretariate for Social Communications should be concerned to coordinate, develop, and animate mass media in the Congregation, it should set up an organization which can adequately sustain the various departments and second their efforts to render those services expected of it. The secretariate should organize, at opportune levels, regular meetings to discuss programs, collaboration, and evaluation of various salesian activities in the field of social communication.

b) To promote scientific research, study, and analysis of common salesian problems in social communication, the Central Office should create a central consulting body of experts, salesians and others.

c) On a provincial (or provincial conference) level, some confreres should be appointed as coordinators, animators, and consultants in the field of

mass media, in agreement with the Central Office, for the training of others in social communication as a service to our mission of evangelization and to salesian information projects.

d) To make it easier for confreres to use primary sources of salesian spirituality and original documents, the study of Italian should be encouraged as a language of unity and communication within the salesian family.

6. NEW MODES OF SALESIAN PRESENCE FOR EVANGELIZATION

At the close of its reflection on the general theme: WITNESSING AND PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL, TWO ESSENTIALS OF SALESIAN LIFE AMONG THE YOUNG, the GC21 realizes that it has touched upon many problems of our communities. **154**

Throughout this document, which set out to be a calm and realistic evaluation of salesian life and activity especially during the past six years, we keep reverting to the term RENEWAL as a measure of the past and a vision of the future. It could not be otherwise since the GC20, characterized as "special" and desired by the Council, "has put the whole Congregation in a state of renewal."¹

We would like to conclude with a further reflection on this theme which highlights the dynamic aspect of renewal in fidelity.

Hence we now speak of NEW MODES OF SALESIAN PRESENCE, using this terminology to mean varied initiatives, both on a personal and interior level and also on an organizational and structural level, with their impact on the spirit and mode of action.

6.1 "New salesian presence"

In analyzing our pastoral action among youth, the SGC affirmed: **155**
"The salesian mission in many areas has unfortunately not been able to find that NEW PRESENCE which a changing world demands."²

¹ ASC 283, p. 16.

² ASGC 393.

This is not an isolated statement. With reference to so central an issue of the GC21 as the SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT we recall another assertion of the SGC: "With young people of today, the preventive system means that *a new kind of presence is needed*. Our educative efficiency is linked up with a renewed fidelity to the preventive system of Don Bosco."³

It is important, and in some ways essential, to meet this pressing demand of the Congregation.

"Realizing that a really efficacious renewal is often enough the result of initiatives of particular groups of people, the General Chapter encourages opportune experiments in new forms of witness and service among the very poor according to the missionary spirit of Don Bosco, and the readiness to offer our help wherever there is more urgent need."⁴

Reviewing the orientation given by the SGC we find some meaningful guidelines:

6.1.1 *a relaunching of the SPIRIT OF INITIATIVE*

This is not a new discovery of the present day.

The first generation of salesians learned enterprise and boldness at the school of Don Bosco.

The history of salesian expansion throughout the world clearly proves the effectiveness of our Founder's teaching.

Father Albera asserts: "To the spirit of personal initiative we must join due submission to one's superior; it is *precisely this spirit* which gives our Society a *pleasing modernity* which makes it possible for us to achieve the good demanded by the needs of time and place."⁵

More incisively Father Rinaldi states: "This *supple adaptability* to all forms of good which endlessly arise within humanity is the *very spirit* of our Constitutions: the day a variation to this spirit is introduced our Pious Society will be doomed. The approval of 1874 has *canonized this principle*, and our Pious Society has begun to belong to all times as it has gradually spread everywhere. But this incessant growth has created the need of modifying our Constitutions."⁶

³ ASGC 188.

⁴ ASGC 619.

⁵ ASC 2 (1921), 4.

⁶ ASC 3 (1923), 21.

In perfect agreement with the above is Father Caviglia's view of salesian history: "To this we owe the fact...that the persons he chose to open new foundations, while they attended to the spirit of the Institute, were able to give each foundation an imprint of its own as demanded by the particular conditions of place, and to appear—no small merit this—as so many *founders themselves* of works which were powerfully efficacious in different ways.

"Anyone who has a grasp of life and of history will appreciate the real genius and wisdom it takes to conceive and actuate such a principle."⁷

6.1.2 *an appreciation of the INTUITION and SENSITIVITY of certain confreres*

"An efficacious renewal is often the result of initiatives of particular groups of people," affirms the SGC.

We are dealing here, we think, with an availability to the Spirit of God who calls and impels; and also with a sensitivity to the cry of boys and of young men who call out in expectation.

6.1.3 *a concern about working according to Don Bosco's MISSIONARY SPIRIT*

This ensures the "corporate identity" of our religious action "in spirit and in form."⁹ For an initiative to be labeled salesian it is not enough that it call itself new, apostolically valid, and enterprising.

There are some criteria to be verified.

First and foremost, the *style of both life and action* must be communal. "To live and work together is for us salesians a fundamental need if we are truly to fulfil our vocation."¹⁰

It is often enough a tiresome task to involve an entire provincial community in the process of renewal; but according to God's plan this is the guarantee of success of our apostolic enterprise and our salesian calling.

A second criterion, intimately connected with the community aspect of our mission, is that of the "*received mandate.*"

⁷ A. Caviglia, *Don Bosco, Profilo Storico*, SEI Torino, 1934, pp. 169-170.

⁸ Cf Address of Paul VI to GC21 (n. 000).

⁹ Rector Major's intervention in the assembly, 30.1.1978.

¹⁰ Const 50.

Pastoral charity demands a hierarchical communion.

It is not only the letter of obedience that has juridical value: "our superiors and community (are) the day to day interpreters of God's will."¹¹

156 6.2 Realizing a "new salesian presence"

6.2.1 There is a NEW SALESIAN PRESENCE which directly touches the heart of the confreres, and it is only their *holiness* that will express it from time to time as they generously respond to the grace of the Spirit and relive the charism of their salesian vocation. By an interior self-renewal the confrere renews the Congregation.

To this end the GC21 calls upon all the confreres to reconsider the SGC's statement: "In order to work out this necessary discernment and renewal historians are not sufficient, nor theologians, nor politicians, nor organizers: we need 'spiritual' men, men of faith; sensitive to the things of God and ready to work with courageous obedience as our Founder did. True fidelity to Don Bosco consists not in copying him exteriorly but in imitating his fidelity to the Holy Spirit."¹²

157 6.2.2 There is a NEW SALESIAN PRESENCE which is linked to the work and action of the confreres, of provincial and local communities, carried out in the chosen apostolates of the past, known to us as TRADITIONAL WORKS AND ACTIVITIES.

In its reflection on the settings for and the means of evangelization, this document has tried to bring out some practical guidelines to revitalize those initiatives which are in danger of being rendered meaningless and futile by time, by changes in social, cultural and ecclesial conditions, and by the wear and tear on the confreres. They encourage a true renewal, even if it is difficult at times. The RRM explains: "Often... the concept of a new presence has been

¹¹ Const 91. The Conciliar Document, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, to which we can rightly refer, states: "This obedience leads to the more mature freedom of God's sons. Of its nature it demands that in the fulfilment of their duty priests lovingly and prudently look for *new avenues* for the greater good of the Church. At the same time it demands that they confidently propose their plans and urgently make known the needs of the flock committed to them, while remaining ready to submit to the judgement of those who exercise the chief responsibility for governing the Church of God." No. 15.

¹² ASGC 18.

impoverished and viewed in one sense only, i.e. with regard to a single 'model'. It would seem for example that we have not highlighted in the spirit of the SGC a new salesian presence in our traditional works, such as setting up a real 'pilot' school, creating a new pastoral image to give us a presence different from that in a school or in a youth center, etc."¹³

This renewal however is not to be one of mere method, pastoral action or workability. It must rise to the level of community.

"We must therefore *renew our communities, big and small*, so that they may be 'constantly' animated by the spirit of the gospel, nourished by prayer and distinguished by a generous mortification of the old man, by the discipline necessary for forming the new man, by the fruitfulness of the sacrifice of the Cross."¹⁴

6.2.3 There is a NEW SALESIAN PRESENCE which is the fruit of pastoral creativity for the benefit of young people; it fills in the gaps which have as yet not been carefully studied. We cite some instances of such gaps: 158

a) the spiritual needs of young people in urban areas—indifferent, or alienated from Church and faith;

b) a care to promote human and christian development among the young and people in general who are rejected or excluded, both in the so called developing nations and in those areas which have become industrialized;¹⁵

c) the promotion of *youth movements*, while at the same time assisting youngsters in their search and desire for bonds of unity which go beyond the confines of their own environment.

Our Constitutions provide a fine statement on these situations and demands: "We must use the pastoral inventiveness of Don Bosco, adapting those works which already exist to changed requirements and creating new ones which correspond better to the needs of the present day."¹⁶

Services arising from these demands will be offered:

— in some cases by individual confreres or groups of confreres, full

¹³ RRM 175.

¹⁴ ET 41.

¹⁵ Cf the Conclusions of the Congress: "Salesians and human and christian promotion in marginal areas," Rome, Casa Generalizia, 19-24 February, 1977.

¹⁶ Const 27.

or part time, who operate from a community whose main work is different;

- in other cases by communities specially set up for the purpose, generally with a smaller number of confreres, and always with the intention “to help and educate young people, especially the very poor, who can be effectively reached only in their own surroundings.”¹⁷

The salesian service which the community renders will be offered either directly to the institutions of the local Church or to those initiatives which are promoted by our own institutions to meet local needs.¹⁸

Realistically we cannot avoid the complex of problems emerging from such “pastoral inventiveness.” Difficulties generally center on a few knotty points, among which the following are the most significant:

- an uneasy rapport between such a new mode of presence and the original work, involving contradictions and tensions of various kinds, which make it hard to define the meaning of the new presence and disturb the balance between the demands of our religious life and those of our apostolic service;
- an uneasy relationship between the new salesian presence and the provincial community, which must be attributed to some extent to the lack of timely communication and understanding regarding certain choices of work, and also to what may seem to be an escape on the part of some confreres from tasks they had previously assumed in the province.

159 6.2.4 There is a NEW SALESIAN PRESENCE which, in the terminology of the ASGC, we call SMALL COMMUNITIES.

Within a diversity of forms adapted to place and need, the SGC identified the following as their fundamental characteristics:¹⁹

- a search for a better insertion of our salesian life among those to whom we are sent, so as to be closer to them in lifestyle and habitation;
- less structured services, more flexible and better adapted to the area’s specific needs;

¹⁷ Const 30.

¹⁸ Cf ASGC 81, 82.

¹⁹ Cf ASGC 510, 515.

- the experimental nature of such a project arising from the “intense communion among its members, but more particularly the call to insert itself into special types of life and work.”²⁰

6.3 The GC21's evaluation of one of the new modes of presence: that of small communities

Among the so-called new modes of salesian presence, the small communities have aroused deepest concern during the past six years in some parts of the Congregation. Hence we center our attention on them so as to take note of both positive and negative elements.²¹

6.3.1 *Positively*, in some provinces small communities have given rise to a more alert and realistic attention to peripheral young people, segregated from society, and to a search for a strategy to meet their real needs in surroundings which are pastorally isolated and unapproachable.

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They have sometimes opened up new fields of apostolic action to young people among whom we work, helping to involve them in the christian apostolate. They have also given some confreres the possibility of reawakening a feeling of personal involvement, coresponsibility and poverty.²²

They have helped to excite interest in the Faith and in the meaning of life in places which were strangers, and sometimes hostile, to the Church's presence; they have involved both juveniles and adults in progressive christian growth even to the point of witness and service in the areas in which they live.

6.3.2 *Among the negative aspects* we cite those which have contributed in greater measure to the failure of some experiments. Some defects and errors are more evident in “small communities”, even though they may not be lacking in others:

- shortcomings in common life, underscored by the immediate needs of community living; or insistence on ideologies which are unacceptable from a religious or ecclesial point of view;²³

²⁰ ASGC 510.

²¹ We have used: a) RRM, especially 135-136, 175; b) Sarti, Statistical Data, pp. 138, 139; c) Material of provincial chapters gathered by Gruppo di maggio vol. 2, 4.

²² Cf Gruppo di maggio, Scheme 5.

²³ RRM 135.

- difficulties experienced in returning to ordinary communities;
- problems in the exercise of authority, and sometimes the complete lack of it, due in part to the absence of clear indications in the matter;
- projects which have not been well thought out and sometimes lead to dispersion;
- an irregular pattern of common prayer, often caused by wide variety in apostolic tasks;²⁴
- an attitude of confrontation in matters of authority and its norms;
- a search for forms of community life, not contemplated by the Constitutions, which will include also non-religious.

161 6.3.3 *The frame of reference* proposed by the GC21 endorses the indications given by the SGC:

- sincere communion with the province and its center, both at the beginning of the project and during its progress;
- an apostolic plan, realistic in its goals and drawn up in communal dialog with the provincial and his council, in line with the requirements of the local Church;
- the selection of competent personnel, adequate in number and excluding young confreres in the first phase of formation;
- provincial organizations are to determine the manner in which authority is to be exercised;²⁵
- a program of prayer and meetings, in accordance with the Constitutions and Regulations, which will give rise to “a union between the demands of common life and those of the apostolate, two distinct but indivisible facets of apostolic charity;²⁶
- a “new presence” is not to be sought for the purpose of experimenting with new forms of religious community life, but to offer services which otherwise could not be provided;²⁷

²⁴ RRM 135.

²⁵ Cf ASGC 515.

²⁶ ASGC 508.

²⁷ This phrase is to be read in the context of the document: “New modes of salesian presence” and is understood by the *Technical Group* in the light of what is said in: n. 160 last 2 lines: “Amongst the negative aspects...

— a search for forms of community life, not contemplated by the Constitutions, which will include also non-religious.”

- the provincial and his council should hold frequent fraternal meetings with the confreres as a sign of unity and support, and should periodically evaluate their commitment and work as a help to the members;
- the confreres should be always ready to return to normal salesian communities.²⁸

Conclusion

The last word is still the same: renewal and self-renewal for the sake of evangelization.

“Deep understanding of present tendencies and of the needs of the modern world should cause your own sources of energy to spring up with renewed vigour and freshness. It is a sublime task in the measure that it is a difficult one.”²⁹

Conclusion: DON BOSCO MODEL AND LIVING PRESENCE

Every work of evangelization is carried out through some encounter “in which the individual’s conscience is touched by the special words another addresses to him.”³⁰

Don Bosco was chosen by God to encounter youth most in need. God gave him a humanity particularly suited to this end, and with added gifts of grace he rendered him still more capable of evangelizing them and transmitting to them his own life.

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Pope Paul VI describes him as “a marvellous synthesis of human talents and supernatural gifts, a genius recognized by modern pedagogy and catechesis, but above all a genius of holiness.”³¹

n. 155 “There are some criteria to be verified. First and foremost, the style of both life and action must be communal. ‘To live and work together is for us salesians a fundamental need if we are truly to fulfil our vocation.’” (Const 50)

n. 155 “A second criterion, intimately joined to the community aspect of our mission, is that of the “*received mandate*.”

²⁸ CF ASGC 515.

²⁹ ET 51.

³⁰ EN 46.

³¹ Discourse of the Holy Father to GC21.

- 163** We salesians are called to participate in his apostolic project. For this purpose it has been given to us to know him, and we are led to love him as our Father and Founder. For us he is not just a memory of the past, but a charismatic and living presence, active and stretching out to the future.

In him we reach a better understanding of ourselves and we find the true sense of what it means to belong to the Congregation, which "came into being not only by human agency but by the providence of God."³²

He gives a sense of unity to all the individual elements of our salesian life, from the interior life to our fraternal unity, to our shared responsibility, to the planning of our apostolic work.

- 164** From those same deep roots has been born, we think, also this document and its message.

The Church, Don Bosco and youth itself call us to be evangelizers in the salesian manner:

- to be salesians in order to be evangelizers;
- to be evangelizers in order to be salesians;
- to meet the young as they are, in the reality of their personality and where they are, in their actual situation, at the present day;
- to effect their evangelization and to provoke a concrete response to it in the life of the young, through the salesian educational and pastoral project, with its style and spirit and with all that it implies and contains, in the varied settings of our work.

- 165** These commitments are an indication and interpretation of the historical moment through which we are passing. We feel them as something inherent in our life and in our vocation which is in process of renewal. They are important and decisive, and in the context of evangelization they represent a deepening and in a certain sense something new, as regards the work of the SGC.

God calls us in Don Bosco to take on these obligations and we reply to him with salesian joy. "Yes, with joy... because joy is an absolute need for the young as well as being a reflection of the grace of God and interior serenity."³³

³² Const 1.

³³ Discourse of the Holy Father to GC21.

DOCUMENT 2

**THE SALESIAN
BROTHER**

**A "lay-religious" vocation
at the service of the salesian mission**

SUMMARY

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THE SALESIAN BROTHER

a "lay religious" vocation

in the service of the salesian mission

Introduction

Don Bosco's large heart would have loved to save the entire world; for this reason he was constantly in search of fellow workers who would help him realize his apostolic dream. His first helpers were the boys themselves; then later came priests, clerics, and laymen. Some of these became his salesian "priests, clerics, and laymen," considered and constituted as such in the first handwritten draft of our Rules (1858-60).¹ **166**

To the salesian brother Don Bosco entrusted a vast gamut of activity: a specific means of sanctification in the discharge of a great variety of services to the community; administrative and managerial responsibility of certain departments; educational and apostolic projects; work of evangelization in mission territories. He saw the necessity of their enriching presence in the Congregation, as sharers in the apostolic activity of the community through their performance of tasks more suited to laymen than to priests, and through their ability to bring a christian presence and an evangelizing activity to those places where it was either impossible or inopportune for the priest to be.²

The first century in the life of the Congregation gives evidence of a progressive, if not always easy, realization of Don Bosco's intuitive perception, in a variety of expressions that are both rich and profound.

The GC19 (1965), aware of the new insights and of the new expectations of the Conciliar Church, undertook among other things an in-depth study of the identity of the brother, underscoring its novel and original character. It called to mind the fact that the salesian brother represents "a constitutive element of the Salesian Society, **167**

¹ MB V 937.

² MB XII, 152, 823; XIV, 394, 783; XVI, 312-314.

which without the brother would not be the society established by Don Bosco."³ That Chapter promoted a fuller incorporation of the brother in the life of the Congregation.⁴ It took steps to initiate a more comprehensive formation of the brother,⁵ "leaving to competent committees the task of continuing the study of the specific nature of the brother along spiritual, juridical, historical and apostolic lines, for the purpose of formulating a clear definition of the spiritual identity of our lay confrere."⁶

- 168** The SGC (1971), convened to re-define the total identity of the Congregation in its renewed context, considered the brother as a component element of the religious community entrusted with the salesian mission. Speaking of the people responsible for our apostolate, it stressed the complementary function and fraternal co-responsibility of all the members of the Society, for the purpose of attaining our established pastoral goals. It then outlined the identity of the brother, his divine call to a special vocation, his share in all forms of educational, pastoral, and salesian apostolate not directly linked with the priestly ministry, and his integral and irreplaceable role in a successful common mission.⁷ It drew up a number of practical directives and concluded with the statement: "The most important basic work to be done is to sensitize and form the mentality of the whole Congregation with respect to the salesian brother."⁸ To that end it called for the convening of congresses at the provincial, regional, and world level.⁹

- 169** The World Congress of the Salesian Brother, which was held in Rome from August 31 to September 7, 1975, addressed itself to the following topics: the identity of the brother along historical, theological, and juridical lines; his apostolic activity; his formation; the presentation of the lay religious vocation to the youth of our own age.

From this Congress there arose, together with noteworthy doctrinal documents, some unresolved questions¹⁰ which were taken up by

³ ASC 244, p. 65.

⁴ ASC 244, p. 69.

⁵ ASC 244, p. 71-72.

⁶ ASC 244, p. 70.

⁷ Const 34; ASGC 145-149.

⁸ ASGC 184.

⁹ ASGC 184.

¹⁰ AWCSB p. 545-554.

many provincial chapters a year later in preparation for the GC21. These chapters in turn asked the GC21 to gather together and collate all in-depth studies and research papers of recent years in an effort to resolve the questions that still remain unresolved.¹¹

Perhaps the present vocation crisis, which is more serious for brothers than for priests, and the occasional conflicts in community life that appear here and there, are caused at least in part by an incomplete knowledge and a consequent inadequate appreciation of the brother. "In contrast with the priest's crisis which results from a weakened and deformed identity, the brother's crisis is caused by a total ignorance of his identity or at least by an inadequate appreciation of the brother's vocation, which is sometimes misrepresented and falsified. This type of ignorance is often found in salesian priests, and sometimes even in the brothers themselves."¹²

The GC21 wants in the first place to affirm the total validity of the lay religious vocation in all the dimensions envisioned by Don Bosco and in those necessitated by today's salesian mission.

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In the second place, it would like to respond at least in part to the legitimate expectations of the Congregation by producing a statement based on the findings of the SGC and within the context of Vatican II theology. This document would not pretend to exhaust the argument, but rather to continue the rethinking that has already been initiated and encourage further explorations along the lines opened up by the Council in the field of theology of the religious life in general and of the lay religious life in particular.

Our present work thus falls in line with the general theme of the GC21: "witnessing and proclaiming the gospel," because the brother is an indispensable component of the salesian community, evangelized and evangelizing, and as such he is called to be always and everywhere an authentic witness and a faithful evangelizer.

1. THE SALESIAN BROTHER IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY

In his zeal to save the young, Don Bosco associated to himself not merely willing and isolated workers, but also others more attuned to

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¹¹ Sch Precap 349-351.

¹² AWCSB p. 607.

his spirit, more committed to his ideals, whom he gathered into a religious congregation, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus it will not be so much the individuals who will perpetuate his ideals as his communities, "formed of priests and laymen," closely united to each other by deep brotherly ties.¹³ For this reason, the clear precise dimension of each salesian can only be studied and evaluated adequately in the context of a brotherly and apostolic community.

When considering the vocational identity of the brother, it is therefore necessary to begin with this basic fact: he is a member of the salesian community. And it behooves us to keep this ever present during the course of the study. He lives, he unfolds his personality, he witnesses his vocation in the context of the community. In it he reveals to himself and to others the true identity of his vocation.

1.1 Basic characteristics of the vocational identity of the brother

- 172 At a first comprehensive glance, it is clear that the brother is neither "a cleric"¹⁴ nor simply "a layman."¹⁵ He is rather a baptized Christian, called by God to give himself wholly to him in Christ, and thus to serve him as a "lay religious" in the Salesian Congregation. In it and in union with the salesian priest, he realizes, under the inspiration of Don Bosco, the specific mission of promoting the integral christian education of the young, especially the poorest of them.¹⁶ It will be profitable now to examine in some detail the principal elements of this definition.

1.1.1 A complete and meaningful salesian vocation

- 173 Our Constitutions state: "The christian who enters the Society as a brother answers a divine call of a special kind: that of living a lay religious consecration, for the unfolding of the salesian mission."¹⁷

This vocation is a reality that is:

- *concrete*. God does not call one to be a salesian in a general sort of way but makes it understood, at times only gradually, that

¹³ AWCSB p. 88-89; Const mss MB V, 937.

¹⁴ Cf LG III, especially 28.

¹⁵ Cf LG 31.

¹⁶ Cf Const 2-7, 9-10, 17-20, 40.

¹⁷ Const 37.

- such a call is to realize Don Bosco's idea of the lay religious;
- *complete* in itself. In the Congregation there are not two different degrees of membership. The brother shares all the elements that constitute a salesian vocation: apostolate of the young, fraternal-apostolic communion, religious consecration, salesian spirit.¹⁸ As a consequence, he belongs to the mission of the Society by his own right, not by one that is derived;¹⁹
 - *innovative*. The brother is "a genial creation of the large heart of Don Bosco, inspired by Mary Help of Christians." (Fr. Rinaldi)²⁰ This vocation is therefore a "specific" vocation different from others: both in the Church, because it is at the service of the salesian mission, and in the salesian family, because it is in the nature of a lay religious living in a community having specific forms bestowed by the Founder;
 - *meaningful*. It encompasses all facets of human life and offers the possibility for the full development of one's personality.

1.1.2 Grafted on a christian vocation

The vocation of the brother is an evolution of the consecration effected by the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, through which he lives in the light of the christian values of the people of God. Sanctified and sent by the Father for the salvation of the world, he partakes of the mission and activity of Christ, prophet, priest, and shepherd, and thus inserts himself in the mission of the Church, to witness and proclaim the gospel.

In his calling to be a salesian lay religious, the brother shares also in all fundamental christian orientations such as consciousness of our common dignity as children of God and brothers in Christ, of our common responsibility in the task of building up his Mystical Body, and of our common call to sanctity; evangelical freedom, the gift of the Spirit; a vivid sense of belonging to the local Church, presided over by the bishop; a sense of renewed presence in society; christian solidarity especially with the poor; sensitivity and openness to "the signs of the times"; creative involvement in contemporary problems.²¹

¹⁸ Cf PC 10.

¹⁹ Cf Const 3.

²⁰ Cf ASC 40 p. 572.

²¹ Cf AWCSB pp. 116-126.

1.1.3 *At the service of the salesian mission*

- 175** Don Bosco believed that to fully realize his mission of promoting human and christian values among poor and abandoned youth, the contribution of the lay religious was indispensable.

The vocation of the brother makes him share in the salesian mission entrusted to the community and makes him responsible with the other members for its actualization. Every brother "receives a part of the salesian mission to accomplish in so far as he is a member, and therefore in intimate solidarity with his confreres and superiors; thus every service in the community, even if not directly connected with the apostolate, shares in this mission and is a service and a witness with this ecclesial dimension."²²

1.1.4 *Lived and realized in community*

- 176** Don Bosco's apostolic initiative is community-oriented. For this reason the brother received his salesian calling from God in view of his incorporation into the community, and lives within it with the full consciousness of his shared dignity as a brother, just as Don Bosco willed it and our salesian traditions have repeatedly sanctioned.²³ Faith and charity uphold this structure of salesian fraternity, which has as its principal trait the family spirit. This spirit engenders in the community a certain "climate of shared affection based chiefly on mutual esteem and confidence and leading on to fraternal rapport and sharing of all they possess by the confreres."²⁴ The brother forms part of the praying community, listens to the Word of God, shares in the sacraments of the eucharist and of reconciliation.

He contributes in a responsible way to the planning, execution, and evaluation of all community apostolic programs. He lives in constant fidelity to his specific vocation and becomes, together with his confreres, a sign of that new and permanent brotherhood established by Christ.

1.1.5 *Through profession of the evangelical counsels*

- 177** The brother is aware that the obligation of personal sanctification and the mission entrusted to him are superior to his human forces.

²² Cf ASGC 29.

²³ Cf AGC19 p. 65-67; ASGC 146.

²⁴ ASGC 499.

At the same time he is convinced that the Lord, who has called him, will enable him to fulfill the one and the other, through the special consecration that sustains his life and activity. Under the action of the Holy Spirit he responds to the divine call by offering him his whole being and action for the salvation of youth.

He gives expression to this commitment through the vows, by which he witnesses his way of being a disciple of Christ and proclaims the new christian life and future resurrection.

The brother finds moreover in his religious profession a deep bond with the salesian mission and community life. In the vows he finds the guarantee of true authenticity and supernatural efficacy for his mission, a source of fraternity and pastoral charity, of enthusiasm and apostolic dynamism. The vows render him always available to others and effective in his work. They bind him to a full living of the gospel which he has to witness and communicate to the young.²⁶

1.1.6 *Lay in character*

The lay dimension is the concrete form in which the brother lives and operates as a salesian religious. This is his specific characteristic, a noteworthy and essential value of his identity. This lay aspect then is not to be taken in a negative sense. Neither is it to be understood simply as a service or a function. It is rather the sum total of the values that constitute a lay christian, conditioned by the salesian religious consecration.

This is how the SGC outlined the lay dimension of the brother: "With the characteristics proper to religious life he lives his vocation as a member of the laity, seeking the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. He exercises his baptismal priesthood, prophetic witness and kingly service, and in this way truly shares in the life and mission of Christ in the Church. With the intensity that derives from his specific consecration and by mandate of the Church, and not merely as a private individual, he fulfils the mission of spreading the gospel and of sanctifying in a non-sacramental manner. His works of charity are undertaken with greater dedication within a Congregation devoted to the integral education of youth, especially those in need. Finally, as regards the christian renewal of the temporal

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²⁵ Cf LG 44 & Const 3.

²⁶ Cf Const 68-72; ASGC 106, 117-125.

order, since he has renounced worldliness he exercises this form of apostolate as a religious in a most efficacious manner, educating youth to the christian renewal of work and to other human values."²⁷

This lay dimension permeates the entire life of the brother: his salesian mission, his life in community, his apostolic activity, his religious profession, his life of prayer, and his spiritual life—all of which are lived by him in his capacity of a salesian religious layman. In this way his entire existence focuses itself into a life of witness to the salesian ideal, with respect to his priest confreres, the people who are in his care, and the various branches of the salesian family. All this gives to the salesian community a characteristic of its own, as envisioned by Don Bosco: the enriching presence of a lay dimension, which makes it possible to meet the world in a way that is apostolically more efficacious.²⁸

- 179** Because of his religious consecration the brother differs from secular priests and laymen. Because he is a salesian religious he differs from other religious belonging to other religious families or secular institutes and from other branches of the salesian family. Because he is a lay salesian he differs from the salesian priest. This difference is not one of rank but of charism, which must not disappear into a generic salesian concept that disregards concrete differences, nor be cut off from the complementary dimension of the salesian priesthood. In our Congregation, "the brother retains his characteristic lay dimension in a close integrating rapport with the priestly dimension of the salesian priest."²⁹ We run into a difficulty when in underlining the common elements of the brother and priest, we affirm merely that "we are all salesians." In this way we seem to imply that the lay character and the priestly character are only accidental or secondary elements. On the other hand, if we consider the brother and the priest apart from the bonds of union that unite them vitally to each other, we run the risk of falling into a separatist vision, or worse still into a class distinction of salesian life.

This charismatic diversity postulates an earnest effort to put in proper perspective the specific elements of the brother's identity, during the initial important stages of formation.³⁰ So also the program of vocation recruitment should present the salesian vocation in its two

²⁷ ASGC 149.

²⁸ Cf AWCSB p. 147-154, 574-576.

²⁹ Cf AWCSB p. 574.

³⁰ Cf Reg 92; GC21 Doc. on Formation, n. 263.

components: the lay aspect and the priestly aspect.³¹

We must admit that a study of the identity of the brother presents special difficulty even today because of the lack of extensive research on the general topic of the laity. For instance, we have no studies on the lay vocation in the Church, on the christian layman in the local christian community, on the lay dimension of the religious life, on the charism of authority in religious life with respect to its lay members, etc. For this reason the task of deepening such an understanding is left to our confreres during the coming years. We shall have to explore the meaning of the lay dimension in the life and behavior of the salesian community and of the brothers themselves, bringing out its enriching influence. This study will have to be carried out in the context of our salesian tradition and in keeping with current developments in theology.

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1.2 The apostolic activity of the salesian brother

By reason of his sacramental character of baptism and confirmation and his special vocation, the brother shares in the salesian mission within the Church. As such he has the duty and the right as an educator and evangelizing member of the salesian community to engage in its apostolic activity, which is prophetic, sanctifying, and renewing in respect of the temporal order.

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Since he will bring a lay-religious dimension to the mission entrusted to the community, it follows that there exists a lay contribution which only he can make to the human and christian promotional services through which the salesian mission is unfolded.

This contribution lies in the exercise of those typically lay functions and services that further the development of the salesian mission. It consists in performing all kind of tasks within the structure of the apostolic community, thus sharing in its mission. It finds expression in his willingness to assume the various educative, pastoral, and missionary roles not directly linked to the priestly character, giving to them his own specific imprint of educator in the faith.³²

The whole gamut of activities entered upon by the brother, whether catechetical, missionary, evangelical, pedagogical, cultural, administrative, clerical, domestic... all have an educational and pastoral

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³¹ Cf GC21 Doc. "Salesians evangelizers of the young" 111.

³² Cf Const 37; ASGC 149; AWCSB pp. 134-141, 148-154, 185-186, 555-557, 641-642.

value with respect to the salesian apostolic community. They contribute to the witness that the community gives of unity, cohesion, fraternity, and Christ-centeredness.³³

In the same context and in reply to several provincial chapters that have raised the issue,³⁴ we have to consider the important question of the apostolic dimension of the work entrusted to the brother and of his educational involvement in the school scene, avoiding the pitfall of entrusting him with only the professional training of the students.

Wherever possible it will be necessary to widen the sphere of the brother's activity, remembering that he too has to be an educator in the faith. He will thus be able to bring together in a more unified way the goals of human advancement and christian formation through his effective educational influence. His horizon will be expanded in view of the possibilities of a wider range of salesian service to the young.³⁵

The GC21 accepts and makes its own the invitation of Pope Paul VI: "The laity can also feel themselves called, or can be called by others, to collaborate with the bishops in fostering the vital growth of the ecclesial community by exercising a wide range of ministries, according to the grace and gifts the Lord chooses to bestow upon them."³⁶ The Chapter hopes that the brother, properly prepared, will be able to exercise those ministries "not linked to sacred orders"³⁷ that the evangelizing action of the salesian community will require.

The brother therefore can qualify for all educative and pastoral assignments proper to a salesian, provided they are not connected with a service that requires priestly ordination.³⁸ This means that in a salesian community there are no zones or activities that are the exclusive preserve either of the brother or the priest, with the sole exception of those ministries and roles that are specifically priestly or lay. The specific contribution of each will consist rather in fulfilling the various salesian assignments or service roles with a style, spirit and dimension that is either lay or priestly; thus our common mission will gain both in richness and efficacy.

³³ Cf Const 37; ASGC 29.

³⁴ Cf Sch Precap 367-371, 400.

³⁵ Cf AWCSB pp. 338-342, 555-557.

³⁶ EN 73.

³⁷ EN 73.

³⁸ Cf Const 37.

If however we consider the nature of certain activities and the socio-cultural milieu in which they are carried out, it can be that some of them are more evident and significant signs of the brother's identity. Considering the importance and the incidence of the working classes in many countries for instance, it is clear that activities connected with this area will certainly be the most significant apostolic field of action for the brother in these regions, even if not exclusively so.³⁹

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With his usual sensitivity to the needs of the times, Don Bosco had already emphasized that one of the distinguishing tasks of the brother was to inject christian values in the world of labor, from which he himself had reaped virtues, some of which are still valid today; for instance, the spirit of competition, strict self-discipline, the sound and enriching apologetical value of a religious workingman in the face of a public opinion that is particularly sensitive to the meaning of human labor.

But today work cannot be reduced to this concept alone. It is a new and vast phenomenon that makes all social categories interdependent and interrelated, that determines the characteristics of a special group, creates new cultural models, forges a new type of man. It is a powerful factor in the development of the total human personality. With the expression "the world of labor" we intend to refer not so much to the material aspect of work as to the quality that makes it an agent for cultural and social change.

The brother's different forms of presence in the field of labor will be significant and effective on two conditions:

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- He should never forget that he is always and everywhere a salesian educator. His main objective should be to focus the different elements of that social reality that we call "work" towards those values, individual and collective, that refer to the person of the worker, so as to open up to him the possibility of finding the full and total fulfillment of his personality in adherence to the Faith.
- He should be faithful to his identity as "a lay salesian religious." This implies many obligations:
He will know how to capitalize on the many positive values present in the world of labor (such as the spirit of brotherhood, solidarity, and community, combined with respect for the perso-

³⁹ Cf AWCSB pp. 322-338.

nality of the individual), and at the same time he will know how to point out the evils that threaten him (a materialistic concept of life, resistance to spiritual realities, individualism, envy, sentiments of hostility, temptation to violence).

* He will know how to defend and promote the good of the workingman. As a religious wholly oriented towards Christ, who is the foundation and the summit of all human values, he will be able to identify the dangers that beset these values and help people to overcome them.

* By reason of the concern that he shows and the love that he unceasingly gives to others, he will be able to bear witness to a profound and universal brotherhood that dispels all forms of egoism, exploitation, and self-interest.

* He will reveal the Kingdom of God, already present in the world and in the history of man, and in this way proclaim the Kingdom that is to come.

Technical schools, youth centers for the working classes, christian associations of young workers are some of the valid structures within which the educational efforts of the brother can run parallel to the practical instruction he gives.

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Finally, the brother is eminently suited to inspire cooperators and past pupils who have gone into the labor market, in their human and christian formation and in their apostolic activities.

1.3 Some points about the spiritual life of the salesian brother

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By spiritual life we here mean a practical way of perceiving, experimenting, maturing and living christian and salesian ideals of sanctity. The brother is called to live and bear witness in the salesian community to an experience of faith and of Church with respect to his particular vocation and state of life. This too belongs to his vocational identity.

Salesian spirituality does not exist as an abstract entity, but is embodied concretely in the life of laymen, religious, and priests. The brother perceives and lives it as a lay religious, with a view to being the promoter of an apostolate that is typically lay.⁴²

⁴¹ Cf ASGC 744, 750.

⁴² Cf AWCSB pp. 154-157, 186, 189-191; *Spiritualità dell'azione*, Midali, Rome 1977pp. 278-282.

In keeping with the basic principles of salesian spirituality, the brother cultivates a living and personal union with Christ, the apostle of the Father, who calls everyone to be saved. He knows that he shares Christ's preferential love for poor and abandoned children. He is aware of being God's helper, as a humble and yet necessary and efficacious instrument. He has a deep sense of belonging, to the Church and to the salesian community. In his life and in his behavior he is attuned to the person, the style, and the spirit of Don Bosco, his founder and model. He is conscious moreover that these attitudes proceed from the Holy Spirit, whom he received in baptism and confirmation. It is this same Holy Spirit that continually gives life and meaning to his particular vocation and orients it to the glory of the Father and the salvation of the young who are poor and needy.

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This spiritual experience has a certain personal character and therefore cannot easily be communicated. However, it would certainly be beneficial in this regard to make a collection of examples given by brothers who have had an intense life of prayer and union with God, an extraordinary love for work, a lively sense of belonging to the Congregation, and an ardent attachment to Don Bosco.

Here it is possible to list certain component elements of the brother's spiritual life, drawn from the whole range of his salesian experience:

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- Joy is a positive and enriching value in the religious life of the lay salesian, that contributes significantly and essentially to the identity of the Congregation. The brother regards his vocation as God's gift and his life as the joyful, free, and personal response that he makes to God; it is the *raison d'être* of his existence, his only path to personal sanctity.⁴³
- Together with his brother priests, he lives a life of family intimacy, work, and prayer. A characteristic of his spirituality must be this experience of deep interpersonal relationship with the salesian priest. This conveys to him a vibrant sense of the Church as a family in which all of us are children of the same Father and equally responsible, albeit with differing ministries and roles that enrich and complete each other. Hence flows the awareness of his responsibility, the indispensable nature of his contribution, and at the same time the need he has of others.⁴⁴

⁴³ Cf Const 37.4.

⁴⁴ Cf Const 2, 34.

- 189 — The special characteristics of “the world of labor,” often a field of apostolic activity for the brother, enable him to experience in a concrete way certain values of the salesian spirit, such as a certain practical sense, a sense of urgency, a spirit of initiative and creativity, an ability to check back periodically and to adapt himself to different circumstances.⁴⁵
- The lay orientation of the brother and the type of work in which he is often involved enable him to enjoy “a new and close presence” with the young and with lay people. He can thus put into practice in a very particular way “the salesian style of relationships”: openness and cordiality, simplicity, delicate familiarity, progressive development of the social graces characteristic of lay people.⁴⁶
 - Generally speaking, the brother is in a position to enjoy the special trait of salesian optimism, because of his involvement in the creative world of technology and art. He is thus enabled to appreciate material values,⁴⁷ to admire the creative power which God entrusts to man, and to rejoice in the achievements of human science.
- 190 — The brother is a religious who has the holy ambition of transforming all his actions, from the lowest to the most brilliant, into an oblation to God, for his greater honor and glory and for his Kingdom. Thus his life is dominated by a special “filial and priestly enthusiasm, and becomes a liturgy for the sole glory of the Father.”⁴⁸
- Vatican II states that religious profession enables one to conform to “the type of virginal and humble life that Christ the Lord elected for himself and that his Virgin Mother also chose.”⁴⁹ The same Council presents Mary to the laity as “the perfect model of their spiritual and apostolic life.”⁵⁰ In this context devotion to Mary most holy becomes for the brother a personal and enriching experience.
- 191 When the spiritual life of the salesian leads him, in imitation of Don Bosco, to practise charity to an heroic degree, then we can say that

⁴⁵ Cf Const 43.

⁴⁶ Cf Const 45; AA 4i, 29c.

⁴⁷ Cf Const 47.

⁴⁸ Cf Const 67, 70.

⁴⁹ Cf LG 46b; PC 25.

⁵⁰ Cf AA 4.

he has reached the summit and becomes a source of enrichment for the entire Congregation. The GC21 finds reason to believe that this gift has been granted to several salesian brothers. Each one of us knows some confrere who has attained this fullness in different places and under varied circumstances, sometimes in the most hidden and self-sacrificing ways. Many have found a place in the annals of the Congregation. Some of them, martyrs for the faith or heroes of charity, have become candidates for canonization. All these instances give further evidence of the charismatic richness found in the salesian lay vocation.

1.4 Sharing the life and government of the Congregation

As a member of the Salesian Congregation the brother finds himself in a relationship of corporate responsibility arising from his special salesian vocation, in which he lives as a brother among brothers. 192

The whole of salesian tradition testifies to the rich and varied contribution made by the brother to the life of the community, with instances of direct responsibility in the structures of authority at all levels:

- At the local level he assumes various roles of responsibility, both in the religious and the educational community: principal, craftsman, technical director, financial administrator... member of the council.⁵¹
- At the provincial level, he shares in all the leadership functions of the province—standing committees, secretariates, can be a member of the provincial council and a delegate to the provincial chapter.⁵³
- At the world level, he can be a member of the General Chapter,⁵⁴ and form part of the Superior Council of the Congregation.⁵⁵

The brother thus makes his responsible and effective contribution to the life of the community.⁵⁶ Living in harmony, sharing authority and responsibility according to the principles of subsidiarity and

⁵¹ Const 185-189.

⁵² Const 171-176.

⁵³ Const 179.

⁵⁴ Const 156.

⁵⁵ Const 146.

⁵⁶ Cf Const 34.

decentralization, he plays his part in the animation of the community's apostolate.⁵⁷ His authority is exercised always "in the name and in imitation of Christ, according to the spirit of Don Bosco, as a service rendered to brothers to discern and fulfil the will of the Father."⁵⁸

- 193** The GC21 notes that brothers are present in a large number of local councils, and form part of about one half of the provincial councils. Their presence at the provincial chapters held in 1977 was rather sparse and very few were elected as delegates to the General Chapter. In this regard, both the World Congress of Brothers and the provincial chapters of 1977⁶⁰ requested that the representation of brothers in councils, and more especially chapters be assured and made more effective.

Considering the nature and finality of Provincial and of General Chapters,⁶¹ the request that a realistic and significant presence of brothers be guaranteed would seem to be well founded, so that the Congregation may not be deprived of the valid contribution of lay salesian experience at a moment of reflection, evaluation and decision so important for our life and mission.

It is not here a question of ensuring the presence of a particular group or class of confreres, nor even of responding to a sociological need. We are dealing instead with a charismatic reality, to which we are not yet perhaps sufficiently sensitized. Through a significant representation of the brother at the Provincial and General Chapters, we want to ensure the presence at these assemblies of the two dimensions, priestly and lay, that make up our Congregation.

If the presence of the lay dimension is found to be very inadequate, it seems imperative to provide a remedy to the situation in the best possible way. Rather than multiply juridical norms, the GC21 thinks it best to leave the solution of this problem to the salesian sensibility of the confreres.

⁵⁷ Cf Const 126, 127.

⁵⁸ Const 125.

⁵⁹ AWCSB p. 552, proposal 7.

⁶⁰ Sch Precap 372-374.

⁶¹ Const 177, 151.

1.5 Essential mutual relationship between the salesian brother and the salesian priest

In an opening statement we said that Don Bosco's expressed will was that our salesian communities should comprise priests and laymen. As a consequence of this the brother should be able to live his salesian vocation in its many enriching aspects that we have presented above, not in isolation, but in brotherly relationship with the salesian priest. "In our Congregation," says Father Ricceri, "the brother lives his distinctive lay characteristic in a close integrating rapport with the priestly character of the salesian priest. The lay character of the brother is not something apart and independent... It exists in a wonderful symbiosis with the priestly character of the salesian priest. In our communities both of these qualitative elements are mutually complementary and result in a unique spirituality of action that characterizes a salesian community in the Church... In the same way the priestly character does not exist alone and independent... The lay function and the priestly function are interrelated in our Congregation. We are dealing here with a special charismatic phenomenon that needs to be studied at greater depth. This is the living reality that we are thinking about; we are a community of priests and laymen that in a vital exchange share the wealth of their vocational differences and in a deep spiritual bond share a common pastoral mission directed primarily to the young and the poor."⁶²

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A relationship of this sort does not mean subordination or opposition, nor does it mean the loss or fusion of one's individuating characteristics. On the contrary, it is a mark that distinguishes our salesian apostolic communities and their members.

In this way the presence of the brother enriches the community. It reminds the priest members of the values inherent in the lay religious vocation and recalls them constantly to an active collaboration with lay people. Effectively it achieves the ideal of Don Bosco, who wanted to influence the young through a deep experience of priests working together with lay people in the same religious community. "This presence serves to remind the salesian priest... of an apostolic goal and ideal that is complex in its reality, because it goes beyond priestly and catechetical activity in the strict sense."⁶³

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⁶² AWCSB pp. 574-577.

⁶³ Fr Ricceri, Cf AWCSB p. 575.

To the young it presents the values of the lay religious vocation as an alternative to the priestly religious vocation. To those who do not feel themselves called to the religious life, it offers a more immediate model of the christian life, of sanctified work, and of the lay apostolate. It offers the community a particular type of incarnation in the world and a particular presence in the Church.

- 196 Since they are closely related to each other in the internal affairs of the community, the brother and the salesian priest mutually characterize and influence each other. It is not possible to define adequately the identity of the brother without reference to the identity of the salesian priest and viceversa. The crisis of identity or the changed perspective of the one involve and affect the other to some extent. Their spiritual strengths enrich each other, and the poverty of spiritual life, whether lay or priestly, has a negative effect on both.

For the salesian community to remain faithful to its original project and for its members to develop faithfully their own characteristic physiognomy, priests and brothers must know and be deeply open with each other in the contemplation of God's gift. "Thus it will be possible to realize this wonderful exchange, in which each one remains himself but is oriented toward the other, and both toward the ones to whom we have been sent. A priest who does not regard his brother in this light, or who belittles his real presence and prophetic mission, is a priest who does not have a full grasp of his own identity. This same uneasiness should likewise disturb the conscience of the brother in his desire for brotherhood, since he has freely committed himself to a life of communion. He should be disturbed when he sees priests who do not feel themselves stirred by the presence of the Lord... and who cheapen their ministry with various forms of clericalisms, worldliness, and vain spiritual banalities."⁶⁴

Regarding this mutual relationship the Rector Major, Fr. Egidio Viganò, has stated, "I believe it will be a very useful thing if the experts continue to deepen our understanding of this peculiar type of fusion and organic complementarity which exists between the ministerial priesthood and the lay consecration in our salesian life."⁶⁵

The Congregation therefore must continue its reflection on the manner in which the lay and priestly dimension of the brother and the salesian priest relate to and complete each other in the internal structure of the one salesian apostolic community.

⁶⁴ AWCSB pp. 307-308.

⁶⁵ GC21: Intervention in the assembly, 24 January 1978, n. 235.

2. THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION AND THE SALESIAN BROTHER

Up to now we have been dealing almost exclusively with the personal vocation of the brother. Now we would like to broaden our discourse to the level of the whole Congregation.

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From what has already been said, it is clear that the brother is an enrichment for our Society; he represents one of its essential and indispensable dimensions. The special religious vocation of a lay salesian affects the global tone of the Congregation, and together with the priestly dimension defines its identity.

The theme of the brother "touches the very nature of the Congregation. To ask what is the brother is the same thing as asking, What is the nature of the Congregation, its mission, its spirit? Because the Congregation that Don Bosco willed and founded cannot be thought of as other than an apostolic community of consecrated laymen and clerics. If you look closely, the problems of the brother are the same as the problems of the Congregation. They are our most real and most essential problems."⁶⁶

The Congregation therefore must keep faithful to the charismatic nature that Don Bosco gave it. This must be not just a theoretical or doctrinal fidelity, but one that is concrete and historical. In other words, it must not merely be said that it is both clerical and lay but it must really be so, in a clear, visible manner, as demonstrated in its attitude, in its life and external manifestations. A Salesian Congregation without the presence of lay members would no longer be the Congregation willed by Don Bosco. It would become historically unfaithful, even if in its official documents it continued to proclaim that it is composed of clerics and laymen.

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Perhaps it should also be added that when in some provinces the proportion of brothers to priests is seriously compromised, then in those places at least we no longer give a complete and exact witness of what we are charismatically.

The GC21 declares with Father Ricceri that "the rediscovery and the reactivation of the brother will indeed mean a greater fidelity to the ideal of Don Bosco and a deepening of our community reality as salesians."⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Fr Ricceri, ASC 272, pp. 63-65; AWCSB p. 588, 590-591.

⁶⁷ ASC 272, p. 65; AWCSB p. 591.

3. THE SERVICE OF THE SALESIAN SUPERIOR AND THE SALESIAN BROTHER

3.1 The problem

199 After a century of peaceful and universal acceptance of the tradition that in our salesian communities the one who is called upon to lead and inspire the others should possess the priestly character,⁶⁸ the question has now been raised in the Congregation, more in some regions than others, whether the brother may exercise the service of superior.

Several questions are raised. Why cannot the brother lead the salesian community? Cannot the salesian community fulfill the same mission even if it is animated by a brother? Why not eliminate from the Constitutions whatever savors of distinction between the brother and salesian priest?

This question arises primarily from the fact that the brotherly equality of our members does not seem to be fully achieved as long as any distinction on this point remains in our particular Code. No development of the salesian lay vocation seems attainable, and no proper presentation of this vocation to the youth of today seems possible unless and until this distinction is taken out of our Constitutions. Other considerations are drawn from a renewed sensibility and from the new position assumed by the laity in the Church, especially after Vatican II. These questions are posed with a sincere desire of interpreting "the will of our Founder for our day and age."⁶⁹

It is evident that we are not dealing merely with a juridical or sociological question; nor is it a problem that arises from a consideration of religious life in general. It is question of a specific religious ecclesial problem that can be termed "salesian." It is concerned with a particular mode of life, as found in the salesian community as started and structured by Don Bosco, and lived and approved by the Church, with a view to the fulfilment of the concrete mission that the Holy Spirit entrusted to our Father and Founder.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ "It is an undeniable fact that the rector in our Congregation has always been a priest." Address of the RM, Fr E Viano, 24 Jan. 1978, n. 214.

⁶⁹ Cf *Contributo di Studio* to Scheme III, n. 579-592, especially 579, 580, 584; Cf also *Sch Precap* 318.

⁷⁰ Cf Fr Ricceri, Closing address WCSB in AWCSB pp. 576-577 n. 3.3.

3.2 The considerations and the deliberations of the SGC

This question was deeply felt by the SGC (1971), which had the assignment of reflecting on the identity of the Salesian Congregation, with a view to the revision of the Constitutions themselves.⁷¹ Thanks to the careful preparation made it was possible to grasp the question with all its motivations and implications.⁷²

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The problem of the priesthood as a condition for the office of salesian superior was studied specifically in the treatise "Those responsible for our mission."⁷³ It was discussed in depth, because it was realized that we were touching a point that concerned the very roots of our spirit and of our salesian life, both with regard to the internal government of the community and with regard to the pastoral method proper to our mission.

The SGC concluded its study with the decision that became part of the new text of the Constitutions: "It is our tradition that the salesian community be guided in its apostolic task by a member who by his sacerdotal ordination and by his pastoral experience is able to direct it spiritually and orientate its mission."⁷⁴

The postcapitular program for helping in the application of the capitular deliberations included among other things Congresses for the Brothers, for the purpose of studying the documents that referred to them,⁷⁵ clarifying their identity and suggesting practical applications of what was discussed in the Chapter.⁷⁶

3.3 The World Congress of Brothers and the Provincial Chapters of 1977

The authoritative answer of the SGC did not end the question. It continued to be deeply felt in various parts of the Congregation.

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The World Congress of Brothers was held in Rome (1975) in a climate of true salesian spirit.⁷⁷ Besides the in-depth study of several themes touching the identity of the brother, his apostolic activity, and his

⁷¹ Cf ES II; PC 2,3.

⁷² Cf "What salesians think of their Congregation today" (1969) vol IV, Chap VI pp. 134-143.

⁷³ Cf Sch Precap 319.

⁷⁴ Const 35.

⁷⁵ Cf ASGC 763, 4b.

⁷⁶ Cf ASGC 184, 4a.

⁷⁷ Cf Address Fr Ricceri AWCSB pp. 569-571 n. 1.

formation,⁷⁸ there emerged the psychological question of what was them termed "juridical equality."⁷⁹

In his closing address the Rector Major, Fr. Luigi Ricceri, whilst manifesting his intention to have this topic of such vast importance studied further,⁸⁰ declared: "The conscience of the Congregation has for the present answered this question through the formal deliberations of the SGC, during which this problem was studied in depth and an answer given through the Constitutions."⁸¹

He then emphasized the point that for an eventual change in this matter it would be necessary to determine whether we were here dealing with an essential or non-essential element of our charism. He recalled the three conditions that have to be verified when we want to shed light on this or any other point that touches on the original charism of the Congregation:

- the explicit and verifiable will of the Founder
- the relation of the particular point in question to our specific mission
- the formal pronouncement of the Church.⁸²

202 Accepting these criteria, it must be admitted that the studies made thus far, especially during the past few years, do not support the possibility of a change in this matter along the lines suggested.

In preparation for the GC21, a certain number of provincial chapters returned to the same argument. Some asked that we should eliminate from the Constitutions every juridical inequality between the salesian brother and the salesian priest; others confirmed the decision of the SGC; still others requested a yet deeper study of so important a problem.⁸⁴

The arguments put forth, both with respect to keeping the status quo and in favor of making a change, do not make any substantial addition to the arguments already expressed by the SGC and by the World Congress of Brothers.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Cf Sch Precap n. 334-340.

⁷⁹ Cf Address Fr Ricceri, AWCSB p. 573 n. 3.3; Sch Precap n. 342; Cf "Proposals and motions of WCSB" n. 4, AWCSB pp. 548-551.

⁸⁰ Cf Address Fr Ricceri, AWCSB p. 573, n. 3.2.

⁸¹ Fr Ricceri, AWCSB p. 578, n. 3.3.5.

⁸² Cf Address Fr Ricceri, AWCSB p. 579 n. 3.3.6.

⁸³ Cf Studies presented to WCSB in AWCSB.

⁸⁴ Cf Sch Precap n. 47-53.

⁸⁵ Cf Sch Precap n. 48, 49, 51; Contribution to Scheme III (1977), n. 578-601. "The reasons available are substantially those taken into consideration already by the SGC." Ibid. 603.

3.4 The 21st General Chapter

The GC21, in the light of the proposals of the provincial chapters and the resolutions of the World Congress of Brothers, decided in favor of a further reflection on this topic. At the beginning of the Chapter, the Cardinal Secretary of State, in the name of Pope Paul VI, sent to the Rector Major, Fr. Luigi Ricceri, a letter "of exhortation and orientation for the Chapter members." In it Cardinal Villot refers directly to this question with the following words: 203

"Finally, filled with hope at the sight of the flourishing development of the Salesian Family and its organization, the Vicar of Christ expressed the desire that the Institute may remain faithful to the essential elements that give it its identity, even with regard to the figure and function of the Rector, so that the latter, enhanced by the charism of his priestly ordination, may be able to guide with ecclesial wisdom the increasing variety of groups whose aim is to lead a committed life under the leadership and in the spirit of St. John Bosco."

The significance of this message was underlined first by the outgoing Rector Major, Fr. Luigi Ricceri, and later by the incoming Rector Major, Fr. Egidio Viganò, who said in part: 204

"This letter introduced a very clear orientation for the work of our Chapter. It is an additional source of light for us to see more clearly and securely. As Father Ricceri stated in answering some questions on the subject, 'They are the words of a Father inviting us to study with serenity, with thoroughness and with fine salesian sensitivity the problems of the Chapter, particularly those which bear on the living identity of the Society. They are the words of our guide in the process of discernment in which we are all engaged in deeds and not just in words, and they are the highest and richest guarantee we have of the authentic identity of our vocation.'⁸⁶

The GC21, conscious of its responsibility, has studied at length the reality of the salesian brother and has amply delineated the figure of the salesian superior, to emphasize especially the latter's role of spiritual guide of the community and the pastoral guide of our salesian mission.⁸⁷ 205

⁸⁶ Cf n. 221.

⁸⁷ Cf "Salesians evangelizers of the young" n. 46-57.

Therefore in an attitude of veneration and special adhesion for the successor of Peter,⁸⁸ the supreme Superior of our Society, and accepting his teaching with docility,⁸⁹ mindful also of the way of thinking of Don Bosco who said that the word of the Pope must be our Rule always and in everything,⁹⁰ after prayer, reflection and a sincere seeking of the Lord's will, the Chapter has decided to maintain, in accordance with the Pope's wish the salesian tradition codified by the SGC in art. 35 of the Constitutions: that the salesian community be guided in its apostolic task by a member who by his priestly ordination and by his pastoral experience is able to direct it spiritually and orientate its mission.

The GC21 entrusts all salesians with the duty of making every effort to increase their awareness of the true and deep salesian brotherhood that Don Bosco wanted to be the form and spirit of our communities.

4. Practical directives

- 206** We salesians must pay special attention to the acceptance and proper assessment of the richness of the vocational identity of the brother, and its essential significance for the life and mission of the Congregation.
- a) Therefore let every province draw up an efficacious program to ensure that all confreres, priests and brothers, deepen their understanding of the true sense of the consecrated life of the brother and his specific community commitment. Retreats and on-going formation courses can be very opportune occasions for this purpose.
- 207** b) To promote an accurate knowledge of the brother within the salesian set-up, to foster his spiritual life and aid vocational work in his connection, the Department for Formation shall arrange for further study of the newer aspects of this vocation, and for the publication of biographies of salesian brothers.
- 208** c) So that the equality and diversity inherent in the identities of the salesian priest and brother may be accepted as one of the riches of the salesian community and become a reality of daily life, each salesian must both

⁸⁸ Cf Const 44.

⁸⁹ Cf Const 128.

⁹⁰ MB VI, 494.

accept these facts internally and manifest externally through certain basic attitudes: a root conviction about their fundamental equality and respective diversities; family spirit; fraternal co-responsibility; the joyful recognition of the mutual need of the one group for the other; complementarity and generous solidarity; the practical recognition of a proper though relative autonomy and responsibility of each group.

d) The presence of the brother in a salesian community touches deeply the identity of the Congregation itself. In the next six years the provinces must feel the urgent need of intensifying the seeking of brother vocations. Let the apostolic presence of brothers amongst young people be intensified, so that they may provide a significant and evident witness amongst the young people concerned. **209**

e) A meaningful presence of brothers in councils and chapters is primarily a service given to the salesian community of the specific charism of consecrated lay life. For this reason in proposing members for provincial councils and electing delegates to provincial chapters, the confreres should keep in mind the advantages of having also brothers present. **210**

f) In electing delegates of the province for a General Chapter, the members of the provincial chapter should keep in mind the possibility they have of choosing delegates amongst the brothers especially when the province has the right to send more than one delegate.

g) To bear faithful witness in the Church and the world to the charismatic gift received by Don Bosco the Congregation at every level must present an accurate official image of a religious community of priests and laymen, and ensure that neither figure is privileged with respect to the other. **211**

**Intervention of the Rector Major
Fr Egidio Viganò on**

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**"SHARING IN THE LIFE AND
GOVERNMENT OF THE CONGREGATION"**

For convenience and because of its special character, this address of the Rector Major given on 24th January 1978, is inserted here after Document 2 instead of in the Appendix.

I feel I have *an obligation in conscience* to intervene on the theme we were asked to reflect on over the past few days, i.e. "sharing in the life and government of the Congregation," and on the letter received from the Holy Father on the subject.

The fact that I am speaking to you on the 24th of the month, the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, our Patron, is partly coincidence but not altogether so; there was also an element of personal choice.

1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MY INTERVENTION

- 212** I feel compelled to intervene because of the nature of the Rector Major's role, through which I have been entrusted with the clear responsibility for conducting this General Chapter (cf Const. Art. 155) and with the guidance of the Congregation for the next six years (cf Const. Art. 129ff).

I have no intention of involving either the Presidency or the Central Coordinating Committee. I assume full responsibility and am speaking as Rector Major, after prayer and reflection, after discussion and assessment with the person you appointed as my "closest collaborator" (cf Const. Art. 138), the Vicar General, Fr. Cajetan Scervo.

I am intervening with particular seriousness, therefore: I hope I shall be both clear and precise because the point at issue goes right to the roots of our salesian spirit and life-style and is directly related, in consequence, to our future renewal, to the unity of our Congregation, to the identity of its members, and to the animation of the whole salesian family.

Evidently I am speaking at a particular and well-defined moment in history i.e. the GC21 and in view of my mandate as Rector Major for the next six years; it is normal for concrete aspects of life and the realism of government to be clearly defined, but the important thing to note is that precisely at this historical juncture I feel it my duty to have recourse, simply and in this family context, to the practical exercise of the supreme ministry of unity and guidance which is proper to the Rector Major.

2. WHERE THE PROBLEM REALLY LIES

Allow me to go straight to the heart of the problem. We are all in complete agreement, I hope, on the importance of the salesian brother and of the need for his advancement. But strictly speaking, this is not the problem which is causing tension among us: the real issue is a different one, even though it is linked with this.

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Even before the SGC the following question was raised: *when we consider the constituent elements of the salesian project, is the service of authority substantially linked to the ministry of the priesthood or not?*

At that time the question covered the problem of authority in the Congregation at all levels (Rector, Provincial, Rector Major); today the problem area has been limited for us to that of the Rector. For the proper presentation of this argument, direct consideration must necessarily be given to the kind of authority that must animate and serve the salesian community. In the Congregation no member has the right to accede to the function of authority (in the elections of the 15th December, last month, the thought of rights never crossed my mind when I heard the names read out; I just trembled with fear). Rather it is the community which according to the particular and specific character of our Institute has the right to be served by the appropriate authority; it is the members taken together in communion who have the right to be guided and animated by a certain specific kind of authority.

Now it is an undeniable fact that the rector in our Congregation has always been a priest; it is equally clear that the rector always figured among the prime concerns of Don Bosco, of all his successors and of all the General Chapters, and was always considered of central importance.

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The problem therefore presents us with the possibility of a qualitative change in the life of the salesian community. It would be foolish to conceal or to play down this fact: before making a qualitative change, one must have a clear and in-depth knowledge of the values at issue, of the motives advanced and of the consequences that will follow, together with the relative advantages and disadvantages.

The proposal for a possible and "radical about-turn" in this field stemmed from different ways of envisaging the function of authority in the salesian community:

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- some argued that the pastoral charity of the salesian community should, on account of the constitutive elements of the salesian project, be guided and nourished by a type of authority that is enriched by the graces of the priestly ministry, a ministry which was powerfully probed by Vatican II and then given fresh relevance in the Church in reply to the signs of the times and in view of a new epoch in history;
- others however took the view that the style and activity of the salesian community must adapt to the signs of the times as seen in the process of

secularization and socialization, and in the light of Conciliar Ecclesiology of the People of God, in which context can be seen emerging for religious life the equality values of baptism, and for the Church the importance of the laity. Following this line, the kind of salesian authority needed in this new age should no longer be necessarily linked with the priestly ministry.

The arguments for both sides were already accumulated in the course of the SGC. They were of various kinds: religious-ecclesiological, socio-cultural, psychological, those that were more concerned with the future and those that were more concerned with our past salesian history. In the various discussion encounters that have followed the SGC, more or less the same arguments have been heard over and over again, without any further substantial progress but with the loss at times of serenity in dialogue.

3. A SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF THE "SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO"

216 It will be clear by now that we are not dealing with a "generic" problem on the theology of the priesthood or on the theology of religious life, but with a highly individuated, concrete "charismatic experience": that of the Society of St. Francis de Sales which was begun by Don Bosco in whose spirit it has grown.

It is to this solid bedrock of living reality that we must descend if our arguments are to have any validity.

What are the elements that go to make up our Institute's "own special character"? When is some specific element considered to belong "substantially" to this special character as part of the foundation core?

The adverb "substantially," excuse the parenthesis, is to be taken "technically" here, with a meaning similar to that which it bears in theology in reference to the "substance" of a sacrament, which depends more on the free determining will of the Founder than on any ideological requirements or generic abstract arguments. The issue before us is not a doctrinal problem about metaphysical values but a clear-cut practical issue which is historical and pedagogical, and which cannot be deduced in any way from the nature of things but solely from the will of the Founder who determined the shape of his particular pastoral project of pedagogy.

In religious life there are many Institutes, but each has its own constitutive project in accordance with a truly wonderful pluriformity of charisms. Indeed, the religious state is "not intermediary between the clerical and lay condition" but derives from both, as a special gift for the whole Church (LG 43); on account of this there exists in religious life a whole range of types of authority, which go from the constitutional inclusion of the priestly ministry to its non-relevance, to its impossibility and indeed even to its positive exclusion.

All this helps us to situate the problem, but does not yet resolve it.

4. THE SOLUTION GIVEN BY THE SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER

In our case, after the issue had been raised, we had a clear statement of the official position from the SGC, which because of its nature as a "Special" General Chapter, was called upon to deal with the issue of identity in all its essential elements. (Cf Pre-Capit. Scheme 1st Comm - A,4b "Peculiar form of the Congregation of the salesian religious" pp. 109-151. These pages served as a basis for discussion and approval of the solution taken by the Chapter Members).

The solution of the Special General Chapter is an official and authoritative answer: it was given with the knowledge, preparation, discussion, qualified approval and explicit formulation that are proper to the supreme authority of the Congregation in a Special General Chapter, entrusted by the Holy See and by all the confreres with the mandate to study and decide whether the figure and function of the rector in the Congregation, by constitutive tradition, required the functions and charisms of the priestly ministry.

The substance of the answer given by the Chapter is codified in the text of Art. 35 of the new Constitutions, in which it is stated that according to our tradition, the community must be guided by a superior whose function is enhanced by the special graces of priestly ordination.

Furthermore, the SGC planned a whole process of renewal, in which the analysis of the situation and the promotion of the figure of the salesian brother featured clearly. The ultimate expression in this programme of activities was the World Congress of Salesian Brothers.

From the beginning, prior to the SGC, the presentation of this problem was couched by many in terms of a direct connection with the promotion of the brother—as if his missing "juridical equality" were the most significant aspect of it all; the outcome was that, for various reasons (on which it would be profitable to dwell), discussions, uncertainties and research carried on. We find all of these, collected in an orderly fashion, in the Acts of the World Congress of Salesian Brothers; some of them were taken up and expanded by various provincial chapters in some proposals sent to this 21st G.C. (see Pre-Capitular Documents).

How are we to understand, and what meaning are we to give to this persistence of the problem after the SGC?

- First of all we must acknowledge its existence, because it does represent a concrete phenomenon that has to be dealt with. We are all equally responsible for the life and vitality of our communities. We have indeed to find a common point of fraternal unity and a dimension of growth, which will help us to overcome all difficulties and to see more clearly, for the love of Don Bosco.
- Then we have to admit that objectively we are dealing with a limited situation, peculiar to well-defined areas and groups of confreres who put

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forward a "proposal" without the guarantee of a solution. As one of you has already pointed out, a World Congress is not an ordinary and even less a special General Chapter. No doubt it has more than a negligible weight of indicative and research value, but one cannot attribute to it a value of solution and directive with the authority of a constitutional body.

- 219** In his concluding talk to the World Congress of Salesian Brothers the Rector Major, Father Ricceri, underlined the delicate nature of this problem and stated discreetly "It seems to me that we are dealing here with something that touches the very essence of our organization as a religious community... In the presence of a possible doubt, whether or not any one element belonged to the essence of our Congregation, we could not proceed with the change only for the reason that a change is possible." If we acted otherwise, in the specific case of the rector, without grave reasons and objective proofs, "we would run the risk of renouncing an explicit choice of our Founder, with the inevitable consequence of depriving our Congregation and the whole salesian family of one of its essential values. And by doing this, we would in time make less truly salesian the members of our family and therefore the very figure of the salesian brother that we want to promote" (Acts WCSB - English Edition pp. 457-458).
- 220** Where does one find the criteria to establish whether an element belongs to the essence or not of our salesian charism? In the same talk of Fr. Ricceri, three necessary conditions are indicated:
- a) the explicit and verifiable will of the Founder;
 - b) the approval and formal declaration by the Hierarchy;
 - c) the harmonization of such an element with the methodology of the preventive system in the practical realization of our mission (Acts WCSB, English Edition p. 458).

In these last years various studies, more or less enlightening, have been made in this threefold direction; it is certainly possible to go even deeper into this subject, and it is desirable that more than one scholar will undertake to do so with love and expertise.

5. THE EXPLICIT DIRECTION OF THE POPE ON THE FIGURE OF THE RECTOR

- 221** At the beginning of this 21st General Chapter, the Holy Father intervened personally with a letter sent to us by Cardinal Villot, and solemnly read on the day of the official opening of the Chapter. The Pope's direction is clear in its expression: *"The Vicar of Christ expresses the desire that the Institute may remain faithful to the essential elements that give it its identity, even with regard to the figure and function of the Rector, so that the latter, enhanced by*

his priestly ordination, may be able to guide with ecclesial wisdom the increasing variety of groups whose aim is to lead a committed life under the leadership and in the spirit of St. John Bosco."

Obviously this letter introduced a very clear orientation for the work of our Chapter; it is an additional source of light for us to see more clearly and securely, as Fr. Ricceri stated in answering some questions on the subject: "They are the words of a Father inviting us to study with serenity, with thoroughness and with fine salesian sensitivity, the problems of the Chapter, particularly those which bear on the living identity of the Society. They are the words of our guide in the process of discernment in which we are all engaged, in deeds and not just in words, and they are the highest and richest guarantee we have of the authentic identity of our vocation."

I would like to point out moreover that when the letter deals with the subject of the rector, to the clear and precise terms is added a more deliberate and authoritative tone; in fact the terms "Vicar of Christ" and "fidelity" precisely to "an essential element" are used.

6. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CHAPTER

How was the Pope's intervention to be taken into account by the Chapter as far as its work was concerned? 222

One proposal was that in the final Chapter Documents due prominence and importance should be given both to its specific statements and to its implications.

For the moment I confine myself to an application to the situation we have reached in our discussion of this scheme.

The Commission's line of approach was to present in the last part of its document a synthesis of the two well known positions, and a provisional text was drawn up which was intended exclusively for the Chapter members (Cf GC21 424/4.0.28). It contains the affirmation (No. 131): "The only path that can lead to a possible change is that of spiritual discernment by the assembly." Once such a discernment has been carried out by the GC21, it is for the Holy See to judge of the genuineness and proper application of our charism (LG 12, Const 151-153). For this reason it was proposed to put four preliminary questions to the assembly for decision.

The Presidency of the 4th Commission discussed with the Coordinating Committee the significance of such a concept of 'discernment' with the object of initiating a debate in the general assembly on the two opposing positions as being equally tenable and with the further intention of submitting the conclusion (if it should prove to be negative) to the Holy See for a definitive judgement.

The Co-ordinating Committee were unanimously of the opinion that if this method were to be used, the assembly should first be informed. They

thought that Cardinal Villot's letter did not call for any request on our part for further clarification, but required our immediate and complete acceptance; any other reaction would have been incomprehensible to the majority of the confreres both inside and outside the General Chapter.

The discussion continued in this sense until agreement was reached on the three preliminary questions put to the vote on Tuesday 10th January. The result of the voting indicated the path to be followed and the 4th Commission revised their text in this sense.

7. SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE AUTHORITY TO BE GIVEN TO THE LETTER

- 223** Everyone is well aware of the great extent to which a critical and hermeneutic capacity has developed in recent years, even in the Church; within proper limits this promotes in us a more reasonable and adult life of faith, but if it is exaggerated or distorted, it leads to a destruction of vital values which are central to the christian vocation itself.

If a process of hermeneutic analysis were to lead someone to formulate some such question as: "But what is the value of a letter like this, and what kind of adhesion does it call for, prompted as it was by a very limited and confined set of circumstances?", he would at the same time have to be prepared to answer the related question: "And what specific authority does the GC21 have in connection with this problem, and what would be the genuinely salesian attitude it should adopt?" A General Chapter, clearly aware of its objectives and its limitations, cannot in fact be anything other than an expression of fidelity to Don Bosco because, as I have already said, the authority of a Chapter is indeed confined and determined by circumstances.

An official letter from the Secretariate of State, sent through the Cardinal Secretary Villot, is an authoritative statement of the Holy Father's judgement on the problem of the figure and function of the rector which was to be considered in the GC21.

- 224** The authoritative nature of this statement can be illustrated by the example of the intervention of the Pope in connection with an analogous problem in the last General Congregation of the Jesuits. On 3rd December 1974 the Secretary of State, the same Cardinal Villot, sent a letter to the Jesuit General who was presiding over their 31st General Congregation. The letter discreetly expressed the mind of the Holy Father in the following words: "It is the desire of his Holiness that you should be informed that such an innovation would seem to present difficulties grave enough to impede the necessary approbation on the part of the Holy See."

During the retreat, Fr. Luiz Gonzalez told us of what happened subsequently. When the Pope heard of the Chapter discussions and voting on the problem he had referred to, he called for an objective report on the matter.

Then on 15th February he sent a further letter to the Father General, this time signed personally by himself, in which he reaffirmed "what our Cardinal Secretary of State wrote to you under our direction on the 3rd December last: ...no innovation can be introduced." And after an assurance that he was "not influenced by any minor considerations or by a grief which is ignorant of the problems involved" but by love for the Society itself which must remain faithful to its Founder and thus produce a great increase in the fruitfulness of the ever more difficult work in the future, he went on: "With this in view, we express the doubts we are feeling because of certain attitudes and tendencies which are emerging as the Congregation continues to hold its sessions. Will the Church be able to trust the Society as it has done in the past? What will be the attitude of the ecclesiastical hierarchy towards the Society? How will the hierarchy be able, without fear, to entrust the Society with crucial and delicate tasks?... The times is decisive for the Society of Jesus, for its future, and also for all religious families. We are thinking of the innumerable repercussions which, God forbid, a way of proceeding contrary to what we have outlined might have on the Society itself and even on the Church."

As we know, the eventual result was positive, and on the 7th March in an allocution to the Father General and his Assistants, the Holy Father insisted once again on the importance of fidelity to the 'Formula of the Institute,' which is the guarantee of the identity of the Society and assures the fruitfulness of its apostolate.

This episode, not unlike our own in its early stages, and similar interventions with other Congregations, makes clear the objective weight the Holy See attaches to this kind of letter and to the discreet literary style in which the Pope's thought is expressed. It makes us realise too that the problem of the rector, seen by some only at the level of the promotion of the salesian brother, must be viewed against a much wider ecclesial background. A whole delicate confrontation is involved in fact between religious life and today's secularization process with its dangerous tendency to degenerate in some ways into straight secularism, with ecclesiology being eroded by sociological ideas. This fact, I think, is making it imperative for the Holy See to view certain phenomena and ideological tendencies with reserve in so far as they impair, for instance, the values of the ministerial priesthood. In judging a problem like our own, the Holy See has the advantage of a much wider outlook and more comprehensive information.

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8. CONFIRMATION AND NOT AN IMPOSITION

On the other hand, the Holy Father's letter certainly confirms and illumines what the supreme authority of our own Congregation had specifically laid down in the SGC. This is not a point of fact that can be passed over, but it must give an objective bias to any dispassionate reading. There have even been those who have seen in this intervention a providential gesture that

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goes a long way towards righting the disorientation felt in the Congregation by the Decree (“a thorn in the heart of Don Rua”) issued by the Holy See at the beginning of the century concerning the priestly ministry of the rector. I cannot let this opportunity go by without reading together with you a confidential page written by Don Rinaldi on this delicate theme:

“I was not able to foresee how things would work out,” says Don Rinaldi. “When the order was first given, Don Rua told me that Rome would most likely bear in mind all that Don Bosco had done. *The blow, to anyone who evaluated it at that time, seemed indeed a very serious one.* One had to be a superior before and after that event to understand the effects of this disposition. It was to be feared that rectors would become administrators, pure and simple. It was at that time that the practice began of situating the rector’s office near the front door so that he could deal the more easily with visitors, a task previously left to the prefect. *The figure of the rector, little by little, began to undergo a change.* Despite all this, I did not think that Rome would change its mind. Seeing how delicate the step was that Don Rua was considering taking, more than once I advised against it, as it seemed most unlikely that Rome would retract the order. The move was entirely his: he wanted to write to Rome. If he remained silent, he felt he would be unfaithful to that solemn promise he made to the dying Don Bosco: that he would be the faithful guardian of all the traditions. He declared: *I cannot betray that solemn oath.* Let Rome judge and decide. We will always stand by the Church and what the Pope commands us to do. He wrote. Rome replied within a few days. Don Rua summoned the Chapter (Council) together and, first of all, read the reply: it was a formal condemnation. All the Chapter Members sat stunned. Don Rua however, having read the letter, put it aside solemnly. He was completely master of himself as if nothing had happened, whilst the Chapter Members tried to recover from the shock.” (Don Filippo Rinaldi by Don Ceria SEI 1932, pp. 172-173)

227 From this precious page taken from Don Rinaldi, we may easily deduce two things:

- that it was clear to Don Rua that it was the Founder’s wish that the rector be a *father* in the priestly ministry;
- that such was the attachment to the Holy See in the spirit of Don Bosco that his first successor, in spite of a solemn promise, accepted a change in this important element when it was explicitly ordered by the Holy See.

9. A GENUINELY SALESIAN ATTITUDE

228 But what is the witness, the exterior homage of reflection in faith and the specific attitude of sincere and operative conformity that the General Chapter must offer to our confreres and to the whole salesian family?

From the first days of the Chapter, I meditated personally about this question and at times discussed it with others. I feel there is need of a discovery

of a vital assumption and a global intention of what may be called "salesian hermeneutics" that precedes and directs the critical capacity and reflexive analysis; it is an attitude of virtue, a natural inclination of our own particular spirit. It was something so strongly lived by Don Bosco and we have seen it preached so often that faith in Peter's ministry is one of the columns of the salesian spiritual triad: the centrality of the Eucharist, the Marian aspect of our apostolic spirituality, and the ecclesial reality of a conscious and active adherence to the Pope.

We know that Don Bosco did not easily give way to this or that Curial Monsignor, or even to this or that individual Bishop when the very nature of his Congregation was in question. But he was eminently docile and even heroic when the explicit thought, desire or need of the Pope came into question. He considered him as the Founder because of his direct participation in the very beginnings of the Institute. Writing to Pius IX on the 1st March 1873 in fact he affirmed: "The Salesian Society which you, most Holy Father, founded, directed and consolidated by deed and advice."

Don Lemoyne, in the Apostolic Process stated that "the respect that Don Bosco had for the Pope was the result of a love that was a very part of his passionate love for Jesus Christ."

As for Don Rua, as can be seen by what I read a short while ago, we know how much the Decree of the Holy See caused him to suffer and how he reacted as a perfect salesian. I would like to read with you some of the salient points from a confidential letter of his, sent to all the rectors to communicate to them the line of action they should take:

"Up till now, according to the norms and deliberations of our General Chapters, we have tried to keep to a path best suited to our circumstances: now he who has been charged by God to teach all people, together with their teachers, has let us know that we must change our mode of acting; and we, gratefully and respectfully, with complete and willing obedience, must put into practice what has been ordered, thus imitating our good Father Don Bosco who always showed such a deep veneration and obedience to any directives whatsoever of the Holy See...

"We look upon this as a disposition of a loving Providence; that Christ himself has deigned to speak to us through his Vicar; and we will study ways and means of carrying out these orders with the utmost fidelity. The date of this Decree—the 6th July, the Octave of the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul—must remind us that it was St. Peter who, by means of his Successor Leo XIII gloriously reigning, has given us this precious document."

And then there is the episode of Don Rinaldi's unsuccessful confession: "One day, to give an example, after this new arrangement, I went to Don Rua as usual to make my confession, and had the door closed in my face" (Don Filippo Rinaldi: *Ceria* p. 172).

Of Don Ricaldone, I have heard quoted a sentence which he uttered after losing a petition he had presented to the Roman Curia, on behalf of the

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Cottolengo Institute: "Even if the Pope ever considered it his duty to suppress our Congregation; I would be entirely docile to his order." It is a paradoxical way of expressing what Don Bosco himself had said with a sense of deep faith: "If our Rules, if our Congregation were not to be a means of giving greater glory to God, I would be absolutely happy should the Lord allow such difficulties, that neither the former nor the latter could be approved" (MB VI, 72).

In this Congregation, we are sons of formidable believers: Providence urges us today to learn how to imitate them.

- 232** And so it is against this typically salesian background that we are being asked to make, both personally and in groups, a true spiritual discernment so as not to appear that we are either timid children incapable of making up our minds or of studying in depth, or the sort of critics who do not have a vital treasure to defend and develop.

Our straightforward witness—simple, virile and serenely objective in the face of a problem and wisely cognisant of the authoritative mediation of the Vicar of Christ—will have more influence on our identity, on the unity of the Congregation and the renewal of the whole salesian family than any reticence or hiding behind subtle disquisitions.

10. THE WORKING PLAN FOR THE NEXT SIX YEARS

- 233** But let us come down to something more explicit and concrete.

It seems to me that the assembly is very much in agreement about reaching a practical solution—an unequivocal and clear compliance with the wishes of the Holy Father.

It is necessary however to find a way of manifesting this attitude not only to our confreres but to the whole Church which is watching us, as Cardinal Pironio reminded us.

Ours must be a gesture that gives public testimony both to the practical spirituality that we have inherited from Don Bosco and to that mature salesian reflection to which we have been led by an adult faith inspired by our SGC.

- 234** In a special way it must be clearly shown that this GC21 is going to orientate all initiatives of animation and government at all levels over the next six years according to guidelines worked out in the light and with the help of this papal directive which, in practical terms, merely confirms what has been our praiseworthy tradition tested over the past hundred years.

This must not be undertaken on a mere juridical level but must be a practical and global undertaking in all activities of our life and apostolate. We are indeed convinced that by means of these directives of the Magisterium we have received a special grace of the Spirit which assures us of a kind of "biological infallibility," as Cardinal Journet put it; that is the

certainly that we are treading the right way of salvation and growth, without fear of being led astray down a mistaken path. Our work must be concentration on the renewal of the figure and function of the rector:

- The Congregation asks for this; cf precapitular schemes Nos. 245-247.
- The renewed salesian evangelizing presence demands it both in view of those for whom we work, and for the mutual complementarity and communion of our members (cf the theme "Salesians, evangelizers of the young" n. 1-165).
- The Pope's letter is both light and encouragement for us to do so.

If this 21st General Chapter goes down in history with no other qualification than that of being the "Chapter of the Rector," bringing him back to his original role, its influence on the future growth of the Congregation will indeed be a notable one.

11. WHAT OF THE SALESIAN BROTHER?

I have stated from the outset that I intended to refer directly to the problem which has brought a certain tension to the assembly. Though there are differing sentiments and thinking on the subject among us, we are all fully and totally alike in our enthusiasm and preoccupation about the salesian brother.

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I think the GC21 has achieved a good deal in the matter. The results of our work and vicissitudes seem to me especially strong:

- The Chapter has clarified *the importance and influence* of the lay component in our common educational-pastoral plan.
- It has affirmed and investigated the *complementarity* of the ministerial and lay dimension of the apostolic salesian community.
- It has measured, with the help of the Pope, the proportions of the mixture of one and the other: not a haphazard complementarity arising by chance, nor one marked by tension, but an objectively organic complementarity which signifies for all alike moving together under the pastoral leadership of one who serves the community with the gifts of a ministry which allows itself to be realised truly "in the person of Christ." (Cf PO 2)

I think it very useful that scholars continue to investigate this special organic complementarity between the ministerial priesthood and the lay quality of our consecration as salesians.

12. OUR PROGRAM OF ACTION

Our planning for the future, our practical directives for the next six years cannot be reduced to some sort of doctrinal research. They must lead us to commitment and action.

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The following questions touch the very heart of all our problems: How can we find ways of being truly present as salesians in the new cultural situations which are emerging? How can we truly be effective while at the same time remaining faithful to our community life style? What types of activities should we choose so as to be faithful to the original apostolic thrust of our Congregation? Where do we look for our beneficiaries, and how do we evangelize them? How should we put the preventive system into practice in our own day? How can we succeed in stirring up vocations among the young? ...We should be united in courageously facing these problems in a practical way.

- 237** During the coming six years, let us by all means strive to correct on the one hand the defects relating to the salesian brother which are linked to a cultural and ecclesiastical era which has seen its day; on the other hand, we must make every effort to avoid the very real dangers of a socio-cultural and religious outlook which is subtly out of line and man-centred. But our program must not stop there, for it could be too negative and incomplete and would tend to lead us to useless arguments and debates.

We must above all be positive and creative, though humble in our planning, as we strive for the growth of the Kingdom of God among needy youth. We find our origins, in fact, in Don Bosco's generous "practice of charity towards his neighbour." The work of the GC21 and the Message of the Holy Father contain for us three very clear objectives:

1. The preaching of the gospel to the young in our own specific salesian style. In terms of this task the Pope reminds us: "The social and ecclesiastical needs of our modern times seem to correspond more than ever to the genius of the apostolate of the sons of St. John Bosco, which caters with special interest and dedication to boys and young men."
2. The personal and communal witness of our 'sequela Christi'. This we accomplish by striving to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the Constitutions of our Society, and by trying to live by them, emphasizing our religious spirit as the Pope suggests.
3. The animation of the salesian community, by stressing realistically and with careful planning what the salesian rector should be and what his main duties are. All this is to be done in agreement with our original spirit and in fidelity to what the Pope indicated in his letter.

- 238** With regard to this third objective, I should like to say that I was deeply struck by the similarity between what many confreres are saying today and what Father Rinaldi, the 3rd Successor of St. John Bosco, said 50 years ago. We consider Fr. Rinaldi as "a bridge between the first and second generation of salesians; the last Rector Major who lived on familiar terms with Don Bosco and knew his mind well" (E. Valentini, *Don Rinaldi, Maestro di pedagogia e di spiritualità salesiana*, Turin-Crocetta 1965, p. 3).

The pre-capitular documents, after enumerating the outstanding problems in terms of the animation of local communities, present among the sug-

gested solutions the topic which should receive the most emphasis. There we read:

"The ministry of animating the community (the role of the rector) could very well become one of the key points of the GC21." (p. 158 No. 246).

The text goes on to specify which aspects of the role of the rector should be clarified, and how the rectors should be prepared for their mission (cf No. 247).

Fifty years ago, in addition to what I have already quoted above, Father Rinaldi had this to say in a conference: "When the Decree of the Holy See came out... under the pretext of avoiding every possible abuse, the salesians went beyond what the Decree actually called for... My dear provincials and rectors, I beg of you in the name of the love of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to reawaken in yourselves and around you the tradition of spiritual fatherliness, which is unfortunately disappearing, with incalculable damage to the souls of the young and to our very salesian spirit" (E. Valentini, o.c. pp. 76-77).

CONCLUSION

I said at the beginning that this date, the 24th of the month, was a happy coincidence and also a date which I chose on purpose. I wanted to speak to you under the special protection of Mary Help of Christians, and in the festive spirit occasioned by the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, upon whom, among the variety of charisms in the Church, our salesian vocation is modelled.

In 1887, on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII's ordination to the priesthood, Don Bosco was invited to write an article as part of a booklet to be published in honour of the Holy Father.

Those were the last months of the life of our holy Founder. I mention this because the fact tends to give his words the force of a last will and testament.

Don Bosco wrote a brief article, describing how devoted to the Pope St. Francis de Sales was. The conclusion of this article was a fatherly and practical exhortation to his own salesians:

"It is my express wish that the members of the humble Congregation of St. Francis de Sales never depart from the loyalty which this great Saint, our Patron, had towards the Holy See. They should accept promptly, respectfully, and with simplicity of mind and heart, not only the decisions of the Pope which regard matters of doctrine or discipline, but even in matters which are open to discussion they should always accept his opinion even as a private teacher rather than accept the opinion of some theologian or teacher of the world." (M.B. 18, 277)

The thought of our Founder and Father is clear. Maybe it would not be the kind of advice to give to somebody who has to do scientific research for a doctoral thesis, but it is indeed a precious practical guideline for anyone who works and plans in the spiritual atmosphere of his brand of holiness.

We are the heirs of great believers!

May St. Francis de Sales obtain for this GC21 the grace of being able to plan wisely for the next six years, as in the salesian spirit we follow the same path of faith and apostolic activity trod by our "forefathers."

Thank You!

DOCUMENT 3

**FORMATION
TO
SALESIAN LIFE**

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FORMATION TO SALESIAN LIFE

INTRODUCTION

240 Taking as a whole the evaluation done by the provincial chapters especially regarding the central theme on evangelization, the urgency of special attention to formation has arisen. For this reason the GC21 has deemed it well to examine formation to ascertain with accuracy how and to what degree the desired renewal proposed by the SGC has been achieved,¹ and to take the necessary and opportune measures so that this renewal may proceed with security and new impetus.

The GC21 therefore, given its practical and evaluative character, rather than bring forth doctrinal formulations on formation—already sufficiently expressed in the SGC—intends to examine the urgent problems which have arisen in the application of the Constitutions, the renewed Regulations, and the ASGC.

Weighing the proposals received from the provinces, examining the Report of the Rector Major on the State of the Congregation, studying the official documents of the Department for Formation, it appears with a certain clarity, that the points which have received specification and practical suggestions may be clustered about these three areas:

- unity of formation in this phase of decentralization;
- the role and characteristic of each phase of the formative process;
- ongoing formation of salesians.

In this study on formation, the Chapter intends to treat both the formation of the salesian priest and that of the salesian brother under the aspects where this formation is the same and also under those where it is diverse.

¹ Cf ASC 283, p. 5.

UNITY OF FORMATION

The principal problems regarding the general aspects of salesian formation converge significantly in the theme of unity in relationship to content, the formative community, and decentralization.² It should be noted that unity of formation is the condition, instrument, and guarantee of the unity of the Congregation.³ The GC21 therefore, in its effort to verify, intends to give this issue special attention not in the totality of its aspects, but in those which have greater need of attention and care; the subject (of salesian formation) marks a point of convergence in much of the expectation in the Congregation today.⁴ 241

Decentralization as willed by the SGC preserves all its value. To emphasize unity therefore does not indicate forgetfulness of decentralization. Unity is in fact realized today in decentralization, and a genuine process of decentralization implies an explicit and concrete obligation of unity.⁵ Logically, this principle is valid also for formation.

1. PREMISES

This Chapter observes that all formation tends to the development of the vocational identity of salesians. It emphasizes further that formation implants the roots of unity in that vocational identity. Aside from legitimate socio-cultural differences, it constitutes the essential unity and most profound reality of the Congregation.⁶ 242

This essential unity or salesian vocational identity finds its chief lines traced in the following elements:

² Cf Sch Precap 444-447; 460-463; 482-487; RRM 143-144; RDF p. 13.

³ Cf Const 99; ASGC 659.

⁴ Cf Sch Precap 445-447, 428; RRM 143; RDF p. 15.

⁵ Cf ASC 272, p. 6.

⁶ ASC 272, p. 6.

- The living presence among us of the Lord and his Spirit which moves us today to reactualize that continuing gift begun in Don Bosco;⁷
- The mission entrusted to us by the Church;⁸
- The contents of "salesian spirit";⁹
- An original plan of evangelical life;¹⁰
- A specific priestly and lay salesian identity;¹¹
- A special community dimension in the family spirit;¹²
- A mode of apostolic presence: "The preventive system."¹³

These aspects in their turn are harmoniously unified in the mission which the Holy Spirit has given us through Don Bosco. In reality this mission specifies the task we have in the Church. It makes us sharers in the same mission of Christ, Apostle of the Father.¹⁴

Unity of formation stands in strict relationship with the phases of formation and continuing formation. In fact it represents the profound reality underlying the continuity of the various phases of formation and the whole harmonious process of continuing formation.

- 243** At the same time we affirm that unity of formation and the principle of continuing formation enrich one another. Nonetheless, in this part of our presentation we direct our attention principally to the initial phases of formation, since these reflect the problems placed in relief by the provincial chapters, and also because they offer special formative characteristics which do not recur.

1.1 Unity of formation in contents

- 244** We, the Salesians of Don Bosco form a community which realizes one single vocation in priestly and lay form.¹⁵ The nature of this vocation, specified by the values of religious consecration, the fra-

⁷ ASGC 1-22.

⁸ ASGC 23-57.

⁹ ASGC 85-105.

¹⁰ ASGC 106-127.

¹¹ Const 36-37; ASGC 140-150.

¹² ASC 272, p. 10; ASGC 84, 481-503.

¹³ Const 25; ASGC 58-84, 93, 360, 365.

¹⁴ Cf Const 2-3, 49, 4; ASGC 26; Sch Precap 459.

¹⁵ Cf Const 2.

ternal community and the apostolic mission, determines the characteristic and unified orientation of our formation within the bounds of its contents.¹⁶

Human maturation and intellectual and professional preparation, deepening of the religious life, and a gradual insertion into the apostolate are factors which formation harmonizes as a vital unity, giving them life in the light of the person of Christ, the model who inspires us.¹⁷

The gospel of Christ, therefore, seen in the style and in the spirit of Don Bosco, constitutes salesianity. It represents the unifying element of the contents of our identity which permits us to prepare and form ourselves as authentic salesian educators and pastors.¹⁸

1.2 Unity of formation in the community

A formative community is truly such¹⁹ when it incarnates our salesian identity in the reality of persons. Unity of the formative community is therefore a necessary factor for the communication of the values of the vital unity of our vocation. In fact it is the life of the community united in Christ through the Spirit²⁰ which forms.

The local formative community is in strict relationship with the provincial community, which is itself "formative."²¹ Formation, in effect, is the "result of the harmonious action of all the confreres, both of the local and of the provincial community."²²

Vocational identity is built on the one hand through the contribution of all the members of the formative community and on the other through the diversity of their functions.²³ The dynamic flow of personal maturation through community growth in the values of salesianity²⁴ merits special attention. Such growth becomes possible through that homelike climate of enriching communication characteristic of the salesian spirit.²⁵

245

¹⁶ Cf Const 3, 100.

¹⁷ Cf Const 101.

¹⁸ Cf Const 41, 49, 101; ASGC 661-672.

¹⁹ Cf requirements for formation community in n. 251 and in Reg 73(b).

²⁰ Cf Const 99, 104; ASGC 680a; Reg 78.

²¹ Cf Reg 89.

²² ASGC 672.

²³ Cf Const 54.

²⁴ Cf Const 52.

²⁵ Cf Const 50, 53.

Unity of formation is assured in the community when as a "family united in mutual trust and in the marshalling of its powers,"²⁶ it has a harmonious formation team of priests and brothers and a serene, constructive rapport between the team and those in formation.²⁷ The rector has principal responsibility as the animator and unifier of formation in this community.

The GC21 reaffirms the determining role of the personal and community participation of those in formation in building the formative community,²⁹ and at the same time the Chapter also emphasizes the indispensable function of those who form and the special need of their influence. In reality, the best descriptions of our salesian identity would amount to nothing if this were not given testimony in practice by the principal animators of the formative community.

1.3 Unity of formation in decentralization

- 246** Decentralization as the adequate distribution of responsibility for governing at various levels³⁰ is the concretization in the area of structures of the fundamental principle of subsidiarity and pluriformity.³¹

In the structures of salesian formation decentralization has assigned new and important responsibilities within the local,³² provincial,³³ and interprovincial spheres.³⁴

Local structures of formation, because they are decentralized, can adapt more easily to the diverse cultures of the distinct regions. Thus they serve the pluriformity of modes of living the one salesian vocation.³⁵

But decentralized structures must contribute to the unity of formation. It is in fact a case of making the salesians in every region grow in the single and united salesian vocation: modes of cultural expression are pluriform, but the salesian plan of life is one.³⁶

²⁶ Cf Const 105.

²⁷ Cf ASGC 683-686.

²⁸ Cf ASGC 678.

²⁹ Cf ASGC 680, 683.

³⁰ Cf Const 127.

³¹ Cf ASGC 137, 139, 706.

³² Cf Reg 85.

³³ Cf Const 106.

³⁴ Cf Reg 130, 2.

³⁵ Cf ASGC 139, 665.

³⁶ Cf ASGC 272, p. 11; ASC 276, p. 66.

2. SITUATION

2.1 Unity of formation in contents

The rapid changes which have come about in the Church and in culture in recent years are reflected inevitably in the area of formation. The Congregation, after the SGC, has made a notable effort to find new solutions which will guarantee the wholeness of the contents of formation in view of the unity of the salesian vocation. It is not difficult nonetheless to understand that the results have not yet reached desired levels.

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One of the most felt problems referred to by numerous provincial chapters³⁷ is without doubt the weakening and at times even the absence of contents typically salesian in formation. This lack, accentuated at times by the need for structures of formation suitable to the exigencies of diverse places and cultures, has produced a sense of excessive genericism, sometimes risking the loss of salesian identity.

In particular the following weaknesses result:

- a partial forgetfulness of the sources of salesian spirituality;
- studies, besides suffering an insufficient substance and systematization, often are not unified under a salesian dimension;
- salesian pedagogical and catechetical preparation is poor, with repercussions in our apostolic undertakings;
- the formative surroundings are negatively influenced by the general weakness of sacramental life and the life of prayer;³⁸
- specific contents for the formation of the salesian priest and of the salesian brother are missing;
- the theology of religious life is insufficiently known.

2.2 Unity of formation in the community

The precapitular schemes, the report of the Rector Major and of the Department for Formation, and also the reflections of the GC21 itself, show that in this period of the past six years there has been an attempt in different places to create formative communities along the lines foreseen by the SGC and the Constitutions and Regulations.

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³⁷ Cf Sch Precap 483.

³⁸ Cf RRM 80.

In these communities a team of formation personnel has been determined. There has also been a growth of coresponsibility, of dialog, and of fraternal life. An adequate opening and a suitable flexibility have been possible to realize. A thirst for salesianity has arisen. In most cases these formative communities have given, in the midst of the provinces, top rate witness.

- 249** Nonetheless, the evaluation points also to negative signs. "Too often the impetus is not given to constitute authentic and specific formative communities with clarity of scope, a sufficient number of formation personnel, and adequate means of formation."³⁹ This often arises from an inadequate interpretation of Constitutions art. 105 and art. 81 of the Regulations.

The difficulty of finding confreres suited to the task of working in formation is common throughout the Congregation. It is not rare to see teachers who forget their formative responsibilities. In certain other cases we see them involved in real crises or indulging in placing ideologies before faith. The training or retraining of formation personnel is not always given priority in provincial planning.⁴⁰

On the other hand, in some places, due to an inexact understanding of the family spirit and of the meaning of participation, the need for those who form and that of authority have been called in question.⁴¹

The subject becomes even more sensitive when it refers to the rector in his capacity of advancing true spiritual direction. In general "a tragic lack of masters and guides of the spirit is noted"⁴² with serious repercussions even in the initial phases of formation.⁴³

Finally, the lack of due rapport between the life of the local formative community and that of the provincial community creates at times a dangerous disorientation at the moment of passage from one to another.

The absence of salesian brothers among the formation personnel in the formative communities must also be lamented.

³⁹ RDF p. 14.

⁴⁰ RDF p. 14.

⁴¹ RDF p. 14.

⁴² RDF p. 15.

⁴³ Cf ASGC 678c.

2.3 Unity of formation in decentralization

At provincial level,

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one notes an incipient assumption of local responsibility, but in various provinces priority is not given to this sector as appears from the unfinished or unsatisfactory Formation Directories and, as a consequence, from the fragmentary and unstable initiatives at the level of new structures, programs, and development of formation personnel.

At interprovincial level,

aside from interesting initiatives of collaboration, one may also find difficulties between the various provinces in settling together problems of formation which they cannot handle separately. At times intermediate structures such as provincial conferences or boards of trustees have not functioned, as for example, a collegial system of collaboration between an interprovincial studentate and the provinces which support it.

At world level,

one is aware of the need for greater clarification of the role of the Department for Formation and the necessity of more specific guidelines particularly as regards studies.⁴⁴

In summary, the evaluation of these years reveals in various places a certain void or non-assumption of responsibility at different levels through a lack of sufficient knowledge, time, suitable persons, means and clear norms.

3. DELIBERATIONS

3.1 During these six years the importance of the formative communities demands that the provincial and his council give preferential treatment to their institution or renewal. Therefore a community to be formative should be expressly structured for that purpose, and there ought to be:

251

— a specifically trained rector and formation team,

⁴⁴ Cf RDF p. 11.

- true spiritual direction,
- an atmosphere of coresponsibility with diversity of roles and the clarity of formative aims,
- salesian life-style in study and work with periodic planning, review, and evaluation,
- and finally, a special sensitivity to the province.

- 252** 3.2 The provincial and his council shall provide that the rectors of the formation communities have a specific and periodic updating to help them fulfill their sensitive and necessary duty of community and personal spiritual direction in the manner envisioned by the SGC.⁴⁵
- 253** 3.3 Every province shall constitute its own provincial formation commission. Its specific duties shall be indicated by the provincial Formation Directory.
- 254** 3.4 The Councillor for Formation, in dialog with the respective regional Councillors and provincials, shall encourage in the provinces an ever greater coresponsibility and active participation in the analysis of the actual situation of the formation communities and shall coordinate a series of advisories calculated to insure a timely realization of the capitular decisions.
- 255** 3.5 The Department for Formation shall be so structured that it may be a more efficacious instrument at the service of unity of formation. This may be obtained through the organization of a team competent in the various sectors of formation.
- 256** 3.6 The Rector Major with his Council through the Councillor for Formation shall see to the creation at the UPS of a suitable center for the preparation of future formation personnel and the re-training of those presently serving. Further, in agreement with the regional groups, he shall promote brief courses and meetings for a greater contact with the problems of every zone.
- 257** 3.7 To deepen those elements which perfect the unity of the salesian vocation, publications on salesian spirituality and their translation into various languages shall be brought out by the Department for Formation.

⁴⁵ Cf ASGC 678a, c.

3.8 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Salesianae*

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Many of the problems touched on above can be more easily resolved through a global and harmonious view of formation. Therefore, the Rector Major with his Council through the Department for Formation shall elaborate and promulgate as soon as possible for the whole Congregation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Salesianae*.

- The *Ratio* shall set forth in an organic manner the whole of the principles and norms on formation which are found in the Constitutions and Regulations, in the ASGC and in the deliberations of this GC21; in addition, those other elements valid for the whole Congregation which have been set forth in the various Church and salesian documents issued after the SGC.
- It shall emphasize in a special manner the importance and necessity of the integral development of the various aspects of formation: human maturation, intellectual and professional preparation, religious and apostolic life, all within the unity of the salesian vocation.
- The *Ratio* shall give very special attention to salesian spiritual development during the whole formation process. In this sector it shall indicate the features and proper identity of the salesian priest, brother and deacon.
- A *Ratio Studiorum* shall form a part of the document taken as the totality of those general norms regarding intellectual formation in the Congregation. This *Ratio* should ensure the principal elements of a curriculum for salesians (priests and brothers) whether for basic formation or for specific priestly or lay formation. Finally, it should indicate the organic contents of salesianity for the various phases of the formation process.
- The *Ratio* shall take into consideration necessary previous pastoral experience for formation personnel⁴⁶ and gradual proportioned apostolic activity for those in formation, emphasizing the indispensable value during such training of the guiding presence of formation personnel. Ordinarily salesian works shall be chosen for these apostolic activities.

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3.9 *The provincial Formation Directory*

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Every province, as soon as the *Ratio* is published, shall elaborate or revise its own provincial Formation Directory observing the norms found in that *Ratio*.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Cf ASGC 679.

⁴⁷ Cf Const 106.

THE PHASES OF FORMATION

PREMISES

1. Continuity and equality of basic formation

- 262 In its study of the phases of formation the GC21 has always kept in mind two concepts of the SGC: the continuity of the formation process and the equality of basic formation (for lay and clerical salesians) with the necessary distinctions.

1.1 *Continuity of the formation process*

Though in its method this examination is divided into parts, the oneness and the continuity of the formation process is a premise which must always be held present all along the arc of formation. Formation does not end with the finish of initial formation, but continues and endures throughout one's life in terms of ongoing formation. In fact, "the formation process ought to be unified and continuous in its various phases. Every phase should be the continuation of the one which precedes it and a preparation for the following."⁴⁸ This continuity of growth presupposes the principle of gradual development in the diverse aspects of the formation process.

The unified and at the same time complex character of the formation process demands that in every phase harmonized as one vital whole, the various aspects of salesian formation should be present: human and christian maturation, intellectual preparation, the deepening of the salesian religious life, and insertion into apostolic work.⁴⁹ However, emphasis on these aspects must be different according to the specific character of each phase:

- human and christian maturation in preparation for the novitiate;
- deepening of the salesian religious life during the novitiate;
- intellectual preparation in the immediate post-novitiate;

⁴⁸ ASGC 691.

⁴⁹ Cf Const 101.

- insertion into apostolic work during the tirocinium;
- the priestly dimension during theological studies for candidates to the priesthood.

1.2 *Equal basic formation*

"Brothers and future priests receive equal basic formation with a curriculum of equivalent level."⁵⁰ This means that the period of salesian formation up to perpetual profession has the same phases, with similar objectives, contents, and duration for all the members according to their own specific lay or priestly vocation, the specific functions of their apostolate, and their personal gifts and aptitudes.⁵¹

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2. Aspects of the formation process

The formation process in its various phases has these two aspects:

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- *maturation in vocation* up to perpetual profession, alike for all salesians according to one's lay or priestly state;
- *specific preparation* of the salesian brother and of the salesian priest.

These two aspects, although different, are not separable from the totality of formation. At no moment do we have a "generic" salesian. However, of necessity for the sake of clarity, we speak in this first instance of the general and common aspects of salesian formation and in a later moment of the specific aspects of the formation of the salesian priest and of the salesian brother.

1. *The period of maturation in vocation up to the perpetual profession*

1.1 Immediate preparation for novitiate.

1.2 Novitiate.

1.3 Period of temporary vows.

1.3.1 Immediate post-novitiate.

1.3.2 Tirocinium.

1.3.3 Immediate preparation for perpetual profession.

2. *Specific preparation of the salesian*

2.1 Priest

2.2 Brother

⁵⁰ Const 103.

⁵¹ Cf Const 103.

1. THE PERIOD OF MATURATION IN VOCATION UP TO PERPETUAL PROFESSION

1.1 Immediate preparation for novitiate

265 *Premises*

We do not have a canonical postulancy with juridico-structural aspects. But the Constitutions present the immediate preparation for novitiate as one of those phases "necessary both for the candidate and the community,"⁵² and they indicate in succinct form the objectives, method to be followed, the atmosphere and the place.⁵³ Therefore we prefer to call this phase "immediate preparation for novitiate."

The SGC has not established any fixed or single structure for this period, allowing the provinces to decide the manner of realizing it "according to the needs of the places and in conformity with the directives of the Church and of the Congregation."⁵⁴ A later document⁵⁵ has better explained the nature, objectives, and modality of immediate preparation for novitiate, leaving the concrete programs to the *Formation Directories* of each province.

Situation

- 266 "In a good number of provinces the prenovitiate is already well established and is bearing good fruit."⁵⁶ But in some places its necessity has not been well understood.⁵⁷ It may be said that the prenovitiate is not yet well programmed and realized as a phase of formation in all provinces.

Deliberations

- 267 The GC21 emphasizes the necessity of a period of immediate preparation for novitiate and offers the following directives:

a) The objectives singled out in article 109 of the Constitutions indicate, in

⁵² Const 108.

⁵³ Const 109.

⁵⁴ Const 106.

⁵⁵ ASC 276 p. 68-73.

⁵⁶ RRM 147.

⁵⁷ Cf RRM 147.

general, an atmosphere and method "to mature," "to discern one's own vocation," "to deepen one's awareness" and "to decide" wisely and freely to become a salesian religious.⁵⁸ Only when the candidate has *made his option for the salesian life* has he begun his immediate preparation for the novitiate.

b) The structuring of this phase, though flexible and diverse according to place and circumstance,⁵⁹ ought to offer the candidate the chance to *deepen his own vocational choice* through:

- a more profound knowledge of himself;
- spiritual direction;
- openness to the word of God, sacramental life and prayer;
- a general knowledge of Don Bosco and of the Salesian Society;
- an experience of community life;
- salesian apostolic experience.

c) During this period *the human and christian maturity of the candidate* in particular should be evaluated to ascertain whether he has reached the level necessary to begin his novitiate well.⁶⁰ A constant understanding of those in charge of formation at this stage with those of the novitiate, especially with the Master of Novices, will make this evaluation easier. **269**

d) Immediate preparation for novitiate customarily shall last one year and shall not ordinarily be less than six months. The concrete modality of this period shall be established by the Formation Directory of each province. **270**

1.2 NOVITIATE

Premises

The novitiate marks the beginning of the salesian religious experience.⁶¹ It has therefore a most important function with regard to the unity and development of the salesian vocation in its origins.⁶² **271**

⁵⁸ Cf ASC 276 p. 70: 1.3.1.

⁵⁹ Cf Const 110; ASC 276 p. 70-72; 1.3.1 - 1.3.6.

⁶⁰ Cf Reg 73 (C).

⁶¹ Cf Const 111; RC 13,1.

⁶² ASC 276, 2.3.1.

Its organization is of the greatest importance. The diversity of the types of salesian novitiate due to the varying number of novices and different cultural and pastoral contexts prevents taking a uniform stance on organizing the novitiate.⁶³ But there is a *fundamental criterion*: The environment and structures of the novitiate must be capable of supporting authentic formation, i.e. of attaining the purposes and fulfilling the contents of the novitiate.⁶⁴

Situation

- 272 "In general information on the novitiates is positive."⁶⁵ The small number of novices⁶⁶ and the impossibility of counting on a large enough and sufficiently qualified formation team has in some places hindered the creation of an environment suitable to attaining the objectives of this phase. In such cases interprovincial novitiates present evident advantages.⁶⁷ In these, however, problems regarding the coresponsibility of the concerned provinces must be resolved. In recent years because of the growing complexity of religious, apostolic, and cultural life, the necessity of specific training for the Master has become evident.

Deliberations

- 273 The ideal to be placed before the novices is to serve Christ in youth, in community and totally, according to our spirit. This ideal we find in the two fundamental books of our thought and life: the gospel and the Constitutions.⁶⁸ So that this phase may be truly efficacious, the GC21 believes it opportune to deliberate:

a) *Characteristics of the novitiate*

- 274 All the elements of novitiate life shall be aimed at initiating the novices to the awareness and practice of the salesian religious life. The novice, with the help of the community and especially of the Master, interiorizes the salesian values and acquires a mentality of faith rendering him capable of discerning the will of God about his vocation.

⁶³ Cf ASC 276, 2.3.3; Const 106.

⁶⁴ ASC 276, 2.3.3.

⁶⁵ RRM 148.

⁶⁶ RRM 149.

⁶⁷ RRM 148.

⁶⁸ Cf ASC 276, 2.2.2; Const 101.

Those aspects more directly intellectual and pastorally practical must be arranged so as to deepen and enlighten his salesian spiritual experience.⁶⁹

Since our Society is an Institute dedicated to apostolic activity, "formation in the novitiate ought to take into greater account the necessity of preparing the novices even from the beginning and more directly for the type of life or activity which must be their own in the future, and it ought thus teach them to realize little by little in their own lives the conditions of that harmonious unity which links together contemplation and apostolic action."⁷⁰

A more precise specification of the scope and of the criteria for the choice of apostolic experience during the novitiate is to be found in the ASC 276.⁷¹

b) *Contents of the novitiate*

The same ASC 276,⁷² also contains a formulation of the essential contents of this phase. Teaching and assimilation of these contents is to be accomplished at two constantly integrated levels: study-reflection and practice-experience. 275

c) *Training Masters of Novices*

In the next three years the provinces shall train in salesian spirituality those confreres who possessing sufficient practical-apostolic-salesian experience⁷³ are destined to exercise the role of Master of Novices. 276

It is important that the Master of Novices be open to the spiritual and cultural values which the novices bring to the novitiate.

d) *Interprovincial novitiates*

When for the sake of greater formative effect an interprovincial novitiate is deemed best, the responsibility of each province over its own novices shall be manifested: 277

- in participation of the concerned provinces through suitable personnel;
- in the relations of the novice with the provincial of origin;
- in the role of the provincial of origin in the eventual dismissal of a novice.

Concerned provinces, through mutual agreement, will establish norms to regulate their coresponsibility.

⁶⁹ Cf ASC 276, 2.2.1.2.

⁷⁰ RC 5.

⁷¹ ASC 276, p. 79-81.

⁷² Cf ASC 276, 2.2.2.1 - 2.2.2.5.

⁷³ Cf ASGC 684a.

1.3 PERIOD OF TEMPORARY VOWS

- 278** The objectives of formation after the novitiate in view of perpetual profession are to develop the different facets of the salesian vocation and to continue the process of maturation of the young confrere.⁷⁴

These objectives need further explanation according to the various emphases of the different periods which make up this phase; that is, the immediate postnovitiate, tirocinium, and immediate preparation for perpetual profession.

1.3.1 The immediate postnovitiate

Premises

- 279** The novitiate as the initiation to salesian life is certainly a fundamental phase.⁷⁵ But it needs to be complemented and further developed.⁷⁶ The immediate postnovitiate is the first complementary phase. Coherence and continuity between the work accomplished during the novitiate and after it is indispensable⁷⁷ so as to avoid a sudden and unsettling change of life-style which may cause a 'release-of-tension' in vocational growth.⁷⁸ For this reason the immediate postnovitiate is a sensitive and important moment for the religious-salesian maturation of the young confreres.

Situation

- 280** Taking the situation as a whole, the reality for diverse reasons appears quite varied, somewhat confused, and in some cases not well initiated.⁷⁹ Often religious-salesian formation presents deficiencies due to the lack of programs, time, organization, suitable communities, or men qualified to give doctrinal instruction. Spiritual direction, so important in this period, is little practised. In many places a serious program of studies is absent. The nature and objectives of this phase⁸⁰ have not been clear, and for this reason they have not been well understood by many.

⁷⁴ Cf Const 114.

⁷⁵ Cf RC 4.

⁷⁶ Cf ASGC 691.

⁷⁷ Cf ASC 276, 3.2.2.

⁷⁸ Cf ASC 276, 3.3.3.

⁷⁹ RRM 153.

⁸⁰ Cf Const 114; Reg 81.

Deliberations

a) *Objectives of the immediate postnovitiate*

281

The GC21 specifies that the immediate postnovitiate is a time of maturation and development:

- in faith, through a gradual integration of faith-and-life, faith-and-culture⁸¹ accomplished especially by means of community reflection and spiritual direction;⁸²
- in the salesian-religious-apostolic vocation learned by the young confreres through an adequate catechetical and pedagogical training, both theoretical and practical, centered in Don Bosco, educator, and the preventive system, especially in view of the tirocinium;⁸³
- in intellectual and cultural formation, including a fundamental introduction to the world of culture (understanding of man, the world, God). To this end the systematic study of philosophy is indispensable⁸⁴ giving an answer to today's problems and not dissociated from the culture proper to each region.

b) *The formation community in this phase*

It is of vital importance that for this phase an explicitly formative community and a valid salesian environment be constituted. Two types of structure are possible:

282

- the studentate, i.e. a formation community with its own center of studies;
- a formation community for young confreres who do their studies elsewhere.

Preference shall be given to the studentate according to the norm of Article 81 of the Regulations.

In cases deemed necessary, the Rector Major with his Council may permit those in formation to be integrated in an active community as they do their studies elsewhere.

c) *Study centers*

The sensitive process of cultural and religious synthesis during this period demands a wise choice of a center of studies whose program is compatible

283

⁸¹ Cf ASGC 677, 689.

⁸² Cf ASGC 678.

⁸³ Cf Reg 88; ASGC 675, 676.

⁸⁴ Cf RF 59.

with and suitable to development of one's vocation, giving preference to Salesian centers of study, at interprovincial level if necessary.

284 d) *The provincial Formation Directory*

The provincial Formation Directory must indicate concrete directions for this phase of formation: suitable place, suitable community, length (not less than two years), program of studies, apostolic activity.

1.3.2 Tirocinium

285 *Premises*

The tirocinium is "a vital and intense encounter with salesian action" through "an experience educative and pastoral in nature" wherein the young salesian "exercises himself in the salesian mission and in the spirit of the preventive system in order to seek the maturation of his own attitudes, interests and responsibilities."⁸⁵

So that this vital experience may become formative, the salesian in practical training must find "in the community and especially in the rector an attitude of understanding, stimulus, and support."⁸⁶ He ought to do his practical training normally in groups.⁸⁷

Situation

286 If well initiated this period of practice may develop among the most beautiful and positive in the salesian way of life.⁸⁸ Often however practical training is reduced to a period of excessive work in support of an activity or foundation to the detriment of the religious and spiritual formation of young salesians.⁸⁹ At times the communities to which they are sent are not suitable and an absence of guidance and spiritual direction is frequent.

⁸⁵ Cf Const 116; Reg 88.

⁸⁶ ASGC 696.

⁸⁷ Cf ASGC 696.

⁸⁸ RRM 154.

⁸⁹ RRM 155.

Deliberationsa) *Suitable communities*

287

Communities suitable for practical training:

- shall be communities capable of positive influence, possessing a coherent, dynamic, fraternal and family life-style wherein the person in practical training may feel at ease as a responsible member;
- shall be communities in which the young salesian may have the opportunity to give his own original contribution in the certainty of being positively accepted;
- shall have a rector and confreres able to understand, follow-up, help, and evaluate the experience of the confrere in training;
- shall offer the confrere in training pastoral work proportionate to his preparation and his capabilities and the chance for community reflection and spiritual direction to help him attain that personal integration between his intense activity and the spiritual values of religious life⁹⁰ in the union of contemplation and action so characteristic of salesian spirituality.

b) *Salesian assistance*

The period of practical training is the one most suitable for formation concretely to salesian assistance understood as an active and fraternal presence among youth.⁹¹ This is one of the most important duties for the salesians of a community where the confrere is doing his practical training, and they fulfill this duty especially through their witness.

288

c) *The provincial Formation Directory*

The provincial Formation Directory shall determine clearly regarding this period:

289

- the type of work most suitable;
- the method to be used for a periodic evaluation of the confrere in practical training to help him in his experience;
- periodic formation encounters at local and provincial levels.

⁹⁰ Cf "Il tirocinio pratico, resoconto di una consulta" I, 2-3, p. 3; II, 2, p. 5.

⁹¹ Cf Const 16, 25.

1.3.3 Immediate preparation for perpetual profession

290 *Premises*

Perpetual profession is the goal of all this period of vocational maturation, and therefore the whole arc of formation prepares for it. However, since it is the culminating point of religious consecration, perpetual profession should be preceded by a suitable period of immediate preparation.⁹²

Situation

Often this period of immediate and more explicit preparation for perpetual profession has been neglected.

Deliberations

291 The *provincial Directory of Formation* shall determine:

- the manner of performing a periodic evaluation for the temporary professed;
- a suitable time for reflection to help them reach a mature definitive choice;
- a program for immediate preparation for perpetual profession including the precise manner (form, content, duration).

2. SPECIFIC PREPARATION OF THE SALESIAN PRIEST AND BROTHER

2.1 Formation of the salesian priest

292 In establishing that brothers and future salesian priests receive equal basic formation, the Constitutions have not forgotten the necessary distinctions determined by the specific nature of their vocations and by their functions in our apostolate.⁹³ One of these specific elements for the salesian priest is his sacerdotal ministry. Specific priestly formation, with a program already established in broad outline by

⁹² ASGC 698d.

⁹³ Cf Const 103.

the Church, is further spelled out by the Congregation⁹⁴ for the salesian candidate to priestly life. This specific element ought to be present all through the formative process according to the nature of the various phases, though it receives special care at the time of theological studies.

The Constitutions⁹⁵ and the SGC⁹⁶ indicate certain characteristics of the salesian priest which provide guidelines for his formation.

Situation

There is at this time in the Congregation a variety of situations with regard to priestly formation: theological studentates, groups of theology students who attend non-salesian centers of study (Catholic universities, inter-religious centers, seminaries...) and even, here and there, young confreres placed in no particular house and without special care.⁹⁷

293

Studentates, certainly not crowded as they once were, offer a good service, even granting their usual faults. The tensions of the past years are for the most part relieved, and the good trend evident in such institutes depends in great part on the teaching and formation personnel who work there.⁹⁸

The situation of the numerous *groups of students* who attend salesian or non-salesian centers varies greatly from group to group and from place to place. Where there are good men in charge of formation (who often teach at the study-centers as well) one may say that the situation is in general satisfactory. In this case, several positive features may be noted: contact with students of other Congregations arouses in our own a more lively sense of belonging to our Society and communicates the richness of our own spirituality to the others; candidates may develop a broader vision of the local Church and the real world. But at times the center is deficient, or those in charge of the group are not suitable; or the community to which the group is attached does not contribute for a variety of reasons to the formation of these young men.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Cf ASGC 660.

⁹⁵ Const 35, 36.

⁹⁶ ASGC 141-144.

⁹⁷ RRM 159.

⁹⁸ RRM 160.

⁹⁹ RRM 161.

Certain problems arise from the situation:

- an absence of a specifically salesian priestly formation: some confreres feel that they are priests in general; others come out unable to see the specific priestly character of their salesian life;¹⁰⁰
- an absence of seriousness and pastoral and salesian quality of studies;
- difficulty in rapport between the formative community and the center of studies.¹⁰¹

Deliberations

294 a) *Characteristics of the sacerdotal formation of the salesian priest*

Convinced of the need to emphasize the specifically salesian quality of our candidates to the priesthood, the GC21 indicates for the "*Ratio Institutionis*" the following contents. It confides them first of all to those in charge of formation and to confreres responsible as a subject to be explored and constantly meditated upon:

- emphasize the figure of Christ, the Shepherd; the salesian, as was Don Bosco, is witness to him for needy youth, especially through the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, in particular the Eucharist and Penance;¹⁰²
- deepen the ecclesial sense of unity and communion with the Church, in particular with the Pope and the Bishops, accepting the *magisterium* with docility and helping youth and the faithful to accept its teachings;¹⁰³
- live the priestly ministry within and from within the local and provincial community¹⁰⁴ in reciprocal complementarity with the salesian brother;
- cultivate the capacity of discerning the will of God in events and persons, preparing the candidate to provide leadership and spiritual direction, especially to the young;

¹⁰⁰ Cf Sch Precap 477, 479.

¹⁰¹ Cf Sch Precap 480.

¹⁰² Cf Const 36, 41.

¹⁰³ Cf Const 44, 128.

¹⁰⁴ Cf Const 34.

- develop special sensibility of the salesian spirit, of the catechetical,¹⁰⁵ vocational,¹⁰⁶ and Marian¹⁰⁷ dimensions of our priestly ministry;
- create the understanding that for the candidate the priesthood is a specific dimension of his salesian vocation, present in all his activities, making him, as Don Bosco, always and everywhere a priest.

b) *Theological-pastoral Formation*

295

There must be a serious theological-pastoral formation including those studies prescribed by the Church,¹⁰⁹ lasting a minimum of four years, arranged and developed according to our specific vocational objectives. In particular, studies on salesianity shall be provided, referring explicitly to the figure of Don Bosco, priest. Duties and other studies which draw one away from the specific task of this period of formation are not permitted.

c) *Pastoral experience*

296

A careful pastoral experience, programmed and duly evaluated, including the guiding presence of those in charge of formation, shall prepare the salesian to be a priest:

- in the midst of youth at the service of the mission of the provincial community;
- incarnated in his social and ecclesial context;
- capable of assuming responsibility for leadership in the salesian family.¹¹⁰

d) *Formation community and study center*

297

The norms established for the immediate post-novitiate regarding kinds of structures possible¹¹¹ are valid also for this phase. Relations between the formative community and the centers of study shall be carefully determined in every case so as to insure the specific needs of each.

¹⁰⁵ Cf Const 20.

¹⁰⁶ Cf Const 29, 107.

¹⁰⁷ Cf Const 65.

¹⁰⁸ Cf Const 36.

¹⁰⁹ Cf "Theological formation of future priests," letter of Sac. Cong. for Cath. Educ. 1976.

¹¹⁰ Cf Const 5.

¹¹¹ Cf this document nn. 282, 283.

e) *Identity of the salesian priest*

- 298** The GC21 recognizes that exploring the identity of the salesian priest along the lines of the Constitutions (articles 35-36) and of the ASGC (141-144) will make simpler the task of formation of the salesian priest. It asks the Department for Formation to continue to study this point in the coming years.

2.2 Formation of the salesian brother

Premises

- 299** The specific nature of the salesian brother within the common salesian religious vocation demands that the consecrated lay state be further studied in the area of basic formation. Therefore, even though what has been affirmed in this document under the phases of formation in nn. 262-291 is fully valid for the salesian brother, we believe it necessary to say a word on his specific formation.

While the Congregation is called upon to develop the formation program already established in broad outline by the Church for the candidate to priestly life, "for the brothers it is a matter very often of building up, or of even creating that formation procedure that will guarantee the harmonious and complete development of their human and religious personality in view of the educational and apostolic mission to which they are called within the Congregation."¹¹²

The GC19,¹¹³ the SGC¹¹⁴ and the Department for Formation¹¹⁵ have already established norms and guidelines to this end. The World Congress of Salesian Brothers¹¹⁶ has studied the matter deeply, clarifying and enriching it.

All formation receives its specific orientation from the nature of the salesian vocation.¹¹⁷ It is necessary therefore to keep in mind all that is indicated in the document on the salesian brother of the GC21—on his identity and his apostolic activity.

We must bear in mind the urgent need of an adequate and up-dated

¹¹² ASGC 660.

¹¹³ Cf ASC 244, p. 71-75.

¹¹⁴ Cf ASGC 660, 688, 692d, 701b.

¹¹⁵ Cf "Salesian Formation," Rome, 1973, p. 28-35.

¹¹⁶ Cf AWCSB p. 375-478 and 558-562.

¹¹⁷ Cf Const 100.

formation for the salesian brother.¹¹⁸ The formation of the brother ought to be considered a problem of absolute priority.

Situation

Notwithstanding the guidelines of the SGC and of other later documents, the 1977 provincial chapters recognize that we are still a long way from an adequate preparation of the brother.

There have been initiatives of various kinds and some promising results. Several of the provinces were interested in this problem during their chapters and have approved different programs for the formation of the salesian brother, but on the whole one perceives an insufficient cultural and pastoral preparation, inadequate for today's religious and apostolic requirements¹¹⁹ and for the new duties which the Congregation confides to the brother.

After the novitiate there have been difficulties not only in providing adequate technical and professional formation, but also religious, apostolic, and salesian.¹²⁰ In truth, the brother is called to be first and foremost an educator and a salesian apostle.

In general new concrete experiences are still lacking in the Congregation, and also perhaps, programs, contents, times and methods of formation which can give direction to and serve as a base for the various provincial Formation Directories.¹²¹ The great diversity of roles of the brother in the salesian community and also the scarcity of vocations make it difficult to build a formation program and to bring it to realization.¹²²

Deliberations

a) The formation program

The concrete possibilities of living the consecrated lay state in the Congregation are many and varied. This pluriformity demands that the provincial Formation Directories shall set forth a serious formation program, but one which is flexible and adjustable recognizing both the special nature of the various responsibilities of the candidate and his actual possibilities.

¹¹⁸ Cf AWCSB p. 19.

¹¹⁹ Sch Precap 382.

¹²⁰ RRM 158.

¹²¹ AWCSB p. 559, prop 19; Sch Precap 405.

¹²² Cf RRM 158.

When the age or cultural preparation of the salesian brother requires it, the provincial with his council may adjust the common program suggested here to the particular situations.

b) *Some characteristics of the lay formation of the salesian brother*

302 The GC21 points out some specific elements of the brother's formation to bear in mind in every phase and constantly to integrate at a twofold level—study-reflection and practice-experience:

- a *salesian religious formation* which will help him to grasp and to ever better guarantee *the meaning and value of the consecrated lay state* in the Salesian Congregation. In the progressive deepening of salesian spirituality, one must be sure to develop above all, the specific traits of the consecrated lay state¹²³ and the brother's reciprocal complementarity with the salesian priest within the salesian community;¹²⁴
- a formation which tends to make of the brother a *salesian lay educator*.¹²⁵ Therefore it is necessary to offer every brother, according to his duties, an adequate pedagogical, cultural, and salesian preparation;¹²⁶
- a *theological and catechetical formation* sufficient to sound the meaning of one's own religious and apostolic vocation, to better understand the presence of God in the realities of the world in which one is placed, and to give witness to and proclaim that presence through coherent life and action;¹²⁷
- a *technical and professional preparation* which will give him within his own possibilities and the educative and pastoral character of his vocation a competence at least equal to that of the layman who exercises the same profession in civil society;¹²⁸
- a *socio-political education* which prepares him for some specific educational activity, in particular in the working world.¹²⁹

c) *The immediate postnovitiate*

303 It is desirable that clerics and brothers lead a common life in the same

¹²³ Cf n. 186-191.

¹²⁴ Cf this document n. 294.

¹²⁵ Cf Reg 92.

¹²⁶ Cf ASGC 688.

¹²⁷ Cf ASGC 688, 701b.

¹²⁸ AWCSB p. 560, prop 19,3b.

¹²⁹ Cf AWCSB p. 560, prop 19.3a.

formation community¹³⁰ where they may gain an appreciation of the two forms of the single salesian vocation.

It is best that technical-professional studies be accompanied by philosophical-pedagogical, and catechetical preparation necessary for the apostolate of the brothers and proportionate to their varying situations.

d) *Advanced formation*

Upon completion of the apostolic and formative experience of practical training, the salesian brother who pursues advanced studies should find both the necessary means and the way facilitated.¹³¹ The choice of a center of study and of a community environment particularly rich in salesian experience and in the opportunity for reflection on one's vocation is very important.

304

This formation should be accompanied or should be immediately followed by theological and salesian studies proportionate to the technical and scientific studies completed¹³² so as to help the brother in the progressive maturation of his religious and apostolic life.¹³³

e) *Those responsible for formation*

To be faithful to our founding charism, those in charge of formation should seek to know, to present, and to make better appreciated our salesian identity in the two-fold dimension of our salesian religious vocation: lay and priestly.¹³⁴ That this may be achieved above all during the time of formation:

305

- whenever possible the brother should be present in the formation structure, not merely through cultural and technical formation duties, but above all through responsibilities of formation to the religious and salesian life. Therefore, during the next six years there shall be special care taken to prepare brothers capable of playing a suitable role in such a formation team;
- the salesian priest who takes part in the formation process of the brother should keep in mind the lay characteristics of this specific vocation so as to know how to effectively understand, promote and

¹³⁰ Cf this document n. 281-284.

¹³¹ Cf Reg 82.

¹³² Cf ASGC 688.

¹³³ Cf "Studies and intellectual formation of the salesian," Rome, 5.8.77, n. 94-95.

¹³⁴ Cf ASGC 184.3.

nurture the call which God gives a young man to follow Christ in the consecrated salesian lay state.

306 f) *The post-capitular program*

In the next years the provincial with his council, through the provincial formation committee, shall set up with special care the various elements of a formation program for the salesian brother. These shall be integrated in the provincial Formation Directory.

ONGOING FORMATION

1. THE PRESENT SITUATION

The present-day speed of socio-cultural transformation reveals forms of educational and apostolic inadequacy in some salesians and wear and tear on their consecrated life which demonstrate the urgent necessity of personal and community renewal. 307

As a response to this urgency, and in application of the deliberations of the SGC,¹³⁶ the Superior Council, the provinces, the provincial conferences and the local communities have realized a certain number of initiatives in ongoing formation.¹³⁷

Some of these initiatives and experiences can be considered successful; others have had less satisfying results.

Some causes for these deficiencies are: a lack of development in the way of thinking about the subject on the part of salesians and communities which still retain a static idea of formation, and are still bound to forms of work which leave them interiorly empty; a certain misunderstanding through which ongoing formation is viewed only as cultural updating; insufficient and limited courses; the lack of time for frequenting and for assimilating them; the lack of animators and experts.

For this reason the GC21 considers it necessary to restate this argument systematically.

¹³⁵ RRM 71, 177. "Salesian Formation," document of Formation Dept. 1973, n. 646.

¹³⁶ ASGC 690f, 701; Const 118; Reg 93, 94; "Salesian Formation" n. 313.

¹³⁷ RRM 70, 164, 165, 166; many Acts of Prov Chaps '77; RDF 3,13; 4,2; 5,3.

¹³⁸ RRM 165, 166.

¹³⁹ RRM 70, 166; RDF 5,3.

2. LINES OF REFLECTION

2.1 The concept of ongoing formation

308 Formation is not, or at least is not only, a determined formation structure nor just a momentary step in life. Indeed it is not exhausted through necessary courses of réqualification and of theological, pastoral, and professional updating.

Nor is it a later phase of initial formation which indeed it presupposes.

Ongoing formation is an organizing principle which inspires and orientates formation along the whole arc of life. Formation and personal culture are today conceived more as an indefinite capacity to learn in relation to life than an acquisition of notions. Ongoing formation therefore implies:

- an essential continuity throughout one's whole life of the formative process, of the growth and constructive entry into society of the person;
- an attitude of permanent conversion in discernment of the voice of the "Spirit which renews the face of the earth";
- a personal and community undertaking aimed at constantly renewing one's own dynamic and creative fidelity in the current phase of history according to the ideal of Don Bosco, and at approaching youth with an adequate present-day educational plan.¹⁴⁰

Inasmuch as this is first of all a personal attitude and a general community undertaking, it must not remain a pure state of mind. It involves each individual salesian and the community, and it becomes a concrete entity in specific personal and community actions, in supporting structures, in a climate of salesian animation and of lively community participation.

2.2 Reasons

309 Ongoing formation is necessary for various reasons:

- the dynamic and developing character of the human personality presents a constant opening up, whether on the level of doctrinal synthesis or of the plan of life;

¹⁴⁰ ASGC 659; Const 118.

- the christian life is by its nature a continuous growth in Christ and in watchful attention paid to the Spirit present in the events of history, which we have to decipher and which await from us a response of faith. The Church is itself in a continuing state of renewal;
- the salesian vocation directed to youth, i.e. to the part of humanity which more than every other part is always new and difficult to anticipate, and demands constantly renewed creativity and dynamism.

But today it is for us particularly urgent for the following reasons: **310**

- the ever accelerated pace of transformations of the world in which we live influences us in an often disturbing way, and the present questions which demand adequate answers are directed toward us personally;
- under the surge of technical progress, the speed and continuity of information have led to a society and a pluralistic culture in which a constant critical comparison with the foundation of one's chosen plan of life is indispensable;
- these very transformations urge us to continuous renewal so as to maintain an understandable witness and an efficient apostolic service;
- the formation tasks assigned by the SGC to the entire provincial community impose on it the urgency of a spiritual and apostolic recharging, and of a doctrinal updating which renders it truly formative.

2.3 The subject

The subject of continuing formation is first of all the person of the salesian. Nothing will take the place of his duty done freely and with conviction. No one will be able to run the course of renewal for him. **311**

The subject of continuing education is moreover the salesian community inasmuch as it is the educator of its members, but also inasmuch as it too needs ongoing formation in fidelity to Don Bosco and of discernment of the Spirit.

The salesian community is the subject of ongoing formation in its essential educational relationship towards youth. It is this relationship which acts as a stimulus to renewal, including spiritual renewal, and which offers reasons, criteria of evaluation and indications for updating.

2.4 Objectives

312 Objectives of continuing formation are therefore: the renewal of each confrere, the reactualization of his salesian vocation, of his apostolic efficiency, and of his human maturity (an open and critical mind, a sense of responsibility, the ability to communicate and to dialogue, to give one's self, to be creative, etc.).

Ongoing formation proposes to us moreover the renewal of the community itself in its fraternal union, in its capacity of proclaiming and witnessing, in its organic insertion in a unified apostolate.

2.5 Areas of ongoing formation

313 Ongoing formation as an endeavor of vital growth involves all aspects of the personality of the salesian, and therefore:

- his spirituality amidst a deepening of faith directed towards continuous conversion and towards the search for fullness in his vocation;
- his salesian identity, hence the religious-apostolic plan of Don Bosco and his pedagogical pastoral method;¹⁴¹
- his theological-pastoral environment, the community dynamics, the present youth situation;
- his professionalism, the new efficient methodologies and the reshaping of mentalities which these imply.

3. PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

314 3.1 Criteria of Organization

The initiatives, structures and programs for actuating ongoing formation give rise to the following criteria:

3.1.1 *Unity and decentralization according to the norms of the Constitutions*¹⁴²

The formative and salesian quality of the initiatives of ongoing formation should be guaranteed with the assistance, the orientation, and the oppor-

¹⁴¹ ASGC 670.

¹⁴² Const 106.

tune decisions of the Superior Council. It will be their task to approve the creation of interprovincial and interregional centers.

The regions and provinces respectively should program execution and local adaptation, and they should assume responsibility according to the current demands of a given situation with due concern for the charismatic patrimony of unity.

3.1.2 *Continuity and gradual development*¹⁴³

Ongoing formation of the salesian ought to develop without interruption, without a break in continuity or the negation of the formation already received. This should be clearly manifest through the doctrinal content of spiritual life it teaches through its method and language and its didactic-pedagogical forms, without being reduced to a pure repetition or amplification of the initial program of formation. **315**

3.1.3 *Its practical and vital character*¹⁴⁴

The protagonist of ongoing formation is a subject placed in a concrete situation of life. His difficulties, his possibilities of growth, his tasks, are all conditioned by his situation. The programming and method of ongoing formation should take this into account, and the goals aimed at should refer especially to that situation. **316**

3.1.4 *"Salesianità"*¹⁴⁵

The salesian vocation should be the unifying and essential theme of ongoing formation, and it should occupy a relevant place within the totality of the contents and perspectives of such formation. **317**

3.2 Responsibility at various levels

3.2.1 *The salesian*

Each confrere, responsible for his own growth and for that of the community in which he lives and works, through a wisely chosen program of life should strengthen or if necessary rebuild his ability and habit of systematic reading and of study in the areas proper to his mission, and also his disposition to personal prayer, meditation, spiritual direction, and the use of the rite of penance.¹⁴⁶ **318**

¹⁴³ ASGC 660, 691.

¹⁴⁴ ASGC 671.

¹⁴⁵ ASGC 660; Const 100.

¹⁴⁶ ASGC 659.

In this duty he will be assisted fraternally by the Congregation through those responsible. They will accompany him in the ordinary duty of growth and will provide indispensable initiatives.

3.2.2 *In the ordinary initiatives, the following have a special responsibility:*

319 a) *The rector*

Since the local community is the ordinary place of continuing formation, the person of the rector, his testimony, his action, his mentality have a decisive importance. His task of religious and pastoral animation and of spiritual direction are to be given preference over all other responsibilities in the working out of his service.¹⁴⁷

b) *The provincial*

It is his task to animate religious life, and to care for the integral and permanent formation of the confreres.¹⁴⁸

For this reason:

- let him support by personal contact the task of renewal of the confreres;
- let him program with his council the activities and initiatives which regard the ongoing formation of the confreres and the training of those who do the educating and animating, especially the rectors;¹⁴⁹
- let him look to the accomplishing of such programs, keeping watch particularly over ordinary local community life.¹⁵⁰

c) *Animators and formation personnel*

Ongoing formation requires of those persons prepared for this function, at least at the interprovincial level, the possibility of dedicating themselves full time to this work.

d) *Qualified salesian personnel*

Qualified salesian personnel should hold this service to the confreres as a matter of priority over other occasional additional tasks.

320 3.2.3 *Extraordinary initiatives and animation on a wider scale.*

a) *The Regional Councillors*

They are responsible with the provincials concerned for the realization of

¹⁴⁷ ASGC 672; Const 182; Reg 153, 155, 157.

¹⁴⁸ Const 168.

¹⁴⁹ ASGC 690f.

¹⁵⁰ Reg 93.

interprovincial programs of ongoing formation. They should encourage a greater collaboration and coordination between provinces for ongoing formation.

b) *The Councillor for Formation*

He is responsible for and cares for the continuing and integral formation of the salesian.¹⁵¹ In agreement with the respective Regional Councillor, he seeks from the provinces the programming and actualization of practical means for the ongoing formation of the confreres. Let him have special care for the good running of centers for ongoing formation and for houses of spirituality.

c) *The Rector Major*

As father and center of unity, he promotes a continuous and renewed fidelity to the salesian vocation.¹⁵² This implies, among other things, the duty of animating the confreres in their ongoing formation. This he satisfactorily accomplishes through his ordinary government, his teaching office (talks and circular letters), his contacts, visits, and his meetings with groups of persons.¹⁵³

3.3 Structures

3.3.1 In the normative documents on salesian formation (*Ratio Institutionis, Ratio Studiorum, Provincial Directories*) there should be a section on ongoing formation. The section on initial formation should assume ongoing formation as an organizing and orientating principle. 321

3.3.2 The provincial formation committee also sets programs for the continuing formation of salesians, and seeks their realization in dependence on the provincial and his council. 322

3.3.3 Regions, language groups, or provincial conferences should have, if possible and convenient, their center for ongoing formation. Interprovincial initiatives which develop in them are the responsibility of the provincials of the area or of the conference concerned, the Regional Councillor, or the Councillor for Formation. 323

¹⁵¹ Const 139.

¹⁵² ASGC 714, 719; Const 129.

¹⁵³ ASGC 701.

- 324** 3.3.4 The "Salesianum" at Rome should have as one of its specific tasks that of preparing directors and animators for the other regional centers.
- 325** 3.3.5 For courses of ongoing formation of the confreres we can also take advantage of interreligious centers, especially when participation in the pastoral work of the local church would counsel it, and when the presence of salesians in such an arrangement would entail an enriching exchange with other religious.

3.4 Lines of action

326 3.4.1 *At local level*

a) We should give preference to the local community as the place for ongoing formation, avoiding every dichotomy or a sense of discontinuity between profitable pauses and community life. The life of fraternal union and of apostolic work is a continuous occasion of personal development.

The community supports this process giving value and enrichment to all times, means, and community aspects which bring us to a greater understanding and deepening of our vocation.¹⁵⁴

Among these we list the following:

- times of community prayer, of shared meditation, of reflection on the gospel and on renewal of one's life; the monthly and quarterly recollection days;
- moments of participation and coresponsibility (council, assembly, meetings) and of community communication;
- occasions of salesian enrichment, as the talk with the rector, the conferences,¹⁵⁵ the good nights;
- communication with the provincial community and with the Congregation through letters read in common and commented upon, through provincial communications, through directives of the Rector Major;
- participation in things of interest to the Church through personal and community acquaintance with her guidelines.

- 327** b) The local communities should schedule their activities in such a way as to ensure that the confreres participate in times of prayer and of community reflection, as well as have "the time necessary for personal and continuous updating."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Const 100.

¹⁵⁵ Cf Reg 157.

¹⁵⁶ Reg 93.

c) The community must encourage this task of the confrere through fitting means: occasions of exchange on a level of studies, participation in conferences and pastoral encounters, correspondence with the proposals on formation of the local church, study and systematic exercise in communication (training in communication), a functional and up-to-date library, a section of the house reserved for the use of the community so as to favor a climate of recollection, prayer, and personal work.¹⁵⁷ **328**

d) The local community should also encourage the formation of its confreres by means of encounters for reflection and religious experiences with the young and those others who are the object of our mission. **329**

3.4.2 At provincial level

a) Let the provincials and delegates in presenting these capitular documents place in evidence the importance of ongoing formation. The provincial formation committee should then continue the work with suitable reminders. **330**

b) Ordinary means and occasions on the provincial level are meetings of rectors, economers, pastoral animators, and other confreres. In these meetings, besides dealing with the administrative and organizational aspects of things, concern should be shown for the religious life and spiritual and doctrinal programs for the salesians. **331**

c) The annual retreats have particular efficacy in promoting personal growth and province-wide union. They gain in value through previous *preparation of the confreres*, updating of the forms of retreat, and the updating also of the animators. **332**

d) Let the province also promote short encounters, according to its possibilities, to foster ongoing formation (e.g. on biblical, catechetical or pastoral themes, and on religious life, salesianity, etc.). **333**

e) The province will take particular care of members who are in the early years of their priestly ministry: as well as the ordinary pastoral care, it will provide for further preparation in those matters which are peculiarly necessary for the salesian priest: catechetics, pastoral work for youth, etc. Similar provision will be made for brothers in the early years of their full involvement in pastoral work. **334**

¹⁵⁷ Reg 39.

- 335** f) After their perpetual profession, let all salesians be offered periodically a period of reasonable length for the renewal of their pastoral and religious life. Let the provinces keep this in mind when drawing up their programs. Let each confrere respond generously to this requirement of formation for his own good as well as that of the community.
- 336** g) In the coming six years let priority be given to the theme of "*salesianità*" and to the study of the Constitutions.
- 337** h) In the next three years let each province or group of provinces provide for the preparation of experts in salesianity, making use of the services offered by the UPS.
- 338** i) Ongoing formation will entail the reshaping of our works and activities as a matter of controlled growth. The GC21 emphasizes the need to apply the criteria for reshaping set out by the SGC also to the need for providing for the ongoing formation of the confreres.

3.4.3 At regional and world level

- 339** a) In the next three years let lengthy courses be provided at the "Salesianum," Rome, for directors and animators of regional centers for ongoing formation.
- 340** b) Periodically the Superior Council will organize projects to provide the specific qualification needed by provincials to enable them to fulfil their role of animators of the provincial communities.
- 341** c) The necessary qualification of rectors will be achieved through interprovincial initiatives, promoted at least every three years and coordinated by the provincial conference or by the Regional Councillor with the provincials concerned.
- 342** d) Provincial conferences or linguistic groups must see to the provision of an adequate and up-to-date salesian bibliography in the vernacular. In addition it is hoped that study groups will be formed at regional level, which will be able to provide in due course salesian publications and other services.

DOCUMENT 4

**OPERA PAS
AND
PONTIFICAL
SALESIAN
UNIVERSITY**

SUMMARY

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OPERA PAS AND SALESIAN PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY (UPS)

PRELIMINARIES

1. In accordance with the mandate of the SGC (ASGC, 705, i) the Superior Council presented the GC21 members with a summary of the evaluation of the performance of the PAS-UPS for the years 1972-1977, and stressed the feasibility for the Chapter to "propose practical guidelines for the attainment of the specific goal of this University, in view of which the Congregation supports and develops it." The GC21 has taken up this task in a responsible manner, within the framework of the verification of the life of the Congregation and its plans of action for the forthcoming years. Its intervention was also an expression of fraternal solidarity with the confreres at that highest salesian academic center who have been called to carry out the mission of the Society in a particularly meaningful manner.¹

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Keeping in mind that at the SGC the term PAS comprised both the present Opera PAS and the UPS, the GC21 turned its attention to the entire religious and academic organization taken together. It considered it its duty however to show a preferential concern for the UPS in view of "an overall positive appraisal of the restructuring of the Opera PAS and of the progress made in the implementation of the AGC guidelines," such as were reported in the Superior Council Report (concl. b), while "it remains to carry out the delicate task of a unified restructuring in the academic field."²

¹ Const 2.

² For an exact understanding of this document it should be kept in mind that what was once called PAS today comprises:

a. The Salesian Pontifical University (UPS), i.e. the academic center of studies made up of 5 Faculties (Theology, Canon Law, Philosophy, Educational Science, Classical and Christian Literature).

b. The Delegation of the Opera PAS, or more simply Opera PAS, i.e. a selected group of confreres organized in communities in the Roman section of the Piazza dell'Ateneo Salesiano 1, for the specific purpose of carrying on the mission of our

344 2. In fulfilling its task of evaluation and orientation, the GC21 members had an ample documentation at their disposal. In particular they had available:

- 2.1 the *practical directives* of the SGC referring to the PAS (702-5);
- 2.2 the letter of the Rector Major, Grand Chancellor, to the Rector of the UPS, dated Jan. 10, 1977;
- 2.3 the *Report of the Superior Council on restructuring the PAS, 1972-77* (GC21 1/6.7 Rome, Dec. 1, 1977); in particular:
 - a. the conclusions of the postcapitular commission,
 - b. the subsequent deliberations of the Superior Council and some changes already made,
 - c. the data relative to the canonical visitation of Fr. Egidio Viganò and to the first capitular assembly of the Gesù Maestro Community,
 - d. the information on the setting up of the special Delegation of the Opera PAS and its present structure,
 - e. the results and deliberations of the 1976-77 Chapter of the Delegation,
 - f. all the studies (still incomplete) on the academic restructuring of the UPS;
- 2.4 the precapitular schemes, nn 466-467;
- 2.5 a summary made by a study group consisting of capitulars (GC21 UPS group).

Congregation through the Pontifical Salesian University. It is governed by a Superior, delegated by the Rector Major, with specific powers, analogous to those of a provincial. A special "Delegation Statute" regulates the details of community life and work so that there is a harmonious relationship with the academic statutes.

c. Within the Delegation are found:

— *The communities of the personnel permanently attached to the UPS*: two in number, i.e. the "Gesù Maestro" Community and the "St. Dominic Savio" Community.

— *Residential communities for salesian students at the UPS*: today two in number, i.e. the "St. John Bosco" Community, and the "Blessed Michael Rua" Community. These two are communities for confreres not in the period of initial formation.

d. The young confreres who are students of the first cycle of philosophy and theology come to the University from formation communities which are independent of the Opera PAS Delegation.

3. The process of study and evaluation and the related proposals helped to achieve the following objectives: **345**

3.1 to make an overall *check* of the PAS-UPS activity during the last 5-year period (1972-1977);

3.2 to focus, to improve and to bring up to date the practical directives of the SGC in view of future tasks.

1. LINES OF VERIFICATION

The GC21 points out that the SGC struck a responsive chord also in the PAS-UPS, with the realization of good results in many areas, despite the fact that a number of problems still remain open; the latter seem capable of solution in the near future.

Before pointing out some positive or problematic aspects, the GC21, taking into account the history of the PAS-UPS and its institutional goals as a whole, takes certain fundamental data for granted:

1.1 Main undisputed facts

1.1.1 The legitimate function of the UPS within the framework of the salesian reality, at the service of the Congregation and as a qualified expression of its mission in the Church, with its specific cultural and formational potential. **346**

1.1.2 The existence of communities of confreres, who are expressly charged with the realization of the salesian mission within the UPS.

1.1.3 The structure of the UPS with its 5 Faculties and respective activities within the Church, which are basic to its title of Salesian Pontifical University, in harmony with the meaning given to it in the *Motu Proprio Magisterium Vitae* of Pope Paul VI (May 24, 1973) and with the declaration of the SGC.³

1.1.4 The immediate consequences flowing from these facts, as already stated in several documents, and fundamentally in the ASGC, are: **347**

a. commitment to service to the Church and in the Church, in fidelity to tradition and the Magisterium,⁴

³ ASGC 702.

⁴ ASGC 702 B.

- b. specific high-priority institutional service to the Salesian Congregation and to its mission,⁵
- c. openness also to external students, ecclesiastical and lay,⁶
- d. serious didactic and scientific university level, with relative academic autonomy, and the special traits of a scientific institution of the highest level, as set down in the Statutes,⁷
- e. a role of particular significance and responsibility, as regards salesian characteristics, of the Faculty of Educational Science, both with respect to its eminently pedagogical and catechetical contents and its methodology (didactic and formational aspects). The latter appear also from the letter of the Rector Major of Jan. 10, 1977 n. 21, and from the *Motu Proprio* which conferred the title of University on the Athenaeum and determined its special insertion in the life of the Church: "The Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum exists and works effectively throughout the world to promote at university level the formation of those who in turn must form others, according to the spirit of the Founder, which is expressed in the so-called 'preventive system' and which with divine inspiration draws its genuine nature and strength from the gospel."

1.2 Positive aspects

- 348** 1.2.1 The setting up of the Opera PAS as a Delegation (June, 1975) after a laborious and lengthy process which began at the time of the suppression of the Province (October 1972), with communities of salesians working in a stable manner, directly or indirectly, for the UPS.
- 1.2.2 Insertion in the Delegation and reorganization of appropriate residential communities for salesian students who have completed the period of initial formation.
- 349** 1.2.3 A deeper consciousness of the ecclesial and salesian university character of the UPS and recognition of its activities in accordance with the guidelines of the SGC and the new Statutes. In particular:
- a. revision and 'ad experimentum' approval of the new Statutes (Sept. 4, 1973) drawn up in harmony with the 'Normae Quaedam' and the new status of the PAS as a university;

⁵ ASGC 702 C.

⁶ ASGC 702 A.

⁷ ASUPS 1-3 & 6; ASGC 702 A.

- b.* elaboration by the Faculties of their objectives and programs in accordance with the new curriculum division into cycles; and activation of the various collegial assemblies decreed by the Statutes;
- c.* special salesian vitality and effectiveness of the sectors of spirituality and catechetics, as stated in the Rector Major's report;⁸
- d.* a perceptible increase in the student enrollment, especially salesians, in the second cycle of the Faculty of Theology, while the attendance of both ecclesiastical and lay students in the Faculty of Educational Sciences and of salesians in the catechetics sector remains satisfactory (though it is somewhat less satisfactory in the area of pedagogical methodology and school pedagogy);
- e.* a first restructuring of the various Institutes and Centers, reorganization of the Don Bosco Study Center and setting up of the Salesian Missions History Center (Centro Studi di Storia Missioni Salesiane) (both centers have special regulations to guarantee their special relationship with the Superior Council);
- f.* improvement of economic and financial administration with regular yearly budgets and reports, rigorously checked by the Administrative Council, the UPS Academic Council and the General Administration Council of the 'Opera PAS';
- g.* consolidation and growth of the salesian centers of theological studies (Messina, Verona, Cremisan-Bethlehem, Benediktbeuern, Barcelona, Salamanca, San Paolo-Brazil, Guatemala) affiliated to the Faculty of Theology (to which is annexed as one of its sections the theological study-center of Crocetta-Turin), and consequent upon directives from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education of centers affiliated to the Faculty of Philosophy (Benediktbeuern, Guatemala, Los Teques - Venezuela);
- h.* increased publishing activity (first through the PAS-Verlag in Zurich and now through the PAS-Editrice in Rome), with marked emphasis on theological, philosophical, religious, pedagogical and salesian matters;
- i.* direct involvement or participation of the Faculties and professorial staff in meetings, study days and weeks and courses in on-going formation.

1.2.4 Discussion and in-depth study of problems related to a better functioning of the academic structures set up in the wake of the new

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⁸ RRM 168.

Statutes. Such work was carried out by the UPS in constant dialog with the members of the Superior Council and has already produced feasible solutions (which are waiting for the directives that will be contained in the forthcoming Constitution of the Church on ecclesiastical studies, for their implementation).

Among the positive results of such collaboration may be noted:

- a. a declared readiness for inter-faculty collaboration;
- b. the commonly acknowledged usefulness of a departmental didactic organization aiming at making effective the collegial formative responsibility of the Faculties and the elimination of needless duplication in teaching and of courses of lesser importance as regards their contents;
- c. the advanced state of elaboration of several problems, already nearing the stage of actual solution as indicated in the practical directives.

1.3 Problematic aspects

351 There remain still some knotty issues which need practical consideration not only by the GC21 but by all who are responsible for the specific formational effectiveness of the UPS.

1.3.1 Activation of objectives and areas of specialization without adequate mutual coordination and with insufficiently motivated divisions (e.g. the two specializations in catechetics; the different options on youth pastoral work, catechetics, pedagogical methodology).

1.3.2 A not entirely satisfactory pedagogical characterization of the program of the psychology of education (courses, practical work, dissertations for the licentiate and doctorate); and an uncertain educational and pastoral goal in the teaching and research in the field of human sciences (biology, psychology, sociology).

1.3.3 Proliferation of Institutes and Centers, and inadequate insertion of some of them in the academic structure (UPS and its Faculties).

1.3.4 Lack of unity of formation, caused by insufficient correlation between material, courses and final objectives; the rigid concept of Faculty autonomy, not yet overcome by a growing exchange of courses and professors; this inevitably causes noticeable differences in mental attitudes among the respective students.

1.3.5 Difficulties in finding, preparing and qualifying salesian teaching and technical personnel, with negative consequences as regards reasonable mobility and the feasibility of collaboration and exchanges with other salesian study centers. **352**

1.3.6 Scarce enrollment of salesian students in some Faculties and non-utilization of some typical pedagogical courses, such as pedagogical methodology and school pedagogy.

1.3.7 Serious economic difficulties, resolved in the past only by sacrifices borne by all those connected with the PAS-UPS and by the Economer General's Department.

2. PRACTICAL DIRECTIVES

The GC21 considers it opportune to make its contribution to overcoming difficulties and enhancing present efforts to increase the vitality of the UPS and its effective credibility by formulating some *practical directives*. **353**

In this collaboration with the UPS, the GC21 agrees with the objectives laid down at the inception of the highest center of studies of the Congregation, and understands its history. These objectives and history were already authoritatively set out by the Rector Major and Grand Chancellor, Fr. Aloysius Ricceri in his letter to the Rector of the UPS of Jan. 10, 1977.

The following precise practical guidelines are designed to enable the rich potential of the UPS to reach still higher levels for the benefit of the Salesian Congregation and for the spreading of its specific mission in the Church.

2.1 Ecclesial and salesian clarity of goals

For a better practical understanding of the place held by the UPS in the Congregation and the Church, and keeping in mind that some perplexities and uncertainties have arisen even in recent years within and without the UPS, the GC21 intends to reaffirm the clearly ecclesial and salesian character which it must constantly exhibit. **354**

On this vital point the GC21 calls for a constant and coherent implementation of the General Statutes (in particular art. 2) and those of each Faculty.

This implies among other things:

2.1.1 working constantly and faithfully in the light of the Church's Magisterium and in harmony with the salesian Constitutions, with due respect to the differences demanded by the methodological autonomy of the various sciences;

2.1.2 fostering a particular sensitivity for christian and salesian community life, in which and for which the UPS exists and functions, and which ought to guide its choice of areas of work;

2.1.3 promoting an open-ended dialog between human and religious-theological sciences, already commonly found in all Catholic universities, and particularly necessary in ecclesiastical universities. This dialog will be strengthened by the specially deep salesian understanding of faith lived in the world of youth and the working classes, as Pope Pius XI remarked: "Spread abroad the gospel message by means of a living and real contribution through the channels of catechesis, pedagogy, psychology, and sociology" integrated with "the direct and personal apostolate in the world of the young, with particular attention and dedication to the poor, the needy, and the socially deprived."⁹

Such salesian and ecclesial clarity, which is demanded of every Faculty, is even more necessary for that of Educational Science, for it marks out our University in a special manner in the Church;¹⁰ and it was set up, in accordance with the express wish of Fr. Peter Ricaldone, "for the purpose of preparing... salesian confreres in an ever better way for their high mission of educators according to the 'preventive system' bequeathed to us by our holy Founder as a "precious heritage" and "for the purpose of enhancing and spreading Catholic pedagogical principles." "It is superfluous to add," said Fr. Ricaldone, indicating the extent of our commitment, "that catechetics will always have absolute pride of place both in the Institute of Pedagogy and in the houses of formation."¹¹

355 2.2 Special attention to the world of youth and the working classes

The salesian service rendered by our University to the Church will therefore fully reflect the content and the style of the mission of the

⁹ Paul VI to members of GC21, Jan. 26, 1978; n. 475.

¹⁰ RCS conclusion.

¹¹ ACS 106, Aug. 25, 1941.

Congregation itself according to our Constitutions and what is concisely stated in art. 2 of the General Statutes:

"To the effort of promoting scientific progress the UPS will add pastoral solicitude in dealing with the problems of youth and their education, having in mind the spirit and teaching of Don Bosco."¹²

In effect, "the pivotal point of the entire work is the organic setting up of a University aimed at a specialized service of our mission to youth and to the working classes throughout the world."¹³

2.3 Suitable programs

It follows that the UPS must program its courses with these goals in view; in other words, it must keep in mind the specific type of service which the Congregation wants to render. **356**

This clear and determining criterion should be a constant guide in the choice of activities, in the setting up of courses, in the scientific and personal formation offered. Moreover, to further stress this ideal clarity of programs and services, the GC21 hopes that the UPS Faculties will see to it that courses on significant aspects of salesianity be included among those offered to salesian students.

2.4 The beneficiaries designated in the objectives and programs of the UPS

Those for whom the courses are intended, be they clergy or religious or lay people and whether they are members of the salesian family or not, are all those who accept the specific characteristics of the University i.e. that it is Pontifical and Salesian. But chief among them are salesians in preparation for special services which they will have to render in their own provinces. **357**

2.5 Particular responsibility of the salesians

All this naturally puts a special obligation on the UPS, but it involves the entire Congregation as well. **358**

2.5.1 On the one hand, the existence of the UPS is justified by its capacity to render an effective service in the first place in and to the

¹² To be integrated with art 1,2 of Statutes of Faculty of Theology; art 1 of Statutes of Faculty of Canon Law; art 1,2 of Statutes of Faculty of Educational Science.

¹³ LGC conclusion; ASGC 703; Sch Precap 198.

Congregation. Hence the need that salesian students be not absent from it, especially in those philosophical, pedagogical, theological and pastoral disciplines which pertain more closely to the salesian vocation and mission. Even though the UPS does not exhaust its purpose merely through its teaching activity, this is nevertheless its most visible *raison-d'être*, capable of directing and stimulating all its other forms of cultural apostolate.

2.5.2 On the other hand, its university structure is not independent; it exists and functions, in the final analysis, by the will of the Congregation which is responsible for running it. It is therefore the concern of the Congregation through its deliberative organs (General Chapter, Rector Major, Superior Council) to exercise an influence on the nature of its programs and services according to the needs of the provinces and also according to the desire to develop through the UPS this or that aspect of the salesian mission in the Church and in the world in harmony with its institutional and constitutional tasks.

359 2.6 Objectives and programs

With regard to the UPS teaching organization, the GC21, while it acknowledges the good results achieved thus far, wishes that:

2.6.1 the type and the number of licentiates, doctorates, and diplomas to be conferred by the Faculties in the immediate future be jointly decided by the University and the Superior Council as soon as possible. On this matter the opinion of provincials would be appreciated;

2.6.2 the internal structural organization be similarly decided, so as to clearly define the duties of professorial staff and others and so make effective planning possible, as regards the qualification of personnel, the economic sector, etc.;

2.6.3 the complete ordinances of each Faculty and of the University as a whole be drawn up and approved according to the norms of the Statutes.

360 2.7 Restructuring in the field of didactic organization

It is likewise the conviction of the GC21 that the UPS will achieve still better results and a better unification of course-content and scientific, ecclesial and salesian inspiration, if it can achieve as soon as possible a more rational organization of programming and teaching. The following are high-priority requirements:

2.7.1 The principle of interdisciplinary and inter-departmental organization should be made effective also on the structural and statutory level. While the Faculties will remain the academic organisms for programming and administration, a more comprehensive control will guarantee the unity of formation.

2.7.2 The matter to be taught should be accurately selected, so as to be truly suited to the goals to be achieved by each group of students according to their own legitimate requirements. It will thus also be possible to maintain a relative distinction between a professor's field of scientific research which may not completely coincide with his teaching activity, and the matters actually taught, which are addressed to specific students of different cultural and formation levels, who are at varying points in academic cycles and have well-defined objectives.

2.7.3 The various teaching cycles, all equally necessary for the life of the University, should be preserved with their specific character, objectives and formative aspects. In fact the first cycle too has its precise overall function, essential not only for the students' organic cultural development, but also for the unity of the intellectual formation itself.

2.7.4 The enrollment in the first cycle of confreres who on account of their religious and intellectual qualities seem to be particularly suited for specific tasks in the Congregation should be encouraged. To them the UPS will be able to offer a solid foundation in their formation and education in view of their eventual specialization, while at the same time suitable formative communities will contribute to their overall maturation.¹⁴

2.8 Non-academic courses

As provided in the Statutes and the Ordinances of the University, alongside the academic curricula, the UPS will offer shorter courses aimed at the qualification or requalification of salesians, particularly those involved in the active life.

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Courses of special interest for the Congregation would be:

- Annual or biennial courses in spirituality and pedagogy.
- Annual updating courses in ecclesiastical, pastoral and educational sciences.

¹⁴ RCS 12 d.

- Concentrated courses for special groups: Rectors, Masters of Novices, confreres directly in charge of salesian formation, parish priests, provincial secretaries, animators, catechists, teachers, etc...
- Annual or summer courses on salesianity, possibly linked with language courses in Italian.
- Correspondence courses (also with academic credit) either at the UPS or in various regions of the Congregation could be offered in the future.

2.9 Exchanges

- 362** Moreover, in accordance with the decisions of the SGC nn 703-704, the UPS with its qualified personnel, recently improved quantitatively and qualitatively, will intensify its collaboration with the provinces and study centers in the areas of research and formation, affiliations, exchange of professors, animation work, assessment of books and scientific institutions, liaison with past pupils and friends. The "Opera PAS" and the UPS will be actively available for periodic meetings with the regional superiors and provincials for the exchange of information and the evaluation of issues of common interest.

2.10 Teaching staff

- 363** Aware of their special responsibility in the field of formation and this not only on cultural and scientific levels, the teachers will pay great attention to the university dimension of their salesian vocation and to their solidarity with the life of the Congregation and of the Church. In view of this they will be able to increase their scientific competence and their respective specialization, in a spirit of initiative and sincere faithfulness to their tasks in the University.
- 364** The GC21 emphasizes some aspects of this issue which seem more pressing:
- a.* For the nomination of an associate professor the following conditions specifying the dispositions of art. 22,2 of the Statutes should be included in the Ordinances:
- a period of experience in some specifically salesian activity,
 - the publication of some scientific work, carried out under the guidance of a professor.

b. The direct responsibility of the Congregation for the entire life of the UPS requires that it be established in the Statutes (or in the Ordinances) that the College of Professors be made up of salesians only. Others may collaborate as visiting professors.¹⁵

c. The religious character of the salesian professor should be made more explicit in the Statutes (or in the Ordinances) so as to make it clear that he is still at the disposal of his Superiors for other tasks in the Congregation.

d. The salesian professors at the UPS will not take up assignments of a prolonged and permanent character in other civil or ecclesiastical universities, or in other non-salesian organizations, without the previous and explicit consent of the Grand Chancellor. The same authorization is required before a UPS professor enters his name in a competition for a university chair or the like. This rule will be inserted in the Statutes (or in the Ordinances). **365**

e. The competent authorities will take prompt action towards a progressive and thorough internationalization of the teaching staff and other personnel assigned to the UPS - Opera PAS.

2.11 Financial aspect

While expressing sincere appreciation for the joint efforts of the Economer General's Department and the confreres working in the Opera PAS, the GC21 hopes that new ways and means of financing will be studied to help meet recurring difficulties with relative security, and to involve more deeply the Delegation of the Opera PAS and the Congregation in general. In particular, the GC21 recommends that in cooperation with the entire salesian family and other benefactors, scholarship funds be set up for students, especially salesians, who come from provinces in economic difficulties. **366**

2.12 Salesian communities and formation communities

Due to their different composition and location the UPS staff and students communities cannot all be organized in the same manner. The GC21 wishes however to make the following suggestions: **367**

a. The Staff communities should be so organized as not only to

¹⁵ SGUPS 20, 4.

provide the essentials of the salesian community for all, as required by the *Constitutions* and the *Regulations*, but also to promote effectively that "clearly salesian and ecclesial character" and that synthesis of life and learning, which make it possible for all who work at the PAS-UPS to live their specific scientific and formative mission to the full.

- 368** *b.* Particularly important for the preparation of well-trained salesian personnel are the communities for salesian students, both those inserted in the Delegation and those separate from it.¹⁶

Organized as true formation communities, they will promote, with safe and modern criteria, the education, i.e., the total growth of the person in all directions. Study, aided by the teaching at the UPS—well qualified as it is from a scientific, ecclesiastical and salesian standpoint—and by other integrative activities, is an element of decisive importance.

The religious superiors of these communities are responsible, together with the UPS teaching staff, for the complete formation of the students with regard not only to their academic progress but also to the maturation of their whole human, ecclesial, and salesian personality, and for their ecclesiastical formation in the case of candidates for sacred orders.

These superiors moreover can and must send to the competent authorities and through the proper channels, their observations, positive or negative, on the influence that the teaching at the UPS as a whole or in some particular respect exercises on the formation of the students; and the authorities at the UPS can express similar judgements on the maturity, adequacy and diligence of the subjects sent there for study and formation.

- 369** *c.* In the next few years the Superior Council, through the competent provincials, will see to it that the formation communities of salesian students existing outside the Opera PAS be well organized, and will promote their internationalization both with regard to students and those in charge of formation.

2.13 Modifications of the Statutes

- 370** Let the Superior Council study, in collaboration with the competent organs of the Opera PAS and the UPS, those modifications of the

¹⁶ RCS, 1c, 11c, 12d.

Statutes which in harmony with the guidelines of the Church concerning ecclesiastical Universities, may be deemed opportune and necessary to increase the scientific, ecclesial and salesian effectiveness of the work of the UPS.

a. Of particular urgency seem to be those modifications which concern some of the issues indicated in this document, and precisely the practical directives nn. 6a,b,c; 7a; 10b,c,d.

b. Moreover, in order to promote a more efficacious operational communication between the UPS and the Opera PAS, the ways in which the Delegate of the Rector Major could be meaningfully inserted into the structures of the UPS should be studied.

c. Lastly, for a more harmonious functioning of the UPS, an attentive revision and definition of the different areas of responsibility and competence, and of the forms of participation by the students in the collegial organs of government and management should be made.

DOCUMENT 5

**REVISION
OF THE
CONSTITUTIONS
AND REGULATIONS**

SUMMARY

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1. DECLARATION OF THE GC21

The GC21, in conformity with the Motu Proprio "*Ecclesiae Sanctae*",¹ undertook a general revision of the Constitutions, which had been approved "ad experimentum" for a six-year period by the SGC.² **371**

The work of revision began with the evaluation of the observations and suggestions sent in by the provincial chapters and confreres and with the remarks contained in the Report of the Rector Major, which reflect the experience of the past six years. Most of the observations of the provincial chapters and of the confreres expressed requests for clarification of certain concepts or more precise terminology; they also suggested stylistic improvements in the text of the Constitutions. A limited number of proposals were made concerning more fundamental aspects of certain texts and the Chapter has examined these suggestions attentively.

The Chapter kept in mind past experience as well as the guiding norms of "*Ecclesiae Sanctae*": theological principles for the adaptation of the text to the directives of Vatican II, historical salesian principles for evaluating fidelity to our Founder's spirit and to our salesian traditions, juridical principles to ensure the clarity of the norms, "necessary to define the character, aims, and means employed by the Institute."³

The GC21 found that the renewed Constitutions as a whole had been received by the Congregation with a spirit of faith and with the will to live them, as a gift of the Holy Spirit who makes Don Bosco's spirit present and active in our time. **372**

On the other hand, a scrutiny of the past six years brings to light some negative points: some provincial chapters observe that the new Constitutions are not yet sufficiently known; they have not been

¹ Cf ES II, 12-14.

² Cf Declaration of SGC, Const 1972, p. 11.

³ Cf ES II, 12b.

studied and thoroughly examined by all the confreres; above all, they have not yet been fully assimilated and consequently experienced as a measure of attachment to Don Bosco and to our salesian vocation. The causes of these deficiencies are identified by the provincial chapters themselves - viz., the considerable changes made in the text of the Constitutions by the SGC and the brief period of time for experimentation.

- 373** The GC21 finds on the one hand that the Constitutions drawn up by the SGC comply with Church doctrine and with our Founder's spirit, though some improvements must admittedly be made in the text; on the other hand the Chapter wishes to offer the confreres more time for a deeper examination and greater assimilation of the Constitutions. Consequently, *the GC21 decides to confirm the present text of the salesian Constitutions, extending the approval "ad experimentum" for a further six years.*

At the present time the text will be modified only to the extent that changes are deemed necessary to clarify or complete it, or to fill some legal lacuna. The modifications will serve to interpret the text more clearly.

- 374** In compliance with the Motu Proprio "*Ecclesiae Sanctae*," cited above, the next Ordinary General Chapter will edit the text of the Constitutions to be presented to the Holy See for definitive approval. This GC21 consigns to that Chapter—through the Superior Council—its working papers, produced on the basis of the observations made by the provincial chapters of 1977 and by individual confreres, so that they may be taken into consideration in the definitive revision of the Constitutions.

- 375** *A similar decision was made regarding the General Regulations, approved by the SGC.* The GC21 confirms their force of law for the whole Congregation after making only those changes deemed necessary or opportune.

- 376** As it presents these deliberations to the Congregation, the GC21 wishes to clarify the proper character of the Constitutions and General Regulations and to underscore their spiritual characteristics and binding force.

THE SALESIAN CONSTITUTIONS, which the SGC presented in renewed form, in compliance with the norms of the Church,⁴ constitute the salesian "Rule of Life."⁵ In them shines forth as the "supreme norm" "the gospel lived according to Don Bosco's spirit,"⁶ and in them are enshrined "the spiritual riches of salesian tradition and the basic norms for the life of our Society."⁷ 377

The Constitutions proceed first of all from the gospel, since they present a way of following Christ, which is rooted in the gospel and expressed in a particular manner of life, a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church through her Founder.

The Constitutions come to us from our Founder, inasmuch as they are a concrete description of the spiritual features of his apostolic plan and contain the essential elements of his charism. For us salesians they recall Don Bosco, who left us in writing: "If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future through the exact observance of our Constitutions."⁸

The Constitutions proceed moreover from our Congregation's dynamic and living fidelity to her mission in history. Consequently they also contain norms apt to determine the spirit and aims of our Founder, as well as the sound traditions which make up the spiritual heritage of our Institute.⁹

For these reasons the Constitutions are approved by the Apostolic See, which guarantees the authentic expression of the Founder's charism in the text of the Constitutions and its usefulness in the service of the Church. This approval makes the Constitutions real laws of the Church; the obligation in conscience to observe them derives however not from a positive prescription of the Church but from the bond freely assumed by the confrere at his profession as his personal response to the Lord's call.¹⁰ 378

Living the Constitutions therefore is for every salesian an act of faith in Jesus Christ and in his gospel, a pledge of fidelity to a vocation received as a gift in the Church, a "path that leads to love."¹¹

⁴ Cf PC, 2; ES II, 12-14.

⁵ Cf Presentation of R.M. Const 1972, p. 5 seq.

⁶ Cf Const 101.

⁷ Cf Const 200.

⁸ Cf MB XVII, 258-273.

⁹ Cf PC, 2b; ES II, 12b.

¹⁰ Cf Const 200.

¹¹ Cf Foreword to Const 1972.

- 379** Approval "ad experimentum" subtracts nothing from the binding force of the Constitutions. The Apostolic See in fact, in granting to the General Chapter in these particular circumstances the power directly to promulgate the Constitutions, approves the text, authenticates their value as a spiritual guide, and reserves to itself only their critical evaluation at the end of the experimental stage.

This second six-year period of trial granted to the Congregation by the Church offers every confrere and every community a special opportunity to study the Constitutions and a motive to practise them with greater diligence, so that they may see the concrete situations of their own life in the light of the spirit of Don Bosco, living in the Constitutions. The Holy See's final approval will then be a more efficacious confirmation of the living experience of the Congregation.

- 380** From the Constitutions, which define the essential elements of the salesian plan of life, derive all the other norms which the General Chapters and the competent authorities establish for the life of the Congregation and for the constant renewal of salesian activity.

The GC21 wishes to indicate briefly the principal classes of these norms.

- 381** a) **THE GENERAL REGULATIONS** represent the collection of prescriptions which apply the general principles of the "Rule of Life" in a manner adapted to changeable situations. Thus they contain the concrete, practical applications of the Constitutions to matters of universal import and are consequently valid throughout the Congregation.¹²

The Regulations are more detailed and circumstantial than the Constitutions. The Church has established that they be enacted by the highest authority in the Congregation (the General Chapter) and they can be appropriately modified and adapted, always however in harmony with the Constitutions but without the need of subsequent approval by the Holy See.

Juridically the Regulations form with the Constitutions a single body of binding norms. They both have legal value, even though their binding force may differ because of their specific content or because of the explicit dispositions of the legislator.

¹² Cf Presentation of R.M. Const 1972, 6.

b) Besides the General Regulations, the General Chapter may approve—as practical applications of the Constitutions—Decrees or Deliberations and Practical Directives. **382**

By **Decrees** or **Deliberations** are meant provisions of a juridical nature regarding a well-defined matter. Decrees or Deliberations may be issued to effect changes in articles of the Constitutions or to establish practical norms of action. The binding force of a Decree or Deliberation flows from the authority of the General Chapter which approves it. Whenever a General Chapter decides to change a text of the Constitutions the change must be approved by the Holy See.

Practical directives may be described as practical norms of action. They are based on the supposition that they will provide directions for specific activities over a fixed period of time. **383**

Generally speaking, practical directives:

- either imply that intermediary authorities (provincial chapter, provincials with their councils, provincial conferences...) will lay down special norms;
- or they establish the best path to follow in fulfilling requirements of the Constitutions or Regulations during a special period and in particular circumstances;
- or they present solutions for situations which emerge, for example, from adapting norms to the post-conciliar renewal.

c) Finally, the Constitutions or the General Chapter, according to the principle of subsidiarity or of decentralization,¹³ may explicitly consign the application of general norms to provincial regulations or provincial directories.¹⁴ **384**

Provincial Regulations or **Provincial Directories** are particular laws within the ambit of the general legislation of the Congregation. They are enacted by provincial chapters¹⁵ but must be approved by the higher authority of the Congregation¹⁶ as a guarantee of their directive character and have binding force only after such approval. Provincial regulations or provincial directories are binding only in the provinces concerned and must always be a practical application of the general legislation of the Congregation.

¹³ Cf Const 127.

¹⁴ Cf Const 123; Const 177, 4.

¹⁵ Cf Const 177,4.

¹⁶ Cf Const 178.

- 385** While the GC21 confirms the present text of the Constitutions and General Regulations, with the aforementioned juridical clarifications, it directs the attention of the confreres to the Acts of the Special General Chapter, as the path to renewal.

The SGC was indeed a special moment of grace for the Salesian Congregation, which was called to look at itself in the light of its origins and of the expectations of the Second Vatican Council. The doctrinal guidelines of the SGC and the practical directives having no time limit retain their value for the Congregation as the foundation of, and a commentary on, the renewed Constitutions, of which they are an authoritative interpretation, a stimulus and a guide for the realization of the salesian mission in our times.

- 386** But aside from every juridical norm, the GC21 is aware of the need for the laws of the Congregation, especially the Constitutions, to be transformed into life if they are to be a criterion of vocational identity.

The GC21 therefore appeals to every salesian to continue during the next six years in the endeavor to gain a deeper knowledge and a greater assimilation of the Constitutions, by accepting the directives of the Chapter.

To this end this Chapter calls to mind personal and community attitudes, which are vital if the Constitutions, a text of spiritual life, are to become effective. These attitudes are especially knowledge and love, which lead to a living attachment.

A diligent and constant effort to attain a profound knowledge of the values contained in the Constitutions is the first condition if we are freely to undertake our religious obligations; hence the importance of an attentive personal and community study of the Constitutions. Useful to this end may be the time allotted to personal and community reading and meditation, monthly days of recollection, spiritual retreats, and renewal programs in the salesian spirit.

Deeper knowledge of the Constitutions will lead the salesian to appreciate them more as the patrimony of his spiritual family, the fruit of the Holy Spirit's special action in our regard, and Don Bosco's living bequest to us. Such an appreciation and love for the Constitutions will grow through appreciation and love for the Constitutions will grow through appreciation and love for the gospel; for the Constitutions are nothing other than the way in which our vocations calls us to meditate on and live the gospel.

Genuine esteem and love for the Constitutions will flourish in our active adherence to and our observance of them—"not... a formal-

istic, could observance as an end in itself," but as "the essential instrument for sanctification, a bond of union, and a safe and rich fulfillment of the mission received from Providence."¹⁷

May Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, our Founder and Father, bless our efforts and help us be faithful, that we may experience personal growth and that our Society may develop for an ever better service to youth.

¹⁷ Cf Presentation of R.M. Const 1972, 8.

2. MODIFICATIONS TO THE ARTICLES OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

CONSTITUTIONS, FIRST PART: OUR APOSTOLIC MISSION

2.1 CHAPTER V: Joint responsibility for the mission

art. 39

- 387** Some of the provincial chapters emphasize in various ways:
- a.* the increased importance of the role of the laity in all the aspects and apostolic sectors of the Church, according to the indications of II Vatican Council;
 - b.* the increased presence of the laity in various salesian activities; on the one hand this leads to their being more closely associated with our mission, and on the other hand indicates clearly the mutual enrichment resulting from the reciprocal collaboration.

From these two premises there follows the necessity of giving to the lay people directly associated with our mission the possibility of acquiring an adequately deep knowledge of the salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system.

For this reason the GC21, in the light of the debate on the participation of lay people in the mission of evangelization (cf the document "Salesians, evangelizers of the young" n. 69-79) proposes a modification to art. 39 of the Constitutions, so as to give greater emphasis to the responsibility of salesians to our lay collaborators.

former text

modified text

- | | | |
|------------|---|--|
| 388 | Lay people often play a direct part in our educative and pastoral work. They make a special contribution to the formation of youth and also to the preparation of a committed laity for our own work either in the parish or on the missions. Our relation- | Lay people often play a direct part in our educative and pastoral work. They make a special contribution to the formation of youth and to the preparation of committed christians for our work in the parishes or on the missions. Our relationship with them should be one of mutual |
|------------|---|--|

ship with them should be one of mutual confidence and loyalty. We offer them the witness of the christian life and we give them the spiritual help they expect.

We also need in our youth work to bring into being an "educative community" in which parents, the first and most important of educators, and the boys themselves join together with us in real dialog, being also prepared to accept the joint responsibility.

In our family atmosphere such a community becomes a living experience of the Church and a demonstration of God's purpose for us.

confidence and loyalty; **they participate in our apostolic work and bring to it their own experience. On our part we offer them the possibility of a deeper knowledge and understanding of the salesian spirit through the practice of the preventive system.** We also give them the gospel witness of our lives and the spiritual help they expect of us.

We also try to realize in our youth work the "educative community" in which parents, the first and most important of educators, and the boys themselves join with us in real dialog and acceptance of joint responsibility.

In our family atmosphere such a community becomes a living experience of the Church and a demonstration of God's purpose for us.

CONSTITUTIONS, THIRD PART: OUR CONSECRATION

2.2 CHAPTER IX: **The Salesian's Religious Consecration**

art. 74: Formula of profession

Some provincial chapters suggested drawing up two profession formulas, one for temporary and the other for perpetual profession.

The General Chapter is of the opinion that the profession formula should remain basically one and the same for all, both in conformity with salesian tradition and also to emphasize the basic sameness of salesian profession, temporary or perpetual, and to indicate that

even temporary profession is already directed towards a definitive commitment.

Nevertheless a modification to the present text is proposed, with the introduction of a phrase to be added by those making temporary profession to express their intention to proceed later to a definitive act of consecration.

former text

modified text

390 To this end,
having full confidence in Mary Help of Christians, in St. Francis of Sales and in St. John Bosco,
and in the presence of... who takes the place of the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, I make the vow for... years (or forever) to be chaste, poor and obedient, according to the way of life of the gospel traced out in the salesian Constitutions.

May the grace of God and the help of my salesian brothers at all times keep me faithful.

To this end,
having full confidence in Mary Help of Christians, in St. Francis of Sales and in St. John Bosco,
and in the presence of... who takes the place of the Rector Major of the Salesian Society,
—(*for the temporarily professed*)
although it is my intention to offer myself to God for the whole of my life, nevertheless in accordance with what the Church prescribes,

I make the vow for... years to live chaste, poor and obedient, according to the way of life of the gospel traced out in the salesian Constitutions.

May the grace of God...

—(*for the perpetually professed*)
I make the vow forever to live chaste, poor and obedient, according to the way of life of the gospel traced out in the salesian Constitutions.

May the grace of God...

2.3 CHAPTER XII: Our obedience

art. 94: *Community aspect of obedience*

391

In this article of the Constitutions is presented obedience in the community, understood as a common search for the will of God, under the guidance of the superior, and as an obligation of shared responsibility in our apostolic operations.

Accepting the proposals of the provincial chapters it is desired to define more clearly:

a. the role of the superior, who performs the service of authority within the community as animator of the dialog and participation which leads, as far as is possible, to a convergence of opinions and union of wills, and so inspires fidelity in an action for which all share the responsibility (ASGC, 646);

b. the process of community obedience in the phases of research, decision and execution, as described in ASGC, 634-637.

In this way both the importance of shared responsibility and the service of authority are made more evident. (cf. also the document "Salesians, evangelizers of youth": the animation of the community, n. 46-57).

former text

In a community we all obey, even though we have different tasks to perform. In matters of importance we join together to seek God's will by fraternal and patient discussion. In many cases the decision emerges from the convergence of views. The superior listens to the members and gives due weight to their opinions; it is he then who makes the decision, if this is required of him.

modified text

In the community, **in order to fulfil the mission entrusted to us**, we all obey, even though we have different tasks to perform.

392

In matters of importance we join together to seek God's will by fraternal and patient discussion **and with a keen sense of shared responsibility. The superior exercises the service of authority, listening to the confreres, encouraging all to make their contribution, and fostering a union of wills in faith and charity. He brings to a close the period of common searching taking the appropriate decisions which will normally emerge from a convergence of opinions.**

We all commit ourselves to collaborate actively and sincerely in carrying out these decisions, even when they may not coincide with our own point of view.

It is in listening to the word of God, and in celebrating the Eucharist that we express and renew our common commitment to the divine will.

We therefore all commit ourselves to collaborate actively and sincerely in carrying out these decisions, even when they may not coincide with our own point of view.

It is in listening to the word of God and in celebrating the Eucharist that we express and renew our common commitment to the divine will.

CONSTITUTIONS, FOURTH PART: FORMATION

2.4 CHAPTER XIII: **General aspects**

- 393** The verification of the specific theme of formation indicated the need to modify art. 105 of the Constitutions in order to define more precisely the character of the "formation community" as the normal setting for formation; and the desirability of introducing a new article into the Constitutions to emphasize the importance of intellectual formation.

The reasons for these modifications and the enrichment they bring are expressed in greater detail in the document "SALESIAN FORMATION" approved by this General Chapter.

- 394** *art. 103B (new): Intellectual formation*

Our salesian vocation orientates and characterizes the intellectual formation of the members at all levels in a way that is unique and original.

The program of studies takes into account the needs of serious scientific reflection, as well as the religious and apostolic dimension of our way of life.

former text

modified text

- 395** Formation has various aspects and the phases through which it

Formation has various aspects and the phases through which it passes

passes should be given in houses specially designed for the purpose, although other suitable communities can be chosen.

All these communities should be conspicuous for their salesian spirit; let all their members form a family united in mutual trust and common endeavor.

Each community, with the openness characteristic of Don Bosco's style of education, will be attuned to the needs of the times and to the new cultural trends, paying special attention to the aspirations of the young for a more personal and more responsible life lived in true brotherhood.

Each member in training is invited to assume gradually the responsibility for his own formation and to give due value to the various phases of his life.

should **ordinarily be realized in formation communities.**

These communities should be conspicuous for their salesian spirit; let all their members form a family united in mutual trust and common endeavor.

Each community, with the openness characteristic of Don Bosco's style of education, will be attuned to the needs of the times and to the new cultural trends, paying special attention to the aspirations of the young for a more personal and more responsible life lived in true brotherhood.

Each member in training is invited to assume gradually the responsibility for his own formation and to give due value to the various phases of his life.

2.5 CHAPTER XIV: Phases of Formation

art. 115

The GC21 has examined the proposals of various provincial chapters asking for a modification of art. 115 so as to permit the first vows to be made ordinarily for a period of three years; the text drawn up by the SGC does admit of such a possibility, but considers it an exception to the ordinary norm of annual vows.

Keeping in mind that, after the trial of a novitiate made with serious diligence, if the candidate proves sufficiently mature and certain in his vocation it is fitting that he should commit himself in a more stable manner in his choice of religious life, the GC21 makes the decision to modify art. 115, leaving the possibility of making the first

vows for a period of three years or for one year only. After the first three years, temporary vows will ordinarily be triennial.

former text

modified text

- 397** During the first three years of this period the vows are normally made for one year at a time. After this the temporary vows should preferably be triennial.
- During the first three years of this period the vows may be **either triennial or annual**. After this the temporary vows should **ordinarily** be triennial.

CONSTITUTIONS, FIFTH PART: ORGANIZATION OF OUR SOCIETY

2.6 CHAPTER XVII: Structures of Government at World and Regional level

art. 139: The Councillor for Formation

- 398** The formulation of art. 139 of the Constitutions, which describes the duties of the Councillor for Formation appears poor in content, and is drawn up in a manner which is rather generic and repetitive in form.

In particular the present version omits important elements of the historically characteristic figure of the Spiritual Director General (cf. first Constitutions, chap. IX, art. 7-9; Const. 1966 art. 71 and 74).

The GC21 presents a new article in which are condensed the traditional contents of former Constitutions in this connection, and explicit reference is made to the important sector of intellectual formation (cf. also the new art. 103 B).

The experience of the past six years is much better expressed in the new version.

former text

modified text

- 399** The Councillor for Formation has the care and responsibility
- The Councillor for Formation has the care and responsibility for the**

for the initial and on-going formation of the members, especially during the period of formation.

integral and ongoing formation of all the members. He gives particular attention to the period of initial formation, the planning of studies, and all that concerns the spiritual growth of the members in their salesian vocation.

art. 140: The Councillor for the Youth Apostolate

On the basis of observations received from the provincial chapters and following the debate in the Chapter, the GC21 recognizes the desirability of confiding the care of the salesian commitment in the parishes to the Councillor for the Youth Apostolate, together with the animation of salesian action among the young.

400

According to the new text the parishes form part of our apostolic activity, but without prejudice to the priority of our mission for youth (cf. Const. 31): this means that parishes confided to us must always be characterized by their salesian spirit and by the priority given to work amongst the young, without of course neglecting the other areas of pastoral activity.

The principle motives which suggested the advisability of assigning the care of salesian parishes to the Councillor for the Youth Apostolate are the following:

- a) The necessity and importance of community pastoral work is emphasized: the whole ecclesial community in fact, comprising young and old, is both the object and subject, the recipients and the doers of pastoral work.
- b) The specific nature of our work for youth, which has to be realized in the parishes, is better guaranteed when one and the same Councillor is responsible for both.
- c) The strict bond which should unite all our different forms of pastoral work in the ecclesial community is made more evident: oratories, youth centers, schools, parishes.
- d) Finally, this transfer simplifies the present very complex and heterogeneous systematization of the sector called in the past "Adult Apostolate." (cf. RRM 213)

On the other hand the designation "Councillor for the Youth Apostolate" has been retained, in order to express the priority of salesian action for the young, even in the parishes.

former text

modified text

401 The Councillor for the Youth Apostolate has the task of furthering, inspiring and coordinating the salesian pastoral care of youth. To this end it is for him to organize studies and programs of action at international level.

The Councillor for the Youth Apostolate furthers, coordinates and directs, according to the spirit of Don Bosco, salesian work among the young at international level; this may be done by promoting studies, projects and experimentation. In addition he promotes our commitment in parishes to ensure an efficacious salesian pastoral approach.

402 *art. 141: The Councillor for the Salesian Family*

Some of the provincial chapters put forward the proposal that art. 141 of the Constitutions be revised with a view to the appointment of a Councillor for the Salesian Family.

It is well known that the salesian family, a charismatic reality functioning in the Church through the intuition of Don Bosco, was re-discovered by the SGC in its historical-pastoral-dynamic dimension (cf. ASGC, 151-177, 727-745), and inserted as a spiritual fact in the Constitutions: "In it we have the special responsibility of preserving unity of spirit and of encouraging those friendly contacts which lead to enrichment and a more fruitful apostolate." (Const. 5)

The verification of the last six years has revealed the need for a deepening of this reality on the part of the Congregation, stimulated and coordinated by the Superior Council, and at the same time the necessity for union with other groups of the salesian family without prejudice to the autonomy of each.

Keeping in mind that art. 141 of the Constitutions drawn up by the SGC had already foreseen for the Councillor concerned certain obligations with respect to the salesian family, it has been decided to make more explicit the task of sensitizing and animating the Congregation for the role it has to play in the family.

This also meets the requests of those branches of the salesian family who expect from our Congregation inspiration and mutual help.

To the same Councillor has been left the task of promoting the

salesian commitment in the sector of the mass media. On him depends the Secretariate for social communication, because of the particular role which has been given to the Department. Nevertheless this Secretariate will not be working exclusively within the salesian family, but will also be at the service of all the other sectors of Formation, Youth Apostolate and the Missions.

former text

modified text

The Councillor for the Adult Apostolate promotes the worldwide salesian work in parishes and in the area of the mass media. In addition he has care and organization of the Cooperators, Past Pupils and of liaison with other movements of salesian inspiration.

The Councillor for the Salesian Family has the task of sensitizing and animating the Congregation for the role entrusted to it in the salesian family in accordance with art. 5. He promotes the organization of the Cooperators and Past Pupils. He also fosters salesian activity in the area of the mass media.

403

art. 156

The GC21 has made a detailed study of the norms which define the participation of ex-officio and elected members of the General Chapter, examining the observations and proposals submitted in this connection by the provincial chapters and individual confreres.

404

It is considered necessary to make some additions to art. 156 of the Constitutions, filling certain gaps of a juridical character and detailing more exactly the participation of elected members to the GC.

The modifications approved concern:

1. The participation in the GC of a delegate for every vice-province. This is a question of filling a juridical gap, in so far as the confreres of a vice-province have the right to elect their own representative to the GC.
2. The participation in the GC of a delegate for every delegation depending directly on the Rector Major. Also in this case there is question of the right of confreres to elect their own representative to the GC. For the delegations with a significantly large number of members, the possibility is provided for the superiors of such delegations attending the GC as members by right.

3. A clarification concerning passive voice in elections to the G.C. Art. 156, revised by the SGC, does not in fact specify that those who can be elected to the GC are limited to the perpetually professed confreres of the province concerned. This has to be made clear in accordance with the norms of canon law and in harmony with what is laid down in art. 179,7 of the Constitutions for the provincial chapter.

former text

modified text

- 405** The following have the right to attend the General Chapter with deliberative vote:
1. The Rector Major
 2. The Rector Majors emeriti
 3. The members of the Superior Council, those not confirmed in office as well as new members from the time of their election
 4. The Procurator General of the Society
 5. The Moderator of the General Chapter
 6. The provincials, or if they are seriously impeded, by permission of the Rector Major their vice-provincials; the superiors of vice-provinces
 7. A delegate of each province with less than 250 professed members; two delegates for the provinces of 250 or more professed members.
- The following have the right to attend the General Chapter with deliberative vote:
1. The Rector Major
 2. The Rector Majors emeriti
 3. The members of the Superior Council, those not confirmed in office as well as the new members from the time of their election
 4. The Procurator General of the Society
 5. The Moderator of the General Chapter
 6. The provincials, or if they are seriously impeded, by permission of the Rector Major, their vice-provincials; the superiors of vice-provinces; **the superiors of delegations depending directly on the Rector Major with at least 125 members**
 7. A delegate for each province with less than 250 professed members, two delegates for the provinces of 250 or more professed members, **a delegate for every vice-province and a delegate for every delegation depending directly on the Rector Major, all elected from the perpetually professed members of the circumscription concerned.**

art. 164

In this article a juridical lack of precision is corrected, in so far as the term "delegated authority" is not correct. In actual fact the superior of a vice-province governs in the name of the Rector Major with "ordinary vicarious authority."

406

*former text**modified text*

At the head of each vice-province there is a superior, chosen in the same way as for a provincial. He remains in office for six years and he governs in the name of and with the delegated authority of the Rector Major.

At the head of each vice-province there is a superior, chosen in the same way as for a provincial. He remains in office for six years and he governs with the **ordinary vicarious authority** of the Rector Major.

407

art. 164B.C.D. (new)

The GC21 takes note of the fact that there are in existence in the Congregation some delegations depending directly on the Rector Major, but which find no mention in the text of the Constitutions which so far contemplate only delegations depending on a provincial. An addition to the text is therefore needed to accommodate this new juridical circumscription.

408

A delegation depending directly on the Rector Major is formed of one or more communities, and is constituted on the basis of special reasons of a geographical, political or religious nature. It differs from a province or a vice-province in so far as it has a superior who does not govern with ordinary authority, either proper or vicarious, but with powers delegated by the Rector Major.

The unity of the delegation arises from the particular scope of the constituent communities, or from the state of emergency in which the communities are existing, or from other particular reasons.

The special dispositions which regulate the functioning of a delegation are established by the Rector Major in the document of erection, or in some other document for the purpose.

The GC21 therefore makes the decision to insert into the Constitutions the following new articles: one to define the delegation in

general as a juridical circumscription (and to introduce the succeeding constitutional articles on delegations at various levels) (art. 164B); two for the delegations depending directly on the Rector Major (art. 164 C,D).

- 409 164 B: The delegation is constituted by one or more communities in particular circumstances, with at its head a superior who governs it with powers delegated by the Rector Major or by the provincial.**
- 410 164 C: When special reasons make it necessary, the Rector Major, with the consent of his Council, can constitute a delegation, formed by one or more communities, depending directly on himself.**
- 411 164 D: The superior of the delegation, nominated by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council, exercises those powers which the Rector Major shall judge opportune to delegate to him.**

2.7 CHAPTER XVIII: Structures of Government at Provincial level

art. 179

- 412** Amongst the proposals coming from the provincial chapters and taken into consideration was one which asks for the application to the provincial chapter of what the Constitutions, in art. 156,6, prescribe for the case when a provincial is unable for grave reasons to attend the General Chapter.

The GC21 recognizes in the proposal an opportune addition to art. 179.5, opening the possibility of a substitute for rectors who are unable for grave reasons to attend the provincial chapter.

former text

modified text

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>413 The following take part in the provincial chapter with a deliberative vote:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>5. The rectors of each canonically erected community</p> | <p>The following take part in the provincial chapter with a deliberative vote:</p> <p>.....</p> <p>5. The rectors of each canonically erected community, or if they are seriously impeded, their vice-rectors, with the previous approval of the provincial.</p> |
|--|---|

2.8 CHAPTER XIX: Structures of Government at local level*art. 186*

The GC21 recognizes the desirability of including the bursar among the fixed members of the council of the community. **414**

This follows from the fact that the bursar is the only other confrere at local level, other than the vice-rector, whose office is described in the Constitutions (art. 192) whilst the other offices in the local communities are determined by the provincial chapter (art. 193).

This allows the General Chapter to prescribe at world level the presence of the bursar in the council of the community, by analogy with councils at other levels.

*former text**modified text*

The following are members of the council:

1. the vice-rector
2. the members responsible for the principal spheres of activity...

The following are members of the council: **415**

1. the vice-rector **and the bursar**;
2. the members responsible for the principal spheres of activity...

2.9 CHAPTER XX: Administration of temporal goods*art. 195, 196*

In the verification of the articles of the Constitutions concerning the administration of temporal goods, the General Chapter, on the basis also of the RRM (282), takes note that there have been erroneous interpretations of art. 195 and art. 196. **416**

To render more precise the content of these articles, the GC21 has proceeded to a reformulation of them, by means of which:

- a) the fundamental principle expressed in art. 195 is more clearly emphasized, i.e. that temporal goods are kept in the Congregation only to the extent in which they are directly useful for educative and pastoral activity excluding every kind of interest-bearing investment;

b) for this reason the cases of "student burses, legacies for masses, life annuities and charitable foundations" are transferred to the following art. 196, because there is question of true economic operations involving extraordinary administration with burdens attached, even though for charitable purposes, and therefore subject to the normal need for authorization, and also because they are not to be considered exceptions to the forbidden interest-bearing investments;

c) further, in art. 196 for greater clarity:

- the operations of "acquiring and alienating" with the further qualification "to which onerous or gratuitous terms are attached" have been added to state explicitly what is already implied in law by these two words, i.e. by "acquiring" is meant both buying against payment or receiving as a gift, and by "alienating" is meant both selling against payment or disposing of as a gift;
- the operations "to mortgage, rent or exchange" have also been added because they are analogous to the preceding, they invest the property, are regulated by the Code, and hence of their very nature require authorization;
- finally apart from the fact that the addition of the word "accept" is merely the correction of a printer's error, there have been appropriately eliminated, in connection with accepting legacies and bequests, the words "to which obligations and burdens are attached" because this limitation is not in the spirit of the article.

former text

modified text

417 195. The Salesian Society
 for our works.

The acquiring and keeping of real estate with the sole object of producing income is forbidden, as also every kind of permanent interest-bearing investment except in the case of student burses, legacies for masses, life annuities, and charitable foundations.

418 196. To dispose of or acquire real estate, to contract loans,

195. The Salesian Society
 for our works.

The acquiring and keeping of real estate with the sole object of producing income is forbidden, as also every kind of permanent interest-bearing investment.

196. To dispose of or acquire real estate to which are attached oner-

with or without mortgage, to construct new buildings, demolish existing ones or to bring about notable changes, to establish annuities, accept legacies and bequests to which obligations and burdens are attached, the authorization of the Rector Major and his Council are necessary.

When such authorization is applied for the application must be accompanied by adequate documentation, together with the statement of the opinion of the provincial and his council in the case of a request concerning the province, and also by that of the local rector and house council where a local community is concerned.

ous or gratuitous terms, to mortgage, rent and exchange real estate, to contract loans with or without mortgage, to accept legacies and bequests, establish annuities, **student burses, legacies for Masses or particular legacies and charitable foundations,** to construct new buildings, demolish existing ones or to bring about notable changes, the authorization of the Rector Major and his Council are necessary.

When such authorization is applied for the application must be accompanied by adequate documentation, together with the statement of the opinion of the provincial and his council in the case of a request concerning the province, and also by that of the local rector and **community** council where a local community is concerned.

3. MODIFICATIONS TO THE ARTICLES OF THE REGULATIONS

3.1 CHAPTER I: **Evangelization and Catechesis**

art. 1 (Commitment to evangelization and catechesis)

The GC21 has made a partial revision of this art 1 of the Regulations for the following reasons:

- a) to express better the subjects of the various obligations which in the former version were laid in general on the provincial community, and thus to render the article more concrete and practical;
- b) to express more adequately the obligation of "evangelization and catechesis" carried out by our communities.

*former text**modified text*

- 420 The provincial community has for its purpose to inspire, coordinate and guide apostolic works to spread the gospel and the christian faith. It therefore encourages an unceasing reappraisal of the catechetical work done by the community, and reshapes its activities...
- The provincial community has the task of inspiring, coordinating and guiding the work of evangelization, **especially through its normal channels of government and animation.** It therefore encourages a constant reappraisal of the **catechetical aspect of evangelization, carried out by the individual communities,** and reshapes...

3.2 CHAPTER II: Pastoral work for youth

art. 8,9,10 (Our schools)

- 421 In the verification carried out by the GC21 the importance of the renewal of salesian schools for the fulfilment of our mission as evangelizers of the young has been emphasized (cf. document: "Salesians, evangelizers of the young" n. 128-134).

On the other hand an analysis of the articles of the regulations concerning the school has revealed a certain poverty of content and some lack of precision in the expressions used.

For this reason it has been considered opportune to revise the text of the regulations concerned, with the purpose especially of making more evident some aspects of the salesian style in scholastic activity.

art. 8

*former text**modified text*

- 422 Salesian schools, of whatever kind or purpose, must provide an education which promotes the development of the whole person in a christian context. To this end intellectual, professional, or technical training should be integrated with extra-mural activities.
- Salesian schools, of whatever kind, purpose **or level,** must provide an education which fosters the total christian development of the young person **in the socio-cultural milieu in which he lives.** **In the work of education carried on in a salesian style, which leads to a growth in the faith, our schools strive for a har-**

monious balance between intellectual and technical training and extra-curricular activities.

art. 9

former text

To make pastoral care valid and effective our schools should be distinguished for their high cultural values and recognized technical and teaching capacity. They should be conducted in a community atmosphere of freedom and charity reflecting the gospel. They should also be open to the neighborhood for social activity, further education for the poorer classes and for the formation of committed christians among the young.

modified text

Our scholastic involvement should be based on solid cultural values and on recognized technical and teaching ability. It should be lived out in a community atmosphere of freedom and charity, which reflects the gospel. This leads to a social and missionary awareness towards the poor and to the formation of committed young christians.

423

art. 10

former text

To ensure a continued updating of our schools, salesians should encourage within the "educative community" a constant dialog concerning the christian and human values we foster and the care we have for vocations and its relationship with the surrounding area.

modified text

Salesians should encourage within their own respective **school** communities an ongoing dialog concerning the human and christian values to be fostered and the vocational guidance offered, and how they are related within the social context.

424

This dialog will ensure that our schools are always ready for that constant renewal required of every salesian educational enterprise.

art. 14 (Service outside our works)

- 425** The verification of the work carried out by the confreres in non-salesian structures, in the sense of art. 30 of the Constitutions has indicated the need to emphasize on the one hand the coresponsibility and fraternal participation of the community which sends them on such activities, and on the other the need for them to be really inserted into the salesian community.

For this reason an addition to art. 14 of the Regulations is approved:

former text

modified text

- 426** For the activity contemplated in art. 30 of the Constitutions the salesian community concerned must obtain the consent of the provincial and his council, due regard being paid to the requirements of common life and the work of the community.

.....
Members assigned to such activities should make sure that they remain a real part of the salesian community, which in its turn will show a fraternal and coresponsible interest in their apostolic work.

art. 14B (New article on lay collaborators)

- 427** On the basis of the more general reasons given for the improvement of art. 39 of the Constitutions (cf. n. 387), the GC21 notes the need of expressing in an article of the Regulations the commitment of the salesians to the promotion of shared responsibility with the lay collaborators, and to ensure for them an adequate formation to the salesian spirit (cf. also document "Salesians, evangelizers of the young" n. 69-79).
- 428** **"Lay people chosen to collaborate in our work should be made aware that they share in the salesian pastoral plan of education. By making use of**

the most suitable means, the community will assure them of an adequate formation in the salesian spirit.”

3.3 CHAPTER V: The mass media

art. 28

The GC21 has endorsed the importance of the mass media in the service of the evangelizing mission of the salesian community. **429**

In this perspective the reformulated art. 28 of the Regulations is designed to render the norms it contains more concrete and practical with a view to renewal.

former text

modified text

In carrying out their apostolate salesians should lend their support and skills in the fields of journalism, cinema, radio and television. For this they should receive adequate training.

The provincial with his council shall determine the mode of our pastoral presence in the field of the mass media, either by preparing confreres to lend their support and skills in the fields of journalism, cinema, radio and television, or even by organizing such services ourselves. **430**

3.4 CHAPTER VIII: Prayer

art. 46

The GC21, after examining art. 46 of the Regulations and recalling the interpretation given during the past six years by the Superior Council, makes the decision to modify the text for the following reasons: **431**

1. To promote among the confreres a *common* spiritual culture.
2. To make it easier for the rector to fulfil the task indicated in art. 127 of the Regulations.

Spiritual reading, made in common, can be a helpful instrument for growth in salesianity and the building up of the community.

*former text**modified text*

- 432** Each day there shall be spiritual reading of some duration. The way of doing this shall be fixed by the Provincial Chapter.
- Each day there shall be spiritual reading of some duration **made in common.**

3.5 CHAPTER X: Poverty

art. 57

- 433** A juridical lacuna was discovered in this article: the confrere who cedes the administration of his goods, either before or after profession, to some person outside the Congregation must inform the provincial of the goods he has reserved as his own property and of their condition both at the time of ceding their administration and periodically afterwards. The lack of this information is the source at times of serious trouble, especially in the case of sickness or sudden death of a confrere.

The article has therefore been clarified by the integration of two additions to the text.

*former text**modified text*

- 434** Before his profession the novice shall cede, for the entire period of his vows, the administration of the goods he possesses to whomsoever he chooses, and freely dispose of their use and proceeds.
- Before his profession the novice shall cede, for the entire period of his vows, the administration of the goods he possesses to whomsoever he chooses and freely dispose of their use and proceeds, **but under the express condition that he will not be involved in the responsibility for managing the same.**

Subsequently, with permission of the provincial, he can alter these arrangements if there is good reason so to do, and he can also perform those acts with regard to poverty which the civil law prescribes.

Subsequently, with permission of the provincial, he can alter these arrangements if there is good reason so to do and he can also perform those acts with regard to poverty which the civil law prescribes.

All this applies also to those goods which may come into his possession after he has taken his vows.

All this applies also to those goods which may come into his possession after he has taken his vows.

Moreover he will from time to time inform the provincial of the goods of which he retains the ownership, and of their condition.

3.6 CHAPTER XB: Obedience

art. 71B (new)

In the course of the verification carried out by this GC21 emphasis has been laid more than once on the importance of the talk with the superior, mentioned in art. 96 of the Constitutions.

435

Attention has been drawn to:

- the usefulness of this talk in connection with the animation of the community and the exercise of shared responsibility;
- the duty of the rector to be always available to receive and listen to the confreres; this is directly linked with the priority amongst the rector's duties in what concerns the ministry of unity and the care of the salesian identity (cf. document "Salesians, evangelizers of the young": animation of the community n. 46-57);
- the responsibility of every confrere to have a meeting with his superior for his own good and that of the community.

For these reasons the following article of the Regulations is approved:

"Let the rector consider as one of his principal duties that of being always available to serve the community, particularly in receiving and listening to the confreres.

436

This friendly talk is a privileged moment of dialog; it helps greatly towards the spiritual growth of the individual confreres and of the community.

In an atmosphere of mutual trust every confrere should frequently see his rector, to let him know the state of his health, how his apostolate is proceeding, the difficulties he is facing in his religious life and in fraternal charity, and of all that may contribute to the welfare of the individual members and of the community."

3.7 CHAPTER XI: Formation

- 437** Various aspects of the verification on formation in the Congregation during the last six years have led the GC21 to modify some articles of the Regulations and to introduce an occasional new article to emphasize important aspects of salesian formation.

The following modifications and additions to the text are therefore presented. They are in harmony with the motivations and guidelines found in the document on SALESIAN FORMATION.

art. 73B (formation communities)

- 438** **“Formation communities are communities expressly set up for the purposes of formation, with a rector and a team of confreres specifically prepared for the work of formation, above all as regards spiritual direction. Those responsible for formation and those being formed create in a life lived in community an atmosphere of coresponsibility in the diversity of their respective roles. With a clear vision of the aims of formation they periodically plan and evaluate their work.”**

art. 73C

- 439** **“Before the novitiate all candidates must have a period of specific preparation.**

Under ordinary circumstances this period should not be less than six months and should be passed in a salesian community.

The details for this are laid down in the directory of the province.”

art. 81

former text

modified text

- 440** After the novitiate every member whether destined to the priesthood or not, must continue his formation in a suitable salesian community, preferably a studentate.

During this period the general philosophical, theological and

Immediately after the novitiate, every member, whether destined for the priesthood or not, must continue his formation **for at least a two year period** in a formation community, preferably a studentate.

During this period the general philosophical and pedagogical training

pedagogical training shall be given. Technical, scientific or professional training can also be begun or continued with specific qualifications in view.

shall be given, **with an introduction to theology**. Technical, scientific or professional training can also be begun or continued with specific qualifications in view.

art. 88B

"The members who are preparing for the priesthood must receive, over a minimum period of four years, a more intense and specifically priestly formation in a formation community, preferably a studentate.

441

During this period they shall attend seriously to theological studies, preferably in salesian centers.

They must not undertake duties or other studies that will interfere with the specific purpose of this formative period."

art. 93 Ongoing formation

former text

modified text

The work of the members should be organized in such a way that they have sufficient time at their disposal for keeping themselves up to date. The possibility of spending a longer period in spiritual and pastoral renewal should be granted to those who desire it.

The work of the members should be organized in such a way that they have sufficient time at their disposal for keeping themselves up to date.

442

art. 93B

"Periodically after their perpetual profession all salesians should be given the possibility of spending an appropriate period of time for the renewal of their pastoral and religious life. In their planning, provinces should take this need into account. Each confrere should generously respond to this need of ongoing formation for his own good and that of the community."

443

3.8 CHAPTER XII: Structures of government at world level

art. 96

444 In art. 127 of the Regulations, drawn up by the SGC, it is laid down that the extraordinary six-yearly visitation of the provinces shall be carried out by the Regional Councillor.

The experience of the past six years has brought to light some difficulties in connection with this practice:

- on the one hand, the practical impossibility—for some vast and complex regions—for the Regional Councillor himself to be able to make with proper care the extraordinary visitation of all the provinces of the Region;
- on the other hand, the danger that the Regional Councillor may be too absorbed in the juridical obligations of the visitation, and so lose his proper physiognomy, which is essentially one of union, of coordination, of animation according to the indications of the GC19 and of the Constitutions.

It seems that a real distinction should be made between the figure of the Regional Councillor and that of the Extraordinary Visitor. Per se the canonical visitation can be made by other members of the Superior Council or for that matter by “non-Councillors,” entrusted with the task by the Rector Major in accordance with art. 96 of the Regulations.

For these reasons the GC21 makes the decision that the contents of art. 127 of the Regulations concerning the extraordinary visitation shall be duly adapted and integrated with art. 96 of the Regulations which deals in general with the faculty of the Rector Major to make personally or through others visitations of the provinces and local communities.

Art. 96 of the Regulations is therefore amplified as follows:

former text

modified text

445 Personally or through others, the Rector Major may visit each and every province and local community. Whenever the need arises he may arrange for other visits, beyond those contemplated in art. 127.

Personally or through others, the Rector Major may visit each and every province and local community. Whenever the need arises he may arrange for other visits.

In particular he will arrange, during his six year term of office, for an

extraordinary visitation of every province. This may be carried out, as he thinks fit, either by the Regional Councillor or by another visitor delegated by the Rector Major with all the powers of jurisdiction required by the nature of the visit itself.

4. DELIBERATIONS

4.1 Delegate of the Rector Major for Poland

The GC21, after noting the deliberations by which in 1971 the SGC **446** decided that the two provinces of Poland should be confided to a Delegate of the Rector Major because of the particular situation of that country, and in view of the fact that the same situation still continues at the present day, *deliberates* as follows:

- 1. To confide the two provinces of Poland to a personal Delegate of the Rector Major, so as better to provide for the good of the provinces concerned and their linkage with the Rector Major and his Council;**
- 2. That the Delegate will have such power and duties as the Rector Major may wish to bestow on him, and he will be consulted by the Superior Council when there is question of specific problems of the Polish provinces.**

4.2 Constitution of the Region of Asia

The GC21, having considered the difficulties stemming from the great geographical extension of the so-called "English-speaking" region and the notable differences between its component provinces, in order the better to provide for the good of the provinces concerned, and to assure a more adequate link between the provinces and the Rector Major and his Council on the basis of the duties assigned to the Regional Councillors by art. 144 of the Constitutions,

makes the decision to divide the former "English-speaking" group into two groups constituted as follows:

Asian Region comprising the Provinces of

Bombay - Calcutta - Gauhati - Madras - Hong Kong - Philippines - Japan - Thailand

and the Delegations of

Vietnam - South Korea

English-speaking Region comprising the Provinces of

Australia - Great Britain - Ireland and South Africa - USA East - USA West.

**CHAPTER
DELIBERATION**

**Confirmation of the decisions of the SGC
concerning the Faculty granted by the
M.P. Ecclesiae Sanctae II 1,7**

**CONFIRMATION OF THE DECISIONS OF THE S.G.C.
CONCERNING THE FACULTY GRANTED BY THE
M.P. ECCLESIAE SANCTAE, II, 1,7**

447 The Special General Chapter made the following decisions concerning the faculty granted by the Motu Proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae" (II, 1,7).

I. Faculty given by the M.P. Ecclesiae Sanctae II, 1,7

1) The Motu Proprio 'Ecclesiae Sanctae', II, 1,6 gives the S.G.C. "the right to alter, temporarily, certain prescriptions... by way of experiment, provided that the purpose, nature and character of the institute are safeguarded. Experiments which run counter to common law—and they should be embarked upon with prudence—will be readily authorized by the Holy See as the need arises. Such experiments may be continued until the next ordinary General Chapter which will be empowered to grant a further prolongation, but not beyond the date of the subsequent Chapter."

2) And no. 7 of the same document adds: "The same faculty is granted to the General Council for the space of time between the said Chapters, according to the norms which they themselves shall decide."

3) The object of this faculty obviously embraces the prescriptions of the old Constitutions which have been incorporated into the new Constitutions and Regulations, as well as experiments contrary to common law, which have been prudently undertaken with the authorization of the Holy See.

In this matter the SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER HAS DECIDED THAT THE EXERCISE OF THE POWER GIVEN BY THE M.P. "ECCLESIAE SANCTAE", II, 1,7 NEEDS A DECISION OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL, APPROVED BY AT LEAST 2/3 OF THE MEMBERS.

II. Special powers delegated by the SGC

As far as the other chapter deliberations are concerned, the S.G.C. AUTHORIZES THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL (under the same conditions as above: 2/3 majority) TO MAKE GOOD ANY EVENTUAL SERIOUS GAPS IN THE TEXT OF THE NEW CONSTITUTIONS AND REGULATIONS, FOLLOWING THE SPIRIT OF THE WORK OF RENEWAL UNDERTAKEN BY THE PRESENT SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER. (ASGC nn. 765-766)

The 21st General Chapter reconfirms these decisions of the SGC and prolongs the faculties referred to in the above paragraphs until the next ordinary General Chapter.

The constitutional faculty, by which the Rector Major can "for practical purposes" interpret the Constitutions, remains valid.

