



Capitolo Generale
Testimoni della radicalità evangelica

I am happy to be writing this letter to you, through which it is my intention

**to convoke the
27th General
Chapter**

“Witnesses to the radical approach of the Gospel”

Gaspar Chavéz



- ✓ The General Chapter is the **27th** in the history of our Society;
- ✓ It will take place in **ROME** at the “**Salesianum**” in the Generalate;
- ✓ It will begin on Saturday **22 FEBRUARY 2014** at **TURIN** in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians with a visit to the places of our Salesian beginnings;
- ✓ Moderator: Fr **Francesco Cereda**
- ✓ Motto: “*work and temperance*”

✓ Four main areas:

- living in the grace of unity and with joy the *Salesian consecrated vocation*;
- having a strong *spiritual experience*, taking up the way of life and di action of Jesus;
- building up *fraternity* in our communities of life and action;
- generously dedicating ourselves to the *mission*, walking side by side with the young so as to give hope to the world.

The fundamental aim of GC27 is that of helping each confrere and community to live the apostolic plan of Don Bosco with fidelity.

GC27 therefore, in continuity with GC26, is meant to further strengthen our charismatic identity.



As fruits from GC27 we want to make our Salesian life even more authentic and therefore **visible**, **credible** and **fruitful**.

- If we believe in our vocation and live it with conviction, then we are **credible**
- **Visibility** is not primarily taking care of our image, but the beautiful witness of our vocation.
- **Flowering of vocations** will come as a consequence of the authenticity of our life.
- I am convinced that in order to achieve the objectives of GC27 a **spiritual and pastoral conversion** is required.
- It is necessary to **enkindle the fire of spiritual and apostolic passion** in the heart of every confrere.

GC27 has other particular tasks:

- ▶ The election of the Rector Major and members of the General Council for the six year period 2014-2020.
- ▶ A rethink regarding the organisation and structuring of the **Departments for the Salesian mission**: youth ministry, missions, social communication (cf. GC26, 117, 118).
- ▶ Reflect on the grouping of the three **Regions of Europe** (cf. GC25, 124, 126, 129).
- ▶ evaluate the decision to **entrust the Salesian Family to the Vicar** of the Rector Major (cf. GC25, 133 and GC26, 116).
- ▶ Evaluate the overall **structure of the General Council** and the structures for central government of the Congregation (cf. GC26, 118).

Cultural challenges:

- The first challenge without doubt is, **post-modernism**, a typically western phenomenon.
- A second challenge is **inculturation**, marked also by an increasing **intercultural mentality**.
- The third challenge regards **secularisation**.

Ecclesial challenges:

- The current situation means that **new evangelisation** is not something ‘optional’ but a missionary obligation.
- The Church is “tempted by a dimming of hope” the *unease in consecrated life*.
- pluralism, which can slip into **relativism**.

Institutional challenges:

- Looking at initial formation we observe a greater weakness in two fundamental areas: **vocational discernment and personal accompaniment**.
- Also evident is a lack in **assimilation of the guidelines of the Congregation regarding pastoral work**.
- We note a **weakness in direction and animation**. Government and animation do not always foster a change of mentality.

Personal challenges:

- One has to mention some failings in the life of the Salesian: individualism, activism, self-formation.
- There is often no awareness of the identity of our vocation as consecrated Salesians
- The affective and effective distance from the world of the young is increasing; they are often not understood or seen as our only *reason for being*.
- The affective dimension of the Salesians, which is little appreciated; emotions, feelings and affections are neglected if not ignored.

The young!

- Finally, I seem to observe in the Congregation a quite worrying phenomenon: here and there I notice a more or less conscious unwillingness and sometimes a clear inability to be sympathetic towards, to learn about or understand and to graciously accept the new forms of expression which are a feature of today's young people.
- To recreate the Salesian charism in the most varied situations it is not enough to adapt it to the different youth contexts. We want to do this while living in their world, speaking their language, standing side by side with them not only as those to whom we are sent especially but, above all as companions on the journey.

Besides the **many positive aspects** there are also **significant difficulties**:

- in some parts of the Congregation **ageing** of the confreres, the **shortage of vocations** and the **complexity of the works** make hoped-for renewal difficult;
- in others it is a struggle to organise **pastoral activities** with the choice of the young as primary focus;
- problems in finding necessary space for **community life** difficulties in finding valid and effective procedures for **ongoing formation**;
- Here and there **a lack of enthusiasm in living the vocation** and there are weaknesses in animation on the part of Rectors.

The need to trace out the **profile of the new Salesian**; today called to be:

- ★ **a mystic**: *"find a response to [secularism] in acknowledgement of God's absolute primacy".*
- ★ **a prophet**: *"In today's multicultural and multi-religious world there is demand for witness of evangelical fraternity".*
- ★ **a servant**: *"The presence of new forms of poverty and di marginalisation ought to call forth that creativity in the care of those most in need".*



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All this requires a change both of mindset and practice!

Radical approach of the Gospel in consecrated life cannot be limited to practice of the evangelical counsels.

It involves ones whole being, touching its vital elements: **the following of Christ and the search for God, fraternal life in community, the mission.** Every one of these areas is imbued with the spell of the vocation, and therefore called to express the radical attitude of the Gospel.

This **radical approach** was **proclaimed by Jesus himself** throughout his prophetic ministry, which finds its most explicit expression in the **“Sermon on the mount”** (cf. Mt. 5-7)



Our specific vocation is to Salesian consecrated life, which places us as disciples and apostles of the Lord Jesus in the footsteps of Don Bosco.

It is described in synthesis in Art 3 of the Constitutions.

There needs to be space which is “balanced and harmonised” for spiritual experience, fraternal life in community, and the mission.





“Witnesses to the radical approach of the Gospel”



The “**grace of unity**” among these features of our vocation is a challenge to be faced seriously and with determination.

spiritual experience
fraternal life in community
mission.

spiritual experience

An...

- **all-embracing experience**, because it places us in the presence of a God full of zeal who admits of no rivals, and with an all consuming presence;
- **unifying experience**, because it gathers together all aspects of life around the one thing important and necessary;
- **dynamic experience**, because it gives us “*a new heart and a new spirit*”: what one has to do, the law to be fulfilled, is not outside ourselves, but within us.

spiritual experience

An experience that makes us...

- **Disciples of Christ** (C. 61-84) and
- **Seekers of God** (C. 85-95)

We have to **carefully cultivate our spiritual life**, at both personal and community level.

It will be necessary to overcome an idea of the spiritual life which is of an intimistic nature, extraneous to or on the fringes of the life of the world; but at the same time it will be necessary to give greater importance to the experience of prayer, improve the quality of community life, and in professional manner be well-prepared to carry out our service of evangelisation, **to be prophetic signs** in the face of the current values this world canonises, **and be irrefutable witnesses to the God of Love.**

in fraternal communities

C. 49-59

- ❖ It is impossible to imagine Salesian religious life without that **communion which is realised in the common life and shared mission.**
- ❖ We can identify **some dangers**, for example, that of organising a style of relationships which are merely functional or hierarchical or falsely democratic

❖ A **community without communion** is reduced to a group in which people may have a place, but are left in isolation. On the other hand, in religious life **communion without community** is a narcissistic way of living: individualism.



mission

C. 26-48

- **The mission** does not consist in doing things, but essentially in **being signs of the love of God in the world.**
- **The specific aims** reflect the identity, especially for apostolic, consecrated life, with the **pastoral or promotional activity** which the religious undertake in the **various areas of human life.**
- **The radical approach of the Gospel in the apostolic mission** has sense, and can be measured in the growth of **pastoral charity**, like that of Don Bosco: *"for you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life"*.





WORK and
TEMPERANCE

Article 18 of the Constitutions, which has as its title “Work and temperance”, presents these two things, “for us inseparable”, as an essential element of the Salesian spirit: *“the watchword and badge of the Salesian”; “the two weapons armed with which, Don Bosco wrote, we will succeed in winning over everything and everyone”.*

One could say that it represents the Salesian way of understanding and putting into practice the “radical approach of the Gospel”, *“in which in a practical manner they incarnate day after day, the ideals and dynamism of our faith, hope and charity”.*



WORK and
TEMPERANCE

- ◆ **Work** is associated by Don Bosco with “union with God”: “sanctified work”.
- ◆ **Work** is “apostolic mission”.
- ◆ **Work** “in autonomy” is not for us Salesians; on the contrary we are called to “live and work together”(C.49)
- ◆ **Temperance** is understood as self-control, moderation of ones inclinations, instincts, passions, being reasonable, cutting off from worldliness, not fleeing to the desert but remaining with people with **one's heart under control**.
- ◆ For us, Fr Viganò wrote “the measure of our **Salesian** temperance is not our renunciations, but **growth in the practice of pastoral and educational charity**”



In order to make the theme concrete and achieve the aim of GC27, **certain requirements are needed**:

Processes to be set in motion

- ▶ **The first process** regards the way of living nowadays our consecrated Salesian vocation in the grace of unity and with joy.
- ▶ **The second process** regards knowledge of Don Bosco, which needs to be constantly improved to be the inspirational motive of our life.
- ▶ **The third process** regards the lived personal community attitude towards the **Constitutions**.



In order to make the theme concrete and achieve the aim of GC27, **certain requirements are needed**:

- ▶ Care needs to be **given to culture. and to cultures**
- ▶ Ecclesial challenges **need to be considered.**
- ▶ Care needs to be taken to increase the culture of the Congregation, especially with regard to **formation demands** of a **serious vocational discernment** and **effective personal accompaniment.**
- ▶ Finally there is a mindset to be changed at a **personal level**, so as to foster the overcoming of forms of individualism, deepen the **identity of consecrated life**, acquire effective **sexual and emotional maturity.**

**Mindset
to be changed**



In order to make the theme concrete and achieve the aim of GC27, **certain requirements are needed**:

- ▶ The **style and organisation of community life needs changing**: consistency, simplification, roles etc.
- ▶ Need to change **the form of presence and exercise of the role of the Rector** of the community: quality, readiness for leadership, etc.
- ▶ Need to change **way of managing human resources**; strengthen **co-involvement and charismatic use** of resources: Salesian Family, shared responsibility of laity, etc.

**Structures
to be changed**



“Witnesses to the radical approach of the Gospel”

1. CONVOCAZIONE

2. GLOBAL CONTEXT

3. RADICAL GOSPEL APPROACH OF Salesian CLONING

REQUIREMENTS to MAKE THE THEME CONC

Processes
to be set in
motion

Mindset
to be changed

Structures
to be changed

At this point the question usually comes up, **"but is it possible to live like Christ?"**. It is not a rhetorical question.

There are confreres and communities who live with great joy, generosity, fidelity and with a radical approach, and others on the other hand whose lives are based on the easy life, individualistic, unconcerned about others, about the young or the poor.



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Today as yesterday God is calling us to holiness in Salesian life. And this is possible if we live as Christ did, as our beloved father and founder lived with great joy, attractiveness and a smiling face, but with the great radical approach of the Gospel, expressed in his twofold motto

WORK and TEMPERANCE

Gasual Changz V.

“Witnesses to the radical
approach of the Gospel”



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WORK and
TEMPERANCE

Gaspar Chanez V.



Father and Teacher
of the young,

St John Bosco,

docile to the gifts of the Spirit
and open to the reality
of your times

you were for the young
especially the little ones
and the poor,

a sign of the love and
special care of God.

Be our guide

as we walk the path of friendship
with the Lord Jesus,

so that we may discover in him
and in his Gospel

the meaning of our lives and
the true source of happiness.

Help us to respond with generosity

to the vocation

we have received from God,
so that in daily life we may be
builders of communion, and
may collaborate with enthusiasm,
in communion with the whole
Church, in creating
a civilisation of love.

Obtain for us the grace of
perseverance

in living a high standard of
Christian life,

according to the spirit
of the beatitudes;

and grant that,

guided by Mary Help of Christians,
we may one day be with you
in the great family of heaven. Amen



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