**THE 2025-2031 SIX-YEAR PROJECT**

In light of the reflection on the example of Mary who, after the announcement of the Angel Gabriel, “set out and went with haste” (Lk 1:39), we are offering the 2025-2031 six-year Project which emerges from the experience of GC29. *“****She set out and went with haste***” is a profound biblical echo that calls for the continuation of the invitation to a review of the life of the Congregation that the Rector Major Emeritus, Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, entrusted to us. That invitation marked the beginning of a journey that continues, one of considering the issues facing the life of the Congregation and pursuing them in the light of Christian hope, which Pope Francis asked us to keep alive as a source of inspiration during this Jubilee Year.

We recognise that the dynamics that emerged during the various weeks that GC29 was at work, characterised by listening and sharing, gradually fostered the emergence of a healthy and mature environment, an atmosphere where attention and openness to reciprocity led to an increasingly clear understanding of the challenges that the Salesian Congregation must continue to face.

This mutual listening confirmed the treasure of cultural diversity, ideas, and ways of interpreting the various realities in which we find ourselves. It also helped us to confront the different interpretations that arise and bear witness to the catholicity of a Congregation precisely through its cultural diversity as a fundamental element. This gives rise to the challenge of inculturating our charism and sharing best practices within our Congregation. All this indicates that our presence among young people and for young people is necessarily rooted in dialogue with their own circumstances and local cultures.

This dynamic that accompanied GC29 led to the maturation of some specific choices, contained in the **Final Document** (FD), which we as the General Council now wish to present programmatically. This is a task that the entire General Council is called to carry out during this six-year term and which will have an impact on the guidance and animation of the various regional, provincial and local processes.

Before moving on to the presentation of the guidelines, it is worth noting that one of the first challenges that has emerged with unquestionable clarity concerns the identity of the Salesian of Don Bosco. We believe that it is wise and pastorally strategic not to underestimate this challenge, which should be considered ‘primary.’ It is a calling that presents itself as the foundation and source of everything we are and, by necessity, of everything we do and propose. We are well aware that this call – ***passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people*** – was also the subject of study and reflection in both GC27 and GC28.

1. **FOLLOWING DON BOSCO’S EXAMPLE, LET US STRENGTHEN THE CENTRAL ROLE OF CHRIST IN OUR LIVES**

* ***Resolutely renew the centrality of Jesus Christ, rediscovering the grace of unity and avoiding spiritual superficiality.* (FD 18)**
* ***Revitalise fraternal life in communities and strengthen service to the poorest young people as an authentic expression of the Salesian charism.* (FD 28)**
* ***Renew formation processes, taking care of accompaniment and formation in the mission***. **(FD 39)**

In this first guiding principle for governance, we are faced with a call that has profound practical and existential implications. The central role that Christ plays in our lives, the daily encounter with his Word, is a demanding journey that involves three fundamentally important choices which are closely connected. All three have to do with defining the identity of the consecrated Salesian of Don Bosco today, our response and our ongoing formation.

We must help communities and confreres to choose the forms and times of personal and community prayer most suited to their current mission, the composition of the community and the age of the confreres themselves. We need to be much freer in these choices of times and ways for daily evangelical and charismatic fidelity.

We find ourselves at a historic juncture marked by profound change. The risk of becoming irrelevant is always just around the corner and will drag us down if our roots are weak. If we take our choice to become consecrated person seriously, renewing it daily as a response to a plan that is not ours but God’s, then we will have no reason to fear or feel inferior.

* In keeping with this logic we are called, both personally and as a community, to do everything possible to ensure that our response to God’s call is marked ***by the centrality of Christ, the soul and strength of our faithfulness, nourished by the Word of God.***

The daily commitment to meditation must be taken seriously in every community because this is where the true strength of our consecrated identity lies. Any weakening of this daily experience is an indicator of where our heart lies and of the authenticity of our witness. If our speaking *about* God is not the fruit and consequence of our speaking *with* God, everything becomes superficial and artificial. We end up not being credible and not even believed, because we are not authentic believers *of* and *in* the Word.

* Our community life is marked by the same experience as Don Bosco’s. This requires ***a knowledge of our Father and Teacher*** that serves as our compass, helping us to embody the charism today.

The gift of the ‘Salesian spirit’ must be embodied and not just copied. Loving Don Bosco means that, as Salesians, we commit ourselves to knowing him well so that we can make his charism relevant and meaningful today. The challenges of globalisation and post-modernity are reasons to encourage us, as well as a call to be prophets in the face of a world of young people looking for authentic adults who offer proposals of hope.

* The first sign of our Salesian consecration is that we are a welcoming environment. ***Making our houses and communities places of healthy and joyful humanity*** means continuing to offer young people that taste of ‘Valdocco’ that is often lacking today.

In a culture that is gradually losing its focus on the person, our witness of life proclaims a gospel perspective that overcomes indifference and individualism. The culture of communication and encounter needs people and spaces that offer hospitality, accompaniment and listening, and that lead to communion of hearts among ourselves and with young people.

In this context, communication is not only technological, but relational, rooted in the building of communion. Inspired by Don Bosco’s pedagogy of presence and personal encounter, Salesian communication creates bonds through listening, storytelling, daily life and prayer which has its inexhaustible source in Eucharistic communion.

It is in this source of authentic relationships that our ministry finds meaning and fruitfulness, both in our personal presence and in the digital world.

* As we read in the ***Constitutions***, **article 16**, this testimony is the root of every vocational proposal: “This is a witness that enkindles in the young the desire to get to know and to follow the Salesian vocation.” It is here that this ***vocational dimension***, which belongs to every aspect of our mission, finds its truth and its authenticity. This is where all kinds of vocational processes and programmes begin.
* All the processes we promote with regard to ***formation – initial and ongoing* –** which is closely interwoven with everyday life, are very relevant here. Allowing ourselves to be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, we gradually discover how, in the experience of mission, we ourselves grow in awareness of our evangelical and charismatic identity. ***Forming ourselves in the mission*** means allowing ourselves to be shaped by God’s will for us today, on behalf of young people, especially those who are most abandoned.
* The process of understanding and applying the ***new Ratio*** requires serious and in-depth study in order to address today’s challenges. ***The entire Congregation should be committed to taking seriously the various formation processes from the beginning of the vocational discernment process to the prolonged and urgent phase of ongoing formation.***

1. **A CHARISMATICALLY UPDATED PASTORAL PROPOSAL, WITH COMPETENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM**

* ***Share spirituality, mission and formation with the lay people and members of the Salesian Family in every Educative and Pastoral Community. (FD 51)***
* ***Offer gradual and systematic programmes of faith education and renew the practice of the Preventive System, ensuring safe settings everywhere.* (FD 60)**
* ***Be present in the new frontiers of the mission: the digital environment, integral ecology, the new expressions of the charism.* (FD 69)**

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the Congregation’s great dedication in this direction demonstrates its shared conviction that the educative and pastoral proposal is a calling that requires multiple commitments and processes, which we are taking very seriously. The various processes experienced by the entire Congregation, at different speeds, are a testimony that everything possible is being done to update the educative and pastoral proposal both at the level of gospel perspective and at the charismatic, pedagogical and professional levels.

This second guiding principle for governance takes into account ***the variety of our educative and pastoral expression.*** It calls for the strengthening of the choices of animation and formation that today emerge as priorities and require adequate and updated responses. We recognise that this journey today is affected by the accelerated pace of thinking, technology, organisational models and so on. There is an urgent need to strengthen our current commitment at various levels and in various sectors where we live the Salesian charism on behalf of young people, especially those most in need.

We live in a time characterised by constant change and cultural and social fragmentation. Our Congregation must become generative, not repetitive. It is not simply a matter of doing more, but of engaging with our time with the courage and hope that is in tune with what our young people are seeking. If we do not offer this, young people will seek it and find it outside the Church.

Every local community stands at a crossroads: either it joyfully accepts the challenge of being a sign of the Kingdom among the people, or it ends up being merely a sign of the past. The challenge of living in our times requires discernment, that is, the wisdom to read the signs of the times.

* In relation to this journey, it is important to highlight the existing commitment as well as new proposals for ***formation processes between Salesians and lay people*** in a growing number of provinces. These are successful experiences that respond to the need for formation that is increasingly shared, with methodologies suited to the concrete realities in which we find ourselves.
* There is growing attention in this field to the ***various groups of the Salesian Family***. It is urgent to support this journey by offering ***current and updated proposals for formation,*** for a growing evangelical and charismatic identity that meets today’s challenges in the various continents and that ***values the precious help of charismatic shared responsibility*** that the members of our Family offer.
* Let us strengthen our conviction that we are called to offer ***gradual and systematic processes and programmes of faith education and catechesis.*** In cultural contexts that are subject to far-reaching changes in values, where the religious and transcendent dimensions, faith and spirituality risk being relegated to the margins, it is urgent for us Salesians to recognise that even in our own environments the pastoral dimension is often weak, sometimes even absent, or unable to counteract the influence of ideologies. Offering young people the frontier of meaning, of the transcendent and the divine, inspired by the message of Christ as communicated to us in the gospel, is a gift that becomes our primary responsibility. It is a choice that recognises and aligns itself with the search for meaning among the younger generations; for us, it becomes an unavoidable call to respond not only for young people but with young people. This call must naturally be understood and interpreted according to different cultural contexts.
* ***The volunteer movement in all areas of the Salesian mission*** has seen significant growth in recent decades, both in the various forms it takes in the concrete reality of Salesian presence and in terms of reflection on it and updating it. The path that bears witness to the drive and energy of the Congregation in this field so far is positive and must be continuously accompanied and verified.
* Let us, with pastoral intelligence, renew our commitment to ensuring that all pastoral environments and processes are an ever more evident expression of the Salesian charism, which is summarised in the pastoral charity of the Preventive System. Every province should promote efforts to ensure ***safe environments*** with ***clear choices in favour of safeguarding***, in order to foster healthy and integral growth for all, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church and in line with the requirements of national governments in this field. ***Safeguarding*** must be understood as a way of caring for the Salesian charism and pedagogy seriously and permanently; it is care for every face, a gift from God that is always greater than us. It means following a path that continues to foster safe environments for everyone: for Salesians, educators and young people.

With sensitivity and pastoral responsibility, let us continue to commit ourselves to ensuring that in our communities all ***environments and processes are safe*** and marked by great respect for the young people entrusted to our care, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church and in accordance with national legislation. ***Safeguarding***, being a necessary responsibility that underlies the promotion of healthy and integral growth, becomes a concrete expression of our fidelity to the Salesian charism, where our very identity finds its synthesis in pastoral charity. Promoting ***safeguarding*** is our way of honouring and preserving the gift of our Salesian pedagogy, a gift from God that is greater than ourselves.

* The Church’s commitment to ***integral ecology*** has been taken up by the Congregation and must be strengthened with a charismatically inspired vision. May the commitment of young people to the common good and to our common home be increasingly rooted at the local level, with young people playing a leading role, sharing choices and participating actively and concretely. ***Don Bosco Green Alliance*** is a proposal that must be accompanied and supported.
* In recent years, the Congregation has taken the issue of ***affective education*** very seriously. The reflection undertaken, the literature produced and the paths taken so far testify to the urgency of commitment in this field. Let us take this challenge seriously by incorporating it into our educational processes as well as into the processes of accompanying families and in the initial and ongoing formation of Salesians and our co-workers.
* ***Peace education*** must be pursued with great care in our various educative and pastoral programmes. It is a challenge that is emerging in a scenario that is increasingly marked by ethnic and international conflicts. Such education is called upon to awaken an awareness in young people of their responsibility for promoting civil coexistence based on respect for diversity, solidarity and dialogue.
* The Congregation's commitment to ***human rights advocacy*** is a journey that continues to grow. Representation at international levels, as well as various experiences at national levels, require us Salesians to strengthen our adequate preparation so that our voice and our proposal may increasingly find a significant space in these same environments and organisations. The positive and appreciated experience of such processes at the international level and in some countries encourages the sharing of best practices that strengthen our voice on behalf of the poor and excluded. It is not enough to do good. We work with the poorest and most marginalised people to change the conditions of our human reality that generate poverty and exploitation. We support social and political efforts to create better living conditions for young people suffering from poverty and their communities.
* Let us promote the following areas:  ***the smooth functioning of the EPC***, a space for synodality, youth participation and families, as well as pastoral planning processes, ***the SEPP of each work and/or presence***, to be carefully contextualised in the various pastoral environments:
  + ***Schooling*** is the sector in which we are most active. The educational proposal is a key that breaks cycles of poverty and vulnerability, while opening new horizons for integral growth. The presence of the Salesians in this sector must be nurtured, prepared and accompanied. The future of many young people depends on this proposal. We are therefore called to prepare Salesians who are experts in the fields of leadership, teaching and teacher training. The respect and esteem shown by young people, parents, teachers and local authorities for our educative and pastoral programme is proof of the value of the education they receive in our schools, but it is also a responsibility that requires reflection, clear vision and planning.
  + ***The vocational training proposal*** confirms its status as a highly regarded educational excellence that sets us apart. It opens up new perspectives that give dignity to the lives of young people, both today and in the future. It is an educational investment that is increasingly needed, which asks us to focus courageously on charismatic, pedagogical, technical and managerial formation, which are essential today. The progress in this sector is positive, and that is why it is urgent that we continue to support it by preparing Salesians who will ensure the charismatic identity of our presence together with the formation of our co-workers. The most revolutionary point is the culture of work: work as participation in God’s creation; work as formation for life. It becomes a school of excellence, not a second-rate option for those who can’t make it elsewhere. For us, vocational training is a school of integration for migrants and refugees in every corner of the world. There is an urgent need to improve support and care for young workers as both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a frontier that demands reflection and long-term planning.
  + In the ***higher education*** field there is continuing focus on identity and coordination. It is urgent that we continue on the path towards a clearer evangelical, charismatic and pedagogical identity so that the Congregation’s contribution in this field can help young people achieve the goals of an integral education capable of building a more dignified, just and supportive future. There are great opportunities here to continue offering educative and pastoral support to young people as they journey towards maturity in their lives.
  + ***Youth centres and oratories*** continue to be a privileged place for Salesians to bring people together. The ongoing commitment to formation of pastoral workers, Salesians and lay people, adults and young people, is a choice that ensures the quality of our educative and pastoral proposal, journeys of faith, catechesis, and growth in values. We cannot be satisfied with simply offering places to occupy time; we are committed to a proposal that opens up horizons of healthy active involvement, offering hope and a future.
  + The experience of ***works and services for young people in situations of vulnerability and exclusion*** is the subject of constant attention and commitment on the part of the Congregation. The development of every type and form of intervention in this sector is a clear testimony in favour of the poor and marginalised. Growing awareness, ongoing formation and collaboration with other agencies at local and regional level are positive signs for the future. The challenge remains to strengthen the charismatic dimension of the proposal through the preparation of Salesians and lay people rooted in the charism, so that our presence may contribute to the evangelical construction of justice and peace, thus promoting human rights, using the universal language that puts us in harmony with those who, like us, are committed to the dignity of every person.
  + The ***parishes and shrines entrusted to the Salesians*** remain a privileged opportunity for presence within a specific territory and context. The reflection undertaken in recent years is a testimony to how the Congregation is committed to ensuring that these are increasingly typically Salesian spaces that prophetically accompany and reach a wide variety of people, with particular attention to young people.

1. **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL CHALLENGE**

* ***Let us give AI a pedagogy, let us enter a new world as educators, together with the younger generations.***

The third guiding principle for governance calls for conscious involvement by everyone in the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), viewing it as a revolutionary challenge that is radically transforming our world. We are at the dawn of a period of innovation that will introduce new ways of learning, communicating and building relationships. This transformation is so profound that it represents a true and proper ***paradigm shift***. It is interesting to note how AI, in its “artificial” form, offers us new possibilities to carry out our ministry, communicating and fostering authentic human relationships,which are close and real, inspired by the Preventive System.

Don Bosco was a visionary who saw hidden opportunities in innovation, both at the ecclesial level and at the educational, cultural and social levels. He moved forward at an astonishing pace, always with a critical and creative eye, because he could see how ***innovation served the best interests of young people.***

* AI is part of our mission as Salesians living in the digital age. In this sense, AI is not just a *tool* for us, but also a *mission*, that is, a call to ***explore the new frontiers that AI contains in its encounter with the educative and pastoral proposal.***
* The governance of the Congregation should commit itself to promoting ***spaces for reflection and discussion*** with experts who can help translate the encounter between the charism and AI and other challenges found in the digital world into processes and experiences. These processes must be guided by a positive and proactive attitude rooted in the Salesian charism.
* Furthermore, there should be a commitment to ***forming ourselves to create coordination and synergies between the many experiences*** existing in various parts of the Congregation in the AI field.
* From an ***ethical and moral*** point of view, we are called to help young people discern the contradictions and grey areas of the world, in light of the ***presence of Christ’s message in the world.***
* We must do everything possible to ***create authentic relationships*** in this space, neither artificial nor virtual. We create genuine connections and a space for listening.

1. **PONTIFICAL SALESIAN UNIVERSITY**

This fourth guiding principle for governance focuses on our **Pontifical Salesian University** (UPS). It is important to remember that UPS is the University of the Salesian Congregation, the University that belongs to all of us and with which we all feel a special bond. It is a structure of great strategic importance for the Congregation. We must do everything possible to enable it to fulfil its mission.

The role and presence of UPS are closely linked to promoting culture and qualification for Salesians, our co-workers and young people. Academic research and teaching, dialogue between charism and culture, must promote an ever more up-to-date knowledge of the figure of Don Bosco and of the Salesian educative and pastoral experience. This call is a task for the entire Congregation in every province. The institutional relationship between the UPS and the provinces of the Congregation, with the IUS of the Congregation, must be strengthened, in synergy with the RM and his Council.

* The governance of the Congregation continues to follow with dedication the two fundamental priorities for UPS: ***the formation of educators and pastors, Salesians and lay people, at the service of young people,*** as well as a deeper ***cultural, historical, pedagogical and theological understanding of the charism that can be linked to the accompaniment of the provinces by the Offices at Central Headquarters, and offer a dialogue of thought that supports the Congregation in a climate of harmony between thought, animation and government.***
* Around these two supporting axes, the UPS is called to continue to develop its ***commitment to research, teaching, and the passing on of knowledge***. The latest experiences in this direction, including the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco’s text on the Preventive System, serve as a paradigm.
* The field of ***Salesian studies*** should be pursued with greater attention, in line with the efforts that the Congregation has been making in recent years to ***promote the Salesian places***. These are not just physical places, but places where the encounter with the charism by many groups of collaborators is bearing positive fruit.
* The ***synergy of study proposals and presence between UPS and the Salesian places*** should be strengthened in a planned manner in order to enhance the positive experiences of ongoing formation that already exist and also to be able to respond to other opportunities that may arise. The heart of this journey is to move from imagining Salesian places as places to visit to a vision that prioritises the in-depth study of Salesianity, that is, to move from mere information to formation.

**Conclusion**

In this section, we aim to offer four general guidelines that will then be developed systematically by the various Sectors and Regions, individually in some cases and in synergy and collaboration in others.

My concluding invitation in this presentation is twofold: first of all, I invite the entire Congregation to draw inspiration for this journey from the ***Letter*** that introduces it. I hope that the contemplative atmosphere that was so well experienced during GC29 will become the ongoing climate that accompanies our mission in our daily lives. Guided by the Spirit of God and nourished by listening to the Word, may we serve young people with an open heart and a generous spirit. May our community life be the most credible sign that offers welcoming spaces, communicates a sense of belonging and the ability to accompany others.

Secondly, let us all commit ourselves – Salesians and lay people alike – to gaining an ever deeper knowledge of Don Bosco. This journey helps us discover our origins, but above all it gives us the courage to live the perennial newness of our charism today. Walking this stretch of road together means making our homes and our presence other ‘Valdoccos’ today. Regarding this call, Fr Juan Vecchi left us with a reflection that is very relevant today:

When we think of the origin of our Congregation and Family, from which Salesian expansion began, we find first of all a community, which was not only visible, but indeed quite unique, almost like a lantern in the darkness of night: Valdocco, the home of a novel community and a pastoral setting that was widely known, extensive and open... Such a community gave rise to a new culture, not in an academic sense but in that of a new style of relationship between youngsters and educators, between laity and priests, between artisans and students, a relationship which had its effect on the area and on the city itself... All this had as its root and raison d’être the faith and pastoral charity, which tried to create from within a family spirit, and led to a deep affection for God and our Lady. (Fr Juan VECCHI, *Now is the acceptable time*, AGC 373, 2000).

**EPILOGUE**

At the end of this journey, I would like to invite all of you, dear Salesians, and together with you all those who are part of our Educative and Pastoral Communities (EPC), to ensure that the call that has come to us through the experience of GC29 may be taken up with an attitude of profound openness towards the realities that the Lord is asking us to encounter. Let us be inspired and guided by Mary’s example in her attitude of ***listening*** to God’s will, which comes through accepting the word, but also through the stories of the young people we are called to meet, welcome and accompany.

I invite you to cultivate an ***open and available heart*** which allows itself to be guided by the cry and search of young people who often live in a situation marked by apparent indifference. This indifference, when faced with a willing heart like that of the Good Shepherd, melts away and in its place emerge meaningful relationships and experiences that offer a future and hope to these same young people. May Don Bosco’s example in his encounter with Bartholomew Garelli be a constant reminder to us of a willingness that can intuit opportunities for healthy and humanly enriching friendships.

Finally, let us recognise that our pastoral ***generosity*** needs the balance which comes from living the grace of unity every day: “a splendid harmony of nature and grace”. (*C.* 21) It is a pastoral commitment and dedication that has solid, deep and rich evangelical and charismatic roots. It is these roots of our generosity that spur us on to be missionaries to young people wherever Providence sends us.

Let us place ourselves at the school of the Holy Spirit so that, following Mary’s example, we too may ‘set out in haste’ with confidence and hope to serve young people.

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**A note on the six-year term project for 2025-2031**

The **Projects** of the past six years continued with several pages ‘spelling out the six-year Project’ following the priorities given by the Rector Major to the entire Congregation. They involved the work of each Councillor, following the division into: Objectives - goal - process - steps.

All of this was published together in the text of the **Project**, immediately defining a closed path.

In the spirit of GC29 and to ensure continued work on inter-sectoral projects, producing processes that must be implemented and evaluated, we have decided to separate this second implementation phase from the text of the **Six-Year Project**.

All aspects of the **Project**, in every sector and region, are being and will be developed in a continuous manner throughout the six-year term.

They will be shared in the Council, step by step, discussed and published as they develop, and will form the structure for the review of the six-year term, which will conclude with the report on the Congregation to be presented at the next GC30.

In keeping with what has always been done, we have introduced new aspects that promote collaboration within the Council, together with a much more structured implementation and review process involving the entire Congregation.

This is how we hope to express the spirit of CG29 in the animation and governance of the Congregation.