



# ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

## OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

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## I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

### THE SALESIANS AND POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Rome, October 1976*

*Dear Confreres,*

I have desired for a long time to converse with you on the topic of this Circular Letter; but I wanted first to make a deeper research on the witness and orientation left us in this regard by our beloved Father, Don Bosco.

After having prayed and meditated, after having gathered on this topic the thought of persons who for years have researched with a great sense of scientific responsibility as well as ecclesial, religious and Salesian sensibility, I believe the Good Lord wishes me to invite you to reflect on the delicate subject of our "political responsibility" as Salesians faithful to Don Bosco.

You realize at once the timeliness, complexity and implications of this topic. Maybe you will find some difficulty in grasping some points at first reading: this is due to the nature of the subject, and it has not always been possible to avoid it. However, it seems to me that the interest in this burning issue and the practical conclusions that we will be able to draw from it concerning our vocation, deserve the effort of an attentive and thoughtful reading: for we are dealing with a topic which is basic to a full understanding of our very identity.

## 1. WHY THIS SUBJECT

There is certainly no lack of urgent reasons why we should face this topic. Let us see some of them.

- *The cultural transformation* and the social changes which are being experienced in various nations give rise to problems that cannot be overlooked by the Church and, in it, by us precisely as Salesians.

The manifold changes that are taking place are becoming a kind of *entrance exam to the future*: a substantial questionnaire on the validity of our vocation. It could be said that we will come out from this historic hour either “passing” or “failing”. We should not therefore be unaware of them and make no effort to set forth some answer of basic value and importance.

- *Don Bosco* lived intensely and with full awareness the problems, uncharted for him too, of the great cultural and social changes of his century, particularly in their political overtones; and he made, in this regard, a careful choice in full accordance with his conscience as Founder, adopting a specific behavior pattern that he wished should become part of his spirit and should characterize his mission.

Certainly the cultural sensibilities as well as the social conjunctures and outlooks of his time appear to be quite different from the present ones. It follows therefore that to be today objectively faithful to the apostolic project of our Father, we have to reconsider the identity of our Salesian vocation and know how to fulfill it in the environment of the new times.

- *Today's newness is characterized by the “signs of the times”* with their values as well as the ambivalences and deviations which accompany them in practice.

Among these “signs of the times” we must undoubtedly mention the process of socialization as a growth of the political

consciousness of the citizens and of their active participation in the responsibilities of the search for and administration of the temporal commonweal. And, in varying degrees, this is true of all countries.

Such a process touches upon and concerns also our Salesian life which is actively inserted in the world with its mission of integral education to youth and the working-class people.

- *Youth and the working-class people*, to whom the Salesian is *de facto* dedicated, usually live in the most teeming zones of society; and they seem to be, today more than yesterday, the privileged object of attention on the part of the so-called “educative city”. They are sought after, cared for, indoctrinated, and even flattered and manipulated by ideologists and activists, by the mass media and political parties which consider them as the most significant “exodus groups” towards the “new society”. Thus it becomes impossible for a son of Don Bosco to dedicate himself to his mission without coming across the perspectives of politics.

- *The “new society”*, about which so much is being said, is to a large extent still to be built. We certainly live in a social and cultural era of transition in which liberalism and socialism, with their varied ideological outlooks and practical achievements, are a proof of the fact that there are situations to be overcome because what has been devised up to now is no longer or not yet in accordance with the true standard for man.

- I think it is because of *this state of transition and moment of search* that the importance of this subject has received more and more emphasis in numerous documents of the official Magisterium, from the Popes to the Council, from the Episcopal Conferences to the Synod of Bishops, from the diocesan clergy to those responsible for religious Orders. From among the most significant of these documents I will point out a few in the

Appendix,<sup>1</sup> as a useful means for your personal and communal reflection.

For us Salesians the Magisterium of the Church constitutes a privileged instrument in determining our position vis-à-vis the most complex and vital problems.

- Today, at any rate, there is for everyone a pressing *need to commit oneself* to a profound renewal of human community life: everybody feels called to contribute in the elaboration of a new society, institutionally and culturally more in accordance with human nature. Such an urgent need, however, has given rise to the present social and political climate with its dangerous unbalances of ideological trends.

- *The SGC has faced also this aspect* of our Salesian vocation, and its directives have already given us very concrete guidelines. But the experience of these last years shows that there are some who prefer to go their own way without listening to the voice of the SGC, and there are some who interpret the texts unilaterally and use them improperly.

These are the very two temptations of which I spoke to you in my “Letter of Presentation” of the Acts of the SGC, under the titles « Preconceptions of distrust - disillusionment” and “Harmonizing the documents.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2. A NEW VISION OF POLITICS

For a little more than half a century *a shifting of accent* has been taking place in the term “politics” which has revived its fortunes and has made it a fashionable word. This, in reality, has also given to the term a multiplicity of meanings, which is unfortunately accompanied by ambiguities of no slight consequence.

<sup>1</sup> See pg. 61: *Select Bibliography of Magisterium Documents*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Acts of the Special General Chapter*, pp. IX-XI.

It is certainly a very positive factor that the conscience of citizens concerning as never before, and that there is continuous growth in the will of the citizens to participate in the search for a more human model of society. "Political choices", wrote the French bishops, "acquire an immense amplitude: how can one imagine new forms of life in society? What types of society do men and women want for the end of the twentieth century or for the following century? A highly developed consumer society taken up with illusory goods, or a society based on justice and fullness of human development? Politics, in short, is today situated close to the level of ultimate ends".<sup>3</sup>

But it must also be remembered that the wider the scope given to politics, the greater must be the clarity of ideas in this regard. As a matter of fact, if everything were to become politics, then Faith would lose its function, the Church would lose its mission, and all of us would have to change our vocation.

It is therefore necessary to specify in some way the meaning in which we are here taking the concept of politics, in order to avoid exposing ourselves to today's recurrent fashion of a generalized and often irrational political demagoguery. This must be done even though it is not an easy task and it does not belong to me to delve into such a complex field.

### **The snare of ambiguity**

Fortunately we now have some experience in the use of ambivalent terms, and we are accustomed to discern between values and non-values, to distinguish, for instance, between secularization and secularism, between the advancement of women and feminism, between what properly belongs to the laity and laicism, and so forth. It is therefore possible, and for us here

<sup>3</sup> BISHOPS OF FRANCE, *Politica, Chiesa e Fede* [*Politics, Church and Faith*], Ed. LDC, 44.

it is even indispensable, to establish a clear distinction between “politics” and “politicizing”:

— *politics* is a good, and it is a basic dimension of human life in the civil community;

— *politicizing*, instead, is intrusiveness and adulteration, a confusion that corrodes from within and alters the nature of society and the manifold civil services of society.

It is true that when a term has caught on, we cannot prescind from its nuances and we should not be afraid to use it. We will do it, however, with an effort not to cause misunderstandings or erroneous interpretations. We should know how to speak the present language of youth and of the people, while keeping in mind that, unfortunately, popular language is not only the vehicle for truths but also for errors. This is true especially when certain terms enter into common usage through the filter of ideologies, which reject transcendent values, oppose religious perspectives, and deny the specific mission of the Church in society.

What then is politics at the level of Christian reflections? What does “political concern” mean for a member of that Church whose mission was defined by the Council as being “not of the political order” but “of a religious one?”<sup>4</sup> And what is today the “political responsibility” of a Salesian who heard his father and founder Don Bosco counsel him, a hundred years ago, to keep away from “things political?”

### **What is meant today by politics**

Scholars today generally use the term politics in two meanings, in accordance with the two axes around which the entire social concern revolves:

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 42.

— *the axis of values and ends* which define the “common good in a global vision of civil society”;

— *and the axis of the means, methods and priorities* which must guide the effectiveness of political power in the practical attainment of an adequate “living together” in society.

### *The axis of values and ends*

The first meaning considers politics in the widest sense of the word as a carefully thought-out discourse on the social dimension of man historically situated in the city, which in Greek is precisely called “polis”. In the city, as a matter of fact, human “living together” in society is organized, culture is developed, work is planned, manifold activities are promoted, social struggles take place and, in the final analysis, the history of a people unfolds to its fullness.

To be a citizen one has to be interested and participate in the dynamics of such a life in community, and devote oneself with various endeavors and services to its right organization and just functioning.<sup>5</sup> A good citizen cannot be neutral in this field, but must know how to give his collaboration generously and with all the competence of which he is capable.

*At this level, all undoubtedly have a political responsibility.* And we think rightaway of a realistic aspect of our Salesian mission: we have often heard it repeated by Don Bosco that we must be engaged in the education of youth and of the adults of the working class, “helping them to become honest citizens.”<sup>6</sup> Certainly, the expression “honest citizen” can have a different resonance depending on its cultural context; however, we are really moving in the orbit of this widely accepted meaning. In this sense, for all practical purposes, the term “politics” refers

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, Nos. 73-76.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Constitutions*, Art. 17.

to the social dimension of man: its substantial reality is constituted directly by the sociocultural values and activities, while the political aspect appears as a qualifying consequence.

*The axis of the means and priorities*

The second meaning considers politics in the stricter and more proper sense of the word, as an intelligent and calculated series of initiatives of proven effectiveness, as the sum total of those practical activities which, through movements, political parties, historical projects and so forth, intend to direct the exercise of supreme political power in favor of the people.

At this level, politics is an activity ordained, no doubt, to the Common Good of all citizens as the goal to which it tends; but it has, as the moving energy that specifies it, the use and the seeking of the use of political power, for the purpose of organizing the entire society, bringing about the converging of various sectors and diverse energies towards the ordering of the whole, and guiding and orienting in concrete ways the behavior patterns of community life. Now this is exactly the most significant angle from which we can survey political activity, the light by which we must ultimately appraise and catalog all the initiatives to which it gives life.

*In the second meaning not all can dedicate themselves to political activity*, both because many other activities are needed and also because it requires uncommon talents and competencies. Well, then, here when I speak of “political activity”, I intend to refer to this second, stricter, and more proper meaning inasmuch as it implies as a substantial reality “the direct relationship with the search, use and distribution of power as the unifying factor of the social community”.<sup>7</sup>

And yet the shifting of accent to which we have alluded

<sup>7</sup> Cf. CELAM, *Chiesa e Politica* [Church and Politics], Ed. LDC, Nos. 6-7.

above, stresses the first meaning rather than the second, gives priority to politics understood more as a qualifying dimension rather than a specifying activity. Will we take this into account? Of course! It is precisely for this reason that we are reflecting on our political responsibility. But what we must clarify now is that a different emphasis does not change the nature of a concept, unless one wishes to fall into relativism.

*When politics pretends to judge everything*

In our case, we cannot allow ourselves to be conned by the Marxist theory of the equalization of social and political. In effect, in a secularized society of the atheistic type, politics takes the place of philosophy and religion in describing the meaning of man and of society: it considers as its primary and fundamental task that of defining the purpose of the world and of making itself the ultimate criterion of human ethics.<sup>8</sup> In that way, politics goes on to receive a supreme value that judges everything, even culture and religious faith.

This is the logical consequence of an ideology in which temporal goals are looked upon as absolutes, and in which politics is identified not only with the social order but with the very "making of history".<sup>9</sup>

This shifting of accent, then, should not lead us to distort the real meaning of things, but to underline and give a privileged position in our concerns to the profound changes in socio-cultural contexts, the adequate revision of the scales of values, the planning of a different priority of concerns, the urgency of assuming new attitudes, the courage to come to grips with uncharted problems, and every person's capacity to make one's own vocation truly efficacious for the good of society.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. R. Garaudy, *Parola d'uomo [Man's Word]*, Ed. Cittadella 1975, 125.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.*, 125.

## The limits of political activity

Even if it is true that man in his totality has political dimensions, nevertheless political activity is not the whole man. Today, also among believers, there is too much talk about the totalizing value of the political dimension, thus opening the door to grave confusions.

“The political sphere”, wrote a scholar in this regard, “does not encompass all the collective and personal dimensions of human existence, though in one way or another it may reach out to all. If it does so, it is only from a certain viewpoint and within definite limits... Men and women can render the greatest services to humanity without making politics the pivotal concern of their lives. To favor politics exclusively would make us run the risk of forgetting essential dimensions of human existence, without which politics would lose every authentic significance”.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, family life, economics, culture, religion, and so forth, are as relevant from the viewpoint of civil society as they certainly are from the perspective of political activity.

I believe that one of today’s tasks is that of *deflating the myth of ‘politicization’*, which threatens to contaminate the other indispensable dimensions of human existence and to change the nature of many different vocations.

However, to demythologize ‘politicization’ does not mean to ignore or not to appreciate the values of the present process of growth in political responsibility. On the contrary, this new sensibility is precisely what makes it imperative for the good of society that we come up with other initiatives distinct from political activity.

“Political activity”, wrote Pope Paul VI, “should be the projection of a plan of society which is consistent in its concrete

<sup>10</sup> R. COSTE, *Dimensioni politiche della fede* [Political Dimensions of Faith], Ed. Cittadella 1973, 33 and 36.

means and in its inspiration, and which springs from a complete conception of man's vocation and of its differing social expressions. It is not for the State or even for political parties, which would be closed unto themselves, to try to impose an ideology... It is for cultural and religious groupings, in the freedom of acceptance which they presume, to develop in the social body, disinterestedly and in their own ways, those ultimate convictions on the nature, origin and end of man and society".<sup>11</sup>

Hence, the all too evident *importance of having among the people and for the people many vocations which do not devote themselves to politics as such, though they actually have a profound influence on political life.*

In an epoch of radical changes politics needs, more than ever, strong cultural foundations, secure religious enlightening, and true life-giving grace from Christ. Bergson, by no means a suspect of clericalism, made a bold statement that provoked not a few discussions: "Democracy will either be Christian or it will not exist". And he was not referring to any specific party, but to that something extra which politics needs to be truly rational.

### **3. RELIGION REMAINS INDISPENSABLE**

We must ponder very seriously the historical function of the Christian faith in the present democratic evolution of peoples. *For a Christian, to truly live the religious dimension of his life becomes, in practice, a grave responsibility also in the line of politics.*

The Second Vatican Council has stigmatized as a distressing error the separation of faith from temporal concerns: "The split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age...

<sup>11</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens*, No. 25.

Let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other... They are mistaken who... think that they may shirk their earthly responsibilities. For they are forgetting that by faith itself they are more than ever obliged to measure up to these duties, each according to this proper vocation. Nor, on the contrary, are they any less wide of the mark who... imagine that they can plunge themselves into earthly affairs in such a way as to imply that these are altogether divorced from the religious life...

In the exercise of all their earthly activities, let Christians gather their humane, domestic, professional, social, and technical enterprises into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory".<sup>12</sup>

Who can help people to make this synthesis? Is there not a need for a special vocation, for an appropriate ministry, for a full-time and lifelong dedication? Yes, indeed: *there can be a political responsibility which, to be truly genuine, should not concern itself with politics, but with laying the religious foundations for civil life in community and transformig into liturgy the whole human dynamism of history.*

### **The mystery of evil in history**

One could say that the process of democratization in civil life is just beginning. A great modern thinker, Maritain, stated that we are still "in a prehistoric epoch" as far as this is concerned.

On the other hand, experience teaches us that the art of government is too often and too easily accompanied by abuses and injustices: power, wealth and sex seem to be climatic zones

<sup>12</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 43.

that are very favorable to sin and to the growth of evil. Let us think for a moment of the various States which exist at this moment on earth, and of the kinds of governments of past centuries: who can promise messianically to a people that there is a science which finally resolves this problem, and that there has appeared an effective method for engaging in politics with full justice? It would be demagoguery and irresponsibility to show oneself naively confident of a political system as having magical powers to resolve problems.

Instead, it is no exaggeration to affirm that human history without Christ could have been defined as the "catastrophe of politics". In history there is evidence of a special place for the Evil one that Scripture calls explicitly "the Prince of this world". Only Jesus Christ defeated him, healing also the political values through his redemptive work (which, it is good to notice, was not of a political nature).

Faith assures us that the "mystery of iniquity" is at work in history; the scene described in chapter thirteen of the Apocalypse is not mythology: there, temporal political power is presented as permeated by a demonic spirit which uses it on behalf of the Enemy of Christ.

St. Paul, too, counsels the Christians to put on "the armor of God so as to be able to stand firm against the wiles of the devil: for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness". We must therefore meditate on the presence in history of a deviating force that can be overcome only by Christ and with Christ.

It is not our task to make exegetical considerations; but we are certainly facing the problems of a special presence of evil in the nerve centers of human activity.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Eph., 6, 11-12.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. E. Schlier, *Principati e Potestà nel Nuovo Testamento* [*Principalities and Powers in the New Testament*], Morcelliana 1967.

## The liberating function of the Church

Here, then, we see an indispensable aspect of the Church's mission in the world: to free it from evil and to leaven it in the good. "The Church is the ambit in which the dominion of Christ is affirmed".<sup>15</sup>

The church is not the world, even though it exists in the world and lives to save it. It cannot loosen itself from the political sphere because it lives in the nations and helps to lay the foundations of their right human dimensions; but *its mission does not consist in building the State, but rather in bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God which inspires the people already living in this world to live uprightly.*

There is no dualism in all this; there is, indeed, a distinction and a duality: God is not an alternative to man, but neither is He man. Thus, the gospel saying "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's"<sup>16</sup> appears as a fundamental non-dualistic principle. The Second Vatican Council affirms that "Christ gave his Church no proper mission in the political order: the purpose which He set before her is a religious one".<sup>17</sup> The statement is plain: I would say that it could not be clearer, even though it may appear disconcerting.

We hear at once the resounding counterattack of Marx's accusation: "Religion is the opium of the people"! Would, therefore, the mission of Christ and of the Church be an alienation of history, a social disqualification, a political uselessness? Yet, Christ became the "Lord of history" precisely by fulfilling his religious mission, and thus opening the gates of liberty to all human values, even those of the political sphere. The Council,

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>16</sup> Mk., 12, 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 42.

in the text just quoted, goes on to affirm: "But out of this religious mission itself came a function, a light, and an energy which serves to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law".<sup>18</sup>

### **Culture needs religion**

It is natural to latch on here to the fascinating problems of culture.

We know that faith does not belong of itself to the cultural order: "The Gospel is certainly not identical with culture, and is independent in regards to all cultures".<sup>19</sup> But *between faith and culture there exists an historical necessity*, derived from their very essence, of *intimate communion* and of a mutually enriching *continuous interchange*.<sup>20</sup>

The Council reminded us of the help that the Church receives from the contemporary world,<sup>21</sup> and the help which it intends to bestow on society.<sup>22</sup> Now, all this must once more be meditated upon, in order to understand and deepen the sense of the indispensability of religion.

Today more than ever, due to the process of democratization in our epoch, it is urgent "to insist that culture be not diverted from its own purpose and made to serve political or economic interests".<sup>23</sup> Such an urgency underlines even more strongly the importance of a *dynamic presence of religious faith in the conception and development of a new order for man and society*.

The Gospel, as the Council assured us, helps to stimulate

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 58.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., No. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Nos. 42, 43, 57, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., No. 59.

culture, to remove from it dangerous errors, to elevate its mediation, to strengthen it, to complete it and make it fruitful.<sup>24</sup> "Faith throws a new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human".<sup>25</sup>

The trouble is that, between faith and culture, serious difficulties have risen to such an extent that it prompted our Holy Father Pope Paul VI to exclaim with anguish: "*The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time*".<sup>26</sup>

In view of the emerging values, it is imperative for us to reflect once more on our faith and to elaborate a theology that can dialogue with the new anthropological sciences so as to avoid the unbalance of sociologism and psychologism.<sup>27</sup> Evangelization should strive to penetrate the evolving strata of humanity; it should baptize the world of labor, purify the social struggle, enlighten politics, give a new dimension to the sense of history. Pope Paul VI tells us: "For the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and, as it were, upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation".<sup>28</sup>

Thus, through the workings of the Spirit of the Lord, there arose and still arise in the Church apostolic vocations especially oriented to face these problems and to devote themselves to resolve them with intelligence and dedication. Among these we

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 58.

<sup>25</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Evangelli Nuntiandi*, No. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 62.

<sup>28</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, No. 19.

must number also our vocation — that of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

*It is a full-time and lifelong religious commitment, an all-embracing and creative undertaking more urgent than any other, for a new projection of man and society.* For, the mammoth crisis that we are undergoing is not primarily political, but religious and cultural. We need Christian vocations specialized in healing the divorce between the Gospel and culture.

Don Bosco was raised by God in the last century with a clear mission. Our vocation as Salesians entails a religiocultural mission especially among poor youth and the working-class people, precisely in view of the new society. Don Bosco himself, in the foreword to his first draft of the Constitutions, wrote with keen perceptiveness: "On the good or bad training of youth depends the happy or sad future of the mores of society".<sup>29</sup>

In an age of transition like ours, we should know how to rethink our vocation without betraying it. The building of a new society certainly needs politics; but to be genuinely democratic, politics needs culture; and if culture does not wish to betray man, it needs religion.

#### 4. DON BOSCO AND POLITICS

It is at least ambiguous to speak of Don Bosco as if he had nothing to do with politics. The mistake would consist in making him a tranquil, disembodied, uncreative, non-prophetic type of priest, with no battling spirit, no untiring drive, no decision, no definite social and historical choice.

It would follow likewise that the mission of the Congregation he founded in direct answer to so many sociocultural needs of his time would lose its very nature.

<sup>29</sup> *Foreword*, 1858; *Biographical Memoirs*, 5, 931.

What is undoubtedly clear is that Don Bosco chose with full deliberation not to engage in politics; as a matter of fact, he handed down this same injunction to his Congregation as part of his spiritual heritage. But this does not mean that he was a stranger to the great human problems of his epoch, or that he was neutral as regards the sociocultural innovations of his era, or that he was ignorant of the needs of the new society which was taking shape, or that he was an armchair idealist in his educational work on behalf youth and working classes, or that he was a somewhat sentimentalistic utopian in his international and missionary enterprises.

No; the very opposite is true! Don Bosco devoted himself creatively to the reform of society, with full cognizance of his responsibility for the common good. But he did it with a new pastoral dedication which followed completely from his priestly heart.

We therefore ask ourselves in what sense Don Bosco's counsel "not to embroil ourselves in things political" is not a sign of unhealthy lack of interest in politics, but implies rather a political responsibility for the common good. Keep in mind, among other things, that what he called "things political" had a very special overtone in the past century. Ours will not be a scientific research. We will simply try with a panoramic synthesis to shed some light on the original meaning and native identity of our vocation in the Church.

To this end, it is relevant for us to understand his choice in this field. We will search not so much for his mentality linked with the culture of his time, or for his possible subjective tastes in the sociopolitical climate of Piedmont and Italy, but rather for those elements that could help us appreciate the spirit with which he lived and the type of mission he wished to accomplish. For we wish to be faithful to our Founder as to a grace from God.

To enlighten such a fidelity, we will gather some observations concerning the difference in sociopolitical context between the

past century and the present time; we will also ask which were, in practice, Don Bosco's most significant specific activities, and how the pastoral aspect of his vocation gave clear witness in his daily life.

### **The century that changed the face of the world**

Today we in the West perhaps look upon the last century with a certain superiority complex, which prevents us from seeing its importance and fecundity in the social and political field. Suffice it to consider that notwithstanding Vienna's restoration (in the year of Don Bosco's birth), all the leavening forces and "signs of the times" contained in the explosion of the French revolution continued to grow. "We know", wrote Father Caviglia, "that the nineteenth century changed the face of the world in every sense, good or bad, and religion was no exception".<sup>30</sup>

It is a century "that aspires to the liberation and elevation of the lower classes, and seeks to achieve democratically a just social order: a century that, calling itself the age of enlightenment, wants education, science, progress for all and in everything, tries with increasing fervor to educate the people in the moral, civil, political, social spheres, turns to the people for national vindications, and adapts to the people the spirit and the genres of the new literature and the new art".<sup>31</sup>

No doubt, all this took place in a cultural climate which was different from our own. It could be summed up politically as the search for independence and constitutional democracy in the new nations, and ecclesiologically in the trends of the First Vatican Council.

<sup>30</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Don Bosco - Profilo storico* [*Don Bosco - Historical Profile*], SEI 1934, 5-7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

## Characteristics of Don Bosco's times

We list some characteristics of the time in which Don Bosco lived.

- In the first place, there was a *general reawakening of nationalism* — which in Italy took the form of the *Risorgimento* and of the wars of independence. When Don Bosco was ordained a priest, there were in the Italian peninsula as many as six State Capitals (Turin, Milan, Parma, Florence, Rome, Naples); the empires of Spain and Portugal had broken asunder; the independent States of Latin America were being born; forces were already at work that would tear apart the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- *The system of government was changing.* Foundations were being layed for a new civil life along democratic lines; forms of absolute monarchy were disappearing; a constitutional government was established also in the Papal States; voting was beginning to take place; political parties were making their appearance.

- It is in the last century that *the travail of socioeconomic transformations began* — industrialization, urbanism, demographic explosion (Europe went from 180 to 400 million inhabitants), and the important phenomenon of emigration to America.

- *New ideologies appeared* which would exert an ever greater sway over the masses through the growing power of the press on public opinion: besides the neo-Guelfs, neo-Ghibellines, and utopian socialists, the movements of Liberalism and Marxism were asserting themselves.

- In Italy there was a particular intensity in the *clash between State and Church*, which saw the vehemence of sectarian forces, a widespread anticlericalism (with the response of a strong clericalism), the confiscation of ecclesiastical goods, the invasion

of the Papal States, the conquest of Rome, abstention from voting and from holding public office on the part of Catholics, and their consequent conflict of conscience.

Let us reflect on what it meant, then, at a time of constitutional euphoria, to have the boys shout, "Long live the Pope!" instead of "Long live Pius IX!" or, during Mazzini's republic in Rome, to make among the boys a collection on behalf of the Pope in exile at Gaeta.

• *To speak of politics in such a context* implies a not so negligible difference of emphasis when compared to the meaning usually given to politics at the present time. Don Bosco used to express in different terms what we have taken to the wide meaning of politics at the sociocultural level of the common good. "The meaning which we give to the expression 'Political World', writes Peter Stella, "must be found to a great extent in the area of other expressions, such as 'civil society', 'fatherland', 'nation', 'society', 'morality'".

In this area it is possible to discover a basic convergence between the goals set by Don Bosco and by the most disparate supporters of the education of youth and of the people, such as Ferrante Aporti, Ilarione Petiti of Ro, Achilles Mauri and Giuseppe Mazzini himself.<sup>32</sup> We can say that, in this field, Don Bosco in practice focuses the goals to be obtained by an integral education in the formula "good Christians and upright citizens".

Instead, when Don Bosco uses the term "politics" or "things political" or "party principle" (cf. letter to Minister T. Mamiani), he refers to what is directly linked with an intervention by the local government, to one's view of the exercise of power in the State, to the ideological postulates which guide the leanings of certain newspapers, of pressure groups which are more or less sectarian, of movements that parted company over the question

<sup>32</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco e la Politica* [*Don Bosco and Politics*], Rome 1971, Duplicate, 3.

of the type of government to be organized and the kind of independence and national unity to be brought about. This was the meaning of the term at the more specialized level of politics.

“To look for nuances in the texture of Don Bosco’s experience it proves advantageous to underscore the points of tension, and at times also of divergence, between Don Bosco and others. Where we find the term ‘politics’, it is possible to fathom the motivations of some of his choices, the criteria which instinctively or consciously guided the line of conduct he had taken”.<sup>33</sup>

### **Don Bosco’s political initiatives**

Never did Don Bosco show either a temperament or an attitude that was neutral or, as people say today, uncommitted to any position whatsoever. He was unmistakably and totally a priest with a genial and self-sacrificing pastoral dedication.

He possessed a noteworthy practical acumen; he obviously had psychological balance; he was, as it is popularly said, very shrewd, realistic and supple; he had the leadership needed to build and rule communities; he faced difficulties with skill; he was gentle and tactful in his dealing with people, knowing how to reach key-persons; he cultivated his inclination and taste for history; he followed the course of world events, appraising them with an objective critical sense; in a word, he had (if we may say so) the qualifications and the making of a “politician”, not as some politicians, armchair critics, who in practice are unable to organize a work, to govern a group, to find a solution or to analyze the components of a concrete difficulty.

He instinctively felt he was Italian and Piedmontese (that is, a citizen of the Kingdom of Sardinia); but, as a believer, he nourished a strong sense of catholicity, which he saw not in con-

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

trast to but naturally linked with his being Italian. As a priest and as a citizen, *he was intimately convinced that "religion was always regarded as the mainspring of human society and of families, and that where religion is lacking there is nothing but immorality and disorder; that we ought therefore to do our best to promote it, love it and make it loved also by others, and guard ourselves carefully from those who do not honor it or who despise it"*.<sup>34</sup>

He was totally and continually taken up with his task, spurred on by "zeal for the Christian renewal of society"<sup>35</sup> and by "a suprapolitical concept of the Papacy",<sup>36</sup> so much so that in an encyclical written toward the end of 1929 (the year of the Concordat between the Holy See and Italy) Pius XI disclosed his admiration "for God's mercy who providentially and for such a long time, in opposition to sectarian and wicked men, all bent on uprooting the Christian religion and downgrading with accusations and insults the supreme authority of the Supreme Pontiff, raised Don Bosco who, strongly deploring the violated rights of the Apostolic See, time and again had toiled to have those rights restored and to heal on a friendly basis a division which had torn Italy from the fatherly embrace of the Pontiff".<sup>37</sup>

But to assure ourselves of Don Bosco's indefatigable dedication and clearness of choice in this matter, let us recall his *main initiatives* which have some reference to the political dimension.

• *Don Bosco dealt personally with politicians and men of culture*, such as Pellico, Gioberti, Rosmini, Manzoni, Cavour, Balbo, Rattazzi, Farini, Crispi, Zanardelli, Lanza and many others, and he continually endeavored to keep up friendly relationships

<sup>34</sup> G. BOSCO, *Storia d'Italia* (in Opere e scritti editi e inediti, Vol. III, SEI) [*History of Italy* (in Works and edited and unedited writings)], 472-473.

<sup>35</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Profilo Storico* [*Historical Profile*], 135.

<sup>36</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Discorso introduttivo alla storia d'Italia* [*Introductory Discourse to the History of Italy*], pg. XXIII.

<sup>37</sup> Encyclical *Quinquagesimo ante anno* of 12/23/29.

with cabinet ministers in the successive capitals (Turin, Florence, and Rome).

• *He participated with interest in some significant events of the new political current.* The Constitutions of Charles Albert in 1848 ushered in the election of deputies and senators and the inauguration of Parliament. “Don Bosco, who studied carefully the events of the day, went a few times to assist at the parliamentary discussions in the first months of its opening; and he understood right away the direction that things political would have taken with regard to the Church”.<sup>38</sup>

In the month of November, 1875, the government convoked the general elections. Bishop Fransoni reminded the people of the Christian meaning of voting Don Bosco took all the necessary steps to obtain the documents required to fulfill this duty, and he prudently tried to further the election of competent Catholics.<sup>39</sup> The majority of the Catholic deputies who were elected were his personal friends, and they often had recourse to him for counsel on certain difficult problems.<sup>40</sup>

• Just when the *Rattazzi law on the confiscation of the property of convents* was about to pass, Don Bosco published in the “Catholic Readings” the famous pamphlet on “The goods of the Church, how they are stolen and what are the consequences, with a short appendix on the chain of events in Piedmont”, which brought about strong reactions in Parliament<sup>41</sup> and was followed by letters to the king with the prophetic warning: “great funerals at court”.<sup>42</sup>

• *When Rome was occupied by the Piedmontese forces,* and Pius IX felt he might have to abandon it (with the consequent

<sup>38</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 3, 305.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 762-764.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 233, 234.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 239-244.

possible intervention by other military powers), Don Bosco saw to it that the Pope received the historic counsel: "Let the sentinel of Israel remain firm at his post".<sup>43</sup>

• *In the enthusiasm of the first missionary expedition to Latin America, we find an important aspect of his creative participation in the problems of the Nation, and it was accompanied by a curious proposal. The expansion of the migratory movement, which did not disturb the politicians too much, was instead of grave concern to Don Bosco, who wanted missionaries to care also for their fellow countrymen abroad.*

But the curious incident is that on March 16, 1876, Don Bosco wrote a memorandum to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Melegari, in which he suggested the unusual project — very bold indeed, and, as a matter of fact, utopian — of establishing to the south of Rio Negro, in Patagonia, a kind of colonial state for the emigrants.<sup>44</sup> "It is interesting to note that, twenty years later, the celebrated Zionist, Theodore Herzl, proposed in his turn that the great powers assign to the Israeli people the sovereignty either of Palestine or of Argentinian Patagonia".<sup>45</sup>

### *In the conflicts between State and Church*

• In the grave conflicts between State and Church, Don Bosco carried out very high and delicate tasks.

In 1865, and four years later in 1869, he intervened in the problem of the several vacant episcopal sees.<sup>46</sup>

In 1873 he was entrusted with the problem of the "temporality of Bishops", which had only partial success because of the opposition of the press and of Bismarck.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 10-66.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Biographical Memoirs*, 12, 111; 12, 623-624.

<sup>45</sup> G. SPALLA, *Don Bosco e il suo ambiente sociopolitico* [*Don Bosco and His Sociopolitical Environment*], LDC 1975, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Biographical Memoirs*, 10, 62 ff.; 10, 453.

<sup>47</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 10, 528 and 10, 550.

In 1878, at the death of Pius IX, Don Bosco was given charge to explore the dispositions of the Crispi government as to the guaranteeing of the safety of the conclave.<sup>48</sup>

The new Pope Leo XIII, soon after his election, commissioned Card Manning to consult Don Bosco on the possibility of a new effort to reach some understanding with the government.<sup>49</sup>

It was a moving scene when, some time later, Leo XIII, upon receiving Don Bosco in audience, told him: "Your life belongs to the Church. At this moment, Don Bosco, you are necessary. Take care of your health. It is the Pope who commands you to do it".<sup>50</sup>

We know that Don Bosco wanted to disentangle the difficulty of the *Exequatur* as well as the one concerning the participation of Catholics as deputies and senators to the clambers of the new Italian State. It was a thorny and intricate question, not only on account of the prohibition, "Neither elected nor electors", but also because he, as a Piedmontese, was regarded with certain diffidence in some influential circles. On that delicate problem, Don Bosco consulted many important persons and obtained from Father Sanguinetti, professor at the Gregorian University, an interesting study which in due time would bear fruit.<sup>51</sup>

### *Writer for youth and the people*

• But one of the particularly enlightened sectors in this regard is that of Don Bosco as a writer, at the service of the cultural uplifting of youth and the people.

"In this sector", wrote Peter Braidò, "one can easily pinpoint the central preoccupation of all his works and favorite methodologies: the focusing on the Christian religious motive,

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 481-482.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 501.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 98.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 469-475.

held to be also the source of moral and civil prosperity; a lively awareness of otherworldly realities...; but, conjointly, the appreciation of work and study, industriousness in the earthly city and in one's profession; and the will to bring into one's life, which is something serious, a note of joy. It is, in a sense, Don Bosco's synthetic formula for action, and it finds one of its typical expressions in the popular theatre to which he gave life".<sup>52</sup>

We must mention, among the most significant writings in this field, the *History of the Church*, *Bible History*, the *History of Italy*, the plan for a "Universal History", the original *Dialogues on the Decimal Metric System*, the pamphlet *Italian Oenologist* written to counteract a vine-growers' society founded by anti-Catholic sects, and so forth.

Don Bosco, moreover, had a keen sense of public opinion, and he carried on an intense promotion activity "on behalf of good morals and civil society"; he issued a famous circular, on the feast of St. Joseph, in 1885, on the spreading of the printed word: "This was one of the principal undertakings entrusted to me by Divine Providence", he wrote, "and you know that I had to shoulder it with untiring energy, in spite of my other countless occupations... I beg you and I plead with you not to overlook this most important part of our mission".<sup>53</sup>

I believe it opportune now to center our attention for a moment on the *History of Italy* and on the initiative of the *Salesian Bulletin*.

### *The History of Italy*

• The *History of Italy* offers an extraordinary abundance of cues for our reflection: "It is not only a book: it is a deed of his life and a trait of his character and thought; and in this

<sup>52</sup> *Scritti sul Sistema Preventivo nell'educazione della gioventù* [Writings on the Preventive System in the Education of Youth], Ed. La Scuola 1965, 553.

<sup>53</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 3, 479-489.

sense, more than a historiographic event, it has an enormous value".<sup>54</sup>

I invite you to read it again, together with the documented and keen "Introductory Discourse" of the unforgettable Father Albert Caviglia, who began by stating: "It is commonly agreed that, among Don Bosco's writings, the *History of Italy* is the masterpiece... It is his most mature and most powerful work; when it was first published (1865), it was said that it had no equal in Italy; it still remains so, because the Author infused into it a vitality which is higher and lasting in that it is not only cultural".<sup>55</sup>

Don Bosco's preoccupation was that of getting the people and youth to know the history of their country at a time of rising national consciousness. The one who was speaking well of Italy, in spite of the passions and anticlericalism of the *Risorgimento*, was a priest; and he was speaking of Italy as the fatherland of all, when national unity was only a distant future which not even all Italians looked forward to, and much less believed in.

It would seem impossible that a writer could have faced such a topic at such a crucial hour without some political attitude, without polemics against sectarians and theorists, without a certain political clericalism proper to the local Christian community; and yet, it is a book that avoided engaging in politics as such. Even when utilizing the works of Guelf or Ghibelline historiographers, Don Bosco knew how to distinguish and prescind: "Just as with the Ghibelline authors whom he follows, his sympathy is not adherence to certain forms of action (secret conspiracies), or to certain political views (like those of Mazzini and Gioberti), and it stops where Ghibellinism begins (anticlericalism and antipapacy); likewise, his Guelf sense of Italianism

<sup>54</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Discorso Introduttivo* [Introductory Discourse], p. XLVII.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. IX.

is tempered by his suprapolitical concept of the Papacy, and by his faith in Divine Providence".<sup>56</sup>

A proof of this superior value of the book is a somewhat emblematic chapter that deals with "The temporal goods of the Church and the power of the Supreme Pontiff". Father Caviglia called it "most important" because of its subject matter and the way it presented it: "Written in 1885, it is still valid and can even become much truer and sounder for those who understand it well, after the Concordat (1929)".<sup>57</sup> For he wrote on contemporary events and personages without betraying his high pedagogical, cultural and religious goal.

### *The Salesian Bulletin*

• The beginning of the *Salesian Bulletin* (1877), linked to the prevailing lay Catholic environment of the Cooperators and to the dimension of the Salesian mission which was already worldwide, has a characteristic socioreligious significance on account of the factors that determined it and the goals which it was meant to achieve.

Don Bosco was fully aware of the factors determining his choice. In the first years of his priesthood, he had dedicated himself to some journalistic activity. In 1848, faced with the flood of party and liberal press, he had engrossed himself, with other priests and laymen, in the foundation of the newspaper *L'Armonia* (Harmony).<sup>58</sup> Later, realizing that the newspaper was not popular, he conceived the idea of a periodical that would be better suited to the simple and less educated people, and he launched *L'Amico della gioventù* (The Friend of Youth); it reached only its sixty-first issue and it was combined, after eight months of life, with *L'Istruttore del Popolo* (The People's In-

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XXIII.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 549, Note 89.

<sup>58</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 3, 409.

structor), another newspaper on which Don Bosco collaborated for twenty months, but which he later abandoned.

In the years of the foundation of the Bulletin, there was an interesting political ferment among Catholic organizations, labor societies, and youth associations; there were even people who advocated a Catholic party of conciliative tendencies.

“What was going to be the way”, writes Peter Stella, “that Don Bosco would show to his Cooperators? Would they, too, be an association preparing to descend some day to join ranks with other legions in the political struggle against the liberal and anticlerical government? Would their organ, the *Salesian Bulletin*, be patterned after the style of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, the *Unità Cattolica*, or Father Albertario’s *Osservatore Cattolico*, the tribune of the most immoderate intransigence? There were, to be sure, various models, but Don Bosco chose the model of the socioreligious periodicals: “Far from being useless, religion is the very soul of well-being, of true progress and of civilization. ‘Civilization and religion are synonymous’, we read in the lead article of March, 1885. The very title of the periodical was meant to be programmatic, and it was the result of careful study”.<sup>59</sup>

Thus, the policy chosen for the Bulletin helps us to grasp even better the vocational choice made by Don Bosco for his Congregation. He himself used to say: “I would hope that the Bulletin, which is printed specifically to spread the knowledge of our goals, will be of great help to this effect and will present in their true perspective the main events as they take place in the Congregation”.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> P. STELLA, *Don Bosco e la Politica* [*Don Bosco and Politics*], Rome 1971, Duplicate, 12-13.

<sup>60</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 13, 288.

### Clear understanding of his vocation and clever adaptability

From Don Bosco's initiatives and attitudes, it does not seem difficult to draw some conclusions that can shed light on our problem. Never was he "uncommitted" to his mission. He wanted his Salesians to be truly "committed" to their vocation, but without putting on airs and in a simple style, with clarity of vocational position and with self-sacrificing dedication to the fulfilment of their chosen mission.

The qualifications for such a commitment are balance and work, without instability and without falling into a soft and easy life, without fanaticism and without fear — neither a conformism that always favors one's government, nor a revolutionary alignment.

The awareness of a definite pastoral choice was called by Father Caviglia Don Bosco's "*higher vocation*".<sup>61</sup> He felt himself strongly called by God to carry out this mission beyond his possible personal tastes and his eventual plans; he had to dedicate himself to it, by passing every obstacle and leaving behind all things, even good ones, that could in any way hinder its accomplishment. In order to be able to dedicate himself daily to his religious and civil objective, Don Bosco prescinded from many other things. His decision not to engage in politics as such, is to be interpreted in this line of thought. It was not a pragmatic strategy suited for the last century, as the provisional *non expedit* was; it was not a waiting for better times. It was a consequence of his vocation; it was a choice that was deeply rooted in a typical spirituality; and it was also an attitude of realistic efficiency, which led him to consider his pastoral task as absolutely indispensable for the new society, no matter what

<sup>61</sup> *Profilo storico* [Historical Profile], p. 99-100; *Discorso introduttivo* [Introductory Discourse], p. XLIX.

its de facto form of government would be. "Instead of filling the air with whining lamentations", he would say, "we should work to the very best of our powers so that things may proceed well".<sup>62</sup>

"Don Bosco lived for an idea and, if we may say so, lived the idea: the conquest of souls, the fulfillment of his motto. Here we see a true ideal synthesis, the focal point that brings together all the rays of that activity prodigiously extended in so many directions".<sup>63</sup>

Don Bosco lived his "higher vocation" in *an intelligent flexibility* according to the sociopolitical situations: "He was not an obstinate man who refused to accept the reality of facts".<sup>64</sup>

### *The politics of the Our Father*

This capacity for adaptation, or holy shrewdness for the purpose of being able to do good in accordance with the scope of his mission, constitutes his well-known "*politics of the Our Father*".

Writing in July of 1863 to the school Superintendent of Turin, he made his "profession of political faith" in this sense.<sup>65</sup> But the expression was born in a conversation with Pius IX, when the trend of the negotiations over the vacant episcopal sees was hardening on both sides. The Pope asked Don Bosco what kind of politics would enable him to disentangle himself from such an intricate problem, and he answered: "My politics is that of Your Holiness. It is the politics of the Our Father. In the Our Father, we pray every day that the Kingdom of our heavenly Father may come on earth and expand ever more, that its presence be ever more felt, in an ever more living manner,

<sup>62</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 13, 288.

<sup>63</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Profilo Storico* [*Historical Profile*], p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> A. CAVIGLIA, *Discorso introduttivo* [*Introductory Discourse*], p. XXXII.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Epistolario* [*Correspondence*], I, 273, 274.

always more powerful and glorious". And he insisted that priority be given above all to the good of the dioceses, and that there should be a study of the way in which it could be ensured.<sup>66</sup>

In summary, Don Bosco knew what his vocational commitment consisted of. He knew what his specific contribution to youth for the building of society should have been. He knew that Christ possesses an original role in history, that the Church has the only true religion, and that this religion is an indispensable ferment of progress. His politics of the Our Father consisted in having as the supreme criterion of his decisions and activities the *Da mihi animas* above and beyond any economic, social, cultural and political criterion, yielding his own personal tastes and even his rights if the situation were to require it, for the sole purpose of being able to stay with youth and announce to them the good news of the Kingdom of God.

#### *The article that was left out of the Constitutions*

Within this vocational framework we can understand why Don Bosco insisted on having an article on politics inserted in the Constitutions.

One of the unique features that was very dear to him and that he pondered very carefully regarding the religious form of our Society was that of safeguarding the civil rights of the members. And yet, three times he tried to introduce an article that would prohibit Salesians from getting involved in political activities.

The article is found in the margin, written in Don Bosco's own handwriting, of a sample copy of the Constitutions drawn up between 1863 and 1864: "It is an adopted principle, to be unalterably applied, that all members of this Society are to rigorously keep clear of all matters concerning politics. Therefore,

<sup>66</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 8, 593.

neither by spoken word nor by writings or books are they ever to take part in matters which even only indirectly involve them politically”.

Two things are to be noted here. First, the article is inserted in the paragraph dealing with the “ends” and not in the one dealing with the “form” of the Congregation; as though to emphasize that it concerns a vocational attitude derived from the very object itself of the Salesian mission. Second, it was taken for granted at that time that, in the Church, even priests could enter politics: it was an offshoot of the sacred outlook of Christianity and of the weight that clericalism carried in the social environment.

Now, all three times, the Roman Curia squelched the article and wanted it to be deleted.

Don Bosco would comment later: “I even wanted an article in our Constitutions that would prohibit any kind of involvement in political matters, and there was one in the hand-written copies; but when our Rules were submitted to Rome and the Society was approved for the first time, this article was removed by the Congregation appointed to examine our Rules.

“Then, in 1870, when it was a matter of definitively approving the Society and we had to submit the Rules once more for examination, I again — as if nothing had happened before — inserted this article, which said that the members were forbidden to enter into political matters. They cancelled it again. I, who was persuaded of the importance of this article, in 1874, the year in which it was a matter of approving the individual articles of the Constitutions, i.e., it was a matter of the very final approval, presenting the Rules to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, I introduced it again; and again it was cancelled. This time, reasons were given for the cancellation, and they wrote to me: ‘The article is being canceled for the third time. Although it might generally appear to be admissible, in these days it sometimes happens that a person’s conscience motivates him to enter into politics, for political matters are often in-

separable from religious matters. Therefore, an exclusion among good Catholics is not to be approved’.

“And so this article was definitively removed. And we may deal with political matters when it is useful or truly appropriate to do so; but, outside of these cases, let us always abide by the general principles of not meddling in political matters, and this will do us a world of good”.<sup>67</sup>

*“The greatest problem”*

Also in the first General Chapter (September 5 - October 5, 1877) Don Bosco returned to the subject of politics, considering it to be an important problem, and perhaps even “the most important problem”.

In view of the historical significance and importance which Don Bosco attached to the holding of the first General Chapter (“My desire is for this Chapter to mark a turning point in the Congregation”), we see once again how he wanted to insist on an aspect which he considered to be essential to his spirit and to his style of apostolate and which was to characterize his Congregation.

In the 24th conference, our Founder said the following: “Our purpose is to make known that one can give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, without ever compromising anyone; and this does not prevent us at all from giving to God what is God’s. In our day, they say that this is a problem; and, if you will, I would add that it is probably the greatest of all problems, but it has already been solved by our Divine Savior Jesus Christ.

“In practice, there are serious difficulties, it is true. Let us try to overcome them, not only by leaving the principle intact, but by furnishing reasons and proofs and testimonies that are

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 265.

dependent on the principle and that explain the principle itself. My main concern is this: try to find a practical way of giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, while giving to God what belongs to God...

By the grace of God and without saying a lot of words directly, we are going to give priority to this principle, and it is going to be the source of enormous good, both for civil as well as for ecclesiastical society".<sup>68</sup>

It seems quite certain, therefore, that Don Bosco was aware of the importance and extent of political activity, that he made a definite choice with regard to it, and wanted his Congregation to have a spirit of its own in this field.

### **Some conclusions for our guidance**

We can end this brief overview of "Don Bosco and politics" by pointing out a few summary conclusions which are not difficult to draw from his life, from his attitudes, and from his directives.

- *Don Bosco's fundamental option*, the basic explanation for the positions he took, the focal point of all the rays of his dynamism, is the pastoral charity expressed in the motto *Da mihi animas*. At the center of his entire personality is a priestly heart. The absolute value, for him, is the coming of the Kingdom of God. The values of politics, of the economic order, and of conjugal love are purely contingent: one can live a full life while in some way renouncing to them, not to depreciate them but to defend them from distortions and exaggerations.

He exercised an option, accompanied by a kind of asceticism and renunciation, that aimed at removing those elements that might slow him down and hold him back from his mission.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 288.

• Don Bosco's characteristic aspect, his historic personal trait, the convergence of his choices and his activities is what Father Albera called "*the gift of predilection for youth*", especially the poorest and most in need. "He did not take a step, he did not speak a word, he did not set his hand to any task that did not have for a goal the salvation of youth".<sup>69</sup> Even though he had talents and capacities for political involvement, he gave them up so as not to be impeded in his work for youth.

To Father Vespignani, who was all enthused over a certain Catholic activity linked to politics, he said: "That is not our spirit. All we want is for them to let us work among youth; therefore, let us keep out of politics. Wherever we are not busy working for youth, we are going to be out of place".<sup>70</sup>

For this reason, he will remain throughout the ages as the "Father and teacher of youth".

• *The historic insight of Don Bosco*, his vision of human unfoldment, his capacity for perceiving the overall course of events, is the long-range outlook of the Christian believer: he does not let himself be tossed about by the winds of the short-lived fads of the day, nor does he fail to recognize the future perspective of deeds accomplished.

Don Bosco's personal bent and great regard for history helped him to shed light on two great orbits of his social sensitivity: the necessity of religion for true progress, and the importance of youth and people in the building up of a new democratic society.

• *The ecclesial consciousness of Don Bosco*, his practical conception of religion, his pastoral criterion of action, is a supra-political and supracultural vision of Christianity, made concrete in the Church, which he loved to view as founded on Peter and

<sup>69</sup> M. RUA, *Lettere Circolari* [*Circular Letters*], letter of 1/29/1896.

<sup>70</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 13, 684.

the Apostles and their successors, the Pope and the Bishops: "Whatever work we do is little", he used to say, "when it is a question of the Church and the papacy".<sup>71</sup>

His was a vision rooted in the certainty of the living presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the conviction that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth, and in the awareness (and devotion) that Mary is the Help of Christians. In keeping with this conviction, he ventured into vast projects, framed clear decisions, took on difficult tasks, and even suffered misunderstandings and injustices.

- *The realism of Don Bosco's activity*, the sphere of his social contribution, his type of action, focuses on the cultural level of human advancement in terms of the education of youth and the working classes, and in terms of molding public opinion on great religious and social values. To this end, he would make use of all the classical means (the press, theatre, school, associations, and the like) under the impulse and with the yardstick of the burning pastoral charity that animated him.

He was an evangelizer who did not just teach Catechism or celebrate the liturgy, but who became embodied in the reality of youth and the working classes, by means of all those cultural avenues that served his purpose. His realism was one of socio-cultural preference, not of political activity.

- *The pastoral rule of Don Bosco*, his educative artistry, his genuine orthopraxy (if we may use the word), is that of the pastoral wisdom of the Preventive System: "not with blows, nor with violence, but with goodness".

The very name "Salesian" was chosen to underscore a spirit, a lifestyle, that is founded on the balance of common sense and not keyed to any party fanaticism, that is made up of human relations and dialogue and not of subversions and resistance, that

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 577.

is dedicated in a positive way to whatever is possible, and not to shout or denounce with sterile negative criticisms.

Following in the footsteps of St. Francis de Sales, Don Bosco devoted himself to emphasizing all the values of doing good, awakening a sense of optimism and of gratitude to God as Father, rather than waxing eloquent and harping against doing evil, thus appealing to the instincts of hatred and forgetfulness of God: "Do good and let people say what they will".<sup>72</sup>

Don Bosco was courageous, decisive, and even controversial, but never subversive, let alone violent. He was even a bit foolhardy, but according to charity and within the framework of his vocational choice: "Regarding those things that are to the advantage of endangered youth or that serve to win souls to God, I rush ahead even to the point of making a fool of myself".<sup>73</sup>

## 5. OUR COMMITMENT IN SOCIETY

We have now stored up a goodly amount of food for thought. The topic itself demanded somewhat of a panoramic view of the vastness and complexity of its contents. At this point, I think I can spell out — at least in terms of giving general directives — some guidelines for Salesian behavior.

They proceed, as you probably know already, not so much from a disciplinary concern, but from the desire to clarify, deepen, and defend the spirit and mission left us by Don Bosco as our spiritual legacy.

In the Congregation, we now need to decisively commit ourselves to our vocation and to give a new and vigorous impulse to our pastoral creativity. Unfortunately, certain deviations spring

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 286.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 662.

from a loss of identity, from a cooling off of enthusiasm, and from a lack of vision concerning the relevance and necessity of the Salesian vocation. The problem of politics comes on as a challenge and a critical yardstick for our genuine fidelity to the apostolic plan of Don Bosco and to his unflagging commitment to the betterment of society.

### **The pressing needs of today**

A formidable social, economic, cultural, and political crisis has exploded throughout the world, thus paving the way to a new society. Certainly there will be differences from country to country, but there are forewarnings in the air regarding the inevitable end of an entire socioeconomic system with its culture and its structures. Now, to build a new society, we need politics; but, as we have seen, politics is not an absolute and foundational value, but a derived value that needs, in turn, a groundwork.

Politics urgently needs culture and culture needs, in turn, religion and faith. Thus, to build the new society, other commitments — nonpolitical — are needed in order to prop up and assure sound and efficient politics.

The Salesian commitment is above and beyond political activity and resides in the sector of its religious and sociocultural foundations. In this area, there is a vacuum or a superficiality or an anachronism that is really tragic. The Council made it clear when it condemned the break between faith and daily life; and Paul VI reminded us of it when he spoke of the clash between the Gospel and culture. If we then reflect on the urgency of a commitment on the part of Christians to justice, as the Synod of Bishops described for us in 1971, we will find that many serious needs today are knocking on the door of our vocation. We cannot be strangers to them. Nor can we rest on the laurels of the past, or they will turn into funeral wreaths.

Many are the needs inviting us to a newness of religious

presence on the cultural level, with new inner attitudes, with a professionalism adapted to the times, with a rereading in depth of the Gospel in the light of the signs of the times.

How many demands for renewal on the part of the Christian are comprised in our embodying the Faith in everyday reality, in developing social sensitivity, in contributing to the advancement of the common good!

How many demands for renewal are comprised in cultivating our conscience and that of others in terms of the social function of economic goods and of their being destined for all men!

How many demands are comprised either in training people regarding civil rights and duties (i.e., being a good citizen today), or actively promoting justice and peace, or appreciating and realizing the necessity for politics, or democratically growing in the capacity to work together in a pluralistic climate!

There is, therefore, particularly for us Salesians, a need to be present with ever better qualifications to meet the needs of the times.

### **The Salesian commitment is a religious commitment**

Let us talk about commitment. This word, too, has a changing fate of its own. Today, when we speak of a “committed” priest, unfortunately we are not talking about the quality of his ministerial priesthood, but about his political leaning and class preference. By the same token, the adjective “uncommitted” denotes the middle-class individual who has “sold out to the system” and accommodated to the *status quo*.

A similar use of language denotes the climate of ‘politicization’ which we have criticized above: a climate in which everything is judged from the standpoint of political choice considered as the key value. Now, the word “commitment” is not clear in itself, but must be qualified.

To commit oneself means to take a definite stand, to choose a certain perspective, to accept a task with seriousness and sincerity, with a firm intention, that is, to carry it through to its ultimate consequences. That which qualifies a commitment will be the stand or the task chosen. In this way we can speak of various commitments and even of a religious commitment.

Indeed, it is this very commitment that we are interested in. We have a magnificent example of it in our Father Don Bosco.

Now, it is urgent for us Salesians to make the word “commitment” signify again our religious profession. If we read articles 73 and 74 of the Constitutions, we will find its meaning. Described therein is a fundamental option for a perspective of faith: evangelical radicalism in following Christ. There is the taking on of a task that requires all one’s energies and all one’s time: the mission among youth and the working classes. There is the choosing of a plan of life by which we gauge all our attitudes and activities: the Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

We have seen how Father Caviglia, in giving the historical sketch of our Founder, spoke of his religious commitment as of a “higher vocation”, whose focal point is the pastoral charity of *Da mihi animas*. Our religious profession commits us to do likewise. It is the most personal and mature act of our baptismal freedom. With it, the Salesian makes “one of the noblest choices open to the conscience of a believer”.<sup>74</sup> If we should empty such a choice of its meaning, we would be opening the door to the possibility of other commitments, substitutes for the religious commitment. The decline of religious commitment is the root of our evils. Just take a look at those confreres who have apparently substituted their religious profession with a political, or a scientific, or an affective commitment!

<sup>74</sup> *Constitutions*, Art. 73.

But what good is a religious commitment? Marxists perhaps might say that we are “high on drugs”, because of the notorious “opium of the people”. And yet, our religious vocation is a right which belongs to our charges. It is a gift, a charism, which the Lord has given to the Church for the good of all. Religion, rather than being an opium, is a basic reality and an indispensable value for social and political life; and the Salesian vocation is not a private privilege of each one of us, but a service which youth and the working class urgently need. To alter the nature of such a vocation would be to contribute in some way to aggravating the current crisis, because the contribution — however modest — of our Congregation to the human and Christian building up of society would be diminished or would be lacking.

*What did the Special General Chapter say?*

The Special General Chapter has helped us to fathom the meaning of the Salesian commitment in the present world; we are striving to assimilate its depth and to implement its guidelines. The forthcoming 21st General Chapter will give us an assessment of and an encouragement in the path we have already undertaken — a path of fidelity to Don Bosco and the times.

Among the topics examined thoroughly by the Special General Chapter, we find also the one about our contributing to justice in the world.<sup>75</sup> It is an aspect of our religious commitment.

The Chapter has clearly distinguished in this regard the above-mentioned two levels of political conception,<sup>76</sup> to point out that the Salesian “works principally through education... in a new cultural context: he is aroused not by contingent motives of political factions and of ideologies of the moment, but by the needs that the integral formation of the ‘perfect Christian and

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *Acts of the Special General Chapter*, Nos. 67-77.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 67.

honest citizen' places before the educator. The Church and the world ask us to form men capable of bringing justice into our world laden with grave problems".<sup>77</sup>

It is a question of a "religious commitment" welling up from "charity", in view of "a more profound communion among men".<sup>78</sup> "It is an element of our mission, which is accomplished by people consecrated to God with permanent reference to the Gospel", with the intention to "evangelize people, keeping in mind the collective evangelization of their environment".<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, it is not a political activity, but it is the practical manifestation of pastoral charity that symbiotically unite evangelization and human advancement. For Don Bosco, separating evangelization from the sociocultural demands of human advancement is the same as lacking practicality on the religious level and usefulness on the social level; but, for him, uniting human advancement to the perspectives of a political project leaves the way open to renouncing the primacy of faith and falsifying the spirit and mission of one's specific vocation.

It is worth reflecting in this regard on what the Acts of the Special General Chapter have to say: "Our commitment to justice:

has for its source the charity of Christ;

has for its motivation the demands of the Gospel;

has for its purpose cooperating with the mission of the Church;

has for its immediate effect cooperating in the manifestation of a particular aspect of Christ's work of salvation;

has for its style that of Don Bosco".<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 70.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 77.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Some unacceptable deviations**

I have already told you that, unfortunately, the decline of a genuine religious commitment on our part gives rise to some deviations. Then, too, the atmosphere which surrounds us brings with it dangers and errors (It is common today to breathe polluted air...). But we have to react.

It is not right to take refuge in an irenic relativism that would try to house fidelity and infidelity under the same roof, nor is it right to lump things together under the label of an open-ended pluralism.

Every country has its own characteristics; hence, it is on the local level that we should size up situations and attitudes in a concrete way. But I do not think it is out of place for me to enumerate here some deviations that tend to be widespread, a criticism of which might serve as a guiding light for all.

There are two signs, in opposition to each other, on which are hinged unacceptable attitudes, unbalanced postures, and errors. They are an irresponsible apolitical frame of mind and political radicalism. Let's take a look at each.

#### *An irresponsible apolitical frame of mind*

Under an irresponsible apolitical frame of mind, we find a plethora of attitudes, which are perhaps not all formidable in essence but which are certainly all very dangerous.

- *Superficiality and apathy concerning the demands of the signs of the times.* This is an attitude which kills imagination and apostolic creativity. It stands aside from the emerging culture and from its intense process of socialization. It makes a kind of ghetto out of local communities and their works, with a cultural mentality alien to the surrounding world. It does not stimulate one's spirit to make a valid effort at bringing the Gospel into a context of situations which has already become

radically different from that of the time — even though not too long ago — of one's own formation.

If Don Bosco had had such an attitude, he would not have been a historic leader, nor would he have gotten under way the vocation of our Congregation.

This static attitude is found at the very opposite end of the creative dynamism of Don Bosco: it was something unthought of in the newborn Congregation, and it is a mortal disease in the Congregation which has to be renewed. It is the beginning of that smug complacency which eats away at the pattern of a vocation.

- *The facile refuge of "anti-itis"*, whether expressed in a gut-level anticommunism or a neurotic antifascism. This is the attitude of the person who is looking for a substitute for his commitment to the difficult and thorny pursuit of growth in religious and cultural values; of the person who prefers to abdicate his responsibility by shifting the solution of difficulties to easy ideological schemes, without having to be committed any more to the hard job of educating people's consciences.

There are both likes and dislikes in the social and political field which are the fruit of irresponsibility, ignorance, and mental laziness. The same holds true for a certain belligerent self-righteousness worthy of a better cause. Such is the case of those who, instead of being constructively committed to announcing the Gospel, rail emotionally against certain positions they dislike. This lowers the level of one's religious vocation, because — as we already said — Christianity is not reducible to the order of sociopolitical projects, but transcends every ideology. Such an attitude, then, promotes a lack of discernment and nurses a veritable mass of myths and prejudices, when instead we know that faith is a leaven that ferments human reality all along its continual historical changes.

- *Finally, a pseudomystical spiritualism*, suspicious of the temporal order and heedless of its values, anchored to an in-

dividualistic conception of virtue, inclined to utopian interpretations, that escapes the reality of life and throws out of balance the wholesome formation of one's conscience.

### *Political radicalism*

Under political radicalism we find another plethora of attitudes, very violent and quite contagious, because they are dynamic and fashionable, and nurtured in some cases by a thick crowd of ideologues and architects of culture with easy access to the mass media.

- *The primacy of revolution.* The first imperative, for some people, is a class option which involves adopting the Marxist manner of operating and actively collaborating for the triumph of the sociopolitical scheme which inspires it.

According to this drastic choice, it is customary to speak not so much about the poor in the Gospel sense but, rather, about the "oppressed", the "exploited", inasmuch as they make up a class struggling against a given socioeconomic system. Class consciousness, thus, turns out to be an essential dimension and a prime value for judging everything, even the Church and the sense of faith.

Those who are most committed along these lines have made an ideologic justification for themselves out of this explicitly political choice. They affirm the primacy of the temporal order as a qualitative jump which upsets the traditional view of society; they set up historical materialism as an interpretative criterion of everything (even Revelation), and practically leave neither space nor time for the inspiration — indispensable for a Christian — of the Holy Spirit. Such a view ends up by excluding in practice the specific character of faith, with readily discernible consequences.

It is not my intention to analyze here the doctrinal significance of a system that is so extremist. But I see clearly that the conclusions lead to a concrete choice of political activity, in

radical disharmony with everything that Don Bosco has left us for spiritual legacy.

That is why — though it grieves me to say so — I am forced to say that any confrere who persists in thinking and acting this way should, in all fairness, leave a Congregation which no one is obliged to belong to, but in which there is a different fundamental option and a commitment that is decidedly not political but religious. In fact, to take on such a revolutionary attitude would signify as a logical consequence that such a confrere is no longer living the spirit or the mission of Don Bosco.

- *A pseudo-pastoral methodology of denunciation* is the attitude of those whose first element in forming consciences involves a criticism of the Marxist view of society and of the world, and who put off proclaiming Christ and the mystery of faith to a later stage, or who present Him as a messiah who subverted the established sociopolitical order.

Even supposing that the criticism leveled at society is basically just (which, of course, is quite problematic and hard to establish), the fact remains that, instead of fostering goodwill in a climate of love, the only thing one succeeds in is arousing a growing desire for subversion and actually fomenting the temptation to hate.

Such a methodology, which I do not hesitate to call pseudo-pastoral, often originates in a concealed political choice which gets the upper hand on a genuinely apostolic commitment. One ends up in this way confusing evangelization with the socioeconomic aspect of social liberation.

Here too, we are a long way off from the Preventive System of Don Bosco and from the concrete guidelines of the Magisterium of the Church.

- *A practical ecclesial dissent* is the attitude of some people who prescind from the guidelines of the Magisterium, even with occasional and varied manifestations of public contestation. Their

behavior, in effect, disregards the “gift of enlightenment of the Ministry” of the Pope and the Bishops.

At the roots of this attitude — to which Don Bosco was a complete stranger — we usually find a sociological interpretation of the mystery of the Church which safeguards neither its divine institution nor its distinction from the world, nor its specific mission of evangelization. According to this perspective, the “people of God” become simply the people, and the community assembly substitutes for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rendering meaningless any institutional mediation.

Also this attitude seems to be in outright contradiction to Don Bosco’s method of operating and completely alien to the clearest Salesian tradition.

### **Six criteria for guiding Salesian activity**

After making painful allusion to these very dangerous deviations, it would be good, before concluding, for me to point out to you some criteria that may keep our activity on a steady course. I will try to do so in a sort of concise way, which will leave room for your own reflections.

#### *1. Being realistic about our mission*

We are apostles of youth and of the working classes, who represent — as we said in the beginning — the avant-garde of the exodus to the new society. The “great personage” in Don Bosco’s dream, whom the Lord sends us to serve, is the world of our charges. They claim our attention with their problems, with their sensitivity to the signs of the times, with the mentality of the culture emerging today. We have to build a bridge leading to that world. The boys, of course, will not preach the Gospel to us; they are the one to whom we must carry the message of salvation which Jesus Christ gives to us through His Church.

A first criterion for guiding the renewal of the Salesian commitment should, therefore, be that of our having a living and intelligent presence in the sociocultural world of today, particularly in the portion assigned to us, namely, the "little ones and the poor". No aloofness, no naive subservience, but a ministering presence — in order to cooperate with the mighty effort of believers, to heal among youth the tragic breakdown between Gospel and culture.

## *2. Being of one accord with the Church's option*

Another guideline for our action is: to be sincerely of one accord with the option made by the Church.

First of all, the Church has opted decisively and invariably for Christ, her Lord, as a bride for her bridegroom. Here is the absolute primacy of love and of truth that illumines her entire mission and guides her activities.

But, against the background of this basic option, there are pastoral choices which the Church makes in different historical situations.

Coming to grips with the crucial times in which the world lives, the Church has made her concrete choice in the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. In that choice, she has turned toward, not away from the man of today; she has looked upon him with the eyes of God, after having considered herself as a sacrament that must be of service in his salvation. The Council wanted her to have a presence that is useful and liberating in the cause of human advancement; a presence, however, that is made concrete in a commitment of a religious nature.

To be of one accord with such a choice, one must be deeply convinced that religion is not a superstructure, but a substantial driving force of human life. We must therefore rediscover the true significance of religion; we must acknowledge its significance to be truly basic and humanizing. Situated along the same lines, of course, is the dynamic and omnipresent concept which Don

Bosco had of religion. Therefore, instead of letting ourselves be overwhelmed by a secularism that attempts to give politics an all-embracing and supreme significance, we too will commit ourselves with the Church and in the Church to reappraise the basic value and social usefulness of the Christian faith.

### 3. *Accepting the demands arising from conversion*

If uncharted problems have cropped up today and if certain sensitivities and human values have developed, we will have to study them and adapt ourselves to their needs.

“It is not enough”, says Paul VI, “to remember principles, to affirm intentions, to point out blatant injustices, and to utter prophetic denunciations. These words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied in each individual by a deep awareness of one’s responsibility in the face of injustices, unless one is convinced at the same time that each person shares in it, and that a personal conversion is needed first. This basic humility will rid action of any harshness and sectarianism; it will also prevent discouragement in the face of a task that seems enormous”.<sup>81</sup>

What we need, then, is the personal and community witness of a real participation in the building of a new Society.<sup>82</sup>

### 4. *Always starting out from the Salesian vocation*

Our activity, therefore, must always start out from the perspective of the Salesian vocation. Religious profession is the act that characterizes our type of sharing in the Church’s option.

The Salesian commitment has, therefore, a true primacy in all our activities: we cannot lose our identity, we cannot take on a type of activity that, even though it be Christian, is characteristic of other vocations. In particular, we must not take on

<sup>81</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens*, No. 48.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *Acts of the Special General Chapter*, No. 70.

the commitment which is proper of the lay person dedicated to political activity.

There may even be among the confreres a distinct mentality, a different way of looking at events; but the criterion that guides our pastoral decisions and our particular postures, community ones above all, will be the pastoral perspective of Don Bosco's apostolic plan: "To be, in a Salesian way, the signs and bearers of God's love to young people, especially the poorest".<sup>83</sup>

### 5. *Taking direction from the Shepherds*

We must remember, then, that a pastoral commitment in a Salesian way takes its direction from the Shepherds.

In the plurality of sociopolitical situations, "it is up to the Christian communities to analyze objectively the situation proper to their country, to shed on it the light of the changeless words of the Gospel, to draw principles for reflection, criteria for judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. It is up to the Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Bishops in charge, and in dialogue with other Christians and with all men of goodwill, to determine the choices and commitments called for, to bring about the social, political, and economic changes that appear urgent and necessary in many cases".<sup>84</sup>

Therefore, all the confreres should see that they get in tune with the local church — national, regional, and diocesan — to receive directives from the Bishops and, in particular, from the Pope.

Our Constitutions time and again emphasize adherence, so characteristic of Salesian tradition, to the Magisterium of the Church.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> *Constitutions*, Art. 2.

<sup>84</sup> *Octogesima Adveniens*, No. 4.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. *Constitutions*, Arts. 44 and 128; cf. also Art. 6, 33, 55.

## 6. *Becoming intensely dedicated to education*

“Our first responsibility”, says the Special General Chapter, “concerns the mass of young people who need an open and complete education: understanding of social activity, knowledge of the Church’s doctrine, formation in civic, social and political responsibility, initiation into a progressive commitment of concrete service”.<sup>86</sup>

Since educative action must be grafted onto the surrounding reality, the Province or the respective Provincial Conference in each country would do well to promote a program of action and give concrete directives in order to spell out the Salesian educative action in this field, in imitation of the creativity, boldness and tirelessness of Don Bosco.<sup>87</sup>

### **The most urgent areas of educative action**

In this perspective, let us consider briefly what the most urgent areas of our educative action are, i.e.: the field of culture, the world of work, the activity of Christian liberation.

- *The field of culture.* It is principally in this area that the future of man is prepared and the recognition of man is guaranteed by man himself. We witness today a true democratization of culture, not in the pejorative sense of its cheapening, but in the positive sense of building up in people an awareness of it and of the roles to be played by it. To be left out today of a cultural refining process would be to betray the future.

The chief concern of the Christian for the betterment of social life lies basically in the cultural work of synthesis between values of faith and values of temporal order.

<sup>86</sup> *Acts of the Special General Chapter*, No. 68.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, No. 68, 69.

Culture is so very basic that there cannot be any good politics without it. Here, then, is a privileged area for a renewed presence of the Salesian commitment.

- *The world of work.* We must recognize that work, considered in the overall historical meaning it has assumed in the current period of industrialization, has become a kind of lever of the entire social life: it is changing the complexion of society, its cultural garments, its balances of coexistence, and its prospects for the future. We have entered an era of technology. At last, as Father Chenu has remarked, “we are coming out of the neolithic age”. We have to be aware of this and to realize that work lies at the origins of a new civilization, mainly in terms of the working classes and so many young people.

This new world of work — it is well to remember — was born and brought up, unfortunately, almost totally apart from the religious sphere; and this is having an enormous influence also on political life.

The pastoral originality of Don Bosco and the essential part played by the Salesian Coadjutor Brother in the mission of the Congregation call for, today more than ever, a special educative commitment particularly in this difficult field.

- *The activity of a Christian liberation.* This is an especially timely aspect in the formation of the good citizen. We know that “liberation” is a rather well-worn subject today, but we are confronting it in the light of the secure guidelines of the Special General Chapter.<sup>88</sup>

The capacity for criticism of social injustices and the courage to struggle in the cause of justice have now become indispensable elements for a Christian education in politics; and this requires a lucid faith and a knowledge of the Church’s social

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, No. 61.

doctrine in order for a person not to be taken in by class-conflict views and violence-inspired solutions.

It is a fact that conflict is always present in social life. Daily experience and faith itself tell us that personal and collective existence is interlaced in a context of struggle, to such a point that courage and patience are necessary virtues of a good citizen, and the supreme expression of religious witness is martyrdom. Who could imagine the life of Jesus Christ without struggle, without courage, and without patience?

If in the present time of transition and heavy social injustice, society were not to analyze its situation and engage in a struggle to overcome injustice, it would appear dismal and short-sighted. On the other hand, if it were marked by wholesome criticism and righteous conflict, it could not remain apathetic about its ills.

We will have to educate people, therefore, to be able to struggle for justice in a Christian way.

But social struggle is not to be exalted to the point of identifying it with the radical conflict between good and evil. It is proper of a materialistic outlook to secularize and politicize the basic disagreement between grace and sin. Social struggle is not the conflict between Christ and Satan.

Every citizen, in fact, is a person and, as such, should not be reduced to his political choice only and to his class standing. Even if he were a political opponent or a beneficiary of unjust structures or even actually guilty of wrongdoing, a citizen should never be equated with the devil and attacked as such.

Education in politics, therefore, must take into account the social fact of conflict; it requires formation in the awareness of the objective analysis of situations, in clear principles, in real possibilities, in the knowledge of projects, and in means and ends; and it requires patient exercise to build up one's capacity for competent participation, and to build up solidarity, constancy, courage and sacrifice.

Salesian educative activity "must be liberating not only in

its objectives but also in its methods, with continual appeal to the responsibility and personal participation of the person being educated”.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusion

Dear sons, we have taken up the issue of politics as something that today concerns and challenges our Salesian vocation. It is a delicate subject. We have felt the necessity to give the exact meaning of a term that now has too many connotations and is therefore, to say the least, ambiguous. We then made a brief overview of the entire life of Don Bosco, and were no doubt amazed by the intensity and broad scope of his initiatives on behalf of society, and by his clear choice of vocation. At the end, we too found ourselves confronted with a vast and precise responsibility: if politics is in need of cultural and religious underpinnings, then the vocation of the Salesians of Don Bosco will be a generous, though limited, pastoral commitment programmed to help meet that need.

We were born in the Church to work together for the renewal of society at a time that ushered in democratic values. We have on that account and precisely as a Congregation, a political responsibility! But this adjective which we use to qualify our responsibility as shepherds of youth and of the working classes denotes an aspect derived from the religious commitment that is at the root of our all-embracing choice.

It is indeed a political responsibility, but understood according to the broad meaning we have described above and therefore not reducible only to what is commonly called “political activity”. On the contrary, engaging in political activity would mar the sense of this responsibility of ours. We can paraphrase the

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 61.

clear-cut expression of Paul VI speaking at the end of the Council: “We turn to, but do not stray into” political reality.

“He who observes well this prevailing interest of the Council for temporal human values”, said the Pope, “cannot deny that such interest is due to the pastoral character that the Council has chosen almost as its program, and must recognize that this same interest is never detached from the most authentic religious interest. Let no one, therefore, use the word ‘useless’ to describe a religion like Catholicism, which, in its most perceptive and effective form such as its conciliar form, declares itself to be wholly in favor and at the service of man.

“The Catholic religion and human life thus reaffirm their convergence into one sole human reality: the Catholic religion is for humanity; in a certain sense, it is the life of humanity”.<sup>90</sup>

The entire Salesian commitment is directed to this “alliance” and “convergence” between religion and human life, between faith and politics. To better the chances for a more equitable human life, we are working to bring faith into it more and more and to inject the life-giving Gospel into its social and cultural activities.

Dear sons, I think I have furnished you with abundant material for reflection, so that you may also examine thoroughly that part of the subject proposed for study at the next General Chapter: “To witness and proclaim the Gospel: two needs of Salesian life among youth”. May our Father illumine us and bless us all.

Let us call upon our Mother the Help of Christians to help us be faithful to our precious vocation, in the birth of which she cooperated maternally. Don Bosco, after 1860, chose to honor the Virgin and to spread her devotion under the title of “Help of Christians”, precisely in order to emphasize her social media-

<sup>90</sup> PAUL VI, *Omelia alla chiusura della 9ª Sessione Conciliare* [Homily at the Closing of the 9th Conciliar Session], 12/7/65.

tion on behalf of the pilgrim Church, its Shepherds and people. "Our times are so trying", he said to would-be Cardinal Cagliero, "that we really need the Blessed Mother to help us keep and defend the Christian faith".<sup>91</sup> How much relevance for us too, in such a choice!

Let us be enthusiastic and tireless bearers of a religious inheritance that is so useful for today's society.

Cordially yours in Don Bosco,

FR. LOUIS RICCERI  
*Rector Major*

<sup>91</sup> *Biographical Memoirs*, 7, 334.

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### III. THE 21st GENERAL CHAPTER

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*With this issue of the Acts of the Superior Council we begin this new section which will deal with the 21st General Chapter (CG 21). It will bring to the confreres notice whatever concerns this important event of the Congregation, beginning with the celebration of the preparatory Provincial Chapters.*

Reports from the Provinces on the first steps being taken in preparation for Provincial Chapters are beginning to arrive at the Secretariat of the Moderator of GC 21. Several Provincials have already held meetings and gatherings with their Councils and Rectors in order to study how to plan and organize their work. In some Provinces the Provincial Chapter Moderator and the Preparatory Commissions have already been nominated, and the deadlines for the various stages of development have been set.

Moreover, at the Secretariat some letters requesting explanations or submitting particular problems have likewise been received. On this matter, the same Secretariat wishes to remind all Provincials and confreres that it is always at their service for consultation on anything regarding the GC 21.

During this period of preparation we are confident that each confrere will take it on himself to once again read most attentively the Special Issue of the Acts of the Superior Council, particularly the letter — “a personal letter” — of the Rector Major. Here we would like to quote briefly from it to better underscore his thought.

“We need *courage* first of all,” Father Ricceri wrote, “the courage to tackle our work with that typically Salesian élan which is indispensable if we are to move in the right direction with the process of renewal in our Congregation.”

“Then we need *strength* — if we are honestly to recognize what-

ever mistakes may have been made, and if we are to come up with the right corrective measures for any deviations or false and harmful interpretations we may have fallen into."

"It is therefore necessary for all of us to have recourse to *prayer*. All together we should create in every community an atmosphere of prayer — that genuine prayer in which with simple and deep faith, with humility and love we talk with God and listen to his Word as he manifests his Will when we are well disposed as individuals and communities" (ASC 283, pp. 8-9).

A few weeks after the Rector Major's letter the Vatican daily *L'Osservatore Romano* published an article by Card. Eduardo Pironio on the significance and importance of a General Chapter. The author's acknowledged competence in this field and the high sense of responsibility that moved him to write make his article particularly interesting for our Congregation at this juncture. This issue of the Acts reports it in full in Section 9, Ecclesiastical Magisterium, for individual and communal reflection.

#### IV. COMMUNICATIONS: NEW PROVINCIALS

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##### **New Provincials**

The Rector Major nominated to the Office of Provincial the following confreres:

- Fr. Rodolf BORSTNIK for Ljubljana (Yugoslavia),
- Fr. Tony D'SOUZA for Bombay (India),
- Fr. Mieczyslaw KACZMARCZYK for Krakow (Poland),
- Fr. Fernando LEGAL for São Paulo (Brazil),
- Fr. Georges LINEL for Lyon (France),
- Fr. Milan LITRIC for Zagreb (Yugoslavia),
- Fr. Alfredo ROCA for Barcelona (Spain),
- Fr. Santiago SÁNCHEZ for Seville (Spain),
- Fr. Stanislaw STYRNA for Łódź (Poland).

Besides, the Rector Major reconfirmed in the Office of Provincial  
Fr. Karl OERDER for Cologne (Germany).

## V. SALESIAN MISSIONS CENTENNIAL

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### 1. The 106th missionary expedition

The Missions Department is completing the list of the missionaries who will make up the 1976 expedition. It is also organizing a Special Training Course for the new missionaries, that will begin on the 10th of October at the Generalate and will conclude on the 5th of November at Avigliana (Turin). The Farewell Ceremony will be held on the 7th of November at Valdocco.

According to the latest data, the 106th missionary expedition is made up of 45 confreres (17 priests, 10 Coadjutor Brothers and 18 clerics), coming from 11 countries and going to 17.

### 2. Appeals and prospects for the future

Even though a fairly good number of confreres is being sent on the missions this year, nevertheless some mission Provinces and Dioceses keep reminding us of their severe shortage of personnel. In particular:

— the Campo Grande (Brazil) Province is sending out persistent calls for helpers in parish work, for teachers at university level and for missionaries among the Bororos and Chavantes;

— the Manaus (Brazil) Province needs confreres who could work on the missions among the natives, in parishes, in training houses and in technical schools;

— the Paraguay Province wants personnel trained in catechetics, mass media, technical schools, and mission work in the Chaco.

Persistent heart-rending appeals for help are being received by the Rector Major from several African bishops. Unfortunately, to their requests for any kind of help and to the many others from our bishops and Provincials the only possible answer at the present time is: We are sorry, *operarii pauci*, the workers are few!

With regard to the 1977 expedition, the confreres who volunteer for the missions are kindly requested to leave it to the Superiors, at least in the majority of cases, to determine which missions they should be assigned to. It has happened all too often that personal preferences have not coincided with the more pressing needs of the Church or Congregation.

### **3. A book on our missions**

The Missions Department has recently distributed several copies of Fr. Eugenio Valentini's book, *Le missioni salesiane oggi* (The Salesian Missions Today) to all the houses in Italy, to all the Provincials and also to the Salesian Sisters. This small book contains a wealth of information on the mission districts entrusted by the Holy See to the Salesians. We hope to soon get ready a second edition that will also cover our missions outside the districts already considered.

### **4. The celebration of the Centennial**

A steady flow of consoling reports on Missions Centennial celebrations either already held or programmed for the near future is pouring into the Missions Department. In order to get a complete picture of these special events, the Provincials will soon be invited to submit to the same Department a full report of all the Centennial activities and celebration held in their Provinces.

The closing of the Centennial is, of course, a splendid opportunity to make boys — and grownups as well — more deeply aware of, and concerned about, our Salesian missionary activity.

For the closing ceremony of the Centennial the Rector Major will travel to Argentina. There he will be the special guest at a series of celebrations that will involve not only our Congregation, but also the local Church and the civil authorities.

The Missions Department Councillor, Fr. Bernard Tohill, will close the Centennial in Poland with similar celebrations and will

later preside at the Farewell Ceremony of the departing missionaries in Valdocco, Turin.

## 5. Some news items from the missions

On July 15, 1976 Fr. Rudolf Lunkenbein, Rector of the Meruri mission in *Mato Grosso* (Brazil), was murdered in the same mission house by some individuals who were opposing the return of illegally-occupied lands to the Bororos. One of the Indians who had rushed to the Father's defence, was killed with him. The 37-years old German-born priest had been working on the Meruri mission since 1959. May the Lord grant rest to his soul, comfort to his family, and new men, as capable and self-sacrificing as he was, to the Mato Grosso Province. (For additional information see the Necrology section in this issue.)

Our work in Beirut, *Lebanon*, has been temporarily suspended on account of the present situation and of another tragic event. With deep sorrow we learned of the death of Fr. Aldo Paolini, victim of an explosion during one of the many bombings of the city, on the school playground while he was talking to some students and past pupils. Another confrere, Fr. James Amateis, was wounded.

In mid-July the last of the ten foreign-born confreres was expelled from *Vietnam*. Now it is entirely up to the 120 young Vietnamese confreres to carry on Don Bosco's work in their country.

For over 18 months we have had no correspondence contacts with the ten confreres in *Timor*. We know, however, that they are in good health and are allowed to carry on their work. The Missions Department Councillor hopes to be able to get in touch with them very soon. In fact he will try to visit them by the end of this year during a visitation to Salesian missions in Asia.

The missionary work in *Mozambique* is meeting with severe hardships. It is feared that more confreres will be expelled in the coming months.

## 6. Solidarity Fund (20th report)

### a) CONTRIBUTING PROVINCES (March 15 - September 10, 1976)

#### AMERICA

Bolivia	Lit.	1,700,000
Brazil, Campo Grande		500,000
Brazil, Sao Paulo		1,000,000
United States, New Roohelle		773,750
United States, San Francisco		8,950,000

#### ASIA

India, Calcutta		1,000,000
India, Madras		1,500,000
Japan		3,570,000
Middle East		450,000
Thailand, Province		200,000
Thailand, Surat Thani		500,000

#### EUROPE

Italy, Generalate		150,000
Italy, Motherhouse		500,000
Italy, Central (San Tarcisio)		50,000
Italy, Lombard-Emilian		510,000
Italy, Venetian-St. Mark		400,000
Italy, Venetian-St. Zeno		500,000
Spain, León		3,013,725

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<i>Total</i>		25,267,475
<i>Cash on hand</i>		5,719
<i>Total amt. for distribution</i>		25,273,194

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b) DISBURSEMENT (March 15 - September 10, 1976)

AFRICA

Central Africa: for 5 mini-projects	1,000,000
Gabon: for native vocations	600,000
Madagascar: for catechetical aids to a Sister	76,807

AMERICA

Argentina, Buenos Aires: for mass media equipment	950,000
Argentina, Bahia Blanca: for catechetical aids	475,000
Bolivia, La Paz: for the trade school in El Alto	600,000
Brazil, Manaus: for the aspirantate in Ananindeua	1,000,000
Brazil, Belem-Sacramenta: for a handicraft center	600,000
Brazil, São Paulo: for the Theologate library	237,000
Central America: for the earthquake victims in Guatemala from Japan	3,570,000
Central America: for the earthquake victims in Guatemala from Verona	500,000
Chile: for the « Milk for Children » program	700,000
Ecuador, Cuenca: for the Youth Center	1,000,000
Ecuador, Paute: a vehicle for the pupils of the agricultural school	1,000,000
Ecuador, Mendez, Sevilla Don Bosco: for a vehicle	1,000,000
Mexico, Guadalajara: for the Youth Center supplies	1,000,000

ASIA

India, Calcutta: for the poor boys at Azimgunj	600,000
India, Gauhati: to buy a piece of land for a poor family at Imphal	560,000

India, Gauhati: to buy a vehicle for Doomni	1,500,000
India, Gauhati: to irrigate fields at Doom Doma	1,500,000
India, Madras: for a communal kitchen	1,000,000
Korea, Seoul: for poor boys at the Youth Center	1,000,000
Philippines, Tondo: for the slum-dwellers	1,000,000
Thailand, Surat Thani: to buy boats for poor fishermen	800,000

EUROPE

Italy, Lombard-Emilian: for a pastoral need at Codigoro	500,000
Italy, Venetian-St. Mark: for the earthquake victims in Friuli	1,000,000
Yugoslavia, Zagreb: for the vocation aposto- late	500,000

<i>Total</i>	<u>25,268,807</u>
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<i>Cash on hand</i>	<u>4,387</u>
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FUND as of September 10, 1976

<i>Income</i>	471,230,901
<i>Disbursement</i>	471,226,514
<i>Cash on hand</i>	<u>4,387</u>

## VI. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

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With all the members of the Superior Council present, the months of July and August were spent preparing for the 21st General Chapter, both with regard to the choice of a study topic, and the consideration of the nature and modalities of the revision of the Constitutions and Regulations, and finally the organization of the general program (Italian: *Iter generale*) of the preparation itself. The conclusions of this lengthy work were published in the Special Issue of the Acts of the Superior Council (No. 283), which Fr. Ricceri made available to every confrere.

Moreover, during the same period of time the Superior Council heard the reports of the Regional Councillors on the Provinces they had recently visited, namely the reports of:

- Fr. Antonio Mélida on the León (Spain) Province;
- Fr. Giovenale Dho for the Lombard-Emilian Province (Italy);
- Fr. Giovanni Raineri on the Novarese-Helvetian Province (Italy-Switzerland);
- Fr. José Vincente Henriquez A. for the Quito (Ecuador) Province;
- Fr. Juan Edmundo Vecchi for the São Paulo (Brazil) Province;
- Fr. Luigi Fiora for the Motherhouse in Valdocco-Turin;
- Fr. Luigi Fiora for the Central Province (Italy);
- Fr. John Ter Sohure for the Central African Province;
- Fr. Bernard Tohill for the Roman-Sardinian Province (Italy).

## VII. DOCUMENTS

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*During the month of August the GC 21 Moderator, Fr. Raphael Farina, forwarded to all the Provincials the following documents dated July 20, 1976:*

### **1. Criteria for determining to which Province a confrere belongs:**

*1. The original membership of a confrere in a certain Province is the one that was clearly and definitively established at the time of his first religious profession.*

*In practice, such membership derives from one of the following situations:*

1.1. when the confrere made the aspirantate and the novitiate, and was admitted to the first profession in that Province;

1.2. when the confrere made the aspirantate and was admitted to the novitiate in that Province, even though for legitimate reasons he was sent to another Province to complete the novitiate;

1.3. when, even if he spent his first period of formation in inter-provincial aspirantates, his membership in a certain Province was clearly and definitely expressed from the start;

1.4. when prior to his first profession the confrere was assigned to a certain Province other than the one where he made his aspirantate and novitiate.

*2. A confrere's original membership in a certain Province is not lost in the following cases:*

2.1. when the confrere is sent elsewhere to complete his studies;

2.2. when he is « loaned » to another Province on a temporary basis, following an agreement between the two Provincials, according to art. 140 of the Regulations. (It is strongly recommended that such agreement between the two Provincials be clearly spelled out

in all its terms and conditions in a written document to be kept in the archives of the two Provinces concerned);

2.3. when the confrere is sent to another Province for a period of convalescence or rest, even if the period were extended beyond the original limits;

2.4. when the confrere is sent to another Province subsequently to a nomination, or the approval or a nomination, made by the Rector Major.

In all these cases, the confrere's continued membership in his original Province means that, upon the cessation of the reasons which justified his absence from it, he has the right as well as the duty to return to his Province, unless the Rector Major intervenes once again with a contrary decision. It is obvious that, as long as the confrere resides in another Province, he juridically and religiously depends on the Provincial of his residential Province, save particular agreements between the two Provincials in special and exceptional cases.

*3. A confrere's original membership in a certain Province is lost in the following cases:*

3.1. when the confrere definitively changes Province with the written authorization of the Rector Major according to art. 14 of the Regulations;

3.2. when a new Province is erected or a "Visitatoria" or Special Delegation is set up, or when a house with its personnel passes to another Province, according to what is stated in the documents governing such juridical acts;

3.3. when a confrere is sent on the missions through the Central Mission Office, not temporarily as a volunteer, but permanently as a missionary. In this case he in practice is definitively changing Province on the authorization of the Rector Major in accordance with art. 140 of the Regulations.

*4. Norms for special cases*

4.1. The missionaries who permanently return to their native countries because of sickness or advanced age — who are therefore

unable to carry on their regular work or are able to do so to a limited degree — are assigned by the Rector Major to the Province which he deems more suited for their conditions. The Province to which they are assigned will surround them care and affection (Const. 121), while the Province from which they come will feel obligated to discharge those duties that charity and justice impose on it even from the economic point of view.

4.2. A transfer from one Province to another, which has taken place without the prescribed form or of which there is no clear documentary evidence, is to be considered definitive (and therefore accompanied by the consequent loss of membership in the original Province) after ten full consecutive years of residence in the other Province.

4.3. Cases contested by either the confrere or the Provincials concerned will be referred to the Rector Major for a solution.

## **2. Criteria for reckoning the number of confreres in a Province both with regard to the number of the Delegates of the confreres to the Provincial Chapter (Reg. 151, 3) and the number of Provincial Delegates to the General Chapter (Const. 156, 7)**

*1. The following confreres must be reckoned among the members of a certain Province:*

1.1. the confreres belonging to that Province since their first profession and residing in it at the time of the counting;

1.2. the confreres belonging to that Province subsequently to a definitive transfer from another Province and residing in it at the time of the counting;

1.3. the confreres belonging to that Province subsequently to a temporary transfer and residing in it at the time of the counting;

1.4. the confreres belonging to that Province for anyone of the reasons mentioned above at Nos. 1.1, 1.2 1.3, and temporarily absent for reasons of studies or health care or special work assignment ex-

pressly mandated by their original Provincials and previously agreed upon by the Provincials of the places where the work is to be carried on. (This is the official interpretation rendered by the Rector Major with his Council of the words of Reg. 151.2 referring to the "confreres temporarily and legitimately absent from the Province". Paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article of the Regulations must therefore be applied in the light of this interpretation);

1.5. the confreres who, having incurred the crime of "apostasy from religion" (Can. 644, collated with Can. 2385) and having returned to the community, live regular community life, even though they are deprived of both active and passive voice, are reckoned in the number of confreres in the Province.

*2. The following confreres must not be reckoned among the members of a certain Province:*

2.1. the confreres who do not belong to it either originally or subsequently by reason of a definitive or temporary transfer;

2.2. those residing in it for reasons of study or health care or a temporary work assignment expressly mandated by the Provincial of the Province to which they belong (see 1.4 above);

2.3. those who obtained the Indult of exclaustation for its duration, or presented a formal request for it;

2.4. those who presented the request for reduction to the lay state (priests or deacons), for secularization or dispensation from temporary or perpetual vows;

2.5. those who live outside their communities illegitimately for any reason whatsoever.

Such is the official interpretation of art. 151.3 of the Regulations and art. 156.7 of the Constitutions rendered by the Rector Major with his Council by virtue of both his ordinary faculties (Const. 199) and the special ones granted him by the Special General Chapter (SGC Acts, 765-766).

## IX. ECCLESIASTICAL MAGISTERIUM

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### **Card. Eduardo Pironio: Reflections about General Chapters**

*The following reflections on the meaning of a General Chapter celebrated by a religious Family appeared on the Osservatore Romano of August 25, 1976 (September 16, 1976 - English Ed.). They were written by Card Eduardo Pironio, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes. They should prove to be a veritable source of serious reflections and valuable guidelines for the Salesians in their preparation for the coming Provincial Chapters and GC 21.*

### **A Chapter concerns also the "others"**

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

I began to think before God what the celebration of a Chapter means in the Church today. And the first thing that occurred to me was that a Chapter concerns, in the first place, the Church and the world. This means that it is not a question just of a customary act, more or less important according to each case, but always within the private life of a Congregation or an Institute.

The celebration of a Chapter concerns in the first place the whole Church. It is an ecclesial event, even if the Congregation is a small one and not extended all over the world. Consequently it concerns all men. It is a salvific event even if most people do not actually know what a Chapter is.

For this reason I decided to write this article. For I am sorry to think that a Chapter should concern only the Capitulars, or at most,

the members of an Institute. And I am sorry to see that most Chapters are celebrated without anyone — in the Church and in the world — even inquiring about it, whereas every Chapter should be a new and deeper manifestation of God to men in the Church. That is, a “real event”, a page of hope.

I do not claim to produce a “theology of the Chapter”, far less to give norms or practical guidance. I wish only to offer these simple pastoral reflections, born of deep love of the Church, which seek to emphasize some of what seem to me to be the most essential aspects.

*A Chapter is always a “paschal celebration”.* For this purpose it must be set in an essential Easter context, with everything Easter contains in relation to the cross and hope, to death and resurrection. A Chapter is not a mere study meeting, a superficial gathering or a short-lived revision of life. A Chapter is essentially a paschal celebration. For this reason it is above all a “penitential” celebration which aims at living two things deeply: a sincere attitude of conversion and a deep and painful search for the Lord’s ways. God’s ways must be discovered every day in pain and in hope. Because it is a “penitential” celebration, a Chapter is always carried out in the joy and sincerity of brotherly charity.

How important it is to stress the penitential aspect of a Chapter! It means a serene and profound examination of conscience, with the consequent change of mentality and life; and it means a painful search for God’s will in the present necessities of consecrated life. How can we deepen our integration in the Christ of Easter by means of the baptismal confirmation of consecrated life? What can we do so that consecrated life may really be today a sign of the holiness of God and of the presence of his Kingdom?

But, being a real paschal celebration, it is not just the penitential aspects that interest us in a Chapter. It is its whole dimension of paschal newness — of new creation in the Spirit — and of firm, committed hope. Every Chapter must leave a sensation of freshness in the Church, a good dose of paschal optimism. If the Chapter has been celebrated well, in an attitude of poverty, prayer, and brotherly charity, it is always a re-creation of the Institute which lets its spiritual riches overflow upon the Church and upon the world.

Because of all this, *the Chapter is a salvific event, an ecclesial event, a family event.*

## A Chapter is an ecclesial event

God operates uninterruptedly in history. Since Christ came to the world, in the fullness of time, he has not ceased reconciling men and things with the Father. Christ, exalted on the right side of the Father and constituted Lord of the universe, daily sends his Spirit upon the whole universe and makes him dwell within each man called to participate in Christ's paschal mystery (*Gaudium et spes*, 22).

But there are key-moments in the history of salvation: the vocation of Abraham, the liberation of the People from Egypt and its wanderings in the desert, the entrance into the promised land, the return from exile in Babylonia, the redeeming incarnation of Jesus with his Passover consummated at Pentecost. When, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the stage of maturity, of hope begins, key-events for the rich growth of the fruits of salvation stand out. Such, for example, are the celebration of a Council, the election of a Pope or a religious persecution. In this sense, the Second Vatican Council was a salvific event for our times. Regrettably, as always happens, we have not yet drawn sufficient benefit from it.

It is in this line — though, of course, far-removed and in an atmosphere of extraordinary modesty and simplicity — that I place a Chapter. It constitutes a moment when the Lord is particularly present and his Spirit outpoured, not only upon the community but also upon the whole Church. And since the Church is essentially a universal sacrament of salvation (*Lumen gentium*, 48; *G.S.* 45), it is the whole world that feels great benefit from a Chapter.

With the interior renewal of an Institute — carried out in the depth, balance and audacity of the Spirit — the Church is enriched spiritually. Therefore the world experiences the fruits.

The celebration of a Chapter is an outstanding moment in the history of salvation that an Institute must write "not in ink, but in the Spirit of the living God, on human hearts instead of stone tablets" (2 Cor 3: 3).

But for a Chapter to be really a salvific event, three elements must enter into it: the Word, the Holy Spirit, conversion.

a) *Conversion.*

Salvation begins here. The Good News, proclaimed to the poor, is for the salvation of all who believe (Rom 1: 16) and therefore calls for conversion and faith (Mk 1: 15). A Chapter is always, by the force of the Gospel, a call to conversion. The first to assume, in representation of all their brothers, the responsibility of conversion are the Capitulars themselves. For this reason the first condition to elect a good Capitular is not his intelligence, but his elementary capacity for conversion. A Chapter is measured not by the depth or beauty of its documents, but by its capacity to transform the intelligence and the heart of everyone.

Is this difficult? Humanly speaking, it is. So two more elements are necessary: the Word and the Spirit.

b) *The Word*

A Chapter is, in the first place, a way of "hearing the Word of God and keeping it" (Luke 11: 29). But we must hear it together, in order to be able to keep it as a community. It is the Word of God, that is Christ, that must always preside over a Chapter. The Chapter will then be irresistible. During the Council the book of the Gospels was enthroned every day, before beginning the sessions. It was a very solemn rite. Would it not be opportune to do the same at Chapters? For it is God who must speak at a Chapter. He does so, in the first place, through Holy Scripture, the Magisterium of the Church, the spirit and charism of the founders. But he also does so through the exigencies of new times in the Church, the events of history and sincere dialogue with brothers.

This presupposes that all, privately and together, should set themselves to meditating God's Word with docility. The central moments of a Chapter are, therefore, the strong moments of prayer. Otherwise human words will be multiplied unnecessarily and tensions will increase. Marvellous decrees and guidelines will perhaps appear, but minds and hearts will remain the same.

c) *The Holy Spirit*

The great salvific event — the mystery of redeeming Incarnation which culminated in Pentecost — was carried out thanks to

the fruitful action of the Holy Spirit. So must it be now too. The paschal newness of a Chapter does not exist without the creating power of the Spirit. We must let ourselves be led by him. It is he who reveals to us the passing of the Lord in history, who deciphers the signs of the times, who calls us to a real change in conversion. *A Chapter is always a deep work of the Holy Spirit.* It is not the task of geniuses, but of simple men with capacity of being animated by the Spirit: the Spirit of Truth and the testimony of fortitude and martyrdom, of contemplative interior life and prophecy.

### **A Chapter is a family event**

A Chapter is not the private history of a Congregation or an Institute. It is essentially an ecclesial act. In a double sense: the whole ecclesial community has something to say in a Chapter (it takes part actively, even if not directly, in it), and the whole ecclesial community benefits from the fruits of a Chapter. Therefore it is absurd to celebrate a Chapter without taking into account the concrete reality of the Church. The first question at a Chapter is always the following: what does God wish of us at this moment of the Church? This is the same as asking: what do men expect of us today? All Institutes arose because of a concrete requirement of the Church in a given period of history.

There was a period, immediately after the Council, during which all Congregations held special Chapters of "*aggiornamento*", tried to interpret the Church and endeavoured to "bring themselves up to date". They were partly successful, partly unsuccessful: either because they advanced too far or because they were too much afraid; either because they stopped just at external "adaptation" or because they touched the fundamental charism dangerously and changed it.

When we say that a Chapter is an ecclesial event, we mean three things: that a Chapter must look to Christ, that it must keep the world in mind, that it must be integrated in the local Christian community.

a) *Keep Christ in mind*

The Church is, in the first place, the sacrament of the Paschal Christ, that is, the sign and instrument of Jesus' saving presence. Therefore a Chapter tries to renew the Institute by means of a gradual configuration with Christ. It is, fundamentally, an answer to the following question: to what extent do our communities or our persons and institutions manifest and communicate the Lord? For this reason a Chapter always sets the Institutes before the expectation of men: "we desire to see Jesus" (Jn 12, 21). The first questioning is done by Christ, sent by the Father "to save the world and not to reject it" (Jn 3, 17). His fundamental question is the following: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16, 15).

b) *Keep the world in mind*

Every Chapter takes its place in a given moment of history: it tries to interpret it and to give an evangelical response to men who are waiting for salvation. The Church offers herself to them as a sign and instrument of the complete salvation that Christ the Lord brought us. Therefore a Chapter — which always seeks the Lord in the desert by means of the transforming action of the Spirit — sets itself at the same time before the world. It endeavours to discover in it the signs of the times, the growing expectation of peoples, the anguish and hope of men. And since it is an ecclesial event, the Chapter cannot limit itself to examining just the specific problems of a Congregation. It must be essentially an evangelical reflection on the necessities and the aspirations of the Church at the present time. It must ask itself, for example, what evangelization means in the Church today, who the poor are today, what the meaning of education, social work, human promotion or full liberation is.

c) *And don't forget the local Christian community*

All religious life is inserted in a concrete Christian community. It is nourished by it, it grows within it and animates it. For this reason a Chapter is of great interest to the particular Church (or a local community). Its aspirations and riches must reach the Chapter somehow. As long as the Chapter lasts, the whole particular Church

is interested and prays. It is a privileged period for the life of that Church: there is also a particular outpouring of the Spirit upon it and a strong call to conversion. The life of an Institute does not grow "beside" the local community, but "within" it. It is nourished by the same Word and the Eucharist, it is gathered by the Holy Spirit in the same centre of unity which is the Bishop, "who is assisted by the priests" (L.G. 21). Therefore a Bishop, with his clergy and his people, is not an outsider or a guest at the Chapter. He is there because something really great is happening in the Church. For this reason, also the personal meeting with the Pope, when it is possible, is not a mere act of devotion, but an expression of the fact that a Chapter is, above all, an act of ecclesial communion.

Every Chapter is a family meeting: its centre is Jesus. "The disciples came together again in the presence of Jesus" (Mk 6, 30). So, once more, the Word and the action of the Holy Spirit are at the centre of this family meeting. The members of an Institute gather to pray, to receive the Word of God as a community, to discern the activity and exigencies of the Spirit, to renew the joy of faithfulness in consecrated life and rediscover their own charism, to listen together to a new call to conversion, to commit themselves more strongly to the evangelization of the contemporary world. That is, to think more deeply of the mystery of the Church and, in her, of the specific requirements of religious consecration, and the ever new meaning of the Institute's original charism.

This family meeting has to take place in an atmosphere of extraordinary poverty, continual prayer and great brotherly charity. In this way useless tensions, confusion and ambiguity, superficial improvisations will be avoided. The climate of a Chapter is manifested at once in "glad and generous hearts" (Acts 2, 47). The seriousness, the balance and the efficacy of a Chapter depend on the depth of prayer — that is, if a Chapter is really a paschal celebration.

But this calls for a spirit of real *evangelical poverty*. The first prerequisite of a Capitular is that he should be really poor. In this way he will be a "listener to God". In this way he will also be a "man of dialogue". Anyone who goes into a Chapter certain that he knows everything, and that his is precisely the complete truth, will never be able to open up to the fruitful action of the Spirit that Jesus promised us (Jn 16, 13). He will never be able to open

up with simplicity to others. And the others, on their side, will not be able to open up freely to him. Poverty opens us up to God in prayer. Because the Capitular feels the responsibility of his mission — which is not his, since it has been entrusted to him in the Institute and, fundamentally, in the Church — he feels the necessity of praying.

A Chapter always presupposes a great atmosphere of *evangelical freedom*. Out of faithfulness to the Spirit that speaks in him, everyone should be able to express his opinion simply and receive joyfully the opinion of others. The Chapter should really be a fruitful dialogue in the Spirit; after all, it arises from the same experience of poverty, of clear awareness of the same responsibility and of the same fundamental attitude of “listening to God’s Word”. No one possesses the complete truth in the Church. For this reason, the poor who, emptied of themselves, open exclusively to the Holy Spirit, have a great deal to say and to contribute at a Chapter.

Another essential element, in this family event, is *prayer*. We have already pointed it out: the Chapter must be a meeting with the Lord, a real paschal celebration the centre of which is the Eucharist. The life of an Institute must be revised fundamentally in the light of God’s Word. It is the latter that will make us see things, clearly; it is the latter, above all, that calls us to conversion.

Finally the family meeting of a Chapter calls for an atmosphere of joy and simplicity in *brotherly charity*. This facilitates freedom of dialogue. The experience of the Capitulars together in the Spirit must be a testimony for the other members of the Institute. Not that there is no difference of opinion (that is an indispensable treasure of real communication, the fruit of the multiform action of the Holy Spirit), but everything must take place in great mutual respect, in the simplicity of giving and in the immense joy of receiving. It is necessary to speak out clearly at a Chapter; but always in the line of transmitting something of God’s Word and of the exigency of the Spirit. Consequently, not with the aggressiveness or elation of one who feels he is in absolute possession of truth, but with the humility of one who has a great deal to receive and feels he is an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

This dimension of brotherly charity must not remain enclosed in the immediate sphere of a Chapter. It is extended to all members of the Institute, whom the Capitulars must interpret, keep in mind

and serve. For this reason, again, it is not necessary to have geniuses for a Chapter. It is necessary to have poor men, capable of being possessed by the Holy Spirit, extremely docile to him and with a great spirit of understanding and service. That is, men who live "according to the Spirit" and are ready to die to themselves or to renounce their own ideas, so that Christ may be formed in the world and the Father glorified. What is necessary is sincere men, who love God and listen to their brothers.

But there is something else. This line of brotherly charity leads us to think of the concrete situation of a particular Church (or the universal Church) and of the general expectation of the world. For a Chapter is always a way of entering into saving communion with the whole People of God and with the universality of people on a pilgrimage towards the Father. We have come back to the fundamental idea with which we started: a Chapter is not a private work of the Capitulars or members of an Institute. It is, above all, a work of the Church which concerns all men and peoples.

For this reason a Chapter cannot be improvised or held in secret. It must be known by everyone, accompanied by everyone with prayer and the cross, celebrated by everyone with the responsibility of conversion, welcomed by all with hope.

A Chapter is always a work of God's love "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5,5). Therefore it is a new and magnificent page of the history of salvation. Let us all celebrate it with gratitude and availability — like Mary, the Lord's humble servant, in whom God worked wonders, and through whom "the light from on high" shone throughout the world (Luke 1, 78).

## X. NECROLOGY

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### *Fr. Newton de Ambrosio*

\* Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 7.2.1924; † in a car accident at Betim, Belo Horizonte, 8.8.1976; 52 years old, 33 prof., 34 priest, 15 Rector.

Rector and Professor for many years, he used his priestly and intellectual talents on behalf of youth in the best Salesian tradition. Having obtained a degree in Canon Law, he became the legal counsellor of the Province, rendering a valuable, though not so visible, service also in this field. His sudden death was a severe shock to his friends and relatives and a heavy loss to the Province and Congregation.

### *Fr. Antoninus Anastasi*

\* Randazzo (Catania), Italy, 5.3.1897; † Palermo, Italy, 22.6.1976; 79 years old, 62 prof., 52 priest.

In his youth he attended the Oratory, the Elementary and High Schools of Randazzo — the first Salesian foundation in Sicily — and later he became member of the Salesian community there. His three chief characteristics were: exact religious observance, boundless dedication to youth work (especially through teaching) and serene affability (the fruit of his self-control). He was a humble and effective exemplar of the religious ideal according to Don Bosco's mind.

### *Fr. Alfred Bandiera*

\* Bentivoglio (Bologna), Italy, 19.12.1890; † Varese, Italy, 19.4.1976; 85 years old, 66 prof., 56 priest, 6 Rector.

An outstanding priest and educator, he left an indelible memory in the houses where he worked in Don Bosco's name, i.e. Bologna, Leghorn, Arezzo, Brescia and, for over 30 years, Varese. An untiring and inspired preacher, he gave and/or directed countless spiritual retreats. He was a kind and understanding confessor, much sought after by boys, past pupils and priests. He worked with a high sense of optimism and initiative especially on behalf of the Cooperators and the Past Pupils. The Lord called him to himself suddenly on Easter Monday to celebrate the timeless Easter with himself.

*Fr. Leo Barattoni*

\* Piovene (Vicenza), Italy, 21.12.1911; † Turin, Italy, 31.7.1976; 64 years old, 37 prof., 41 priest.

After being ordained priest in his diocese, he became a Salesian to fulfill his missionary vocation. He was first sent to India and then to Mandalay (Burma), where he remained, except for a short interval during the Second World War, till 1966, when he was expelled by the government. He dedicated his life to teaching. He wrote popular books in Burmese ("The Life of Jesus Christ", the biographies of Don Bosco and St. Dominic Savio, etc.). But his first and foremost field of apostolate was the parish, to which he consecrated all his energies unstintingly. He followed each of his parishioners, sharing sorrows and joys and receiving esteem and cooperation in return. After a short stay in Italy, he was assigned to the Philippines. As a pastor, he started our work in Tondo (Manila). During his visit there, Pope Paul VI, as if to show his personal appreciation for his highly successful pastoral activity, donated to him the stole he was wearing. A serious sickness obliged him to return to his native country, where he died.

*Fr. John Bertolone*

\* Chieri (Turin), Italy, 19.5.1931; † Bahía Blanca, Argentina, 7.5.1976; 44 years old 26 prof., 16 priest.

He was a kind-hearted, always smiling, deeply pious Salesian. His parishioners showed him sincere appreciation for his zealous dedication to their well-being. They admired his chaste, humble and extremely simple lifestyle, his Salesian love for work and temperance, and his boundless concern for youth, especially the neediest.

*Fr. Leopold Birkelbauer*

\* Ortschlag, Austria, 1.3.1930; † Johnsdorf, Austria, 4.7.1976; 46 years old, 22 prof., 13 priest.

He was ordained priest late in his life. After years of teaching at the Unterwaltersdorf High School and College, he gave his best energies to directing spiritual retreats. He was a wise and prudent counsellor to the young men who were feeling called to religious life. Involved in a car accident, he at first seemed to be on his way to recovery, and then was suddenly called by the Lord to his reward.

*Fr. Hugh Bisi*

\* Faenza (Ravenna), Italy, 2.4.1903; † Cerignola (Foggia), Italy, 8.5.1976; 73 years old, 54 prof., 47 priest.

A great Salesian with an outstanding record. Fr. Ricaldone called him to Valdocco to be the co-organizer of the first, and for those days really avant-garde, experiments in Salesian film making, and later entrusted to him the difficult task of reorganizing the then-languishing Salesian Sodalities. Under his strong and able leadership, the Sodalities' Center at Valdocco gave a new spurt to these organizations, not only in our Salesian houses, but also in diocesan seminaries and schools of other teaching Congregations. When he saw that the Center was solidly on its feet, he himself asked to be assigned to other duties. He then left Valdocco where he had worked tirelessly for almost 40 years, and joined the Southern Italian Province, where he was once again highly esteemed for his readiness to serve, for his personal warmth and strong attachment to Don Bosco, for his spirit of poverty and his precision in everything he was doing.

*Fr. Cyprian Canale*

\* Concepción, Paraguay, 26.9.1934; † in a car accident at Santa Fe, Argentina, 9.2.1976; 41 years old, 22 prof., 12 priest, 3 Rector.

At the time of his admission to the Holy Orders the following remarks were written on his personal files: "He has many practical qualities, he is good, generous, apostolic, dedicated to study, loyal to his superiors". That was Fr. Canale, a young Salesian priest who died tragically and prematurely. He was cheerful, gregarious, and untiring in bringing souls to Christ. Guitar playing and singing were his favorite tools in the parish apostolate. He loved the poor with a feeling of predilection and they will long remember him with gratitude.

*Fr. Andrew Cavenago*

\* Caponago (Milan), Italy, 22.3.1898; † Treviglio (Bergamo), Italy, 13.6.1975; 77 years old, 57 prof., 48 priest.

He spent his whole life in the Lombard-Emilian Province, carrying everywhere his zeal for work and for the exact observance of the Rule. He was particularly concerned with liturgical celebrations, which he wanted to be performed with dignity, precision and fervor. His constant trust in the Lord gave him that aura of serene optimism and cheerfulness for which he is well remembered in his province.

*Fr. Louis Cerato*

\* Fonzaso (Belluno), Italy, 24.11.1908; † Bombay, India, 24.5.1976; 67 years old, 49 prof., 42 priest.

He attended the Card. Cagliero Missionary Institute at Ivrea (Turin), and completed his priestly and missionary training in Shillong (Assam). For 35 years he worked in the Brahmaputra Valley, in the North Lakhimpur District, where he founded a mission residence. The Lord blessed his work with hundreds and hundreds of conversions. Always calm and smiling, it was natural for him to make friends with everyone he met, from the humblest peasants to the highest authorities. In 1969, when the government decreed to banish foreigners from border areas, he had to leave his mission. Transferred to Bombay, he continued to work with undiminished generosity in a new apostolate. Mary Help of Christians, in whose honor he had his mission church, called him to his reward on her feastday, May 24.

*Fr. Raphael Conde*

\* Cabeza de Caballo (Salamanca), Spain, 15.1.1914; † Cádiz, Spain, 5.2.1976; 62 years old, 42 prof., 33 priest.

During his 42 years as a Salesian he trained hundreds of pupils with his Salesian-style supervision and dedication to his priestly ministry. Hoping to recover from a precarious health condition, he submitted to a surgical intervention, which instead proved fatal. His last days spent in the hospital were a splendid witness of Christian faith and hope to all people around him.

*Fr. Joseph Czenki*

\* Ostffyasszonyfa, Hungary, 22.7.1915; † Tököl, Hungary, 29.5.1976; 60 years old, 39 prof., 32 priest.

For many years he worked with great dedication as a parish priest, taking special care of the education of children. This caused him much suffering because of the suspicious and hostile government attitude. He died a sudden death, away from his flock.

*Fr. Louis Dal Soglio*

\* Magrè Vicentino (Vicenza), Italy, 5.8.1888; † Cornaiano (Bolzano), Italy, 26.12.1975; 87 years old, 53 prof., 48 priest, 6 Rector.

A remarkable figure of Salesian missionary. He got himself ready for the apostolate by undergoing the harsh vicissitudes of military life during

the First World War (he served among the *Alpini* and was taken prisoner of war). He did missionary work in Argentina and Chile. He rode on horseback the entire length and breadth and height of the Pampas and the Andes. In 1966 the old pioneer made the homecoming trip to his native Italy. He was stationed in Bolzano till his death, and there he was looked upon as the community's lovable and cheerful "grandfather".

*Fr. Questor De Barros*

\* S. Lucia (Minas Gerais), Brazil, 5.8.1895; † Barbacena, Brazil, 21.5.1976; 80 years old, 59 prof., 51 priest, 3 Rector.

From Don Bosco he inherited his dynamic spirit of apostolate. He worked in many houses in Brazil. Youth Centers were his favorite field of activity. He also gave his generous assistance to parish priests by celebrating two or even more Sunday Masses for them. His characteristic virtues were humility, simplicity, and exactness in performing his religious and priestly duties.

*Fr. Ernest Defilippi*

\* San Benigno Canavese (Turin), Italy, 17.5.1902; † Lanzo (Turin), Italy, 11.7.1976; 74 years old, 55 prof., 48 priest.

A priest of true fidelity to the Salesian spirit and educative mission. A delicate and tireless teacher. An esteemed spiritual director for various religious communities in the area. On Sundays and Holy Days he worked as a pastor in a priestless parish for many years. As the Cooperators' Delegate, he discharged his duties with exemplary loyalty to Don Bosco and the Pope.

*Coad. Bro. Pacificus Degano*

\* Pasian di Prato (Udine), Italy, 15.9.1928; † Venice, Italy, 15.5.1976; 47 years old, 26 prof.

He taught tailoring to many generations of young apprentices; and when his trade had to give way to other more popular and updated vocations, he showed a fine and courageous capacity for adaptation. He loved his Salesian vocation and apostolate. This enabled him to work effectively for the young, who loved his simple and cordial ways.

*Coad. Bro. Daniel De Geyter*

\* Gentbrugge, Belgium, 5.10.1894; † Liège, Belgium, 25.2.1976; 81 years old, 62 prof.

Manager of a machine shop for 46 years, he dedicated his entire life to the professional, human and Christian training of his boys. With a great deal of technical competence and enthusiasm he overcame all sorts of difficulties in his field over so many years. Invited in 1960 to leave his post, he was humble enough to retire to doing the lowest domestic services in the community. He was always faithful to his prayer life. The Holy Eucharist and devotion to Mary helped him get ready to meet the Lord in death.

*Fr. Joseph Dini*

\* Tarquinia (Viterbo), Italy, 17.11.1881; † Santa Tecla, El Salvador, 16.8.1976; 94 years old, 78 prof., 70 priest, 45 Rector.

He entered Central America as a young cleric way back in 1902. There he spent with great enthusiasm and utter dedication the first heroic years of Salesian work and witnessed its remarkably steady progress. He sowed and reaped rich harvests of good, first as Rector for many years, then as confessor. His personal characteristics were: deep faith, simple and filial piety, boundless availability and the heart of a child.

*Coad. Bro. Caspar Farfán*

\* Huarcondo (Anta) Peru, 6.1.1928; † Huancayo, Peru, 10.6.1976; 48 years old, 22 prof.

He fulfilled his Salesian call as a farmer among his dear Peruvian *campesinos*, especially the young ones. He spent all his energies in training them to live good Christian lives. He toiled in the fields and worked in the youth centers of Chosica, Puno and Huancayo. His dedication was not always appreciated by some, but he never desisted from his work, suffering in silence. He was amply compensated with the boys' affection and cooperation.

*Fr. Henry Ferlini*

\* Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2.8.1899; † Rosario, Argentina, 17.7.1976; 76 years old, 60 prof., 49 priest, 9 Rector.

The sickness that brought him to his grave found him on the job as pastor in Formosa, Argentina, where he had founded the Salesian work in 1949. He was highly esteemed for many talents and various enterprises.

He was an exemplary priest, an austere and cheerful, big-hearted and dynamic Salesian.

*Coad. Bro. Cornelius Floriani*

\* Lizzana (Trento), Italy, 1.11.1914; † Oneglia (Imperia), Italy, 14.6.1976; 61 years old, 40 prof.

Since his profession in 1936, he lived his religious life in the service of God and his brethren filling a great variety of posts. In particular, he dedicated himself to spreading good Christian literature and to consoling with his habitual cheerfulness all those who came in contact with him. Forced to inactivity by his sickness, he carried on his apostolate first from his private room and then from the hospital. His way to Calvary was a long and weary one, but he climbed it with Christ-like fortitude and patience.

*Fr. John Floryn*

\* Woloszca, Poland, 14.10.1928; † Lublin, Poland, 29.2.1976; 47 years old, 29 prof., 20 priest.

After his ordination he spent his youthful energies in the parish apostolate. He used his fine talents and education for the religious training of his young parishioners. Forced by failing health to leave his teaching, he was made chaplain in Lublin. He never complained about his disease (cancer); on the contrary, he offered his confreres an admirable example of courageous submission to God's will.

*Fr. Francis Flynn (Morgan)*

\* Linwood (Scotland), Great Britain, 10.1.1905; † there, 25.3.1976; 71 years old, 50 prof., 40 priest, 6 Rector.

His knowledge of languages and music and above all his fine intellectual qualities made him successful and well liked as an educator. He spent most of his life working with great diligence in the school apostolate. He died a happy death after a rather long sickness, during which he showed edifying resignation to God's will. Since his ordination in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, his life was characterized by a filial devotion to Don Bosco and his Madonna.

*Fr. Charles Frigo*

\* Cogollo del Cangio (Vicenza), Italy, 15.1.1889; † Forlì, Italy, 15.4.1976; 87 years old, 68 prof., 60 priest.

Of sturdy physique and strong character, he faced hardships with an iron will and a ready spirit of sacrifice. During the First World War he

was military chaplain with the rank of captain, and was subsequently awarded several decorations for his services. He then served under Don Bosco as a missionary — always jovial and enthusiastic — first in Brazil, later in China and, after a short parenthesis in the United States, once again in China, for a total of 26 years on the missions. After his return to Italy, he continued to spend the rest of his time in the priestly apostolate like a worthy son of Don Bosco.

*Fr. Martin Frùth*

\* Adlersberg, Germany, 7.10.1899; † Porvenir, Chile, 24.3.1976; 76 years old, 44 prof., 35 priest.

A man of great apostolic spirit, he spent most of his missionary life in South Chile helping the people in his care. His simple cordiality won him the hearts of all. His favorite activities were assisting the needy, visiting the sick, and preaching the word of God with conviction and zeal.

*Coad. Bro. Charles Gallenca*

\* Foglizzo (Turin), Italy, 26.11.1917; † Valdocco, Turin, 21.2.1976; 58 years old, 38 prof.

He lived most of his life at Valdocco, first as a pupil, then as a confrere. He loved "his" boys, and in the true Salesian fashion he knew how to instill into them both professional know-how and moral training. All of this he achieved also in the typically Salesian fashion, that is, with kindness and patience and a constant spirit of self-sacrifice.

*Fr. Angelo Garau*

\* S. Gavino Monreale (Cagliari), Italy, 17.3.1910; † Oakland (California), U.S.A., 23.7.1975; 65 years old, 48 prof., 40 priest, 7 Rector.

He first worked as a missionary in several houses in Haiti, Puerto Rico, Cuba and Santo Domingo and from 1963 onwards as a parish priest in St. Andrew's Parish, Oakland, California, U.S.A. In the latter assignment he dedicated all his time and energies to the apostolate among the Spanish-speaking immigrants. He showed a special love for the needy and the sick whose hearts he won with his cheerful, sincere and simple ways.

*Fr. Asprenus Gentilucci*

\* Penna S. Giovanni (Macerata), Italy, 18.8.1900; † Turin, Italy, 10.6.1976; 75 years old, 59 prof., 51 priest, 10 Rector.

He spent the most memorable and successful years of his life as a teacher in several of our high schools in Italy, such as Frascati, Valsalice,

Caserta and Mogliano Veneto. His pupils will long remember him for his professionalism and his warmth. He enriched his active life with constant prayer and the latter part of it with a patient preparation to death amidst constant pain.

*Fr. James (Santiago) Giovanelli*

\* Iseo (Brescia), Italy, 26.7.1908; † Chiari, Italy, 12.7.1976; 68 years old, 23 prof., 34 priest.

He went to Colombia with a group of pilgrims for the International Eucharistic Congress in 1968, and then he asked the Superiors to assign him to the leper colony of Agua de Dios. He was a true apostle and son of Don Bosco. His characteristics were cheerfulness, brotherly spirit and total availability.

*Coad. Bro. Julius Giraldo*

\* Salamina (Caldas), Colombia, 2.11.1909; † Bogotá, Colombia, 3.7.1976; 66 years old, 23 prof.

He was in his 40's when he humbly and insistently begged to be admitted to the Society. He lived his religious life in holy joy and enthusiasm, working in many houses of the Colombian Province. He was later appointed sacristan of the National Shrine of our Lady of Mt. Carmel and for 15 years he discharged this assignment with wholehearted dedication.

*Fr. Anthony Glorieux*

\* Marke West (Vlaanderen), Belgium, 5.12.1905; † Kortrijk, Belgium, 30.4.1976; 71 years old, 46 prof., 38 priests, 21 Rector.

He joined the Congregation at the age of 24. He was a well read man, and this helped him make his conversations and conferences particularly interesting and formative. He loved life and learning. He had the gift of storytelling and making friends. The atrocities of the Second World War, the sufferings of the many years when he was directly involved in the training of young confreres, and especially the disease that at the end forced him into total inactivity incided on his rich personality by somewhat dampening his spirits in his last years; yet, all this never destroyed his patience and trust in God.

*Cleric Gilbert Guigou*

\* Lyon, France, 16.6.1906; † there, 14.4.1976; 69 years old, 40 prof.

A lawyer and a teacher (with a diploma in History and Geography) before becoming a Salesian, he always kept alive his desire to acquire and to impart knowledge. During his last years, in spite of his failing health he undertook giving evening classes to illiterate immigrants. A self-sacrificing, forbearing and kind-hearted man, he always did his best to help all, especially the neediest.

*Fr. William Jehaes*

\* Liège, Belgium, 9.11.1894; † there, 23.6.1976; 81 years old, 59 prof., 54 priest, 4 Rector.

He was a hard-working assistant of the boys and a successful preacher of the Word. His well prepared sermons were eagerly anticipated and attentively listened to by the boys and the grownups as well. He was the pastor of St. Francis de Sales' Parish in Liège for many years.

*Fr. Emile Kacznicz*

\* Jachówka, Poland, 30.4.1904; † Oswiecim, 15.3.1976; 71 years old, 55 prof., 43 priest.

He distinguished himself for his exact religious observance. He was an incomparable secretary, and a tireless minister of the Sacrament of Confession to the young, to Sisters and to the faithful at large.

*Fr. Victor Kaczmarek*

\* Rombin, Poland, 4.10.1899; † Lipki, Poland, 10.3.1976; 76 years old, 40 prof., 40 priest.

He entered the Congregation as a late vocation. After his priestly ordination he did distinguished pastoral work in several parishes. Named pastor of our parish in Kalawa, he spent there 20 fruitful years supported by the loving cooperation of his parishioners. He was also a regular confessor in a nearby diocesan seminary.

*Coad. Bro. Ladislaus Kalinowski*

\* Culma, Poland, 25.10.1887; † Jaciazek, Poland, 17.3.1975; 87 years old, 63 prof.

Born of a highly educated Polish family, he personally felt but little attraction to intellectual pursuits. A late vocation, he showed himself

humble and easily compliant with his Superiors' wishes. He first worked as chef and then for many years as librarian in our school in Oswiecim. He showed talent for drawing, painting, and writing satirical poems, dramatic plays and comedies (the latter are still staged in our schools). He himself was an actor and producer of plays. In his last years he also became an expert calligrapher and a fine secretary. Thus he became all to all.

*Coad. Bro. Ernest Kasper*

\* Bous (Saarland), Germany, 1.6.1904; † Vienna, Austria, 8.3.1976; 71 years old, 47 prof.

He became a Salesian at the age of 23. He used his uncommon talents to fill many posts, including that of secretary. In all he did he distinguished himself for his exactness and reliability. He fought hard for the coresponsibility of the Coadjutor Brothers in our Congregation. His contribution to the communities was much appreciated and will be remembered for long time to come by confreres and past pupils alike.

*Coad. Brot. Otto Katzenbeisser*

\* Münichschlag, Czechoslovakia, 11.4.1920; † Feldbach, Austria, 3.7.1976; 56 years old, 25 prof.

He spent 22 years in the Novitiate house holding a variety of offices and jobs. He was chef, farmer, economer, sacristan and leader of apostolic groups. He discharged all his duties with great zeal. He played an important role in the restoration of our church in Oberthalheim. He died suddenly of a heart attack.

*Fr. John Korbas*

\* Dakorn Suche, Poland, 19.10.1893; † Valencia, Spain, 7.3.1976; 82 years old, 62 prof., 54 priest.

Sent to Valencia in the immediate after-war, he adapted so well to the new country that he was soon granted Spanish citizenship. An uncommonly talented educator, he worked hard and successfully among the day students in the outskirts of Valencia. Because of his vast culture he was deeply sensitive to all human values, friendship in particular. His preaching showed his solid and updated theological background and was much appreciated by his parishioners. He loved Don Bosco, the Congregation and the Church like a true son.

*Coad. Bro. Maurice Lambert*

\* Gilly (Hainant), Belgium, 2.7.1905; † Tirlemont, Belgium, 1.2.1976; 70 years old, 50 prof.

After his perpetual profession he left for the missions in Central Africa. He spent 41 years in the printing shop of our house in Kafubu (Zaire-Lubumbashi), working diligently for the professional training of hundreds of young boys. For them he wrote a "Course in Technology" in their language. They in turn not only became competent printers, but also good Christians, following the example of his total self-donation and sincere piety.

*Fr. Gustave Leclerc*

\* Verviers, Belgium, 23.2.1913; † Rome, Italy, 5.6.1976; 63 years old, 29 prof., 24 priest, 3 Rector.

As a young employee, he joined the Belgian JOC (Young Catholic Workers' Association). His work in the labor unions' field led him to Don Bosco and the Salesian Family, which in Belgium was (and is) closely involved with the poor workingman's problems. After completing his studies with outstanding success, he taught Canon Law in our studentate in Heverlee, where he also held the office of Rector for three years. Called to teach at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome (UPS, formerly PAS), he was much sought after as a professor and consultor. The Salesian Superiors, the Roman Congregations and Ecclesiastical Tribunals frequently made recourse to his expertise in Canon Law. He lived an exemplary Salesian life, in total availability to all who sought his help. The universal grief over his untimely death (of cancer) was a proof of the high regard in which he was held by all, particularly in Rome.

*Fr. Charles Lewandowski*

\* Warzymon, Poland, 14.12.1901; † Kielce, Poland, 25.3.1976; 74 years old, 56 prof., 46 priest.

He taught music for many years in our organists' school in Przemyśl. He himself composed organ music. He was also highly esteemed as a confessor of various communities of Sisters and of our boys.

*Fr. Matthias Lich*

\* Schlich (Rheinland), Germany, 12.2.1914; † Klagenfurt, Austria, 2.3.1975; 61 years old, 39 prof., 26 priest, 12 Rector.

Since his early Salesian life he showed outstanding talent in the field of sports and music, and used it generously on behalf of his boys. It was

only after several years spent in military service and imprisonment, that he was able to complete his priestly studies. As a chaplain at Linz and Amstetten and later as Rector in Vienna and Klagenfurt, he trained his young boys to become strong-willed men and dedicated Christians. Outwardly seemingly harsh and severe, he was in reality very approachable and kind-hearted.

*Fr. Rudolf Lunkenbein*

\* Döringstadt (Bavaria), Germany, 1.4.1939; † Meruri (Mato Grosso), Brazil, 15.7.1976; 37 years old, 16 prof., 7 priest.

From his native country he went to Brazil to make his novitiate. After completing his theological studies in Germany, he returned to Mato Grosso as a priest to work among the Bororos. He had been Rector of our Meruri Mission for barely three years, when he was shot to death by some *fazendeiros*, white settlers and ranchers, who had recently been dispossessed by government decree of their illegal land holdings within the Bororos' reservation. Wrongly blaming the government action on Father, they overran the mission to vent their anger and frustration on him.

*Fr. Maximilian Maier*

\* Percha (Upper Bavaria), Germany, 9.5.1884; † Beromünster, Switzerland, 14.3.1976; 91 years old., 71 prof., 64 priest, 26 Rector, 17 Provincial Economist.

In 1902 he went to our houses of Lombriasco and Foglizzo (both near Turin), and after a few years he made his religious profession in the hands of Blessed Fr. Rua. He was then sent on the missions in Peru. After returning to his native country, he served as military chaplain during the First World War, and then Rector in several houses in Germany and Switzerland (the foundations in Munich and Beromünster are principally due to his initiative). Difficult and delicate was his work as Provincial Economist during the Nazi regime. Trust in God and devotion to the Sacred Heart were the wellspring of his strength and total dedication to work.

*Fr. Ladislaus Malejczyk*

\* Warsaw, Poland, 14.6.1920; † there, 20.1.1975; 54 years old, 36 prof., 29 priest.

Intense was his commitment to pastoral activity first as a parish priest and then as Catechist for many years. On the occasion of the celebration of the Millennium of Christendom in Poland he promised to write 1,000 ser-

mons. He started out with great zest, but finding himself hampered by many daytime occupations, he stayed up late many a night to work on the project. This eventually brought him to the threshold of physical exhaustion and a nervous breakdown, and he had to undergo special medical treatment. He spent the latter portion of his life at home in his mother's loving care. A martyr of sermons!

*Fr. Anthony Louis Martin*

\* Nice, France, 18.6.1883; † there, 17.3.1976; 92 years old, 64 prof., 59 priest.

He spent his first 18 years of Salesian life on the missions: his novitiate year in Smyrna (Turkey), some time in Palestine, 8 years in Shanghai and the rest in Bangkok. Upon his return to France, he worked actively among the students in several houses of the Lyon Province and for ten years he was engaged in the preaching apostolate in the same region. Assigned to Nice, his native city, in the early 60's, he was very active in the ministry of confessions and remained so till late in life, as long as his health allowed him. A martyr of confessions!

*Coad. Bro. Lucian Martin*

\* Villarino de los Aires (Salamanca), Spain, 8.1.1902; † Sevilla, Spain, 16.7.1975; 73 years old, 51 prof.

He distinguished himself for the faithful observance of the Rule and for his exemplary punctuality to community practices. He taught the poorest boys until almost the end of his life. When he had to quit teaching on account of failing health, he edified his confreres with his calm and trustful patience.

*Fr. Francis Marzorati*

\* Cessano Maderno (Milan), Italy, 2.9.1915; † Santiago, Chile, 1.1.1976; 60 years old, 42 prof., 33 priest.

He left for Chile at a very young age and there he worked for 45 years with untiring energy and missionary zeal. He trained many generations of youngsters in self-discipline, in prayer and in a profession. He enjoyed sports, and organized boys' band groups and parades. He was a vigorous educator, a wise economist, and a priest with an ardent devotion to the Eucharist, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

*Coad. Bro. Peter Matsuoka Isamu*

\* Ato-Machi (Yamaguchi), Japan, 15.3.1908; † Nakatsu (Oita), Japan, 9.2.1976; 67 years old, 38 prof.

He was the first Japanese Salesian Coadjutor Brother. Diligent and thoughtful, he was stationed almost all of his life in Nakatsu, where he worked among the orphans and the disabled. He was the religious who could not say *no* to anyone. Boys and confreres held him in high esteem because of his simple and modest manners, and because of the sound judgement and common sense with which he was able to tackle difficult and complicated situations. Out of his shoemaker's shop came many young men fitted out to lead productive lives and to walk in the ways of the Lord. The long and painful sickness that brought him to his grave also made the depth of his interior life and Faith stand out more clearly.

*Fr. Charles Mayer*

\* Hartbatshofen (Schwaben), Germany, 27.1.1885; † Penzberg (Upper Bavaria), Germany, 26.7.1976; 91 years old, 71 prof., 62 priest, 4 Rector.

He was one of the first German-born Salesians. He received his training at Lombriasco and Foglizzo (in northern Italy) and made his first consecration to God and Don Bosco in the hands of Blessed Fr. Rua. Most of his Salesian life was spent in the training and teaching of candidates to the priesthood. All of them remember him as an open-minded person and a brotherly counsellor. His constant inspiration was St. John the Baptist's ideal (which, incidentally, he had printed on the holy card souvenir of his 60th anniversary of ordination): "He must become more important, while I become less important" (Jn. 3: 30).

*Fr. Leo Melli*

\* Suzzara (Mantova), Italy, 6.3.1916; † Bron (Rhône), France, 4.8.1976; 60 years old, 41 prof., 30 priest, 15 Rector.

In all his offices — Rector, parish priest, military chaplain — as well as in all his activities he showed himself kind and friendly to all. His deep-seated love of Don Bosco was the wellspring of his ardent charity and unshakeable attachment to the Salesian Congregation.

*Fr. Louis Mészáros*

\* Muzsla (Esztergom), Hungary, 24.5.1902; † Budapest, Hungary, 30.12.1975; 73 years old, 55 prof., 47 priest, 9 Rector.

His special tools of apostolate for many years were the teaching of music and of various school subject matters. Even after our foundations

in Hungary were lost to the Comunist regime in power, he was able to keep in touch with many of the pupils through his teaching. Much appreciated by them, he thus continued to guide them like a spiritual father and friend.

*Fr. Joseph Miguens*

\* Buenos Aires, Argentina, 13.7.1892; † Ferré, Argentina, 22.4.1974; 81 years old, 65 prof., 57 priest, 17 Rector.

Throughout his long Salesian life he was fully dedicated to the training of youth on the example of Don Bosco. As Rector of technical and agricultural schools for many years, he took great pains to promote both culture and technology so as to put our schools in the van of progress. He distinguished himself as a professor of botany, mathematics and belles lettres. He knew how to instill in his students the love of knowledge, nature and God, and the zest for work. He spread his apostolate on the air waves as a radio amateur. His departure was serene.

*Fr. John Monchiero*

\* Fossano (Cuneo), Italy, 1.5.1915; † Manila, Philippines, 17.5.1976; 61 year old, 45 prof., 36 priest.

In the immediate after-World War II period he provided spiritual assistance to the Italian *Partigiani* (anti-Fascist and anti-German volunteer forces) as their chaplain. He was subsequently chosen member of the Pontifical Commission for War Prisoners, and worked with unflinching dedication assisting these sorely tried people to get reunited with their families. In 1947 he was sent on the missions in Kwantung (China), but after enduring many sufferings and persecutions and finally expulsion he was reassigned to the Philippines. Here he was the founder of our work in Victorias (Western Negros), and an esteemed and loved teacher and confessor. Later he was nominated confessor of the novices at Canlunbang, and there he remained to the end of his life. Fr. John was a man happy with his work: when he was not in the confessional he was in the garden which he tilled with great care. He helped the unemployed to find jobs. He gave generously to the needy who came to him for help.

*Fr. Sylvius Murara*

\* Caldonazzo (Trent), Italy, 11.4.1909; † Trent, Italy, 19.4.1976; 67 years old, 42 prof., 33 priest.

Those who knew him remember him as a gentle soul and a true minister of God. He entered the Salesian house of Trent at the age of 20, after

overcoming many difficulties with his family. His grateful response to Gods' gracious call was a life totally consecrated to prayer and to the service of his neighbor. He was a conscientious teacher, and a dynamic organizer of the Cooperators and Past Pupils.

*Coad. Bro. Hugh Nasuto*

\* Castellana Grotte (Bari), Italy, 16.12.1898; † Bari, Italy, 19.7.1976; 77 years old, 54 prof.

His vocation came about through a providential meeting with a Salesian Coadjutor Brother in a concentration camp. His Salesian life — busy, simple and methodical — was spent in only two houses: at Vomero (Naples) from 1922 to 1939 in charge of the laundry-linenroom-and-infirmary, running errands and helping out in the youth center; and in Bari from 1939 onwards in charge of administration. He was exact and faithful in the discharge of his duties, exemplary and punctual at the practices of piety. He nurtured a filial devotion to the Blessed Mother. Like a true Salesian, he was deeply involved with the Past Pupils.

*Coad. Bro. René Nicolas*

\* Chemille (Maine-et-Loire), France, 28.12.1902; † Montpellier, France, 25.5.1976; 73 years old, 52 prof.

He left the Angiers Seminary to join the Congregation, but he was forced by his frail health to interrupt the study of philosophy and give up the priestly ideal. As a Brother, he worked for 35 year in a supervisory capacity in our houses in North Africa. He was also a gardener. In 1950 he returned to Montpellier, where he spent the rest of his life. Work and piety were the basis of his faithfulness to Don Bosco's spirit. A painful infirmity, which he bore patiently, united him to the crucified Christ and, when he passed away early in the Easter Season, to the Risen Christ.

*Fr. John Ortiz*

\* Belén (Concepción), Paraguay, 24.6.1938; † in a car accident at S. Justo, Argentina, 3.2.1976; 37 years old, 17 prof., 7 priest.

His short-lived priesthood was spent filling with joy the hearts of the boys the Lord entrusted to him. He brought Christ to the poor and abandoned youth. The remarks written by his Superiors in his personal files at the time of his admission to the priesthood make his best eulogy: "On a

natural level: irreproachable, well balanced, serious about his studies; especially careful not to force his opinions on others, but concerned instead about being an integral part of the community. On a pastoral level: dynamic and well equipped for the priesthood. Pious". These were also the personal traits that won him the affection of his boys.

*Fr. Joseph Parolini*

\* Lanzada (Sondrio), Italy, 19.4.1905; † Bahia Blanca, Argentina, 2.7.1976; 71 years old, 51 prof., 40 priest, 6 Rector.

After the novitiate he was sent on the missions in Patagonia. His lifestyle was a combination of clever simplicity with boundless charity. He knew how to beg successfully in order to help the needy. Untiring preacher of the Kingdom, he ran the length and breadth of the Patagonia arid wasteland to sow God's Good News. He was particularly knowledgeable about the Holy Shroud of Turin, and indefatigable in promoting the Cause of Beatification of the Servant of God Zephyrin Namuncurá.

*Coad. Bro. Jordan Pavoglio*

\* Navarons (Pordenone), Italy, 14.1.1909; † S. Isidoro (Buenos Aires), Argentina, 15.4.1976; 67 years old, 48 prof.

From his native country he emigrated with his family to Rosario (Argentina). He attended the Salesian Schools in that town, and there he discovered his Salesian vocation to the Brotherhood. Among his many skills three were outstanding: he was a master carpenter, a band director and an organist. In later years he was also in charge of making the purchases for the community. Pious, reserved, extremely delicate in all circumstances, trustworthy, ready to serve his confreres and available to his superiors — these were some of his personal qualities.

*Fr. Pellerin Pérez*

\* Vergara, Colombia, 24.11.1898; † Bogotá, Colombia, 12.5.1976; 77 years old, 55 prof., 43 priest.

The last year of his life was marked by intense suffering: he was bedridden most of the time, racked by excruciating pain. But he sublimated it with the love of the Eucharist in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (which he celebrated every day almost down to the end) and with the love of the poor he received in his room to listen to their tales of woe, to give them instruction (he was an uncommonly capable teacher) and to hear their confessions.

*Coad. Bro. John Peroni*

\* Gussago (Brescia), Italy, 26.6.1900; † Rodeo del Medio, Argentina, 5.5.1976; 75 years old, 47 prof.

A humble, self-sacrificing and pious religious. He put to the service of the Congregation his exotic talent in aviculture, which he developed to a rare degree in our school at Rodeo del Medio and four which he was awarded 4,104 trophies and merit certificates at national and international bird shows. Over and above that, he cultivated a tender devotion to the Holy Eucharist and to Mary Help of Christians, and spent his last year taking care of the Church as sacristan.

*Fr. Peter Pescatore*

\* S. Giorgio Canavese (Turin), Italy, 29.7.1902; † Moca, Dominican Republic, 26.4.1976; 73 years old, 51 prof., 43 priest.

The field of his exceptionally successful pastoral work from 1940 to 1957 was Camagüey (Cuba), where he left a lasting memory of himself. Sent to Moca, for many years he worked simultaneously at Moca, La Vega and Mao. He was a tireless, original and adventurous man — on a motor-bike or jeep or a burro, in fair or bad weather he would manage to get where he wanted to go. His favorite activities were hearing confessions, assisting the dying, fixing up irregular marriages, teaching catechism and promoting the Legion of Mary. A born and self-taught musician, he composed popular songs and taught them to the people. His life was a wholehearted consecration to the Lord's service in the spirit of Don Bosco.

*Fr. Joseph Piemontese*

\* Rignano Garganico (Foggia), Italy, 10.3.1907; † Rome, Italy, 18.2.1976; 68 years old, 53 prof., 46 priest, 15 Rector.

Prompted by ardent love and lively faith, endowed with a sharp mind and a generous heart, he dedicated all his talents and energies to the Salesian priestly apostolate. The Oratories, the classrooms and the parishes of Arborea and Rome were the beneficiaries of his zeal. He braved toils and struggles for the Kingdom of God. He was a faithful son of the Church and of Don Bosco.

*Coad. Bro. Louis Plazar*

\* St. Janz Dolenj (Drav. Banov.), Yugoslavia, 14.12.1908; † Santiago, Chile, 29.1.1976; 67 years old, 41 prof.

He worked hard for youth, first in his native country, then (from 1947 on) in Southern Chile. For over 25 years he ran the cabinet-making

shop of our school in Porvenir and taught the boys this art. In his spare time you would have found him fingering the rosary beads. Last year for reasons of health he was transferred to Santiago, where he prepared himself to meet the Lord.

*Coad. Bro. Robert Pollice*

\* Limosano (Campobasso), Italy, 18.9.1914; † Sangradouro (Mato Grosso), Brazil, 31.12.1915; 61 years old, 40 prof.

He lived forty years on the Brazilian mission, giving all of his energies to the service of the natives. He was faithful to Don Bosco's program, "Work and temperance". He fearlessly denounced any attitude contrasting or compromising with it.

*Fr. Bernard Ponzetto*

\* Verolengo (Turin), Italy, 13.2.1889; † Novara, Italy, 30.5.1976; 87 years old, 61 prof., 55 priest.

He was an untiring worker in every field of endeavor: in the classroom and the confessional, in his apostolate on behalf of the workingmen and it that on behalf of the oppressed and abandoned. His charity knew no bounds. In the city of Novara and in large areas of Piedmont he became a key man in the solution of industry-labor relations issues and other social problems. There are many interesting episodes in his life that show his originality and creativity in this special field. In reality all this was the result of his deep Salesian spirit and inexhaustible love of God.

*Fr. Ferdinand Rabadán*

\* Espinardo (Murcia), Spain, 13.9.1932; † Cuenca, Spain, 1.5.1976; 43 years old, 22 prof., 13 priest.

In 1968 he volunteered for the missions for five years and was sent to Santa Cruz (Bolivia), where he worked hard and won the affection of the Bolivian confreres and boys. After his return to Spain, he was appointed economer of our school in Cuenca, and kept in touch with his Bolivian friends. His life, already fruitful, but even more promising, was cut short in a car accident.

*Coad. Bro. Emile Ragogna*

\* Aviano (Pordenone), Italy, 17.10.1908; † Venice, Italy, 15.6.1976; 67 years old, 51 prof.

For nearly 35 years he worked on the missions in Tokyo and Miyazaki as a chef, provider and handyman. He is remembered as a good-hearted

Brother, full of enthusiasm for his vocation. Hard-working, simple, faithful, he spread serenity and joy all around. He returned from Japan tired and sickly, and spent his last four years in Alberioni (near Venice), always cherishing the happy memories of his apostolate on the missions.

*Fr. David Reedy*

\* Accrington, Great Britain, 12.3.1887; † Bolton (Lancashire), Great Britain, 11.3.1976; 89 years old, 62 prof., 55 priest, 3 Rector,

He was a late vocation. He distinguished himself for his love of the priesthood and Salesian life. He was a man of practical faith, deeply attached to the Church and the Holy Father's teachings. Confreres, relatives and past pupils remember his kindness, his zeal for work, and his human warmth.

*Fr. Vincent Ricaldone*

\* Mirabello (Alessandria), Italy, 27.2.1897; † Turin, Italy, 14.11.1975; 78 years old, 57 prof., 52 priest, 17 Rector.

He came from a family of Salesians: his uncle Fr. Peter was the late Rector Major, two of his brothers joined the Salesians and one of his sisters the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He toiled for 28 years in China and for 24 in the Philippines. As Rector and Master of novices, he trained many generations of missionaries in a deep faith, solid piety, and practical love of the Congregation. He distinguished himself for his kindness and total dedication to the service of others.

*Fr. August Rinaldi*

\* Vallestretta (Macerata), Italy, 26.9.1885; † Macerata, Italy, 10.3.1976; 90 years old, 72 prof., 63 priest, 12 Rector.

After obtaining a degree in Natural Sciences and Agriculture, he dedicated his life — a long one indeed — to studying and teaching. He was a member of the Italian Botanical Society, the Italian Entomological Society, the Turin Agricultural Academy, the Rome Tiberina Academy and an honorary member of the Macerata Mycological Group. In his enthusiastic study of nature he always took the occasion to point out the beauty, goodness and wisdom of God. In a little diary he wrote of himself: "A sin I never committed: wasting time".

*Coad. Bro. Gaston Robert*

\* Cresserons (Calvados), France, 30.7.1887; † La Crau (La Navarre), France, 17.5.1976; 88 years old, 31 prof.

After he became a widower and his only daughter a nun, he joined his brother Edmond, who was a Salesian Coadjutor Brother, and he himself became a Coadjutor Brother. A hard worker, he cultivated the community's vegetable and flower garden with the same alacrity he had cultivated his family's. In spite of the physical weakening caused by his advanced age, he made every effort to make himself useful by means of little services to the confreres till the end. He was inquisitive by nature, and never lost an opportunity to learn more. His favorite meditation was on the Passion and Death of Christ. He was affable, cheerful, humble and self-sacrificing.

*Fr. Joseph Anthony Romano*

\* São Paulo Brazil, 15.5.1921; † in highway car accident at Queluz, Brazil, 21.4.1976; 54 years old, 33 prof., 26 priest, 5 Rector, 4 Provincial.

If we wanted to find a suitable definition of Fr. Romano, we would have to use a biblical image — that of “breaking bread”. This would in fact reveal his constant willingness and readiness to give of himself generously and joyously. He had the religious sense of things and events. He was a deeply religious man — not only because he observed the Rule, but especially because he always sought to discover God in everything and everybody and to live joyfully in his presence. The firm kindness of his heart served him in good stead to guide, organize and correct and, above all, help his confreres to grow into mature religious. His fatherliness was energetic, full of wisdom and steeped in a rare understanding of a man's heart. When the confreres' response to his leadership was somewhat slow in coming, he knew how to wait, to understand difficulties and to pray with increased fervor. His spirit of prayer was known to all. He never failed to mention the Blessed Mother in any of his sermons or good-night talks. Even when the car on which he and the other confreres were riding went out of control and everybody sensed the imminent tragedy, Fr. Romano's voice — his last words — rang out loud: “Mary Help of Christians, pray for us!”.

*Fr. Francis Rovarino*

\* La Plata, Argentina, 9.7.1928; † there, 5.3.1976; 29 prof., 19 priest.

He distinguished himself for his love of work, which he used as a means for personal asceticism and as a practical application of the spirit

of poverty. Death caught him standing and working, fully conscious. Just before falling to the cardiac infarct that had seized him, he asked for absolution from one of the priests who was passing by. He is sorely missed by all who knew him.

*Fr. Charles Saini*

\* Vespolate (Novara), Italy, 14.4.1907; † Courgne (Turin), Italy, 22.8.1976; 69 years old, 53 prof., 42 priest.

Orphan of his father at a tender age, he received from his mother — a strong and devout woman — an exemplary training from which in time developed the Salesian vocation (his brother James had already followed it). For some years the Youth Center of San Paolo in Turin was his field of apostolate, where he spent his energies especially on behalf of the younger boys, among whom he organized the “Amici Domenico Savio” (Dominic Savio’s Friends) Club. He carried the cross of many discomforts and several diseases for almost 40 years with admirable fortitude.

*Fr. Raphael Sánchez Escribano*

\* Alcalá la Real (Jaén), Spain, 4.4.1902; † Palma del Río (Córdoba), Spain, 25.5.1976; 74 years old, 56 prof., 41 priest, 12 Rector.

During the long years of Salesian life he filled posts of responsibility as economer and Rector in several houses. An untiring worker, he never retired till the very end, and then only by order of his physician. In a true spirit of poverty he tried to avoid all unnecessary expenses, but he was always prompt to make the necessary ones. Even though at times he was quite vigorous in defending his views against those of some younger confreres, he nevertheless made every effort to maintain cheerfulness and harmony in his community.

*Fr. Charles Scandroglío*

\* Buenos Aires, Argentina, 15.7.1889; † there, 1.7.1976; 89 years old, 69 prof., 62 priest.

Almost his entire life — a pretty long one indeed — was spent in the boarding school and parish of San Carlos as teacher, infirmarian and curate. For 7 years he was chaplain of the Italian Hospital in Buenos Aires. As curate, he used to make daily rounds of the parish to visit the sick and comfort them with the Sacraments and his uplifting words. For 40 years

he was confessor of several religious communities, both Salesian and of other Congregations. His confessional was always crowded with penitents. He wrote several booklets, leaflets and outlines of catechetical nature, and gave them away free.

*Fr. Francis Schneiderbauer*

\* St. Florian am Inn, Austria, 28.10.1908; † Linz, Austria, 29.6.1976; 67 years old, 46 prof., 38 priest, 18 Rector.

He worked for many years in youth centers. He distinguished himself as a writer and among other things he compiled a chronicle of the Austrian Province. He had to bear many crosses, particularly in the form of physical ailments. Among his various initiatives on behalf of youth, his constant effort to help them appreciate the Sacrifice of the Mass is worthy of special mention.

*Fr. Joseph Tedeschi*

\* Ielsi (Campobasso), Italy, 5.3.1934; † Don Bosco, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2.2.1976; 41 years old, 17 prof., 7 priest.

Sent to Argentina as missionary and ordained priest there in 1968, he soon showed a predilection for social outcasts, so much so that he went to share their lives and problems at Villa Itatí, a ramshackle village near Don Bosco, Buenos Aires. In the strained atmosphere presently prevailing in that country, his gesture, inspired by Christian charity, brought him a great deal of trouble at the hands of his enemies, who eventually one day kidnapped him and assassinated him. His tragic end was deeply grieved by his friends, the poor, who had pinned their hopes on him.

*Fr. Frederick White*

\* London, England, 1.6.1907; † Engadine, Australia, 4.6.1976; 69 years old, 53 prof., 42 priest.

At the age of 11 he entered the house of Battersea, and after 4 years he made his novitiate at Cowley. After his philosophical studies he taught at Chertsey and Bolton, while he was pursuing his theological studies. For reasons of poor health he had to delay his ordination till 1934. Afterwards he continued teaching in our schools in England. He was appreciated for his ability in sports. For 7 years he alternated teaching with serving as military chaplain, and later he served as such for 14 years. In 1971 he was

sent to the Australian Province, and there he worked as confessor and curate at Brooklyn Park, and subsequently as confessor at Engadine. He is remembered for his cheerfulness and for the encouraging and kind word he would have for every one who approached him.

*Fr. George Zancanaro*

\* Mogliano Veneto, Italy, 1.7.1908; † Verona, Italy, 30.3.1976; 67 years old, 45 prof., 36 priest, 10 Rector.

There was nothing exceptional in this humble son of Don Bosco, except his modesty in maintaining himself as an unobtrusive yet sure guide pointing to Christ and to His Gospel. He gave everybody the gift of trust and goodness, and in return God gave him the rare gift of maintaining his youthful candor till the end.

*Fr. Vincent Zingali Saitta*

\* Randazzo (Catania), Italy, 19.3.1885; † Palermo, Italy, 10.8.1976; 91 years old, 72 prof., 64 priest, 32 Rector.

Fr. Zingali was one of the first Salesians of the house of Randazzo, which was founded by Don Bosco himself. From the elementary school on he was with the Salesians for 85 years! He truly assimilated the Salesian spirit, and showed it in his apostolate. He was an assistant, teacher, brother and friend to countless generations of boys. These he was able to make docile and cooperative by his mere presence among them, in particular by his penetrating and persuasive look. The communities which had him as Rector were always distinguishable for regular observance, for seriousness of scholastic work and for a discipline that was serene and free of harsh punishments.

## 2nd Elenco for 1976

- 39 Sac. AMBROSIO Newton de † a Betim (Belo Horizonte) 1976 a 52 a.
- 40 Sac. ANASTASI Antonino † a Palermo (Italia) 1976 a 79 a.
- 41 Sac. BANDIERA Alfredo † a Varese (Italia) 1976 a 85 a.
- 42 Sac. BARATTONI Leone † a Torino (Italia) 1976 a 64 a.
- 43 Sac. BERTOLONE Giovanni † a Bahía Blanca (Argentina) 1976 a 44 a.
- 44 Sac. BIRKLBAUER Leopoldo † a Johnsdorf (Austria) 1976 a 46 a.
- 45 Sac. BISI Ugo † a Cerignola (Foggia - Italia) 1976 a 73 a.
- 46 Sac. CANALE Cipriano † a Santa Fe (Argentina) 1976 a 41 a.
- 47 Sac. CAVENAGO Andrea † a Treviglio (Bergamo - Italia) 1975 a 77 a.
- 48 Sac. CERATO Luigi † a Bombay (India) 1976 a 67 a.
- 49 Sac. CONDE Raffaele † a Cádiz (Spagna) 1976 a 62 a.
- 50 Sac. CZENKI Giuseppe † a Tököl (Ungheria) 1976 a 60 a.
- 51 Sac. DAL SOGLIO Luigi † a Cornaiano (Bolzano - Italia) 1975 a 87 a.
- 52 Sac. DE BARROS Questore † a Barbacena (Brasile) 1976 a 80 a.
- 53 Sac. DEFILIPPI Ernesto † a Lanzo Torinese (Italia) 1976 a 74 a.
- 54 Coad. DEGANO Pacifico † a Venezia (Italia) 1976 a 47 a.
- 55 Coad. DE GEYTER Daniele † a Liège (Belgio) 1976 a 81 a.
- 56 Sac. DINI Giuseppe † a Santa Tecla (El Salvador) 1976 a 94 a.
- 57 Coad. FARFAN Gaspare † a Huancayo (Perù) 1976 a 48 a.
- 58 Sac. FERLINI Enrico † a Rosario (Argentina) 1976 a 76 a.
- 59 Coad. FLORIANO Cornelio † a Oneglia (Imperia - Italia) 1976 a 61 a.
- 60 Sac. FLORYN Giovanni † a Lublín (Polonia) 1976 a 47 a.
- 61 Sac. FLYNN Morgan Francesco † a Linwood (Scozia - G. Bret.) 1976 a 71 a.
- 62 Sac. FRIGO Carlo † a Forlì (Italia) 1976 a 87 a.
- 63 Sac. FRÜTH Martino † a Porvenir (Cile) 1976 a 76 a.
- 64 Coad. GALLENCA Carlo † a Torino - Valdocco (Italia) 1976 a 58 a.
- 65 Sac. GARAU Angelo † a Oakland (California - USA) 1975 a 65 a.
- 66 Sac. GENTILUCCI Aspreno † a Torino (Italia) 1976 a 75 a.
- 67 Sac. GIOVANELLI Giacomo (Santiago) † a Chiari (Italia) 1976 a 68 a.
- 68 Coad. GIRALDO Giulio † a Bogotà Colombia) 1976 a 66 a.
- 69 Sac. GLORIEUX Antonio † a Kortrijk (Belgio) 1976 a 71 a.
- 70 Ch. GUIGOU Gilberto † a Lyon (Francia) 1976 a 69 a.
- 71 Sac. JEHAES Guglielmo † a Liegi (Belgio) 1976 a 81 a.
- 72 Sac. KACHNICZ Emilio † a Oswiecim (Polonia) 1976 a 71 a.
- 73 Sac. KACZMAREK Vittorio † a Lipki (Polonia) 1976 a 76 a.
- 74 Coad. KALINOWSKI Ladislao † a Jaciacek (Polonia) 1975 a 87 a.
- 75 Coad. KASPER Ernesto † a Wien (Austria) 1976 a 71 a.
- 76 Coad. KATZENBEISSER Ottone † a Feldbach (Austria) 1976 a 56 a.
- 77 Sac. KORBAS Giovanni † a Valencia (Spagna) 1976 a 82 a.
- 78 Coad. LAMBERT Maurizio † a Tirlemont (Belgio) 1976 a 70 a.
- 79 Sac. LECLERC Gustavo † a Roma (Italia) 1976 a 63 a.
- 80 Sac. LEWANDOWSKI Carlo † a Kielce (Polonia) 1976 a 74 a.

- 81 Sac. LICH Mattia † a Klagenfurt (Austria) 1975 a 61 a.
- 82 Sac. LUNKENBEIN Rodolfo † a Meruri (Mato Grosso - Brasile) 1976 a 37 a.
- 83 Sac. MAIER Massimiliano † a Bermünster (Svizzera) 1976 a 91 a.
- 84 Sac. MALEJCZYK Ladislao † a Warszawa (Polonia) 1975 a 54 a.
- 85 Sac. MARTIN Lodovico Antonio † a Nice (Francia) 1976 a 92 a.
- 86 Coad. MARTIN Luciano † a Sevilla (Spagna) 1976 a 73 a.
- 87 Sac. MARZORATI Francesco † a Santiago (Cile) 1976 a 60 a.
- 88 Coad. MATSUOKA Isamu Pietro † a Nakatsu (Oita - Giappone) 1976 a 67 a.
- 89 Sac. MAYER Carlo † a Penzberg (Oberbayern - Germania) 1976 a 91 a.
- 90 Sac. MELLI Leone † a Bron (Rhone - Francia) 1976 a 60 a.
- 91 Sac. MESZAROS Lodovico † a Budapest (Ungheria) 1975 a 73 a.
- 92 Sac. MIGUENS Giuseppe † a Ferré (Argentina) 1974 a 81 a.
- 93 Sac. MONCHIERO Giovanni † a Manila (Filippine) 1976 a 61 a.
- 94 Sac. MURARA Silvio † a Trento (Italia) 1976 a 67 a.
- 95 Coad. NASUTO Ugo † a Bari 1976 a 77 a.
- 96 Coad. NICOLAS Renato † a Montpellier (Francia) 1976 a 73 a.
- 97 Sac. ORTIZ Giovanni † a S. Justo (Argentina) 1976 a 37 a.
- 98 Sac. PAROLINI Giuseppe † a Bahía Blanca (Argentina) 1976 a 71 a.
- 99 Coad. PAVEGLIO Giordano † a S. Isidro (Argentina) 1976 a 67 a.
- 100 Sac. PEREZ Pellegrino † a Bogotà (Colombia) 1976 a 77 a.
- 101 Coad. PERONI Giovanni † a Rodeo del Medio (Argentina) 1976 a 75 a.
- 102 Sac. PESCATORE Pietro † a Moca (Rep. Dominicana) 1976 a 73 a.
- 103 Sac. PIEMONTESE Giuseppe † a Roma (Italia) 1976 a 68 a.
- 104 Coad. PLAZAR Luigi † a Santiago (Cile) 1976 a 67 a.
- 105 Coad. POLLICE Roberto † a Sangradouro (Brasile) 1975 a 61 a.
- 106 Sac. PONZETTO Bernardo † a Novara (Italia) 1976 a 87 a.
- 107 Sac. RABADAN Fernando † a Cuenca (Spagna) 1976 a 43 a.
- 108 Coad. RAGOGNA Emilio † a Venezia (Italia) 1976 a 67 a.
- 109 Sac. REEDY Davide † a Bolton (Gran Bretagna) 1976 a 89 a.
- 110 Sac. RICALDONE Vincenzo † a Torino (Italia) 1975 a 78 a.
- 111 Sac. RINALDI Augusto † a Macerata (Italia) 1976 a 90 a.
- 112 Coad. ROBERT Gastone † a La Crau-La Navarre (Francia) 1976 a 88 a.
- 113 Sac. ROMANO Antonio Giuseppe † a Queluz (Brasile) 1976 a 54 a.
- 114 Sac. ROVARINO Francesco † a La Plata (Argentina) 1976 a 47 a.
- 115 Sac. SAINI Carlo † a Courgnè (Torino - Italia) 1976 a 69 a.
- 116 Sac. SANCHEZ ESCRIBANO Raffaele † a Palma del Rio Córdoba (Spagna) 1976 a 74 a.
- 117 Sac. SCANDROGLIO Carlo † a Buenos Aires (Argentina) 1976 a 86 a.
- 118 Sac. SCHNEIDERBAUER Francesco † a Linz (Austria) 1976 a 67 a.
- 119 Sac. TEDESCHI Giuseppe † a Don Bosco (Buenos Aires - Argentina) 1976 a 41 a.
- 120 Sac. WHITE Federico † a Engadine (Australia) 1976 a 69 a.
- 121 Sac. ZANCANARO Giorgio † a Verona (Italia) 1976 a 67 a.
- 122 Sac. ZINGALI SAITTA VINCENZO † a Palermo (Italia) 1976 a 91 a.

