



# ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

## OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

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S. G. S. - ROMA

## I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

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*Dear Confreres,*

On behalf of the Superiors of the Council and myself I would like, in the first place, to thank those of you who sent us their cordial Christmas greetings. To help reduce the now prohibitively high mailing charges, we decided not to reply on an individual basis, but to use this circular letter to thank both individuals and communities for sending such greetings. We hope you understand. We appreciate your thoughtfulness and assure you of our prayers for the new year.

### **Family news**

I now would like to give you some news items that concern all of us as a family.

*My trip to Argentina for the Missions Centennial.* In November I was privileged to fly to Argentina to take part in the week-long celebration at the conclusion of the Centennial of the first missionary expedition. I was in San Nicolás de los Arroyos, where our men first started the work that was to spread as far south as the southern tip of Patagonia and everywhere else in Argentina.

The whole celebration was a most magnificent event. Church and State authorities and huge crowds of people — especially youth — gave their jubilant and enthusiastic participation. The Salesians, the Salesian Sisters and all the other members of the Salesian Family gave their full cooperation, and thus made the

celebration a great success. I clearly saw on that occasion how much the Salesian Family has done over the years for the advancement of that great country, not only on a spiritual level, but on all levels, and in how many wonderful ways the Argentinians showed their gratitude to Don Bosco and his sons.

As I repeatedly stated during those unforgettable days, there is every reason for us to hope that that celebration will bear much fruit, especially in the form of vocations. These would indeed be the best reward for the generous efforts of all those who in some way contributed to the success of the Missions Centennial celebration.

*Provincial Chapters.* Consoling news on Provincial Chapters getting under way and doing their job is reaching us here at the Generalate.

In another section of the present issue of the Acts you will find suggestions for a more successful celebration of the Chapter. Here I will only remind you once again that it is only through the humble prayer and the strong determination of each Salesian to contribute his share to the renewal of the Congregation that all of us can be assured of success in carrying out its weighty mandate.

*VDB's First General Assembly.* This is certainly a happy family news you will be pleased to hear. The Volunteers of Don Bosco will hold their First General Assembly in the coming month of July at the Salesianum. They have come a long way since their beginnings in May 1917: they presently number 650 members and work in 14 countries. Their Assembly will deal with important matters — also in view of the forthcoming pontifical approval of their Institute.

Let us be grateful to the Lord for having blessed so abundantly this live and fruitful offshoot of the Salesian Tree. As you know, it was the God-inspired brainchild of our Servant of God Fr. Philip Rinaldi. Let us all pray that this First General Assembly of the Volunteers of Don Bosco be a success.

*"The Salesians and Politics"*. I have received letters of congratulations and support on the circular *"The Salesians and Politics"*. Yes, dear confreres, we do need clear ideas to direct and enlighten our social action, which should be preeminently an evangelizing one. Such clear ideas are found in the Magisterium of the Church, in the words and examples of our Holy Founder, and in the guidelines of the authoritative bodies of our Congregation whose responsibility it is to issue them in accordance with our spirit and mission.

*A topic dear to our Father Don Bosco.*

In this issue of the Acts I would like to present to you some reflections on a topic which was so very dear to our Father Don Bosco and which today is more timely than ever, i.e. our life of consecrated chastity. It is my sincere hope that these reflections will not only fill a need for guidance for all of us Salesians — a need which seems to be widespread, judging from the number of requests received from many parts of the Congregation — but also provide matter for discussion in the Provincial Chapters, since they will deal with this and other important topics concerning our consecration today.

## **LIVING A LIFE OF CONSECRATED CHASTITY TODAY**

### **1. THE CHURCH ASKS US THIS WITNESSING**

One of the most disquieting signs of the confusion and of the breakdown of moral values which characterizes our age of transition is without doubt the way problems of human sexuality are set up and solved. There is certainly no lack of honest and scholarly individuals who face these problems out of a sense of deep responsibility and with real competence; but one needs only to take a quick look at the means of communication — both

“big” and “small” — to become aware of the fact that we are confronted with an unbridled and extravagant commercialization and instrumentalization of sex — for instance, through pornography —, as if man’s sexual dimension were his only dimension.

It comes as no surprise that in this stifling and obsessive atmosphere chastity has become a discredited and ridiculed virtue. However, I would like to add immediately that this great virtue — a sign of the victory of the Risen Christ — does continue to attract the attention of this sex-crazy culture of ours, for certain wild manifestations that we see today belie a regretful longing for this lost good.

Despite all the fuss against priestly celibacy and consecrated virginity in recent times, the clearcut stand taken by the Vatican Council and by Pope Paul VI in some important documents of his magisterium, indicates how highly the Church in the twentieth century esteems the virtue of chastity. The Pope’s teaching here is very firm, and it is because of his firmness that many of those who have strayed away are beginning — as recent inquiries show — to head back to base.

As sons of Don Bosco, we are fully identified with the Holy Father, we wholeheartedly embrace his teachings. But it seems to me that we should not stop at that. In this age of moral permissivity, laxity and confusion the Church, in my opinion, has a right to demand of us the special witnessing of Salesian chastity in order to present it to the world for imitation.

Whether we are fully aware of it or not, the destinataries of our mission cannot be deprived of the charism of Salesian chastity. Salesians chastity is not a tiny dim star lost in the firmament of the Church; it is rather a great bright light of which the Church cannot be lacking.

### **Don Bosco’s characteristic virtue**

The more deeply we study Don Bosco’s life, educational method and spirituality, the more keenly do we become aware

of the value of chastity in the economy of the Salesian world.

Some of his peremptory statements are known to all of us. "Should chastity fade away, the Lord would scatter and disperse our Congregation".<sup>1</sup> "Chastity", our holy founder used to state unequivocally, "must be the outstanding trait of our Society, just as poverty and obedience are respectively the hallmarks of the Franciscans and of the Jesuits".<sup>2</sup> Chastity "must be the hinge of all our actions".<sup>3</sup> "Chastity is the foundation of all the other virtues and the focal point upon which they converge".<sup>4</sup> And the quotations could go on and on.

Some one here might say: "This is an exaggeration, a theological error! Chastity would thus become the first Christian virtue!". One who would say this would in fact be twisting Don Bosco's thought altogether. For Don Bosco was not lacking in theological precision; he instead had a keen sense of proportion and balance. Never did he dream of rating chastity over other virtues, especially the theological ones!

Let it suffice to refer to the Dream of the Mantle. In it the diamond of chastity shines undoubtedly with a particular light: "This diamond shone with peerless brilliancy", we read in the narrative of the dream, "and it attracted one's attention as a magnet attracts iron".<sup>5</sup> Yet, in this vision, chastity is not ranked first.

Also in his listing of the vows, Don Bosco never placed chastity in the first place. He never hesitated to put obedience out in front. To do so he was prompted by heavenly inspirations and by the deep understanding — common to all great founders — of the vow of obedience as the synthesis of the other two. In the very draft of the Constitutions there is "a special sequence

<sup>1</sup> *MB* 13, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *BM* 10, 29; *MB* 12, 224.

<sup>3</sup> *MB* 12, 224.

<sup>4</sup> *MB* 12, 15.

<sup>5</sup> *MB* 15, 183.

in the order of chapters on the three vows”, remarked one of our scholars. “In the first place he (Don Bosco) always placed the one on obedience, and then in the traditional order those on poverty and chastity ».<sup>6</sup>

His thinking was extremely clear: « ‘In true obedience,’ says St. Jerome, ‘lies the perfection of every virtue,’ » we read in his *Introduction to the Constitutions*. « ‘All religious perfection,’ says St. Bonaventure, ‘consists in suppressing one’s own will’ »—a paradoxical expression which Don Bosco immediately explains—« in other words, in the practice of obedience. ‘The speech of the obedient will always be heard,’ says the Holy Spirit. St. Gregory concludes that ‘obedience leads to the possession of all other virtues and likewise preserves them all.’ »<sup>7</sup>

The logic of Salesian life is above all the logic of obedience. Yet this logic does not prevent Don Bosco from laying a particular emphasis on chastity, from speaking about it in terms which could be regarded overemphatic, were they not stating a fact and a reflection of his deep convictions. « How beautiful this virtue is! — he told his sons in 1976 — I would love to dwell on it for days... Of all the virtues this is indeed the most charming, the most dazzling and, still, the most delicate! »<sup>8</sup> « O chastity, how great a virtue you are! »<sup>9</sup>

If his reason and practical disposition, enlightened by faith, led him to emphasize the value of obedience in religious life, his heart and sensitivity inclined him to prefer the virtue of chastity. That luminous and transparent something enwrapping his whole personality during his life was, as we have been told by those

<sup>6</sup> Pietro Stella, *Le Costituzioni Salesiane fino al 1888 (The Salesian Constitutions up to 1888)* in *Fedeltà e Rinnovamento (Fidelity and Renewal)*, LAS Rome, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *St. John Bosco to his Salesians in Constitutions and Regulations* (1972), pp. 235-236.

<sup>8</sup> MB, 12, 564

<sup>9</sup> MB, 10, 1106

who lived very close to him, nothing but a reflection of his chastity.

### **A characteristic of Salesian spirituality**

Don Bosco's special love of chastity was bequeathed to his sons and became a most precious heritage of his family. It is certainly not meaningless that Rector Majors and General Chapters have on repeated occasions felt it their duty to deal with this topic.

Let it suffice to call your attention to the circular letters of Fr. Albera and Fr. Ricaldone and the deliberations of the more recent 19th and 20th General Chapters.

I, too, in obedience to a clear dictate of my conscience, have felt the need to discuss this topic with you — not that I have anything to tell you that has not been said by our two General Chapters (those were Chapters of *aggiornamento* and renewal also with regard to chastity!), but because I wish to exhort you to practise what they said. At the same time I would also like to exhort you with this brotherly reflection to treasure what the Church said on this subject. It is very important, particularly in this age of confusion, that all of us have clear ideas and strong motives on this characteristic element of our educational method and spirituality.

### **The continuing drain of vocations**

I cannot let it go without mentioning it that one of the reasons prompting me to discuss this topic with you is the fact — sadly, still continuing to date — of defections among our confreres. For your consolation and mine I must add, however, that the rate of drain, after reaching its peak in the years 1968-1972, has since been steadily declining. But, much to our chagrin, the laici-

zation of priests is still going on at a steady-trickle rate. This is a serious thing indeed, because each priestly defection — whatever its reasons, which we of course cannot judge — causes a kind of deep gash or laceration in the body of the Congregation as well as in the body of the Church.

Thus situations are created which seriously disturb the orderly functioning of our communities, delay the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth and adversely affect the welfare of our boys. Allow me, therefore, to exhort you to pray even more earnestly than ever before for the great gift of perseverance, and to do your level best so that, when temptation comes, we may be found strong and ready to meet it successfully.

One of the areas in our formation in which we must commit ourselves to do more and better is that of chastity. I noticed that among the various reasons adduced by priests who requested to be reduced to the lay state there was almost always the experiencing of difficulties in the observance of chastity. I do understand perfectly well that this is in most of the cases a symptom rather than a cause; but who would dare deny that a correct 'management' of one's own chastity could have worked the individual into a position of strength to help him withstand the onslaught of temptation?

Also in view of this, then, I believe that this exhortation to consecrated Salesian chastity I am addressing to you is quite timely.

In the name of Mary — our Mother and Teacher of Salesian chastity — let us begin with some preliminary considerations.

## **2. OUR TIMES DEMAND A NEW APPROACH**

First of all, following the lead of the Special General Chapter, let us point out certain facts which in the past either were not given their due attention or were overlooked altogether, but which can be easily referred to that new cast of mind with which the

Church now views earthly realities and human values. "Vatican Council II sets out for us the most recent attitude of the Church to human values," we are told in the Acts of the SGC. "Dealing with the values of created things, it is easy enough to see that they are specifically related to chastity — sex, love and marriage. The Council is clear in its acceptance of such values, without any hint of pessimism or manichaeism."<sup>10</sup>

Here we should point out three things which by their nature are bound to affect the practice of our chastity. They are: a more positive evaluation of sexuality, a more positive evaluation of womanhood, and a more positive evaluation of love.<sup>11</sup>

Let us consider each of these points briefly.

### **A more positive evaluation of sexuality**

In *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, a weighty document issued by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in 1974, we read this meaningful statement: "Christian pedagogy, in accordance with God's revelation, has its own proper perspective and evaluation of sex. Christianity sees sex as part of God's creation, a reality which does not have the body alone as its object, but involves the entire human being, a reality which has a determining role in the way a man matures... It sees sex as a reality which is actualized in personal encounter."<sup>12</sup>

As you see, the teaching of the Church is set in a positive perspective on human sexuality. This alone should be a sufficient reason to calm down any confrere who might feel so exasperated by the exaggerated exaltation of sex and by the lurid purveyance of pornography in today's society that he might be tempted to

<sup>10</sup> *Acts of the Special General Chapter (ASGC)*, 560.

<sup>11</sup> See *id.*, 563.

<sup>12</sup> Sacred Congregation for Christian Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, Vatican Polyglot 1974, 27. Hereafter referred to as: *GFPC*.

reject *en bloc* human sexuality (its positive aspects included) and decide to turn his mind off completely and forever from anything connected with sex.

As educators, we cannot but give due consideration to the profound changes that have taken place in this field. In times past body and soul were seen in such stark antithesis as to leave little room for a vision of mutual integration and vital interdependence. Today instead we stress the latter type of relationship.

Man not only *has* a body, but *is* a body. This means that in practice human nature exists only as male or female. This fact marks and affects a person's whole being — not only his or her body, but also all his or her powers, so much so that there is a distinctly male way of imagining, thinking, feeling and acting, and there is a distinctly female way of doing the same things.

If we now apply this to a life of consecrated chastity, we must say that there are a male way and a female way of considering, understanding and practising it. In other words, the religious who consecrates himself or herself to God, does not cease being a man or a woman with all the consequences that follow. He or she must, first of all and at all times, know and accept himself or herself for what he or she is and has; he or she must reckon foursquare with his or her inclinations, needs, desires, etc., in order to be able to direct and discipline them in the light of reason and faith.

Acting otherwise means building on illusions and condemning oneself to suffer sooner or later the reprisal of nature, for you cannot impunely repress or twist or fool human nature. In such case even the most sublime religious thoughts, even the most ardent prayers for purity of life would avail nothing. Thus a young man's training towards a sensible and serene attitude towards women (and viceversa) becomes, in this perspective, one of the basic requirements for the building of a mature personality.

The Church has set out important guidelines on this matter, and all the confreres should get to know them and apply them as

needed. In the case of candidates to Salesian life, every effort should be made in each case so that they achieve emotional maturity at the right time and in the right manner. Without such previous maturation their choice of consecrated chastity would be a wrong choice.

### **A more positive evaluation of womanhood**

Christian teaching confers equal dignity on both man and woman. It is apparent at the same time that only in our age is woman achieving that rightful social and cultural status she has been denied in past centuries. The advancement of womanhood is indeed one of the outstanding signs of our time: it is permeating our culture on worldwide proportions. Many countries in fact have already altered or are in the process of altering their constitutions and laws to put women on equal footing with men with regard to rights in education, politics, economy, and everything else. Also the Church is moving in the direction of giving women greater responsibilities in its organization, v.g. by acknowledging married women, widows, nuns as capable of performing special spiritual and apostolic ministries. It is not altogether meaningless that two women saints are numbered among the Doctors of the Church.

A result of this social evolution is the fact of mixed groups, which already drew the attention of the 19th General Chapter. This is not only a youth-related fact. It is a thing that nowadays affects in some way the whole structure and functioning of social life. Men and women meet daily at work, during leisure hours, in the performance of various tasks — including, of course, apostolic tasks.

As far as we are concerned, the Special General Chapter recognized that “our mission brings in its wake responsibilities that entail greater collaboration with women, religious and lay

alike”.<sup>13</sup> In such cases the relationship that will necessarily be established and developed among men and women working together will have to bear all the traits of our Salesian spirit; in other words, it will have to be a relationship based on respect, esteem and delicate concern for woman’s psychology and vocation in the Church and in the world.

Our Special General Chapter spoke of “serene esteem of womanhood”, of attitudes that would help us, in the light of the Blessed among women, “to react always and everywhere as true Salesians without hesitation and without worries of conscience”.<sup>14</sup>

Certain reactions of aggressiveness or regressiveness with regard to women are, more often than not, a sign of emotional immaturity rather than a sign of virtue. In any case, such reactions would compromise not only every mutually enriching encounter between us and women, but even the very possibility of any cooperation.

True chastity is not an escape, even though it does entail renunciation and vigilance, for the charism of consecrated chastity — let us never forget it! — does not cripple our emotional makeup, but leaves it wholesome. “Treat the older women as mothers”, was St. Paul’s advice to Timothy, “and the younger women as sisters, in all purity”.<sup>15</sup> A fine piece of advice even for us today.

### **A more positive evaluation of human love**

Consecrated chastity has for some time been set side by side with marriage. Also in this there has been a remarkable evolution over the years. We all know how marriage and sexual love have been researched into to great depths and their Christian

<sup>13</sup> *ASGC*, 559.

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*, 559.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Tim., 5: 2.

values have been emphasized.<sup>16</sup> Pope Paul VI at his Wednesdays general audiences takes a great deal of pleasure pointing them out to the newly-weds in attendance. Who would today dare contest that the life of Christian marriage is a true path to sanctity?

This is a path that ought to be held in esteem by the religious, but that should not obscure their own chastity. The Council in fact says with regard to the training of seminarians: "Seminarians should be duly aware of the duties and dignity of Christian marriage, which bodies forth the love between Christ and the Church".<sup>17</sup> But from the comparison with married love consecrated chastity should come out not weakened, but rather strengthened in its motivations. For the Council adds: "Let them (i.e., the seminarians) perceive as well the superiority of virginity consecrated to Christ, so that by a choice which is maturely thought out and magnanimous they may attach themselves to God by a total gift of body and soul ».<sup>18</sup>

A comparison is, therefore, all right, but it is to be made for the sake of seeing and maintaining an antithesis between married life and religious life. In this way each state of life will hold on to its own identity: that is, conjugal love in the case of the former and consecrated chastity in the case of the latter. "Virginity and marriage — the Acts of the SGC tell us — are both to be promoted as two different yet complementary ways of sharing in the mystery of Christ's union with the Church".

### **Dangers and ambiguities**

We have briefly pointed out the positive values of sexuality in the light of the Church's teachings. We must now realistically

<sup>16</sup> See *Lumen Gentium*, 41; *Gaudium et Spes*, 48-50.

<sup>17</sup> *Optatam Totius*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

admit that with regard to human sexuality there are ambiguities and deviations of which we must be aware and wary.

As our General Chapters have stated, chastity, “the virtue that is supremely necessary, the great virtue, the angelic virtue”,<sup>19</sup> is also the virtue “most undermined today”.<sup>20</sup>

Dangers, ambiguities and temptations — the Capitulars have told us — are by far more numerous today than in the past. This more difficult and testing situation demands of us greater determination, greater commitment and first of all clearer awareness of the perils and pitfalls awaiting us. Here I will mention three of them.

### **On a practical level**

On a practical level today’s religious must live a life of chaste love in a permissive society, in pervasively paganized environs which make it difficult even for married people to practice conjugal fidelity to their spouses. A mounting wave of eroticism and sexual licence is engulfing our mores, our families, our free time through practically all the mass media. Contemplatives could remain unscathed by, and even aloof to, this raging wave; but active-life religious, such as we are, that is, religious who must keep in touch with the realities of the surrounding world, cannot but feel implicated in, and buffeted by it. Beset and beleaguered by the Evil one, we need to be safeguarded from him,<sup>21</sup> we need to be clad with the armor of God so that we can “stand up against the Devil’s evil tricks”.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *St. John Bosco to His Salesians in Constitutions and Regulations*, p. 240.

<sup>20</sup> *Acts of the XIX General Chapter*, p. 84.

<sup>21</sup> Jn 17: 15.

<sup>22</sup> Eph., 6: 11-12.

## **On an intellectual level**

That is not all. Today consecrated virginity as well as priestly celibacy are for various reasons being contested also on an intellectual level by people of all walks of life, even at times by people who call themselves Christians. Chastity would make the religious who profess it strangers to their fellow men; it would detract from their personalities; it would prevent or stifle their normal development, and so on.<sup>23</sup> In certain places you could almost sense the worldlings' heavy breath of sullen contempt or ill-disguised commiseration being poured on a man or a woman who has not made sexual experiences.

In this lascivious world of ours our chastity is therefore far from being lavishly admired by everyone in every place. This challenges us not only to speak in its defense, but to witness in actual life that it is indeed "a choice of a real life, unique and well worthy of a man who is called to it".<sup>24</sup>

## **On a moral and legal level**

We notice, finally, that in secularized societies there is a constantly widening gap between what is moral by Gospel standards and what is merely permissible by civil law. This fact underscores the need for all of us to clarify the issues at hand and to train our consciences in order to take the right stand. When one can no longer perceive the difference between legality and morality, he runs a serious risk of considering entirely legitimate whatever does not run against his country's civil laws and common opinion. Divorce and abortion, for instance, are legally permissible in some countries; premarital sex, unnatural sex, conjugal

<sup>23</sup> See *Lumen Gentium*, 46; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *ASGC*, 563; see 575.

infidelity and even “weaknesses” in a consecrated man no longer cause a stir in certain quarters; on the contrary, they are seen as normal by those who derive their morality from the so-called “public opinion”.

This permissive mentality is worming its way into the poorly trained consciences of certain Christians — typical is the case of the wild reaction to the recent Holy See’s *Declaration on some questions of sexual ethics* — and sometimes even into the consciences of some religious, in which the true sense of consecration and of its obligations has become obscured. In this way these people, under the pretext of being modern, consent to being worldly.

Today more than ever it is absolutely necessary for us to exercise discernment of spirits; in other words, we must discriminate between the true values and the fake values presented to us by modern-day researchers and writers on sex, womanhood, love, man-woman relationship, married life, etc. We must accept and thank God for all that is true and good. We must reject errors, beware of exaggerations, and keep in mind the Gospel demands on renunciation. “Put all things to the test; keep what is good, and avoid every kind of evil”.<sup>25</sup>

It is in this context that we today have to live our lives of consecrated chastity. It is no doubt quite a different context from that which was known to Don Bosco and the first generations of Salesians. We could long for the happy old days; but we cannot ignore our present-day situation. It is God’s will that we live in it, and it is also God’s will that we live chastely, with renewed fidelity to our religious consecration and to the spirit of our Society.

All this does not imply a lax attitude. On the contrary, as a result of the considerations made on this historical context we

<sup>25</sup> 1 Tess. 5: 21-22.

ought to show a deeper understanding of, and a greater dedication to, our choice of Salesian chastity.

### **3. THE TRUE MEANING OF OUR SALESIAN CHASTITY TODAY**

As I have already said, it is not my intention to expound anew on all the meanings and dimensions of our chastity. Document 10 of the Acts of the SGC sums them up very neatly where it says that our chastity is evangelical and paschal, ecclesial and eschatological.<sup>26</sup> Here instead I would like to call your attention to some aspects which are less “classical”, but, in my judgement, nonetheless useful in the present circumstances.

#### **A renunciation accepted with wide-opened eyes**

A life of consecrated chastity is definitely “a choice of a real life”<sup>27</sup> and “a deeply Christian way of loving”.<sup>28</sup> “Instead of involving the renunciation of the capacity of human love and its enrichment, a life of consecrated chastity places the religious in a deeper and more vital relationship of love with God. Far from diminishing and frustrating a man it can fulfil him. It can deepen in him a capacity for dialogue and communication”.<sup>29</sup>

Now all this is very true. But we must be realistic about it: to bring this theory, lovely as it is, down into practical life is no easy thing! In practice, how can we achieve this great love? How can we sublimate human love? There is not the least shade of doubt that consecrated chastity implies a real mutilation. One needs the courage to look straight into the renuncia-

<sup>26</sup> See *ASGC*, 567-571.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*, 563.

<sup>28</sup> *Const.*, 75.

<sup>29</sup> *ASGC*, 562.

tion it involves. This is so difficult a thing that people in the Old Testament did not understand it and did not accept it. By consecrated chastity a religious renounces the most common expressions of human love and sex and the very natural tendency to such expressions.

I have already pointed out that in these realities — human love and sex — there are involved values of the greatest importance for the social development of a person, and that in consecrated chastity there is involved a “mutilation” — according to the violent tenor of the image used by Christ — “for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven”. But certainly the Lord gives the consecrated person other sublime values and other wonderful opportunities for maturation; nevertheless this detracts nothing from the stark reality of this hard renunciation, harsh privation.

Now, above and beyond all the nice and edifying expressions, the accepting of this renunciation brings with it also experiencing it in daily life. It entails not being surprised or frightened if and when, especially in some moments of depression or sluggishness or loneliness, its heavy burden on one’s flesh and heart is really felt. Consecrated chastity is a solid chunk of one’s cross,<sup>31</sup> and at times it may become one’s sharing in Christ’s agony in the Garden.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, as *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* remarks, “an inclination towards marriage and family life, which makes their renunciation painful, ought not to be regarded necessarily as a contradiction to a celibate vocation. Even if the pain is lifelong, this does not prejudice the genuineness of the call to virginity, provided one can live exclusively for God with full and free assent of the will. Celibacy is a call from God that can well include the continuing sacrifice of a strong propensity for marriage”.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Mt. 19: 12.

<sup>31</sup> See *ASGC*, 568.

<sup>32</sup> See Mt. 26: 37.

<sup>33</sup> *GFPC*, 48.

It would seem correct to me to say that a certain number of confreres who left their lives of consecrated chastity in order to get married, have done so because they were not prepared to face up to this painful renunciation. Then one day they became sharply aware of it, and perhaps egged on by some wild theories, they became little by little convinced that they were "abnormal". In the midst of their frustration they lost sight of the incomparable riches Christ promises and gives "already in the present age" to those who leave everything to follow him.<sup>34</sup> And then a little dreaming about marriage did the rest.

A conscious and courageous acceptance of renunciation will help us to be not only faithful, but also generous in God's service. When instead we look exclusively at the negative aspect (renunciation, that is), we unconsciously tend to look for compensations for our own frustrations.

So it can happen that after renouncing married love and physical fatherhood, we may be tempted to take back what we have put away, and resort to a selfish search for, for instance, unhealthy emotional involvement with women, mushy sentimentality, excessive desire of approval, harsh or high-handed or selfish wielding of authority, and so on. A psychologist made the remark that also in little communities based on all the members' option to live together there can be an ambiguously motivated search for intimacy and emotional outlets.

All of us, therefore, need to gain a clear understanding of ourselves — to look at ourselves with wide-open eyes! — and to be generous in our commitment. Let us not take back what we gave the Lord!

<sup>34</sup> See Mk. 10: 28-30.

### **Consecrated chastity sets us free — and binds us together!**

The very fact of renouncing something implies a choice: if I renounce certain values, it is because I prefer others. History teaches us that voluntary celibacy appears only in advanced cultures, where there has developed a high sense of personhood. By promoting consecrated virginity, the Gospel has set us free from the stereotype of *de rigueur* marriage, and at the same time it has maintained a positive evaluation of sexuality (God created man and woman as such, not automatically as husband and wife).

Voluntary celibacy bears witness to the fact that man is free in the use of his inmost energies and in the choice of his lifestyle. He thus shows his capacity to live his personal, sexual and emotional life in a manner different from the customary. His choice would be of little value though, were it to be prompted only by his whimsical, conceited or stoic desire to flaunt his autonomy or unconventionality. As it was initially prompted by love, so his choice must be continually oriented towards love. For voluntary celibacy is freedom for the purpose of a kind of union. It is an opening towards a kind of love bonds which have their own warmth and intimacy — of a different nature, of course, from the warmth and intimacy of the married love bonds.

*A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* expresses this thought in concise and felicitous formulas: “Sexual fulfilment achieved in marriage is not necessary for the emotional formation of the human personality; nor will marriage in itself bring about harmonious development of emotions. On the other hand, man is capable of sublimating his sexuality and finding fulfilment in non-sexual emotional relationships”.<sup>35</sup> And further on: “A celibate is called to express his ability to love in a special way... Celibacy chosen “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven”

<sup>35</sup> *GFPC*, 27.

... is falling in love. (It) is a vocation to a special kind of love".<sup>36</sup>

What kind of love? If we look at married and family life realistically, we see that, as some recent studies have pointed out, the very close bonds that hold the family members together are not free from uncertainties and conflicts that pressure them to fly apart. It is the purpose of these bonds to promote the maturation of the couple and their offspring through the various expressions of, and a commitment to, a true and liberating love; but human weakness and sinfulness render the achievement of this goal and the performance of this task an awfully difficult one. Or else, how would you explain today's mad stampede towards divorce courtrooms?

The consecrated celibate freely renounces "having" a wife and children, so that he can open himself to less possessive and more universal relationships. He gives up the satisfaction of his conjugal and parental love, and by so doing he is enabled to turn to all the others without any restriction or exception, and love them for their own sake, with a self-sacrificing love that fully guarantees their independence as persons. From this we can draw the conclusion that it would not be worth for us to sacrifice the values of married life, unless we firmly decided to live up to our own relationships as fully and disinterestedly as possible.

The consecrated celibate makes himself available to others, first interiorly, in his heart and mind, and then also exteriorly, by taking up works in the service of others and by investing his time and energy on their behalf — a thing that would hardly be possible were he burdened with the responsibility of caring for his own family.<sup>37</sup>

The consecrated celibate, therefore, accepts a certain amount of solitude for the sake of this deep union with God and with

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*, 31 and 51.

<sup>37</sup> See *Const.*, 75.

the others. Isolation is a negative, harmful thing; but solitude is different; you might almost call it its opposite. Solitude is like the silence that precedes speaking and makes it fruitful. Even if solitude is a real burden that we have to bear, it enables us to relate to others in such a way that we accept them from God's hands just as they are and love them for their own sake.

The consecrated celibate is one who holds his arms wide open to embrace all while renouncing to close them around one alone — a wife he could have chosen to marry, — and this for the purpose of keeping himself available to all who come to him for help. This is our vocation as Salesians.

### **Capacity for loving and serving**

Our profession of chastity, therefore, means our commitment to a “preferential love of Jesus Christ”,<sup>38</sup> which is expressed in a self-sacrificing love of our neighbor, that is, the confreres of our community, and the young of our mission. Our chastity, inspired and nourished by Christ's charity, will enable us to establish a relationship of true and generous friendship with our confreres and boys.

Allow me to touch briefly on how chastity can help us to bring about a brotherly union and fulfil our apostolic mission.

### *Chastity and brotherly union*

The SGC documents insist on the relationship between brotherly union and chastity to make us understand that the two support each other.<sup>39</sup> In the light of the considerations made above I would like to emphasize how much true chastity can

<sup>38</sup> ASGC, 575; see also 562.

<sup>39</sup> See *Const.*, 51, 71, 78; ASGC, 569 and 574.

help us towards building “a true community of persons”.<sup>40</sup>

Many inconveniences, misunderstandings and conflicts in our communities derive from individuals seeking to defend themselves against the others or to dominate them or to manipulate them for their own selfish interests. Chastity does away with this type of relationship among the confreres; it opens them to selfless love and to honest communication, and makes them understand the meaning of religious community, in which they live together as brothers not so much because of a personal choice, but because of a common call: “By calling us to live in community, God gives us brothers to love”.<sup>41</sup> Yes, to love, and not just to tolerate! In this perspective, “chastity opens us to mutual love as brothers in the spirit”,<sup>42</sup> by overcoming natural tendencies to pursue selfish interests.

Showing daily concern for the brothers’ needs, refusing to act out of aggressiveness or bitterness, smiling at them and joking with them, and dealing with them patiently, forgivingly and thoughtfully — these are the signs and fruits of chastity earnestly practiced. This is well expressed in *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*: “Voluntary celibacy makes sense”, the document says, “when it is viewed in a context of relationships with others lived in a fraternal community where one can ‘reach’ others without ‘having’ them, that is, when it is an exercise in non-possessiveness. It is a sign of celibacy rightly assumed when one can create and maintain worthwhile interpersonal relationships while experiencing the presence of friends even in their absence, refusing to impose oneself on them, and showing that need of them is limited”.<sup>43</sup>

In this perspective we can understand something which is rather new among us, that is, the SGC’s insistent invitation to

<sup>40</sup> *Const.*, 50.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*, 51.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *GFPC*, 49.

the confreres “to promote (among themselves) deep authentic friendships” — not maudlin, but virile, not exclusive-club-type, but open-to-all friendships —, because these create “the climate which enables a confrere to feel at home and esteemed for his own sake”.<sup>45</sup> Chastity properly understood is in fact just what makes it possible for us to carry on among ourselves an in-depth dialog — a thing so much spoken of today.

### *Chastity and apostolic mission*

At the same time a “well-balanced chastity... opens (a confrere’s) heart to a spiritual fatherhood... The Salesian who is really chaste... can the more readily love all whom Our Lord entrusts to him, especially boys in need... Chastity enables us to show them true love so that they are ‘aware that they are loved’ ”.<sup>46</sup>

By dealing about loving kindness and chastity within the same article,<sup>47</sup> the Constitutions help us understand the close relationship existing between the two virtues. There is no Salesian loving kindness without chastity, because a “truly personal and affectionate” love, one in which a Salesian shows “himself to be a father and a friend” to his boys, is to be understood as a sincere desire for their good without seeking any personal gain from them. Likewise, there is no chastity without loving kindness, because the confrere’s renunciation of certain expressions of love and emotional involvement are precisely for the sake of a deeper and more universal love. This in reality means that he

<sup>44</sup> *Const.*, 78; see also 53 and 111; *ASGC*, 483, 487, 574 and 680.

<sup>45</sup> *ASGC*, 487.

<sup>46</sup> *Const.*, 45, 71 and 76.

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*, 45.

has to live his spiritual fatherhood in its true nature and to its full extent.<sup>48</sup>

Let us try to understand this great truth better by illustrating it with two articles of our Constitutions. "Chastity", art. 76 tells us, "is a compelling virtue: it makes us witnesses to the special kind of love Christ had for the young". More indicative still is art. 2 which attempts to define the very identity of the Salesians as "signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are the poorest and most in need".

Let us make it unmistakably clear: our chaste love of the young has our love of God as its divine wellspring. For we must love our boys not only out of a natural liking, but in the name of Christ the Good Shepherd and in the name of God the Eternal Father, that is, with a love that takes its inspiration and strength from them, a love that is totally chaste, single-minded and selfless, a love that seeks the good and the salvation of the young with a dogged, almost violent determination, and finally a love that had its highest expression in the Father giving his Son to die for us on the cross and in the Son giving us himself entirely, in life and in death. This is indeed the tremendous love that ought to inspire us, and this is also the love we must reveal to our boys!

*Are we serving our boys or are we using them?*

At this point we should clearly see the necessity to verify from time to time the quality of our relationship with them and, if need be, to purify it of any dross. We should ask ourselves, for instance: which are our inmost motivations in dealing with our boys? on what criteria do we make the final decision to work for this or that group, on this or that pastoral undertaking? how do we deal with them in practice? how do we react to success and failure?

<sup>48</sup> See *GFPC*, 32.

If we are brutally sincere answering these and similar questions, we will probably have to admit that in many, very many occasions we have used our boys instead of serving them. We have loved them with an enslaving rather than liberating love. We have loved them for our own sakes, for the satisfaction of getting their admiration or affection. We have loved them out of our covert despicable will to dominate them and manipulate them, out of a narcissistic desire to shape them to our own image. Even the expressions we employed at times, such as *my* group, *my* boys, *my* past pupils, *my* parishioners, could point to a glib and self-indulgent paternalism or other forms of ill-disguised self-gratification.

A chaste lover, instead, helps his boys grow up for their own sake, according to their own ideal, according to their own rate, and does so with humility, respect and patience, without seeking a reward for his dedication, without expecting too much too soon. He guides them and helps them to become what they choose to become and what God wants them to become. Don Bosco's extremely fine sensibility in speech, looks and deeds was nothing but an expression of his infinite respect for the person and liberty of his boys, and a consequence of his immense faith, which enabled him to see in every boy "a brother for whom Christ died"<sup>49</sup> and a son of God who is unique and capable of an inner dialog with his Father.

*We must be mature to educate boys to love*

I will add that a chaste love is particularly necessary for us Salesians in view of our task of educating boys to a right understanding of human sexuality and a spirit of reverence for girls, women and love.<sup>50</sup> Especially today, in these difficult times of

<sup>49</sup> 1 Cor., 8: 11.

<sup>50</sup> See *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1.

ours, we as educators stand in need of much discernment, much level-headedness, much sensitivity in our zeal. Boys in turn stand in need of enlightening and convincing witness from their educators. For purity and love are taught little by words and explanations, much by reflection and sensitization, and very much by the example of those who live with them.

We realize what an important role “the personality of the educator and his own past emotions” and experiences play on his rapport with his charges, particularly in the field of sexual education.<sup>51</sup> How could an educator expect to train them to love, to self-control, to fighting against evil, or how could he guide them out of their own confusion, bewilderment and frailty, or how could he prepare them for engagement and marriage, if he himself is not thoroughly chaste, well-balanced and mature? How could he ever be a “bearer of (Christ’s) message of liberating purity”?<sup>52</sup>

Everybody knows how exacting today’s youth are on the point of consistency from their elders, and how upset and really put out they feel especially by the inconsistency of their educators. We also know how saddened — sometimes even to tears! — Don Bosco was at the thought of the disastrous effects on the boys’ souls of a Salesian unfaithful to his commitment to chastity. Maturity here means responsibility for oneself and for others.

#### **4. LIVING A LIFE OF CHASTITY AS MATURE SALESIANS**

This brings us to reflect, finally, on problems of training and practical conduct. The difficulties encountered in the practice of chastity stem chiefly from two causes: first, ignorance and uncertainty on the true meaning of consecrated chastity, inadequate

<sup>51</sup> See *GFPC*, 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Const.*, 76; see *ASGC*, 125, 556, 576 and 578.

understanding and appreciation of its human and Christian, mystical and practical values, and misunderstanding of its limitations; second, lack of determination at the time of Profession and/or later to practice it as a life-long choice.

It is therefore necessary for us to hold chastity in high esteem and — allow me the expression — to be crazy in love with it (without, of course, disparaging other valid life-long choices). We must choose it daily with vigorous determination, without ever looking backward. If we allow doubts and compromises to enter our minds, we then soon turn into abnormal beings, victims of constant conflicts, because we are deprived of the wonderful returns both of a lay vocation and of consecrated chastity.

### **The first training of a consecrated celibate**

The often-quoted *Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy* makes some important points which are fully valid also with regard to the religious as a group. “The history of priests who have defected — the document states — is often that of men somehow lacking; of personalities without unity or integration where one would look in vain for maturity and balance”. “Errors in discerning vocations are not rare — the document goes on —, and in all too many cases psychological defects, sometimes of a pathological kind, reveal themselves only after ordination to the priesthood (here we could add: or after the perpetual profession). Detecting defects earlier would help avoid many tragic experiences”. “An excessively affectionate nature, an over-sympathetic temperament, and an inclination to emotional attachments are not suitable for a celibate life ».<sup>53</sup> How could such a con-

<sup>53</sup> *GFPC*, 25, 38 and 51.

frere arouse in any boy a desire to consecrate himself to God? <sup>54</sup>

Back in his own days Don Bosco was already of the same idea. He used to say that those who by temperament were inclined to laziness, over-emotionalism, sensuality or scrupulosity were no candidates for the Salesian way of life.<sup>55</sup> To be admitted to profession, a young man must have achieved — as they put it today — an adequate emotional and sexual maturation: “an adequate psychological and affective balance”,<sup>56</sup> through a regular training by which it is ascertained he possesses self-control, clear ideas and sound motivation on the values of celibacy and a sensible way of dealing with women as befits a consecrated man.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, a verification should be made to determine whether a candidate has received from God the gift of chastity for the sake of the Kingdom, because, according to St. Paul, the decision to lead a consecrated life is in the number of charisms given to some for the benefit of all.<sup>58</sup>

### *Novitiate and first profession*

Now we can see the seriousness of a candidate's admission to the novitiate and first profession and the necessity for him to have a definite period of preparation (the Superior Council has issued detailed guidelines on it).<sup>59</sup> Evidently, any candidate who is still troubled by sex hangups or shows a noticeable lack of emotional maturity must be denied entry into the novitiate.

<sup>54</sup> See *ASGC*, 576.

<sup>55</sup> See *Const.*, 77; and old *Regulations*, 292.

<sup>56</sup> *Const.*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> See *ASGC*, 563, (in cross reference with *Perfectae Caritatis*, 12 and *Optatam Totius*, 10) and 573.

<sup>58</sup> See 1 Cor., 7: 7.

<sup>59</sup> See *Acts of the Superior Council*, No. 276 (Oct.-Dec. 1974), pp. 45, 61-73 on *Immediate Preparation for the Novitiate*. In particular, the criteria for admission to the novitiate are indicated.

Moreover, it is very important to make good use of the several-years long span between first and perpetual profession. This time is needed for the young Salesian to continue his maturation within the framework of the life he has chosen; this he should do with a vigorous effort, with all the means at his disposal, “with the help of the community and a suitable guide”<sup>60</sup> who is to aid him to be true to himself.<sup>61</sup>

In this process the role of the Master of Novices is of paramount importance; so is also that of others in charge of the novices’ training, in particular the confessors and spiritual directors. These must themselves be mature and balanced men, in command of an adequate preparation, — which today must absolutely include, but not be limited to, a psychological preparation.<sup>62</sup> Besides, they must make use of that most wonderful pedagogical tool given them by the Church and already referred to many times, i.e. *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*. It is their bounded duty to study it accurately and make the necessary adaptations to the Salesian consecrated life.

### **Education to chastity in a Salesian atmosphere**

A certain climate or atmosphere is needed for a consecrated person to mature properly and to persevere in his life of joyous and generous self-dedication. And the Salesian atmosphere fills exactly that need. In fact chastity, as it was taught by Don Bosco, is intimately bound up with such fundamental values of the Salesian spirit, as awareness of God’s presence, loving kindness, availability to others, steady and tranquil joy...

Paradoxically, we could say that we will succeed in observing

<sup>60</sup> *Const.*, 114.

<sup>61</sup> See *Acts of the Superior Council*, No. 276, pp. 73-78.

<sup>62</sup> See *GFPC*, 39.

our chastity if we will not be too uptight about it, if we will only busy ourselves with it to a reasonable extent. « Even when confronted with ignorance or mistaken notions about sex, one has to avoid an over-emphasis in which sex is made to appear the sole, or the most important, element of human motivation”.<sup>63</sup>

Our Lord did not say much about chastity, but he, above everything else, lived and asked us to live a life of loving rapport with his Father and his brethren. The more strongly determined we will be in our vocation, the more strongly dedicated we will be in our loving service of God and of our boys and the less troubled we will be with our chastity. Chastity will then become a carry-over of our charity. “Purity cannot be mastered by concentrating on it as a fixed and isolated idea, but only by including it in a wider view of life that includes justice and charity, elements absolutely necessary to give any life meaning and value... In this area a training is needed to form the candidates into men who love with charity all human beings”.<sup>64</sup> Too many times in the past has chastity been isolated from the influence of charity.

In fact charity, better than any other virtue, can because of its dynamic nature marshal all the energies of one's personality, integrate them, develop them and make them highly productive. “The workings of the theological virtues”, says the above mentioned Church document, “give a new and higher significance to chastity and even change its very nature. It becomes a gift from God with a power that enables the will not so much to suppress sexual desires as to integrate the sex drive into the entirety of the Christian personality”.<sup>65</sup> This agrees perfectly with what our Constitutions declare to be “the very heart of our Salesian spirit: a young and alive pastoral love”.<sup>66</sup> So here is the basic problem about chastity: to spark and then to keep

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Id.*, 40 and 47.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*, 27.

<sup>66</sup> *Const.*, 40.

aflame in us that “ardent apostolic drive which makes us ‘seek souls and serve God alone’”<sup>67</sup> — that charity which finds “its model and source in the heart of Christ, sent by the Father and on fire with ‘zeal for his house’”.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, the key to Salesian chastity is Salesian charity. There is no chastity apart from charity. Only chaste love exists. We Salesians do not choose chastity for its own sake. We choose Jesus Christ (though we are first chosen by him) and we choose to serve others for the sake of his Kingdom; and within this framework we choose chastity and accept its inner logic and all its consequences.

This perspective accounts for the particular tone or style of our Salesian chastity. Our chastity is lived in an atmosphere of serenity and cheerfulness, youthful buoyancy and sprightly resoluteness, clear-eyed discernment and unyielding trust in life and finally attentive perception of God’s presence in us. Despite his strong practical unpoetic bend, Don Bosco used to wax lyrical whenever he spoke about chastity: from his own experience chastity stood out as the beautiful blossom of charity. Now all these characteristics can be applied quite properly to our dynamic Salesian charity.

There follows that whatever in us fosters and strengthens charity, — as for instance heart-felt prayer, the twin “table of the Word of God and of the Eucharist”,<sup>69</sup> fraternal charity and daily humble dedication in the service of our boys — at the same time also fosters and strengthens chastity. Viceversa, whatever weakens and stifles our pastoral charity, also threatens our chastity and makes it little by little burdensome and uncomfortable. As long as the Lord will send us zealous Salesians, — I said ‘zealous’, and I did not mean restless activists or agitated workmaniacs —, we will have luminously chaste Salesians.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*, 41; see 101.

<sup>69</sup> See *Const.*, 79.

Moreover, we will have Salesians who will be interiorly strong, ready to stand up to evil, and therefore ready to face difficult and delicate situations whenever necessary. Our work brings us into contact with a world which is full of temptations and is seemingly becoming... fuller by the day! Even though we exercise prudence (an always necessary virtue!), we cannot avoid them altogether: "Father, I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One".<sup>70</sup>

What will enable us to keep ourselves chaste? The inner strength of our love of God and of youth. It is basically the same thing that enables a married man, constantly battered by vicious examples and foul seductions, to stand loyal to the woman he chose — that is, his love of her. Outer defenses will be of little benefit unless there are inner defenses built up and maintained by loyalty and love. During the Council a group of religious women presented this remark to the Commission in charge of drafting *Perfectae Caritatis*: "Fearful isolation can be no solution. Formation to chastity consists less in setting up protective distances than in improving our rapport with God, for it is in the fulness of God's presence in us that we find strength and security for our chastity".<sup>71</sup>

### **A steady progress towards maturity**

I hope no Salesian uses these considerations of mine for imprudent behavior or disturbing experimentation, for this would be a sign of immaturity. Besides, it is not enough to have clear ideas to solve a problem.

A healthy and mature chastity, no less than true and mature

<sup>70</sup> Jn 17: 15.

<sup>71</sup> Remark presented towards the end of 1964. See Tillard-Congar, *Il rinnovamento della vita religiosa (Renewal of Religious Life)*, Vallecchi 1968, p. 340.

love, is the end of a long journey which invariably takes us through the Cross. Neither conjugal nor consecrated love can be achieved without a deliberate acceptance of asceticism and conversion, that is, without going through a lengthy, gradual and unavoidably painful process of purification that will lead us out of easy but sterile self-love into selfless love of God and neighbor.

It is no easy thing to get out of ourselves, to leave our cozy little nest, to make an exodus from ourselves and venture out towards God and people. "Love and self-denial complement each other, since self-denial frees man and makes room for love; love, in turn, induces one to self-denial... Maturity and freedom can only be attained by means of a long and uninterrupted practice of self-control and self-giving throughout the years of formation".<sup>72</sup> It would be very naive of us indeed were we to believe that we could overcome our temptations and control our desires without entering upon the paschal mystery of Christ our Savior, without "facing death every day!"<sup>73</sup>

Our religious profession, even when it is preceded by a thorough preparation, does not usher us into an angelic life, but it leaves us to contend with our human nature. It does not automatically set us free from either sensual drives or our tendency to refer people and even God to ourselves and to seek to be loved rather than to love. Neither does it offer us a guarantee against possible psychic or spiritual regressions.

Our profession, therefore, is not a treasure that we come into possession of one happy day and then lock into a safe-deposit box for perpetual safekeeping. It is a value, instead, which is written — by God's grace — into the very fibers of our living nature and enmeshed with the texture of our persons and the development of our personalities. In other words, it is a value that we have to discover, take up, and preserve every day in

<sup>72</sup> *GFPC*, 53 and 55.

<sup>73</sup> 1 Cor., 15: 31.

ever varying situations, in ever shifting circumstances. For this reason each of us must know himself ever more clearly and learn to control his life of chastity progressively better. Evidently, to attain this it is necessary for every confrere to get help from a wise and experienced spiritual guide, at least during the confrere's first years of profession and at specially difficult moments later; it is useful for him to do so at any other time in his life; and, on special occasions, it may also be useful to get professional help from a psychologist or the like.<sup>74</sup>

Our Special General Chapter embraced this historic perspective on Salesian chastity in its entirety. "Chastity is not something acquired once and for all", our Constitutions tell us. "It has its moments of tranquillity and moments of difficulty. It is a gift which because of human weakness is fragile and vulnerable and needs a daily pledge of fidelity".<sup>75</sup> Even a mature and balanced Salesian in his 30's or 40's may quite unexpectedly be overtaken by a squall... We have already said that this should cause him no surprise, but he should make use of it as an opportunity for looking into himself and his commitment to chastity more deeply.<sup>76</sup> The document on formation in priestly celibacy invites him to face such eventual crisis with sound realism and with a lively and humble faith.<sup>77</sup>

*St. Paul's "castigo corpus meum, I chastise my body"*

A typically Salesian observation is called for here. Don Bosco and our tradition have always recommended, as a means for observing chastity, the joint use of natural and supernatural means. But, for pedagogical reasons, the means of ascetic nature have always been assigned the first place.

<sup>74</sup> See *GFPC*, 38 and 42.

<sup>75</sup> *Const.*, 79; see also *ASGC*, 564.

<sup>76</sup> See *Const.*, 119.

<sup>77</sup> See *Const.*, 67-69.

For instance, in his *Introduction to the Constitutions*, Don Bosco spoke only of means of mortification or self-denial (though, undoubtedly, such means are inspired by love of Christ on the cross). And this he did for a good reason. His pastoral pragmatism had convinced him that the most fervent prayers and the most assiduous reception of the sacraments were next to useless for the one who did not accept St. Paul's program of "*castigo corpus meum, I chastise my body*,"<sup>78</sup> which he quoted in his *Introduction*.

"*Castigo corpus meum*" today consists largely in rejecting every kind of intemperance. The field, in which Don Bosco calls us to exercise self-denial with his strong and challenging program of Salesian temperance, is today fraught with no less potentially dangerous and tempting situations than then — to point out just one, the easy use and abuse of alcoholic drinks. But there is an area in which it is absolutely necessary for us today to reject every kind of intemperance for the defense of our chastity — I mean the area of mass media. It is not true that we may look at everything, read everything, listen to everything.

It goes against sound psychology and plain common sense for one to believe that giving indiscriminate freedom (license, that is) to his senses will have no effect on his imagination, on his thoughts and finally on his actions. As this is a matter of human nature, it applies to every man, particularly to a man who has to maintain the fragile balance of chastity. This balance is, in fact, based not only on God's holy grace — which is not to be lightly presumed! —, but on a constant and difficult striving towards self-mastery through self-denial. He who wants to be spiritually healthy, must breathe in clean air and steer clear of the miasma of this decadent culture of ours which, unfortunately, is invading our world. (As educators, let us not forget our

<sup>78</sup> 1 Cor., 9: 27.

responsibilities in this regard, especially in the choice of shows for our boys' theaters).

Vatican II has likewise reminded us that we "should take advantage of those natural helps which favor mental and bodily health".<sup>79</sup> For mental fatigue, resulting from overwork or excessive pressure, sooner or later leads to physical or psychic exhaustion, and this in turn becomes a fertile ground for temptations. Sufficient sleep and relaxation are needed to preserve emotional balance.

### **Our relationships with externs**

I would now like to touch upon some aspects of our relationships with externs. In the first part of this letter, when I was talking about the new social and cultural context in which we have to live our chastity today, I called to your minds a thought of the Special General Chapter: a mature practice of chastity "presupposes a genuine and serene reverence ...for sexuality ...human love ...and women".<sup>80</sup> A consecrated life is no negation or fear of, or flight from, social relationships; it is a special, but genuine, manner of communicating with people, women included. Besides, as the same Chapter remarked,<sup>81</sup> the evolution of our pastoral praxis leads us today, in certain environments, to take on larger responsibilities towards women and girls. The very renewal of our Salesian Family issued a call for "intercommunication and collaboration" among its various groups, so that "through sharing and collaboration, we (can) live the experience of the gospel to our mutual enrichment".<sup>82</sup>

All this supposes that the Salesian of today has learned the proper manner of dealing with women. If he has not, this could

<sup>79</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*, 12.

<sup>80</sup> *ASGC*, 563.

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*, 51 and 355; *Regulations*, 7 and 12.

<sup>82</sup> *ASGC*, 174; see 692.

bring disaster upon him, his community and the people concerned.

It is, therefore, important for us in this regard to have clear ideas, if we want to conduct ourselves properly. To put it in a nutshell, we must make a double effort: first, to understand, and second, to be honest with ourselves as men and as Salesians.

### *An effort to understand*

For obvious reasons it is particularly necessary for us to understand that our renunciation here touches us in one of the most sensitive areas of our being and, consequently, it will be all the more natural to look consistently and albeit unconsciously for compensations.

Earlier in this letter I invited you to check from time to time on the deep-seated motivations and the external qualities of your relationships in the apostolate. Such check deserves to be made more accurately with regard to our relationships with women. For instance we should ask ourselves: Why in this circumstance do I want to meet with this woman or girl or female group? Do I really intend this meeting for her or their good and for God's Kingdom or for my own satisfaction? With what delicacy and tact do I deal with them?

Leaving aside other obvious considerations, we should take into account the negative, albeit unexpressed, reaction of people around us to an improper and 'free' behavior in this regard. I recall a remark a Superior once made: "We're now planning our apostolate for the summer. We'll organize several camps — some for boys and others for girls. I'm having a hard time finding enough Salesians to work for the lads; but for the gals I've got too many volunteers!"

My dear confreres, Don Bosco wanted us to be specifically oriented towards boys and young men: it is them that we have to look for, because they are our natural destinataries.<sup>83</sup> Yes,

<sup>83</sup> ASGC, 51.

the Chapter recognized that “in certain kinds of pastoral responsibility” there arises “a need for an integrated (mixed) education for our young people”. But this is a matter of providing for an educational need in circumstances and environments that must be well defined, and not a reason for an indiscriminate (or nearly so) opening towards boys and girls, which would cause our works to lose their precise character of male institutions. This is no doubt such a momentous and delicate problem that we will have to responsibly reflect on it at the proper time and place.

Something else we ought to understand is the prudence or reserve which is required in this delicate field. All the Salesians should have a suitable “instruction in the character and psychology of women as it is affected by the sort of life they lead and by their age”.<sup>84</sup> I am afraid that some of them sometimes are not aware of the subtle processes of transference or fixation which they, out of a seriously imprudent naïveté, risk to trigger in women.

For instance, a young Salesian — Coadjutor Brother or cleric — should realize that a girl is naturally inclined to see in him the ideal “man” (male, that is), endowed with many wonderful talents, etc. and for every little problem she comes up with she is likely to turn to him, thus developing a sort of attachment and dependence on him. A priest should in turn realize that his ministration to a married woman or a married couple invariably brings a new element into the husband-wife relationship and could give rise to difficulties and problems, even serious ones.

What balance is, therefore, required in giving spiritual or pastoral assistance! What a remarkable capacity for discernment and self-mastery, what a sense of responsibility, and what a forthright faith-inspired intention are needed in dealing with women! There is indeed a great deal of truth in the statement made in the church document already referred to: “A good and healthy relation-

<sup>84</sup> *GFPC*, 60.

ship towards women cannot be a matter of improvisation. It has to be achieved through a slow and delicate training process”.<sup>85</sup>

### **An effort to be honest with ourselves as men and as Salesians**

I would not want to insinuate by these reflections that the problem of our relationship with women should degenerate into an obsession. Just the opposite! I spoke of the need to be honest with ourselves as men and as Salesians. “As in all human relationships, so too in the relations between (ourselves) and women, the correct course to follow is that of truth and sincerity. Genuineness in behavior automatically excludes everything that is fake and artificial”.<sup>86</sup>

The goal for us here is to attain a serene and “natural, unequivocal and clear attitude”.<sup>87</sup> Our very family spirit invites us to avoid anything stiff and stilted and to be genial and cordial without mawkishness in dealing with people. “The Salesian’s manner of action is to seek to do all things well, with due measure and simplicity. He is open and cordial, ready to make the first advance and to receive people with kindness, respect and patience”.<sup>88</sup> In this we should take for our guideline Don Bosco’s way of dealing with his women benefactors as it is revealed in his letters to them. These letters are, as Fr. Aubry has recently described them, “masterpieces of human and priestly tact, a marvelous blend of reverence and affection, savoir faire and candor, pastoral daring and discretion”.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* On this point the document offers excellent guidelines. Read carefully 57-61, 65, 87-88. The special importance assigned to the educative influence of the spiritual director — to whom young religious in particular are invited to go for guidance — is worth noticing.

<sup>86</sup> *GFPC*, 59.

<sup>87</sup> *ASGC*, 675.

<sup>88</sup> *Const.*, 45.

<sup>89</sup> *Scritti Spirituali di S. Giovanni Bosco (Spiritual Writings of St. John Bosco)*. edited by Fr. Joseph Aubry, Città Nuova 1976, vol. 2, p. 70.

I will add that there is a sign by which we can tell whether a consecrated man behaves as he should when dealing with women: it is the genuineness of his fraternal charity within his community. We at times see a Salesian who is sweet and kind with externs, and gruff and mean with his confreres. A tendency to overfriendliness with women coupled with a shying away from the community would be a sure sign of a disorderly emotional condition.

In particular our immaturity in this regard would make it especially difficult, if not impossible, for us to promote the welfare of the Salesian Family. It is my sincere hope, instead, that all of us bring their honest contribution to it in a true family spirit, that is, by helping each other as brothers and sisters to love and serve the Lord and the destinaries of our mission better and better. On this point our Special General Chapter issued an appeal "to be authentically 'ourselves'": "A truer consciousness of the religious aspect of our vocation will make us better fitted to help the Cooperators and other lay groups to live their vocation with a more penetrating sense of the Gospel and of the Beatitudes".<sup>90</sup>

### *Some practical situations*

Just before closing allow me one quick reference to some practical situations in our Salesian life.

First of all, *the employing of female personnel in our houses*. Here we should ask ourselves to what extent this is needed or useful, and in any case we should ask ourselves whether by doing so we could still say that we are, as individuals and as communities, within the true Salesian spirit and style.

Next a word on *the atmosphere needed to build up a Salesian*

<sup>90</sup> ASGC, 126.

*community.* A religious community needs — no less than a home or an individual, rather still more than they do — what the English-speaking people call privacy. In fact a religious community is a family, but not just like any other family; for it is a family of consecrated men; and as such it has its particular need for intimacy and reserve. Such need is fulfilled by reserving certain places of the house and certain times of the day for the community members only. It is true that we must be ready to welcome people; but this does not mean that our house should open the door of every room to everyone every hour of the day.<sup>91</sup>

Lastly, *our relationships with our families.* A significant evolution has taken place here. The Special General Chapter presents contact with the family as a sign and outlet of legitimate affection (especially when it is a case of visiting one's parents); moreover, it considers it as an aid to maturity and balance, and as an opportunity for witnessing. Naturally, all this should be done with moderation and discretion — two typically Salesian virtues.<sup>92</sup>

We should never forget, however, that, as consecrated men, we must give our mission the absolute priority. Except for emergency cases of assistance, the love of our family members takes the second place after the needs of the Kingdom of heaven.<sup>93</sup> It is our duty to delicately educate our dear ones on this Gospel truth we have accepted and believe in.

## **Two perennial sources of light and strength**

As you see, I touched upon many aspects of our consecrated chastity, and also made many references to practical situations.

<sup>91</sup> See *Const.*, 52.

<sup>92</sup> See *ASGC*, 674; *Reg.*, 40; *GFPC*, 85.

<sup>93</sup> Lk 9: 59-62.

I am confident that you will take them to heart and do your very best to put them into practice. As a concluding exhortation I believe it could be useful to call your attention to three deliberations proposed by the 21st General Chapter to all the Salesians on the matter of chastity.

“1. Both as a congregation and as individuals, Salesians must be acutely conscious of the fact that they have a special message of purity to transmit to the modern world. They have a special mission towards the young whom they must train to be vigorous in their practice of purity. For such a mission, they themselves must in a special way be invincible in their own purity.

2. The Salesian must loyally admit the necessity of mortification and prudence, virtues which, especially in this field, are authentic expressions of personal love for Christ and are, besides, the condition required for a balanced interior life. He must exclude everything of a doubtful character (books, films, etc.). He must be discreet in spiritual direction. If he is obliged to exercise his apostolate towards women, he should do it with simplicity and delicacy and in full accord with his superior.

3. The Salesian should give the Blessed Virgin her rightful place in his personal life. Thus his affections will have their fruitful supernatural outlet and his purity its proper radiance”<sup>94</sup>

This brings my letter to an end.

Dear confreres, please receive these considerations with simplicity and openness, and try to draw profit from them, both by personal meditation and community reading. You will do well to take them in their entirety, without emphasizing some points to the disadvantage of others, so as to ensure a balanced view.

Let us pray to the Holy Spirit to enlighten us with his gifts. Our consecrated chastity is in fact possible, most of all because

<sup>94</sup> *Acts of XIX General Chapter*, pp. 84-85.

it is gift of God, “a precious grace”,<sup>95</sup> that we must accept with gratitude and develop as a joyful and loving return in kind.

There are two perennial sources of light and strength at our disposal: the Holy Eucharist, where we meet the loving Christ as our Victim and Nourishment, and where we can communicate, body and soul, with his Saving Body and Blood;<sup>96</sup> and a filial devotion to the Virgin Help of Christians, blessed among women, Immaculate, wholly consecrated to ther Son, and foundress of our Salesian work on her day, 8th of December.

Cordial greetings and heartfelt prayers — and thank you for your own prayers.

Affectionately,  
Fr. LOUIS RICCERI  
*Rector Major*

<sup>95</sup> *Const.*, 75.

<sup>96</sup> Our interior attitude is well expressed by this liturgical prayer: “Cleanse our spirit, O Lord, and renew it with this sacrament of salvation, so that also our mortal bodies may receive the seed of resurrection and of new life”. (*Postcom. of Tuesday of the 4th week in Lent*).

### III. THE 21ST GENERAL CHAPTER

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Preparation for GC 21 and respective Provincial Chapters is now a fairly well documented thing at the Secretariat of the Moderator, where detailed reports on the work done are received daily. The Technical Commissions in charge of the preparation for the Provincial Chapters have evidently been able, in almost every Province, to reach their confreres and their communities, to rouse their spirits in various manners and in particular to create a remarkable climate of prayer. This, we believe, will contribute in no small amount to making their reflection and verification more serious and effective.

In nearly all the Provinces a Regulator has already been nominated and Delegates to the Provincial Chapters have been elected. The dates for the celebration of the Chapters in various countries have been set to fall, broadly speaking, into two periods: either the pre-Christmas period or the pre-Holy Week Triduum period. Certain Chapters, however, especially in the southern hemisphere, will be held during the months of January-March, and a handful of them were already held in November. Some Provinces celebrate their Chapters in a single session, lasting about 10 days or more; others, instead, prefer to stagger their meetings into two or even four sessions over a period of several months.

Within the last quarter of 1976 there was a flurry of requests for juridical clarifications, especially with reference to the election of Delegates to Provincial Chapters and the proper functioning of the Chapters themselves. With the aid of the Juridical Office, the Moderator tried to reply to all queries as promptly as possible.

To meet requests for aids and for suggestions on how to foster a better spirit of interest and prayer in communities in preparation for the GC 21, the Moderator in November sent all the Provincials a folder containing various prayers, suggestions for liturgical and paraliturgical celebrations, samples of "Liturgies of the Word", etc. All this material was either taken from material submitted by some Provinces or specially prepared by the Secretariat of the Moderator.

Other helpful material, excerpted from the rich documentation received at the Generalate, such as reflections on the general study topic, and talks by some members of the Superior Council, was likewise mailed out to any one who requested it. Materials were also exchanged among Provinces within the same language groups, and this proved to be beneficial to all those involved in the exchange. On such occasions Provincial Newsletters showed how useful they can be.

Once again we think it advisable to remind the confreres that it is the task of the Provincial Chapter — besides what is stated in Const. 177,5 — to study the topics proposed for GC 21 on the basis of the contributions made by confreres and communities, to elaborate proposals and suggestions to be sent to GC 21, and to propose other topics which are considered vitally important for the Congregation. It is therefore a question of, first of all, making a double verification according to the directives issued by the Rector Major, i.e. a verification on the basis (literally: the versant) of the Constitutions and Regulations and then a verification on the basis of the general study topic. To this primary task must be subordinated all other topics or problems, no matter how important and valid for the whole Congregation they may be considered.

“Finally an eventual adjunct privileged selection of a topic or problem more markedly local should be made on the basis of its specific weight for the purposes of renewal (in response) to a valid expectation which is widespread among confreres and communities, and it should prove to be objectively not insertable on both of the above-mentioned versants of verification”\*; in other words, if a secondary topic is chosen, it should be relevant for individual confreres and communities and, of course, it should not be already included in the major topic.

At this time we remind you that the deadlines of March 31 and April 30, 1977 cannot be extended. No later than March 31 the

\* A literal translation of this curlicued conundrum: «*Infine un'eventuale scelta privilegiata aggiuntiva di un tema o problema più spiccatamente locale dovrebbe essere fatta in base al suo peso specifico ai fini del rinnovamento, ad un'attesa valida, diffusa dei confratelli e delle comunità, e risultare oggettivamente non inseribile nei due versanti suddetti della verifica*». (Translator's note).

replies to the *Survey on the State of the Works of the Congregation* should be forwarded to the Secretariat; and no later than April 30 the documents relative to Provincial Chapters (see Acts of the Superior Council, No. 283, p. 15) and the contributions of individual confreres should likewise be forwarded to the same Secretariat. The names of the Delegates to the GC 21 should be made known to the Secretariat immediately after their election, because it is from their number that the Rector Major with his Council will in May choose the members of the Precapitular Commission.

The Moderator is standing by to assist you with clarifications, suggestions, aids, etc. on request. He is grateful for all the news items and documentation sent to him on work done or being done in the Provinces.

The responsibility of the confreres and of the communities should not end with the election of the Delegates to the Provincial Chapter and to GC 21. Reflection, study, information, education and prayer should be continued, so as to support that spirit of trust, which is never missing in those who do God's will, and which must accompany our entire preparation for and celebration of GC 21.

## IV. COMMUNICATIONS

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### 1. Motto of the Rector Major for the year 1977

The new Motto of the Rector Major, which is published in the January issue of the various editions of the Salesian Bulletin, aims at getting the entire Salesian Family of Don Bosco involved in some way with the celebration of the General Chapter 21.

In practice, the motto deals with a topic which is highly relevant and much discussed in the Church today, i.e. evangelization. It is also the general study topic chosen by the Rector Major for the confreres' reflection in preparation for GC 21.

If the individual confreres, their communities and the various branches of the Salesian Family will in the next months carry on an in-depth study of this topic, it will be possible for all of us to achieve a greater understanding of, and unity of action in working for, Don Bosco's apostolic project. This in turn will make our combined efforts on behalf of youth in the Church and in the world more effective.

The text of the Motto:

The Salesian Congregation this year celebrates the Twenty-first General Chapter in its history, exactly one century after the First Chapter, which was convoked by Don Bosco himself. On this memorable occasion the Salesians are all invited to check on the effectiveness of the renewal of the Congregation, as requested by the Church after the Council, in the light of the deep reflection which the Church is making on the fruitful theme of EVANGELIZATION. I think it most opportune this year to extend to all the members of the Salesian Family an invitation to check on their efforts towards

**PROCLAIMING CHRIST AND  
BEARING WITNESS TO HIM WITH THEIR LIVES.**

Individually and collectively within our Family we will all strive to live up to this pledge in the light of Don Bosco's apostolic project, which is today more timely than ever.

Fr. LOUIS RICCERI  
*Rector Major*

## 2. New Provincials

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

Fr. Aureliano LAGUNA VEGAS for León (Spain),

Fr. Omero PARON for Mogliano Veneto Venetian Province (Italy),  
and

Fr. Benjamin PUTHOTA for Madras (India).

## 3. Our Causes of Canonization

### a) *Msgr. Versiglia and Fr. Caravario declared martyrs*

An important forward step in the Causes of Beatification of Msgr. Versiglia and Fr. Caravario has been taken recently. The Sunday, November 14, issue of *L'Osservatore Romano* carried the following communiqué:

“Yesterday, November 13, 1976, in the presence of the Holy Father, six decrees concerning as many Causes of Canonization and Beatification were promulgated; to wit, ... on the martyrdom of the Servants of God: Louis Versiglia, of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, Titular bishop of Caristo, Vicar Apostolic of Schiuchow, born at Oliva Gessi, Tortona diocese, on June 5, 1873 and died at Li Thau Tseui, China, on February 25, 1930; and Callistus Caravario, priest of the same Society of St. Francis de Sales, born at Cuorgnè, Turin, on June 8, 1903, and died at Li Thau Tseui on February 25, 1930..”.

This Decree is an official recognition of the martyrdom of our two missionaries. Only one miracle is now needed for their Beatification.

This is joyous news indeed — one that puts the crowning touch on the Centennial of our Salesian Missions.

### b) *Msgr. Cimatti's "Cognitional" Process begun.*

News has come from Japan that on November 26, 1976 at Chofu, in the presence of four bishops and a large representation of the Salesian Family the “Cognitional” Process (as the canonical process

is presently called) for the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Msgr. Vincent Cimatti was officially opened.

For information on this saintly and genial Salesian, please write to: Fr. Carlo Orlando, Postulator of the Causes, Via della Pisana 1111, 00100 Rome-Aurelio (Italy).

#### **4. Salesian Cooperators' World Congress**

“A Salesian presence in the world to carry Christ to youth”. With this slogan the Centennial manifesto had announced the Salesian Cooperators' World Congress, following a letter of convocation issued by the Rector Major on May 24, 1975, in which he had set dates and topics (see ASC No. 280).

Local, provincial and national precongresses had done the preparatory work among the rank and file; the Congress, which was celebrated at the Salesianum, Rome, October 30-November 3, 1976, marked the crowning point.

Present were 75 members out of 78 Provinces and Delegations, representing 40 nations. There were 150 Delegates and 131 Observers, thus distributed: 105 lay and 45 religious Delegates; 55 lay and 76 religious Observers. In this way the percentages set by the Cooperators' Regulations were observed. This was the first time that a Cooperators' Congress was conducted prevalently by them.

The Congress was graced by the presence of Cardinals Garrone, Carpino and Silva Henríquez, Bishops Moreira Neves, Castillo and Javierre, 11 Salesian Superiors, 2 Superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the highest Superiors of various Groups of the Salesian Family and of Third Orders.

In the afternoon of October 30 the Rector Major opened the Congress. The Secretary-Coordinator of the Italian National Council welcomed the participants and the Moderator, Dr. Luigi Sarcheletti, introduced the Program and provided for the formation of Committees and Study Groups.

A climate of friendliness and brotherliness immediately developed among the participants. Each day began with a well-prepared and intensely-followed liturgical celebration.

Fr. John Raineri, Councillor for the Apostolate of the Adults

and for Social Communications, delivered the keynote commemorative message. The topic, "*The Salesian Cooperators' Commitment in the Family, in the Church and in Society*", was presented in three talks, delivered respectively by Mr. Isidoro Barneto (Spain), Mr. Roberto Ingaramo (Argentina) and Mr. Giuseppe Giannantonio (Italy).

Thirteen study groups examined the reports in very lively sessions. Their conclusions were voted upon by the General Assembly with the electronic voting machine on November 2, together with the proposed modifications of the new Regulations, which were presented by Mr. Angelo Tei.

A Cooperators' Panel on Missionary Activities had Delegates from India, Argentina, Spain, Mexico and Italy to report before the General Assembly on their missionary or apostolic activities. At the end two young Cooperators, soon to leave for Patagonia, added their own testimony. This was a clear indication of the new missionary trend developing among the Cooperators.

The various entries of the Salesian Missions Centennial Competition promoted by the Cooperators among young students in Italy were put on display during the Congress.

On November 3, more than 2,000 members and friends of the Salesian Family joined the 300 World Congress and the 300 Young Cooperators' European Congress participants for a concelebrated Mass at the Altar of Confession in St. Peter's presided over by the Rector Major.

At 11 a.m., always in St. Peter's basilica, they were received in a special audience by Pope Paul VI. The text of the speech is reported in the Documents Section below.

On November 3-5 the Young Cooperators' European Congress was held at Grottaferrata, near Rome. Its topic was: "*Working together to build a civilization of love through evangelization*". Fr. Riccardo Tonelli, SDB, gave the major report, which was discussed in 20 study groups.

Lively participation in liturgical services and discussions, and youthful cheerfulness during the evening fraternity hours characterized this Congress. The final motion was a forthright appeal to all Salesians to get more intimately involved with Young Cooperators' groups so as to help the Cooperators to be truly, as Don Bosco wanted, "the soul of the Congregation".

A Salesian present at the Congress summed up his impressions in these words: "We hold in our hands a first-rate human potential, whose effectiveness on society depends on us. This raises some big question marks: To what extent are we Salesians accepting or seeking the responsible collaboration of our Cooperators? What preparation do we have or are we trying to get in order to train these young Cooperators to be apostolic-minded? Are we willing to associate them in some way to our works?"

## **5. The First Asian-Australian Past Pupils' Congress**

On November 25 - December 1, 1976 the First Asian-Australian Past Pupils' Congress was held — with great success — in Hong Kong.

Present were three Superiors of the Council representing the Rector Major: the Councillor for the Past Pupils Fr. John Raineri, the Regional for the Far-East Fr. George Williams, and the Councillor for the Missions Fr. Bernard Tohill. Representing the World Confederation were the Confederal President Señor José Gonzalez Torres (from Mexico), the Confederal Delegate Fr. Umberto Bastasi (who was the animator of the Congress) and other major officials of the European organization.

Despite the great distances and the expenses of the trips, 103 Delegates representing the Federations of China (Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan), Bhutan, Burma, India, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Thailand and Australia showed up punctually at the Aberdeen Technical School in Hong Kong. Unable to attend were only the delegations from Viet Nam and Sri Lanka.

It was the goal of the Congress to help the Past Pupils to discern their identity, their Salesian provenance, their organizational structures and the mission which they carry on jointly with the other members of the Salesian Family on behalf of youth. In other words, the Congress aimed at helping them deepen their consciousness of their Salesian call to build up a better world, and offered them an opportunity to get to know each other across cultural, linguistic and religious barriers and to give the world an effective witness of a love

which amidst a plurality of religious beliefs can truly create a unity of purpose and a brotherly spirit.

The keynote address, entitled: "*The meaning and the role of the Don Bosco Past Pupils' Association in Asia and Australia*", was delivered by Mr. Carlisle Curry, Federal President of India. Other speakers were: Fr. John Raineri, Fr. Bernard Tohill, who commemorated the Salesian Missions Centennial, and Fr. George Williams, who read a telegram from the Holy Father and a message from the Rector Major. Particularly significant was the participation of the President of the Hong Kong Association, Mr. Winston Chu, a distinguished lawyer and a non-Catholic.

Right from the outset there was felt among the participants that unmistakable sense of friendliness, brotherliness and joviality which has always been typical of the Past Pupils' Congresses. No one had any difficulty fraternizing with non-Christian Past Pupils, who in some Asian Federations reach up to 90% of the membership.

Attachment to Don Bosco and his Successor was visible in all the members, the non-Catholic included. This was manifested particularly in their willingness to work alongside the Salesians on behalf of youth.

Of the many events one deserves a special mention, that is, the inter-faith prayer service which took place in the general assembly hall of the Hong Kong University, with the participation of outstanding Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Moslem and, of course, Christian personalities. There were in it some poignant moments of shared religious feeling — one more evidence that man's yearning for spiritual realities is one of his essential dimensions.

Invaluable for the success of the Congress was the contribution of the Salesian Sisters, who carried a heavy share of its complex organization and made the Congress participants feel welcome and comfortable in their houses.

The Delegates, divided into 8 groups, held lively discussions on the speakers' reports and made a number of important final motions. Here are some samples:

- The Association shows to be fully capable of carrying on the education received in Salesian houses and of making it bear fruit in the service of its fellow members, society and Church.

- For the Association's vitality it seems necessary to set up a minimal structural organization — from local Unions or Groups attached to Salesian houses all the way to the Center at the Generalate.

- It is not only opportune, but necessary for lay members, who have the responsibility of directing the Association, at the same time to feel the need for, and to explore the possibilities of, cooperating with the Congregation.

- It is likewise a duty for the Salesians to stand by their Past Pupils as spiritual animators of their Association.

As a result, the Congress issued a solicitous appeal to the Far-Eastern Provincials to see to it that at provincial and local levels:

- a)* Salesians are enabled to acquire a deeper knowledge about the Association through the study of the official documents of the Congregation and the Association itself;

- b)* they learn, along the various educational stages, how to prepare their pupils to become members of the Association and to enter the labor world — briefly, to be good Past Pupils;

- c)* those Salesians are chosen as Past Pupils' Delegates who are well trained, spiritually updated, friendly, and committed to working among boys and young men; and

- d)* such Delegates are assured an adequate amount of time for their tasks, and a certain continuity on their posts as Delegates (when a new Delegate is made, let this be done in consultation and agreement with the lay officials of the Association).

In the judgement of those in charge of the Congress, it fully achieved its goals. On the basis of the resolutions passed, it will be followed by a Second Asian-Australian Past Pupils' Congress to be held in Manila in 1980.

## 6. The Seventh Course of On-going Formation

The 7th Course of On-going Formation is presently being held at the Salesianum. Begun on November 10, 1976, it will close in early February 1977.

The purpose of the Courses is to foster the renewal called for by the Special General Chapter and to offer the Provinces an incentive and a guideline for similar courses to be organized locally.

Also the present Course intends to provide a stimulus for various local initiatives, which have been developing in many parts of the Salesian world as a result of the six previous ones. But, whereas the preceding courses were open to confreres ranging from 30 to 50 years of age, this instead was reserved to confreres in the 55-70 years' range, provided they felt able and willing to bring their vigorous contribution to the Salesian apostolate in their Provinces, especially as men of sound discernment and mature leadership. In view of this, the Course provides the participants with suitable time for reflection, prayer, and exchange of experiences. There are 38 confreres enrolled in it, and they come from 20 countries and 33 Provinces. They are evidently enjoying this experience, which is already proving to be an abundantly fruitful one. The previous six Courses brought over 200 confreres to the Salesianum from nearly every country and Province in the Salesian world.

A similar Course will be held in the same place from March 1st to early June 1977. It is likewise scheduled for confreres within the same age range (55-70 years), who are capable of leadership in their Provinces and of serious work during the Course itself. It is also required that the applicants have a working knowledge of Italian, freely decide to take up the Course, are willing to live in a community, and are open to dialog, initiative and especially interior renewal.

## V. SALESIAN MISSIONS CENTENNIAL

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### 1. Closing of the Centennial in Argentina

The closing of the Missions Centennial was celebrated in Buenos Aires and San Nicolás de los Arroyos (the cradle of the Salesian work in America) on November 12-18, 1976 in the presence of the Rector Major, the Regional Councillor Fr. Juan Vecchi, two Reverend Mothers of the Superior Council of the Salesian Sisters and many other dignitaries.

It would be hard to imagine a celebration that could have been more solemn and at the same time more typically Salesian. The Argentinian people went all out to stage a most fantastic and enthusiastic tribute of gratitude to Don Bosco and the Salesians. Here is a brief report.

#### *An action-packed week*

**Friday, Nov. 12** - Arrival of the Rector Major. In the reception hall at the Ezeiza international airport Fr. Ricceri received a warm welcome from the Salesian Family and the official welcome from the Argentine Government. He was declared guest of honor.

**Sat., Nov. 13** - Arrival of the Rector Major at San Nicolás de los Arroyos on an Air Force jet. After an enthusiastic reception, concelebrated Mass (among the gifts carried at the Offertory procession, the key of the city presented by the Mayor).

**Sun., Nov. 14** - Meeting with the Salesian Family: two hours of interviews, conversation, etc. with all the members of the Family. Flight back to Buenos Aires in the afternoon.

**Mon., Nov. 15** - Recording of the Rector Major's interview for

national TV broadcasting. Late in the afternoon, in the Buenos Aires Cathedral: Thanksgiving Mass and tribute of the Salesians to the Argentine hierarchy. The concelebrated Mass was presided over by Card. Aramburu. Uncovering of a memorial stone to Archbishop Aneyros, who called the first Salesians to Argentina.

**Tues., Nov. 16** - Visit of the Rector Major to Card. Aramburu. In the afternoon, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Almagro (a Buenos Aires borough): concelebrated Mass for the Salesians of the Capital, presided over by the Rector Major. Religious profession of Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Volunteers of Don Bosco, and pledge ceremony of about 30 new Cooperators. Family supper and Good-night talk of the Rector Major.

**Wed., Nov. 17** - In the evening, in the famed Colón Theater (the greatest opera house in Latin America, and the largest, too, but too small for the occasion): the official homage of the Argentine Nation to the Salesians, in the presence of the highest civil and ecclesiastical authorities. On the stage a 250-member Salesian Boys' choir, and in the pit the Colón Theater orchestra — normally directed by the best directors in the world, but this time under the baton of a Salesian. Official speeches. At the end, Händel's *Allelujah* sung by the Boys' Choir. Many eyes damp with tears.

**Thur., Nov. 18** - Visit of the Rector Major to the President of the Argentine Republic. Unscheduled interview with the Salesian youth in the Capital.

**Fri., Nov. 19** - Return flight to Rome.

### *The Rector Major's impressions*

The best commentary on the Argentine celebration can be found in the words of the Rector Major himself, who played a... major role in it. Back at General Headquarters in Rome, Fr. Ricceri expressed his impressions in a informal talk to the Community. Here is a summary of what he said.

After quoting the phrase: "Argentina is Don Bosco's second homeland", Fr. Ricceri said: "Well, I thought at first that was only a nice, catchy little phrase... until I got there and realized that Argentina has indeed become Don Bosco's home country. Don Bosco and the Salesians have struck deep roots in Argentina, they have become Argentinians among Argentinians. The Argentinians look up to Don Bosco as to one of their own".

"Twenty-five per cent of the Argentine clergy — Fr. Ricceri went on — has been trained by the Salesians. In the South every *padre* is automatically assumed to be a Salesian. People just could not think otherwise, because for several decades they have known no other priests but Salesian priests".

Underscoring the joyous spirit and other characteristics of the celebration, Fr. Ricceri said: "That was a *real feast*, not just a merry-making fiesta. It was a solid, spiritually well prepared celebration... perhaps a bit German-style, one that was in the making and cared for in the least details for a whole year".

"It was a *people-centered celebration!* Very large sections of the population took part in it. They did so spontaneously. There was nothing forced or staged about it. Rather, people had to be contained. Wherever I went, I saw there was never enough room to accommodate all the people present".

"It was a *youth-centered celebration*, — with thousands upon thousands of young people, and all of them from our houses. In Buenos Aires alone there are 13 Salesian foundations! And our boys practically ran the big show at the Colón Theater!".

"It was a *nation-wide celebration*. The State and Church authorities who graced the celebration with their presence took pains to stress they were representing the people and talking for the people. The proudest and happiest person was the First Lady — the wife of the Argentine President and a past pupil of the Salesian Sisters".

"It was a *celebration involving the entire Salesian Family*. All the members of our Family cooperated with enthusiasm in the preparation of the commemorative program. At the 2-hour-long Mass at Almagro on November 16, I could see in front of me nothing but a huge sea of white albs — the concelebrating priests' — and behind it, a huge sea of black dresses — the Salesian Sisters'".

“And it was a *celebration of Salesian youth*. My last day in Argentina was scheduled to be a day of rest... But then I was ‘mobbed’ by some seventy young in-training confreres, novices and postulants. That was a mammoth interview! Yes, today’s youth are quite different from the youth of, say, four or five years ago. Vocations now are on the increase. These young men seek Don Bosco. They want to know him in depth. They love him. They love Salesian things. They are out-spoken with us. And they are rightly demanding”.

“Finally, those were *days of high hopes*. There was a feeling there that, after the recent crises, things are on the upswing again; that we are standing on the threshold of a new era. This feeling was shared by elder Salesians who were sensing the shifting mood. ‘We feel renewed’, they told me. ‘We can now look at the future with new confidence. Our youth are our guarantee for a brighter future’”.

## 2. Closing of the Centennial in Turin

The closing of the Salesian Missions Centennial in Valdocco-Turin took place on Sunday, November 7, 1976 with the Rector Major, with Fr. Bernard Tohill and several other Superiors present. The two high moments of the day were the Farewell Ceremony of the newly-departing missionaries and the academic entertainment.

The Farewell Ceremony was held in the afternoon in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, which was packed with members and friends of the Salesian Family. Particularly numerous were the parents, relatives and friends of the new missionaries, some of whom had travelled long distances to be present. The simple and moving ceremony took place during a solemn concelebrated Mass presided over by the Rector Major. Worthy of notice among the departing missionaries were three young lay Cooperators.

In the evening a lyric and musical entertainment honoring the missionaries was held in the Valdocco theater hall. Its high point was a preview show of “*Un sogno cent’anni dopo*” (“A dream 100 years later”), a Salesian Missions color documentary shot in 1976 on the same spots Don Bosco had ‘seen’ and described a century earlier. There was also the awarding ceremony for the winners of the Salesian

Missions Centennial Competition, which had been held during the year among elementary-school pupils in Italy.

Two musical performances put an artistic touch on the closing of the Centennial in Turin. First there was a series of organ concerts (three of them) during the month of November in the new church at UPS-Crocetta: renowned organists played pieces from the classical and Salesian repertoires.

On December 23 there was at the RAI (Italian Radio Network) Auditorium the premiere performance of a cantata-oratorio composed by Maestro Alberto Pizzini, a Salesian Cooperator, expressly for the Centennial. His composition is to be rebroadcast on the same RAI Network during the month of January 1977.

It is impossible for us to follow up this sketchy report on the Turinese Centennial celebration with an even sketchier report on the many other celebrations which took place simultaneously and throughout the year in various Provinces and houses. It would simply be impossible to fit them all in the Acts. Let it be a comfort for us to know that Don Bosco's friends and civil and ecclesiastical authorities often participated as a body at the countless celebrations which were organized in practically every Salesian house.

### **3. Statistics on the 106th Salesian Missionary Expedition**

The 1976 Salesian Missionary Expedition — the 106th in the long series started by Don Bosco — was made up of 53 members, of which 22 were priests, 16 clerics, 12 Coadjutor Brothers and 3 lay Cooperators.

*Average age:* 34 years. Lowest age: 19 years (a cleric); highest age: 62 years (a priest).

*Countries of origin:* 13 from Italy, 10 from Poland, 7 from Spain, 4 each from Ireland and India, 3 from France, 2 each from Brazil, Portugal and the United States; 1 each from Belgium, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Philippines, South African Republic, and West Germany.

*Provinces of origin:* 8 from Łódz, 5 from Ireland, 4 from the Central Province, 3 from Madras, 2 each from the Lombard, Southern

and Subalpine Italian Provinces, the Bilbao, León and Valencia Spanish Provinces, the Lyon and Paris French Provinces, the Portuguese and the São Paulo Provinces; 1 each from Australia, Barcelona, North-Belgium, Bombay, Central American, Kraków, New Rochelle, Philip-pines, San Francisco and Venetian-St. Mark.

*Countries of destination:* 27 missionaries were assigned to Latin America, 15 to Africa, 9 to Asia, and 2 are still awaiting their destinations. Eight were sent to Brazil, 4 each to Antilles, Argentina, Bolivia, India and South African Republic; 3 each to Gabon and Zaire; 2 each to Colombia, Ecuador, Macao, Marocco, Paraguay and Philip-pines; 1 each to Egypt, Lybia, Swaziland, Thailand and Venezuela.

#### **4. A seminar on slum-areas apostolate**

On February 19-24, 1977 a seminar on slum-areas apostolate will be held at the Salesianum in Rome.

One confrere per Province has been invited to take part in this initiative, which follows in the wake of the Missions Centennial. Only those confreres are asked to attend, who — as the Rector Major pointed out in the letter of convocation to the Provincials — “are truly involved in this kind of apostolate, and are able to contribute their experiences to the workshop in Rome and bring back to their Provinces a fuller understanding of, and a renewed dedication to, this special apostolate”.

The workshop activities will consist in the stating of one's own experiences, group reflection and discussion, and contributions by experts.

The aim of the workshop is twofold: first, as regards the participants, to give them an opportunity to analyze and compare on-going personal experiences, to study the causes of social maladjustment and emargination, to search for ways and means for promoting human and Christian development and to clarify the meaning of a Salesian presence in this sector. Secondly, on a wider scale, to sensitize the Salesians on this typically Salesian form of apostolate.

## 5. Reports on Centennial celebrations requested

The Missions Department last November sent out a request to all Provincials for a detailed and picture-documented report on all the initiatives which had been carried out during the Missions Centennial year.

Fr. Bernard Tohill's letter to Provincials is found in the Documents Section of this issue (p. 71).

## 6. Solidarity Fund goes over Lit. 1/2 billion (British: milliard) mark

With the last contributions counted in this **21st Report**, the Confreres' Solidarity Fund has gone over the one-half billion (British: milliard) Italian Lire mark (roughly, USA\$75,000 as of January 1, 1977). Obviously, this initiative continues to rouse the interest and cooperation of many confreres.

The Solidarity Fund project was proposed by the Rector Major over eight years ago as a practical corollary of his letter on Poverty (ASC No. 253, November 1968). Shortly afterwards (ASC No. 265, February 1969, p. 6), he spoke of "our needy works... where too often the bare necessities of life were wanting and the confreres were living in conditions of extreme poverty, having to resign themselves to a slow paralysis of a great part of their social and apostolic work through lack of means".

Helping these works and these confreres in need thus becomes "a duty that combines justice and fraternal charity". Where should the help come from? "The fruits of this solidarity", Fr. Ricceri went on to say, "must come from each of us as persons and as communities... from our poverty, lived more generously, from an administration that is more wise and attentive, from a prudent and intelligent economy, and... from a certain renunciation of quite a lot of superfluous or inopportune things...".

The economic crisis which is presently troubling various regions of the world, has certainly aggravated the discomfort of many a confrere and hampered many a work. The forthcoming Lenten season

could very well give us a grand opportunity for a more generous contribution to the Solidarity Fund.

a) CONTRIBUTING PROVINCES (September 10 - November 11, 1976)

AMERICA

Central America	Lit.	2,000,000
United States, San Francisco		4,000,000

EUROPE

Germany, Cologne		13,400,000
Italy, Southern P.		1,461,000
Italy, Subalpine P.		3,818,000
Italy, Venetian-St. Mark P.		4,385,000
Portugal		860,000
Spain, Valencia		1,813,000

<i>Total</i>		31,737,000
<i>Cash on hand</i>		4,387

<i>Total amt. for distribution</i>		31,741,387
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b) DISBURSEMENT (September 10 - November 11, 1976)

AFRICA

Central Africa, from Cologne: for the training of young Zairians		13,400,000
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AMERICA

Antilles: scholarship for On-going Formation Course		500,000
Argentina, Buenos Aires: idem		500,000
Argentina, Bahía Blanca: idem		1,000,000
Argentina, Bahía Blanca, from Venetian-St. Mark: to Msgr. Moure		500,000
Argentina, Bahía Blanca: for Radio Cemipas project at Comodoro Rivadavia		400,000

Argentina, Córdoba: for San Antonio Social Assistance	1,000,000
Argentina, Rosario: scholarship for On-going Formation Course	500,000
Bolivia: idem	500,000
Brazil, Belo Horizonte: for "Vigilantes Mirins" Social Assistance	2,000,000
Brazil, Campo Grande: scholarship for On-going Formation Course	500,000
Brazil, Porto Alegre: idem	500,000
Central America: idem	500,000
Colombia, Bogotá: idem	500,000
Colombia, Ariari: idem	500,000
Colombia, Medellín: idem	500,000
Ecuador: idem	500,000
Mexico, Mexico City: idem	500,000
Paraguay: idem	500,000
Uruguay: idem	500,000
Uruguay: dispatching supplies to a missionary	300,000

#### ASIA

India, Calcutta: scholarship for On-going Formation Course	500,000
India, Madras: idem	500,000
India, Madras: for handicapped and orphan boys at Mangalagiri	1,600,000
India, Tura: for a Youth Center	1,000,000
Korea: scholarship for On-going Formation Course	500,000
Thailand: idem	500,000

#### EUROPE

Italy, Central: for the decoration of the parish church at Castelnuovo Don Bosco	1,000,000
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<i>Total</i>	31,700,000
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<i>Cash on hand</i>	41,387
<i>Fund as of November 11, 1976</i>	
<i>Income</i>	502,967,901
<i>Disbursement</i>	502,926,514
	<hr/>
<i>Cash on hand</i>	41,387

## VI. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

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In the Fall of 1976 the Rector Major and his Council were kept very busy by a voluminous amount of undertakings both in Rome and in various parts of the world.

In particular the RECTOR MAJOR attended the closing ceremonies of the Salesian Missions Centennial first in Turin and then in Argentina (see report, pp. 58-62).

FR. EGIDIO VIGANÒ visited the houses of formation in Latin America, and met with Provincials, Rectors and many other confreres responsible for initial and on-going Salesian formation at various levels. The principal stopovers in his long journey were Mexico, Central America, Colombia (Medellín and Bogotá), Peru, Bolivia and Chile. In the last-mentioned country he also met with the leaders and members of the Salesian Youth Movement and, assisted by Fr. Joseph Aubry, presided over a Spirituality Week, which was attended by 160 Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians altogether.

FR. GIOVENALE DHO likewise visited Latin America. Before his departure he presided over a Study and Reflection Meeting for the Italian vocations centers personnel at the Salesianum in Rome; he then visited Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Venezuela and the Antilles. In these countries he met with the various groups of confreres responsible for youth activities and vocations, and working in aspirantates, vocations centers, Salesian youth movements, youth centers, counselling centers, etc. Finally, in the La Plata region he chaired a Youth Pastoral Council and a Vocations Council.

FR. GIOVANNI RAINERI was taken up with various activities of his Department. He presided over first the "Salesian Family Days" in three Spanish Provinces, then the Salesian Cooperators' World Congress and immediately afterwards the Young Cooperators' Euro-

pean Congress (see report, pp. 52-54), and in December the Asian-Australian Past Pupils' Congress in Hong Kong (see report, pp. 54-56). Also in December he visited several Provinces in Asia, and met with the personnel in charge of Adult Pastoral Work (parishes, Cooperators, Past Pupils, VDB's, etc.). He has a Course for European Parish Priests and a Visit to Yugoslavia and Spain scheduled for January.

FR. BERNARD TOHILL with his Department continued to maintain high the spirit of the Missions Centennial. He attended its closing ceremonies in Turin and Warsaw. Since mid November he has been visiting the Asian missions, with stopovers in Calcutta, Rangoon (Burma), Djakarta (Indonesia), Hong Kong, Taiwan and Philippines. He will later visit Korea, Japan, Thailand and again India.

### *The Regional Councillors*

The Regional Councillors left Rome in mid October for a long period of visits and/or visitations to their Regions.

FR. LUIGI FIORA is making a canonical visitation of the Sicilian and Subalpine Provinces. His crammed schedule also contemplates an Italian and Mid-Eastern Provincials' Conference, a Newly-elected Rectors' Conference, and seven national conferences for various sectors (parishes, Past Pupils, Cooperators, etc.).

FR. JOSÉ VINCENTE HENRÍQUEZ made a canonical Visitation to the Ecuador and Central American Provinces. He is scheduled to visit Peru, Chile, Bolivia and Venezuela and to make the visitation of the Bogotá Province.

FR. ANTONIO MÉLIDA is presently making a canonical visitation of the Valencia Province, with the usual series of meeting with various groups.

FR. JOHN TER SCHURE, after a flash visit to the confreres in France, Belgium and Yugoslavia, made a canonical visitation to Austria and is at present visiting the Central African Province.

FR. JUAN VECCHI, who left Rome back in August, made a canonical visitation of the Paraguayan and Bahía Blanca (Argentina) Provinces. He later attended, side by side with the Rector Major, the closing celebrations of the Missions Centennial in Argentina, and is now scheduled to visit the La Plata Province.

FR. GEORGE WILLIAMS, whose Region spreads to the five continents, first visited England and Ireland, and then made the visitation of the New Rochelle (USA) Province. He went on to visit the Provinces of San Francisco (USA), Australia, Philippines, Japan and Korea, and made the visitation of the Hong Kong Province, and also visited Thailand and Indonesia. He is presently making the visitation of the Calcutta and Gauhati-Shillong Provinces. And before winging his way back to headquarters he will have also visited the Bombay and Madras Provinces, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Swaziland.

This long period of visits and visitations by the Regionals will continue till April 15, 1977. Thereafter the Superior Council will hold plenary meetings to examine the reports on the visits and visitations made and to take care of the immediate preparation for the coming GC 21.

## VII. DOCUMENTS

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### **Reports on Missions Centennial celebrations requested**

On January 11, 1977 Councillor for the Missions Fr. Bernard Tohill sent the following letter to all the Provincials:

Dear Father Provincial,

In the preceding issue of the Acts you read: "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 celebrations held in their Provinces" (ASC No. 284, p. 66).

The Centennial year is now over.

On behalf of the Rector Major I would now like to invite you to forward to this Department within the month of January a full report on whatever was done both at provincial and local levels to commemorate the Centennial and to foster missionary spirit.

From reports already received I see that some houses and Provinces carried out initiatives such as the following, which I submit as samples:

- liturgical celebrations
- civic commemorations
- pastoral and missionary initiatives
- displays and shows
- competitions of various kinds
- collections and fund-raising activities for the missions
- publishing of books, pamphlets, leaflets, brochures, etc.
- films, filmstrips and slides

— radio and TV programs.

As far as possible, reports should be accompanied by an adequate documentation: pictures, samples of printed programs, statistics, names of VIP's participating at religious, civic, cultural, radio-and-TV programs, etc..

May I ask you to entrust a confrere with the task of gathering this material and writing this report, and then forward it to us as soon as possible.

Thanking you for your cooperation in getting ready a complete dossier on such an important and unique event, I am,

Sincerely yours,

·Fr. BERNARD TOHILL  
*Councillor for the Missions*

## IX. PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM

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### **People working side by side with the Salesians**

*On Wednesday, November 3, 1976, the Holy Father Paul VI received in a special audience about 3,000 members of the Salesian Family who had gathered in St. Peter's Basilica at the closing of the Salesian Cooperators' World Congress. Pope Paul punctuated his formal message — which appeared on the English edition of L'Osservatore Romano of November 18 — with many off-the-cuff remarks — his normal way of expressing his special satisfaction and joy when he is in the midst of Don Bosco's sons.*

*Here is the complete text of his message from a tape recording:*

It is with heartfelt and sincere joy that we bid you welcome this morning. Although short in duration, this audience is entirely for you. Yes, just for you, dear Salesian Cooperators, who have come here to Rome from every part of the world.

We wish we could speak everyone's language to make ourselves understood by everyone of you, but we hope you can understand with open hearts and minds what we say, even before you can read it translated into your own languages.

In greeting you, we greet also the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, Fr. Louis Ricceri (applause). He together with his confreres and with all those who work close to him, can very well be proud of the vitality, the number and the efficiency of the spiritual family of which you are members, and which shares the spiritual heritage and teachings of St. John Bosco.

In greeting you, we greet also all the members of the Associations you represent before us today. With St. Paul we say: "Gaudium et corona mea, You are our crown and joy!" (Phil. 4:1).

We feel we are standing in the midst of a family. We feel surrounded by people who are joined in true Christian brotherhood.

You sure love each other, don't you? (Yes! - applause)

You are happy to be Cooperators, aren't you? (Yes - applause)

You love Don Bosco, don't you? (Yes! - applause)

Don Bosco gives us the right to ask you one more question: Do you love the Pope? (Yes!, roared the crowd with a thunderous applause).

Dear sons and daughters, we know you have gathered here to celebrate the Centenary of the papal approbation of your great Association granted by our predecessor, Pius IX of blessed memory.

You certainly know the long and glorious history of your Association. It is enough for us to mention the words "Salesian Cooperators" that we immediately visualize a large — we dare say almost immense — army of people working side by side with the Salesians and doing a tremendous amount of good.

We in turn are happy to be the one who welcomes you today for the celebration of this historic milestone you have now reached. Your Association has certainly had a long and fruitful existence. But we wish to encourage you in the Lord's name to press forward vigorously along the road that God still wants you to travel according to the zealous spirit of your holy founder. And we urge you to be enthusiastic about your Christian and Salesian way of life. We assure you that the Church is with you, because you are with the Church (applause).

When we look around, we see that the Salesians are wherever the Church is. You, too, are found in all the continents where the Church is at work. You have taken on the Church's dimensions.

We know how much good the Salesian Family is doing for Church and society. You then belong to a great organization. Your very name — Cooperators — spells out what you really are: you are joint partners and friends of the Salesian Family. You have a thing we wish other church organizations had — that is continuity.

We know that most of you are also Salesian past pupils. Your loyalty to your educational and professional training is something to be proud of. It shows that the Salesian Family does indeed render the Church an incalculably precious service by its examples and works.

On behalf of Jesus Christ whom we here represent with the fullness of our office, we want to say THANK YOU to the entire Salesian Family (applause).

Our very special greeting to you, Delegates to the Salesian Cooperators' World Congress, who are here representing 560 centers in 40 nations — you are a kind of United Nations! — and also to you, Young

Cooperators, gathered here for your first European Congress! (applause).

In you we recognize forces which are dynamic and generous for the service of both the universal and the local church. This service is expressed through authentic Christian witness by which you become the leaven of human society itself. We want you to know we rely upon you and upon your cooperation.

Some of you might say that the Pope does not know you personally, individually. Well, when we see you gathered together under Don Bosco's banner, we know each of you indeed, and of each of you we ask the cooperation. It is not only the Rector Major who asks you to be his cooperators in the great Salesian Family. I, too together with him and in the name of Jesus Christ, ask you to stay with us and work with us — the way you have been doing for so long. You are indeed involved in a project which is very well worth every effort of yours and has a sure guarantee of the eternal reward.

Besides, we want you to know we have a certain kinship with you. We had a dear cousin who, as you may know, spent 27 years in Macao, your former Chinese mission, and was later sent to Brazil. There he passed away suddenly, even though he was still young, energetic and proud to be a member of the Salesian Family. I am not going to speak about other personal ties that I have with the Salesian Family...

Once again I say I am very happy to be in your midst, and once again I urge you to press on, to be faithful and to work very hard. In this manner you will feel the great joy of being partners all together in a great civil, religious and missionary organization such as the Family of St. John Bosco.

This we say in the words of Saint Paul to the Colossians: "These have cooperated with me for the kingdom of God and they have been my consolation! (Col 4: 11). Thank you, my dear sons and daughters!

And now, in order that you may have the fortitude to carry out your ecclesial and civic duties, and that the Lord may sustain you in your mission, We most heartily bestow our apostolic blessing upon all here present, on those with responsibility in your Association, and in particular on your beloved Rector Major and upon the entire Salesian Family.

## X. NECROLOGY

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### *Fr. Joseph Anguilar*

\* Támara de Campos, Palencia, Spain, 18.4.1898; † Bilbao, Spain, 13.4.1976; 78 years old, 59 prof., 51 priest, 7 Rector.

Strongly attached to the Congregation, he spent his first years of Salesian life in the Antilles, where he was ordained priest and worked unstintingly. Back in Spain, he worked just as hard in several houses, especially Bilbao, Burceña and Ciudad Real. His outstanding characteristics were a filial love of the Blessed Mother Mary, Help of Christians (whose devotion he spread throughout the Ciudad Real province), exact religious observance of his religious duties, devotion to Don Bosco and total availability to his Superiors.

### *Fr. John Barbieri*

\* Olgia, Novara, Italy, 16.10.1900; † Bethlehem, Palestine, 29.10.1976; 76 years old, 50 prof., 41 priest, 11 Rector.

He was in his early 20's when he entered the aspirantate first at Penango, then at Ivrea. In 1925 he left Italy for the Middle East, and there he remained for over 50 years. He held posts of great responsibility in times of unusual difficulty. He learned how to overcome all trials by prayer, humble obedience, and a great love of God and his brethren. Many people, especially priests and religious, benefited from his strong-but-even-handed and wise spiritual direction. He left behind the memory of a religious who walks humbly and modestly before God and men, but cultivates a robust, generous and self-sacrificing spiritual life.

### *Coad. Bro. Edward Basso*

\* Pornassio, Imperia, Italy, 9.2.1907; † Alassio, Savona, Italy, 2.10.1976; 69 years old, 41 prof..

An absolutely upright and conscientious Salesian, a tough and resolute man, he loved Don Bosco and the Congregation with utmost generosity and

exemplary loyalty. In several Salesian houses he turned his fine skill as a master tailor to excellent use. Finally in the house of Alassio he took charge of the maintenance of our public church. His observance was exemplary, his spirituality deep, and his service dedicated. A long-drawn-out and painful illness destroyed his body, but refined his spirit.

*Fr. Louis Beccuti*

\* Serralunga di Crea, Alessandria, Italy, 15.3.1886; † Monteortone, Padua, Italy, 17.7.1976; 90 years old, 61 prof., 67 priest.

A pioneer missionary at Magellanes (Tierra del Fuego), professor of theology, secretary of Fr. Ricaldone in charge of missions. A very dynamic man, totally committed to his work, endowed with an extraordinary memory and a keen mind, he used all his talents both in the pastoral work and the teaching of theology. Competent and sure of himself, he taught, as his pupils used to say, "like one having authority". He preached hundreds of retreats, and made himself constantly available for confessions. When because of his age he was forced to curtail other activities, he applied himself even more intensely to this typically priestly and Salesian ministry.

*Fr. Joachim Brunori*

\* Mordano, Bologna, Italy, 13.3.1890; † Florence, Italy, 19.9.1976; 86 years old, 67 prof., 53 priest.

He was a difficult person to get along with, but only in public; privately, instead, he was a pleasant fellow, a gentleman. At all times he was a witty conversationalist. He kept his rough-hewn character right down to the end of his life. His antagonistic attitude which led him to take up a stand contrary to everybody else's, was made tolerable and even pleasant by his unique talent for a quick repartee. But above and beyond his sharp mind, Fr. Brunori had the qualities of a faithful and active Salesian and a Church-loving and dedicated priest. Death came to him quietly at the end of 53 long years in the priesthood and 67 in religious life.

*Fr. Emmanuel Caamaño*

\* Bustavalle, Maceda-Orense, Spain, 2.4.1896; † Salamanca, Spain, 28.5.1976; 80 years old, 62 prof., 52 priest.

Animated by an exemplary spirit of service, he used to spend hours on end to teach and give remedial classes to slower students. He performed manual works in the house to save money on hired labor. He was infirmar-

ian. He was an untiring confessor. In everything he was cheerful and serene. He spiked his conversation with pleasant and unforgettable anecdotes and friendly advice. He was a man with an unshakeable faith in God and an all-out love of the Congregation.

*Coad. Bro. Calogero Centanni*

\* Alia, Palermo, Italy, 7.6.1911; † Palermo, Italy, 20.10.1976; 65 years old, 35 prof..

Up to the age of 28 he led the life of a farmer, helping his father and brothers to till the land. Finally he was able to realize his dream — to embrace religious life among Don Bosco's sons (his younger brother Louis had already become a Salesian). After his profession he was placed in charge of supplies and errands in several houses, everywhere showing his fine natural qualities, exemplary piety and great spirit of sacrifice. Overtaken by a deadly disease, he passed away serenely, assisted by his brother Fr. Louis.

*Coad. Bro. Gumersindo Cid*

\* Coirás, Orense, Spain, 15.8.1893; † Shillong, India, 22.9.1976; 83 years old, 63 prof., and 46 years of missionary labor in India.

With the death of Brother Cid, the last survivor of the heroic group of Salesians who under the leadership of Msgr. Mathias, set foot on the Khasi hills in North-east India on the 13th of January 1922, an era in the missionary history of that country has come to an end. Brother Cid could find his fulfilment in any work the Superiors would entrust to him. To the youthful enthusiasm which was his chief characteristic he added a large dose of contagious optimism, a tireless activity and an all-consuming zeal. He loved the young the true Salesian way. He was a Salesian Coadjutor Brother in the finest tradition, without complexes, without identity crises. He lived happily: happy to be a Salesian, happy to have been called to the missions, happy also of suffering for the love of God in his last sickness.

*Coad. Bro. John Cipriano*

\* Meri, Messina, Italy, 2.11.1914; † Messina, Italy, 21.11.1976; 62 years old, 35 prof..

A masonry-worker in his native town, he entered the Novitiate at Villa Moglia (near Turin) to become a Salesian. After some years of studies towards the priesthood, he joined the Brotherhood. He showed a capacity for holding several jobs, and much spirit of generosity. When an LDC (the Italian Salesian publisher of catechetical material) branch was opened in 1959

in Messina, he was its dynamic and capable organizer. Under him it flourished throughout Sicily. He passed to his reward after a short illness — victim of an embolism.

*Fr. Louis Conde*

\* Portela-Allariz, Orense, Spain, 14.3.1881; † Madrid, Spain, 12.8.1976; 95 years old, 74 prof., 66 priest.

Fidelity to his religious life and generosity in his pastoral activity were the chief traits of Fr. Conde through his long years as a Salesian. He was a much-sought-after spiritual director. As parish priest, military chaplain, teacher, economer, he showed initiative and readiness to serve. He made it a particular point to find scholarships for candidates to the priesthood. Severe and simple, adaptable to the changing times and tenacious with regard to essentials, he was an understanding, forgiving, and warm-hearted Salesian priest.

*Fr. Vincent Conti*

\* Turin, Italy, 31.8.1912; † Ivrea, Turin, Italy, 25.10.1976; 64 years old, 48 prof., 39 priest, 4 Rector.

Born of a large family, which was very dear to Don Bosco, he entered the Novitiate of Villa Moglia after completing his secondary studies at Valdocco and Penango. During his theological studies he suffered from a nervous breakdown; yet despite his frail health he was able to find in his deep piety and strong attachment to his Salesian vocation the strength to carry on. He kept in touch with his pupils, their parents, and the past pupils. He had the knack for friendship and personal warmth: to all he would offer a word of advice and encouragement with winsome graciousness.

*Fr. Gerald Crossley*

\* Heywood, Lanchashire, Great Britain, 7.3.1916; † Bolton, Lancas., GB, 29.10.1976; 60 years old, 42 prof., 33 priest.

Since his missionary aspirantate in Shrigley as a young boy, he learned how to love Don Bosco and the Congregation with a deep love. As a Salesian we was a capable and beloved educator. His many talents of mind and heart caused him to be held in high regard also outside our schools, particularly because of his deep practical knowledge of modern-day youth problems. For some years he was director of the Salesian Bulletin, and up to his death a capable collaborator to its editorial staff.

*Fr. Donatus Cucchi*

\* Palestro, Pavia, Italy, 21.2.1889; † Vercelli, Italy, 24.7.1976; 87 years old, 69 prof., 57 priest, 20 Rector.

For over 20 years he was Rector in several houses in Piedmont, where he distinguished himself for his firmness as well as his fatherliness. In 1962 he was sent to the Vercelli Community as confessor and spiritual director — a post that he held till his death. He was a practical and incisive educator, a deeply humane and courageous man. Free and outgoing, he made friends easily: for him friendship was a tool for the apostolate. With a sure hand he guided the communities which were entrusted to him as well as the individuals who chose him as their spiritual father.

*Fr. Julius Demolder*

\* Rekem, Belgium, 26.6.1897; † Mol, Belgium, 28.1.1976; 78 years old, 54 prof., 48 priest, 6 Rector.

He lived a life of utmost generosity and readiness to serve. He worked for 22 years in the Salesian parish in Liège, where he was much esteemed and loved. Rather severe and intransigent, he knew nonetheless how to be jovial and dynamic, especially in organizing youth activities. During his last few years his virtue was constantly tested by a sickness that caused him much suffering and that he bore with great resignation.

*Fr. Michael De Salvo*

\* Bahía Blanca, Argentina, 11.1.1891; † there, 11.9.1976; 85 years old, 68 prof., 58 priest, 42 Rector.

He grew up at the school of the early missionaries sent out by Don Bosco. His outstanding capacity to govern and his piety induced his superiors to entrust him with the responsibility of rectorship in several houses for over 40 years. With his Salesian-style kindness and exquisite charity, he assuaged the hardships of his early apostolate in Patagonia. Noble and at the same time kind in mien, he was truly a Christ-like priest who spent himself without reserve in the lands envisioned by Don Bosco.

*Fr. Aemilianus Díaz*

\* Carayaca, Venezuela, 13.8.1910; † Caracas, Venezuela, 7.11.1976; 66 years old, 45 prof., 34 priest, 3 Rector.

Born of a profoundly religious family, which gave several children to the Church, and endowed with a lively, demonstrative, intelligent and energetic nature, he put all his fine qualities at the service of the Congregation and the Church. He was a capable educator and a faithful priest, totally

dedicated to his mission. Struck down by a painful infirmity, he bore it with humility, patience and cheerfulness, without desisting from his work till the very end.

*Coad. Bro. Caesar Ghiringhella*

\* Torre Canavese (formerly Torre Bairo), Turin, Italy, 24.4.1906; † Montevideo, Uruguay, 2.8.1976, 70 years old, 50 prof..

During his half-a-century long Salesian life he was all to all. He arrived in Uruguay as a young man in 1925, and never once did he come back to his native town in Piedmont. After his novitiate he was assigned to the Trade School in Montevideo, and there he remained for the rest of his life, discharging a variety of tasks, some of them of high responsibility. He put his strong will and his various talents and skills at the service of his confreres and boys. Rather than listing his numerous activities, let it suffice to underscore his total generosity and the "much love" he put into them, thus gaining the esteem of his confreres and of many generations of young artisans..

*Fr. Anthony Gois*

\* Itabaianinha, Sergipe, Brazil, 3.6.1917; † Manaus, Brazil, 27.2.1976; 58 years old, 40 prof., 30 priest, 6 Rector.

During his thirty years of missionary activity he gave proof of dauntless abnegation, all-out spirit of sacrifice and untiring zeal on behalf of the poor and needy. He spent the last decade in a missionary outpost founded by him on the banks of the Marauíá (a tributary of the Rio Negro), where he, like a pioneer, dedicated himself to the search for, human development and evangelization of, various ethnic groups among the Yanomani Indians, living on the vast region bordering with Venezuela. On his return trip from Italy and the Holy Land, where he had travelled by invitation of the Superiors on the occasion of the Missions Centenary, he was overtaken by sudden death just before he could reach his beloved mission.

*Fr. Joseph Gotthardt*

\* Tauberrettlersheim, Lower Franconia, Germany, 26.5.1884; † Waindhofen, Ybbs, Austria, 1.11.1976; 92 years old, 65 prof., 54 priest, 9 Rector.

He made his aspirantate, as a late vocation, in Penango, Italy. Returning to his native country after his priestly ordination in Vienna, he spent his energies to the very end of his life as a tireless confessor and preacher, and as a faithful friend and counsellor of the very many who came to seek his advice. His main personal traits were simplicity of life, unceasing work and total commitment to his pastoral duties.

*Fr. Conrad Hagenmayer*

\* Stuttgart, Germany, 7.2.1914; † Burghausen, Salzach, Germany, 25.10.1976; 62 years old, 45 prof., 36 priest, 16 Rector.

Immediately after his priestly ordination, which he received on the eve of the Second World War, he was called to military service. There followed nine long years of severe hardships and imprisonment under the Russians. After returnig to his country, he worked as Prefect of Studies and then for 16 years as Rector in Bamberg and Würzburg. When he had become physically exhausted, he returned to Bamberg as spiritual director. Confreres, past pupils and Cooperators remember him as a cheerful and optimistic Salesian, an exemplary religious, and a priest with a piety which was simple and full of trust in the good Lord.

*Cleric Christopher Higgins*

\* Fairfield, Manchester, Great Britain, 13.2.1954; † Dunfermline, Scotland, 6.8.1976; 22 years old, 2 prof..

The life of this young confrere, barely two years professed, was full of hopes; but the Lord called him to himself through an inexorable sickness. We are left with a happy memory of his short presence among us and with the hope that his sacrifice can gain us from God new and true religious vocations like his.

*Fr. Venantius Iglesias*

\* Espeja, Salamanca, Spain, 25.1.1924; † Ramos Mejía, Argentina, 12.10.1976; 52 years old, 35 prof., 25 priest.

He spent his first ten years of priesthood on the missions in Thailand, but his poor health forced him back to his country. Shortly afterwards, he was back on the missions, this time in Patagonia; but once again his health forced him to return to a milder and more suitable climate. Parish work, done with generosity and effectiveness, filled the rest of his days. He was found dead in his bed, with his hands crossed on his chest, as if he had been serenely awaiting for death's visit.

*Fr. Edward Jarliński*

\* Stawki, Aleksandrów, Poland, 11.9.1910; † Czerwińsk, Poland, 13.6.1976; 65 years old, 43 prof., 30 priest.

The Lord had endowed him with goodness of heart and willingness to work hard. His first years of priesthood were spent in an aspirantate that had just been opened; later he was made Economist and Rector of a small

agricultural school, where he worked with great enthusiasm and acquired a high degree of competence as an administrator. Little by little his health began to fail him and blindness set in; yet he continued to carry on the ministry of the confessional with great zeal and charity on behalf of his parishioners and, in the last few years, of the novices at Czervinsk.

*Fr. John M. Le Bagousse*

\* Grandchamp, Morbihan, France, 27.11.1907; † Sion, Switzerland, 10.9.1976; 68 years old, 49 prof., 39 priest, 15 Rector.

After six years of work in the house in Sion, he was assigned to another house. After preaching to a group of Salesians, he was returning to Sion to take his luggage and his leave of the confreres and Salesian Sisters, when suddenly he felt sick, collapsed to the ground and expired. During his last few years he had dedicated himself with admirable zeal to the service of Sisters and nuns, by giving them conferences, retreats, and especially spiritual direction through intense correspondence. It was apparently fitting that when the Lord called him to his reward, this dedicated Salesian priest should have been comforted by the prayerful presence of the Sisters for whom he had worked very hard.

*Coad. Bro. Trinitás De León*

\* Tamanique, El Salvador, 13.11.1895; † San Salvador, El Salvador, 17.10.1976; 80 years old, 57 prof..

His was a life entirely consecrated to God through faithfulness to his religious duties, profound piety, self-sacrificing work and charity with all. Because of his modesty and his humble work as handy man and supervisor at a Youth Center, he gained esteem and affection from the young and the old, the rich and the poor alike. They all saw in him a man of God. His last years were made precious by patient and loving suffering of severe physical discomforts.

*Fr. Sigismond Maciak*

\* Sterdyń, Poland, 2.5.1918; †Czerwińsk, Poland, 2.9.1976; 58 years old, 38 prof., 27 priest, 6 Rector.

As a young cleric in Warsaw, during the World War II German occupation, he successfully overcame many difficulties against his religious vocation. He was later transferred to Kraków, where he was able to complete his studies and be ordained priest. He held the offices of Catechist and teacher in a diocesan seminary and, for 16 years, pastor of the Frombork Cathedral.

A learned and accomplished speaker, well liked by his confreres, he was made Rector of the novitiate annexed to the Marian Shrine at Czerwińsk. There, after some years, the Lord called him suddenly to his reward.

*Fr. John Magistrelli*

\* San Giovanni Battista, Concordia sulla Secchia, Modena, Italy, 16.4.1894; † Modena, Italy, 26.2.1976; 81 years old, 45 prof., 42 priest, 6 Rector.

After receiving the minor orders in the seminary, he fell under Don Bosco's spell and asked to become one of his sons. He was one of those rare Salesians, who can be called "for all seasons". He was in fact confessor of the pupils and delegate of the past pupils, Cavaliere di Vittorio Veneto (Knight of Vittorio Veneto) and founder of a war veterans' group, Rector and, more recently, animator of the Modena Salesian Cooperators. Deeply interested in furthering the spiritual life of his people, he promoted weekly, monthly and yearly prayer meetings and organized pilgrimages, which under his leadership proved to be very beneficial for the spiritual welfare of the participants. He died in harness, under the heavy burden of daily work.

*Fr. John Baptist Mondati*

\* Mendoza, Argentina, 24.10.1897; † Córdoba, 3.10.1976; 79 years old, 58 prof., 50 priest.

Despite his poor health, he was an exemplary Salesian in his dedication to work. The last evidence of this is the fact that in 1975, at the age of 78, he accepted the responsibility of directing the Los Cóndores Primary School. At the same time he did not neglect receiving the many visitors who came to him for advice on how to cure their illnesses by means of natural remedies (he was a natural medicine expert). On such occasions he used to hand out, along with medicinal herbs, also friendly and sound advice for his clients' spiritual welfare. His was a simple and straightforward piety, coupled with a faithful observance of poverty and the other religious virtues.

*Fr. Benedict Nunes*

\* Vilar, Cadaval, Portugal, 18.10.1915; † Lisbon, Portugal, 9.4.1976; 60 years old, 43 prof., 34 priest, 11 Rector, 6 Provincial.

He distinguished himself for his capacity for service, and for his uncommon intellectual and artistic talent and leadership. During his term as Provincial he gave the Portuguese Salesian Family a powerful impetus towards renewal and faithfulness to Don Bosco's spirit. Once his term was over, he left for Cape Verde Islands, where he humbly and generously dedicated his

energies to teaching and guiding boys. During the last months of his life, he was struck down by a painful sickness, which he bore with Christian resignation and hope.

*Fr. Joseph Omodei*

\* Tornaco, Novara, Italy, 6.6.1904; † Intra di Verbania, Novara, Italy, 2.10.1976; 72 years old, 55 prof., 46 priest.

“He spent fifty-two years of his life among boys, who were the center of his loving care,” it was said in his funeral eulogy. “Endowed with uncommon teaching talents, he knew how to captivate his pupils’ friendship, trust and cooperation. To the end of his life he was a true Salesian, a friend of the boys. With his kind ways and pleasant conversation he carried on his teaching mission, in total faithfulness to his duty”.

*Fr. Aldo Paolini*

\* Tarcento, Udine, Italy, 10.12.1913; † Beirut, Lebanon, 19.8.1976; 62 years old, 43 prof., 33 priest, 9 Rector.

He was the economer of the Salesian house in Beirut, at a time when life had to be lived in a rough-and-tumble atmosphere, not totally unsuited to his strong and brave Friulan character. He was good at making friends, and in few years spent in Beirut he had made a host of them. Despite the critical circumstances created by unrelenting war hostilities in the area, the Salesians had decided to carry on their educational work in their youth center in the city, obtaining respect from troops but no immunity from bombs. One such bomb, haphazardly fired, cut down the life of this courageous confrere, who had decided to stay on to assist his ill Rector. At the moment of the deadly explosion Fr. Paolini was holding in his pocket an air-flight ticket to visit his earthquake-stricken folks in Friuli.

*Fr. Louis Pazó*

\* Vigo, Pontevedra, Spain, 12.10.1898; † Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 26.8.1976; 77 years old, 60 prof., 51 priest, 9 Rector.

His personality calls to mind the earliest Salesians: obedient, observant, faithful to duty, self-sacrificing, committed to assisting boys the Salesian way, diligent in preparing homilies, and always available for any kind of service. He spent many hours in the confessional or in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. His delicate touch and humane concern for the needs and wishes of his confreres, pupils and past-pupils won him many friends. Also in the

hospital, where he completed his earthly existence, the personnel was won over by his charity and optimism.

*Fr. Luke Rath*

\* Bamberg, Germany, 17.11.1906; † there, 27.8.1976; 69 years old, 50 prof., 41 priest, 20 Rector.

Conscripted into military service shortly after his priestly ordination, he served during World War II, was captured in 1945 and for two years was a war prisoner. Back in his country and in his good health, he was successively in charge of several Salesian houses as Rector for 20 years. He was cheerful, sociable, and enthusiastic about Salesian things. He finally submitted to two surgical interventions, which due to complications proved fatal to him.

*Coad. Bro. Darius Rincón*

\* Choachí, Cundinamarca, Colombia, 3.6.1912; † Ibagué, Colombia, 6.10.1976; 64 years old, 39 prof..

A religious of the old school, a true son of Don Bosco, totally dedicated to missionary work and totally self-fulfilling in his apostolate, always ready to serve his neighbor with simplicity and cheerfulness. Obedience was his rule of life. He loved nature, he researched it with the passion of a man of science. His deep piety, his dedication to work and his constant concern for the good name of the Congregation were known to all. Death caught him suddenly, but not unawares, as he was getting ready to attend the Provincial Chapter as the delegate of Ibagué.

*Fr. Karl Robr*

\* Pirmasens, Bavaria, Germany 16.12.1886; † Mannheim, Germany, 10.9.1976; 89 years old, 70 prof., 61 priest, 15 Rector.

Born of a large family, and having learned of the Salesians from an advertisement in a Catholic paper, he in 1905 (when our Congregation had not yet entered Germany) went to Ghent in Belgium to join the Salesians. There he completed his training. In 1916 he was among the founders of the first Salesian work in Germany, in Würzburg, and shortly afterwards of the Salesianum in Munich. As Rector and Economist he displayed a great sense of responsibility. He made it a point to keep always busy. He was kind and sociable. Even down to his last years he helped with parish work to the best of his ability.

*Coad. Bro. Lucian Sannino*

\* San Cipriano Picentino, Salerno, Italy, 13.12.1923; † Bari, Italy, 24.4.1976; 52 years old, 25 prof..

His resolutions at the end of the novitiate were: "I will hold on to the Rules as a train engineer holds on to the railroad tracks. I will learn from Mary Most Holy the right way to get to Jesus. I will be faithful to Don Bosco. Death rather than sin". Those who knew him could testify that he kept his novitiate promises. His field of action was the machine shop, where he was a competent and valued master. Happy with his plain and simple room, he found his real happiness among his poor boys.

*Fr. Tullius Sartor*

\* San Giorgio della Richinvelda, Udine, Italy, 29.8.1920; † Treviso, Italy, 10.10.1976; 56 years old, 37 prof., 29 priest, 10 Rector, 9 Provincial.

"His was by no means a long life: for it was snatched away all too suddenly", it was said in the *trigesima memorial service*. "Yet much was the work he accomplished in his short life, and great were the earnestness, the brotherly solicitude for all, the faithfulness to prayer and to his ideals which characterized his priestly and Salesian life. Many indeed were the talents which the Lord entrusted him with, and which he used like a good steward. He was a superior and a brother — never proud of his post, never losing sight of the deep significance of responsible authority. Two were the wellsprings that supplied him with a wealth of wisdom and courage: his love of Don Bosco, whose ideals and guidelines he cherished in his life and proposed to others, and love of the Church and the Pope, whom he, as a true son of Don Bosco, honored as teachers of truth and interpreters of God".

*Fr. James Schauer*

\* Bamberg, Upper Franconia, Germany, 26.6.1902; † Munich, Germany, 13.11.1976; 74 years old, 51 prof., 42 priest, 7 Rector.

He came from a large and deeply Catholic family. After some years of experience as a salesman, he entered the missionary house of Unterwaldersdorf near Vienna as an aspirant. After his profession, he was for 18 years in charge of administration first in the house of Munich, then in the Province. He discharged his responsibilities with dedication, efficiency and calm. He was an indefatigable and cheerful worker, a priest with strong convictions, and a true son of Don Bosco. A protracted illness prepared him to meet the Lord.

*Fr. Antoninus Scornavacca*

\* Agira, Enna, Italy, 2.11.1887; † San Gregorio, Catania, Italy, 26.10.1976; 88 years old, 68 prof., 57 priest, 30 Rector.

Animated by a lively desire to enter religious life and endowed with excellent intellectual and moral talents, he went through the various stages of his formative Salesian life with the most remarkable results. After receiving the subdiaconate, he was enlisted into military service for the duration of the entire World War I (1915-1918). As a serviceman in the Medical Corps, he won the esteem and friendship of his fellow soldiers and the high commendation of his officers. After his ordination he held several offices of responsibility: he was economer for 14 years, Rector for 30, and for the last 16 years confessor of the clerics at San Gregorio. Father Antoninus was exemplary in everything, always serene and jovial.

*Fr. Ancilone Gomes Siebra*

\* Caririçu, Ceará, Brazil, 23.5.1941; † Carpina, Brazil, 21.3.1976; 34 years old, 13 prof., 4 priest.

He was a young priest who irradiated *joie de vivre*, imperturbable serenity, outgoing and outspoken piety, and unwavering uprightness all around. A son of a rugged Nordeste Brazilian pioneer, he filled the houses of formation in the province with his youthful enthusiasm. Endowed with a strong physique, he excelled in every kind of sport, until at 27, during his theological studies, an accident on the job almost totally immobilized him for two years. Then, after three years of intense priestly work at Carpina among the young who were responsive to the fascination of his personality, he lost his life in a highway car accident, as he was returning from a youth meeting.

*Fr. Aldous Speciga*

\* Mantua, Italy, 10.6.1904; † Bologna, Italy, 1.11.1976; 72 years old, 44 prof., 36 priest.

His vocation matured in a virtuous family environment and the Catholic Action groups of his parish. At the age of 20, after completing a machine work apprenticeship course, he became a Salesian. He carried out his priestly ministry in several houses in the province, and from 1943 to 1945 he was highly appreciated, and because of it one of the concentration camp inmates became a Salesian. The later part of his life was tested by prolonged sickness, which he bore with Christian resignation and fortitude.

*Fr. Augustine Stassig*

\* Possnitz, Upper Silesia, Poland, 26.9.1900; † Neuburg, Donau, Germany, 27.8.1976; 75 years old, 46 prof., 38 priest.

Born of a large family (with 12 brothers), he received a deeply Christian training from his parents. After his ordination, he was sent to Spain, where he spent 16 years teaching, doing parish work and providing spiritual guidance to youth groups. Back in Germany, he continued doing parish work and was appointed confessor of several Salesian foundations. The Lord tested his sterling faith with a bothersome disease: it was only after three years of suffering in a clinic that He called him to himself.

*Fr. Nicholas Staszków*

\* Lwów, Poland, 19.6.1931; † Głogów, Poland, 16.10.1976; 45 years old, 26 prof., 18 priest.

His spent his life doing parish work, first as assistant, then as pastor (parish priest). Despite the many difficulties of the social and political situation in his country, he was able to build a parish church in Lubrza and another in Sarbinów, and to earn the grateful cooperation of his parishioners.

*Coad. Bro. Louis Tammaro*

\* Scafati, Salerno, Italy, 3.2.1905; † Montevideo, Uruguay, 29.8.1976; 71 years old, 9 prof..

An eleventh-hour vocation, at the age of 62, after caring for his mother with filial love till her death, he applied for admission to the Salesian family. An accountant by profession and a gifted painter by avocation, he had been employed with commercial companies and interior decoration firms; in the Salesian houses where he was sent he put his unusual talents and long experience to the service of the confreres. In particular he took care of administration, until his health allowed him, being at all times a paragon of poverty.

*Fr. Iginus Tau*

\* Fiano Romano, Rome, Italy, 30.1.1912; † Genzano, Rome, Italy, 8.8.1976; 64 years old, 47 prof., 38 priest.

A priest according to the heart of Christ, a true Salesian educator and apostle, he gave generously of his talents of mind and heart to the priestly ministry, to teaching and caring for his pupils. To them he rendered

constant and dedicated service, and to them he was an esteemed friend, confidant and counsellor.

*Fr. Mark Belisarius Terán*

\* Tucumán, Argentina, 25.4.1915; † there, 28.10.1976; 61 years old, 35 prof., 29 priest.

Born of a noble Tucumanan family, he heard God's call while he was pursuing his studies in engineering; putting aside opportunities for worldly success, he became a humble son of Don Bosco. Genteel and amiable by nature, he easily captivated the hearts of all who came in contact with him. He used this talent of his to bring many souls back to the right path. He loved the splendor of liturgy, and sparked church services with his facile and popular preaching, his profound love of the Eucharist, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

*Fr. William Thiele*

\* Niederntudorf, Westfalia, Germany, 14.1.1892; † Bahía Blanca, Argentina, 13.11.1976; 84 years old, 55 prof., 49 priest.

He was sent to Patagonia right after his ordination, and never went back to his native country. For over 34 years he worked in Villa Iris, where he was parish priest. When his health began to fail, he was transferred to General Roca, where he continued to work till a progressive paralysis brought about complete immobility. He nevertheless continued to celebrate Mass in his room till his dying day. His mortal remains were brought back to his former parish in Villa Iris, where his parishioners gave them a triumphant reception.

*Coad. Bro. John Vich*

\* Mercedes, Soriano, Uruguay, 2.6.1895; † Montevideo, Uruguay, 5.8.1976; 81 years old, 49 prof..

Born on a farm, he followed his natural inclination towards farming. After becoming a Salesian Brother, he dedicated all his energies to the training of boys in our agricultural schools in Uruguay and Paraguay. He was an expert plant pathologist. His memory of Greek and Latin names of plants and their diseases, of beneficial and harmful insects was prodigious and remained so even in his old age. Endowed with a sturdy physique, with a capacity for down-to-earth teaching and a colorful and facetious language, and with a somewhat rough-hewn character, he made friends easily with clerics, young farmers, and confreres.

*Fr. Louis Villarino*

\* Buenos Aires, Argentina, 20.2.1900; † Ramos Mejía, Argentina, 11.11.1976; 76 years, 58 prof., 50 priest.

He was highly appreciated as a teacher and school master. With his beautiful voice he taught his boys music, and with his jovial and always cheerful disposition he captivated the hearts of children and grownups alike. He was the past pupils' delegate in various houses. At Mar del Plata he was the chaplain of the rest home of the past pupils' families, which considered him as a dynamic and dedicated father and spiritual director. In all things he showed to be animated by a great love of Don Bosco.

*Fr. Achilles Visentin*

\* Zovon di Po, Padua, Italy, 11.4.1910; † Este, Padua, Italy, 8.10.1976; 66 years old, 46 prof., 38 priest, 44 missionary in India.

At 18 he entered a missionary aspirantate in northern Italy, and his motto became: "Go and preach". He went to India, and preached, not so much from a pulpit, but rather by means of his good example, his kindness, his personal concern, and above all his spirit of poverty, simplicity and serenity. He did not obtain prestigious degrees; he was happy to be a "man of God". Thus he was able to do much good, first on the missions in India, then in his native country, where he had returned to take some rest, and where he continued to be a missionary of the word and a minister of grace.

*Fr. Peter Yarmorini*

\* Aiguá, Maldonado, Uruguay, 15.3.1912; † Salto, Uruguay, 22.6.1976; 64 years old, 42 prof., 34 priest.

An uncommonly talented man, an able professor, he dedicated his entire life to the teaching of children and young men. He was a born teacher. He had a taste for literature. He showed his tireless industriousness wherever he was assigned by obedience. He was kind and dedicated, helpful and pious, cheerful and affable. Death came suddenly, but not unexpectedly.

*Fr. Florindus Zandonella*

\* Candide, Comelico Superiore, Belluno, Italy, 30.5.1909; † Bahía Blanca, Argentina, 16.9.1976; 67 years old, 47 prof., 36 priest.

As a very young man he went from Italy to Patagonia to fulfil his missionary dream. There his vocation matured and became fruitful. Sturdy like an oak tree, he seemed to be able to bear up under the most trying and

burdensome conditions without respite. He worked unstintingly. The Chos Malal territory was the witness of what a man, supported by a dauntless faith, can do. Travelling by jeep, on horseback or on foot he carried on his work of evangelization in the midst of the most unfavorable circumstances. A dreadful disease cut down his strong constitution and led him prematurely to the reward of the just.

### 3rd Elenco for 1976

- 123 Sac. AGUILAR Giuseppe † a Bilbao (Spagna) 1976 a 78 a.  
124 Sac. BARBIERI Giovanni † a Betlemme (Palestina) 1976 a 76 a.  
125 Coad. BASSO Edoardo † a Alassio (Savona - Italia) 1976 a 69 a.  
126 Sac. BECCUTI Luigi † a Monteortone (Padova - Italia) 1976 a 90 a.  
127 Sac. BRUNORI Gioacchino † a Firenze (Italia) 1976 a 86 a.  
128 Sac. CAAMANO Emanuele † a Salamanca (Spagna) 1976 a 80 a.  
129 Coad. CENTANNI Calogero † a Palermo (Italia) 1976 a 65 a.  
130 Coad. CID Gumersindo † a Shillong (India) 1976 a 83 a.  
131 Coad. CIPRIANO Giovanni † a Messina 1976 a 62 a.  
132 Sac. CONDE Luigi † a Madrid (Spagna) 1976 a 95 a.  
133 Sac. CONTI Vincenzo † a Ivrea (Torino - Italia) 1976 a 64 a.  
134 Sac. CROSSLEY Gerardo † a Bolton (Lancs - Gran Bretagna) 1976 a 60 a.  
135 Sac. CUCCHI Donato † a Vercelli (Italia) 1976 a 87 a.  
136 Sac. DEMOLDER Giulio † a Mol (Belgio) 1976 a 78 a.  
137 Sac. DE SALVO Michele † a Bahía Blanca (Argentina) 1976 a 85 a.  
138 Sac. DAZ Emiliano † Caracas (Venezuela) 1976 a 66 a.  
139 Coad. GHIRINGHELLO Cesare † Montevideo (Uruguay) 1976 a 70 a.  
140 Sac. GOIS Antonio † Manaus (Brasile) 1976 a 58 a.  
141 Sac. GOTTHARDT Giuseppe † a Waidhofen (Ybbs - Austria) 1976 a 92 a.  
142 Sac. HAGENMAYER Corrado † Burghausen (Salzach - Germania) 1976 a 62 a.  
143 Sac. HIGGINS Cristoforo † a Dunfermline (Scozia) 1976 a 22 a.  
144 Sac. IGLESIAS Venanzio † Ramos Mejía (Argentina) 1976 a 52 a.  
145 Sac. JARLINSKI Edoardo † Czerwińsk (Polonia) 1976 a 65 a.  
146 Sac. LE BAGOUSSE Giovanni Maria † a Sion (Svizzera) 1976 a 68 a.  
147 Coad. LEON DE TRINITA' † a S. Salvador (El Salvador) 1976 a 80 a.  
148 Sac. MACIAK Sigismondo † a Czerwińsk (Polonia) 1976 a 58 a.  
149 Sac. MAGISTRELLI Giovanni † a Modena (Italia) 1976 a 81 a.  
150 Sac. MONDATI Giovanni Battista † a Cordoba (Argentina) 1976 a 79 a.  
151 Sac. NUNES Benedetto † a Lisboa (Portogallo) 1976 a 60 a.  
152 Sac. OMODEI Giuseppe † a Intra di Verbania (Novara - Italia) 1976 a 72 a.  
153 Sac. PAOLONI Aldo † a Beirut (Libano) 1976 a 62 a.  
154 Sac. PAZO' Luigi † Santiago de Compostela (Spagna) 1976 a 77 a.  
155 Sac. RATH Luca † a Bamberg (Germania) 1976 a 69 a.  
156 Coad. RINCON Dario † a Ibagué (Colombia) 1976 a 64 a.  
157 Sac. ROHR Carlo † a Mannheim (Germania) 1976 a 89 a.  
158 Coad. SANNINO Luciano † a Bari (Italia) 1976 a 52 a.  
159 Sac. SARTOR Tullio † a Treviso (Italia) 1976 a 56 a.  
160 Sac. SCHAUER Giacomo † a München (Germania) 1976 a 74 a.

- 161 Sac. SCORNAVACCA Antonio † a S. Gregorio (Catania - Italia) 1976 a 88 a.
- 162 Sac. SIEBRA Gomes Ancilone † a Carpina (Brasile) 1976 a 34 a.
- 163 Sac. SPECIGA Aldo † a Bologna (Italia) 1976 a 72 a.
- 164 Sac. STASSIG Agostino † a Neuburg (Donau-Germania) 1976 a 75 a.
- 165 Sac. STASZKOW Nicola † a Glasgow (Polonia) 1976 a 45 a.
- 166 Coad. TAMMARO Luigi † a Montevideo (Uruguay) 1976 a 71 a.
- 167 Sac. TAÙ Igino † a Genzano (Roma - Italia) 1976 a 64 a.
- 168 Sac. TERAN Marco Belisario † Tucumán (Argentina) 1975 a 61 a.
- 169 Sac. THIELE Guglielmo † a Bahía Blanca (Argentina) 1976 a 84 a.
- 170 Coad. VICH Giovanni † a Montevideo (Uruguay) 1976 a 81 a.
- 171 Sac. VILLARINO Luigi † a Ramos Mejía (Argentina) 1976 a 76 a.
- 172 Sac. VISENTIN Achille † a Este (Padova - Italia) 1976 a 66 a.
- 173 Sac. YARMORINI Pietro † a Salto (Uruguay) 1976 a 64 a.
- 174 Sac. ZANDONELLA Florindo † a Bahía Blanca (Argentina) 1976 a 67 a.



