



# ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

## OF THE SALESIAN SOCIETY

### SUMMARY

#### I. Letter of the Rector Major (p. 3)

Learn from Don Rua - The function of the magisterium of the Congregation - Prayer: a vital problem - Prayer is in a state of crisis - Negative signs of the situation - The reasons are many - Prayer is necessary - Indispensable for a Religious - It is the centre of our Salesian tradition - Prayer must be renewed - Building up the community with prayer - Life becomes prayer - We work for renewal.

#### II. Instructions and Norms (none in this issue)

#### III. Communication (p. 47)

1. The Rector Major's strena for 1973. - 2. The Beatification of Father Michael Rua. - 3. Appointments. - 4. Brotherly Solidarity. - 5. Inauguration of the **Salesianum**: study-week on Salesian spirituality. - 6. Request for historical sources and documents for two projected volumes. 7. Amendments to the English edition of the Constitutions and Regulations. - Provincial news letters. - 9. Salesian Statistics.

#### IV. Activities of the Superior Council and matters of general interest (p. 54)

1. Superior Council meetings. - 2. Work of the various commissions. - 3. Meetings with the Salesian family.

#### V. Documents (p. 58)

1. From the Rector Major's letter to the Salesian family: a) New undertakings of 1972; b) The vocation crisis. - 2. Brotherly solidarity.

#### VI. Pontifical Magisterium (p. 64)

1. "Let us bless the Lord! Don Rua is 'Blessd'." 2. "Be faithful to your Religious vocation." - 3. "What is the Church's greatest need today?"

#### VII. Necrology - fourth list for 1972 (p. 83)



# ACTS OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL

## THE ITALIAN SOCIETY

At a meeting of the Superior Council held on the 15th day of January 1914, the following resolutions were adopted:

1. That the Council should continue to support the work of the Italian Society in the field of research and publication.

2. That the Council should continue to support the work of the Italian Society in the field of research and publication.

3. That the Council should continue to support the work of the Italian Society in the field of research and publication.

## I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

---

Rome, January, 1973

*My dear confrères and sons,*

I write to you still under the spell of Don Rua's Beatification; it was unforgettable. In the floodlit grandeur of St. Peter's Basilica the Holy Father proposed to the whole Church the example and cult of the first humble successor of Don Bosco. An immense crowd of over 30,000 enthusiastic and joyous pilgrims from every part of the world (their bond of unity was the Salesian spirit and mission) witnessed again the Church's official approval of the spiritual fruitfulness of the Salesian charisma.

### **"Learn from Don Rua"**

The Holy Father gave a beautiful homily. He referred to Don Rua as "all meekness and goodness, all duty and sacrifice" and spoke of his faithful and creative "continuance" of Don Bosco and all he stood for. He told us that Don Rua "turned the example of Don Bosco into a 'school' and his personal work into a world-wide institution; he made his life a history, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type, a model; he made the spring into a stream". He spoke of the "marvellous fruitfulness of the Salesian family" and quite disconcertingly defined it as "one of the greatest and most significant phenomena of the perennial vitality of the Church in the last century and in the present".

The Pope bade us learn from Don Rua. "He teaches the Salesians to remain Salesians, ever-faithful sons of their Founder." And he gave us what practically amounts to a rule of life when he described how "all the sons of this flourishing young Salesian family, under the friendly and fatherly gaze of their new Beatus, quicken their step along the steep, straight path of the well-tested tradition of Don Bosco".

While listening to the homily I meditated on the spiritual heritage we have received from Don Bosco and the grave responsibility incumbent on each of us not to hamper its energy, its vitality, its spiritual fruitfulness so evidenced in the invaluable fruits of sanctity it has produced. At the Offertory, conscious of my unworthiness to be called to be the "father and centre of unity" (1), I offered God the anxieties and hopes of our family. I promised in your name not to fall short of our Special General Chapter's top-priority resolution of "renewed fidelity". I am well aware that "together with the Superior Council, my main care is to promote in the members a constant and renewed fidelity to their Salesian vocation". (2) I am also sure I can count on your collaboration in accepting the directives that derive from this mandate given me. (3) Accordingly I mean to dwell on a subject that needs to engage all the goodwill you have, for it is absolutely vital (I use the word advisedly); it is a matter of life or death for our Congregation.

### **The function of the magisterium of the Congregation**

Before proceeding with my subject it is necessary to recall a few fundamental principles. You are well aware that one of the main duties of any Religious superior (at all times, but especially

(1) *Constitutions*, art. 129.

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Regulations*, art. 95.

these days) is what could be termed the “magisterium”. This means direction, guidance and inspiration; pointing out the right road, quickly correcting deviations, denouncing abuses, clarifying the correct attitudes to be taken, so that all know clearly at any given moment the line that ought to be followed. This is not paternalism; nor is it stifling the freedom of the individual. Rather it is defending the liberty of all those who have the right to be defended against the flood of « opinions » that make everything relative and uncertain. They have given their names to the Society and they have the right to know positively in what direction it is going. Such guidance is not the prerogative of any individual or pressure group or any leader of the moment: it is the fundamental reserve of the competent superiors; by virtue of their office, this mandate and responsibility is theirs.

Obviously this magisterium should not be limited to purely negative matters, merely correcting errors or deviations. Its main work should be positive, i.e., guiding, strengthening and vitalizing our Salesian vocation (the meaning of which has been enriched by the enlightened pronouncements of the recent Special General Chapter).

In no way may the magisterium be used arbitrarily: it must at all times be modelled on the Constitutions which “in stable form give direction to our profession and shed a radiance on our fidelity ». (4) Only thus can we adequately promote the genuine growth of the Congregation, its mission and its vitality.

On the other hand it is the duty of all confrères to accept the magisterium cordially, generously and actively. The strength of an organisation such as a Religious Congregation lies in its cohesion, its internal unity in regard to certain principles and activities which clarify the nature of its vocation or are connected directly or indirectly with it. Of course, on certain matters proposed by the Superior there could at times be divergence of opinion. This rarely has to do with a matter of principle. But

(4) *Constitutions*, art. 200.

when a direction is proposed it is not generally just thrown in for discussion or critical examination; it is meant to be put into practice.

Please do not misunderstand me. I have no wish to infringe on reasonable freedom of opinion nor to lessen the personal responsibility of anyone. I simply want to make this clear: there exists an exaggerated independence that leads some people to argue every point, to criticise, to use completely personal or arbitrary criteria, picking and choosing what they think should be accepted or rejected. All this leads to anarchy and disintegration, and could be the ruination of our Congregation. In the normal manner of procedure, all issues have been well discussed and personal contributions, suggestions and criticism already made; using all the methods of consultation and collegial deliberation provided for by the Constitutions. This process should not be repeated endlessly every time some instruction, direction or prescription is issued by the competent organisations.

Here is a case in point. For three years the Congregation was engrossed in the work of deep and critical analysis of its life and mission. After further long and laborious study by the Chapter members it formulated its criteria for renewal. These are crystallized in the new Holy Rule and clarified by the Acts of the Special General Chapter. This is now no time for further discussion of these dispositions, or (in some ways worse) ignoring them, or judging them already obsolete or too avant-garde, or even not in accordance with Don Bosco's thinking. This is the time (as I have said on various occasions already) to put them into practice, to work according to the guidelines given us.

### *The ACTS formulate our policy*

I have mentioned these things to emphasise the magisterium of the Congregation. The Rector Major and the members of the Superior Council are very conscious of the pluralism in the Congregation in the areas indicated by the Constitutions; of the

decentralization which the Special General Chapter rightly introduced; of a certain autonomy (5) in the Provinces consequent on subsidiarity. They make every effort to respect these principles and not to overstep the boundaries of their mandate. At the same time they are aware that theirs is a grave obligation to govern the Congregation in order to promote unity, growth and fidelity to the Salesian vocation at world level; and to see that the members everywhere assume the responsibilities required of them by the Special General Chapter.

In the past our Congregation wielded a mighty force because it was so united. It managed to survive many grave crises because it clung closely to Don Bosco in his abiding presence. It embarked on grand enterprises with unquestionable results because it concentrated its effort. Our Society was not a number of tiny rivulets flowing in all directions and being absorbed by the parched earth: it was a mighty river. Wherever it went it left its mark: it sowed devotion to Mary, it spread an educative system, because it marched in line as an efficient army. Let us be convinced that our salvation lies in being united.

To get down to practicalities. The directions contained in the letters of the Rector Major and the Acts of the Special General Chapter should be considered as "government policy" with the purpose of attaining a common line of action. They are not a pious exhortation to be read and put aside. They should be thoroughly pondered, especially by Provincials and Rectors and their respective councils, and ways and means should be found to have them known, assimilated and applied. On our part we are making every effort to have them translated promptly so that they may be read and, of course, put into practice.

Those confrères or communities who for some reason or other are not acquainted with the Acts of the Superior Council and the general news of the Congregation are like a city with the water supply or the electricity cut off.

(5) *Constitutions*, art. 162.

*I speak with a father's confidence*

I draw your attention in a special way to the subject of my treatise; as I said, I consider it of vital importance for our life and renewal. I open my heart to you with the confidence and freedom of a father speaking to his grown-up sons, hiding nothing of my anxieties and worries in this difficult time we are going through.

I have no wish to cause excessive apprehension or play the part of a pessimist. On the other hand I cannot conceal what I believe could jeopardise the very existence of our Society which cost Don Bosco and his great followers so many tears and sacrifices. I am sure I shall have your complete understanding that we shall be of one heart in our determination to live to the full our wonderful vocation.

My subject is the importance of prayer and its absolute necessity if our vocation is to be lived and our mission fulfilled.

**PRAYER: VITAL PROBLEM**

Towards the end of his address to the members of the Special General Chapter the Holy Father said: "We have a last recommendation to make. In face of the risk of excessive activism and the influence of secularization, to which Religious communities, especially communities like yours who are dedicated to active work, are more exposed than ever today, see that care of your spiritual life, prayer, the spirit of poverty, love of sacrifice and the cross, always have first place in your lives. If the desired *aggiornamento* were not to bring back apostolic dynamism to a closer contact with God, but were to lead it to a surrender to the worldly mentality, supporting short-lived and changing attitudes and fashions, to imitation of the world in its various forms and without discernment, then it would be necessary to reflect seriously on the severe words of the Gospel: « If salt becomes tasteless

what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men". (6) It seems to us that the spirit of your saintly founder, who in his life was so open to the needs of young souls but always so united with God, asks you specially to make this particular effort... » (7) From the height of his magisterium the Holy Father points out to us serious and real dangers, risks waiting to entrap us and cause us to lose the identity and validity of our vocation; and he indicates practical goals for us that should have first place: the interior life and prayer. This comes to us from the Pope as the "particular effort" which Don Bosco asks of us today.

The words of the Holy Father find a sad echo of confirmation in the worrying report made on the state of prayer in the Congregation in the document that has been called "the X-ray of the Congregation".

### **I. Prayer is in a state of crisis**

The "Report on the present state of the Congregation" that I made at the opening of the Special General Chapter already showed findings that side by side a successful effort in the liturgical field there existed a notable falling away and lack of interest in the main practices that nourish our piety, such as meditation, spiritual reading, confession, devotion to Mary, etc. As far as personal prayer was concerned, I was only too well aware of the difficulty of evaluating the state of interior and personal attitudes in individuals. I made this remark: "Nevertheless it can probably be said, on the basis of the external facts to hand, that the level of piety and interior life in the Congregation has decreased very noticeably". (8)

(6) *Matt.*, V, 13.

(7) *Acts of SGC*, page 637.

(8) *General Report on the state of the Congregation*, page 32.

Referring to the many “defections” in the six years, the report in its analysis maintained that the “principal cause (as I had already written in my letter of March 1970) was the decrease in the interior life both in communities and individuals; this ended in many cases in an actual loss of faith”. (9)

What is the present position? A detailed evaluation would be premature as our data is far from complete; but from what information is available I must say, unfortunately, that there is no evidence as yet of that general resurgence needed and expected after the Special General Chapter. This is a matter of grave concern.

When a crisis is unduly prolonged it runs the risk of becoming a chronic sickness with attendant fatal results. Of course it is also a fact that many Provincial and individual communities have made very consoling progress in applying themselves firmly and methodically to a prayer-life that is dynamic and vital: and already the results give cause for rejoicing. But we cannot close our eyes to the other side of the picture.

### **Negative signs of the situation**

The following traits are relative, incomplete, negative and perhaps open to discussion. Obviously they do not reflect a universal situation, but they are fairly frequent at various levels and are indications: lack of interest in liturgy renewal; unwillingness to concelebrate (which is such a privileged way of praying together) and considering concelebration as merely a kind of prevailing fashion; a kind of resistance (under pretexts) to common liturgical prayers such as Lauds and Vespers (10) and other community prayer. The value common prayer has for religious life

(9) *Ibid.*, page 42.

(10) cf. *Constitutions*, art. 60 & *Regulations*, art. 44.

and building up the community is not sufficiently appreciated.

More serious and fundamental is the lack of personal prayer: in many cases meditation, spiritual reading, the rosary, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, etc., are neglected or totally abandoned. In other cases it is sad to see meditation losing its character of "mental prayer" and being supplanted by various arbitrary and variant novelties which are not by any means true prayer; and work that loses its apostolic value because performed as a profession rather than for God.

Other findings could be added. The sad synthesis they all contribute to is this: our prayer falls short in quality and quantity.

One Provincial has summarised the situation in his Province thus: "God seems to be absent from our conversations and activities; our faith is weakened; our hearts are either listless or disturbed; there is not enough time for peace, serenity, prayer and joyousness; our activities lack energy and fundamental Gospel motivation; we lack the interior life".

Perhaps many confrères will see themselves mirrored in this sincere and courageous summation.

### **The reasons are many**

Faced with such a situation we naturally ask what are the reasons for it. They are many; and although of various kinds, they all converge.

Some are rooted in the past, are complex and not easily described since they belong to the intimate and personal spiritual life of the individual. Others are of a general nature, dependant on social background, cultural differences, modern thinking (especially in the way man and his world are conceived) and certain theological or pseudo-theological hypotheses accepted uncritically, at least in practice. Again, there are other causes more directly connected with our Congregation, such as the notable changes in the pastoral-educative field, the new variations in community

life, or the lack of opportunity for calm recollection and dialogue with God.

A few causes have their beginning in the period of our formation. Findings show that the pedagogy of prayer was often lacking: this was aggravated later by our active life and by hazy and faulty ideas about the role of prayer in the Salesian life.

From these general remarks it is plain that the causes are manifold; and this letter is hardly the place for a deep and exhaustive diagnosis: such can be done elsewhere and by experts. Here and now it will suffice to note some of the more common and recurring causes in our prayer crisis (which is one of quality as well as quantity).

### *Influence of materialism*

Among these causes worldly influence takes first place.

There is a well-known ambivalence in this phenomenon: true, it presents positive principles for clarifying the concept of God and religion by stripping away distorting pseudo-structures; but there are also many other consequences, and though some are obviously illogical, they nevertheless exert great influence. They exalt the autonomy of material reality and end by eliminating God altogether, practically turning him into an isolated, inaccessible transcendent being, and denying him any interest in the world and its doings. This materialism aims at putting creatures beyond the pale of God and making them independent of him.

One of the first consequences of all this is to argue that prayer be eliminated; and if we accept the premises, the argument is "logical". It is a thesis that independent theologians and certain widely-circulated reviews claim to justify with all sorts of specious argumentation.

Here I am moved to quote Cardinal Pellegrino, Archbishop of Turin, who could not by any means be called reactionary in his thinking. He spoke of the number of times he had to defend theologians. Then he went on: « However, let us get this straight:

in matters of faith and the spiritual life the criterion of judgement cannot be the opinion of a single theologian (or one who claims to be a theologian). We are very willing to listen with respect to the contributions of all. But if, for instance, a theologian tells me that prayers of petition are senseless, I prefer to believe Jesus Christ, St. Paul and the teaching and practice of the whole Church. Besides, it does not seem logical to give so much weight to these theologians (always presuming they are theologians) when today, as indeed in the past, theology is re-echoing and deepening what Scripture and tradition has always taught about the value and necessity of prayer, including prayer of petition. I quote just one of the many such testimonies from the work of a non-Catholic theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "The child prays to his Father whom he knows. This is no generic worship: asking is of the essence of Christian prayer. The attitude of a man before his God is that he stand with his hands raised in prayer to him who he knows has a father's heart." (11)

I do not think these secularized theories are openly accepted by any of our Salesians, but they must make some impact, especially on people who are insufficiently prepared. Unconsciously they absorb ideas, prejudices and influences from all directions; they finish by tacitly accepting, at least in practice, that « today » in the new concept of the world and the new theology, prayer is not as necessary as it was once held to be. It then becomes a "burden" to be got rid of under any pretexts that might be at hand; or when they do pray, it is in a half-hearted sort of way: just to "carry out the obligation".

In the face of the evil consequences of this materialism, as far as we are each personally concerned, there is only one attitude: to resist and react with an intense spiritual life.

(11) Card. M. PELLEGRINO: *Pregare o agire*, LDC, 1972, page 23.

*Horizontalism*

Our active way of life possibly exposes us in a particular way to horizontalism. This attitude reduces the spiritual life to a "service and liberation of the poor". It considers prayer out of place because it cannot be measured in terms of immediate results, and furthermore it distracts from this essential Christian duty.

Pope Paul VI denounced this horizontal tendency with these words: "It is well known what a negative force this spiritual attitude has assumed: it holds that action, not prayer, renders Christian living alert and sincere. Social services take over from practices". (12)

*Religious practices*

At the beginning of last December I took part in the annual meeting of Superiors General. The theme was prayer. They dealt with the temptation to horizontalism which is ensnaring many Religious. With the help of two eminent periti, Father B. Haering and Father J. Loew, a number of fundamental conclusions were reached. Here is a summary of them.

"Salvation comes to us only from God and in the way willed by him: hence we cannot separate what he has united: body and spirit, action and contemplation, God and man. The horizontal can only be cured by the vertical. The source cannot be ignored.

"It is clear that charity in the Gospel and in the lives of the Saints covers an area that is not reduced to mere activity for others. God comes before our neighbour; and in regard to our neighbour, charity has other aspects than mere action.

"It must be remembered that, like the Church as a whole,

(12) PAUL VI, *general audience*, 20 August 1969.

every individual Christian has the continual need of 'conversion': and conversion cannot take place without God.

"Finally, those Religious of 'action only', who reject prayer, regularly end by abandoning their vocation".

These thoughtful conclusions are the fruit of a wide experience. They afford us plenty of matter to ponder deeply.

### *Adapting ourselves to change*

Another cause of the prayer-crisis could be failure "to adapt" to certain changes either in our educative-apostolic work or our community life. Our educative mission and Preventive System has always put us in a position of "sharing" with the pupils. It was natural that in our boarding schools (so often our special type of work) the Salesians should attend the same practices of piety as the boys. Of course they put more understanding and will into them; but the practices were the same. Later meditation and spiritual reading were added, but the great moment of the day was Community Mass with the boys.

Then certain changes were introduced (not always happy ones and often too sudden and not pedagogically sound). The result was to reduce the pupils' practices of piety to a minimum or even to eliminate them altogether. The Salesians then found it a problem to fit in their Mass. Unfortunately in many places it ended up by being relegated to any half-hour which happened to be available; Mass was said in a hurry and often at times that were most inconvenient.

But the most common causes of the crisis are at the personal level: lack of prayer formation and training; little conviction or ability to concentrate; often a superficiality, a diminution in faith, a clouding of religious ideals; no interior life; frequently a paucity of thought and ideas.

I shall not dwell on these negative aspects: they could well appear exaggerated and pessimistic; and there would probably

be no lack of prompt justification forthcoming. I believe it will be more useful and constructive to deepen and strengthen our conviction of the importance and the absolute necessity of prayer.

## II. Prayer is necessary

I have advisedly used the word “necessity” and not “obligation”. One who is baptized (and moreso one who is consecrated) and takes his vocation seriously does not need to be told he is obliged to pray: it would be like telling a person he must breathe and eat if he wishes to live. No man needs such an order unless he is abnormal. The comparison is not exaggerated if we begin our argument from a basic principle of faith.

Step by step this is our argument: prayer is essential for every Christian. The Holy Father states clearly: “Without a personal, intimate, continuous interior life of prayer, faith and charity it is impossible to remain a Christian, to participate usefully and wisely in the flourishing rebirth of the liturgy, to give efficacious witness of that Christian authenticity so frequently spoken of; it is impossible to think, breathe, act, suffer or hope in close union with the living pilgrim Church. Prayer is essential. Through lack of prayer, not only our understanding of things and events but also the mysterious but indispensable help of grace diminishes or may even disappear”. (13) This is a truth as old as the Church, which from its very beginning followed the precept of Christ (14) and “always prayed”. (15)

### Indispensable for a Religious

For a Religious prayer is even more necessary — it is absolutely indispensable. It is one of the fundamental dimensions

(13) PAUL VI, *Teachings of Paul VI*, vol. VII, page 1019.

(14) LUKE, XVIII, 1.

(15) *Acts*, II, 42.

of his make-up. By definition a Religious is “a man of God”. This “belonging to God” is not just a juridical fact resultant on the contract expressed in our public Religious vows and the binding power of the Constitutions. It is above all a personal, spiritual fact, a choice of life that gushes from a love of God exclusive and enthusing. It means we simply must live in his friendship. Now, friendship is not satisfied with an initial declaration followed by a vacuum. Every friendship calls for nourishment, growth, demonstration. Presence and contact are needed to strengthen it; and the more it is strengthened the more it clamours for this “presence”. Prayer is nothing other than this “dealing with God”, listening to him, answering him, turning to him, keeping close to him, seeking union with him.

Our new Constitutions tell us that in prayer “the Salesian community becomes more conscious of its intimate and vital relationship with God and of its mission of salvation”, (16) and that “it fosters our intimate union with Christ and with the Father; it keeps prayer from becoming routine; it re-enchants love...”. (17) Hence prayer is a vital need. Not to pray means more than a moral default: it means losing a grip on life itself. It bespeaks feebleness, death-pangs, death itself.

And there are further considerations. The Religious life means opting for spiritual values which make sense only with the eye of faith. The way the world sees it, the Religious life is an absurdity. But worldly values are non-values. Take for instance the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, mortification, etc. What is fascinating and attractive about these Gospel values comes from grace. St. Paul says, “The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned”. (18)

(16) *Constitutions*, art. 58.

(17) *Constitutions*, art. 64.

(18) 1 *Cor.*, II, 14.

Hence a vocation which bases its choice and perseverance on anything but faith is radically at fault and is in danger of serious collapse at any moment: all the more so when our "outlook of faith" is jeopardised constantly by worldly values which are measured by a totally different standard. Our life and mission cause us to be immersed in the world and we are endlessly bombarded on every side by propaganda and the mass-media shouting at us in a thousand and one ways that we are out-moded, that our way of life makes no sense. How then can we remain firm in our correct outlook, our perspective of faith, without "the window that opens on to faith" (von Balthasar) which is prayer? Prayer enlivens faith, strengthens the heart, dispels the mists from our understanding and gives us the assurance that "we have chosen the better part". (19)

Prayer frees us from that influence to which we are all exposed: thinking and living contrary to the Gospel spirit, that perilous "conformism" which, under the illusion of "adapting to" the times, does away with "the scandal of the cross". Prayer has us constantly seeking God and meeting him in our everyday life. It gives a new, authentically Christian meaning to everything we think or do. (20)

Don Albera in his circular on "The Spirit of Piety" said, "Experience has proved time and time again that the Practices of Piety impart that energy to our souls that prevents us from being overwhelmed by the travails inevitable even in the Religious life, and saves us from the misfortune of losing our vocation". (21)

Pope Paul VI's "Evangelica Testificatio" clearly expresses the unbreakable link between prayer and the Religious life. Prayer gives us a taste of that genuine and personal knowledge of the Lord "without which we could never understand the worth of

(19) LUKE, X, 42.

(20) Card. M. PELLEGRINO, *op. cit.*, page 25.

(21) Father PAUL ALBERA, *Circular Letters*, page 38.

the Christian and Religious life; nor would we possess the strength to advance thither in the joy of a hope that does not beguile". (22)

*Fidelity to our vocation*

Faith, prayer and fidelity are closely bonded and dependent on one another in many ways. When prayer is lacking faith is weakened and vice-versa. This is a law that is rigorously exact. Faith is a gift and obtained by prayer; and prayer is the breath of faith. So it is that prayer is absolutely indispensable for fidelity to our vocation.

"It is our belief", says Pope Paul VI, "that many of the sad spiritual and moral crises of educated people who form part of the Church's organisation at various levels are due to weakness and perhaps to the lack of a regular and intense prayer-life. When the frame-work of exterior discipline is removed, prayer goes with it, and with it go fidelity and joyousness . (23)

The Pope's words are borne out by our experience. I do not mean that so complex, delicate and difficult a problem is solely due to lack of prayer. But it is a fact that in the sad history of so many of our confrères there is always a single constant factor either obvious or implicit: prayer has been abandoned or has become an empty and sterile formality. In many of the crises preceding or accompanying the decision to abandon the priesthood prayer could have given the necessary élan to a clearer vision and a greater faith. A crisis can be a painful trial, a process of growth or maturing, a night of the soul; but if prayer is abandoned, we lose that confidence in God that our weakness so sorely needs.

Sometimes confrères who ask for laicisation say they have prayed much. Again I do not wish to generalise: there are cases where this is really so. But in many instances (I would say

(22) PAUL VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, n. 43.

(23) PAUL VI, *Teachings of Paul VI*, vol. VII, page 1019.

the majority) real prayer was lacking. Maybe there was a process of “reasoning”, a seeking to rationalize a decision already taken; but there was no facing God and praying humbly, confidently, perseveringly and patiently. It is an undeniable fact that the priesthood (like any true vocation) only founders when prayer is lacking.

### *Seeking love of God*

Another point to be remembered is that prayer is necessary to attain what is always the purpose of any religious life: love of God, union with God, loving and total identification with his will; in a word, our sanctification.

Our Religious profession binds us to work towards spiritual maturity. (24) This is a long and tiring process and many factors must be taken into account. Over the years it should help us acquire a spiritual intensity, to become “men of God”, knowing him and carrying his aura about us.

Unhappily it sometimes occurs that confrères, even those of mature age and in positions of authority, reveal a painful superficiality, a kind of interior vacuum, like fountains without water; they can offer spiritual nourishment to neither confrères nor pupils; for them spiritual guidance is a closed book. The only explanation for this is habitual lack of true prayer, of the search for God.

Father Albera, writing on mental prayer, so important an element in the spiritual maturity we are talking about, says: “This exercise of mental prayer, taken in its broader sense, *is not only morally necessary* (the emphasis is Father Albera’s) for the conservation of the priestly spiritual life, *but absolutely indispensable* if there is to be any progress at all”. (25)

(24) *Acts SGC*, n. 525.

(25) Father PAUL ALBERA, *op. cit.*, page 443.

*Carrying out the Salesian mission*

Some may consider my insistence out of place in this climate of renewal, especially since the Special General Chapter has expressly stressed the Salesian mission. But, my dear confrères, also from this point of view prayer is indispensable. This is the true mind of the Special General Chapter and our constant Salesian tradition. Our Salesian mission, as part of the Church's mission, is not fully defined simply by what it does in the way of educating, evangelizing and helping the particular people we work for. These are fundamental elements but they are incomplete and do not portray the full character of our mission. Its wealth goes deeper and has its source in a dimension that is theological.

To be true to itself, a "mission" presupposes "God who sends", and hence the awareness of "being sent", the actual relationship with the sender and being dependant on him, a continual "referring" to the sender by the sent. This is a concept that has a wealth of important implications; it absolutely takes away from the mission all horizontal whims and anchors it firmly to God in a vertical dimension that cannot be substituted. Only thus is our mission a part of the mission of Christ who is the sole mediator and hence the model and reference point of every apostle.

In the Gospels, especially St. John, all Jesus' life and activities are inextricably related to the Father. As his Son, as the Word of the Father from all eternity, as the one sent by the Father in time, his existence and life derive from the Father. He never ceases to be aware of this... "I have not come of my own accord... My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me... My food is to do the will of him who sent me". This essential referral to the Father is never absent in Christ's work: through it he is in a constant state of adoration and glorification of the Father, contemplating his greatness, ever ready to do his will. His prayer flows from the very depths of his being which is so completely dominated by the sense of the Father that Christ is not so much an "adorer" or "glorifier" of the Father as "adoration" and "glorification"

personified. And in accordance with his human nature this prayer manifests itself in colloquy with the Father: this is the sublime and fruitful mystery of the prayer of Christ.

His public mission began with prayer; he prayed far from the crowds, in the wilderness, where he and the Father were alone; many of his nights were spent in prayer; it was a preparation for certain momentous acts of his mission (such as the choosing of the Twelve) and his most significant miracles; it culminated in the "Our Father".

The whole being and action of the praying Christ is synthesised in his priestly prayer at the last supper: a grieving plea for unity, for light and love for his children, a generous offering of himself to the Father for all of us, a eucharistic immolation. All this is continued, as St. Paul says, in the Risen Christ, living forever in unceasing intercession for us with the Father.

On one occasion Pope Paul VI borrowed a happy description of Christ as "the Man for all other men"; we could add that it is from the Father that this completely altruistic Christ derives the motivation, the energy, the meaning and the value of his total self-giving. Without this referral to the Father, Christ's living for others would be incomprehensible and meaningless and the value of the Redemption would be naught.

Article 2 of our Constitutions which describes our mission should be read in the light of this theological dimension. We Salesians "strive to realise through our Religious consecration the apostolic design of our Founder; then in our own Salesian way we try to become signs of and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are the poorest and the most in need". (26) The result is an all-pervading need of "being present" always and lovingly to God whom we must represent and mirror to the world. This is what the Special General Chapter requires of us. "This role of 'mediation' belonging to every

apostle, and all his tasks, presuppose in him a 'consecration' on the part of God, and require of him specific interior dispositions: a deep sense of the presence of him who calls and a willing availability in his instrument". (27)

We derive the same conclusion from the work of our mission, which is based on the Gospel and can only be adequately carried out in a spiritual perspective. We are directly collaborating "to achieve the saving designs of God and the coming of his kingdom by bringing the grace of Christ and his message to help permeate the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel... We aim in all our pastoral and educative work, if we follow Don Bosco, at helping all we come in contact with to grow gradually in the likeness of the perfect man, the Risen Christ". (28)

Also, in bettering man's lot we must never lose sight of bringing the Gospel to him: this needs the same interior attitude. (29) "Preaching the Gospel and catechising are fundamental to our mission. As Salesians we are all and at all times educators in the faith". (30) "Educating to the faith means above all leading people to the person of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Our highest knowledge is to know him, our deepest joy to reveal the unsearchable riches of his grace...". (31)

In the face of all these grave statements, the question must be asked, "How can we achieve duties and ideals without prayer, without a prayer-life that is deeply rooted?"

### *Masters of prayer*

There is yet further convincing matter to ponder. Our mission explicitly demands of us that we become "accomplished

(27) *Acts SGC*, n. 26.

(28) *Constitutions*, art. 17.

(29) *Acts SGC*, n. 60.

(30) *Constitutions*, art. 20.

(31) *Constitutions*, art. 21.

in prayer". "The first expression of faith is the adoration of the Father 'in spirit and in truth'. The Salesian educates to prayer as a loving and intimate encounter with Jesus our Saviour and with the Father". (32) "Today more than ever before we must help the young to rediscover the value of prayer in delicated living. It gives fresh vigour to faith; it enables them to listen, to seek out and follow the Spirit; it builds up interior life and creates community in and with Christ". (33)

Pure logic demands that if we are to instruct the young and others for whom we work in the way they should pray, we ourselves must be men of prayer. Our new Constitutions emphasise this fundamental need. "Our style of work and our relationships with others demand that we must always be renewing the divine element in our apostolic commitment: '...apart from me you can do nothing'. We need an ever fresh awareness of the Holy Spirit present in our lives". (34) And elsewhere: "In our mission we need a deep awareness of God and his kingdom... Our radical commitment as Religious to the God we love above all things serves to purify and enrich our apostolic service. It enables us to announce Christ as the life-giving word we ourselves have experienced in intimate encounter, to see him and serve him in his members...". (35)

To dispel any doubts about the intimate and vital relationship between prayer and our mission the SGC document on the "praying community" affirms that "prayer is the basis of our apostolic service directed to all men, our brothers, particularly towards poor and needy youth". (36)

The practical consequences are so obvious that there is no need to dwell longer enumerating them.

(32) *Acts SGC*, n. 64.

(33) *Acts SGC*, n. 372.

(34) *Constitutions*, art. 48.

(35) *Ibid.*, art. 70.

(36) *Acts SGC*, n. 529.

### It is at the centre of our Salesian tradition

The explicit declarations of the Special General Chapter quoted above are in full accord with our genuine Salesian tradition: a lot of documentation is not needed.

We all know that Don Bosco was called "Union with God" and found in this continual referral to God the source of his untiring pastoral charity; and that he made "religion" one of the main pillars of his educational method. In this regard it would be useful to read the learned treatise of our Father Braida on the Preventive System, or Father Caviglia's "Life of Dominic Savio", or Father Ceria's booklet "Don Bosco with God". And there are many others of a similar nature.

Don Bosco once said, "Whoever is ashamed to encourage acts of piety is not worthy to be an educator". (37) This is a simple, clear and forceful summation of what the Salesian mission requires.

I quote two of his successors who lived with him and had ample opportunity to probe the depths of his method and mission. Father Albera wrote to his Salesians, "The whole of the educative system taught by Don Bosco rests on piety. Where piety is not properly practised our institutes lose all beauty and prestige: they become far inferior to lay institutes". He goes on to say that we cannot inculcate piety if "we are not ourselves well provided with it. The education we impart to our pupils would be deficient: the least breath of impiety or immorality would wipe out those principles which long years of effort had tried to imprint on their hearts. The Salesian without solid piety will never make an educator. No better praise can ever be given to a Salesian than to say that he was a man of solid piety". (38) Ten years later he wrote, "It would be a mistake to be over-zealous for exterior holiness and multiply practices of piety. It would be a worse evil to go to the other extreme, misunderstanding Don Bosco's

(37) *Memorie Biografiche*, X, 1019.

(38) Father PAUL ALBERA, *op. cit.*, page 35.

intentions and maintaining that to be his followers it suffices to love youth, schools and noisy playgrounds. Diligent preoccupation in one's own sanctification is absolutely essential". (39) And Father Rinaldi wrote in 1930 (24 December), "Let us be careful we do not turn out mere students and professionals. Knowledge is good and necessary. It is the salt of the earth; but woe if it loses its savour. Even if our Society possessed top-rate scientists, it would not be carrying out its original educative apostolate; it would be like an old castle which from without still retains much of its pristine magnificence whilst within it is a mass of ruins". (40)

From what has been written and quoted a fundamental postulate emerges: prayer is absolutely essential to live and actuate our Salesian mission. It would be a great error to think we could achieve our mission of helping the needy merely by well-organized social services. We cannot be satisfied with activities that are praiseworthy and apparently fruitful, but not vitalized by union with God, not flowing from genuine pastoral charity, not sustained by prayer. This is not the Salesian way: it is soul-less.

Dear confrères, I have dwelt insistently on these points. I do not claim to have treated them in depth: I simply wanted to bring home to you the urgency of the situation. In our life and in our mission there is no substitute for prayer.

### III. Prayer must be renewed

It is not enough to intensify prayer: it must be definitely renewed. We should meditate frequently on the valuable treatise the Special Chapter offers us on this matter. It sets out a way for us that is safe and authoritative; it should be the inspiration of our updating and our spiritual rebirth.

(39) *Ibid.*, page 442.

(40) Father PHILIPS RINALDI, *Circular Letters in ASC*, X (1930), page 922.

Without going deeply into the matter, I simply put to you a few practical things which here and there I have seen neglected or undervalued and which I consider of great importance in our Salesian life.

### **Building up the community with prayer**

As I wrote in my presentation of the Acts of the Special General Chapter, one of the basic structures of renewal is the building-up of the community. With this in mind, the Special General Chapter, when treating of prayer, put the accent on the community. The very title of the chapter bespeaks this: "The praying community" (instead of "The Salesian's life of prayer"). This preference means that before all else prayer is, in our Salesian life, a "fundamental dimension" of the community. It is both an expression of the community and its basis. The community expresses itself as such, i.e., as a Religious community, by means of prayer. The community is called together by the Word of God, it is united by the bonds of a common vocation, a common mission, a common love. For the community the moment of prayer is a "genuine turning to God in whom it finds the supreme justification of its being".

Prayer also builds up the community. This is especially true of the Eucharist, without which no community can be formed; (41) but it also holds for all prayer. "When the community prays it becomes more conscious of its intimate and vital relationship with God". (42) The sense of belonging, of giving oneself, increases; the presence of the Holy Spirit strengthens faith and love, the two pillars of any community.

It follows from this that prayer is not something extrinsic, artificial, superimposed; not just another job to get done: it is a

(41) *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 6.

(42) *Constitutions*, art. 58.

vital, intrinsic, essential part of the community, its very breath of life. Without it there is no such thing as a Religious community.

Accordingly, whilst the Practices of Piety should be without formality (reduced to a mere external attitude) or legalism, still they should not be treated light-heartedly and arbitrarily and omitted in a facile, motiveless, debonair way. They indicate a prayer-rhythm that the Congregation in its capitular revision judged necessary and hence binding.

The persuasive tones of the Constitutions and Regulations (as I have already emphasised) by no means signify that our obligation is lessened: after all, we assumed this way of life as adults with full consciousness when we made our profession. The “creativity” of which the Regulations (43) speak is not to be taken as permission to chop and change the Practices of Piety that are clearly prescribed by the Constitutions and Regulations. It is a call for co-responsibility and initiative in an effort to forestall and overcome the danger of mere routine.

I appeal fervently to all, particularly to Rectors and Provincials: each has in special trust the “furtherance of the Religious life” (44) and the particular responsibility in the question of the life of prayer. (45) In the most suitable and efficacious ways “he must rouse in the confrères a sense of need and a taste for prayer. He must seek to create suitable conditions that will favour prayer”, beginning by arranging horariums that suit the community, “safeguarding the right of each confrère to pray”. (46) And if need be, he must not fail to correct in all charity but firmly any confrères who show carelessness in prayer or omit community practices.

Indeed the Provincial certainly shares the Rector’s responsibility in these matters, and at times even more directly. It is true

(43) *Ibid.*, art. 45.

(44) *Ibid.*, art. 168.

(45) *Acts SGC*, n. 526.

(46) cf. *Acts SGC*, n. 526.

that we are adults and that each is self-responsible; but as Religious we have taken on specific duties of common life, and as adults we must carry them out thoroughly. Prayer is one of these duties, and it is not merely a private matter. The Special General Chapter speaks of the duty of every member to “bring his irreplaceable contribution to the different moments of a community meeting for prayer, even by the mere fact of his physical presence. His presence always has the value of witness and mutual stimulus”. (47)

### *The Eucharist is central*

The Eucharist must always be for us the true centre and acme of our life of piety, (48) the root, the hinge, the foundation, the expression of brotherly communion, (49) the fountainhead, the nourishment, the energy of our apostolic dedication. The Special General Chapter invites us with these words: “In a spirit of faithfulness to the constant tradition of our family, we must feel the need to establish again the ‘centralness’ of the Eucharist in our personal life and that of our apostolic community dedicated to educating youth, in the richness of a vision renewed in accordance with Vatican II”. (50)

This must be a genuine duty for every Salesian and every community. It requires above all a courageous and humble self-criticism and a genuine conversion. Here I wish to allude to some situations which have come to my knowledge and which are in open conflict with our tradition and the recent capitular deliberations.

Before proceeding I must give due praise to many communities who are renewing their efforts to celebrate the Eucharist as

(47) *Acts SGC*, n. 525.

(48) *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 5b; *Christus Dominus*, n. 30.

(49) *P. O.*, n. 6e; *P. C.*, n. 15.

(50) *Acts SGC*, n. 542.

it should be done. Good preparation is made with the singing, the clear and intelligible proclaiming of the Word, and the dignity and precision of the ceremonies.

But it is sad to have to say that in quite a few cases no renewal is obvious. Even the exhortations of the Special General Chapter run the risk of being a dead letter. In quite a few communities the Eucharist is not given its central place: there is no Mass which draws the whole community together. Concelebration, where it can be held, is resisted through prejudice and narrowness rather than with good reasons. And so a fair number of priests are satisfied with Mass said in a hurry, pushed into the first free space of the day (which is not always the most suitable or apt for recollection). One hears of others who, under various pretexts, omit frequently, and sometimes habitually, to say Mass at all. And the confrères who are not priests often have to forage round for a Mass: and sometimes they too are satisfied with Mass once a week. To this far from encouraging picture a few more sad facts have to be added: the abuse of interfering with the rubrics of the Mass by omissions, changes and additions which run counter to what the Church has clearly prescribed. (51)

Finally there are some houses that have been designed for a more adequate "community life", where there is no place for the Blessed Sacrament; and sometimes not even a chapel. They do not feel the need for one!

These things (which I hope are only few in number) are the very negation of the Salesian ideal. I say this with deep sorrow: they will never produce any renewal or any flourishing vitality.

We must then energetically and courageously remedy this state of affairs: it is opposed to the Special General Chapter and is more like the death-throes of a community than its spiritual rebirth.

(51) v. *Instruction III on application of liturgical reform* (1970) in Acts, n. 262, October, 1970.

*Preference for liturgical prayer*

In step with liturgy renewal the Special General Chapter proposed to all Salesians some parts of the Liturgy of the Hours as official community prayer. The Constitutions explain how we are to take part in the prayer by which the People of God are united to Christ. "Consecrated to God's glory the Salesian community sedulously takes part in the movement of prayer by which the People of God, through the Liturgy of the Hours, joins itself to Christ in his mysteries, so as to render thanksgiving and make supplication to the Father. It gives preference to this prayer and celebrates it with the dignity and fervour that Don Bosco recommended to his sons." (52) And the regulations say, "The members, if possible in common, shall say Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer". (53)

This is something quite new. I well understand the problems of older confrères in adapting themselves, having to abandon the simple prayers they have recited all their Salesian lives and which they considered the very essence of our spiritual tradition.

To overcome the possible distress of these confrères and to spur on the communities who are slow to adopt the capitular deliberations, I invite you to reflect that these changes are in line with what the Church clearly wants. They are found in the "official acts" of her magisterium. Hence they are what the Congregation wants; and its highest deliberative organization has authoritatively and clearly set them down among its requirements.

We could well recall here how faithful and prompt Don Bosco was to second even the simple wishes of the Holy See.

In the Apostolic Constitution "Laudis Canticum" Pope Paul VI presents the Liturgy of the Hours as a "necessary complement whereby the extraordinary wealth of divine worship in the Eucharistic Sacrifice flows forth and reaches out to every single hour

(52) *Constitutions*, art. 60.

(53) *Regulations*, art. 44.

of the human life" (Introduction). And so it "seems eminently desirable that it pervade, revivify, guide and express all the manifestations of Christian prayer and efficaciously nourish the spiritual life of the People of God". (54) The Liturgy of the Hours, then, is offered "to all the faithful, including those who are not legally bound to recitation". (55)

The "Institutio generalis de liturgia horarum" (1971) says even more explicitly: "Religious men and women who are not bound to common recitation, and members of every institute of perfection, are all strongly recommended to celebrate all or part of this liturgical action together in community or with the people". (56)

In his "Laudis Canticum" Pope Paul VI recommends this observance not as in the spirit of an obligation, "but because of the obvious beauty and pastoral and ascetical value. In fact it is greatly to be desired that the Church's public prayer flow forth for all from her spiritual renewal and the acknowledged interior need of the Body of the Church, which, resembling its Head, can only be defined as the 'praying Church'". (57)

To make the recital of the Liturgy of the Hours fruitful and not mechanical, adequate preparation is needed so that the psalms will be better known and understood. The Superiors have the responsibility of providing for this by meetings, conferences, readings and suitable books.

This is something new and naturally has its problems. We shall overcome them by our conviction that the direction comes from the Church: for we all wish to be her docile children.

I am confident that in this matter as in others, confrères young and not so young will give their complete co-operation.

(54) *Laudis Canticum*, n. 8.

(55) *Ibid.*

(56) *Institutio generalis de liturgia horarum*, n. 26.

(57) *Laudis Canticum*, n. 8.

Many communities have already done so. The matter calls for mutual understanding, discretion, obedience and charity. These will help us follow the line indicated by the Special General Chapter, which is a faithful reflection of what the Church wants.

*Meditation: of capital importance*

Meditation is a basic part of our prayer-life. Father Ceria, referring to the organization and regularizing of the Society, quotes Don Bosco's words: "In the ordinary way of things the Congregation would not have been founded, and if I had confined myself to a tiny area in order to have everything perfect, I would have achieved nothing...". And Father Ceria adds in explanation, "As the Society was gradually regularized, its foundation stone was piety; and the two practices of piety that were of capital importance were the annual retreat and the daily meditation". (58)

To consider meditation alien to our Salesian style and tradition would be gravely wrong. It is true that the official juridical obligation dates only from 1874, but it has always, right from the beginning, been considered fundamental.

In his circular of 1921 Don Albera wrote, "Some may think that maybe a Salesian should not aim as high as 'affective prayer' and that Don Bosco would not have wanted this from his sons. But I can assure you that it was always his wish to see his sons exalted by meditation to that close union with God which he himself had always so wonderfully achieved; and when occasion offered he never tired of urging us to do the same' ". (60)

Father Rinaldi speaks of meditation as the "daily nourishment just as needful for the spiritual life as food is for the bodily

(58) *Mem. Biogr.*, XI, 272.

(59) *Ibid.*, page 27.

(60) Father PAUL ALBERA, *op. cit.*, page 444.

life” and cites Don Rua in confirmation. He had once asked him “how he managed to remain recollected in the midst of so much travelling, work and visiting”. Don Rua answered, “I make sure I am well armed: a good meditation each morning; good helpful thoughts, and a strong effort of the will...”. Father Rinaldi added, “We must be convinced that a Salesian who does not meditate well runs the grave risk of reducing his work to the level of a simple employee. It could even happen (God forbid) that he lose his vocation”. Unhappy experience has borne this out more than once. Not to be convinced of this would be a great tragedy. (61)

The Special General Chapter solidly backs this tradition. The new Constitutions call mental prayer “an essential form of...personal prayer. It fosters our intimate union with Christ and with the Father; it keeps prayer from becoming routine; it re-enchants love, keeps the heart of man open and stimulates service to our fellowman. For Don Bosco it was a guarantee of joyous perseverance in our vocation”. (62) These precious and abundant fruits can only be had when we make our meditation and make it well. This requires of us effort and (perhaps) correction. Unhappily, I feel that even after the Special General Chapter there are confrères who, under various pretexts, make no meditation; others absent themselves from the community meditation; they are overwhelmed by the pressing work of the day and arrive at evening without having provided for this spiritual need. For others, meditation is reduced to a purely physical presence — or, as has been said somewhat cynically, “a reading with pauses for distraction”. I should be happy if the tints of this picture were not exaggerated, but from what I can see we have here one of our weak points, one of the most perilous deficiencies in our prayer-life. I admit that perhaps for us this kind of prayer is more difficult: but it is necessary for us just

(61) Father PHILIP RINALDI, *Circular Letters, in Acts VII* (1926), page 458.

(62) *Constitutions*, art. 64.

the same. The disinclination for it and the lack of effort could be an indictment of spiritual bankruptcy, a fearsome interior vacuum.

Furthermore the matter of our meditation, the texts we use, should all be well chosen. It is pleasing to see that in accordance with the Chapter's recommendation, Holy Writ is often used. But even here we must realise that a superficial reading is not good enough: preparation and study are needed.

While on this matter I must point out (a propos of the various forms and methods of meditation) that it should always be a matter of *meditating*, i.e., a loving dialogue with God, a personal encounter. Meditation always remains "mental prayer", speaking "in secret" before God. Thus a pause after a five-minute sermon is not enough; nor are readings of practical cases (which generally remain at surface level) or sociological analyses, etc. At times this kind of logorrhoea is a veil for a sort of spiritual egotism that blocks out communication with God.

### *Devotion to Mary is relevant*

This letter is hardly the time for examining the various forms of prayer: but a word on Marian devotion is in order.

I need hardly say how this devotion is at the very root of our tradition. I have already had occasion to lament a falling off in devotion to Mary. Perhaps there is a reaction against what some consider is a devotion not well-founded or oversentimentalised. But the Special General Chapter leaves no doubt about Marian devotion being both relevant and essential for the Salesian family. "The long and uninterrupted Marian tradition of our family founded on the conviction that 'Mary did it all' because she is the 'Foundress and the one who sustains' our work, must continue to give its character to the spirituality and apostolic mysticism of the sons of Don Bosco". (63)

Constitution 65 says, "We therefore have for her a strong filial devotion. Mary Immaculate leads us to the fullness of our consecration; as the Help of Christians she gives us fortitude in the service of the People of God. Our communities celebrate her feasts with fervour and encourage all to imitate her with personal conviction". (64) And Regulation 47 adds, "The Rosary, in which Mary teaches her sons how to live the mysteries of Christ, shall be recited every day". (65) The position is thus most clear and I think further argument is not needed to exhort you to this daily homage to Mary. Just one more quote from Karl Rahner: "When (the Christian) understands that the Rosary can be a simple and sublime prayer and part of his daily religious effort to be with God; when he realises that his spiritual life will be increased and strengthened so as to make practical and personal the clear dogmatic truth and the objective importance of the Virgin in the life of each individual, then he will joy in reciting daily, when he can, part of the Rosary; he will consider this as a small contribution in his duty of prayer for the salvation of the world. And this can work in reverse: the recital of the Rosary teaches him just how well it should be said". (66)

### **Life becomes prayer**

Prayer is an intimate encounter and dialogue with God. It presupposes an interior attitude which forms and strengthens the soul and saves it from formalism, ritualism, routine, mere external observance. This spiritual attitude is not automatic: it requires will and faith, etc. It also needs a favourable atmosphere, a kind of temperature, a prepared background. This latter is the

(64) *Constitutions*, art. 65.

(65) *Regulations*, art. 47.

(66) K. RAHNER, *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. VII, Zur Theologie des geistlichen Lebens.

first need and is stressed by the Regulations: "Let every community decide on opportune periods of silence to produce an atmosphere conducive to prayer...". (67)

It is not that we have to become monks; but it is an elementary condition for meeting God "in depth". Don Bosco used insist on it at the Oratory. Today it is all the more necessary because of the massive bombardment of worldly images and violence of all kinds to which we are endlessly subjected by the mass media. Our minds are in danger of being reduced to a superficial gala-day of hustle and bustle with all its hurly-burly of sights, sounds, emotions and feelings. All this makes deep concentration difficult: we just cannot think.

The Special General Chapter speaks of "the silence of all one's being, which is not a simple absence of noise and of words; "it is a silence which can place us in the condition of really listening to God, and of identifying ourselves evermore with his plan of redemption". (68) "Evangelica Testificatio" says it is necessary "for those who must find God in the midst of the world's hubbub and din". (69)

If we are to achieve humble and sincere communion with God, there must be an atmosphere of peace and serenity in the community, a brotherliness that transcends the daily tensions. Divisions, rancour, aversions cut the wings of prayer. Confrères must make constant and sincere efforts to foster genuine brotherliness: this is a condition for true prayer. It increases our friendship with God; at the same time, it brings about the consoling peace and serenity of humble hearts united in prayer and charity.

Each individual, too, needs to cultivate for himself a suitable interior atmosphere — faith that is open and vigilant, humility and patience that persevere in prayer even when there seems to be no answer to his effort at dialogue. When God "is silent"

(67) *Regulations*, art. 35.

(68) *Acts SGC*, n. 552.

(69) *Evangelica Testificatio*, n. 46.

for long periods, the experience can be very painful, as many men of prayer have testified. Greater faith and perseverance are needed that prayer be not abandoned.

Furthermore, our heart must be free and available, open to God, detached in spiritual poverty from all things and all persons. All this calls for (indeed presupposes) an ascetic attitude, a mortification that is continuous and vigilant in self-control and focussed on things eternal; a mortification that brings freedom and clarity of vision so that in the turmoil of life God is visible and finds us ready to receive him.

### *The Liturgy of Life*

The Salesian's prayer-life is not confined to the few Practices of Piety officially prescribed in the Holy Rule. These are a statutory minimum. His life needs much more — explicit private prayer (to express his personal sonship to God) and implicit prayer (that lends substance and expression to his apostolic life). The Constitutions read, "We have but few practices of piety, but we pray without ceasing and after the manner of Don Bosco's own union with God aspire to become contemplatives in action by praying in simple heart to heart colloquy with Christ, with the Father conscious of his presence, with Mary our helper". (70)

This is where the Liturgical Life comes in. The Apostolic Constitution "Laudis Canticum" exhorts us, "If the Divine Office becomes genuine personal prayer, those bonds uniting our whole Christian life to the Liturgy will become more obvious. The entire life of the Faithful, day and night, constitutes a "leitourghia" by means of which they offer themselves to God and to men in the service of love, uniting themselves closely to the action of Christ, who by making his dwelling among us and offering himself has sanctified the life of all men". (71) This "Liturgy of Life"

(70) *Constitutions*, art. 48.

(71) *Laudis Canticum*, n. 8.

concept mirrors Don Bosco's own life, which combined contemplation and action, and proved to his sons that apostolic work did not of itself conflict with contemplation, but rather was a exercise of charity and hence an efficacious means of holiness for them. This is the mind of Don Bosco when he insisted on work as a characteristic and ideal of his Congregation.

*The implicit prayer of work*

In 1869 Pius IX said to Don Bosco: "In my opinion, the Religious house where there is much work and little prayer is in a better position than the one in which there is much prayer and little or no work". (73) Unceasing work done under obedience was Don Bosco's ideal for his Congregation. In 1875 he spoke to his Rectors and said, "The work is immense and is being carried out with a will". Then he remarked that in his visits to the houses, whilst he was happy with the work being accomplished, he as even happier with the manner in which it was being carried out, and he added, "I feel that the ideal I set for the Congregation has been achieved; for besides the great amount of work being done, there is the spirit of obedience and the altruism that goes with every act". (74)

One of the last recommendations to Mgr. Cagliero, who was about to celebrate Christmas midnight Mass (in 1887), was, "Tell my Salesians to work zealously and intensely. Work! Work! They must use it as a means to save souls". (75)

I have quoted at length to stress the importance of work for us Salesians and to make the point that we cannot adopt "a snug and calm life of prayer", using this as an excuse for not

(72) *Mem. Biogr.*, IX, 566.

(73) *Ibid.*, XIV, 218.

(74) *Ibid.*, XI, 29.

(75) *Ibid.*, XVII, 493.

working or working little. We must not view work and the spiritual life as contraries. Work is not inimical to the spiritual life, or something periferal and not connected with it. "Perfectae Caritatis" (76) speaks of the interweaving of the religious and apostolic life; without boasting, we may claim that this has always been a matter of pleasant family principle for us.

But experience suggests that this is not where the Salesians' danger lies. If dedication to work is lacking, it is not because of over-dedication to prayer. If anything, the opposite is the case, and it is usually prayer that suffers.

### *Prayer is not always work*

Certain teachings badly interpreted, the other problems mentioned at the beginning of this letter, and a heavy work-load can combine to create a great temptation to practically eliminate explicit prayer. The "justification" is that the apostolate is of itself prayer sufficient and that the apostle works out his sanctification by means of action. The excuse is made that work is prayer: so why add more prayer, which only takes up precious time that could be given to work? Surely God is more present in the poor and oppressed we are helping, than in prayer, which after all is a mere monologue!

Such sophisms only attempt to re-define (falsely) the true Christian liturgy as a fulfilment of the precept of helping our neighbour and mutual charity. I admit that this ever-present tension between work and prayer is a difficult problem. In theory the arguments are clear and acceptable: it is the practice that is troublesome. But the problem is not solved by simply removing one of the poles of tension and arguing the case with a specious theology that has been disapproved and refuted by the Magisterium.

This would be a fatal deception. (The findings of the Convention of Superiors General have already been mentioned in this letter.)

These quite radical attitudes run completely counter to Salesian thought. We should not divide prayer and work as though we Religious of the active life were faced with two irreconcilable realities. We know full well that, per se, the daily ups and downs of our work should not constitute an obstacle to prayer or be a source of distractions: rather should they be an invitation and an incitement to pray. They should help us to include in our prayer-offering to God, all people, things and events that form part of our work.

Unfortunately, in practice our service to our neighbour can easily lose its vertical dimension, its grip of the spiritual, and become dull, sterile horizontalism. Not every activity constitutes prayer. Both the nature of our work and the way we do it are important. The old teaching still holds: "Our work must have purity of intention"; it must be done in accordance with God's will — hence in obedience; not done independantly, outside (or even contrary to) the needs and requirements of our mission. Salesianly speaking, it should be "vitalized by union with God", and should "proceed from intimate union with him". (77)

If we do not work hand in glove with God, then even if we labour apostolically, our efforts are sterile and spiritually impoverishing. Theological theories are of little avail against the compelling experience of the Church's long history.

The characteristic restraint of the Practices of Piety left us by Don Bosco are not to be interpreted as an easy-going minimum. They must be seen in context, i.e., in the fruitful and intensely supernatural atmosphere of the Oratory at Valdocco — the result of Don Bosco's holiness and the utterly God-centred fervour he had engendered among the pupils.

(77) *Ibid.*

*Work "alla Don Bosco" is a means to sanctity*

That untiring work and activity that Don Bosco proposed to his sons is indeed a means to holiness and cannot be conceived without that spiritual dimension which penetrates it completely and gives it its true meaning and apostolic flavour. The first successors of Don Bosco who were his close spiritual sons and completely possessed his ethos, were all at one on these principles and never tired of stressing them. They are basic to the authentic Salesian vocation.

A few months after he was appointed Rector Major, Father Albera wrote in a circular on the "Spirit of Piety": "I speak to you from the heart: I admit I am overwhelmed by the worrying fear that the much-vaunted activity of the Salesians, this zeal that up to now has feared nothing, this fervid enthusiasm that has so far enjoyed continuous success, may one day collapse, if it is not enriched, purified and sanctified by true and solid piety". (78)

Father Rinaldi was hardly elected Rector Major when he hastened to ask from Pius XI the "indulgence for sanctified work" as an "efficacious spur to help (the Salesians) to be every day more active and at the same time more united to the Lord". (79)

The transformation of one's life in prayer requires solid union with God. It is only then that explicit prayer may, if need be, diminish, since work transformed into prayer comes from deep down, from where the soul loses itself in God. Only then does prayer become "a kind of restful, basic harmony which continues playing against the background of the chaotic melodies of daily occupations, and which is heard as soon as there is a brief pause". (80)

(78) Father PAUL ALBERA, *op. cit.*, page 29.

(79) Father PHILIP RINALDI, *Circular Letters, in Acts III* (1922), page 16.

(80) U. v. BALTHASAR, *Klarstellungen zur Prüfung der Geister*.

This is for us an apex, a supreme ideal to aim at, not yet within our grasp. Thus it must not serve as a pretext for depriving our souls of that solid nourishment which our encounter with God supplies.

### **We work for renewal**

At the end of this letter I return to a thought touched on at the beginning. At this moment the whole Congregation is mobilized for the difficult, delicate and urgent work of renewal. We must face the fact squarely that the future has many question-marks that set us thinking seriously. Many confrères are confronted with a mountain of work and wonder where to make a start. Others are disheartened in the face of so many difficult problems and their own limited means, and seem resigned to give up all effort to solve certain problems, barely managing to preserve the status quo, without verve or vitality.

Faced with the challenge of history and our modern age (full of problems but with the promise of Spring on the way) I invite you to listen to another of Don Bosco's successors. He spoke in circumstances just as difficult as ours, at the end of the First World War, amid its disastrous destruction, with personnel diminished, many vocations lost, and against a dramatically obscure future. Father Albera said to his Salesians, "We would be men of little faith if we gave way to discouragement. We would show ignorance of the history of our Society if, in front of the problems which seem to be blocking our path, we were to stop and lose faith. What would Don Bosco say if he saw us without energy and disheartened at seeing our numbers so few for the work Providence has assigned to us? He would only recognise us as true sons when our courage and efforts were equal to the difficulties to be overcome. And this courage and energy which is so necessary will come to us primarily through our piety. I have

always considered it necessary to insist on this: now more than ever is it my bounden duty to do so". (81)

*From prayer to brotherliness*

The difficulties we have are not hidden from us and we have no wish to play them down. We know that the interests and values at stake are enormous. As individuals, as superiors at all levels, as members of a society which in its various dimensions we love with every fibre of our being, we must expend every ounce of energy we have. It is a matter that concerns the magnificent family we have chosen to belong to: the Society has nurtured and formed us in every way. Today it needs our help to draw its breath and renew itself above all in faith and prayer. And we have the ability and means wherewith to achieve this.

The Congregation possesses so many who have a sincere and effective love for it: so many (and many young ones, too) are magnificent in every respect: hard-working, humble, full of faith, genuinely in love with God. Here is a vital and powerful force; it works quietly and efficiently to carry out its mission inherited from the Founder; and this mission is more relevant than ever these days. Proof of this are the many requests for help and collaboration, especially in countries where the increasing numbers of the young are in need of education, better social conditions and the Gospel.

We have many reasons to look to the future with confidence — provided we follow Don Bosco's teaching and roll up our sleeves for the job. We have to put our every energy into being active workers, especially in that basic renewal which is the *sine qua non* of all renewals: renewal of the spirit, both as individuals and as communities.

A year has passed since the conclusion of the Special General Chapter. In the meantime most of the Special Provincial Chapters have been held. This is good. 1973 must find each of us enthusiastically determined to “work, bring into effect, to carry out ...within the limits of his task and responsibility...” the renewal of our Society. (82)

In practice, the Provincial Councils, the local and individual communities should consult the Constitutions and Regulations in the light of the deliberations and directions of the Special General Chapter and the Special Provincial Chapters; they should use the suggestions in this letter of mine; they should work out practical ways, means and times to implement the great work of renewal, viz., that every Salesian community be transformed into a praying community and a genuine brotherly community.

The brotherly community is essential; it is a need that flows from the very nature and life of our vocation. Thus, everyone of us, young and not so young, and of whatever personal views, must be willing to dialogue, to surrender even certain private opinions. We must be convinced that some have limits, some have excesses, but all need “to belong”. A little humility and realism will make this evident and will help us look to Don Bosco and find our bearings in his thinking; these virtues will also help us in the practical applications; and the deliberations and clear indications of the Special General Chapter (which were always inspired by those of the Church) will be a helpful guide as well. But the community will find the authentic and joyous meaning of brotherliness only in the life of faith and prayer, especially in the Eucharist. Only this Food, which nourishes charity, and of which all the members will partake, will render the community joyously fraternal and hence apostolically fruitful.

This is the way of that renewal, of that rebirth, which we

(82) *Acts SGC, Letter of presentation of the Rector Major, page XXI*  
(at foot).

want to achieve, and must achieve; we have to dedicate our lives to this task with fervour and efficacy. Once again here is decisive confirmation from the Special General Chapter: "In order to work out this necessary discernment and renewal, historians are not sufficient, nor theologians, nor politicians, nor organizers: we need *spiritual* men, men of faith, sensitive to the things of God and ready to work with courageous obedience as our Founder did". (83)

I have offered you words both of admonition and encouragement. I am sure you will translate them into practice with willingness, generosity and resoluteness.

May Don Bosco bless your good resolves.

Father ALOYSIUS RICCERI  
*Rector Major*

### III. COMMUNICATIONS

---

#### 1. The Rector Major's Strenna for 1973

*To all members of the Salesian family and those related to it in any way.*

The strenna or motto is a tradition left us by our father, Don Bosco; its value is not merely sentimental; nor is it an exercise in rhetoric. Its purpose is to suggest a programme of life and action that will unite us in our common aims. It is thus meant to help the individual and the community (especially those communities whose segmented work makes meeting together a problem).

Briefly then:

THE SALESIAN FAMILY WILL REDISCOVER ITS EARLY VITALITY BY BECOMING DYNAMICALLY MISSION-MINDED.

This motto was prompted first of all by the Special General Chapter. It rightly urged that all genuine individual and community renewal lay in dynamic awareness of the missions. I would add that "community" here comprises family, religious and ecclesial communities.

But the main inspiration for the motto is the serious and effective preparation for a date that not only commemorates an exciting event, but in a sense should re-create that generous, austere and joyous dedication which worked the miracle of the first Salesian missions.

1975 marks the first centenary of the Salesian missions. We are now studying suitable ways for a useful and adequate celebration of this historical date. Meantime let us all — the Congregation and the whole Salesian family — get down to brass tacks with the strenna. To help us do this, explanations, developments and practical applications of the motto to suit the individual groups of our Salesian family will soon be forthcoming. I should like to feel that I give you this motto from the missionary heart of Blessed Don Rua and in the name of Don Bosco.

Father ALOYSIUS RICCIERI

## 2. The Beatification of Father Michael Rua

On 29 October 30,000 of the Salesian family assisted at the solemn rite of Beatification of Don Rua in St. Peter's, Rome. Among those present were 27 cardinals, over 50 bishops, the diplomatic corps of accredited ambassadors to the Holy See, relations of Don Rua, and the two "miracolati".

In his homily the Holy Father once again referred to the Salesians with affection and warm encouragement. At the end of the rite the members of the Superior Council paid their homage to him and presented the customary gifts.

In the afternoon at the Aula Magna of the PAS a civil commemoration was held at which Senator Joseph Alessi, a Salesian Co-operator, delivered an outstanding address

On 30 October the Rector Major concelebrated with over 400 priests at the Basilica of Don Bosco. The next couple of days saw various other important functions in Rome in honour of the new Beatus.

During 9-12 November Don Rua was honoured in his native city of Turin. The city's cardinal, civil authorities, large numbers of diocesan priests, Religious sisters, youths, various associations and well-wishers all joined the Rector Major and his councillors in various functions organised by the Salesians at Valdocco-Turin.

The Holy Father's homily at the Beatification ceremony is given in full under "Pontifical Magisterium".

## 3. Appointments.

The following confrères have been appointed Provincials.

Father JOHN CANTINI - Province of Bahía Blanca, Argentina.

Father NICHOLAS LO GROI - Province of Calcutta, India.

Father ARGIMIRO MOURE - Province of La Plata, Argentina.

Father MATTHEW PULINGATHIL - Province of Gauhati, India.

Father FRANCIS TESSAROLO - Province of Rosario, Argentina.

#### 4. Brotherly Solidarity

a) Offerings have been received from the following Provinces

##### ITALY

Lombardo	Lire	430.000
Novarese		6.700.000
Meridionale		756.000
Subalpina		5.647.500
Veneta San Marco		470.000

##### EUROPE

Masses from Iron Curtain countries	Lire	364.000
------------------------------------	------	---------

##### U.S.A.

Eastern Province	Lire	580.000
------------------	------	---------

##### SOUTH AMERICA

Bolivia	Lire	351.000
---------	------	---------

##### ASIA

Middle East	Lire	58.500
-------------	------	--------

Total monies received

10 July to 12 December 1972	Lire	15.357.000
-----------------------------	------	------------

Plus cash in hand

	Lire	2.467.154
--	------	-----------

Monies available for distribution

on 12 December 1972	Lire	17.824.154
---------------------	------	------------

b) *Distribution of monies*

##### EUROPE

Italy, Rieti. New roof for St. Joseph church	Lire	1.000.000
Jugoslavia, Zagreb. Personnel in formation.		500.000
Hungary. Breviary		37.700

## ASIA

Korea, Seoul. Repairs to studentate building	Lire	1.000.000
Philippines, Manila, Tondo. Social centre for shantytown children		1.000.000
India, Shillong. Don Bosco School: machine for printing press.		1.000.000
India, Tezpur. To bishop for the poor		500.000
Middle East. Refugees		500.000
Vietnam. Personnel in formation		1.000.000

## SOUTH AMERICA

Antilles, Dominican Republic. Repairs to aspirantate of Jarabacoa	Lire	1.500.000
Antilles, Haiti, Port au Prince. Meals for the poor.		1.000.000
Bolivia. Three youth centres (El Alto, Santa Cruz, Las Villas).		3.000.000
Ecuador, Cuenca, Electric generator at agricultural school		1.000.000
Paraguay. Food for natives at the Comandante Peralta Colony		500.000
Total monies disbursed		
10 July - 12 December 1972	Lire	14.537.700
Plus cash in hand	Lire	3.286.454
Grand total	Lire	<u>17.824.154</u>

c) *General conspectus of our Brotherly Solidarity Fund to 12 December, 1972*

Monies received	Lire	170.074.999
Monies disbursed		166.788.545
Cash in hand	Lire	<u>3.286,454</u>

Correction. In the July 1972 ACTS, no. 267 (p. 46),

instead of	United States East:		Lire 1.171.480
please read:	United States	{ San Francisco:	Lire 815.480
		{ New Rochelle:	356.000

d) *Contributions to the Brotherly Solidarity Fund* should be sent to the Rector Major. If on account of money exchange values or other good reasons monies are sent directly to the beneficiaries, headquarters at the Generalate should be notified immediately to keep the books in order.

#### 5. Inauguration of the "Salesianum": study week on Salesian spirituality

The centre for studies in spirituality and culture (the Salesianum) attached to the Generalate is now almost completed and Father Peter Schinetti has been appointed its co-ordinating officer. It will be officially inaugurated 21-27 January, 1973, by a study-week on Salesian spirituality organised by the Formation commission. A hundred or so representatives of the various branches of the Salesian family will participate. The theme is "The Salesian family considers its vocation in the Church today". Among the speakers are Cardinal Garrone, Father John Beyer (Gregorian University), Dom Adrian Nocent (Ateneo Sant'Anselmo) and the Salesian priests Paul Natali, Peter Braido, Peter Stella, Joseph Aubry.

#### 6. Request for historical sources and documents for two projected volumes

##### a) *A collection of Don Rua's letters*

In honour of the new Beatus and as a valid and efficacious means of promoting greater knowledge of the Salesian spirit it is proposed

to publish a complete collection of Don Rua's letters. The Rector Major therefore asks the co-operation of the whole Salesian family, especially Rectors, Provincials, Superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Delegates and Group Leaders of the Co-operators, and past pupils. Anyone who possesses any of Don Rua's letters or documents, or knows of persons or organizations who do, is earnestly asked to send photostat copies to the Rector Major or advise him of such information. The Rector Major sincerely thanks in advance all who answer this plea.

b) *A biography of Mgr. Marcellinus Olaechea*

This Salesian Spanish bishop who died last October was such a remarkable man that a biography is obviously indicated. All who knew Bishop Olaechea are asked to furnish any information or documents they may possess. All material should be sent to Rev. P. Ricardo Nàcher, Colegio San Juan Bosco, Camino de la Fuente San Luis 135, Valencia 13, Spain.

## 7. Amendments to the English edition of the Constitutions and Regulations

The following corrigenda apply to the printed edition of the Constitutions and Regulations in English.

*Constitution* 39. Add the following third paragraph:

“In our family atmosphere such a community becomes a living experience of the Church and a demonstration of God's purpose for us”.

*Regulation* 131. For: “shall ask the perpetually professed members” read: “shall ask the professed members”.

*Regulation* 168. For: “assembly of the members” (penultimate line) read: “local community assembly”.

## 8. Provincial New Letters

Nearly all Provinces have followed the advice of the Special General Chapter to step up the "domestic" news exchange among the confrères and have circulated Provincial news letters. Many of these arrive regularly at the Generalate. All are asked to forward at least two copies: one to the Rector Major and one to the Office of the Salesian Press (Ufficio Stampa Salesiana). This office has the task of circulating the more important items of news of the Congregation; furthermore, it has plans for a study-survey of these news letters (how the news is selected and edited, the general lines and scope, the contents, the way they are printed, etc.). The collation and study of this information should result in useful observations and advice for all.

## 9. Salesian Statistics

The General Secretariate is compiling the usual annual Salesian statistics for 1971-1972. Many Provinces have already forwarded their data. The General Secretariate pleads with the Provincial secretaries who have not yet obliged, to send the information posthaste.

#### IV. ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL AND MATTERS OF GENERAL INTEREST

---

##### 1. Superior Council meetings

The regional concillors arrived back at the Generalate in early October after visiting their respective areas throughout the Salesian world. The Superior Council then settled down to a busy programme of work. First of all the Regional Superiors presented in Council a detailed report of their visits. The problems of the various Provinces were outlined and practical suggestions made to help overcome the more immediate difficulties.

Meantime an overall plan of the next few years' activities was worked on; and a number of new Provincials were appointed. However, the main work of the Superior Council was the examination of the Deliberations of the Special Provincial Chapters. This is a complex task, lengthy, delicate and important. It means checking that the Deliberations are in harmony with the Constitutions and Regulations and the prescriptions of the Special General Chapter. There is a small commission or group (dicastero) for each of the "Pastorals" or Apostolates for Formation, Youth, Adults and Missions. All these commissions read the Deliberations in full, giving special attention to the parts that come within their scope. Any observations that may be made are then presented to the Regional Councillor concerned. He in turn makes his own observations and then gives the documents to the Superior Council for study. The Council then approves the Deliberations and any sections which may have been modified. The decisions of the Council are then forwarded to the Provincials concerned; these will in turn present them to their Provincial Councils whose task it is to see to the necessary amendments. Finally the Special Provincial Chapter Deliberations will be ready for official promulgation.

At the time of going to press the Special Provincial Council documents (with the approbation and remarks of the Superior Council)

have been returned to the following Provinces: Subalpine, Adriatic, Ligure-Toscana, Lombardo-Emiliana, Southern, Novarese, Romano-Sarda, Sicula, Veneta-Ovest, Barcelona, Bilbao, Cordoba (Spain), Leon, Madrid, Seville, Lisbon, Paris, Belgium South, Zagabria, Tokyo, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Antilles, Central America, Caracas, Belo Horizonte, La Plata.

## 2. The work of the various commissions

The commissions are at work in their various sections.

*The Missions team* is preparing for the 1975 centenary of the Salesian missions. It has invited a number of advisers to meetings in January to arrange a suitable programme.

*The Formation commission*, as mentioned, has organised a "Salesian Spirituality Week" for the end of January at the Generalate "Salesianum". The same group has made good progress with a document on "on-going" formation. It also arranged a meeting of Salesian Scripture experts of Italy; it has enlisted the aid of liturgists to prepare a pilot scheme of Salesian prayers which contains general proposals for the Italian Provinces; it also organised meetings of coadjutor confrères.

*The members of the Adult "Pastoral"* worked long and hard arranging the many Beatification celebrations and are now busy with numerous meetings with Co-operators, Past Pupils, Volunteers of Don Bosco, etc. They are also occupied with problems in our publishing houses; improvements in the Salesian Bulletins, now published in more than twenty editions (various languages and titles); the preparation of a Salesian news network as desired by the Special General Chapter.

## 3. Meetings with the Salesian family

In spite of the work-load at the Generalate many of the Superiors have managed to visit the Salesian family for certain special occasions.

*The Rector Major and his Council* attended the Beatification

celebrations at Turin, and the closing ceremony of the centenary of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Cardinal Garrone was principal celebrant of the Mass at Rome, and the Italian Minister for Education, Sig. Luigi Scalfaro, gave an address at the PAS).

*The Rector Major* also attended various meetings called by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes: first he was at the plenary gathering of the Sacred Congregation (of which he is a member with two other Superiors General); then as a member of the Sacred Congregation he was present at the international conferences of the Religious Major Superiors; finally he took part in a study-convention on prayer which was requested by the Superiors General themselves. (Over seventy were present and among the referees were Father Loew and Father Haering.)

At Rome the *Rector Major*, *Father Raineri* and *Father Fiora* attended a two-fold conference of Italian Co-operators ("young" and "adult"): a convention that was a possible "first" in a kind of "family ecumenism", in that it included Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Mother General Ersilia Canta and several FMA delegates for Co-operators were present) and a number of Volunteers of Don Bosco.

*The Concillor for the Missions*, *Father Tobill*, spent 9-12 November at Lyons, France, representing the Congregation at the International Missionary Conference of the Pontifical Missionary Societies. The occasion marked the 150th. anniversary of "Propaganda Fide".

From 14-19 November *Father Tohill* represented the *Rector Major* in India on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Salesian mission in Shillong, Assam. He also visited the Salesians in Gauhati, Calcutta, Krishnagar and Bombay.

*Father Raineri* went to Spain twice for regional Co-operators' conventions and also attended various meetings in Rome in connection with the Adult "Pastoral".

At Rome *Father Fiora*, *Councillor for Italy*, took part in a meeting of Rectors of Theological Studentates. (This was organised by the Formation commission in order to get a bird's-eye view of the problems of the studentates.) In Milan he met the Provincial

Economers; and at Turin he attended the annual meeting of a group of laybrothers (Consegil) whose special interest is helping young workers.

*Father Vecchi* returned to Latin America and was present at the Cordoba-Argentina Special Provincial Chapter; on his way back he called at San Paulo - Brazil to discuss some local problems there.

This survey is quite inadequate, but gives some indication of the efforts being made to push ahead with the renewal programme as indicated by the Second Vatican Council and our Special General Chapter.

## V. DOCUMENTS

---

### 1. From the Rector Major's letter to the Salesian family

*The Rector Major's letter to the Salesian family has been published in full in the Italian Salesian Bulletin and summarised in various other Salesian reviews. It includes the "Strenna for 1973" (printed in this number under "Communications") and the following two passages of interest to us all.*

#### a) *New undertakings of 1972*

I think some clarification is needed regarding the new works undertaken in 1972. The Special General Chapter prescribed that the whole Congregation should make a courageous and thorough examination of all existing works, the object being twofold: renewal in accordance with the mind of the Chapter, and examination of the validity of these works in the light of the Chapter deliberations and changed social conditions. This check-up "went under the name of 'Redimensioning of our works' ". It is plain that this vast and complex operation would need before all else a moratorium in new undertakings until the function of many of them could be clarified and a check made on the availability of qualified personnel in the various sectors of our mission. Right now such qualification is of the utmost importance and hence should enjoy top priority.

However, despite all this, some new works on the lines indicated by the General Chapter were started in 1972, while in certain places throughout the world redimensioning has resulted in other works being closed down.

*New activities in line with the Special General Chapter*

I should point out how these new activities fit in broadly with the thought of the General Chapter regarding priority and preference in the carrying out of our mission.

Before the list, let me cite a few instances.

In Rome, at the new generalate, which began functioning last June, a centre for studies in spirituality and culture has been set up called the "Salesianum". It is well furnished with modern equipment and can accommodate a hundred and fifty persons, with every commodity for meetings, congresses, study courses, days of reflection — not only for our family but for whoever is attracted by Don Bosco's work and wishes to develop spiritual or cultural initiatives and activities. The Salesianum will begin functioning towards the end of January with a course of Salesian spirituality devoted to the members of Don Bosco's family.

Our Madrid Province has set up its first foundation in Guinea: a "help and advancement centre" which will eventually extend into evangelical activity. Six Salesians are already at work in this new venture.

In Brazil a wide-range activity has been started, mainly in the depressed areas of the periphery, with centres for simple ABC literacy as well as professional qualification (Brasilia, Belo Horizonte, Jaciguà, Campo Grande).

In India we have opened two new missionary centres in the Madras Province (Polur, Tiruvannamalai).

*What has been achieved by the Salesians*

Here is the list of the developments which with your generous collaboration we have been able to achieve.

SOUTH AMERICA. *Argentina* — Funes (Santa Fé): middle school for apostolic vocational training. *Brazil*: Belo Horizonte: parish, youth centre, literacy centre for adults. Brasilia: parish, elementary schools, literacy centre for adults. Jaciguà: parish, literacy centre for adults. Campo Grande: parish, Paul VI Social Works. *Venezuela*: Caracas-Boleita: parish, youth pastoral centre. *Ecuador*: Zum-

bagua: parish, various works for the social and Christian advancement of the indigenous population.

ASIA. *India* — Polur: parish, mission, oratory. Tiruvannamalai: parish, mission.

AFRICA. *Guinea* — Bata: elementary school for boarders and dayboys.

EUROPE. *Belgium* — Eeklo: juvenile help centre. *Scotland*: Glasgow: youth hostel. *Poland*: parish, catechetics and after-school centre at Trzebnice, Milkowice, Grabowno Wielkie, Chocianowiec, Pakoslawsko.

*What has been achieved by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*

As already alluded to, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians also (as a practical celebration of their centenary) took on many new works in every continent, especially in the very needy areas. Some are completely new foundations, others are developments of existing works which now include activities for social aid and advancement.

This year the Salesian Bulletin will try to write-up at least the more important and characteristic developments.

EUROPE. *Italy* — Alessandria: in the periphery parish of St. Joseph the Worker: a nursery school, a daily youth centre, Christian Doctrine literature and parish groups for the immigrant population. *Belluno*: social and evangelizing enterprises in a periphery area. *Clivio-Varese*: professional courses and activities for leisure time.

*Ireland*. Maynooth (Kildare): hostel for university students.

SOUTH AMERICA. *Brazil* — Araràs (São Paulo): elementary school in a very poor quarter, literacy classes for adults, catechetics, family visiting, small consulting surgery. Rio di Janeiro: works for social advancement. *Colombia*: S. Juan de Arama, in the prefecture apostolic of Ariari: parish groups and catechetics. Mexico (Villaflores-Chapas): parish schools and evangelization activities.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (*Philadelphia*): elementary schools and various activities, catechetics.

ASIA. *Japan* — Oita: nursery school, Christian Doctrine literature, family visiting. *Korea*: hostel for young workers.

b) *The vocation crisis*

I wish to inform you, as members of the same family, of another of my sorrows which causes me great worry: the vocation crisis. You have probably heard it referred to as a phenomenon that is common to the whole Church and the Religious Institutes. This is true. But we too, both Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, are affected by it in varying degrees. Our life is not a sheltered one and we cannot remain unaffected by what goes in the world.

It is plain that if on the one hand those who are in the trial period do not measure up and have to leave us, and on the other hand there is a diminution in the numbers of vocations to take the place of the lost, ill or wavering, our Congregation will reach a critical state with dire consequences.

I am certainly not advocating that we multiply vocations at any cost: in fact I am more than ever convinced that true progress and development depend on the quality of vocations. But if we cannot adequately fill the gaps that occur, progress in quality is difficult and one cannot see how our many works can carry on.

The problem is serious and complex, and obviously an analysis is not possible here and now. But it is absolutely vital, and for this reason it will be necessary to deal thoroughly with the matter on another occasion. It is the concern of the whole Salesian family.

For the moment I simply let you know of this worry our Congregation has: I think this will suffice for the present to stir up your interest in the problem: you will think up many ways and means to cope with it.

It is essential that the vocation problem be tackled by every single one of us. It is not a matter of fine words or complaints that get us nowhere; we need deeds and lives lived consistently and actively in Salesian joy.

## 2. Brotherly solidarity

*Text of communication to Salesian Provincials by Councillor for the Missions, 13 November, 1972.*

Recently the Rector Major approved a plan to assist fourteen enterprises as will be written up in the report of the eighth distribution of the Solidarity Fund. There are only a few lire left; but this small sum is no source of worry, for we know from experience that many Provinces are noted not only for their generosity but for their regularity in forwarding their contributions. There are also Provinces far away and very poor who receive our fraternal help; yet somehow they manage to give to others.

In this month of November the last few of the twentyfour missionaries arrive at their destinations. They come from five different nations and have been appointed to fourteen missionary Provinces in twelve different countries in three continents.

This is indeed a pointer to the results of our solidarity: help in monetary terms, and help in a more vital way — the Salesians who have left for the missions.

Allow me to recall the nature of this duty of justice and fraternal charity. The monies sent “in solidarity” must come from the efforts we all make individually and as communities. The offerings of benefactors and various collections are a different matter altogether. “From our own poverty lived more generously, from an administration that is more wise and attentive, from a prudent and intelligent economy — why not? — from a certain renunciation of quite a lot of superfluous or inopportune things, there should come forth genuine fruits of solidarity towards our brethren and on behalf of all our needy works” (Acts of the Superior Council, no. 256, Feb. 1969, page 6).

Up to now our Provincial communities have generously answered this duty of fraternal charity 127 times, making a grand total of some 170 million lire. With this amount the Rector Major has been able to send help no less than 148 times to those in need, Salesian and non-Salesian. Every offering carries a moving and edifying story of privation, sacrifice and renunciation; and in the great

ocean of poverty every drop of help received means a little relief and some growth in apostolic work.

Dear Provincials, please relay this earnest appeal to all your communities. May they continue being generous and regular in their practical proof of religious brotherliness and their acute awareness of the disconcerting economic and social divergencies that we see in so many places.

For this purpose every community should seriously organise the most practical and effective ways to contribute to the Solidarity Fund. Advent and Lent are particularly suitable seasons for us to practise this charity towards our brethren in need.

In the name of all the missionaries, Salesian and non-Salesian, who have benefitted by your charity, and in the name of the Rector Major, and personally, I wish to thank you most sincerely and assure you of a special place in my Holy Mass.

Father BERNARD TOHILL

## VI. PONTIFICAL MAGISTERIUM

---

### 1. Let us bless the Lord! Don Rua is "Blessed"

*Address given by Pope Paul VI in St. Peter's Basilica during the Beatification ceremony. The following translation is taken from the English edition of the "Osservatore Romano", 9 November, 1972.*

Once more a marvellous thing has taken place: above the crowd of humanity, raised by the arms of the Church, this man, seized by a levitation that grace, welcomed and supported by a heroically faithful heart, has made possible, emerges at a higher, luminous level, and draws to himself the admiration and the cult that are permitted for those who, having passed on to the other life, have now reached the bliss of the kingdom of heaven.

A frail, worn figure of a priest, all meekness and goodness, all duty and sacrifice, appears on the horizon of history, and will now stay there for ever: it is Don Michael Rua, "blessed"!

Are you pleased? There is no need to ask the threefold Salesian Family, which both here and throughout the world exults with us, and instils its joy into the whole Church. Wherever the Sons of Don Bosco are, today is a feast-day. And it is a feast-day, particularly for the Church of Turin, the earthly home of the new Blessed, which sees inserted, in what we may call the modern array of its elect, a new priestly figure, documenting the virtues of the civil and Christian stock and certainly promising other future fruitfulness.

Don Rua "blessed". We will not make a biographical sketch of him now, nor will we deliver his panegyric. His story is now well known to everyone. It is certainly not the worthy Salesians who leave their heroes without celebrity; and it is this dutiful tribute to their virtues which, making them popular, extends the radius of their example and multiplies their beneficial efficacy; it creates the epic, for the edification of our times.

And then, at this moment when joyful emotion fills our hearts, we prefer to meditate rather than listen. Well, let us meditate for a moment, on the characteristic aspect of Don Rua, the aspect which defines him, and which with one look tells us everything, makes us understand. Who is Don Rua?

*Son, disciple, imitator*

He is the first successor of Don Bosco, the Holy Founder of the Salesians. And why is Don Rua now beatified, that is, glorified? He is beatified and glorified precisely because he is his successor, that is, continuer: son, disciple, imitator. He with others, as is well known, but first among them, made the example of the Saint a school, and his personal work an institution extended, it may be said, all over the earth. He made his life a history, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type, a model. He made the spring a stream, a river. Remember the parable in the Gospel: "the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, that a man has taken and sowed in his ground; of all seeds, none is so little, but when it grows up it is greater than any garden herb; it grows into a tree, so that all the birds come and settle in its branches" (Mt. 13, 31-32). The marvellous fruitfulness of the Salesian family, one of the greatest and most significant phenomena of the perennial vitality of the Church in the last century and in ours, had in Don Bosco its origin, in Don Rua its continuation. It was this follower of his that from the humble beginnings at Valdocco served the Salesian work in its expansion, realized the felicity of the formula, developed it according to the letter, but with ever inspired newness. Don Rua was the most faithful, therefore the most humble and at the same time the most valiant of the sons of Don Bosco.

This is now very well known. We will not give quotations, which the documentation of the life of the new Blessed offers with superabundance; but we will make only one reflection, which we think is very important, today particularly. It concerns one of the most discussed values of modern culture, now praised, now condemned; we mean tradition. Don Rua inaugurated a tradition.

Tradition, which finds supporters and admirers in the field of

humanistic culture, history, for example, and philosophy, is not held in honour in the operative field, where it is rather the break with tradition, — revolution, hasty renewal, originality always intolerant of the school of others, independence from the past, release from all ties, — that seems to have become the norm of modernity, the condition of progress. We do not contest what is wholesome and inevitable in this attitude of life straining forward, advancing in time, in experience and in conquest of the surrounding realities. But we will give a warning about the danger and the harm of blind repudiation of the inheritance that the past, by means of a wise and selective tradition, transmits to the new generations.

Not taking this process of transmission into due account, we could lose the accumulated treasure of civilization, and be obliged to recognize that we have gone back, not forward, and to begin an exhausting effort all over again. We could lose the treasure of faith, which has its human roots in certain moments of past history, to find ourselves shipwrecked again in the mysterious sea of time, no longer having any notion of, or the capacity for the journey to be undertaken.

This is an immense subject, but it appears on the first page of human pedagogy, and it lets us know, if nothing else, what merit the cult of the wisdom of our old people still has, and for us, sons of the Church, what a duty and what a need we have to draw from tradition that friendly, perennial light which from the distant and near past projects its beams on our advancing path.

But for us the subject, in the presence of Don Rua, becomes simple and elementary, but not for this reason less worthy of consideration.

### *Teaching us to be "continuers"*

What does Don Rua teach us? How was he able to rise to the glory of paradise and to the exaltation that the Church gives to him today? Just, as we were saying, by teaching us to be continuers; that is, followers, pupils, teachers, if you like, provided we are disciples of a higher Teacher. Let us amplify the lesson that we receive from him: he teaches the Salesians to remain Sale-

sians, ever faithful sons of their founder; and then he teaches all of us reverence for the magisterium, which presides over the thought and economy of Christian life. Christ himself, as the Word coming from the Father, and as the Messiah implementing and interpreting the revelation concerning him, said of himself: "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (Jn. 7, 16).

The dignity of the disciple depends on the wisdom of the Master. Imitation in the disciple is no longer passiveness, or servility; it is leaven, it is perfection (cf. 1 Cor. 4, 16). The capacity of the pupil to develop his own personality is derived, in fact, from that art of drawing out, the teacher's art, which is called education, an art that guides the logical but free and original, expansion of the pupil's virtual qualities. We mean that the virtues of which Don Rua is a model and which the Church made the reason for his beatification, are still the evangelical virtues of the humble who adhere to the prophetic school of holiness; of the humble to whom the highest mysteries of divinity and of mankind are revealed (cf. Mt. 11, 25).

### *Mighty worker of the Kingdom*

If Don Rua is really qualified as the first continuer of the example and work of Don Bosco, we will always like to think of him again and venerate him in this ascetical aspect of humility and dependence. But we will never be able to forget the operative aspect of this little-great man, all the more so in that we, not alien to the mentality of our times, which is inclined to measure the stature of a man by his capacity for action, are aware we have before us an athlete of apostolic activity, which, still in the mould of Don Bosco, but with growing dimensions of its own, confers on Don Rua the spiritual and human proportions of greatness. His mission, in fact, is a great one. Biographers and critics of his life have found in it heroic virtues, which are the requisites the Church demands for the positive outcome of the causes of beatification and canonization, and which presuppose and testify to an extraordinary abundance of divine grace, the first and supreme cause of holiness.

The mission that makes Don Rua great takes two distinct exterior directions, which are intermingled and blend in the heart

of this mighty worker of the kingdom of God, as usually happens in the form of the apostolate that Providence assigned to him: the Salesian Congregation and the Oratory, that is, the works for youth, and all the others that crown them.

### *Multiform Salesian work*

Here our praise should go to the triple religious Family which had its roots first in Don Bosco and then in Don Rua, in direct succession, that of the Salesian Priests, that of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and that of the Salesian Cooperators, each of which had a marvellous development under the methodical and indefatigable impetus of our Blessed. Let it be enough to recall that, in the twenty years of his government, the 64 Salesian houses founded by Don Bosco during his life rose to 314. There come to our lips, in the positive sense, the words of the Bible: "This is the finger of God" (Ex. 8, 19).

Glorifying Don Rua, we give glory to the Lord. In his person, in the growing ranks of his Confrères and in the rapid increase of the Salesian work, He has wished to manifest his goodness and his power, capable of arousing, even in our times, the marvellous, unexhausted vitality of the Church, and of offering to her apostolic effort the new fields of pastoral work that impetuous and disorderly social development has opened up to Christian civilization. And, rejoicing with them in joy and hope, we greet all the Sons of this flourishing young Salesian Family, which today, under the friendly and fatherly gaze of their new Blessed, quickens its step along the steep, straight path of the now tested tradition of Don Bosco.

Then the Salesian works light up before us illuminated by the Holy Founder and with the new splendour of the Blessed continuer. It is to you we look, young men of the great Salesian school! We see reflected in your faces and shining in your eyes the love with which Don Bosco and with him Don Rua and all their Confrères yesterday and today, and certainly tomorrow, shielded you magnificently. How dear you are to us, how beautiful you are to us, how gladly we see you gay, lively and modern; you are young men who have grown up and are growing in this multiform and providential Salesian Work!

*We greet the pupile too*

How our heart fills with emotion at the extraordinary things that the genius of charity of St. John Bosco and the Blessed Michael Rua and the thousands and thousands of their followers, has produced for you. For you, specially, sons of the people, for you, if in need of assistance and help, of instruction and education, of training for work and for prayer. For you, if, sons of misfortune, or confined in distant lands, you wait for some one to come to you, with the wise preventive pedagogy of friendship, goodness, joy, someone who can play and dialogue with you, who will make you good and strong, making you serene and pure and good and faithful, who will reveal to you the sense and the duty of life, and teach you to find in Christ the harmony of everything! We greet you, too, today, and we would like to call all of you, little and big pupils of the joyful, studious and laborious Salesian training ground, and with you so many of your contemporaries in towns and in the country, you of the schools and sports fields, you of work and suffering, and you of our catechetical halls and our churches, yes, we would like to call all of you to attention for a moment, and invite you to look up to this new Blessed Don Michael Rua, who loved you so much and who now, through our hand, in the name of Christ, blesses each one of you, and all of you together.

**2. Be faithful to your Religious vocation**

*Last Autumn representatives of the National Conferences of Religious Men and Women met in Rome at the invitation of the Sacred Congregation for Religious. The Pope received them in audience 19 October and addressed them in French. The following translation appeared in the English edition of the "Osservatore Romano", 5 November, 1972.*

It is not a question for us, in the framework of this brief meeting, to take up all the questions raised by the adapted renewal of religious life. Last year, in our Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelica testificatio*, we set forth for you our concerns and hopes on this

matter. In the Lord's name, we defined the criteria of discernment capable of guiding you along this demanding, but how fascinating, path to a more evangelical life. We beg you to keep before your eyes, and meditate upon, these various elements of religious life which we emphasized, without neglecting any of them. This morning, we just wish to revive in you the "religious spirit" that must mark your persons and your communities, as well as your positive adherence to the Church.

*The world needs your faithfulness*

Yes, you have chosen to live your baptismal vocation in the particular framework of the religious life: or rather, you have agreed to serve the Lord in this radical way which is a deep response to an evangelical appeal, which has proved itself in the Church for centuries, and which the latter has authenticated as an unequalled and indispensable testimony of the beatitudes. We tell you straight out: be consistent with yourselves, be faithful to your vocation, do not let this essential character of religious life, which is your lot, dissolve, in theory and in practice. Most Christians are called to affirm their faith and exercise their charity as laymen, with all the temporal responsibilities incumbent upon them, and their testimony is essential, as we have often stressed. Some are doing so today, with the support and according to the requirements of a Secular Institute, and we have recently praised this new initiative again. But they all need just your faithfulness to your specific vocation as religious men and women.

It involves, as you know, in addition to profession of the vows of consecrated chastity, poverty and obedience, a common life lived in complete brotherhood. It requires a particular asceticism which makes you renounce, freely and joyfully, the goods of this world, as a sign of your attachment to the Lord Jesus, loved for his own sake, above everything even to the Cross. It is manifested in an obedience which makes you completely available for the will of our Father in heaven, through the concrete appeals of the Church and of your superiors, as Christ lived obedience to his Father through the conditions of his incarnation (cf. Jacques Guillet, *Jésus-Christ hier et*

*aujourd'hui*; Desclée de Brouwer 1963, pp. 109-125). In short, you must aim at evangelical perfection (cf. Mt. 5. 48) so as to be permanently living signs of the transcendency of the Kingdom of God.

*Do not fear to be fully religious*

Certainly this sign will not always be understood, not only by the "world", as understood by St. John, but even by men of goodwill, and even your Christian brothers and sisters. And you will suffer as a result. For this world is not only attracted—and sometimes enslaved—by possessions, power and the flesh, but it has become supersensitive to the demand for personal development, in the framework of complete autonomy. Your life may assume in its eyes something mysterious, strange, and even inhuman, according to some. And yet you know that what is foolishness in the eyes of men is wisdom in the eyes of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1, 25-27). Besides, would not the real scandal be to perceive that, on the pretext of adaptation, you renounce these requirements of prayer humility, poverty, sharing, purity, simplicity, and disinterested service that Christ has asked of his disciples?

Let us be clear: the form of religious life must not despise natural talents or personal charisms; it must serve the vocation of each person. And it is a heavy task for you, superiors, to see to it that each of your brothers and sisters may develop in it, may be treated with consideration, be recognized and loved, and be able to bring the best of himself to his community and to the world. But the paradox of the Gospel, which you, more than others, have the mission to carry out fully, must not be forgotten: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt. 16, 25). Be assured: this love of the Lord, lived to the extent of renunciation of yourselves, cannot remain without fruit. Bringing you deep joy and the hope of eternal life, it will mysteriously open up for souls the way to the God of love. Yes, in this sense, do not fear to be fully religious.

*Loving the world and announcing Christ to it*

We will now deal briefly with the second subject of our talk. Such love of God, reawakened in deep prayer and stimulated by

fraternal life, cannot on the contrary turn you aside from the missionary concern animating you today, and in which we greatly rejoice. Whether you lead a contemplative or a directly apostolic life, love of the Church will be at the heart of your concerns. You will, of course, adhere unreservedly to the true faith that she professes; you will welcome confidently the guidelines she lays down, the decisions she takes, in different fields, for the good of all. At this hour, this testimony of loyalty of all religious united with the See of Peter, seems to us of vital importance. Look at history: it was always decisive at the periods when the Church undertook her great reforms. But you will also share, according to the specific charism of your Institute, her determination really to meet this world, new in so many respects. It is not a question of conforming with it, but of accepting it, understanding it and loving it to the extent of announcing Jesus Christ to it, with evangelical patience and according to the means best suited to its understanding.

Now, in each of your dioceses, regions, countries, the Bishops have the task, with the priests' and pastoral councils, of discerning priority needs, directing pastoral efforts, and coordinating them. Each Institute must define its personal identity clearly, to find its place in this service, with its own vocation. There is no question of absorbing this wealth of your multiform, traditional charisms in an authoritarian grouping or an impoverishing levelling. Nevertheless, each one must participate, in complete availability, in the mission of the Church, in harmony with the apostolate exercised in the people of God as a whole, under the responsibility of the Hierarchy. You will always remember that "exemption" itself concerns particularly the internal structures of your congregations (cf. *Evangelica testificatio*, n. 50): it must never be an obstacle to the implementation of a close, deep, cordial communion, of sentiments and of action, with your Bishops.

#### *You are sent*

Dear Sons and Daughters, we were thinking of you these days as we celebrated Mass in honour of St. Luke. You are among those disciples that the Lord is sending before him today. We beg the Master of the harvest to send you numerous companions, men and

women, of tested loyalty. Already it seems to us that the moment has come for a revival of religious life in depth. Go all over the world, therefore. Take Christ's peace to it. Proclaim his good news, by your own consecrated life: "The Kingdom of God has come near to you" (Lk. 10, 9). With Mary, turn to the Lord, in thanksgiving and with perfect availability. And we willingly bless you.

### 3. What is the Church's greatest need today?

*On 27 September Pope Paul VI opened the usual Wednesday general audience with these words:*

"We are privileged in our weekly audiences to welcome all our visitors as the representatives of the People of God, of the Holy Church of Christ. Today your silence seems to say to us: 'How is the Church progressing? What can the Pope tell us about it?' And I in turn ask the question: 'Do my visitors know what the Church really needs most? What can they do to help satisfy those needs?'"

*The Holy Father answered these questions in a series of ten audience addresses. He listed the Church's greatest needs as faith (27 September and 4 October), deliverance from evil (15 November) the afflatus of the Holy Spirit (29 November), and certain others.*

*We print here three of the latter as being of particular interest: "The Church needs holy people", (4 November) "The Church has need of continual renewal" (8 November) and "The Church needs its authentic style of Christian living" (22 November).*

#### a) THE CHURCH NEEDS HOLY PEOPLE

The Church needs holy people.

Anyone who has understood what the Church is, understands the logical force of this statement. We who are imbued, we think, with the doctrine on the Church given to us by the great teaching of the recent Council, must certainly remember that holiness is at the same time *a property* of the Church. That is to say, it is a mysterious mode of being of hers deriving from her vocation as the People of God, from the covenant that God set up with that part

of humanity chosen, favoured, sanctified and loved by Him (cf. Eph. 5, 26-27) and called the Church, the Bride and Mystical Body of Christ, the inexhaustible sacrament, that is the sign and instrument, of salvation. Holiness, therefore, is also *a note* of the Church, that is, an exterior quality, a recognizable beauty, and apologetic argument calculated to impress, historically and socially, the men who observe it with an honest eye, capable of recognizing spiritual values where they are (cf. *Lumen Gentium* n. 9 etc.).

The Church, in God's mind, is holy, that is, associated with him, animated by his Spirit, clothed in a transcendent beauty derived from the harmony of the lines that constitute her, according to the divine plan, and therefore sacred and always religiously addressed to divine worship and to observance of God's will (cf. St. Th. II-II, 81, 8). She is holy in her nature. She is holy in the divine truths entrusted to her and taught by her. She is holy particularly in her sacraments, by means of which she sanctifies men. She is holy in her liturgy and in her prayer. She is holy in her law, that is in the teaching whereby she guides men to walk along the paths of the Gospel and live in charity.

But this holiness, which we can call active, is aimed at producing the holiness, which we can call derived (if not completely passive—cf. Denz. Schonm, 2201. ff.) of the members who make up the Church. In the order of grace, they remain free, nay more, are invited, helped, bound to use their freedom in as conscious and assiduous a way as possible to carry out in themselves the sovereign and urgent commandment of love of God and, connected with it, love of one's neighbour, with all the duties derived therefrom, according to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

### *Christian life does not tolerate mediocrity*

To the constitutive holiness of the Church must correspond the holiness practised by her members. Which means: not only is the Church holy in herself, but we who belong to her and form her must show she is holy through ourselves. We, individuals, organs and community, must be holy. This necessity with regard to persons, *in fieri* stems from a deeper necessity, in act, relative to interior authenticity: the holiness, as we were saying, characteristic of the

ecclesiastical institution. Our faithfulness to the Church involves also this plane of life: it is necessary to be holy.

The programme of Christian life does not tolerate mediocrity. Terrible, in this connection, are the words of Revelation, which says: "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. ...So, because you are lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth" (3, 15-16). The first Christians, admitted to the ecclesial communion of faith and grace, were called holy in name, and they knew that they had to behave as such. This mentality, which makes it obligatory to conform one's way of life to the demands of the new style of life, the Christian style, is still cultivated in new missionary communities today.

The question rises spontaneously: how is it possible to impose such a serious duty on people of this world? We know only too well their laziness, even their incapacity for great ideals, moral ones particularly, which are not confined to utopian speculations, but demand practical and concrete applications in actual life. We know, too, their frailty in consistency of action and their deceptive happiness in yielding to their passions and to the stimulus of interest and pleasure. Is such a severe interpretation of Christian life correct? Is not the evangelical law indulgent to human weakness? Does it not free us from the burdens of legalism and moralism? What a long answer such a complex and radical question would require! Let us give a very summary answer for the present.

### *The holiness of miracles is not required*

Christian life does, indeed, free us from the weight of norms unnecessary for perfection, which consists substantially in charity (cf. Col. 3, 14), and which denounces in pharisaism an intolerable hypocrisy (cf. Mt. 23). But it is not lax; on the contrary, it is morally serious and severe: just read the Sermon on the Mount. It aims entirely at a perfection that begins within man and therefore is binding on the direction of freedom from its very first roots, the heart (cf. Mt. 15). But we must take into account, above all, that the human action of the Christian enjoys a marvellous and incalculable interior aid, grace. Does not the Master say to strengthen the disciples, frightened by the demands of evangelical morality:

“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible”? (Mt. 19, 26).

This is a vital point for the follower of Christ and for the whole doctrine and practice of Christian life and perfection, that is, for the conquest of holiness. Grace makes Christ’s yoke light and sweet (cf. Mt. 11, 30). Grace operating in the human spirit multiplies its forces, to the extent of making self-sacrifice, poverty, chastity, obedience, the cross, pleasant. And then we can add that the holiness required of us is not the holiness of “miracles”, that is, extraordinary phenomena, but the holiness of a good, firm will which in every ordinary circumstance of everyday life seeks the logical rectitude of the pursuit of the divine will.

It is of this rectitude that we should like to speak, being content to affirm that it is the “Christian witness” of which so much is written and said. It is this holiness that the Church needs today: the apologia of deeds, example, and transparent virtue, which even those around us recognize, and refer to God (cf. Mt. 5, 16). It is this holiness, this integrity of Christian character, which makes the message of the Church credible even in our profane and often hostile and corrupt world, as is said today.

We cordially and warmly recommend this holiness to you, beloved Sons, with our Apostolic Blessing.

#### b) RENEWAL, A VITAL PROCESS IN THE CHURCH

There has been talk of a renewal of the Church: the Council awakened the idea in us, gave us the hope, left us the orders. This word “renewal” still speaks to us: to lovers of the Church, to indicate in a simple word the many needs of the age-old institution which, still alive and consistent with its roots, receives as impulse the divine sap of the Holy Spirit always flowing through it towards the blossoming of a new spring. Yes, the Church needs renewal (cf. Decree *Optatam totius*, n. 1; etc.).

#### *Not always rightly understood*

This same word has not always been rightly understood by everyone. For some it rang out as a condemnation of the past and

licence to break with it regardless of its binding and vital function as the vehicle of the essential principles by which the Church lives, her faith especially, and her constitution. The word renewal seemed to authorize some adaptation of the latter. And there were some who conceived it as detachment from the institutional, historical, visible, exterior structures, in order to keep its spiritual and characteristic content more pure and efficient, forgetting that the soul of the Church without the body in which she lives could no longer be found or be active, as St. Augustine already repeated. There were also some who thought they could renew the Church by secularizing her, that is, modelling her sometimes without discernment, in forms and in mentality on the mould of secular society, which, as the daughter of history and of time, could confer on the Church the coveted title of modern.

Two things were, and still are, overlooked. The first is that renewal, a continuous, vital process in a living organism like the Church, cannot be a metamorphosis, a radical transformation, a betrayal of essential and perpetual elements, the renewal of which can only be to strengthen, not to change. The other is that the desired renewal is interior, rather than exterior, as St. Paul admonishes us in words still relevant today: "There must be a renewal in the inner life of your minds" (Eph. 4, 23).

### *Continual self-reformation*

Pithy words, these, easier to utter than to put into practice. How should we translate them? You must renew your mentality by virtue of the Christian inspiration that is conferred on you by grace, by the inner action of the Holy Spirit. You must accustom yourselves to thinking according to the faith. You must form your speculative and practical judgment according to Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel, or, as is said, according to Christian analysis. We must have a Christian mentality, we must think according to the conception that the Word of God gives us of the world, life, society, present and future values. It is not easy; but this is what has to be done. The adaptation of our overall way of feeling, knowing, judging and therefore operating is the permanent programme of the individual Christian and of the Church in general.

It is a question of continual selfreformation.. *Ecclesia semper reformanda*. Living in the world, today so meaningful and diffusive, so aggressive and tempting, so trained to conformism, even in its contestation, has a strong influence on our personality. The accepted norm, particularly in the new generations, that we must be "people of our times", obliges all of us to put up with the philosophies, that is to say, the current opinions, and to regulate our inner spirituality and our exterior conduct along the lines of the age, that is, of the world which disregards God and Christ. To travel along these lines may ensure great speed, that is, great intensity of life, but all things considered, it will deprive us of our originality, our real and autonomous freedom. We are conformist. The Church, too, has her temptations of conformism. St. Paul warns us: "Do not be conformed to this world (understood as an environment the atmosphere of which is infected by ideas that are wrong or deprived of Christian light), but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Rom 12, 2). Claim your freedom to live according to "God's will" (ib.), according to the charity that the Spirit has poured forth in your Christian soul (cf. Rom. 5, 5). Here we must remember: "Where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom" (II Cor. 3, 17; cf. Jn. 8, 36; Rom. 8, 2).

To renew oneself inwardly, what work, what toil! Who is ready to modify his way of thinking? To purify the inner cell of his fantasies, ambitions and passions? Yet how often the Lord exhorts us to make this inner renewal! (cf. Mt. 15, 18-20). And the Council invites us to do so, individually, and invites the whole Church altogether; and this is what she is doing, with God's help: renewal, which is the same as purification.

#### *Formidable criterion for renewal*

But we should not like, on ending our little talk, to leave you with a purely negative impression of the renewal that the Church needs. There is a whole positive vision that would deserve our attention, for example, the one opened up by the education of the modern Christian (here this qualification seems to us rightly used) to see good wherever it may be, provided it is really good according

to the Christian judgment. This new and open attitude towards natural earthly, historical and scientific values, is one of the characteristic aspects of the Council. We owe it to a large extent to Pope John's human, serene and kind heart. Ecumenism began in this way: as respect for non-Christian religions, for our very adversaries, for the values of human activity, etc. (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 34). To be able to see in every man an image of Christ, a brother to be respected, served and loved, is not this a fundamental and formidable criterion for the renewal that the Church and the world need? To see a secret of divine goodness in every sorrow, a coefficient of personal or collective progress in every event (cf. Rom. 8, 20), is this not tantamount to opening a marvellous source of optimism, and therefore of renewal for the old, weary and disappointed heart of man? To have rekindled eschatological hope in the mind of us mortals today, is this not to instil a meaning, an impulse of newness into present and future time?

"*Ecce nova facio omnia*", behold, I make all things new (Ap. 21, 5; cf. II Cor. 5, 17)! The Lord's word. The Church's need. The commitment of all of us!

With our Apostolic Blessing.

### c) AN AUTHENTIC STYLE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

A desire always burns in the heart of the Church, like a lamp that never goes out, a common desire of the Church as the People of God, and as the personal conscience of every member of this Mystical Body of Christ. It is a desire that invests the whole psychology of the followers of the Lord Jesus, and is part of every resolution and every programme of reform and renewal, the desire to don a real Christian style.

The word "style" is hardly adequate, for it refers to the exterior aspect of a thing; but in this case style means the result of an inner spirit. It means the visible reality of a moral order, the expression of a mentality, a conception of life, a consistency and a faithfulness, which are nourished from the roots of the deep and vital personality of those who manifest themselves in their own style.

Again we have the old proverb: the cowl does not make the monk.

True. But the cowl in itself must qualify individually and socially the one who professes to be a monk. It can, indeed, disguise him and clothe him in hypocrisy (cf. Mt. 15, 7-8), and make him play a fictitious part that does not define him intimately, like the actor in the theatre. But the stylistic intention of the habit aims not only at telling who one is by means of the exterior aspect but also at giving the wearer an inner awareness of who he must be.

### *Required by the Council*

For what interests us now, we repeat, the Church and every member of the faithful must have a style of life in conformity with his faith. We have said so many a time, in the words of St. Paul: the just man, that is, the true Christian, lives by drawing from faith the energy and the criterion of his authenticity (cf. Rom. 1, 17). This entails, in addition to a new supernatural "form" of life, interior and original, a certain outpouring of this inner life, a certain exterior visibility. All the more so in that the council itself, by reviving in the heart of the Church and of the faithful composing her the divine gifts of the true religion come down from heaven, also aimed at instilling in the Church herself a greater degree of conspicuousness, calling her the "visible sacrament" of union with God (*Lumen Gentium* n. 1), of saving unity (n. 9), indeed of salvation itself (n. 48; *Gaudium et Spes* n. 45; *Ad Gentes*, n. 5). By means of the Council the Church, it is expected, will be more recognizable, more luminous, more stylized according to her own canons, living more by the morals portrayed and demanded by her evangelical vocation.

Has it been successful, this effort to make the Church appear more in conformity with the style, the morals demanded by her vocation? Has the Church been transformed or rather reformed according to the Council's demands for renewal? It seems to us we can answer, yes, owing to the many good things which have been carried out in the Church and which, already underway, will be carried out, in this manifest intention of authenticity and credibility. This we must say to the praise and encouragement of those sons of hers and of those institutions which, precisely to give the Church lines corresponding better to her original institution, her consistent tradition, her present mission, have prayed, worked and suffered with

a good spirit, in these ten years since the beginning of the Council.

But we cannot pass over in silence the fact that there have taken place at the same time other phenomena which cannot always be reduced to the established plan of giving, restoring, preserving for the Church the pure, splendid and nuptial style (cf. Eph. 5, 27) that she must don, especially in our times, in order to be, as she should be, the loving bride of that Christ who loved her to the extent of giving his life for her.

Two excellent principles, authoritatively explained by the Council, namely *aggiornamento*, that is, her own renewal, and involvement in the troubled and fermenting life of the contemporary world—excellent principles, we say, and still valid—have not always been correctly interpreted and correctly applied. Some environments, instead of reforming and renewing the ideal figure of the Church, have distorted it, at least on the conceptual plane.

### *The "Church without..."*

To some restless spirits and many lacking sufficient culture, there has occurred the formula, more or less radical, of the "Church without". It is a formula that has its history: heresies and schisms, throughout the centuries, have used it abundantly.

The attempt has been made, for example, to have a Church without difficult dogmas, thus taking away from the treasure of faith the mysteries of divine Thought, and reducing the Reality of revealed religion to the dimension of the human brain. Here and there, unfortunately, this process of reduction continues to empty Catholic doctrine of its content and its certainty. Alongside this first "without" there has arisen another Church without authority, either of magisterium or of government, as if she were a Church liberated and made accessible to all those who would like her to be purely spiritual and indifferent to objective and social moral precepts. Thus an easy Church has been desired, without hierarchical or juridical forms, a Church without obedience, without liturgical norms; a Church without sacrifice. But what is a Church without the Cross?

Yes, there are those who think they can content themselves with Christ, but without the obligation of contemplating his Cross, or of admitting his Resurrection, and moreover without entering the

sacramental and moral experience of our participation in this paschal and central mystery of death and life, which is supernatural.

And there are those who think they can make up for the immense void left by this residual spirituality without real and existential Redemption, by adopting another "without", that is, by removing from their own lives every barrier, every distinction from the life of the profane world, without hope, without charity, without morals that are firm and worthy.

On the contrary, they trust in the ideologies of others, and they still draw to a certain extent on that treasure of human wisdom, the Gospel, to make man himself, his own personality and society itself, the ideal, nay more the idol to which the mental and civil processes of life are geared. But without God what life can hold out?

Beloved Sons and Brothers! Let us maintain the desire for a life modelled according to the Christian style. The Christian style is not always easy; it is, we know, a demanding style, sometimes inconvenient, and not always fashionable. But remember: it must not be judged only by what it takes away, but evaluated by what it gives. And if it is engraved on us by the law of sacrifice, that is, by the Cross, remember, or rather experience for yourselves the paradox characteristic of the Christian style, which consists in an extraordinary fusion of braking and thrusting, of moderation and vitality, of sorrow and joy, at the same time. The present life finds in this style its highest and fullest expression: "With all our affliction, St. Paul said, I am overjoyed" (2 Cor. 7. 4).

May God help all of us to impress on our modern life a new style, sweet and austere, the Christian style.

With our Apostolic Blessing.

## VII. NECROLOGY

---

### *Father Leander Altoé*

\* Jaciguá (Espírito Santo - Brazil) 7.4.1940, † Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 15.11.1972, 32 years of age, 14 profession, 5 priesthood.

He was an enthusiastic worker in the apostolate. With a young priest's energy he put life into the scholastic section of the house, obtained good discipline, kept in touch with the parents and made very successful use of "parent-teacher" meetings. In barely three years his indefatigable labours effected a vigorous growth in the Salesian work of Rocha Miranda.

### *Father Caesar Baldasso*

\* Arcade (Treviso - Italy) 27.1.1899, † Pordenone (Italy) 11.11.1972, 73 years of age, 56 profession, 48 priesthood.

In his long career as a teacher he enjoyed the respect and affection of his many pupils. He sympathised in the joys and troubles of all who approached him in his priestly capacity or in the class-room and gave valuable service in pulpit and confessional. The painful illness that ended his laborious life was borne with edifying resignation.

### *Father Ernest Berta*

\* Avigliana (Turin - Italy) 29.12.1884, † Genzano (Rome) 3.12.1972, 87 years of age, 71 profession, 63 priesthood, 27 rector, 6 provincial.

He was born into a deeply Christian family greatly devoted to Don Bosco and blessed by God with 6 vocations (3 priests and 3 nuns). He was very proud of the fact that he was a grand-nephew of Father Alasonnatti. His life was give unstintingly to the young and poor, to whom he generously opened the doors of the institutes in Rome (especially during the last war, when he was Provincial). A concelebration of fifty priests at his funeral showed how highly his confrères esteemed this exemplary priest and educator.

*Father Anthony Cavoli*

\* Marignano (Forlì - Italy) 6.8.1888, † Tokyo-Suginami-Ikuei (Japan) 22.11.1972, 84 years of age, 50 profession, 58 priesthood, 6 rector.

He was a military chaplain during the I World War and became a Salesian at 33 years of age. Four years later he was a member of the first missionary expedition to Japan. This deeply spiritual man with such a forceful and exuberant character gave 25 years of work to the Miyazaki area and founded a Congregation of native sisters there (Miyasaki Sisters of Charity): these nuns carry on the work of St. Vincent of Paul for the aged, the poor and the orphaned. His last ten years were bedridden, spent in prayer for his nuns and the Salesians.

*Father Peter Conconi*

\* Geneva (Switzerland) 1.9.1911, † there 25.5.1972, 60 years of age, 41 profession, 32 priesthood, 15 rector, 5 provincial delegate for Switzerland.

A man of great spiritual and natural virtues, his work for vocations was outstanding; first as socius, then as master of novices. He had the gift of inspiring his novices with a real love for the Salesian educative mission. Transferred to Morges, he built up the educational centre of La Longeraie into a model school. He was greatly attached to the Congregation and always wanted it to be in the vanguard of progress. He was a great believer in dialogue and human relations, and his smile, his words, his welcoming manner gained for him innumerable true and loyal friends.

*Father Anthony Dal Pos*

\* San Fior di Sotto (Treviso - Italy) 21.5.1906, † Bahia Blanca (Argentina) 30.11.1972, 66 years of age, 48 profession, 39 priesthood, 6 years rector.

He joined the Patagonian mission as a young Salesian and worked there with priestly zeal. His kindness and availability earned him many friends and he used his capacity for making friends as an instrument in his apostolate.

*Brother Henry Fiffi*

\* Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) 5.2.1890, † there 26.11.1972, 82 years of age, 58 profession.

A great enthusiast for the festive oratory, he spent 53 consecutive years in this work. With deep Christian conviction he prepared thousands

of youngsters for their first holy communion. He was constant, firm and kind.

*Father Anacleto Gallo*

\* Grancona (Vicenza - Italy) 21.10.1892, † Lugano (Ticino - Switzerland) 10.8.1972, 79 years of age, 63 profession, 53 priesthood, 10 rector.

A Salesian who was once his pupil spoke of him thus: "He belonged to 'the pure of heart' and wore his priestly dignity like a royal robe; whereas in the service of the young and the people he humbly wore the worn habit of a workman." He gave himself completely and serenely to the class-room, the playground, the pulpit, the confessional. In his social work he was a harbinger of peace. His was a life of dedication, especially the years he spent as director of the oratory, director of the St. Joseph's sodality and assistant parish priest.

*Father Andrew Goga*

\* Chrabrany (Slovakia) 9.11.1914, † Táriba (Táchira - Venezuela) 10.9.1972, 57 years of age, 39 profession, 30 priesthood.

In his life shone all the virtues of the model man, priest, religious, scientist and tireless worker. Thousands of past pupils, friends and acquaintances will never forget him. He was a born educator, and his work continues on in the various text-books he has written for secondary school science. He worked diligently right to his death, which was sudden though not unexpected. His confrères lament the loss of a Salesian who was kind, serene, helpful and devout.

*Brother Michael Iwata*

\* Kuroshima (Nagasaki - Japan) 3.10.1916, † Tokyo-Chofu 9-10-1972, 56 years of age, 15 profession.

Seriously wounded in the II World War, he recovered miraculously after days in a state of coma. He was a late vocation and was noted for his simple faith, great humility and complete availability. His work was of the humblest kind in the fields and in the kitchen, and he laboured till the end. He was an example of religious observance and hard work despite his indifferent health.

*Father Victor Kolmer*

\* Schirrhein (Lower Rhine - France) 14.8.1888, † Strasbourg (France) 30.10.1972, 84 years of age, 67 profession, 58 priesthood, 27 rector.

He was one of the principal pioneers of our work in Alsace. He founded the college at Landser, the parishes at Mulhouse and Strasbourg and the studentate in the same city. All his life he devoted a generous part of his time to the Salesian Press and a rewarding correspondence. He was noted for his deeply religious spirit, his hard work, his way with the young and his efforts for Church renewal.

*Father John Korff de Gids*

\* Aja (Holland) 4.10.1922, † Rijswijk (Holland) 20.9.1972, 49 years of age, 24 profession, 16 priesthood.

He dedicated many years of his priesthood to the apostolate of young workers as rector of the professional school at Amersfoort before being the Dutch Province's tireless economist. All who knew him speak highly of his fidelity, his love of the Society, his sense of justice and his priestliness. He died after long and painful sufferings.

*Father Robert Marschner*

\* Konigswalde (Austria) 8.12.1900, † Radkersburg (Austria) 28.5.1972, 71 years of age, 52 profession, 44 priesthood, 14 rector.

A reliable and enthusiastic worker for the young. As rector and parish priest he was entrusted with tasks of great responsibility. In his last three years he offered his many sufferings to God for the house at Graz, giving a fine example of resignation to the divine will.

*Father Joseph Martins*

\* Campina Grande (Paraíba - Brazil) 8.9.1899, † S. Paulo (Brazil) 31.10.1972, 73 years of age, 50 profession, 38 priesthood.

He was a good Religious and a hard-working educator, most reliable and loved by his pupils, a man of deeds rather than words, always serene and courteous to all. His teaching was whole-hearted and his discipline gentle. He made the liturgy pleasant for the boys with attractive functions which were often on a grand scale with an army of altar-boys. He loved Mary Help of Christians and taught others to love her and his love of Don Bosco was proved by his fidelity to the Holy Rule. He ended his life suffering much on account of a partial paralysis and other complications; but his cheefulness always hid his pain.

*Father Francis Maté*

\* Tórtoles de Esgueva (Burgos - Spain) 9.8.1896, † Madrid (Spain) 5.9.1972, 76 years of age, 57 profession, 46 priesthood, 4 rector.

A jovial enthusiast, he loved the Society and served it with dedication and simplicity and in responsible offices. He was Prefect for 20 years in various houses and gave of his best, especially in the aftermath of the war when the many difficulties of the times really tested his spirit of sacrifice. He was always available and an easy conversationalist. He accepted death in a great spirit of faith.

*Father John McTague*

\* Liverpool (England) 4.8.1892, † Farnborough (England) 3.10.1972, 80 years of age, 63 profession, 53 priesthood.

Music was his love and his apostolate and he taught it practically all his life in our schools and also saw to the sacred music in the parish. Of a rather quiet disposition he eschewed the limelight. He died in his sleep seemingly without having suffered any illness.

*Father John Henry Neale*

\* London (England) 12.6.1916, † Melbourne (Australia) 7.10.1972, 56 years of age, 30 profession, 19 priesthood, 5 rector.

Another victim of cancer in our small Province. He bore his illness with patience and cheerfulness and died a most serene and happy death, receiving the sacraments and saying the rosary with his confrères. God gave him many talents and he spent many years of his life as Provincial Economist using what was perhaps his best talent, book-keeping and business affairs. His Salesian charity extended with particular affection to social problems and for some years he was a regular visitor to Pentridge prison. He was also deeply interested in the poor, the young and abandoned. He had great faith in the younger generation of Salesians and often used say, "Leave it to the younger confrères: today's world belongs to youth".

*Brother Alessio Nellishery*

\* Trichur (Kerala - India) 6.10.1941, † Cochin (Kerala - India) 22.8.1972, 30 years of age, 9 profession.

An enthusiastic laybrother who loved the Society, was happy in his vocation and had a smile for all. There was enthusiasm and gusto where-

ver he went. The kindness he showed towards others was reciprocated by them. His death was sudden but he was well prepared: a road-accident while returning home after making his day of recollection.

*Bishop Marcellinus Olaechea*

\* Baracaldo (Vizcaya - Spain) 9.1.1889, † Valencia (Spain) 21.10.1972, 83 years of age, 67 profession, 60 priesthood, 7 rector, appointed bishop of Pamplona 1935, archbishop of Valencia 1946, retired 1966.

God has called to himself the first Spanish Salesian bishop. He was at first prefect of studies, then founder-rector, then 32 years provincial. He was appointed pontifical visitor of the diocesan seminaries in Spain, then Bishop of Pamplona and finally Archbishop of Valencia. He was esteemed and venerated everywhere for his kindness and love for the poor. Mgr. Lahiguerra, Bishop of Valencia, preached the funeral eulogy before an immense crowd and emphasised his fidelity to the Church and Don Bosco, his filial love of Our Lady, his apostolate of public and personal eucharistic devotion. He had the gift of making friends and attracting willing helpers and so was able to achieve so much on the religious and social plane, especially for the poor and abandoned. He had written in his will that he wished to be buried in a Salesian grave without crowds or ceremony: but his funeral showed that the people wanted it otherwise. His remains rest in the cathedral in the chapel of St. Thomas of Villanova, his predecessor in the bishopric of Valencia.

*Father Emmanuel Angelo Pisano*

\* Buenos Aires (Argentina) 30.5.1900, † there 31.8.1972, 72 years of age, 55 profession, 46 priesthood, 16 rector.

The sacred ministry was everything for him and he gave it his complete dedication. He was teacher, prefect of studies, catechist and rector in various houses. He was also parish priest and worked hard for the spiritual progress and social improvement of his flock. His labours were characterised by generosity, understanding and dynamism. His constant prayer to Don Bosco was for help to become a "true priest and Salesian".

*Father Carmelo Pitrolo*

\* Scicli (Ragusa - Italy) 5.12.1885, † Modica Alta (Italy) 26.11.1972, 86 years of age, 67 profession, 58 priesthood.

He spent practically all his life in the apostolate of the young and the working classes. He was a musician, a poet, a teacher of French and

literature, and placed these talents at the disposal of needy youth and aspirants to the Salesian life. He worked in various houses of the Roman and Sicilian Province, especially at Modica, where for forty years he attracted much goodwill to the Salesian work. He was in demand as a spiritual director by diocesan priests, Religious men and women and many of the faithful.

*Father William Renshaw*

\* Cleator Moor (Cumberland - England) 13.4.1919, † Chertsey (England) 9.10.1972, 53 years of age, 31 profession, 21 priesthood.

His apostolate was in the classroom and his talent lay in the teaching of technical and professional subjects. His was a simple, spiritual life, dedicated to teaching. He "died in harness", suffering an apoplectic seizure whilst teaching.

*Father Louis Ripula*

\* San José (Misiones - Argentina) 1-9-1920, † Corrientes (Argentina) 27-11-1972, 52 years of age, 34 profession, 24 priesthood.

A true Salesian: zealous in assisting, always with the boys despite his poor health. He was most reliable in fulfilling the teaching duties entrusted to him and always had at heart the good of the house and Congregation. He was also a zealous and regular confessor.

*Father Amedeo Rodinò*

\* Gioiosa Ionica (Reggio Calabria - Italy) 5.5.1903, † The Generalate, Rome, 4.11.1972, 69 years of age, 53 profession, 44 priesthood.

He was a student companion of the Rector Major. He was a brilliant writer and used to edit the review "L'Amico della Gioventù" which had such great success with young Italian students. In 1955 he was called to Turin to take charge of the Salesian Press Office, a duty he fulfilled with competence and sacrifice for seventeen years. On such occasions as the canonization of Dominic Savio, the 150th. anniversary of the birth of Don Bosco, and the Beatification of Don Rua, the extra amount of work he did was quite incredible. On 29 October, whilst already in hospital preparing for an operation, he obtained permission from his doctor to attend the Beatification ceremonies in St. Peter's. Two days later he underwent his operation but failed to recover. He died whilst reciting the morning Angelus with a confrère who was by his bedside.

*Father Michael Suppo*

\* Pianezza (Turin - Italy) 20.10.1902, † Hong Kong 13.11.1972, 70 years of age, 47 profession, 41 priesthood, 12 rector.

He worked many years and fruitfully in his beloved China. He held important offices in various houses and used his many gifts of character and intelligence for the furtherance of God's Kingdom. When the Communists came to power he underwent a harsh imprisonment which undermined his health; yet on being released he set about with surprising energy consolidating and expanding the Salesian works in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam. He was a man of prudence, balanced judgement, great faith and uncommon talent for organizing and administration — all of which enabled him to succeed in tasks that were often extremely difficult.

*Father Joseph Trisoglio*

\* Lu Monferrato (Alessandria - Italy) 13.12.1912, † Lima (Peru) 23.8.1972, 59 years of age, 43 profession, 33 priesthood, 9 rector.

He had an understanding and generous nature and his delicate, respectful and fatherly manner gained him the sympathy of all. His priestly counsel and preaching, his 35 years of untiring work in the classroom, the difficulties he experienced in carrying out certain unpalatable obediences, showed a genuine, supernatural life and a remarkable exterior serenity.

*Brother Augustine Venturini*

\* Bagnoli di Sopra (Padua - Italy) 13.11.1902, † Turin (Italy) 6.11.1972, 70 years of age, 47 profession.

He was killed in a car accident whilst returning from a day of recollection. His was a life of prayer and work and desire to be with God. He was proud of having looked after two Salesian bishops (Bp. Lucato and Bp. Arduino) and of having lived for so many years by the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, to the beauty and care of which he gave of his best. He practised poverty and loved the poor.

*Father Francis Vogrinčič*

\* Cankova (Slovenia - Jugoslavia) 14.11.1895, † Kapela (Slovenia - Jugoslavia) 18.11.1972, 77 years of age, 57 profession, 47 priesthood, 13 rector.

He had three genuine Salesian qualities: a joyous optimism in the ups and downs of life; a love of the young and the sick (for whom no hour was too late, no journey too long); and he taught Christian doctrine with eagerness and efficacy. In later life he was a confessor much in demand; and when he could do no more he consecrated his life to prayer.

*Father William Wasel*

\* Berrendorf (Renania - Germany) 31.5.1884, † Sannerz (Germany) 4.10.1972, 88 years of age, 63 profession, 51 priesthood, 12 rector.

He came of a large family and had a hard life as a youngster, helping his father in the fields. As an adult he was introduced to studies by his parish priest and entered Penango, the first seminary of our German Salesians. He was called up during the war, then went to Pampa to assist migrant Germans, for whom he laboured with patience and zeal. Back in Germany he worked in various houses till taken ill and for many years bore this sickness with patience and fortitude until his death.

*Brother John Zanovello*

\* Legnago (Verona - Italy) 6.2.1896, † Treviglio (Bergamo - Italy) 28.9.1972, 76 years of age, 54 profession.

He was an "institution" in the college of Treviglio where he spent all his Salesian life. He educated hundreds of boys, was the friend of children, and used the stage as his special means of education. He practised genuine poverty, was rich in natural virtues and communicated them generously to whomever he met. He had a strong devotion to Mary Help of Christians and instilled this devotion in all. He ended his life in days of deep interior recollection.

#### 4° elenco 1972

N.	COGNOME E NOME	LUOGO DI NASCITA	DATA DI NASC. E MORTE ETÀ	LUOGO DI M	ISP.		
155	Sac. ALTOE' Leandro	Jaciguá (BR)	7.4.1940	15.11.1972	32	Rio de Janeiro (BR)	BH
156	Sac. BALDASSO Cesare	Arcade (I)	27.1.1899	11.11.1972	73	Pordenone (I)	Vn
157	Sac. BERTA Ernesto	Avigliana (I)	29.12.1884	3.12.1972	87	Genzano (I)	Ro
158	Sac. CAVOLI Antonio	Marignano (I)	6.8.1888	22.11.1972	84	Tokyo (Japan)	Gp
159	Sac. CONCONI Pietro	Ginevra (CH)	1.9.1911	25.5.1972	60	Ginevra (CH)	Pr
160	Sac. DAL POS Antonio	S. Fior di Sotto (I)	21.5.1906	30.11.1972	66	Bahía Blanca (RA)	BB
161	Coad. FIFFI Enrico	Rio de Janeiro (BR)	5.2.1890	26.11.1972	82	Rio de Janeiro (BR)	BH
162	Sac. GALLO Anacleto	Grancona (I)	21.10.1892	10.8.1972	79	Lugano (CH)	No
163	Sac. GOGA Andrea	Chrabranj (CS)	9.11.1914	10.9.1972	57	Táriba (VZ)	Vz
164	Coad. IWATA Michele	Kuroshima (Japan)	3.10.1916	9.10.1972	56	Tokyo-Chofu (Japan)	Gp
165	Sac. KOLMER Vitore	Schirrhein (F)	14.8.1888	30.10.1972	84	Strasbourg (F)	Ly
166	Sac. KORFF de GIDTS Giov.	L'Aja (NL)	4.10.1922	20.9.1972	49	Rijswijk (NL)	OI
167	Sac. MARSCHNER Roberto	Königswalde (A)	8.12.1900	28.5.1972	71	Radkersburg (A)	Au
168	Sac. MARTINS Giuseppe	Campina Grande (BR)	9.8.1899	31.10.1972	73	S. Paulo (BR)	SP
169	Sac. MATE Francesco	Tórtoles de Esg (E)	9.8.1896	5.9.1972	76	Madrid (E)	Ma
170	Sac. McTAGUE Giovanni	Liverpool (GB)	4.8.1892	3.10.1972	80	Farnborough (GB)	Ig
171	Sac. NEALE Giov. Enrico	London (GB)	12.6.1916	7.10.1972	56	Melbourne (AUS)	At
172	Coad. NELLISHERY Alessio	Trichur (India)	6.10.1941	22.8.1972	30	Cochin (India)	Mr
173	Mons. OLAECHEA Marcellino	Baracaldo (E)	9.1.1889	21.10.1972	83	Valencia (E)	—
174	Sac. PISANO Emanuele	Buenos Aires (RA)	30.5.1900	31.8.1972	72	Buenos Aires (RA)	(BA
175	Sac. PITROLO Carmelo	Scidi (I)	5.12.1885	26.11.1972	86	Modica Alta (I)	Sc
176	Sac. RENSRAW Guglielmo	Cleator Moor (GB)	13.4.1919	9.10.1972	53	Chertsey (GB)	Ig
177	Sac. RIPULA Luigi	S. José (RA)	1.9.1920	27.11.1972	52	Corrientes (RA)	Rc
178	Sac. RODINO' Amedeo	Gioiosa Ionica (I)	5.5.1903	4.11.1972	69	Roma (C. Generalizia)	—
179	Sac. SUPPO Michele	Pianezza (I)	20.10.1902	13.11.1972	70	Hong Kong	Ci
180	Sac. TRISOGLIO Giuseppe	Lu Monferrato (I)	13.12.1912	23.8.1972	59	Lima (PE)	Pe
181	Coad. VENTURINI Agostino	Bagnoli di Sopra (I)	13.11.1902	6.11.1972	70	Torino (I)	Sb
182	Sac. VOGRINČIČ Francesco	Cankova (YU)	14.11.1895	18.11.1972	77	Kapela (YU)	Lj
183	Sac. WASEL Guglielmo	Berrendorf (D)	31.5.1884	4.10.1972	88	Sannerr (D)	Kö
184	Coad. ZANOVELLO Giovanni	Legnago (I)	6.2.1896	28.9.1972	76	Treviglio (I)	Lo