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30th Anniversary of the Worldwide Salesian Youth Movement

Rome, 3rd September 2018 (30th anniversary of the Beatification of Laura Vicuña)

Dear young people, FMA, SDB and Salesian Cooperators of the Salesian Youth Movement,

“Near or far I always think of you. I have only one desire: to see you happy here and in eternity ... it is enough for me to know that you are young for me to love you.”

With these words of Don Bosco we would like to reach each one of you on this year of blessing and grace. Thirty years ago, in connection with the centenary of Don Bosco's death, “Confronto 88” was held in Turin and Colle don Bosco from the 28th of August to the 4th of September. On that occasion, the Salesian Youth Movement was launched as a worldwide movement. We celebrate this anniversary which, providentially, coincides with the eve of the Synod of Bishops on the theme “Young people, the faith, and vocational discernment”.

It is evident that in these thirty years, the Salesian Youth Movement is constantly growing in the Provinces, nations, and in all continents. The Movement gives visibility to the communion between groups and associations who are inspired by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.¹ As of today, there are various forms of coordination, simple and flexible, at different levels; for example, the national Coordination in numerous Countries, the regional Coordination in SEPSUR-CICSAL and Inter-America, and the continental Coordination for Europe and the Middle East.

The Salesian Youth Movement is a comprehensive and extensive pastoral, educational and evangelizing presence of the Salesian Family with young people, among young people and for young people. It is the mission that unites the different groups of the Salesian Family, in a collaborative spirit, particularly the SDB, FMA and Salesian cooperators.

¹ Cf Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, *That they may have life and have it to the full. Guidelines for the educational mission of the FMA*, Leumann (TO), Elledici 2006, n. 125; Salesian Youth Ministry Department, *Salesian Youth Ministry. Frame of Reference*, Rome, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco 2014, p. 177.

As it reflects on young people, the focus chosen by the Synod of Bishops resonates very deeply with the identity of the Salesian Youth Movement. From its very beginning, this worldwide movement unites groups and associations who live “the values of the Salesian Youth Spirituality”², with a vocational perspective, as a journey of discernment and adherence to God’s dream for each person, the very theme itself of the Synod.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Salesian Youth Movement, we invite you to believe in its value, to strengthen its identity, to promote the various forms of coordination (local, provincial, national, regional, continental), and to assure the journey of integral growth of the young, personally and as groups, giving special attention to vocational discernment. Together, young people and adults, let us deepen the values of the Salesian Youth Spirituality in order to live them according to the challenges of the third millennium: *everyday life; joy and optimism; friendship with Jesus; communion in the Church; responsible service.*

For this reason, we would like to propose some points that we think are essential to animate the Salesian Youth Movement today:

Commitments of the Salesian Youth Movement³

- a) In the field of spirituality
 1. To live one’s experience of faith with the spirituality of daily life
 2. To revitalise some important elements of this spirituality
 - Interior life
 - Spiritual discernment
 - Accompaniment
 3. To transmit the Salesian Youth Spirituality with one’s life
- b) In the field of action
 1. To empower the SYM in the socio-political field
 2. To integrate faith and life
 3. To renew the preferential option for the poor
 4. To promote practical and integrated formation
 5. To promote youth action in the SYM
- c) Communion and coordination
 1. To make the SYM grow as an expression of the educational and missionary commitment of the Salesian Family
 2. To promote a better knowledge of the Saints of the Salesian Family
 3. To make a clearer impact on local diocesan and parish life, developing effective partnerships with other local agencies that also serve youth, especially the poorest
 4. To strengthen the Salesian Youth Movement with the minimum of structure for communication and coordination.

² General Chapter XXIII of the Salesians of Don Bosco (Rome, 4 March – 5 May 1990), nn. 275-276.

³ The young people of the World Forum of the Salesian Youth Movement, cf Dicastero SDB – Ambito FMA per la Pastorale Giovanile, *Signs and Bearers of God’s Love for the Young. Acts of the World Forum of the Salesian Youth Movement*. Colle don Bosco, 6 – 13 August 2000, Roma 2001, 197-200.

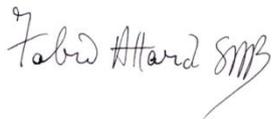
From the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) of the XVth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on “Young people, the faith, and vocational discernment”

- ✚ The young person’s identity is also shaped by our external interaction and membership within specific groups, associations and movements. (IL, n. 21)
- ✚ Engaging with faith-based groups, movements, and like-minded communities can also assist young people in their discernment. (IL, n. 115)
- ✚ Accompaniment will be crucial also to adequately take into account people’s backgrounds, which nowadays are increasingly diversified in terms of admission age, education level, prior formation, prior professional and affective experiences, church background (parishes, associations, movements, etc.). Accompaniment is a key tool to allow for a truly personalized approach to formative paths, which young people seem to appreciate, whereas they consider standardized proposals mortifying. (IL, n. 136)
- ✚ Years of service within movements and charities give young people an experience of mission and a space to discern (IL, n. 194).
- ✚ **Many young people live and rediscover their faith through their determined and active membership in movements and associations.** (IL, n. 203)

So *we ask ourselves*: does the Salesian Youth Movement offer the young an intense fraternal life, challenging spiritual journeys, meaningful service experiences, spaces for appropriate accompaniment, and competent people for discernment?⁴

So dear friends, these are some reflections that come from our heart that we would like to share with you. We hope that together you would be able to find time reflect on how to make the Salesian Youth Movement *a space* where young people can be protagonists, and *a journey* in responding to God’s call to realize their plan of life and achieve happiness.⁵

Affectionately,



Fr. Fabio Attard SDB



Sr. Runita Borja FMA

General Councillors for Youth Ministry

⁴ Mother General and the Sisters of the General Council, Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, *Circular N. 980*, Rome 2018.

⁵ Cf Pope Francis, *Prayer for the Synod 2018*.