

**GENERAL CHAPTER XXVI
SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO**

*«Da mihi animas,
cetera tolle»*

Chapter Documents

GC26

Rome, 23 february - 12 april 2008





acts

of the General Council
of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

N. 401
year LXXXIX
May 2008

«*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*»

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER XXVI
OF THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS OF SALES

Rome, 23 February – 12 April 2008

Editrice S.D.B.

Edizione extra commerciale

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Finito di stampare: giugno 2008

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PRESENTATION

My Dear Confreres,

I am happy to present to you the Acts of the 26th General Chapter which was brought to a happy conclusion on Saturday 12 April 2008. This concluding date has a symbolic significance for us: it recalls the day when Don Bosco entered Valdocco on Easter Sunday 1846. If that day meant for him the beginning of a new stage in his mission, for us the 12 April 2008 represents the launch of a six-year period that will bring us to the celebration of the bi-centenary of the birth of our beloved Founder and Father.

During the unfolding of the Chapter you have had the opportunity of being promptly informed about the intense Salesian experience that was lived, the methodology of the work undertaken, the various issues examined. In addition you will have certainly heard about their experience from those who took part in this great Chapter event: Provincials, Delegates and invited guests. Now the promulgation of the deliberations of the Chapter invites us to put them into practice (cf. C. 148).

The publication of the Acts, with the documents that form part of them, makes the decisions taken official policy, and marks the starting point of the six-year period 2008 - 2014. I hope that the personal reading, the study by the community and the putting into practice of the guidelines will bring as their precious fruit the inflaming of the heart of each one of you with the spiritual and apostolic passion of Don Bosco himself. May the Lord Jesus, through His Spirit "open your heart" (cf. *Acts* 16, 14).

In this presentation of mine I want to describe for you the theme, the method of discernment, the people involved, the spirit of the Chapter and its deliberations. Taken together these will serve as a guide in reading the document, and above all in its implementation.

The theme: "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle"

The theme of the GC26 is a single one even though it is set out in key issues. At first sight it might seem that the GC26 dealt with five different questions; in reality it is just the one theme: Don Bosco's programme of spiritual and apostolic life.

The motto "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle" can be fully understood from a knowledge of the life and work of our beloved Father and Founder Don Bosco. In fact it is a question of his personal plan of life, expressed as a personal prayer. It needs to be interpreted in the light of his apostolic dedication, pastoral creativity, untiring work, in a word of Don Bosco's apostolic *mystica*, but also of the self sacrifices made, of the many difficulties overcome, of the commitments undertaken by Don Bosco, of his *ascetica*. The implicit subject of this motto is *Don Bosco*; the first key issue "starting afresh from Don Bosco" makes it a manifesto and establishes it as the foundation of all the rest.

The "*da mihi animas*" is translated into the commitment to evangelise the young, especially the poorest ones. In fact the apostolic passion of Don Bosco and of the Salesian is at once expressed in the ability to recognise the urgent needs for evangelisation and to act in such a way that Jesus Christ and his gospel become a gift to everyone. In evangelising activity we also transmit his apostolic passion to lay people, to families and especially to the young; it is particularly to them that we have the courage to propose Salesian consecrated life as the following of Jesus in the steps of Don Bosco, not as one possible way among others of personal fulfilment, but as a call from God.

The "*cetera tolle*" makes us ready to leave everything that might prevent us from going to where the most serious needs of the young are to be found: the new frontiers of the Salesian mission. The gospel is good news for the poor and needs to be proclaimed by poor people. The most compelling needs of the young are their material forms of poverty but also those that are affective, cultural, spiritual; these call us to a radical availability and to put to one side every-

thing else. The different forms of poverty of the young require us also to be at one with them, to share with them a simple and poor life, to put at their disposal the resources we have.

The challenges of post-modernity call us to overcome the fragmentation of our life and of our culture. For this reason the theme of the GC26 ought to help us to live the "grace of unity," in other words, to accept the gift of the unification of our lives, to take on board Don Bosco's programme of spiritual and pastoral life as the criterion of unity, to translate it in practical terms in our personal and community choices and in those of the Province, the Region and the Congregation.

Method of discernment

As had already happened at the GC25, for the study of the key issues GC26 adopted the method of discernment. Making use of a method already tried, one that is also used for the personal plan of life and the community plan of life, facilitated the work, but above all helped in the appreciation of the potential of discernment itself. This enabled us to follow a sure path and to offer a development of the Chapter theme that was forward-planning and not only doctrinal.

In *God's call*, by means of a process of discernment, in each key issue, the urgent appeals and the priorities were identified. Therefore, the call does not describe exhaustively all the demands linked to an issue, but only the priority ones; the process of discernment led us to make choices. To discern is precisely to distinguish what is fundamental from what is secondary at a certain time, and consequently to make choices.

For example, in order to start afresh from Don Bosco the GC26 identified and proposed three main pathways: returning to him, returning to the young, strengthening charismatic identity and revitalising apostolic passion. Similarly, in order to respond to the urgent need for evangelisation, the Chapter chose these priorities: taking care of the Salesian community in such a way that it is evangelised and evangelising, making the proposal of Jesus Christ central, giving

depth to the relationship between education and evangelisation, paying attention to the regional contexts. The same method was then followed in the other key issues.

In the analysis of the *situation* the process of discernment leads us to identify the positive aspects, the signs of hope, the resources, but also the difficulties, the hesitations, the challenges, with regard to the fundamental choices identified in the call. From this there arises an overview of the issues that concentrates on the identification of priorities; in this way a picture emerges of light and shade, which immediately leads us look for the most appropriate things to be done.

In the *guidelines for action*, for each key issue we find something new: at the beginning, the processes required for change are indicated. That is, the situations to be dealt with are listed and the goal towards which the guidelines for actions should lead; it is a matter of passing from a state of weakness to a new approach to life. They are processes for a conversion in ways of thinking and a change of structures; they are indications of our exodus and our passover.

Seventeen guidelines for action are presented; but in reality these form five major themes with an indication of the practical ways of implementing them. In fact, basically, it is a question of undertaking the following tasks: starting afresh from Don Bosco, responding to the urgent need for evangelisation, having the courage to propose to young people the Salesian consecrated vocation, giving a credible witness of evangelical poverty and a simple life, venturing out onto the new frontiers of the Salesian mission.

The guidelines for action are made more specific through particular interventions. These are given to different subjects. It should be noted that each one does not have to do everything, specific contributions are requested from the different subjects. With everyone's contribution, the guidelines for action can become something practical; each one is invited to play his part. This is the importance of different subjects being involved.

The people involved

The GC26 will be able to bring about the desired changes in the life of the Congregation so that they become reality therefore, only if there are people who take on the mentality and guidelines with generosity and in a responsible manner. The fact that there are a number of subjects involved ensures effective action.

The GC26 addresses first of all the *Salesian*. After the 23rd, 24th and 25th General Chapters which focused on the local Salesian community, the GC26 intends to put at the centre of attention the individual confrere. It is he who has received from God the gift of the Salesian vocation; it is he who is called to respond to that gift with creative fidelity and to take up Don Bosco's spiritual and pastoral programme of "da mihi animas, cetera tolle".

The GC26 intends to revitalise in the heart of each confrere the apostolic passion and to offer him a role characterised by charismatic identity; in this way he can be Don Bosco for the young people of today. He is called to have an intense and profound spiritual life, to live in a joyful family spirit, to be with the young, to be daring in evangelisation, to go out to the frontiers of our mission, to live in the way of the poor, to involve the laity, families and the young people themselves in pastoral zeal, to propose to young people Salesian consecrated life, to love Don Bosco and make him known.

GC26 then directly issues a challenge to each *community*. In fact in the guidelines for action there are almost always interventions proposed to the community, for it to take up. In particular, the community takes the initiative for evangelisation, takes care of vocations to Salesian consecrated life and gives its witness to evangelical poverty. The evangelised community is called to be evangelising; the witness it gives is the first vocational invitation; its life lived in simplicity and austerity shows its love for poverty; it goes out among poor young people with daring; in the place where it lives it reproduces with the young the Valdocco experience.

In this way the GC26 asks the Salesian community to continue those processes that the GC25 set in motion, once again inviting it to focus

on consistency in quantity and quality. In the community the confrere grows in his following of Christ and makes the gift of himself to God for the young. He is called to assume personally the new demands of his vocation; at the same time the community by living its own life to the full fosters his ongoing formation.

The GC26 also indicates *other subjects*: the Province, the Region, the Rector Major with the General Council. Giving due weight to subsidiarity, each one carries out his tasks and all cooperate in the responding to the same call and putting into practice the same guidelines for action. Without question action cannot be limited to these subjects. At once there comes into play the co-involvement and the active role of the young, the laity and families, and hence of the educative pastoral community. Likewise it is unthinkable to live and to act without reference to the Salesian Family and without links with the surrounding area and with the local Church.

The Spirit of the GC26

The General Chapter was an unforgettable event, one that will soon become a chronicle to be narrated especially by those who lived it. It has also been translated into a fine document, which, however, would run the risk of remaining a “dead letter” without a spirit to animate it. The GC26 therefore is also a spirit; thus we need to recognise what the spirit of GC26 is.

Just as the “spirit of the Second Vatican Council” is alive and active, we can also say that there is a “spirit of the GC26” that needs to be welcomed. It is made up of the passion that burned in the heart of Don Bosco and drove him to seek the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It guided the Assembly in the process of discernment and in the drawing up of the document and it will see to it that the text of the Chapter is transformed into life, vitality and vivacity for each confrere, for the communities, the Provinces, the Regions and the whole Congregation.

It is the Spirit of Christ who animates and vivifies. The spirit of the GC26 is a gift of the Spirit of the Risen Lord to our Congregation.

He has poured out his gifts abundantly on all of us with a renewed Pentecost. He opens the mind of each confrere and warms his heart; in this way He inflames him with a renewed passion that will give abundant fruits. In this way the GC26 is not only an event of historical record nor just a document, but becomes part of the life story of each one of us and of the Congregation.

Deliberations regarding the Constitutions and Regulations

The General Chapter also produced some deliberations regarding the Constitutions and the General Regulations and the government of the Congregation. Some of them refer to central government and to the Regions, others to the relationship between the Salesian community and the work, and to the local economy, others again to our institutions of higher education.

In particular I mention the guideline regarding the so-called "Departments for the Salesian mission". The Chapter expressed the need for greater collaboration and for unification in the organisation and the implementation of the Salesian mission. I encourage the Provinces to bear in mind this sensitivity and to draw inspiration from it in the animation of the Province.

To me it seems important also to draw attention to the guideline regarding the three Regions of Europe. Taking into consideration the cultural processes of the unification of Europe, the experiences of collaboration in progress and the re-structuring of the Provinces, it is necessary to intensify the forms of coordination, to encourage synergy, to overcome a view from the perspective of a single Region, and therefore have a European outlook.

I also consider of interest the deliberation expressed concerning the relationship between the Salesian community and the work. The guideline offered will help in understanding better, also from the institutional and juridical points of view, the action taken by the GC25 which asked that the Salesian community and the educative pastoral community should be considered two genuine subjects.

The General Chapter is now handed over to the whole Congregation.

Through the Provincial Chapters, the Provinces and Vice Provinces had already produced their guidelines for courses of action, identifying objectives, procedures and interventions. Now with the deliberations of the GC26 they are called upon to integrate the work already done, with reference to the individual Salesian, to the local communities and to the community of the Province.

We entrust ourselves to Mary Help of Christians. Through her motherly intervention, to contribute to the salvation of youth, the Holy Spirit raised up Don Bosco (cf. C. 1). She was his guide in the carrying out of his mission to youth. «She has done everything». She is our Mother and Teacher. From her we learn docility to the Holy Spirit and the depth of the spiritual life, that is the root of the fruitfulness of our mission. To her we recommend the challenges of evangelisation, vocations to Salesian consecrated life, and poor young people. May Mary Our Help intercede for us.

Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

Rome, 11 May 2008
Solemnity of Pentecost

**«DA MIHI ANIMAS,
CETERA TOLLE»**



INTRODUCTION

*I have promised God
that I will give of myself
to my last breath for my poor boys*
(Biographical Memoirs XVIII, 216)

Don Bosco's passion for the salvation of youth is our most precious heritage. The 26th General Chapter set itself the task of reviving it in each Salesian by putting the famous motto of our Father and Founder, *Da mihi animas cetera tolle*, at the centre of reflection of the communities and provinces. Thus began a process of interior renewal and reflection which emerged through the contributions which came to the Chapter Assembly as a point of departure for its work.

Pilgrims to the places of Don Bosco, we have seen from the beginning that the *Da mihi animas cetera tolle* gathers up the charismatic experience of our origins and the witness of so many confrères of yesterday and today. It questions our capacity to be Don Bosco in our time and invites us to be enthusiasts for his project of holiness, joyful and credible witnesses of the Salesian spirit, enamoured of God and consecrated to the young "until our last breath". Thus we find ourselves at the source of consecrated life and at the heart of the mission, because the mystical and ascetic nature which marks out the Salesian vocation is found concentrated in this motto. This all means for us that we return to Don Bosco and begin afresh with him in order to go out to meet today's young people.

They were with us as principal interlocutors throughout the Chapter, with our lively desire to reveal God's love to them. The youth frontier today is more than ever full of challenges and opportunities; it is there as both attractive and difficult. It is essential that we understand the expectations and needs of the young, appreciate the values they are more sensitive to, and recognise their own potential. We

must take account of the threats and obstacles they need to cope with and overcome in their search for life, the way of freedom, in their experience of love. It is a responsibility which comes from our vocation to accept the challenge of this emergency, and not desert a frontier that belongs to us. Education and evangelisation are the greatest contribution we can offer the young, the Church and society today in the spirit and with the methods and contents of the preventive system.

Accepting the invitation of the Rector Major in his letter of convocation, we have spelled out "starting afresh from Don Bosco" following four themes: the urgency of evangelisation, the need for vocation ministry, evangelical poverty and the new frontiers. It is not a case of separate themes, but of elements built into our Father and Founder's programme of spiritual and apostolic life. They are elements of great relevance for today, from which come concrete and demanding tasks of renewal. They are our priorities for this time.

We have identified them by putting ourselves in harmony with the Church and by listening to the Congregation, paying attention to the different regional contexts, noting the more lively and prophetic testimonies, facing up to new forms of poverty and the challenges which evangelisation poses for the entire Church, both in countries of ancient Christian tradition and in mission countries. Our own time in discussion together has helped us a great deal, both the debates in the *aula* and the work in commissions; but more helpful still has been the atmosphere of prayer and fellowship which has marked our time together, and, especially, the authoritative word of the Holy Father Benedict XVI.

Thus we have arrived at drawing up the text which we present now, as a reminder of our experience and a sharing of the effort we made to decipher and interpret the signs of the times. In it you will find the core themes divided into:

- *God's call*: looking at both Don Bosco and the young, we have carried out a work of discernment to discover what God wants from us today;
- *Situation*: we have taken what the confrères offered as the fruit of their research and the telling of their experience, and we have

identified both the positive and the problematic elements, aware that God speaks to us through history;

- *Guidelines for action*: introduced by some points which encourage a change of mentality and structures, these identify in summary fashion the main priorities the Congregation intends to deal with over the next six years; they are divided into actions which touch the individual Salesian, the community, the province, the region and central government, offering pointers to be taken up and made concrete in the various contexts.

The fruit of our work now comes into the confrères' hands and becomes an invitation to renewal and to fidelity to Don Bosco and, through him, to God and the young. We have as stimulus and encouragement our confrères, the young, the laity and other members of the Salesian Family who have given witness through their holiness to the beauty of our project of life, the fruitfulness of the Salesian spirit and the spiritual strength of the *Da mihi animas cetera tolle*.

The years to come will be a time of grace for us Salesians. The 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation in 2009, the centenary of the death of Blessed Michael Rua in 2010 and the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth in 2015 make the coming years an extraordinary time. We will have a chance to recall to mind and more deeply understand the history of our charismatic experience, in order to identify ourselves with it and live it with the passion and radical nature of the *Da mihi animas cetera tolle*, and to offer and share it joyfully and with prophetic capacity. We have before us a favourable time for returning to Don Bosco and starting afresh with him and like him, passionate for God and the young, docile and attentive to the Spirit, trusting in the presence of the Help of Christians. It is a journey and grace we would like to share with all members of the Salesian Family.

The Confrères
of the 26th General Chapter

STARTING AFRESH FROM DON BOSCO

"Keep doing all the things that you learnt from me and have been taught by me and have heard or seen that I do" (Phil 4:9)

GOD'S CALL

"The Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher. We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace. He was deeply human, rich in the qualities of his people, open to the realities of this earth; and he was just as deeply the man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and living "as seeing him who was invisible". These two aspects combined to create a closely-knit life project, the service of the young. He realized his aim with firmness, constancy and the sensitivity of a generous heart, in the midst of difficulties and fatigue. "He took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young. Truly the only concern of his heart was for souls". (C. 21)

1 Return to Don Bosco

Listening to the Spirit we feel called to return to Don Bosco as our sure guide in following Christ with a burning passion for God and for the young, especially the poorest of them.

To return to Don Bosco means loving him, studying him, imitating him, invoking him and making him known. It also means applying oneself to getting to know his story and to a study of the origins of the Congregation, constantly listening to the expectations of the young and the challenges of today's culture. The wealth of sources and Salesian studies now available to us allow us to more deeply understand the motivations which led him to certain choices. These also help us to appreciate the goals and projects which gradually became clearer through his activity, the original synthesis of pedagogy and

pastoral ministry which he achieved by taking St Francis de Sales as his inspiration. These opportunities challenge us particularly to discover the rich humanity that immediately made him a friend to the young, and the profound spirituality which motivated him daily to dedicate his life *to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls*.

To return to Don Bosco also entails grasping more deeply the many ways of conveying the charism in the cultural contexts of various countries and availing of the contribution of the vital experience of so many generations of Salesians, among whom some luminous examples of holiness stand out. This enables confrères in every Region to rediscover the wealth of the tradition they have received and to draw inspiration from it for an authentic inculturation of the charism.

2 Return to the young

To return to Don Bosco means “being in the playground”, that is being present with the young, especially the poorest of them, in order to discover the presence of God in them and invite them to be open to his mystery of love. Don Bosco returns among the youth of today through the witness and action of a community which lives his spirit, and which is animated by the same apostolic passion. He recommends that each Salesian joyfully encounters the young in their daily lives, pledging himself to listen to their pleas, to know their world, encourage them to take the lead, to reawaken their sense of God and offer them ways to holiness found in Salesian spirituality. It is Don Bosco who asks us once again to face up bravely to the challenges of the young and give a courageous response to the crisis of education in our time, rallying a vast movement of forces on behalf of youth.

In his dream at nine years of age Don Bosco received Mary as his mother and teacher. He let himself be guided by her in his mission to the young. This is why we too feel that she is present in our Houses and propose her to the young as a spiritual model and help as they grow up.

3 Charismatic identity and apostolic passion

By studying Don Bosco's spiritual journey and re-living his apostolic passion today, we feel called to let the fascination of his charism shine forth, show its beauty and communicate the power of its attraction. This urges us to developing a visible and credible witness to our vocation, a radical following of Christ, a strong sense of belonging to the Church, the Congregation and the Salesian Family, a clear perception of our spiritual and pastoral identity. Without such a charismatic, riveting and all-involving proposal, the process of vocational identification is difficult.

Each Salesian is called to contemplate the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd and Apostle of the Father, and to follow him, according to Don Bosco's example, in an obedient, poor and chaste style of life. In this manner he will dedicate himself generously to the young, live his vocation in the community joyfully and thus find his way to holiness.

Don Bosco, who handed over the Constitutions to Fr John Cagliero before the latter's departure for Patagonia, indicated to us the way we should make a "fair copy" of the Congregation for today: by being faithful to him through a convinced observance of our Rule of life. Furthermore, the cross which is given to us at our perpetual profession invites us, through the images it bears, to spend our lives with the young and for the young until our dying breath, taking up Don Bosco's invitation: *work out how to make yourself loved.*

SITUATION

4 Return to Don Bosco

The figure of Don Bosco is ever attractive and relevant. Many confrères desire to know him better and imitate him in their lives. One sign of this is the growing readiness to take part in formation opportunities which call to mind the origins of the

charism. The young and lay people as well are involved in this renewed interest.

The publication of new Salesian studies and critical editions of historical sources has offered a support for a deeper understanding of our spiritual and apostolic experience. In order to avoid a merely affective or nostalgic understanding, we recognise the need to throw more light on Don Bosco's mystical experience and to study the spiritual and pedagogical wealth of our tradition, paying particular attention to putting the Preventive System into practice and inculturating it.

There are numerous well-qualified expressions of esteem for and recognition of the educative service we carry out in difficult contexts and for young people at risk. The unavoidable life-questions of so many youngsters compel us to find adequate responses. They convince us of the effectiveness and relevance of the Salesian charism in today's world.

5 Return to the young

Confrères and communities are generously dedicated to educative and pastoral service. They carry out intensive work for disadvantaged young people, the poor, the working classes through a variety of works and initiatives. Faced with situations of an educative emergency, we accept the challenge and are often able to discover the resources and ways to offer an adequate response.

The passion of some confrères is contagious, and enthuses many adults who not only collaborate, but share the responsibility, making the life and activity of our educative and pastoral communities possible. We also appreciate the readiness of many young people to be protagonists and to become apostles amongst their own companions, even to the point where vocations to special consecration mature. At times however, the style of management of our works hinders a more direct presence of confrères amongst the young and with the laity. It absorbs all their energies in tasks that could be entrusted to others.

But it must be admitted that for not a few confrères the world of

the young is something difficult and distant, arousing in them fear and the feeling that they are not adequately prepared. A difficulty in understanding language accentuates the cultural alienation that can then result in physical and affective distance.

6 Charismatic identity and apostolic passion

Many confrères are committed to the renewal of spiritual life. This shows itself in the joyful atmosphere of many communities, in the pastoral energy which animates them and in the depth of their prayer life. Many have found the personal and community plan of life helpful for their personal growth. Nor can we overlook the serenity and spirit of faith of so many elderly and sick confrères who offer up their illness for the salvation of the young, and support the community through prayer. Where all this is found one recognizes a happy involvement of adults and young people in the one mission, especially when they have been offered a process of formation.

It is painful to acknowledge, nonetheless, other patterns entering into community life: patterns marked by individualism, ease, a tendency to adopt bourgeois values, rigid approaches, denial of visible indicators of consecrated life. Don Bosco had already put his early Salesians on guard against these dangers.

Activism and over-focusing on efficiency, the lack of a community project, individualism, an insufficient or unbalanced distribution of tasks are all obstacles to prayer, make interior life fragile, bring a chill to our fraternal relationships, and diminish the attention owed to each individual confrère. By weakening the ascetic aspect of the *cetera tolle* we prejudice the apostolic passion which finds its inspiration and expression in the *da mihi animas*.

These lights and shadows in our communities clearly demonstrate the difficulty we experience in our consecrated life combining, as Vatican Council II requested, the *sequela Christi*, the Founder's charism, and the adaptation to the changing conditions of our times (PC 2).

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

7 Processes required for change

In order to face up to the demands of the call and the challenges which arise from the situation, and in order to carry out the guidelines for action which follow, we need to change our mentality and modify our structures, moving from:

- a superficial knowledge of Don Bosco to a serious and committed study of the history, pedagogy, ministry and spirituality of our Father and Founder, and of the reflection of the Congregation;
- a ministry focused on activities to be carried out to a ministry more attentive to encountering the young where they are to be found;
- a routine practice in our spiritual life and pastoral work to living the “da mihi animas cetera tolle” as daily prayer and passion.

GUIDELINE 1

Return to Don Bosco

- 8** *Be committed to loving, studying, imitating, praying to Don Bosco and making him known in order to start afresh from him.*
- 9** *Let each Salesian*
 - re-awaken in his heart a renewed interest in a deeper, more systematic knowledge of Don Bosco through a serious and persevering study of the Salesian history, spirituality, pedagogy and pastoral ministry, and of the Preventive System to put it into action;
 - read and meditate frequently on the Constitutions - “Don Bosco’s will and testament” (C. 196);
 - renew his personal devotion to Don Bosco in order to share his passion for God and for the young.

10 *Let each community*

- make reference to the Constitutions in daily life: use them regularly in community meetings, especially at times of discernment; choose appropriate moments for reading and commenting on them; offer occasions for the review of life;
- practise *lectio divina* with Salesian sensitivity, e.g. by making reference to texts belonging to our tradition and the situation of those for whom we work;
- include specific occasions within the community plan for the formation and updating in Salesianity of confrères as well as of lay people who share responsibility for the mission;
- update the Salesian section in the House library;

11 *Let each province*

- encourage the updating of confrères, lay people who share responsibility with us, and members of the Salesian Family, in Salesian studies; promote Retreats which refer to sources of the charism in addition to the Word of God; occasionally offer pilgrimages to the Salesian places of origin;
- take advantage of the proximate preparation for perpetual profession as a privileged occasion for a deeper understanding of themes in Salesianity and for a re-reading of the Constitutions;
- take care to send some confrères to attend specialist courses in Salesianity at the UPS or at other Centres, in view of the animation of the Province and the requirements of formation;
- commit itself to making Don Bosco known through the use of media;
- study and deepen its understanding of the history of the Salesian charism in its own cultural context.

12 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- invest adequate personnel resources in the UPS, the Salesian Historical Institute and other Centres dedicated to the study and the spreading of Salesianity;

- coordinate and organise collaboration among these Centres with a view to a better theological understanding of Don Bosco's spiritual experience to develop his pedagogical and pastoral intuitions and to study the gradual inculturation of the charism in different contexts;
- study the possibility of specific experiences of ongoing formation in the fundamentals of Salesian spirituality, with special attention given to Rectors, in preparation for the bi-centenary of Don Bosco's birth;
- set up an international team of confrères to provide for the animation of the places of origin of the Salesian charism;
- make the most important Salesian texts accessible and available in various languages, as well as in digital form;
- see to the publication and translation of a collection of the principal Salesian sources.

GUIDELINE 2

Return to the young

- 13** *Return to the young, especially the poorest of them, with the heart of Don Bosco.*
- 14** *Let each Salesian*
 - learn to encounter God through the young to whom he is sent (Cf. C. 95);
 - find the time to be present with the young as a friend, educator and witness to God, whatever his role in the community may be;
 - when age, health or other reasons prevent a physical presence among the young, cooperate in the mission to them, through prayer, by showing interest, by offering up his own life.
- 15** *Let each community*
 - renew its understanding and practice of Salesian assistance (cf. (C. 39), by involving lay people who share the responsibility;

- plan some formation meetings as part of the annual community programme, which have a thorough study of the youth situation as a topic;
- welcome young people both for occasions of sharing our life and for meetings which reflect on their situation;
- plan initiatives for going out to meet the young where they live their lives.

16 *Let each province*

- cultivate a constant and more focused attention on how the circumstances of young people are evolving in their own area, in dialogue with civil and ecclesial institutions;
- study the possibility of setting up spirituality centres which offer young people opportunities for prayer, days of recollection and retreats, education in listening to the Word, and sacramental life;

17 *Let each region*

- encourage collaboration between provinces in establishing criteria and norms for behaviour to be followed by confrères and lay people who share responsibility for the Salesian mission in order to guarantee the safety of minors in our centres and to prevent any kind of abuse, in fulfilment of what was said in GC 25, 36.

18 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- enhance the Congregation's presence in international institutions which are concerned with youth policies.

GUIDELINE 3

Charismatic identity and apostolic passion

19 *Rediscover the significance of the **Da mihi animas cetera tolle** as a programme of spiritual and pastoral life.*

20 *Let each Salesian*

- ask God each day for the grace of unity between contem-

plation and apostolic activity and commit himself to realising it, thus avoiding the risk of fragmented and superficial activity;

- take personal responsibility for his own spiritual and pastoral formation in order to mature authentically in his vocation;
- renew or strengthen the practice of being accompanied by a spiritual director, looking at Don Bosco's experience;
- be ready to share his own faith journey, richness of Salesian spirituality and apostolic activity with his confrères, with lay people who share responsibility with us, with the members of the Salesian Family and with the young.

21 *Let each community*

- organise its daily rhythms of life in such a way as to enable each confrère to take part in community occasions as well as to be truly present among the young;
- care for the quality of community prayer and liturgical celebrations (cf. Cost 86);
- highlight Salesian feasts as occasions for community formation and transmission of the charism;
- value the service that the Rector, as first in order of responsibility for formation, exercises through the Good Night, conferences, the personal talk, fraternal animation.

22 *Let each province*

- prepare confrères to carry out the role of spiritual guides for the community, giving particular attention to initial formation communities;
- accompany communities in drawing up the community project so as to ensure ongoing formation opportunities for confrères of every age;
- plan formation initiatives to help confrères live a life of resplendent chastity which conveys God's love for each young person and prevents any kind of counter witness and abuse in their regard.

II. THE URGENT NEED FOR EVANGELISATION

*"If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to
boast; it is a duty for me.
Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!"
(1 Cor 9:16)*

GOD'S CALL

"This Society had its beginning in a simple catechism lesson'. For us too evangelising and catechising are the fundamental characteristics of our mission. Like Don Bosco we are called to be educators to the faith at every opportunity. Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery. We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so discover in him and in his Gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men" (C. 34).

23 An evangelised and evangelising community

"The word 'evangelisation' has a very rich meaning. In the broad sense it sums up the Church's entire mission: her whole life in fact consists in accomplishing ... the proclamation and handing on of the Gospel which is 'the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes' (Rm 1:16) and which, in the final analysis, is identified with Christ himself (cf. 1 Cor 1:24). ...In any case, 'to evangelise' does not simply mean to teach a doctrine but to proclaim Jesus Christ by one's words and actions, that is, to make oneself an instrument of his presence and action in the world" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal note on certain aspects of evangelisation*, n.2). We work within the Church, and guided by the Spirit, for the coming of God's Kingdom, "bringing to men

the message of the Gospel, which is closely tied in with the development of the temporal order” (C. 31).

The source of all the work of evangelisation lies in a personal encounter with Christ. This experience is a daily event for us, one which is renewed in our listening to the Word, our participation in the Paschal mystery through the liturgy and the sacraments, in our fraternal sharing and our service of the young.

Mary, the first to welcome and carry the message of salvation, teaches us to create evangelised and evangelising communities. From her we learn that a profound experience of God is at the root of our mission and that the first and principal way to evangelise is our witness of faith. This witness becomes more convincing when we approach the young as friends and accompany them as fathers and teachers, radiating joy and hope. In this manner we pass on what we believe and demonstrate what we proclaim through our lives.

24 Centrality of the proposal of Jesus Christ

We perceive evangelisation as the principal requirement of our mission, aware that the young have a right to have Jesus proclaimed to them as the source of life and promise of happiness now and in eternity. Our “fundamental purpose is that of proposing that everyone should live their human life as Jesus lived it. ...At the centre should be the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel, together with the call to conversion, the acceptance of the faith, their taking their place in the Church; then from this will come faith journeys and forms of catechesis, liturgical life and the witness of charitable work” (Benedict XVI, *Letter to Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major of the Salesians, on the occasion of the General Chapter XXVI*, 1 March 2008, n. 4).

Through the Church the Lord Jesus calls us to carry out a new evangelisation: “new in its zeal, its methods and its expressions” (John Paul II, *Speech to the CELAM Assembly*, 9 March

1983). This entails that we creatively and courageously prepare various appropriate ways of bringing the young to a personal encounter with Christ, so they may grow in the desire to follow him and become apostles of the Gospel and builders of a new world. This emphasis at the heart of every educative intervention of ours is one which we must also communicate to lay people, involving them more and more in pastoral work.

25 Evangelisation and Education

Evangelisation demands that we safeguard both the proclamation in its entirety and the gradual way in which it is offered. Don Bosco gave his attention to both of these so he could offer all young people a deep experience of God, bearing in mind their real circumstances.

In the Salesian tradition we have expressed this relationship in various ways: e.g. “upright citizens and good Christians” or “evangelising by educating and educating by evangelising”. We note the need to continue to reflect on this delicate relationship. In any case we are convinced that evangelisation offers education a model of fully developed humanity and that education, when it succeeds in touching the heart of the young and developing the religious meaning of existence, encourages and accompanies the process of evangelisation: “Without education, in fact, there is no deep and lasting evangelisation; there is no growth or process of maturity; there is no change of mentality or culture” (Benedict XVI, *Letter to Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major of the Salesians, on the occasion of the General Chapter XXVI*, 1 March 2008 n. 4).

This is why, right from the outset, education must draw its inspiration from the Gospel and evangelisation must adapt itself to the evolving circumstances of the young person. Only thus can the young person discover in Christ his or her true identity and grow to full maturity; only thus can the Gospel deeply touch his or her heart, heal it from evil and open it up to a free and personal faith.

Aware that we are called to educate and evangelise also in ways of thinking, languages, customs and institutions, we commit ourselves to fostering dialogue between faith, culture and religions. This helps the Gospel throw light on the great challenges which human beings and society face from epoch-making changes, and transform the world through the leaven of the Kingdom.

26 Evangelisation in various contexts

The urgent need for proclaiming the Risen Lord impels us to confront situations that resonate in us as both an appeal and a concern: peoples not yet evangelised, the secularism which threatens lands which are of ancient Christian tradition, the phenomenon of migration, new and dramatic forms of poverty and violence, the spread of movements and sects. We also feel called to respond to certain opportunities such as ecumenical, inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, the new sensitivity for peace, safeguarding human rights and protecting the environment and all creation, the many expressions of solidarity and voluntary movements that are becoming more widespread throughout the world.

These elements, recognised in the Apostolic Exhortations which followed the Continental Synods, are challenges for the entire Church and require us to find new ways for proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ while respecting and appreciating local cultures. From this comes the need for each of our Regions and Provinces to make the effort to identify the most suitable ways to carry out our common mission in the specific circumstances of each context.

SITUATION

27 An evangelised and evangelising community

Many confrères intensely live their passion for God and the young. This is shown through a desire for a more prophetic life of consecration, marked by spiritual depth, sincere fra-

ternal community life, and apostolic courage. In this manner, living and working together, they feel they can give an authentic and joyful witness of the charism and attract the young to seriously consider the Christian way of life being offered them and consecrated life itself.

On the other hand we come across spiritual superficiality, frenetic activity, a bourgeois life style, weak evangelical witness, a half-hearted approach to the mission. This translates into awkwardness in bringing out our proper identity as consecrated persons, and into apostolic timidity. The complexity of certain works sometimes risks absorbing confrères' energies in managerial tasks, weakening their primary role as educators and evangelisers.

28 The centrality of proposing Jesus Christ

The education of the young to faith, re-launched by GC 23, sees the generous commitment of many confrères who offer experiences and differentiated courses adapted to the age, the various circumstances of the young and cultural situations. Despite this we note that the invitation to draw up programmes and processes for young people to encounter the Lord Jesus has not been fully taken up.

Our initiatives are not always clearly directed to education to the faith. Processes of catechesis are weak and in many cases do not engender in young people a convinced and regular sacramental life, a true sense of belonging to the Church and courageous apostolic involvement. The lack of structure and continuity, the result of insufficient reflection and study, has sometimes led to a ministry more of initiatives and events than of processes. In other cases what we have offered has not been sufficiently part of the programmes of the local Church.

In many contexts a certain difficulty is felt due to the distance of young people from the faith, resistance brought about by a secularist mentality widespread amongst families, a misconceived respect for non-Christian religious traditions, a lack of courage on the part of educators.

29 Evangelisation and education

We perceive that the Salesian charism is a lively part of local Churches and esteemed by them. Don Bosco's Preventive System is more relevant than it ever was and people everywhere find it very attractive. Many young people are open to the search for meaning in life and ready for a serious and courageous educative and Christian proposal. There is no shortage of young people ready to be involved personally in evangelising their peers, especially by belonging to groups. Others on the other hand, victims of the lack of attention today's society has given to education, need our help to achieve an awareness of the deep questions they carry within.

We note the growing number of lay people and members of the Salesian Family who share responsibility not only in organisational matters, but also take up pastoral activity in our works and where they live. We are often not adequately concerned about offering them a systematic formation.

We are heirs to a strong tradition in the field of research and of publishing, in the area of catechetics and youth ministry. We note nevertheless the danger of blunting our efforts given the difficulty of finding and preparing specialised personnel and coordinating our initiatives. We also perceive the difficulty in being present in a significant way in the dialogue between faith, culture and religions which is a fundamental challenge for our mission today.

We have improved our institutes of higher education in their response to the needs of the young for academic and professional preparation. These centres are attended by students of diverse nationality, culture and creed. This brings with it the duty of ensuring not only the quality of teaching and research, but also that of the Salesian identity and the proposal of evangelisation.

30 Evangelisation in different contexts

We encounter settings open to the Gospel in areas recently evangelised. The location of our centres among the people al-

lows contact with many people and offers the possibility of working in the service of the faith in many ways. *Missio ad gentes*, an essential part of our charism, continues to engender enthusiasm in many confrères who offer themselves for the mission and to involve many young people in volunteer projects. We are committed to getting to know and understand the cultures, languages, religions and local traditions in order to inculturate the Gospel. In some developing countries there are communities exercising a prophetic role in the field of social justice.

In countries of ancient Christian tradition there are expressions of popular religiosity which are a treasure for transmitting the faith and which deserve to be better fostered, promoted and where necessary purified. In the western world we see a widespread crisis of the culture inspired by Christian values, to the point where the Church is no longer an authoritative point of reference for many people and institutions. This gives rise to a particular difficulty in proposing the Gospel and educating to the faith.

Many of our works find themselves operating in a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural context which poses new challenges to and offers new opportunities for evangelisation. Among these, our relationship with Islam is of particular note, since it demands that we set out adequate strategies for dialogue and proclamation. Where an explicit or immediate proclamation of Jesus Christ is not possible, our presence as Christian educators is a prophetic sign and plants a precious seed of evangelisation.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

31 Processes required for change

In order to face up to the demands of the call and the challenges which arise from the situation and to carry out the guidelines for action which follow, we need to change our mentality and modify our structures, moving from:

- a mentality that favours roles of direct management to one that favours an evangelising presence among the young;
- an evangelisation made up of events lacking continuity to a systematic and integrated evangelisation programme
- an individualist mentality to a communal style which involves the young, families and lay people in proclaiming Jesus Christ;
- an attitude of pastoral self-sufficiency to one of sharing in planning by local Churches;
- considering the effectiveness of our presence in terms of the esteem of others, to understanding it in terms of fidelity to the Gospel;
- a mentality of cultural superiority to one of positive acceptance of cultures different from our own;
- considering the Salesian Family only as a chance to meet, get to know, and exchange experiences, to a commitment to making it a true apostolic movement on behalf of the young;
- a model of evangelisation aimed only at transformation of the person to an evangelisation which also looks to transforming social and political structures.

GUIDELINE 4

An evangelised and evangelising community

32 *Put encounter with Christ in the Word and the Eucharist at the centre of our communities, in order to be authentic disciples and credible apostles.*

33 *Let the Salesian*

- make a personal plan of life which offers the necessary time for individual and community prayer, give attention to meditation on God's Word, make good use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and give pride of place to the daily Eucharist.

34 *Let the community*

- make a community plan of life which provides opportune initiatives to encourage the centrality of the Word of God and Eucharist;
- involve elderly confrères in the work of evangelisation, where they can, so as to contribute through their experience and wisdom, also as spiritual directors and confessors.

35 *Let the province*

- offer good renewal programmes and appropriate materials, seeing to the quality of Retreats, Monthly Recollections and lectio divina;
- ensure adequate formation accompaniment for those in practical training and confrères in their quinquennium.

GUIDELINE 5

Centrality of the proposal of Jesus Christ

36 *Propose to the young with joy and courage that they live their lives in the way Jesus Christ lived his.*

37 *Let the Salesian*

- apply himself to a systematic and spiritual study of the Word of God in order to assimilate it and make Jesus the inspiration, criterion and purpose of every educative and pastoral activity;
- give witness to his own faith, saying what effect the meeting with Christ has had in his life;
- see to his own updating in areas of study which permit a critical interpretation of our times and an effective way of proposing the faith.

38 *Let the community*

- put into its pastoral and educative plan programmes for proclamation, catechesis and education to the faith which are appropriate for those to whom they are addressed and for their contexts;

- offer lay people in the pastoral and educative community who have made an option for Christ, a formation which helps them be educators of the faith;
- educate the young to personal prayer and encourage a style of celebration which communicates an authentic experience of joyful and lively encounter with the Lord;
- frequently offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an essential step along the road to conversion, and the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life;
- foster youth groups as a place where the young can feel that they are active agents in their own journey of faith and service to their brothers and sisters.

39 *Let the province*

- review its pastoral and educative plan with a view to new evangelisation, selecting the most appropriate means for bringing the Gospel to settings and situations which present new challenges;
- strengthen the preparation of confrères and lay people who share responsibility with us, in the area of pastoral disciplines: youth ministry, catechetics, liturgy, missiology and social communication.

40 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- encourage, through the Formation Department, a more consistent theological and pastoral preparation in curricula for specific formation.

GUIDELINE 6

Evangelisation and education

41 *See to a more effective integration, in each setting, of education and evangelisation, following the logic of the Preventive System.*

42 *Let the Salesian*

- appreciate that a direct and warm relationship with each young person is a privileged form of witness and proclamation.

43 *Let the community*

- examine its pastoral activity in order to check that it is safeguarding both the proclamation in its entirety and the gradual way in which it is offered, following the logic of its contents and processes;
- see to the renewal of catechesis and be open to new forms of accompaniment of children, older youth and adults in the process of Christian Initiation;
- see to the formation of a moral conscience and educate young people to social and political involvement following the inspiration of the social teaching of the Church;
- encourage opportune reflection on the relationship between culture, faith and religions so that the Gospel may resonate as part of the great questions which impinge all areas of human awareness today.

44 *Let the province*

- ensure that all its works, through educative activity, carry out a real work of evangelisation;
- prepare personnel and foster formation initiatives which help in making good use of social communication for education and evangelisation;
- accompany and assess the quality of teaching of religion and catechetics in our settings.

45 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- encourage, through the competent Departments, a deeper understanding of the relationship between evangelisation and education in order to put the Preventive System into practice, and adapt the frame of reference for youth ministry to changing cultural circumstances;
- encourage reflection, through the Youth Ministry Department, on the contribution which the oratory criterion (cf. C. 40) can offer to the renewal of catechesis which is happening in the Church.

GUIDELINE 7

Evangelisation in various contexts

46 *Inculturate the process of evangelisation in order to give a response to challenges in regional contexts.*

47 *Let the Salesian*

- learn the languages of the people with whom he works with a view to guaranteeing a truly inculturated evangelisation.

49 *Let the community*

- study and plan interventions, methods and strategies for the evangelisation of the young in their own context, in relationship to culture and the choices made by local Churches;
- form Christian young people and adults in a multi-religious context to be disciple missionaries while respecting other religious traditions.

49 *Let each province*

- accompany each community in planning specific responses to challenges in the context in which it is operating;
- offer formation initiatives to confrères and lay people on the theme of inculturation of the faith;
- foster the missionary spirit, generously place at the Rector Major's disposal Salesian personnel for *missio ad gentes*, and encourage missionary vocations among lay people and families;
- educate confrères in initial formation to a missionary sensitivity and to dialogue with different cultural and religious traditions.

50 *Let the region*

- animate the provinces so they can effectively promote contextualised evangelisation, following the directions

of Episcopal Conferences and Continental Synods and by sharing the more significant experiences.

51 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- foster experiences of inter cultural communities as a sign of communion and fraternal life and as a help to evangelisation in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic contexts;
- accompany evangelising and educational activity on behalf of the young and families of other religions, by offering appropriate directions provided by the Departments for the Salesian mission.



III. NEED FOR VOCATION MINISTRY

*"Look around you, look at the fields.
Already they are white, ready for harvest" (Jn 4:35)*

GOD'S CALL

"To meet the needs of his people the Lord continually calls some to follow him, and enriches them with a variety of gifts in the service of the Kingdom. We are convinced that many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation. We help them to discover, accept and develop the gift of a lay, consecrated or priestly vocation, for the benefit of the whole Church and of the Salesian Family. With equal zeal we nurture adult vocations" (C. 28).

52 Witness as the first vocational invitation

We gratefully recognise that the Salesian vocation is a grace we have received from God. He has called us to live by following the obedient, poor and chaste Christ, in a fraternal community with a mission to the young, based on Don Bosco's example. The generosity of confrères and the example of communities who live the primacy of God, the family spirit and dedication to the mission, are the first and most beautiful vocational invitation we can offer the young.

We know that a young person discovers the call to consecrated Salesian life when he encounters a community that is significant to him, or a model with which to identify, an experience of spiritual life and apostolic commitment, the help of a guide who accompanies him in his choice of Christ and gift of himself.

The lack of vocations experienced by some provinces, while it obliges us to duly assess the situation, challenges us to grow

in the authenticity of our life and in our ability to invite. We are in fact convinced that God continues to call many young people to service of the Kingdom and that there are various factors which can encourage their response.

53 Apostolic vocations

Today we feel more strongly than ever the challenge of creating a vocational culture in every setting, such that young people may discover life as a call and that all Salesian ministry may be truly vocational. This requires that we help young people overcome an individualist mindset and the culture of self-fulfilment which urges them to plan their future without heeding God; it also requires us to involve and form families and lay people.

There has to be a particular effort put into engendering apostolic passion amongst the young. Like Don Bosco we are called to encourage them to be apostles among their own companions, taking on various kinds of ecclesial and social service, being involved in missionary projects. To encourage a vocational option for apostolic commitment, these young people should be offered a more intensive spiritual life and a more personal and systematic accompaniment.

This is fertile ground where families capable of authentic witness can flourish, as well as committed lay people at every level of Church and society. Vocations to consecrated life and to ministry can also flourish.

54 Accompaniment of candidates to Salesian consecrated life

Don Bosco, while working with tireless generosity in fostering many kinds of vocation in the Church, also called young men to stay with him permanently. For us too, proposing the Salesian consecrated vocation to young people is part of our fidelity to God for the gift we have received. It is what drives

our desire to share the joy of following the Lord Jesus, staying with Don Bosco, in order to give hope to many other young people of the whole world.

Fostering consecrated vocations demands certain fundamental choices: constant prayer, explicit proclamation, courageous invitation, careful discernment, personalised accompaniment. We should be committed to daily prayer in our communities and involve young people, families, lay people, Salesian Family groups. Proclamation entails making good use of the many opportunities which present themselves over the course of the liturgical year. Inviting and discerning require a warm closeness which gives rise to confidence and allows us to recognise the signs of a vocation which a young person can show. Accompaniment requires us to help the young intensify their spiritual life, take part in suitable forms of apostolate, have an experience of community, get to know the Congregation, assess their motivations and take the necessary steps which lead to a decision.

We recognise the need for each province to have vocational communities or aspirantates which can welcome and accompany the young people who are interested in looking at the possibility of Salesian consecrated life. Then, in vocation ministry the essential contribution of families should be taken into account in various ways.

55 The two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation

Don Bosco wanted the Congregation to be distinguished for the complementary presence of lay Salesians and ordained Salesian ministers. We are therefore called to give priority and visibility to the unity of our apostolic consecration, even though it takes two different forms. We can do this by strengthening the primacy of God and the radical following of Christ as the basis of our life.

Salesian apostolic consecration lends a particular educative flavour to our way of living the ordained ministry, putting proclamation of the Word, liturgical celebration and guidance

of the community at the service of the growth of young people; this is the specific contribution we should offer pastoral and educative communities and local Churches.

The same consecration marks out the Salesian Brother, making him a full time educator and evangeliser, capable of bringing, in all educative and pastoral areas, the values of his lay state and his being close to the young and the realities of work. (cf. C. 45)

Aware that the Congregation would put its identity at risk if it did not preserve this complementarity, we are called to more deeply understand the original Salesian contribution to the ordained ministry and to make greater efforts to foster the vocation of the Salesian Brother.

SITUATION

56 Witness as the first vocational invitation

Numerous confrères live their vocation joyfully and are involved in creating an atmosphere which encourages the emergence of vocations. The attitude of many Salesians who welcome young people with simple, meaningful gestures such as a warm greeting, dealing with them in a friendly way, offering an animating presence, becomes a vocational witness. The example of a confrère who is serene and active in old age and the patient contribution of confrères who are sick, who know how to give their lives "new apostolic significance" (C. 53), can communicate to the young the beauty of a life that is dedicated and still fruitful.

The lack of vocations has sensitised communities and confrères to reflect on the ways of carrying out vocation ministry today. Many communities pray for vocations, invite in the young, lay people, families, using various forms of prayer and celebration.

The example of our lives, on the other hand, does not always manifest the centrality of God and a life style inspired by the Beati-

tudes. We are not ready, sometimes, to welcome young people into our communities. We also find difficulty in guaranteeing an educative and spiritual accompaniment. Pastoral individualism weakens the value of living and working together and renders less credible the invitation to be a part of our fraternal life. Ways of behaving which are not consistent with consecrated life, particularly with the vow of chastity, and those who leave the Congregation, impact negatively on the choices young people make. The widespread culture of the media, too, which often trivialises affectivity and offers a distorted image of the consecrated person, is an obstacle to identifying with the consecrated vocation.

57 Apostolic vocations

Numerous communities are committed to giving importance to the vocational dimension of youth ministry. Despite this, we are aware of the risk of efforts that are improvised and sporadic; we often offer meaningful but isolated experiences, the result of activities which lack coordination between youth and vocation ministry.

The crisis of the family, a widespread relativist and consumerist mentality, the negative influence of media on consciences and behaviour are a strong obstacle to a vocational culture. We have not always sensitised our pastoral and educative communities, at the right moment, to the apostolic and vocational dimension, nor have we always shown that we appreciate shared responsibility with the laity and collaboration with groups in the Salesian Family.

The presence of so many youngsters in our centres is an opportunity for cultivating an educative dialogue, entering into their confidence, helping them to discover God's plan for their life and inviting them to offer the gift of themselves. We do not always know, however, how to enthuse them to be apostles among their own companions, and offer them diversified spiritual paths and service opportunities. As a result we risk leveling out our invitations and not knowing how to engender apostolic vocations, thus undermining the natural context where vocations to special consecration can mature.

58 Accompaniment of candidates to Salesian consecrated life

There are provinces with a well-structured vocation ministry which is shared by the communities. They have set up discernment groups, retreats with a vocational dimension and experiences of voluntary service, communities of invitation and new forms of aspirantate/candidacy. They also use social communication media to facilitate a knowledge of Don Bosco's charism.

The practice of meetings between young confrères and young people discerning a vocation is fairly widespread; this is particularly useful since, through witness of this kind, young people can discover consecrated life as an attractive form of Christian living.

Adolescents and older youth are generous, but they experience difficulty in taking on long-term commitments. The recruitment mentality at times leads to having young candidates to consecrated life whose motivation is fragile. Unfortunately some young men are brought into the formation stages without being sufficiently suitable. Others have a difficult family situation behind them which needs to be understood and integrated in such a way as not to compromise the process of maturing. Vocation ministry is almost exclusively aimed at students, while we overlook young workers.

There are also sometimes difficulties of spiritual accompaniment because of the lack of preparation of Salesians. We still see weaknesses in the organisation of initiatives and proposals either at province or local level. When there is a lack of planned continuity, a change of confrères responsible for vocation ministry can be especially delicate. In some provinces there are no communities for vocational accompaniment.

59 The two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation

Many Salesian priests live their ministry at the service of the young and with an educative style which is faithful to Don Bosco's intuitions. In some cases, however, we encounter an

unspecific pastoral approach and only a half-hearted taking on of our charismatic identity. This invites us to better distinguish the specific formation paths that can be followed.

The Salesian Brother vocation is often not understood, since it is less visible and poorly presented. Among other things, this is the result of it being tied mainly to managerial roles and not directly to youth activities. His role and purpose is not always presented with adequate emphasis in aspirantates, pre-novitiates and novitiates. In certain contexts the prejudice persists that the Salesian priestly vocation is more important than that of the Brother. The reduction of our presence amongst young workers has impacted negatively on proposing this vocation.

Where, on the contrary, we find a significant number of Salesian Brothers who are culturally and professionally qualified and placed in roles of responsibility, this heightens the visibility of the vocation and arouses in young people a desire to follow it. A positive factor has been the introduction in all regions of a specific formation phase for the Salesian Brother.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

60 Processes required for change

In order to face up to the requirements of the call and the challenges which arise from the situation, and in order to carry out the following guidelines, we need to change our mentality and modify our structures, moving from:

- thinking that we are the ones who take the lead in vocation ministry to humbly recognising that we are but mediators of God's action in this regard;
- a vague and occasional vocational invitation to one of focused and attentive planning that creates a vocational culture;
- a vocation ministry which we conduct alone, to projects shared with groups in the Salesian Family and with the local Church;

- setting up vocation ministry as a response to the problem of a lack of vocations to one where we rediscover the joy of helping young people find out God's plan for them;
- a mentality where we delegate vocation ministry to a few people, to one where we involve every confrère, community and the laity;
- a vocation ministry which is separate from youth ministry to one understood and experienced as the very crowning of youth ministry.

GUIDELINE 8

Our witness as the first vocational invitation

61 *Witness with courage and joy to the beauty of a consecrated life dedicated totally to God in the mission to the young.*

62 *Let the Salesian*

- keep alive an awareness of the gift of his own vocation, assuming an attitude of thanksgiving to God;
- be committed to witnessing to a joyful life and sharing the story of his own vocation when opportunity presents itself;
- strengthen fidelity to his vocation by constant recourse to spiritual guidance; let him also, in difficult moments, value the help that can be given by the human sciences;
- pray daily for vocations;
- transform the patience demanded by discomfort and suffering at the time of old age or illness, into a trusting offering of himself on behalf of vocations.

63 *Let the community*

- open its house to the young, especially those who are discerning their vocation, inviting them to share in key moments of community life;
- support confrères in their affective maturing, helping them especially in moments of difficulty;
- carry out a *scrutinium* each year on its witness of life;

- involve young people in occasions of prayer for vocations.

64 *Let the province*

- foster, amongst confrères, a strong sense of belonging in order to witness to the value of living and working together.

GUIDELINE 9

Apostolic vocations

65 *Instil in young people an apostolic involvement on behalf of the Kingdom of God, with the passion of the **da mihi animas cetera tolle**, and encourage their formation.*

66 *Let the Salesian*

- be convinced that each young person has a God-given mission, and accompany him or her in discovering it.

67 *Let the community*

- draw up a proposal for vocation ministry which is appropriate for the context, working with the educative and pastoral community and the Salesian Family, bearing in mind the decisions of the local Church and ensuring adequate financial resources;
- see to a ministry to families which uses encounters, reflection and prayer, so that parents may be open to their children's vocation;
- avail of the apostolic and vocational resources found in groups, voluntary work and missionary animation;
- make use of the opportunities the liturgical year offers for vocation ministry;
- present the idea of the Salesian Cooperator in a convincing way, as an invitation to the lay apostolic vocation.

68 *Let the province*

- draw up a plan for vocation ministry as part of the province's pastoral and educative project;
- ensure the right conditions for the Rector to carry out his role as the primary animator of vocations and strengthen the role of the pastoral coordinator in each work;
- offer experiences of apostolic service to young people, of belonging to groups and volunteer work;
- work with groups in the Salesian Family and the local Church and other institutes of consecrated life in the area of vocation ministry;
- encourage the updating of Salesians and lay people who share responsibility with us in discernment and accompaniment;
- invest adequate financial resources and personnel in vocation promotion initiatives.

GUIDELINE 10

Accompaniment of candidates to the Salesian consecrated life

69 *Make explicit the invitation to Salesian consecrated life and foster new forms of vocational accompaniment and aspirantate/candidacy.*

70 *Let the Salesian*

- learn to recognise the signs of a vocation that young people manifest and have at heart inviting them to Salesian consecrated life;
- be available for spiritual accompaniment and see to his preparation for the task.

71 *Let the community*

- organise vocational groups and gatherings which have a process of discernment and accompaniment;
- invite well-disposed young people to be part of the proj-

ects at Province level regarding vocation discernment for Salesian consecrated life;

- make good use of feast days and regular celebrations of our Saints and anniversaries of professions and ordinations as opportunities for vocation ministry;
- encourage sharing of experiences on ways to accompany young people along their vocational journey.

72 *Let the province*

- study possibilities for new forms of aspirantate/candidacy in order to have one or more communities where vocational accompaniment of young candidates can take place;
- encourage reflection and cooperation between youth ministry and formation;
- offer initiatives for vocation ministry at every level of a person's life, paying attention to affective maturity;
- work with consecrated groups in the Salesian Family to offer vocational invitations to young women as well;
- plan for specific vocation ministry to young migrants belonging to Catholic families or ethnic minorities, and indigenous young people;
- take greater note of the criteria indicated in the Ratio regarding vocation discernment;
- involve young confrères in vocation ministry at local and province level.

73 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- encourage, through the Departments for Youth Ministry and Formation, reflection on new forms of aspirantate/candidacy and on spiritual accompaniment, and offer opportune directions to provinces;
- study, through the Departments of Formation, Youth Ministry and Missions, problems regarding the age of candidates, specific courses for indigenous vocations, the criteria for accepting those who come from other vocational programmes/experiences.

GUIDELINE 11

The two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation

- 74** *Encourage the complementarity and specific nature of the two forms of the one Salesian vocation and take up a renewed commitment on behalf of the Salesian Brother vocation.*
- 75** *Let the Salesian*
- value and foster the uniqueness of the Salesian consecrated vocation in its complementary forms.
- 76** *Let the community*
- accompany ordained confrères in highlighting their priestly ministry through our educative charism, giving preference to pastoral activities which are aimed directly at the young;
 - encourage the presence of Brothers among young people in educative and pastoral roles and not just as organisers and administrators;
 - make known the Salesian Brother vocation, by presenting the more significant models of this vocation.
- 77** *Let the province*
- make the Perpetual Profession ceremony an occasion for understanding better and proposing the complementarity of both forms of the Salesian vocation;
 - involve Salesian Brothers, where possible, in the various services of province animation, especially in vocation ministry and in the provincial formation commission;
 - strengthen the specific formation of the Salesian Brother, something which is happening at regional or inter-regional level.
- 78** *Let the Rector Major with his Council*
- encourage a serious and up-to-date reflection on the complementary and specific nature of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation in the Congregation.

IV. EVANGELICAL POVERTY

"If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (Mt 19:21)

GOD'S CALL

"Don Bosco lived his poverty in detachment of heart and generous service of others; his manner was marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative. Following his example we too live detached from all earthly goods; we participate with a spirit of enterprise in the mission of the Church and in her struggle for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need. The witness of our poverty, lived in a common sharing of our goods, helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing" (C. 73).

79 Personal and community witness

Taking on our human condition, the Lord Jesus chose to be born and to live poorly, entrusted himself totally to the Father and shared the circumstances of life of the poor, proclaiming them to be blessed in that they had benefited from the Good News and were heirs to the Kingdom. He asked some to leave everything to follow him more closely, proclaiming by their lives that God is their true wealth. From this call comes the poverty of the Salesian who expresses his trusting abandonment to the Father, his closeness to and service of the poor, the blessedness of a life filled with love for God and our brothers.

From being a young boy Don Bosco, a man of humble origins, experienced the discomforts but also the values of a poor life. With Mamma Margaret as his teacher he gained a taste for

work and a simple life style, serenity in trials and solidarity with those in need. Placing his total trust in Providence, he decided to live poorly and to spend all his energies for the young to whom God had sent him: "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life" (C. 14). The detachment from everything that makes us insensitive to God and hinders the mission is the deep significance of the *cetera tolle* and is the criterion for evaluating our way of living poverty.

The first manifestation of poverty is the total giving of oneself to God in availability to the needs of the young; this brings with it self-renunciation and putting aside individual projects in order to share those of the community. Aware of Don Bosco's warning about comfort and ease, we are called to live an austere life style, to work tirelessly without giving in to activism, keeping our heart free from attachment to goods and material things. The community in particular feels itself called to seek institutional forms of witness which express a credible and prophetic poverty.

80 Solidarity with the poor

By dint of our vocation, we are called to cultivate an attentive listening to the cry of the poor and announce the Kingdom to them as the basis of true hope and leaven for a new world. This requires the preferential choice for the most needy young people, attention to their needs, sharing their situation, overcoming a paternalistic, welfare mentality, a commitment to making them active agents in their own development.

Faithful to our charism, we are not content with offering them immediate help, but aim to condemn and fight against the causes of injustice, contributing to the creation of a culture of solidarity, educating to moral awareness, active citizenship, respect for the environment, proposing initiatives and projects of intervention, working with other organisations and institutes who promote life. This commitment requires that we

renew our communities and, in our educative settings, our sensitivity to these matters, and that we overcome the tendency to bourgeois values which results in indifference to the global tragedy of poverty.

81 Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity

Don Bosco reminds us that "what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well" (C. 79). The practice of poverty demands a management of the resources entrusted to us which is consistent with the purposes of the mission, responsible, transparent and carried out in a spirit of solidarity. This means, among other things, a clear and complete accountability, a rational and optimal use of our property, initiative in finding the necessary resources to guarantee the sustainability of our works, respect for legal work contracts, attention to the social setting where we are located, rediscovering the value of generosity in offering hospitality and some of the things we do, solidarity amongst our communities, provinces and the Congregation.

The challenges of widespread lawlessness, global injustice and the hoarding of goods on the part of some, call us to condemn these scandals and develop a culture of what is essential, equitable distribution of resources, sustainable development. This way poverty takes on a powerful educative value: it affirms the primacy of being over having, bringing about an authentic Christian solidarity with the poor, and challenges a consumer lifestyle.

SITUATION

82 Personal and community witness

In general, confrères give witness to generous work and freely give of themselves until old age, putting what they are and what

they have at the service of the poor; despite decrease in numbers, communities carry out many initiatives in a wide range of areas.

Sometimes we risk reducing the exercise of poverty to dependence on the superior; irregular management of money and personal accounts is noted. Poverty is not always expressed through simplicity in food, dwellings, journeys, media, organising our free time, looking after our health. In some contexts there is an exaggerated attachment to and support for our family of origin which is not consistent with the vow of poverty.

In many communities goods are shared and families in difficulties are helped. There are confrères who lend a hand in the care and maintenance of the House, but the widespread use of paid staff risks a weakening of our shared responsibility for common services. Lack of involvement in financial management of the community and insufficient information lead some to be unaware of the difficulties of the House, the cost of living, and problems which the poor face on a daily basis. The *scrutinium paupertatis* does not always result in modifying incorrect practices.

Sometimes, in initial formation, there is a lack of attention given to evangelical poverty expressed concretely in day-to-day living: they know of the implications of the vow of poverty, but do not learn in real terms to think and live as poor people.

83 Solidarity with the poor

We undertake various initiatives in response to the most serious forms of poverty, such as taking in migrants, projects supporting development, help for victims of war and natural disasters, human development in mission territories. Important too is the work carried out in schools to educate to the demands of justice and in the cause of peace; we offer a culture of solidarity with initiatives on behalf of the most needy and excluded. We work for the poor, but sometimes not alongside and with them: in fact

we are not always careful to foster their sense of involvement in development projects. We note a resistance in some confrères to going out to needy youth, and offering themselves for new presences in areas of poverty affecting the young.

Imposing buildings which are sometimes no longer meaningful in relation to the social context, costly and ostentatious materials, incorrect use of money, risk not giving witness to community and institutional poverty. Some works which started out on behalf of the poor have gradually ended up being aimed at the middle class.

84 Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity

Many efforts have been made to show greater transparency in administration, especially by a more careful drawing up of financial statements, better use of buildings, growing respect for the laws which currently apply, a practical solidarity at provincial level. We are encouraged by the fact that private benefactors, civil and ecclesiastical institutions continue to show trust in our work and lavish funds to sustain our works.

We do not always have the necessary competence for the management of financial resources; despite the effort to prepare eonomers/bursars, they do not all have the necessary preparation. Budgeting is not a widespread practice. We note, in the relationship with those who work for us, an ownership style which does not respect their dignity; we need to always remind ourselves to be more attentive to social justice in their regard. There is a difficulty, too, in sharing responsibility with lay people in management decisions.

The growing needs and complexity of certain activities risk transforming Salesian work into a business enterprise, with the danger of being excessively functional and efficient, especially when this weakens our pastoral intent. When carrying out big projects relating to new structures or re-structuring, there is the risk of wasting energy, time, money.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

85 Processes required for change

In order to face up to the demands of the call and the challenges which come from the situation, and to carry out the following guidelines, we need to change our mentality and modify our structures, moving from:

- a half-hearted apostolic commitment, to the unconditional gift of ourselves for the needs of the mission;
- a theoretical esteem and formal observance of poverty, to effective practice and true inner freedom in the spirit of the Beatitudes;
- a vague understanding detached from the circumstances of poverty, to one of concrete solidarity with the poor and a greater commitment to social justice;
- a local mindset which is closed in on itself, to a provincial and global spirit of solidarity;
- inadequate skills, to a more professional approach in administration;
- management of resources from a proprietary mindset, to an awareness that we are stewards of the goods entrusted to us.

GUIDELINE 12

Personal and community witness

86 *Give credible and courageous witness to evangelical poverty, lived personally and as a community in the spirit of Da mihi animas cetera tolle*

87 *Let the Salesian*

- dedicate his whole life to God and the young with inner detachment, recalling what Don Bosco once said: “we need to have poverty in our hearts to practise it”;
- express his poverty through tireless self-sacrificing

work, fleeing laziness or frenetic activity, also by giving a hand in work and service around the House;

- take care of his health and in agreement with the community plan appropriate periods of rest;
- live the temperance that Don Bosco wanted of us through a simple lifestyle with regard to food, clothing, journeys, furniture, use of work materials, media and time, maturely accepting any discomfort when something useful or necessary is lacking;
- rediscover the requirements of dependency on the superior and the community (cf. 75) and the sharing of goods as required by the Constitutions (cf. C. 76) and give an account of what he receives and whatever comes to him from any source.

88 *Let the community*

- ensure that confrères know and put into practice what is indicated in the Provincial Directory's poverty and administration section, especially in reference to personal use of goods and technological tools;
- diligently make the annual *scrutinium paupertatis* in view of a more credible witness;
- prepare the annual budget, present the financial statement, regularly inform confrères of the financial situation and sensitise them to the cost of living; punctually hand over to the province any monies left over (cf. R. 197).

89 *Let the province*

- draw up a plan of financial solidarity which guarantees equitable distribution of resources and lays down the criteria to ensure a tenor of life which is common for all communities;
- ensure that directions concerning poverty, as proposed to confrères in initial formation are consistent with the effective practice of individuals and communities.

GUIDELINE 13

Solidarity with the poor

90 *Develop a culture of solidarity with the poor in the local context.*

91 *Let the community*

- express its solidarity with the poor not only through 'charity', but also through choices that have an impact on the tenor of our lives;
- educate, in collaboration with the educative and pastoral community, to a culture of solidarity, helping young people to bring a critical spirit to their interpretation of the economic and social phenomena of our time, involving them in initiatives and projects of development, and encouraging their taking part in similarly ordered activities of solidarity;
- educate to a respect for ethnic and religious difference and encourage a spirit of brotherly concern.

92 *Let the province*

- plan experiences at the service of the most disadvantaged young people for confrères in formation;
- choose areas of greatest poverty when opening new works.

93 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- help the provinces grow in their commitment on behalf of social justice;
- support institutions fostering the rights of the young and, when possible and opportune, take a stand in the name of the Congregation against their violation.

GUIDELINE 14

Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity

94 *Manage resources in a responsible, transparent way, consistent with the purposes of the mission, putting the necessary checks and balances in place at local, provincial, world level.*

95 *Let the community*

- periodically assess the objectives and strategies of the work to avoid it being simply a business venture rather than a service of education and evangelisation;
- ensure that the financial transactions of all sectors of the work are referred to the administrative office (R. 198), the inventory kept up to date, and that all the necessary information is made available to assist the administrative personnel in carrying out their work;
- guarantee good planning and management with regard to personnel we employ, respecting the rights and duties laid down in law and seeing that they are respected;
- be responsible for the planning, execution and monitoring of building and maintenance works, in understanding with the Provincial Economist (R. 195);
- study its own financial situation to ensure the sustainability of the work and, if dependent on external help, set up a plan for financial self-sufficiency;
- give attention to the correct use of funds which come from other bodies or institutions;
- respect the intentions of benefactors.

96 *Let the province*

- accompany the financial management of individual Houses with the help of competent lay people who are trustworthy and share our spirit, and make the necessary checks;
- ensure ethical sensitivity in the management and use of financial means, availing itself of the professional help available in this field;
- act in such a way that the buildings in our works are suitable for carrying out the mission, that the structures are adequately used and properly maintained;
- take account, in asking for financial support, of the planned elements of the Overall Provincial Plan so as to avoid setting up initiatives or structures which will not be sustainable over time;

- rethink initial formation with regard to poverty, helping confrères to make correct use of their time, goods and money; offer essential knowledge of accounting and management; involving them in running the House;
- educate communities to being ecologically sensitive, by supporting initiatives in the local area concerning respect for the environment, use of alternative energy and economical use of resources.
- study the possibility of common contracts to acquire goods and manage expenditures and propose these to the communities as a way to make savings.

97 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- ask for a more practical solidarity of resources and personnel among provinces and regions, also through twinning arrangements;
- keep an eye on the management of financial resources of the provinces to see that it is carried out in an ethical way and in a spirit of solidarity;
- ensure effective supervision of Provincial Economer operations, at the same time assessing their carrying out of projects financed by the Congregation;
- give directions for the distribution of donations coming in through institutional channels at General Administration and Province levels, being careful to see that there is an equitable distribution of resources and that benefactors' intentions are respected;
- assess the opportuneness of the use of Free/Libre Open Source Software, through the Department for Social Communication, and give pointers to the Provinces.

V. NEW FRONTIERS

*"The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good
news to the poor" (Lk 4:18)*

GOD'S CALL

"Our apostolic activity is carried out in a variety of ways, which depend in the first place upon the needs of those to whom we dedicate ourselves. We give effect to the redeeming love of Christ by organising activities and works of an educative and pastoral nature attentive to the needs of the neighbourhood and the Church. Sensitive to the signs of the times and with a spirit of initiative and continual flexibility we evaluate these activities, renew them and create new ones. The education and evangelisation of many young people, especially among the very poor, means that we have to go to them where they are to be found, and provide adequate forms of service in the context of their own life style" (C. 41).

98 Main priority: poor young people

Don Bosco, going through the streets of Turin, saw the needs of "youth at risk" and responded promptly to their needs, opening up new frontiers of involvement and also acting with "temerity" to "win souls for God". Going around the streets of the world we too run across young immigrants, children exploited by sexual tourism and child labour, drug addicts, HIV/AIDS sufferers, social misfits, unemployed, victims of violence, war and religious fanaticism, child soldiers, street children, the physically and psychologically disabled, young people at risk. We are struck by some of the marginalised places where young

people live, such as the shanty towns and city outskirts, and also by some of the marginalised situations such as those of refugees, indigenous children, Gypsies and other ethnic minorities. We also acknowledge the expectations of young people who are spiritually and culturally poor, and who ask us to be involved: young people who have lost meaning in life, lack affection because of family instability, those left disillusioned and empty by the consumerist mentality, the religiously indifferent, those lacking motivation because of permissiveness, ethical relativism, the widespread culture of death.

Don Bosco felt he was sent by God to respond to the cry of poor young people and understood that if it was important to give an immediate response to their difficulties, it was even more important to prevent their causes. Following his example, we want to meet up with them, convinced that the best way to respond to their poverty is, in fact, through preventive action. Therefore we see the need to study his educative system in order to spell out the tasks involved in overcoming the problems of the young and their marginalisation: education to ethics, fostering the dignity of the human being, social and political involvement, the exercise of active citizenship, the defence of the rights of juveniles, the struggle against injustice and the building of peace. Recognising that we find openness and availability to the Gospel in poor young people, we courageously proclaim Jesus Christ to them and offer them journeys of faith.

99 Other priorities: family, social communication, Europe

Special attention needs to be given to the current situation of the family, originally responsible for education and the first place for evangelisation. The entire Church has become aware of the serious difficulties the family finds itself in and warns of the need to offer extraordinary assistance for its formation, development and the responsible exercising of its educative role. This is why we are also called to act in such a way that youth ministry is ever more open to family ministry.

We also feel questioned by the new technologies of social communication and the educational challenges they pose. Today's communication opportunities have become an habitual way for young people to meet, exchange ideas, and get involved quickly and with great mobility, but also in an impersonal and virtual way. The culture of personal media can compromise one's ability to mature in personal relationships and exposes young people especially to the danger of very negative encounters and dependencies; this is the "playground" where we need to be present in order to listen, enlighten, guide.

We share the Church's concern for the future of the Gospel in the Western world, and especially in Europe. There is a constant weakening of reference to the Christian roots which have contributed to the identity of the Continent, inspired thought, customs and art, guided the history of its peoples, enriched the Church with splendid figures of holiness, and for centuries nurtured a missionary zeal throughout the world. Given the interdependence of peoples, Europe's destiny involves the entire world and becomes the concern of the universal Church. This opens up a new frontier with respect to the past; for us Salesians it is an invitation to "give greater attention to the training of young people in the faith" (*Ecclesia in Europa* n. 61).

100 New models for managing works

Attention to new frontiers involves us in the renewal of our mentality, in cultivating shared responsibility in projects which are never those of the individual but of the Salesian community, the Educative and Pastoral Community. The new needs of the young demand personal detachment from roles, situations and bonds which threaten real readiness to change, and also demand the apostolic courage which disposes us to rethink initiatives and works in order to respond better to their questions.

A new model for managing works requires that we guarantee the consistency in number and quality of the community; real shared responsibility amongst confrères and lay people; availability of

the Rector for his primary duty; the fostering of new kinds of more flexible presence; common planning with the Salesian Family and networking with other educative organisations and agencies in harmony with the local Church and society.

This will permit us to give life to “new presences”, that is, to hitherto unknown projects in response to emerging needs, or the renewal of existing works and proposals which can make them “new forms of presences”, that is, more effectively oriented towards the mission.

SITUATION

101 Main priority: poor young people

There is widespread attention given to so many forms of poverty in today's world especially those which threaten the present and the future of the young. The Congregation is strongly committed to fostering social growth and human development in areas where poverty is most evident. Young people are brought into our Houses without discrimination and our educative and pastoral service is offered to all. The settings where we prepare young people for the world of work are especially effective, offering accompaniment and professionalism.

Positive experiences which respond to emerging forms of poverty have come about in provinces. Networking is developing in collaboration with the Salesian family, educators and volunteers in educative and pastoral communities, people of the Church, society and community groups, non-government organisations. Positive aspects encouraging an openness to new frontiers include the increased capacity to think up and work with projects, the trust and availability of private and political institutions, a commitment to investing in formation which enables Salesians and lay people to give adequate responses.

On the other hand there is a certain resistance to renewal, re-qualification, change in our way of thinking. Formation of Salesians and lay people in knowing how to read the signs of the

times and overcome the danger of growing away from the young, is weak. This conjures up the danger that we grow distant from the young. As a result our educative involvement sometimes does not reach those beyond the boundaries of where we are. To respond to new forms of poverty, provinces often trust in the initiative of some confrère who is sensitive to the situation, but have not put planned common initiatives in place.

102 Other priorities: family, social communication, Europe

The circumstances of the family are a particular concern in almost every context. The family is threatened not only by widespread ethical relativism, but also by the passing of unjust laws which do not support it as an institution. It has come to the point where families fall apart and other kinds of union are recognised, bringing serious consequences at the educational level such as abandoned children, forced cohabitation, violence within families. This is why attention has grown in provinces to the family which is the essential point of reference for education, but the efforts we have made so far are still insufficient.

Sensitivity to and involvement on the part of the Congregation in Social Communications has grown. Signs of this are, for example, the setting up of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the UPS, the putting into place of various projects of education to critical use of media, the growing presence of our websites on the internet, the greater familiarity we have with computer networks whether for personal exchanges or for distance education, and the new arrangements for the Department of Social Communication. We are nevertheless aware that there are very many virtual worlds inhabited by the young and that we are not always capable of sharing and animating them because of our lack of formation, time and sensitivity.

In recent decades we have witnessed a gradual weakening of the Salesian presence in some nations in Europe. The worrying decrease in vocations has meant confrères are doing their best to maintain presences and activities by involving lay people in the management and animation of these works, re-

defining boundaries of provinces in order to set up joint projects to respond better to the challenges of education and evangelisation. We see the un-sustainability of this kind of effort without a courageous project on the part of the whole Congregation.

103 New models for managing works

In our work on behalf of poor young people, some provinces have achieved good results by forming, involving and sharing responsibility with the laity. Here we are speaking of ever wider attention, but one still not adequately taken up in all our presences.

Sometimes we come across an organisational model which has not known how to renew itself according to the needs of the times: a mentality persists which has been inherited from a traditional style of management in our Houses. This shows up, for example, in the rigid way in which activities are set up, in insufficient attention paid to the rhythms of life of young people, in the slowness with which we relocate or reorganise our houses or works, in the difficulty in sharing responsibility with lay people in decision-making roles.

In order to measure up to the changed circumstances of the times we have often adopted the strategy of making the works so big as to be difficult to manage and no longer capable of responding to the new forms of poverty with the ease and urgency they demand.

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

104 Processes required for change

In order to face up to the needs of the call and the challenges which come from the situation, and to carry out the consequent guidelines for action, it is necessary to change out mentality and modify our structures, moving from:

- occasional attention to poor young people, to lasting and focused projects in their service;
- a welfare mentality, to involving poor young people in being active agents of their own development and active in the social and political field;
- intervention directed to the victims of injustice, to networking to combat the causes of injustice;
- a youth ministry insufficiently attentive to family contexts, to one of greater investment of energies on behalf of the family;
- a timid attitude and sporadic presence in media, to one of responsible use and a more incisive educative and evangelising animation;
- a situation of progressive weakening of our works in some countries in Europe, to a re-launching of the charism;
- a tendency to focus on management of works already consolidated, to one of courageous and creative flexibility;
- educative activity which is too self-sufficient, to networking with whoever has the needs of the young at heart.

GUIDELINE 15

Main priority: poor young people

105 *Put courageous choices into place on behalf of poor young people and those at risk*

106 *Let the community*

- face up to new forms of poverty experienced by the young in their locality, and keep alive a sensitivity to the most serious kinds;
- express predilection for the poor by planning initiatives along with the educative and pastoral community which are explicitly dedicated to the poorest young people in the area;
- feel particular solidarity with province works which are dedicated to the poorest;

- seek responses to the spiritual forms of poverty of the young, offering them experiences and ways to re-awaken the religious dimension of life and help them discover Jesus as Saviour.

107 *Let the province*

- guarantee that in its Overall Provincial Plan there are works explicitly dedicated to the young people who are poorest and most at risk and prepare qualified personnel;
- ensure that in each work's pastoral and educative project there is a proposal of education to the faith which measures up to the situation of the poorest young people;
- take a courageous decision, where necessary, to relocate and re-dimension its works so they may serve poor young people and ordinary folk;
- study the possibility of putting projects into place and creating opportunities to offer young people an alternative to physically and morally dangerous kinds of amusements;
- promote the defence of the rights of juveniles and other young people and condemn violations of these rights with prophetic courage and educative sensitivity.

GUIDELINE 16

Other priorities: family, social communication, Europe

108 *Give privileged attention to the family in youth ministry; improve the educative presence in the media world; re-launch the Salesian charism in Europe*

109 *Let the community*

- involve and form parents in the educative and evangelising activity they carry out for their children;
- develop curricula for affective education especially during adolescence and accompany young people during their time of engagement for marriage, making good use

of the contribution of parents, lay people who share this responsibility and members of the Salesian Family;

- foster new forms of evangelisation and catechesis of families and by means of families;
- plan educative projects to help young people to a critical and responsible use of various kinds of media (mass, folk, personal, convergent etc.) and encourage their active involvement in the social communication field and in youthful and popular forms of expression;
- use the technologies of social communication to give greater visibility to their presence in order to spread the charism.

110 *Let the province*

- coordinate and sustain the efforts of educative and pastoral communities in the affective education of the young and in accompaniment of engaged couples;
- lay down a realistic strategy which favours a more incisive presence in the media world, as well as youthful and popular artistic expression, and prepare qualified personnel in this area;
- foster family ministry projects together with lay people and the Salesian Family.

111 *Let the Rector Major with his Council*

- offer guidelines, through the Youth Ministry Department, on contents and processes for affective education of the young, in order to support the efforts of provinces and communities;
- reflect, through the Departments for Social Communication, Formation and Youth Ministry, on the new challenges of the culture of personal media for formation of Salesians, the preparation of the laity, and to help the young;
- define the nature and objectives of the Congregation's intervention on behalf of a renewed Salesian presence in Europe.

GUIDELINE 17

New models for managing works

112 *Review the management model of works for a more effective educative and evangelising presence*

113 *Let the province*

- reinforce the consistency in number and quality of the Salesian community and help it to identify what is its main responsibility in animating the work;
- identify the interventions needed to set in motion “new presences” or to renew existing ones so they are better oriented towards the mission;
- rethink the distribution of responsibilities in individual communities, assess the functioning of the councils at various levels so the Rector can carry out his primary duty;
- reflect on the complexity of the works and identify more flexible forms of presence through the Overall Provincial Plan;
- ask for and make good use of the contribution of the Salesian Family in view of common planning of its presence in the neighbourhood;
- encourage networking with members of the Salesian Family, the Church and society.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE GC26



On the basis of the proposals sent in by Provincial Chapters, individual Confreres, and also the General Council and from the Chapter Assembly, after being examined by the Juridical Commission and the Assembly, the General Chapter approved the following **deliberations**. Some of them concern **articles of the Constitutions and General Regulations**; others are **operative guidelines for the government of the Congregation**.

1. TRANSFER OF THE VICE PROVINCE OF MYANMAR TO THE EAST ASIA - OCEANIA REGION

114 The 26th General Chapter

- having considered the request put forward by the Chapter of the Salesian Vice Province of Myanmar;
- having taken account of the fact that Myanmar belongs geographically to the South-East Asia Region and is part of ASEAN, “Association of South-East Asian Nations”, and that as a result links between these nations are made easier;
- bearing in mind that culturally Myanmar is closer to many countries in the East Asia – Oceania Region;

determines that the “Mary Help of Christians” Vice Province of Myanmar be transferred from the South Asia Region to the East Asia - Oceania Region, according to the norms of art. 154 of the Constitutions.

2. REGIONS OF EUROPE

115 The 26th General Chapter

- bearing in mind that processes of incorporation are in progress as well as a new configuration of the Provinces within the three European Regions;
- appreciating the positive nature of the initiatives carried out in the previous six-year period, the processes of collaboration and exchange in progress and the work of the bodies that have been set up;

- aware that the time is ripe for a “Project Europe” on the part of the Congregation;

determines that the current configuration of the three Regions of Europe be maintained and asks the Rector Major with his Council to strengthen coordination among the Regional Councillors and with the Councillors for Sectors that may be involved, and to set up the office which was suggested by GC 25, 129, to develop projects and achieve common goals.

3. ASSIGNMENT OF THE ANIMATION OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY TO THE VICAR OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

116 The 26th General Chapter, noting

- the positive assessment of the members of the Salesian Family concerning the assignment to the Rector of the Rector Major of the task of animating the S.F.;
- the need to ensure that the Vicar can give priority to the institutional tasks attached to his role;

confirming the assignment of the task of the animation of the Salesian Family to the Vicar of the Rector Major, asks that the team for animating the Salesian Family (GC 25, 133) be strengthened and have a Coordinator. An evaluation of this will be carried out at the end of the six-year period.

4. DEPARTMENTS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY, SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, MISSIONS

117 The 26th General Chapter

- having considered the complexity of the Salesian mission;
- seeing the need for greater coordination between the Departments for Youth Ministry, Social Communication and the Missions, especially for animating sectors of shared activities;

asks the Rector Major with his Council to promote inter-departmental animation teams for these sectors and entrust the Coordination to one Councillor or another, in each case safeguarding the unique and organic nature of Salesian pastoral ministry.

5. EVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURES OF ANIMATION AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CONGREGATION

118 The 26th General Chapter

- considering that the next General Chapter will be asked to evaluate the assigning of the animation of the Salesian Family to the Vicar of the Rector Major, the coordination of the three Departments for Youth Ministry, for Social Communication and for the Missions and the configuration of the Regions of Europe;
- considering also that such a review directs attention to the overall structure of the General Council;

asks the Rector Major with his Council to promote for the next General Chapter an evaluation of the structures for animation and central government of the Congregation, involving the Provinces.

6. ELECTION OF THE REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

119 The 26th General Chapter

- having recognised that for the election of the Regional Councillors the suggestion of only one name in the vote with secret ballot makes it possible to know with greater clarity the prevailing mood of the confreres of the Region,

determines that art. 128 of the General Regulations be modified with the expression “writing one name on each voting paper”.

7. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY AND WORK

120 The 26th General Chapter recognises that at present in the Congregation there is a plurality of models in managing works:

- works managed by a Salesian community that is the animating nucleus of a wider educative pastoral community;
- activities and works entirely entrusted by the Salesians to lay people, or set up by lay people and recognised in the Provincial Plan, according to the criteria indicated by GC 24, nn. 180-182;
- varied forms of management that cannot be reduced to a single model, in which the relationship between a local community and a work (or more works) persists, but this (or sectors of it) are managed by lay people.

Therefore:

- having considered the diversity of contexts and the different requirements, and the need to try out possible new forms of the management of works;
- having recognised as essential the need to ensure the qualitative and quantitative consistency of the communities, to guarantee the living and working together that "is for us Salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation" (C. 49);

determines that the Provincial, having the consent of his Council, and within the Provincial Structural Plan, be given the faculty,

- **to identify which works or sectors of works, while retaining their reference to a local community can be entrusted to the management of lay people,**
- **to define their responsibilities, the criteria for appointment, the duration of the appointments; the processes of decision making and the organs of government; the competences of the Rector and of the local council, the competences of the Provincial and of the Provincial Council.**

8. LOCAL ECONOMER

121 The 26th General Chapter

- considering that in a number of places it is not possible to entrust to a confrere the role of economist of the local community, or as a result of the considerable increase in the complexity and structural organisation of the activities for which the religious community is directly responsible,

determines that the Provinces be granted the faculty of inserting in the Provincial Directory a norm which sees the possibility, in specific circumstance, of assigning to a lay person appointed by the Provincial, having heard the opinion of the Rector, the functions of the economist of the local community. At the invitation of the Rector, s/he will be able to take part, without the right to vote, in meetings of the house Council whenever his/her presence is required.

This faculty granted to the Provinces needs to be exercised respecting the following conditions.

- That the constitutional distinction between the role of the Rector and that of the economist be always respected, excluding the practice which sees the Rector engaged in administrative roles and tasks.
- That the duration of the role and the areas of economic responsibility entrusted to the lay person be clearly defined, especially in those matters in which such action involves the institution. The same applies to powers to sign in cases of delegation, exercise of the powers of attorney, purchases, the administration of money etc.
- The lay person called upon to carry out the functions of the economist ought always to act in close dependence on the Rector with the Council.
- In these cases the Provincial Economist will accompany and support the community and the lay person to whom the functions of the economist have been assigned.
- The Provincial should identify and prepare confreres capable of taking on administrative and managerial roles, at the service of the communities and of the Province.

9. MODIFICATION OF ARTICLE 13 OF THE GENERAL REGULATIONS

122 The 26th General Chapter

- having considered the notable number of Salesian institutions of higher education, with a considerable number of Salesians engaged in them and a large number of students attending them;
- considering it opportune that in article 13 of the General Regulations these institutions of higher education be explicitly mentioned, together with the other schools at various levels and the vocational training centres;
- so that also in these activities and works there be applied the criteria indicated in article 13 and in article of 14 the General Regulations, especially as regards “those for whom it is particularly designed” and the educative and pastoral objectives;

determines that article 13 of the General Regulations be modified, with the following wording:

The school, vocational training centres and institutions of higher education

13. The school at various levels, vocational training centres and institutions of higher education foster the total development of the young person through the assimilation and critical re-elaboration of culture and education to the faith in view of the Christian transformation of society.

The educational process, carried out in a Salesian manner and with recognized technical and teaching ability, should be based on solid cultural values, and be tailored to the needs of the young. The programme should provide a harmonious balance between intellectual and technical training and extra-curricular activities.

A periodic examination should be made to ensure that the contents of the curriculum and pedagogical and training methods are still valid as regards their relationship with the social milieu, the world of work and the pastoral indications of the Church.

APPENDICES



Message of His Holiness BENEDICT XVI for the beginning of the General Chapter XXVI

To the Very Reverend
Fr PASCUAL CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA SDB,
Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco

1. I am particularly pleased to send my heartfelt greetings to you and to those taking part in the XXVI General Chapter, which is an occasion of grace in the life of the Congregation now present in all the continents. In it you are being called to bring together the wealth and the variety of experiences, of cultures and of the expectations of the Salesians involved in a multiplicity of apostolic activities, and ready and willing to make their service to the Church ever more effective. The charism of Don Bosco is a gift of the Spirit for all the People of God, but only by docile listening and openness to the action of God is it possible to interpret it and in these times of ours, to make it relevant and fruitful. The Holy Spirit who at Pentecost came down on the newborn Church, continues, like the wind, to blow where he wills, as a fire to melt the ice of selfishness, as a spring to water what is dry. Pouring out on the Chapter Members the abundance of his gifts he will enter the hearts of the Confreres. He will make them burn with his love, He will en-flame them with the desire for holiness, urge them to open themselves to conversion and strengthen them in their apostolic daring.

2. The Sons of Don Bosco belong to the large host of those disciples Christ has consecrated to himself by his Spirit through a special act of love. He has reserved them for himself; for this reason the primacy of God and of his work ought to shine out in the witness they give. When someone gives up everything in order to follow the Lord, when he gives to him what is most dear, facing up to every sacrifice, then it should not come as a surprise if, as happened to the divine Master, he becomes a "sign of contradiction", because the consecrated person's way of thinking and of living leads to him often finding himself at odds with the thinking of the world. In reality this is reassuring, because it shows that his way of life is an alternative to the culture of the day and can perform, in its regard, a role that in some ways is prophetic. However, to achieve this, it is necessary to be on one's guard

against the possible influences of secularism, to defend oneself and so be able to continue with determination, along the path already begun, overcoming the "liberal model" of consecrated life, leading a life totally focused on the primacy of the love of God and of one's neighbour.

3. The theme chosen for this General Chapter is the same plan of spiritual and apostolic life that Don Bosco made his own: "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*". Within it is to be found the whole personality of the great saint: a deep spirituality, creative initiative, apostolic zeal, untiring work, pastoral daring and, above all, the consecrating of himself without reserve to God and to the young. He was a saint with one great passion: "the glory of God and the salvation of souls". It is vitally important that every Salesian continually draws inspiration from Don Bosco: that he knows him, studies him, loves him, imitates him, prays to him, makes his own his apostolic passion, which springs from the heart of Christ. This passion is the ability to give oneself, to be full of zeal for souls, to suffer for love, to accept with serenity and joy the daily demands and the renunciations of the apostolic life. The motto "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*" expresses in synthesis the mystical and ascetical dimension of the Salesian. There cannot be a passionate mystical dimension without a solid asceticism to support it; and vice versa no one is ready to pay a high and demanding price unless he has discovered a fascinating and priceless treasure. In a time of fragmentation and fragility like our own, it is necessary to overcome the dissipation of energy in hyperactivity and cultivate the unity of a spiritual life through the acquisition of a profound sense of the mystical dimension and a sound asceticism. This nourishes apostolic commitment and guarantees an effective ministry. It is in this that progress along the path of holiness for every Salesian should consist, and on it that the formation of new vocations to Salesian consecrated life should concentrate. *Lectio divina* and the Eucharist, lived each day, are light and strength for the spiritual life of the consecrated Salesian. He ought to give sustenance to his day by listening to and meditating on the Word of God, while also helping young people and the lay faithful to appreciate its value in their daily lives, and then making the necessary effort to translate what the Word says into witness. "The Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving". (Encyclical *Deus caritas est* 13). Leading a simple, poor, modest, basic, and austere life: this will help Salesians to strengthen the response to their vocation, in the face of the risks and dangers of mediocrity and a bourgeois style of life; and it will also bring them closer to those in need and to the marginalised.

4. Following the example of their beloved Founder, Salesians need to be consumed with apostolic passion. The universal Church and the particular Churches of which they form part expect from them a presence characterised by apostolic drive, and by a daring evangelising zeal. The post-synodal Apostolic Exhortations regarding evangelisation in the various continents, can be a stimulus for them and offer guidance in carrying out an inculturated evangelisation, in the different contexts. The recent Doctrinal Note on some aspects of evangelisation can help them to examine further how to communicate to everyone and especially the poorest young people the riches of the gifts of the Gospel. May evangelisation be the main and priority frontier of their mission today. It presents many tasks, urgent challenges, vast fields of activity, but its fundamental purpose is that of proposing that everyone should live their human life as Jesus lived it. In multi-religious situations and in secularised ones, it is necessary to find new ways of making Jesus known, especially to the young, so that they may discover his perennial fascination. Therefore at the centre of their apostolic activity should be the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel, together with the call to conversion, to the acceptance of the faith, to their taking their place in the Church; then from this will come faith journeys and forms of catechesis, liturgical life and the witness of charitable work. Their charism places them in the privileged position of being able to give due weight to the role of education in the field of the evangelisation of the young. Without education, in fact, there is no deep and lasting evangelisation; there is no growth or process of maturity; there is no change of mentality or of culture. Young people have within them a deep desire for a full life, for genuine love, for constructive freedom; but often, sadly, they are betrayed in their expectations which are not fulfilled. It is essential to help young people to make good use of the qualities they have within them, such as energy and positive desires; to give them projects full of humanity and gospel values; to encourage them to take their place in society actively, through their work, their involvement and their commitment to the common good. This requires that whoever is guiding them opens up wider educational horizons, while paying attention to the new forms of youth poverty, to higher education, to immigration; in addition it means giving attention to the family and to its involvement. On this issue, which is so important, I gave special attention in the Letter on the educational emergency that I recently addressed to the faithful of Rome, and which now I should really like to give to all Salesians.

5. From the beginning, the Salesian Congregation has been committed to evangelisation in different parts of the world: from Patagonia and Latin

America to Asia and Oceania, to Africa and Madagascar. At a time when in Europe vocations are declining in number and the challenges of evangelisation are increasing, the Salesian Congregation needs to devote its attention to strengthening the proclamation of the Christian message, the presence of the Church and Don Bosco's charism in this continent. Just as Europe has been generous in sending numbers of missionaries to the whole world, so now may the whole Congregation by making a special appeal to those Regions rich in vocations, be responsive in its regard. To continue throughout time the mission among the young, the Holy Spirit guided Don Bosco to create various apostolic groups animated by the same spirit and sharing the same commitment. The tasks of evangelisation and education in fact require large numbers to make their contribution, and to know how to work in synergy. For this reason the Salesians have involved in their work many lay people, families and the young people themselves, raising up among them apostolic vocations that keep the charism of Don Bosco alive and fruitful. To these young people, the attractive fascination of the consecrated life, the radical choice of the following of Christ obedient, poor and chaste, the primacy of God and of the Spirit, fraternal life in community, the devoting of oneself totally to the mission should be proposed. Young people are open to demanding challenges, but they need witnesses and guides who know how to accompany them in the discovery and the acceptance of such a gift. In this context I know that the Congregation is giving particular attention to the vocation of the Salesian Brother, without which it would lose the characteristic feature that Don Bosco wanted it to have. Certainly it is not an easy vocation to discern and to accept; it emerges more easily where apostolic lay vocations are presented to the young and where they see a joyful and enthusiastic witness to religious consecration. May the example and the intercession of Blessed Artemides Zatti and the other venerated Brothers who have spent their lives for the Kingdom of God obtain also in these days for the Salesian Family the gift of such vocations.

6. I am very pleased to be able to take this opportunity to express very grateful thanks to the Salesian Congregation for the work of research and formation undertaken at the Salesian Pontifical University, where some among my present closest and most appreciated collaborators were formed, and have also been teachers. It has an identity that comes from the charism of Don Bosco and offers an original and specific contribution to the whole Church. Unique among the Pontifical Universities it has a Faculty of Education and a Department of Youth Ministry and Catechetics supported by the input of other Faculties. With a view to a course of studies that profits from the diversity

of cultures and is attentive to the multiplicity of contexts, it is to be hoped that there may be an increase there in the number of teachers coming from around the whole Congregation. In the educational emergency that exists in many parts of the world, the Church needs the contribution of scholars who will undertake in-depth studies into the methodology of pedagogical and formation procedures, the evangelisation of young people and their moral education, drawing up together responses to the challenges presented by post-modernism, by the process of interculturalisation and by social communication, while at the same time seeking to help families. Don Bosco's preventive system and the Salesian educational tradition will surely lead the Congregation to propose a Christian pedagogy for today, inspired by the specific charism that is its own. Education is one of the key issues in the anthropological question of today, to the solution of which the Salesian Pontifical University, I am sure, will not fail to make a very valuable contribution.

7. Dear Rector Major, the task facing the Salesian Congregation is one that is difficult but exciting. Each member of your large religious Family in fact is called to make Don Bosco present among the young people of our day. In 2015 you will be celebrating the bicentenary of his birth, and with the decisions you make in this General Chapter you will already be beginning the preparation for the celebrations of such an important jubilee event. May it be a spur for you to be ever more "credible signs of the love of God for the young" so that the young may indeed be the hope of the Church and of society. May the Virgin Mary, to whom Don Bosco taught you to pray as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians sustain you in your resolutions. "It is she who has done everything," Don Bosco said at the end of his life, referring to Mary. Once again She will be the one to be your guide and teacher. She will help you to communicate "Don Bosco's charism". She will be for your Congregation and for the whole Salesian Family, for the educators and especially for the young, the Mother and Star of Hope. While offering for your attention these reflections of mine, I renew the expression of my gratitude for the service you render the Church, and while I assure you of my constant prayer, with all my heart I impart, to you Rector Major, to the participants in the Chapter Assembly and to the whole Salesian Family a special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 March 2008

Benedictus PP XVI

**Address of Cardinal Franc Rodé, C.M.
Prefect of the Congregation
for the Institutes of Consecrated Life
and the Societies of Apostolic Life**

Da mihi animas, cætera tolle

1. This is the motto Don Bosco chose as a young priest and it accompanied him throughout his life. It is the plan of life of Don Bosco and of every Salesian,¹ the title that you have chosen for the celebration of the 26th General Chapter of the Salesian Society of Saint John Bosco.

In this Chapter meeting which brings you all together from different countries and cultures, one can see the abundance and the beauty of the Lord's gifts. For each and every one of you, and for all your Salesian confreres around the world, I give thanks to the Giver of all that is good, Who in His infinite goodness has given to the Church the great Family of Saint John Bosco.

My greetings and my thanks for the vital commitment of all the Salesians in the Church and in the world cannot fail to go to the Rector Major, the successor of Don Bosco, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, for his commitment not only to the numerous Salesian Family but to all Consecrated Life.

2. The General Chapter is sign of unity in diversity, it is a meeting of brothers, it is a moment of communal reflection, so as to remain faithful to the Gospel, to the charism of the Founder and to the times.² It is the ideal moment to open wide your eyes and hearts and to begin to look, to recognise and appreciate; it is the appropriate time discern along what path it is that the Lord is sending you; to move on from discouragement to hope, to the re-discovery of the presence of the Lord in your midst, in his Word and in the Bread of eternal life.

Its celebration is a living memorial of the path already taken, the realisation in today's world, of the dream of little John Bosco, so as to plan for

¹ Cf. C. n. 4.

² Cf. C. n. 146.

the future with living hope and complete trust in the Lord's work.

3. In the face of a complex world and its crises, the Christian faith is exposed to all the questions and debates about God, about his entering into history in the person of Jesus, about the nature of man and the meaning of life and of death. The Church too is under scrutiny: in some circles its role and its influence in the world are trivialised and questioned. Consecrated life is marked by signs of crisis, especially in North America and in Europe: reduction in numbers, uncertainty about its identity, the temptation to give up and to discouragement.

Returning to the origins, to the centrality of Jesus Christ, to the spirit of the Founders can help us to respond with trust, creativity and courage to these many varied challenges.

4. In these days each one of you is called to renew your fundamental option for Christ, thought through again with a clear and precise conscience as a community, according to the gospel project of the Constitutions: your special covenant with the Lord; a loving encounter that colours and guides your whole life; the total gift of yourselves to God and to the young; the meaning of your life consecrated by the power of the Spirit.

After having considered, in past years, Salesian identity,³ the mission,⁴ sharing with lay people⁵ and the community,⁶ during this Chapter assembly your attention will be focused on charismatic identity and on apostolic passion. It is a return to the heart of your vocation in the Church to the purest spirit of the Founder.

Don Bosco ritorna, you will repeat in these days. Mindful of the words that the Holy Father John Paul II wrote to you in his Letter *Iuvenum Patris*: «*Don Bosco ritorna* is a traditional hymn of the Salesian Family: it expresses the fervent hope and desire of a return of Don Bosco and of a return to Don Bosco, so as to be educators able to preserve our fidelity of old, and at the same time be attentive, as he was himself, to the thousand and one needs of today's youth, so as to find in his legacy the starting point for a present-day response to their difficulties and expectations.»⁷

³ GC 22.

⁴ GC 23.

⁵ GC 24.

⁶ GC 25.

⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Letter *Iuvenum Patris* for the Centenary of the death of Saint John Bosco, Rome 31 January 1988, n. 13.

Returning to Don Bosco and starting afresh from Don Bosco so as to re-awaken the heart.

You are setting out therefore to return to the sources of Salesian spirituality, of the Salesian charism, to the heart of your call, which finds its living source in the very heart of Christ with «the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving.»⁸

5. There are different ways of speaking about spirituality. Certainly to be avoided is that which leads to spiritualism, almost as a retreat into a world of the spirit in which everything is considered perfect and rarefied; instead, it is necessary to preserve its original characteristic of *life according to the Spirit* and its being firmly rooted in everyday life, with its struggles and its tensions, its efforts and its difficulties, in this way reflecting the nature of all spiritual journeys – personal and ecclesial – rich in life and mystery.

Only in this way will it be possible to avoid those exhausted ways of talking about the Christian life that nowadays seem to be almost worn out by being too generic or too rhetorical. The use of extravagant language shows how difficult it is nowadays to speak about spiritual matters properly in ways that are not afraid of mentioning the uncertainties in life nor of referring to its mystery. Modesty and temperance of speech might restore to our language the possibility of communicating the great beauty of a life lived from the perspective of the Gospel.

6. From his earliest days Don Bosco let himself be guided by a single desire: to consecrate his whole life for the benefit of the young. His work is not an expression of hyper-activity, the happy and open character of the *acrobat* of the Becchi is a very real, conscious and willing *consecration*, a *mission* for the holistic *salvation* of youth.

Da mihi animas, cætera tolle. The aim of Don Bosco's education of prevention – a fully realised personal, social and religious life – is made clear in the expression “the salvation of souls”: a yearning for holiness. It was an “everyday” holiness that Don Bosco proposed to his boys and his first collaborators.

A “holiness” that is not the goal offered only to the “good boy”, to some kind of aristocratic élite, but to all the boys of Valdocco: «it is God's will

⁸ Cf. C. Art. 11

that we all become saints; it is quite easy to do so; there is a great reward prepared in heaven for whoever becomes holy».⁹

In the atmosphere of holiness at Valdocco, his strong and generous proposals become credible. He «knew how to propose holiness as the practical objective of his pedagogy» – recalled the Servant of God John Paul II, in proclaiming him “Father and Teacher of Youth”.¹⁰ «I want especially to consider in Don Bosco the fact that he realized his personal holiness through an educative commitment lived with zeal and an apostolic heart, and that at the same time he knew how to propose holiness as the practical objective of his pedagogy».¹¹ It is here that one needs to look for that «prophetic message which he has left to his followers and to the Church».¹²

7. «An interchange between “education” and “holiness” is indeed the characteristic aspect of his personality: he was a “holy educator,” he drew his inspiration from a “holy model” - Francis de Sales -, he was the disciple of a “holy spiritual director” - Joseph Cafasso, and he was able to form from among his boys a “holy pupil” Dominic Savio».¹³ And we can continue this list with Blessed Laura Vicuña and Blessed Zephyrinus Namuncurá, the last in time on 11 November 2007, to be set before the Salesian Family as an example of holiness.

This prophetic message left you by the Founder offers the original feature of your charismatic identity, of your apostolic consecration, of your method of education based on reason, religion and loving kindness.¹⁴

There is an urgent need to recover the true features of holiness. For each Salesian, for each young person who approaches you. To continue to be, as was Don Bosco, holy teachers of holy young people, *masters of youth spirituality*.¹⁵ To carry out the plan of life that your Founder left you: «to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people especially those who are poor».¹⁶

⁹ BOSCO G., *Life of the boy Dominic Savio written by the priest John Bosco*, p. 50, OE XI p. 200.

¹⁰ *IP*, n. 5.

¹¹ *Ib.*

¹² *Ib.* n. 8.

¹³ *Ib.* n. 5.

¹⁴ cf. “The Preventive System,” in “Regulations for the houses of the Society of St. Francis of Sales,” in John Bosco “Pedagogical and spiritual Writings,” 166.

¹⁵ *IP*, n. 16

¹⁶ Cf. C. art. 2.

8. Article 3 of your Constitutions says that you «live as disciples of the Lord,» and that you offer yourselves totally to God «to follow Christ and work with him in building up the Kingdom». ¹⁷

In view of this offering the Father consecrates you with the gift of His Spirit and sends you out to be apostles of the young. ¹⁸ The gift of the Spirit ought to fill your hearts with His gentle power to enable you to be totally faithful to your life as disciples. The secret to success lies in knowing how to constantly reinforce the links of your covenant with God.

As persons consecrated to the Father you are called to reproduce in the Church and in the world, through the evangelical counsels, «the characteristic features of Jesus — the chaste, poor and obedient one,» ¹⁹ nourishing your faith, your *sequela Christi*, your loving conformity to the Lord Jesus so as to be able to communicate this lived experience in a educative relationship. All the rest can provide the supports, the methods and the means in the always difficult task of communicating the faith especially to the young, but these are small matters in comparison with the absolutely essential requirement for someone embarked on this enterprise: the possession of faith and of a vital love, one that is incarnated, and sustained by a sound formation.

This is your profound nature, your vocation, your total fulfilment. The evangelical counsels are the basis of this relationship, a constant attitude towards the Other. «There is no other way of living that is worthy of man than in self giving». ²⁰

9. Don Bosco was born less than thirty years after the French Revolution. Throughout the previous century (the “age of enlightenment”) the faith was subjected to attack in the name of a reason that was divinised, that set out to fight against everything that it called «superstition». In the XIXth century the attack became tied up, sometimes quite closely with social and national questions.

Don Bosco’s times therefore are those of the beginnings of industrialisation, of the Risorgimento, of the period of restoration and revolution. Turin of the Risorgimento is a city expanding rapidly as a result of the huge number of immigrants coming from the Piedmontese countryside, and the world of youth is in the grip of very serious problems: illiteracy, unemployment, moral decline and religious assistance in short supply.

¹⁷ C.. art. 3.

¹⁸ Ib

¹⁹ VC, n. 1.

²⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Message for Vocations Day 2003*.

"I'm sixteen ... and I don't know anything": so Bartholomew Garelli, the first of Don Bosco's boys introduced himself. «To this first pupil some others were added," - Don Bosco himself narrates -. "During that winter I concentrated my efforts in helping grown-ups who needed special catechism». ²¹

And so the Oratory began: with youngsters seeking work. Don Bosco gave them a home, a faithful friend, instruction and protection, ensuring fair and just work contracts; he created vocational training schools, work-shops. He gave similar help to the students. He set the boys on the path to obtaining a place in the world, helping them to acquire skills and professional competence; he guided them in the Christian life, seeing to their religious formation, to their reception of the sacraments and a filial love for Mary.

10. This undertaking continues to be relevant today. If at one time there were just the play ground, the church, the work-shop and the school, today we can see various kinds of educational institutions, schools, literacy centres, community homes for children and young people in difficulty, preventative centres for drug addiction, advice centres, humanitarian projects for street children, refugee camps with large numbers of children and youngsters, reception centres for immigrants... And always with eyes and hearts alert for those places and situations where poverty and disadvantage need a *surplus* of compassion, friendship, love and protection.

In these days when the globalisation of the media and of the economy is accompanied by an wider increase in poverty and marginalisation which particularly afflicts the younger generations, the Church recognises with great concern the urgent need to overcome, especially in the field of education, the drama of a deep split between the Gospel and culture, that leads to undervaluing and side-lining Christ's message of salvation. Today, more than in the past, we are in need of a prophetic outlook on these new times, so complicated and difficult, and above all of the daring of the saints, with a large and generous heart.

"I'm sixteen ... and I don't know anything". This is the cry that we hear repeated by so many young people we meet on our way, who seem to be living, especially in these years, with a listlessness and indifference not only with regard to the faith, but above all as regards a love whose real significance is being sought, or its having been lost, is viewed with nostalgia, while, in quite a contradictory fashion, it is reduced to some brief sentiment or emotion.

²¹ BOSCO G., *Memoirs of the Oratory*, [p. 190] adapted by Bosco T., 1985.

We are faced with the *era of emptiness* ²² on account of contemporary individualism. «It seems to me,” the Holy Father said to questions from young people in the diocese of Rome, “that the great challenge of our time is secularization: that is, a way of living and presenting the world as “*si Deus non daretur*”, in other words, as if God did not exist.[...] This seems to me to be the first essential element: that God be once again present in our lives, that we do not live as though we were autonomous, authorized to invent what freedom and life are. We must realize that we are creatures, aware that there is a God who has created us and that living in accordance with his will is not dependence but a gift of love that makes us alive». ²³

11. It is necessary to be able to speak the truth, without being afraid to, even when it is inconvenient. As the Holy Father does constantly.

On this subject Romano Guardini wrote: «One who speaks should say what something is, how he sees it and understands it. Therefore he should also express with his words what he feels within him. It may be difficult in some circumstances, it may lead to annoyance, harm and danger; but our conscience reminds us that the truth has its obligations; that it has something of the absolute about it, that it has nobility. You cannot say about it: You can tell the truth when you like, or to achieve a particular aim; but: When you speak, you must tell the truth; you must not minimise nor alter it. You must always, simply tell the truth, even when the situation would incline you to remain silent, or when you could easily avoid answering a question»²⁴ There is an imperative therefore from which one neither can nor should escape: to demonstrate that the truth must take its rightful and proper place not only in our preaching and catechesis, but above all in peoples' lives so that they may come to a life that really makes sense.

The ministry that you carry out places you first of all in the position of transmitting the faith. This, we all know, is not primarily a question of abstract subject matter, but of a way of life that flows from the decision to place oneself at the *sequela* of Christ and to accept his word as a promise and as personal fulfilment.

«Priests... cannot be ministers of Christ unless they are witnesses and dispensers of a life other than this earthly one. But they cannot be of service to

²² G.LIPOVETSKY, *L'era del vuoto. Saggi sull'individualismo contemporaneo*, 1995.

²³ BENEDICT XVI, *Conversation with young people*, during the Meeting with the Youth of the Diocese of Rome, in preparation for the XXI World Youth Day, Rome, Thursday 6 April 2006.

²⁴ R. GUARDINI, *Le virtù*, Brescia, 1972, p. 21

men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men. Their ministry itself by a special title forbids them to be conformed to the world. Yet at the same time this ministry requires that they live in this world among men and that as good shepherds they know their sheep ... it is their task (therefore), in the light of Christ to strive to deal with contemporary problems». ²⁵

12. Again, our young people are living in a state of profound loneliness. It often arises from their not being listened to, accepted for what they are or rejected; the different kinds of betrayal that life can present, by friendship, by love, in the family or with their peers, very clearly bring to light the profound sense of loneliness in which many of them are immersed.

I am convinced that our young people want from us a witness of total selflessness and sincere forgiveness. They want to be loved for what they are, but on this account we should not forget that for us, to love is to seek tirelessly and with great patience their good.

The Council wrote in *Gaudium et spes*: «A man is more precious for what he “is” than for what he “has”». ²⁶ The cultural context in which we are living undoubtedly gives a mistaken primacy to doing and having over being. The response to the questions of the young is not that of finding practical techniques or initiatives: we would be heading for failure. If we want to do something for the young, it is necessary above all to be people with large hearts, because as Don Bosco once again said, education is a matter of the heart.

This, however, requires on our part the effort to know how to really cultivate once again interpersonal relationships and the guidance of our young people, which is the best means for a vital transmission of the faith. Unless there is a one-to-one relationship the faith is not transmitted. We can call it spiritual direction or something else, but the tradition of the Church assures us of the fact that it is only through an interpersonal relationship that treats the person as an individual, that the transmission of the faith takes place.

Precisely for this reason it is essential for you to once again think through your «to be in the Church, signs and bearers of the love of God for young people especially those who are poor». ²⁷

«It is not enough to love». The ideal of Salesian holiness is «to make oneself loved». ²⁸

²⁵ PO, nn. 3. 4 .

²⁶ GS, n. 35.

²⁷ C. art. 2

²⁸ BM XVII, 85-94

«Strive to make people love you» is the advice Don Bosco gave Don Rua when he sent him to Mirabello, in 1863. «Since I cannot always be at your side...I speak as a loving father who opens his heart to a most dear son»; he gave him various pieces of advice in which stands out that of making himself loved.²⁹ Don Bosco insists: «it is not enough to love», it is necessary to know how to make «oneself loved».

«The greatest art is the art of love,» – William of Saint Thierry taught. “Nature itself and God the artificer of nature have kept its teaching to themselves. Because love, which is given life by the Creator of nature, if its natural purity is not sullied by foreign affections, teaches itself: but only to those who let themselves be taught by it or to be taught by God. Love, in fact, is a power of the soul, which leads it, as though by a natural inclination to the place and to the end which is proper to it». ³⁰

The art of love, love for the truth, is learned from the way of life of Christ chaste, poor and obedient, humble and temperate, directed to charity. Consecrated life becomes in this way *confessio Trinitatis, signum fraternitatis, servitium caritatis*,³¹ a luminous prophetic witness, an epiphany of the way of life of Jesus, an incisive presence within the Church and a paradoxical and attractive prophecy in a bewildered and confused world.

13. «The ecclesiastical awareness of our Founder,» – wrote the Rector Major of the Society, Fr Egidio Viganò, in 1985 – “was concretely expressed from a pedagogical point of view in some strong and practical rules of conduct as far as faith was concerned. He expressed them in all simplicity in three great attitudes which gradually took on the name of “devotions”: to *Jesus Christ* the Saviour and Redeemer, present in the central action of the Church, the Eucharist; to *Mary*, Model and Mother of the Church, seen in history as the Help of Christians; and to the *Pope*, Peter’s Successor, placed at the head of the College of Bishops for the pastoral service of the whole Church». ³²

«No effort should be spared,» - Don Bosco wrote - “when the Church and the Papacy are at stake». ³³ Love for Christ, for Mary, for the Church and for the Pope. May your *sentire cum ecclesia* not only be the concrete task in

²⁹ BM VII, 316-7

³⁰ WILLIAM OF SAINT THIERRY, *Nature and greatness of love*, 1,1-2, Magnano 1990

³¹ cf. *Vita consecrata*.

³² Letter of the Rector Major, in AGC n. 315

³³ cf. C. art. 13.

the life of each Salesian and of the Superiors of the Society, but also witness to the ecclesial dimension of your faith and your commitment in educating the young people in the same way.

14. In invoking the blessing of the Lord on you and on your General Chapter and on your tasks in the coming days, I take up the words of Benedict XVI in the encyclical letter *Spe salvi*: «Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history. But to reach him we also need lights close by—people who shine with his light and so guide us along our way».³⁴ May Mary, *Mother of the Church and Help of Christians*,³⁵ Don Bosco, all the many Salesian saints and blessed be your guiding stars and make you beacons of hope for the whole human race and especially for the young.

Rome, 3 March 2008

³⁴ SpS, n. 49.

³⁵ C. art. 8.

**Address of the Rector Major
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
at the opening of the GC26**

«I am longing to see you so that I can convey to you some spiritual gift that will be a lasting strength, or rather that we may be strengthened together through our mutual faith, yours and mine» (Rm 1, 11-12)

1. Greeting to the Guests

Your Eminence, Cardinal Franc Rodé, Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life,
Your Eminence, Cardinal Raffaele Farina, Librarian and Archivist of the Holy Roman Church,
Your Eminence, Cardinal Miguel Obando Bravo,
Your Eminence, Cardinal Joseph Zen,
Your Grace, Archbishop Angelo Amato, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,
Your Grace, Archbishop Gianfranco Gardin, Secretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life,
Your Lordship Bishop Gino Reali, Bishop of Porto and Santa Rufina,
Your Grace, Archbishop Francesco Brugnaro, Archbishop of Camerino, Past Pupil and Cooperator,
Your Lordships the Salesian Bishops, Bishop Carlo Chenis, Archbishop Zef Gashi, Archbishop Stanislav Hocevar, Archbishop Calogero La Piana, Archbishop Basile Mvé, Bishop Pierre Pican, Bishop Peter Stump, Bishop Luc Van Looy, Bishop Adrian van Luyn, Bishop Rosario Vella,
Reverend Sister Enrica Rosanna, Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life,
Reverend Mother Antonia Colombo, Superior General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,

Sisters and Brothers, Official Representatives of the various Groups of the Salesian Family,

Reverend Father Pietro Trabucco, Secretary General of the Union of Superiors General,

Reverend Father Mario Toso, Rector of the Salesian Pontifical University.

In the name of the whole Chapter Assembly, I heartily thank you for your presence on this occasion, specially significant for the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, and I want to say how gratifying to all of us is your participation, honouring the opening of our XXVI General Chapter and encouraging us in our work.

2. Welcome to the Chapter Members

My Dear Confreres, Members of the Chapter, Provincials and Superiors of Vice Provinces, Provincial Delegates, invited Observers, who have come from all parts of the world to take part in this important assembly of our beloved Congregation.

To all of you I want to give a welcome from the heart of Don Bosco. Feel yourselves at home and make yourselves at home! Don Bosco's house is your house. The Generalate too is Don Bosco's house, just as was that at Valdocco, where in a spirit of prayer and contemplation we wanted to make a start at the very beginning of this Assembly; just as was the little house at the Becchi, on the front of which is the inscription with Don Bosco's words: "This is my house".

The "starting afresh from Don Bosco", the central theme of the Chapter, is an invitation addressed to the whole Congregation. It has taken us to the places where our beloved Father and Founder, docile to the voice and to the action of the Holy Spirit, began and developed that charism, of which we are heirs, guarantors, witnesses and communicators. The Becchi and Valdocco are the cradle of our charismatic experience. There is our identity, because there we were all born, as the psalmist full of joy thinking of the city of God sings: "all shall be her children; in you all find their home". (*Psalm 86*).

Our DNA is the same as that of our Father Don Bosco, whose genes are the passion for the salvation of the young, confidence in the value of a high standard of education, the capacity to involve many people to the extent of creating a vast movement of people capable of sharing, by the mission to youth, the mysticism of "*da mihi animas*" and the asceticism of "*cetera tolle*". To-

gether with you I express the most fervent hope that our Chapter may be a launching pad for the starting afresh from Don Bosco to arrive at 2015, when with joy and gratitude we shall celebrate the second centenary of his birth.

3. The General Chapter

I wanted to begin this opening address with the quotation from Saint Paul to the Romans, because to me it seems to express what is in my heart and what I am expecting from this assembly. If it is true that any General Chapter is an event that goes far beyond the formal implementation of what the Constitutions prescribe, with greater reason I think the GC26 needs to be so. It will be a Pentecostal event, that will have the Holy Spirit as its main protagonist. It will unfold between memory and prophecy, between gratitude faithful to the origins and unconditional openness to the newness of God. And all of us will play our full part, with our responsibilities and our expectations, with a wealth of experience, ready to listen, to discern, to accept the will of God for the Congregation.

Bringing us together is God Himself, Who continually and at all times calls and sends his prophets, so that there may be life in abundance for all. The calls of God require generosity, total dedication and readiness also for suffering in order "to give life"; life does not come to birth without "the pangs of birth". God does not issue an invitation to consolidate situations of stagnation or even death, but sends His Spirit to give fresh life and vitality, to transform people and through them to renew the face of the earth.

I cannot but recall at this point the penetrating vision of Ezekiel about the people of God in exile, deprived of King, Temple and Law. On the dry bones, on this dead people, God sends the Spirit and behold sinews reappear and flesh grows. He covers these bodies with skin and breathes on them his breath of life (cf. *Ezek 37*, 8seq). Certainly the new life that God wants to offer the world can meet with a psychological and spiritual resistance to "being born from above" (*Jn 3*, 3), as with Nicodemus. On the contrary, what is being asked of us is the readiness demonstrated by Abram who allows himself to be guided by the God of the promise (cf. *Gen 12*, 1-3); he does not cling even to the long-awaited son and is ready to give up Isaac, not hesitating to sacrifice him rather than lose his God. Again in terms of this total availability, the perfect model of unlimited openness is the Virgin Mary, ready to set aside her own plans to take up that of God (cf. *Lk 1*, 35ss).

The GC26 opens onto something new and without precedent. The need to return to the origins is urging us on. We are being called to find inspiration in the apostolic passion of Don Bosco himself. We are being invited to draw on the living streams of the charism, and at the same time to open ourselves with daring and creativity to new ways of expressing it nowadays. For us it is like discovering new facets of the same diamond, our charism, that will allow us to respond better to the circumstances of the young, to understand and serve their new forms of poverty, to provide new opportunities for their human development and their education, for their journey of faith and for their fullness of life.

It is important, dear Chapter members, that each one of us enters deeply into harmony with God who is calling us "today" so that the inspiration and the strength of His Spirit are not grieved in our hearts, silenced on our lips, deformed in our thinking (cf. Eph 4, 30). All of this means that the effort we are called upon to make is to open as wide as possible our "spiritual" receptivity, to discover deep within ourselves the will of God for the Congregation and always to conform our thoughts and our words to the Word of God. May the words that each one of us will feel called upon to pronounce, bear as little as possible the weight of the flesh, since «that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit» (Jn 3, 6).³⁶

4. Attitudes for a full participation in the GC26

How then are we to live the Chapter experience constructively? What kind of commitment should each Chapter member make? With what attitudes are we to participate in the General Chapter?

Cultivating the prophetic spirit

The awareness of being called together by God reawakens in us the sense of our being dependent on Him and the acceptance deep down of the mission He has entrusted to us. This demands from us a constant, humble, obedient listening attitude. Unlike being at a congress or a convention, where often a dialectical atmosphere prevails, we are here to spend time in discernment and discussion about the life of the Congregation, about our charism, which is a great gift from God for the Church and for the young.

³⁶ Cf. V. BOSCO, *Il Capitolo: momento di profezia per tenere il passo di Dio*, Elle Di Ci, Torino 1980, p 8.

We cannot take the role of spectators. That would change the event into a simple fact of history; nothing would remain of it apart from some vague memory, incapable of creating the genuine transforming dynamics that change history. This is precisely the task of the prophet: moved by the Spirit of Christ and a bearer of the Word of God, he is capable of changing history. For this to become our experience, the GC26 requires from us our total involvement. We are all being called to play our part in this event with a sense of responsibility, recognising its vital importance, and each day renewing in ourselves deep interest and openness to the journey that the Spirit is leading us to make.

The Chapter will be significant and fruitful if it moves on from being a simple "event", that takes place in time and space, to being a profound "experience" which, above all, touches our very being. And it will, if in carrying out the Chapter, we are able to find God. From that moment, regeneration and rebirth will begin; and then we shall be able to communicate to all the confreres in the Congregation «that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands» (*IJn* 1, 1).

Personal development and service to the Congregation, which come into play in the Chapter experience, go hand in hand. Often one hears it said that taking part in a General Chapter is an intense experience of ongoing formation; and this is true. Nevertheless, personally, I prefer to speak of a charismatic experience in the deepest sense of the term, that is to say, of an experience of the Spirit, and in terms of an assembly, of a truly communitarian Pentecost.

It is not only a question of not disappointing the confreres, but of not throwing away an "acceptable time," a "kairós", and thus not disappointing God and the young, the two poles that shape our identity, around which our life revolves, and our service to whom justifies our existence.

Exercising discernment

Precisely because the Chapter is not a congress, but a time of discernment, it needs to be lived with the right attitude, which requires preparation, serious reflection, calm and profound prayer, a personal contribution, a consciousness of one's own conformity and listening to God and to each other.

From this perspective, the days of Salesian spirituality lived at the Becchi and in Turin, and the Retreat, and the two days for the presentation of the Congregation according to the Sectors and the Regions have contributed to

creating the spiritual atmosphere. The ideal atmosphere in which God works his marvels and directs history - also that of our Congregation - is charity: "Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est".

The Spirit acts, breathes his breath of life and scatters his flames of fire wherever there is a community gathered in the name of Christ and united in love. It is the communion of hearts that brings us together around the same apostolic project - that of Don Bosco, and makes unity possible in a variety of different contexts, cultures and languages.

Walking with the God of history

The situation in the world and in the Church today demands that we walk with the God of history. We cannot give up our vocation of being, as consecrated persons, the cutting edge in the Kingdom of God, the watchmen in the world and the sensors of history. Our vocation to be "signs and bearers of the love of God" (C. 2) urges us to become what the Lord expects from all of his disciples: "salt of the earth and light of the world" (cf. *Mt* 5, 14). Notice the two images used by Jesus to describe and identify his disciples. Both are very eloquent and they are telling us that taking up the call to follow Christ is not so much a matter of "doing" as of "being," that it is more a *question of identity* than of efficiency, more a problem of a significant presence than of grandiose enterprises.

Here too, what matters is not so much the renewal of the Congregation or its future, as the passion for Jesus and the Kingdom of God. This is our hope. It is here that the vitality, credibility and fruitfulness of our Institute are to be found. In fact, being open to the questions, the demands, the stimuli and the challenges posed by modern man, in our case those by the young, frees us from every form of hardening of the arteries, becoming tone deaf, stalling, conforming to middle-class values, and sets us on our way "in step with God". So we will avoid looking back and becoming pillars of salt, or deluding ourselves with pointless sprints to the front, that are not in conformity with God's will.

An aspect typical of Don Bosco and of the Congregation has always been a sensitivity to history, and today, more than ever we cannot neglect it. It makes us attentive to the needs of the Church and of the world. It will make us "go" and "go out" in search of the young. This needs to be translated into a Chapter document capable of setting the hearts of the confreres on fire. A text like that will become a navigational chart for the years ahead. This is why it is important to read "the signs of the times," some of

which I wanted to indicate in the AGC 394 in the letter convoking the GC26.

Building on the rock

In my circular letter entitled "You are my God, my happiness lies in you alone" (*Psalms* 16, 2), published in the AGC 382, I spoke about a liberal kind of consecrated life that has already run its course and has no future. Efforts at renewal were made and attempts to grow, but not exactly according to the logic of a life that is consecrated first of all to God. Many experiences confirm the suspicion that attempts were being made to build the house on sand and not on rock. Any attempt to re-found consecrated life that does not take us back to Jesus Christ, the foundation of our life (cf. *1Cor* 3, 11), and does not make us more faithful to Don Bosco, our founder, is destined to fail.

There is no doubt that consecrated life is going through a time even more difficult than that immediately after the Council, in spite of all the efforts made at renewal. In the face of this situation the temptation can arise of a simple return to the past, where security and tranquillity may be recovered, at the cost of shutting our eyes to the new signs of the times, that are urging us to respond with stronger identity, visibility and credibility.

The solution is not in forms of restoration; in fact one cannot remove from consecrated life the prophetic force that has always distinguished it and makes it dynamic and counter-cultural. As I have already said several times, what is at stake during the next six years is not the survival but the prophetic witness of our Congregation. We should not therefore cultivate an "institutional tenacity", trying to prolong life at all costs; rather we need to seek, with humility, with constancy and with joy, to be signs of the presence of God and of his love for mankind. Only in this way can we be a force that draws and attracts.

Well then, in order to be a prophetic presence in the Church and in the world, consecrated life needs to avoid the temptation of conforming to the secularised, hedonistic and consumer mentality of this world and allow itself to be guided by the Spirit, who raised it up as a special form of the following and imitation of Christ. In this way we can know and accept the will of God for us, at this time in history, and carry it out in our lives with joy, conviction and enthusiasm. «Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect». (*Rm* 12, 2). We

cannot forget that the Christian life, and with greater reason consecrated life, has no other vocation and mission than being «salt of the earth» and «light of the world».

We are *salt of the earth* when we live the spirit of the beatitudes, when we build our lives starting from the sermon on the mount, when we live an alternative life-style. It is a matter of being people who, faced with a society that pursues success, the ephemeral, the temporary, money, enjoyment, power, revenge, conflict, war, choose peace, forgiveness, mercy, selflessness, a spirit of sacrifice, beginning within the family circle or the community and spreading out into society.

Jesus warns us, however, that salt can lose its taste, that his disciples may not be genuine. He says what the disastrous effects of this are: «It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men». Either we are disciples with a clear evangelical identity, and therefore significant and useful for the world, or we are to be thrown away and scorned, we are the unhappy ones, we are nothing. Christianity, the faith, the gospels, consecrated life have a social significance and a public responsibility because they are a vocation and a mission, and they cannot be understood and lived as “for private use”.

This is the meaning of the exhortation with which Jesus concludes his words: «*Let your light so shine before men*». Jesus wants his disciples to make of the sermon on the mount a programme of life. Meekness, poverty, generosity, mercy, forgiveness, abandonment to God, trust, love for others are therefore the gospel works that must be made to shine out, the ones that make us become “*salt*” and “*light*,” those which help us to create the alternative society that will not allow humanity to go completely to the bad.

We, dear confreres, are called to be hope, to be light and salt; we are called to a mission to society and the world, a mission that can be summed up in one word: holiness! Being light and salt means being saints. Article 25 of the Constitutions presents profession as the path to holiness. After speaking about confreres, who, living to the full the gospel project, become for us a stimulus on the path of holiness, it concludes like this: «The witness of such holiness, achieved within the Salesian mission reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young».

John Paul II told us: «it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity... The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this high standard

of ordinary Christian living»³⁷ which is precisely holiness. Paraphrasing Don Bosco, I would say that being saints is fascinating because holiness is radiance, spiritual growth, splendour, brilliant light, interior joy, calm, purity, love taken to the limit.

If it is true that consecrated life is «a divine gift, which the Church has received from her Lord», «a tree planted by God in the Church,» «a particular gift that helps the saving mission of the Church,» and which «belongs inseparably to the life and holiness of the Church» (LG 43 e 44), it follows that the celebration of a Chapter is a Church event in the genuine meaning of the word. It is a veritable “kairós,” in which God works to lead the Church to become ever more the spouse of Christ, in all her glory, without spot or wrinkle.

5. The theme and the aim of the GC26

In a language study following the decision regarding the theme for the GC26, Fr Julian Fox wrote that the word that occurred with the greatest frequency in the writings of the Rector Major starting from the presentation of the GC25 Documents was “passion”, usually linked to “da mihi animas”.³⁸ His conclusion is that it is Don Bosco’s “da mihi animas” that provides the subject matter and the meaning of the word “passion”, frequently used by me in my writings; in other words the word “passion” describes the meaning of “da mihi animas” very well.

This language becomes more marked starting from the International Congress on Consecrated Life, held in Rome at the end of November 2004, which in fact had as its theme “Passion for Christ, passion for Humanity”. As a member of the Executive Committee and of the Theological Commis-

³⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 31 and cf. *Starting afresh from Christ* n. 46

³⁸ The reference is essentially to a sentence in n. 20 of GC25: «Every community is made up of men, living in society, who express the gospel ardour of “da mihi animas, cetera tolle” with the optimism of faith, with the dynamic creativity of hope and the kindness and total self-giving of charity». Each community expresses the Gospel-based passion of the ‘da mihi animas’. So while the RM doesn’t actually mention the term ‘passion’ as the very first thing he wrote to the whole Congregation by way of the introduction to the GC25 documents, he is introducing a document that does, and he soon takes up the twin terms ‘passion’ and ‘da mihi animas’ in subsequent letters anyway. We can say that they were there from the beginning of his consciousness as Rector Major. (J. Fox, 06.04.2006).

sion of the USG, I had the opportunity to contribute to the choice of this theme, which was meant to underline the centrality of "passion" in the witness of consecrated life nowadays.

In Salesian tradition and in the wider context of consecrated life, this choice aimed at bringing us consecrated persons to cultivate a powerful drawing force, an extreme energy - that precisely of desire. The profound connection between "passion" and "Da mihi animas" belongs to our genetic makeup - not on the formal level but the essential. In this, which is a charismatic gift of our founder, the "passion" deeply connects us to God and to the young. The choice of the theme "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*" therefore, was with the desire to go to the roots of our charism, to the "fundamental" spiritual and apostolic choice made by Don Bosco, that he himself left as a programme of life to Salesians (cf. C. 4). This motto, in fact, sums up our charismatic identity and our mission.

Da mihi animas expresses a *mission desired, sought and accepted*. The mission is a gift of God; it is He who wants to be among the young through us, because He Himself wants to save them, to give them the fullness of life; the mission therefore is to be desired, because it is born in the heart of God the Saviour and not in our will. What is more, the mission is a gift to be sought; the missionary of the young is not the master neither of his vocation nor of those to whom he is sent; the mission is carried out in the first place in communion with the Lord of the harvest; this implies a profound relationship with God, the absolute prerequisite of every mission. Then again, the mission is a gift to be accepted; this requires identification with the charism and attention given to vocational fidelity through initial formation and ongoing formation; it will be this fidelity that will protect us from estrangement from God and from the young.

Cetera tolle represents the *interior disposition* and the ascetical effort to embrace the mission. It is a decision to be detached from anything that takes us away from God. This demands from us: a personal and community life that is more simple and poor; then the consequent institutional reorganisation of the work, that helps us to overcome the danger of being managers of works rather than evangelisers of the young; giving attention to the new forms of poverty of the young and of those we work for in general; opening up to the new frontiers of evangelisation and to an profoundly renewed apostolic commitment.

The aim of the GC26 is that of touching the heart of the Salesian, so that every confrere is "a new Don Bosco", his interpreter today! We have de-

scribed this goal saying that the GC26 is intended to «reawaken the heart of the Salesian with the passion of 'Da mihi animas'». We are sure to reach the goal if each Salesian identifies himself with Don Bosco, taking him in his own life as “father and model” (C. 21). To do this we need to renew the attention we give to the Constitutions and our love for them, drawing from them all their charismatic force.

In this regard I should like to point out to you in particular the second chapter of the Constitutions that deals with the “Salesian spirit”. We recall what Don Bosco left us, written in his Spiritual Testament: “If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions”.³⁹ And Don Rua tells us: «When the Venerable D. Bosco sent his first sons to America, he wanted the photograph to show him in the middle of them in the act of handing Don Giovanni Cagliero, leader of the expedition, the book of our *Constitutions*. How much D. Bosco was saying with that gesture! ... I should like to accompany you myself, comfort you, console you, protect you. But what I cannot do this little book will do. Take care of it like a most precious treasure». ⁴⁰ And finally Don Rinaldi used to say: “All of Don Bosco is to be found in it”.

6. Charismatic identity and apostolic passion

The theme of the GC 26 “*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*” has as a sub-title the expression “charismatic identity and apostolic passion”. At the end of the day, the profound renewal that the Congregation needs at this historic hour and towards which this General Chapter is directed, depends on the inseparable union of these two elements. As I see it, the classic dilemma between “charismatic identity and social relevance” has to be overcome right from the start. In fact, this is not a problem at all: in fact it is not a question of two independent factors, and opposing the one to the other can lead to ideological positions which distort consecrated life, becoming the cause of useless tension and fruitless efforts, and producing a sense of failure. I therefore ask myself: where can you find the Salesian identity, that which would guarantee the social relevance of the Congregation, demonstrated in the “Salesian phenomenon”, as Paul VI called it, the fruit of its incredible vocational growth and its expansion world-wide?

³⁹ Cf. “From the spiritual testament of Saint John Bosco”, WRITINGS OF DON BOSCO, in “Constitutions and Regulations,” ed. 2003, p. 269.

⁴⁰ Circular Letter of 1 December 1909, in LETTERE CIRCOLARI DI DON MICHE RUA AI SALESIANI, Direzione Generale delle Opere Salesiane, Torino 1965, p. 498.

We are today experiencing what is happening to the Church. She «is constantly faced with two sacred imperatives that keep her in an irresolvable tension. On the one hand she is tied to the living memory, to the theoretical assimilation and to the historical response to the revelation of God in Christ, which is the origin and foundation of her existence. On the other she is tied to and sent out for the generous communication of the salvation offered by God to all mankind, which she carries out through evangelisation, the celebration of the sacraments, a living witness and the generous collaboration of each of her members. *Care of the identity and the exercise of the mission are equally sacred*. When fidelity to the origins and preoccupation about the identity are disproportionate or excessive, the Church is turned into a sect and succumbs to fundamentalism. When preoccupation about her relevance to society and to the common causes of humanity is carried to the extreme, in which her own original sources are forgotten, then the Church is on the brink of collapse and, in the end, of insignificance».⁴¹

Here then are the two constitutive elements of the Church and, hence of the Congregation: her *identity*, that consists in being disciples of Jesus Christ, and her *mission*, which is concerned with working for the salvation of mankind, in our case of the young. The obsessive preoccupation with identity leads to fundamentalism and so relevance is lost. Anxiety about social relevance in carrying out the mission, at any price and at the cost of the loss of the identity, on the other hand, leads to the loss of the sense of “being Church”.

This means that the fidelity of the Church, and *a fortiori* that of the Congregation, depends on the inseparable union of these two factors: charismatic identity and social relevance. Often considering these two elements as antagonists or simply separating them, “either identity or relevance”, we can fall into a false understanding of consecrated life, thinking that if there is great emphasis on the identity of faith and of the charism, social commitment can suffer and consequently there can be little significance to our lives. We are forgetting that “faith apart from works is barren” (*James* 2,20). It is not a matter of alternatives but of their integration!

Speaking about the renewal of consecrated life in n. 2 of the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* the Second Vatican Council proposed this basic guidance: “The appropriate renewal of religious life involves two *simultaneous* processes, a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life, and to the

⁴¹ O. GONZÁLEZ DE CARDENAL, *Ratzinger y Juan Pablo II. La Iglesia entre dos milenios*, Ed. Sígueme, Salamanca 2005, pp. 224 ss.

original inspiration behind a given community and an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times”.

There are three aspects to this programme of renewal: 1) a continuous return to the sources of all Christian life; 2) a continuous return to the original inspiration behind a given community; 3) an adjustment of the community to the changed conditions of the times. However, there is first of all a criterion that becomes normative, that is to say, the three requirements for reform go together: *simul*. There can be no appropriate renewal with only one element taken into account. Perhaps this has been the mistake of some failed attempts at the reform of consecrated life. In the period immediately after the Council, while some emphasised the original inspiration behind the community through a strong identity, others opted for an adjustment to the new situation of the contemporary world with a stronger social commitment. In this way both polarisations remained unfruitful and without any effective convincing force.

On several occasions I have shared with others the deep impression that a visit to the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity in Calcutta made on me, precisely on account of the particular conviction that Mother Teresa had been able to transmit to her Sisters: the more you devote yourself to working for those no one cares about, the poorest and the most needy, the more you need to express the different approach, the fundamental reason for this preoccupation, that is Christ Crucified. The only way in which the witness of consecrated life becomes clear is when it is capable of revealing that *Deus caritas est*. Mother Teresa wrote: “A more profound prayer leads you to a more vibrant faith, a more vibrant faith to a more expansive love, a more expansive love to a more selfless self-giving, and more selfless self-giving to lasting peace”.

Identification with contemporary society, without a profound identification with Jesus Christ, loses its symbolic capacity and its inspirational force. Only this inspiration can make possible the different approach of which society has need. Mere identification with a social group or with a particular political programme, even one with a strong impact on society, is no longer eloquent nor credible. There are other institutions and organisations in today's world for this purpose.

See what Don Bosco managed to do in an extraordinary way. Our Constitutions in article 21 present this in masterly fashion, speaking about Don Bosco as father and teacher and offering him to us as our model. Three reasons are given:

- a) He succeeded in his own life in achieving a *splendid blending of nature and grace*:
- deeply human
 - rich in the qualities of his people
 - he was open to the realities of this earth
 - *This then is his identity.*
 - deeply a man of God
 - filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit
 - he lived as seeing him who is invisible
- b) These two aspects combined in a *closely-knit life project: the service of the young*
- with firmness and constancy
 - in the midst of difficulties and fatigue
 - with the sensitivity of a generous heart
 - he took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young.
 - *In this was his relevance.*
- c) In truth *he only had at heart souls.*
- totally consecrated to God and fully dedicated to the young
 - he educated by evangelising and he evangelised by educating
 - *Here then the grace of unity.*

Today the Congregation is in need of this conversion, which at one and the same time will help us recover our charismatic identity and apostolic passion. Our commitment to the salvation of the young, especially the poorest, necessarily flows from our charismatic identification.

In Don Bosco holiness shines out in his works, it is true; but the works are only the expression of his life of faith. Union with God is living his own life in God; it is being in His presence; it is participation in the divine life that is within us. Don Bosco made God's revelation and his Love the reason for his life, according to the logic of the theological virtues: with a faith that becomes a fascinating sign for the young, with a hope that was an enlightening word for them, with a charity that became gestures of love in their regard.

7. Conclusion

My Dear Confreres, members of the Chapter, on 3 April 2002 I was elected Rector Major by the GC25 and on the following days the Vicar and the other Councillors for Sectors and Regions were elected with the task of animating and governing the Congregation for the six year period 2002-2008.

During these six years we have tried to carry out this role to the full, putting our very best efforts into it.

Fr Luc Van Looy, after less than a year was called by the Holy Father to the episcopal ministry as Bishop of the Diocese of Ghent in Belgium. This obliged us to appoint a new Vicar, Fr Adriano Bregolin, and consequently a new Regional for Italy and the Middle East in the person of Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli. One of us, Fr Valentín De Pablo, died while carrying out the Extraordinary Visitation of the AFO Vice Province. Two Councillors Fr Antonio Domenech and Fr Helvécio Baruffi have been sorely tried by sickness. And finally on 23 January Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa, Councillor for Social Communication, was appointed Bishop by the Holy Father, who entrusted to him the demanding role of Auxiliary in the Archdiocese of Sao Paulo.

While I thank each one of the Councillors for their closeness to me, and for their loyal, generous and expert collaboration in the different roles entrusted to them, today it is time once again to let the Chapter Assembly, which represents the highest expression of authority in the life of the Congregation, speak. To all of you then, dear Confreres the floor, but also an invitation to open your hearts to the Spirit, the great Master of the interior life that He may guide us towards the truth and the fullness of life.

I conclude, entrusting this Pentecostal event of our Congregation to the Madonna, to Mary Help of Christians. She has always been present in our history and she will not be lacking in her presence and her help on this occasion. As in the Upper Room, Mary, well-versed in matters of the Spirit, will teach us to let ourselves be guided by Him «to discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect» (*Rm* 12, 2b).

Rome, 26 February 2008.

Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

Address of homage of the Rector Major to the Holy Father on the occasion of the Papal Audience

Most Holy Father,

We feel great joy and consider it a wonderful gift of God to be able to meet Your Holiness on the occasion of our 26th General Chapter. I am happy to be able to present to you the members of the new General Council elected last week, and all the other Provincials and the respective Delegates from the 96 Circumscriptions into which our Salesian Society is divided. Also among those present are some who were invited as observers. In all there are 233 members, representing the almost 16,000 Salesians present in 129 countries in the world.

The joy that the meeting with the Holy Father evokes in us is the fruit and expression of our Charism. In fact our Father Don Bosco used to say: "*No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake*". (BM V, 383). He had a vision rooted in the certainty of the living presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, in the conviction that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ on earth, in the knowledge that Our Blessed Lady is the Help of Christians. In accordance with these principles he promoted and undertook initiatives, took decisions and accepted difficult tasks, always making the wishes of the Holy Father a fundamental point of reference for his activity and his spirituality. This way of thinking is alive in us, Most Holy Father, and with this, in addition to expressing our closeness and attachment to the person of the Pope, we intend to express our Love and our total dedication to the service of the Church.

The Chapter that we are celebrating has focused out attention on an important key charismatic feature of our Salesian Congregation: "*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*". This short prayer is the motto that Don Bosco chose, from the very beginning, for his apostolate among the young. With it he intended to express at one and the same time, his total dedication to God, a great apostolic passion, and complete readiness for every renunciation, so as to bring his mission to its fulfilment.

During this General Chapter we wanted to examine ourselves in relation to

this total dedication of our Holy Founder to God in young people. We have proposed that we should return to Don Bosco and start afresh from him, with the desire to study him, love him, imitate him and pray to him, applying ourselves to gaining a better knowledge of his history and that of the origins of the Congregation; and all of this so as to "return among the young", in order to listen to their appeals, and in the light of today's culture, to take upon ourselves their worries and their expectations.

We strongly feel the relevance of the Charism of education which we are called upon to bear, Most Holy Father, and we intend to live it intensely for the benefit of youth as an original contribution, and one we make to the evangelising mission of the Church.

The celebration of a General Chapter is always a time for stock-taking and we are happy to be able to see that our Confreres are working with fidelity and effectiveness in so many parts of the world. Thirty years ago the Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò began "Project Africa". As a result of a extensive programme of missionary twinning schemes, it has been possible to so multiply our presence that it now reaches 42 countries on the continent. Today the Confreres in Africa are more than 1,200 and the majority of them are local vocations. In Latin America we continue to work in the field of education with great commitment. Great attention is always given to the poorest young people on the outskirts of the cities, on the streets and also in the least developed areas of the continent. In Asia and Oceania, where the Catholic religion, in percentage terms, is scarcely present, we have witnessed a great flowering of vocations, and evangelisation is being carried out with enthusiasm and great fruit, especially among the tribal peoples. This is so in India, in Indonesia, in Vietnam, in Timor, and as far as the Islands of Fiji and Samoa. A dream we still have in our hearts is to be able to devote ourselves also to the young people of mainland China, and so bring to fulfilment the missionary dream of Don Bosco. When it pleases the Lord to open these doors too, it will be a time of great rejoicing for all the Church and also for our Congregation.

We are aware, Your Holiness, that the "missio ad gentes" is a vocation that is also calling us to a renewed commitment to the continent of Europe, as well as to the more developed areas of the continents of North-America and Australia. Don Bosco is urging us to seek new ways of reaching out to these young people, who very often do not show signs of material poverty, but are certainly suffering from a great spiritual poverty; they are looking for answers but they do not have sincere friends; they are hungry for life and yet have lost the sense of life. Because of all this, the General Chapter is work-

ing towards the formulation of a “European Project”, aimed at re-dimensioning our Salesian presence for greater impact and effectiveness in this continent. That is, seeking a new form of evangelisation in order to respond to the spiritual and moral needs of these young people, who to us appear as wanderers without guides and without destination.

Most Holy Father, while we renew our feelings of filial gratitude, we assure you of our constant prayers for your intentions for the Church and for the world, and with joy we await from you those proposals that can most clearly indicate the way ahead for our Congregation during the next six years, in which we shall be making the immediate preparations for the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco (1815-2015).

We remain always you devoted sons and now ask you to bless us.

Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

**Address of His Holiness BENEDICT XVI
in the Audience to the Chapter Members on 31 March 2008**

*Dear Members of the General Chapter
of the Salesian Congregation,*

I am pleased to meet you today as your Chapter is now reaching its conclusion. I first of all thank Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, Rector Major, for the sentiments he has expressed on behalf of you all, confirming the Congregation's will to work with the Church and for the Church always, in full harmony with the Successor of Peter. I thank him too for the generous service he has carried out in the past six years and offer him my good wishes for his recent renewal in office. I also greet the members of the new General Council who will help the Rector Major in his task of animation and in the governance of your whole Congregation.

In the Message I addressed to the Rector Major at the beginning of the Chapter, and through him to you, the Chapter Members, I expressed certain expectations that the Church has of you Salesians and I also offered several ideas for the progress of your Congregation. Today, I intend to take up again and examine some of these recommendations in the light of the work you are doing. Your 26th Chapter is being celebrated in a period of great social, economic and political change, of heightened ethical, cultural and environmental problems and unresolved conflicts between races and nations. Moreover, in our time, communication between peoples is more intense, there are new opportunities for knowledge and dialogue and a livelier exchange on the spiritual values that give meaning to life. In particular, the appeals young people make to us and especially their questions about the fundamental problems are linked to their intense longing for a full life, authentic love and constructive freedom. They are situations that test the Church and her ability to proclaim Christ's Gospel today with its promise full of hope. I therefore warmly hope that the entire Salesian Congregation, thanks to the results of your General Chapter, may live with renewed dynamism and fervour the mission for which, through the maternal intervention of Mary, Help of Christians, the Holy Spirit brought it into being in the Church. I want today to encourage you and all Salesians to continue on the

path of this mission in full fidelity to your original charism, already in the context of the upcoming second centenary of Don Bosco's birth.

With the theme "*Give me souls, take away all else*", your General Chapter's aim was to revive apostolic zeal in every Salesian and throughout the Congregation. This will help give Salesians a better defined profile so that they may become increasingly aware of their identity as people consecrated "for the glory of God" and increasingly on fire with pastoral zeal "for the salvation of souls". Don Bosco wanted the choice of consecrated life to guarantee the continuity of his charism in the Church. Today too, the Salesian movement can only grow in fidelity to its charism if a strong and vital nucleus of consecrated people continues to form its core. Thus, in order to strengthen the identity of the Congregation as a whole your first commitment consists in reinforcing the vocation of each Salesian so that he may live in full fidelity to his call to the consecrated life. The entire Congregation must strive to be ceaselessly "a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren" (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 22). May Christ be the centre of your lives! It is necessary to let oneself be seized by him and to start out afresh from him always. May everything else be counted "as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" and as "refuse, in order that I may gain Christ" (Phil 3: 8). It is here that ardent love for the Lord Jesus is born, the aspiration to identify oneself with him, assuming his sentiments and way of life, trusting abandonment in the Father and dedication to the evangelizing mission that must characterize every Salesian: he must feel chosen to follow the obedient, poor and chaste Christ in conformity with Don Bosco's teaching and example.

The secularization process gaining ground in contemporary culture unfortunately does not spare even communities of consecrated life. For this reason it is necessary to watch over forms and lifestyles that risk weakening Gospel witness as well as rendering pastoral action ineffective and the vocational response fragile. I therefore ask you to help your confreres preserve and revive their faithfulness to the call. Jesus' prayer to the Father before his Passion, asking that he keep in his name all the disciples that he had given him and that none of them be lost (cf. Jn 17: 11-12), is particularly appropriate for vocations of special consecration. "The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the programme" of your Congregation (*Vita Consecrata*, n. 93). May the Word of God and the Liturgy be sources of Salesian spirituality! In particular, may *lectio divina*, practised daily by every Salesian, and the Eucharist celebrated every day in the community,

nourish and support Salesian spirituality! From this will be born the authentic spirituality of apostolic dedication and ecclesial communion. The flourishing of your Congregation will be guaranteed by fidelity to the Gospel lived *sine glossa* and to your Rule of Life, particularly an austere way of life and Gospel poverty practised consistently, with faithful love for the Church and the generous gift of yourselves to youth, especially the neediest and most disadvantaged.

Don Bosco is a shining example of a life marked by apostolic zeal, lived at the service of the Church in the Congregation and in the Salesian Family. At the school of St Joseph Cafasso, your Founder learned to make his own the motto "*Give me souls, take away all else*", as the synthesis of a model of pastoral action inspired by the figure and spirituality of St Francis de Sales. This model fits into the horizon of the absolute primacy of God's love, a love that succeeds in shaping passionate personalities eager to contribute to Christ's mission to set the whole earth ablaze with the fire of his love (cf. Lk 12: 49). Besides the ardour of God's love, another characteristic of the Salesian model is awareness of the inestimable value of "souls". This perception by contrast generates an acute sense of sin and its devastating consequences in time and in eternity. The apostle is called to cooperate with the Saviour's redeeming action in order that no one be lost. "Saving souls", precisely as St Peter said, was thus Don Bosco's *raison d'être*. His immediate successor, Bl. Michele Rua, summed up the life of your beloved Father and Founder in these words: "He did not give way, he did not speak, did not turn his hand to any task that did not aim at the salvation of young people.... He truly had only their souls at heart".

This is what Bl. Michele Rua said of Don Bosco. Today, it is also urgently necessary to nourish this passion in every Salesian's heart. Thus, he will not hesitate to venture daringly into the most difficult milieus of evangelizing action for young people, especially for those who are materially and spiritually the poorest. He will have the patience and courage even to propose to young people that they live in total dedication in consecrated life. He will have an open mind in order to identify the new needs of young people and listen to their prayers for help, possibly leaving to others areas that have already been consolidated by pastoral interventions. For this reason the Salesian will face the totalizing demands of the mission with a simple, poor and austere life, sharing the living conditions of the poorest of the poor, and will have the joy of giving more to those who have received less in their lives. May his apostolic enthusiasm become so contagious that others also catch it. The Salesian thus becomes a champion of what the

apostolate means, helping first of all young people to know and love the Lord Jesus, to let themselves be fascinated by him, to cultivate evangelizing commitment, to love their own peers, to be apostles to other young people like St Dominic Savio, Bl. Laura Vicuña and Bl. Zepherin Namuncurà and the five young Blessed Martyrs of the Oratory of Poznan. Dear Salesians, may you be committed to forming lay people with apostolic hearts, inviting them all to walk in the holiness of life that develops courageous disciples and authentic apostles.

In the Message I addressed to the Rector Major at the beginning of your General Chapter, I wished to present in spirit to all Salesians the Letter I recently sent to the faithful of Rome concerning the anxiety about what I called a great *educational emergency*. "Educating has never been an easy undertaking and seems to be becoming increasingly difficult today; thus, many parents and teachers are tempted to give up their task and do not even succeed in understanding what the mission entrusted to them truly is. Indeed, too many uncertainties, too many doubts are circulating in our society and our culture, too many distorted images are transmitted by the media. It thus becomes difficult to propose to the new generations something valid and reliable, rules of conduct and worthwhile objectives to which to devote one's life" (*Address at the Presentation of a Letter on "The Urgent Task of Education"*, 23 February 2008). Actually, the most serious aspect of the educational crisis is the sense of discouragement that overcomes many educators, parents and teachers in particular as they face the difficulties of their task today. I therefore wrote in the Letter cited: "The soul of education, as of the whole of life, can only be a dependable hope. Today, our hope is threatened on many sides and we even risk becoming, like the ancient pagans, people "having no hope and without God in the world", as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Ephesus (Eph 2: 12). "What may be the deepest difficulty for a true educational endeavour consists precisely in this: the fact that at the root of the crisis of education lies a crisis of trust in life", which is basically nothing other than distrust in the God who called us to life. In the education of youth it is extremely important that the family play an active role. Families frequently have difficulty in facing the challenges of education; they are often unable to make their own contribution or are absent. The special tenderness and commitment to young people that are characteristic of Don Bosco's charism must be expressed in an equal commitment to the involvement and formation of families. Your youth ministry, therefore, must be decisively open to family ministry. Caring for families does not mean taking people away from work for young people; on the contrary, it means making it

more permanent and effective. I thus encourage you to deepen the forms of this commitment on which you have set out; this will prove advantageous to the education and evangelization of the young.

In the face of these multiple tasks, your Congregation must assure its members in particular a sound formation. The Church urgently needs people with a solid and profound faith, an up-dated cultural training, genuine human sensitivity and a strong pastoral sense. She needs consecrated people who devote their lives to being on these boundaries. Only in this way will it be possible to evangelize effectively, proclaiming the God of Jesus Christ and thus the joy of life. Your Congregation must therefore devote itself to this formative commitment as one of its priorities. It must continue to take great pains in training its members without being satisfied with mediocrity, overcoming the difficulties of vocational weakness, encouraging solid spiritual guidance and guaranteeing educational and pastoral quality in continuing formation.

I conclude by thanking God for the presence of your charism at the service of the Church. I encourage you in achieving the goals that your General Chapter will propose to the entire Congregation. I assure you of my prayers for the implementation of what the Spirit will suggest to you for the good of youth, families and all the lay people involved in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. With these sentiments and as a pledge of abundant heavenly gifts, I now impart my Apostolic Blessing to you all.

Vatican City, *Clementine Hall*, 31 March 2008.

**Address of the Rector Major
Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
At the closing of the GC26**

**The GC 26:
A NAVIGATION CHART FOR THE JUBILEE OF 2015
*Under the banner of "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle"***

My dear Confreres,

Today we bring to an end this Salesian Pentecost. Yes indeed ! This is what the 26th General Chapter was meant to be: a Pentecost, a moment of particular openness to the Spirit of the Lord. The words which Pope Benedict XVI sent us in his message for the opening of our assembly still resonate in our hearts: «The charism of Don Bosco is a gift of the Spirit for all the People of God, but only by docile listening and openness to the action of God is it possible to interpret it and in these times of ours, to make it relevant and fruitful. ... Pouring out on the Chapter Members the abundance of his gifts he will enter the hearts of the Confreres. He will make them burn with his love, He will inflame them with the desire for holiness, urge them to open themselves to conversion and strengthen them in their apostolic daring»⁴².

1. The Chapter event: a short chronicle

In fact, this was exactly how we wanted to live the Chapter: under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that it would be Him to help us to understand better, to bring up-to-date, and to make fruitful the charism of our Founder and Father. During these days we have experienced the action of the Spirit, who inflamed our hearts to make us eloquent and courageous witnesses of the Lord Jesus, to bring to the young the good news of His resurrection and to propose to them the joyful experience of meeting Him.

⁴² To the Very Reverend Don PASCUAL CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, Rector Major of the Salesians of Don Bosco. From the Vatican, 1 March 2008, n. 1

The days spent in the Salesian holy places (Saint Francis of Assisi, Valdocco, Colle Don Bosco, the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, the Sanctuary of the Consolata) were splendid, greatly appreciated by everyone for the opportunity to be in direct contact with the cradle – charismatic, spiritual and apostolic – of our Congregation. For some it was the first time that they had the joy of visiting “our Salesian holy places” for others it was the first time they had listened to a presentation of Don Bosco, not so much based on family anecdotes nor on historical curiosities needing clarification but rather as a spiritual and charismatic experience to live through again. Certainly, those days were for everyone a practical way – and I really hope – a first step “to start afresh from Don Bosco”.

The fruits must be very plentiful: the desire to go more deeply into the spiritual inheritance that has been handed on to us, the commitment to make Don Bosco and our Salesian history better known, the desire to prepare formation personnel in Salesianity and, finally, the desire to make better use of these places linked to our charism.

The presentation of the state of the Congregation, by means of the audiovisual Report of the Departments and of the Regions, was an expression of the intention to do more than just distribute a book with the Report of the Rector Major. The specific aim was to provide the Chapter members with precise information about the state of the Congregation, to foster an overall view and a sense of shared responsibility. The Congregation belongs to all of us and we are all co-responsible for its growth, for its resources, for its challenges.

The *Retreat* was experienced as a real exercise of the Spirit, overcoming the temptation to reduce the spiritual presentation to a collection of study topics or a theological-spiritual updating course. These days of retreat helped to create an atmosphere of faith that is absolutely indispensable for making the Chapter an experience of listening to God, of docility to the Spirit, of fidelity to Christ. To me they seemed to be exemplary – also because it is not usual to find this atmosphere in the experience of other Retreats – the silence, the prolonged personal prayer in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation. It should also be mentioned that the Retreat talks also gave us elements of important insights for a greater theological understanding of the charism, the mission and Salesian spirituality.

As they were developed the topics offered us significant keys for interpretation so as to learn to be men of hope, playing their part in the marvellous

plan of God for the salvation of the world with the *mystica* of “Da mihi animas”, which makes the love of God the drawing force, and with the *ascetica* of “cetera tolle”, which leads us to commit our lives even to our last breath. An important element from this perspective was the clarification of the mission, which does not consist so much in doing things as in becoming signs of the love of God. It is precisely this Love that is the only force capable of freeing in each one of us our greatest potentialities. We know that we have to live all this under the banner of selfless giving and of grace. Only in this way does one achieve that special gift of God, the “grace of unity”, by which *everything is consecration and everything is mission*. As regards those to whom we are sent, we heard how Don Bosco felt himself charismatically “touched” by the danger that could put at risk the happiness of the young, in time and in eternity (“salvation”): *the abandonment* in which they could find themselves as regards God and others, an abandonment caused by their *poverty*, sometimes tragic. For all this Don Bosco is our father, teacher and model. At the school of Mary the Immaculate Help of Christians, he wanted his religious identity to reflect the fact that he had put as the foundations of his life the absolute primacy of God, desire for continuous union with Him, in order to correspond fully to his will (obedience), as the expression of a total love (chastity) in stripping himself and giving up all that might impede his complete dedication to the mission (poverty).

Now I should like to go over with you the stages of this journey of Grace that our General Chapter has been.

The *first week of the Chapter* (3-8 March) was dedicated to the ordinary juridical procedures (presentation and approval of the Regulations of the GC26, the election of the Chairmen), and especially the study of the Report of the Rector Major by the different Regions. These, reflecting on the Report, identified the great challenges that emerge from the state of the Congregation, and, subsequently, the guidelines for the future to be offered to the Rector Major and his Council in view of the planning of the animation and government for the six-year period 2008 – 2014.

The study of the Report was a fundamental element in examining further the theme of the Chapter, taking into account the fact that more than ever this Chapter set for itself the task not so much of the drawing up of a document, as the renewal of the life of the Congregation with the pressing appeal to “start afresh from Don Bosco”. Taking into account just where we are enables us to discover better the path for “a return to Don Bosco”, the elements to be recovered in order to start from him with renewed vigour.

The *second week* (10-15 March) was totally given over to the study of the first three key issues. The questions considered by the Juridical Commission were also presented, especially those which dealt with the configuration of the General Council. In fact it was necessary to arrive at the elections having replied to the requests of the Provinces or of individual confreres. As regards the study of the key issues, the "Working Document" was particularly appreciated as the starting point for the reflections of the Chapter. This, on the one hand, gives clear proof of the good work carried out by the Pre-capitular Commission, and on the other also underlines the validity of the contribution offered to the GC26 by the various Provincial Chapters. I am happy about that because as I wrote in the letter convoking the Chapter, as a process of reflection the Chapter actually began in the Provinces, with the study of the topics proposed and the start of a process of renewal. Thus the Commissions worked on a text that was now Capitular and no longer Pre-Capitular, a document from which to start and not just an aid. The contributions offered by the Commissions enriched and perfected it. It was a matter of being more precise and making changes that were not merely linguistic but meant especially to respond in a better way to the situation according to the variety of the social, cultural, political and religious context in which the Congregation is operating. This was the task of the Assembly which rightly became the true author of the chapter document.

The *third week* (17-20 March) concentrated more directly on the work in the Assembly, discussing the work done by the Commissions. It was the time also when there was an opportunity for the expression of the thoughts and concerns of individual Chapter members who wanted to help to throw light on the topic, to put into words the different sensitivities and views, to lead, from various points of view, to a vote on the document that would be more aware, more personal and more responsible. It should be mentioned particularly that often in the contributions made the major preoccupations emerged. Thus for example, speaking about the *urgent need to evangelise*, it was pointed out that this needed to be understood and practised in the way that we as Salesians evangelise; and this both as regards those who are our priority objective (the young), and as regards reference to the different ways of evangelising. Speaking about the *need for vocation ministry*, this must be done with the same conviction that Don Bosco had to help the young to discover God's dream about their lives and encourage them to at least give God a chance. Vocations – as I said myself in the opening address – are not a mission, but the fruit of the mission, when it is done well. If we add to this the fact that there are huge crowds of young people living in extremely precarious situations struggling to survive, or others who, while not experiencing

problems of material poverty, are living aimless lives, or even wasting the priceless gift with life choices that are not satisfying or that become paths of self-destruction, we cannot but work to help vocations come to maturity. Speaking about *evangelical poverty*, we see in it an invitation from the Lord to make our own his beatitude, living free from the preoccupations of earthly goods, overcoming the temptation to become rich, taking on a style of life that is sober, simple, that frees our hearts and minds from so many things that become an obstacle to our total dedication to the mission, making us less credible. Wealth is a real danger: it makes men *short-sighted* when it comes to values that last (see the rich fool, *Lk* 12,13-21), *hard-hearted* with regard to the poor (see the parable of the poor man Lazarus and the rich glutton, *Lk* 16,19-31), *idolaters* at the service of Mammon (see the words of Jesus on the use of money, *Lk* 16,9-13). It is a question of one of the more disconcerting topics, but also of a choice that has a great liberating power for us and for others. And again: in speaking about the *new frontiers* we need to do so not as activists for human rights, nor as well-intentioned co-workers of NGO, but as consecrated educators, who are trying to respond to the needs of the young, without prejudice to the works we have and which perform a significant service. Therefore I repeat here what I said in the "Overall view and prophetic look ahead" in my initial Report: it is important that the works respond to the needs of the young, with new presences, where they are necessary, or a new form of presence where we are already but need to renew ourselves.⁴³

The *fourth week* (24-29 March) was spent in an atmosphere of discernment for the election of the Rector Major, his Vicar and the Councillors. It was a matter of one of the principal objectives and at the same time one of the most delicate tasks of the General Chapter. Guided by Father José Maria Arnaiz, as capitulars we managed to enter into that spiritual atmosphere that made us aware, free and responsible in order to express our opinion through a personal vote. In general, all the elections took place with tranquillity even if in the assessment made at the end the need was seen to facilitate a greater knowledge of the expectations regarding each Department or Region and to define better the profile of the Councillor to be elected with more information about the names of possible candidates. There is no doubt that in the composition of the General Council many factors come into play: above all the feelings of those whose names are presented as candidates, and therefore cultural sensitivity in carrying out the process, in addition to the legitimate desire to try to achieve a form of representation of the whole Congregation. Nevertheless, the

⁴³ Cf. LA SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES NEL SESSENNIO 2002-2008. Relazione del Rettor Maggiore don Pascual Chávez Villanueva, p. 290

high level of convergence reached in the election of the Rector Major and of all the Councillors was a sign of the unity of the Congregation in the diversity of the elements that make it up.

This unity in diversity had its special expression in the evening after the election of the Rector Major with a celebration and concert. The sustained applause given to the Councillors who had finished their period of service (Fr Antonio Domenech, Fr Gianni Mazzali, Fr Francis Alencherry, Bishop Tarcisio Scaramussa, Fr Albert Van Hecke, Fr Filiberto Rodríguez, Fr Joaquim D'Souza, as well as the Councillors who had died while carrying out their work, Fr Valentín de Pablo and Fr Helvécio Baruffi) was a sign of gratitude for their service undertaken on behalf of the Congregation, in animating a Sector or a Region. Still with regard to the elections one cannot fail to underline a very significant novelty which was the election of the first Salesian Brother as a member of the General Council.

The *fifth week* (31 March – 5 April) began with the visit to the Vatican and the Audience with the Holy Father. The visit to St Peter's Basilica, where we were welcomed by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, Archpriest of the Basilica, gave us the grace to renew our profession of faith in front of the urn containing the relics of the Apostle Peter and to pray before the statue of Don Bosco, asking for the courage to be able to cry out with him "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle". Then the meeting with Pope Benedict XVI was one of the culminating events of the GC26, in harmony with the ecclesial and spiritual vision of Don Bosco. The words of the Holy Father to the Capitulars were received as being enlightening and programmatic guidelines. In the following days the Commissions and the Assembly took up again the study of the first draft produced by the Drafting Group. In this way the work undertaken during Holy Week before the week of the elections was continued, studying the five key issues in commissions and in the assembly. There was also a vote on several issues presented by the Juridical Commission. The week ended with a visit to the Catacombs of Saint Callixtus, where we wanted to go to remember with gratitude the Rector Majors in particular, the last three, Fr Luigi Ricceri, Fr Egidio Viganò and Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, stopping in prayer before the place where they are buried, after the celebration of mass and lunch. In my personal prayer I wanted to thank the Lord for the gift to the Congregation of each one of them. Asking the help and the intercession of these predecessors of mine, I also asked for all the Confreres the grace to know how to go to the sources of our own identity ("return to Don Bosco") to find a path for the future ("starting afresh from Don Bosco"). Our future path of fidelity starts from fidelity to those who have gone before us.

I won't hide from you that I often asked myself: «But is this really a Pentecostal experience? Is the Spirit really acting through us to renew the Congregation warming the hearts of the confreres?» I believe the answer is yes. The Holy Spirit doesn't change the external circumstances of life but the inner; He has the power to renew people and to transform the earth. He has acted primarily in each one of us, bringing us together, involving us in a shared project, making us responsible for drawing up all that makes possible a freshness of identity of visibility and of credibility in our life and in our mission.

As regards the work done by the Juridical Commission this examined each of the proposals that arrived from Provincial Chapters, from individual confreres, from the General Council and from Capitulars. All this so as to give a clear presentation to the Assembly which then had to express its opinion. Reading the history of the Congregation, we become aware of the impact the various General Chapters had for the configuration of the structures of animation and government at the various levels (local, province and world). Certainly to arrive at some changes in the structures several General Chapters were needed; and this not because of tardiness or the lack of courage in introducing significant changes, but rather because it was not always possible to have a complete vision of what was entailed in these decisions. A return also in this General Chapter to a reflection on some aspects of the current configuration of the General Chapter means that there is a need for a serious study with alternative solutions, that can present a proposal that is really innovative and valid in its entirety. From all this there emerged a first directive approved by the Chapter Assembly: that of carrying out in the course of the six-year period an assessment of the central Government of the Congregation (its composition and functioning), in such a way that the service it gives can be more effective and closer to the confreres.

2. A 'prophetic' reading: towards an "understanding" of what happened

The Chapter has produced a document, with five work schemes, that are interdependent, on the major topics already indicated in the letter of convocation: "the return to Don Bosco so as to start afresh from him"; "the need for evangelisation", "the need for vocation ministry", "evangelical poverty" and "the new frontiers". These work schemes were intended to make the motto "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle" more concrete, applying the outline scheme already known from the GC25 (God's Call, Situation, Course of action) and enriched with some criteria for assessment, which assist with the goals to be

reached: the mentality to be brought to maturity and the structures to be changed.

I think that the final document really is good and constructive, taking account of the variety of contexts and situations in which the Congregation is to be found incarnating the charism of Don Bosco. It is now up to each Region and Province to work on putting into context the major courses of action with the subsequent procedures so that they respond better to the actual situations and concrete challenges.

I am sure that all the Confreres will find stimulating pages that will help to give dynamism to their lives and to carry out well the Salesian mission. Perhaps overall it may not seem very radical; and yet I am convinced that if taken to heart, it will give rise to enthusiasm and above all, enable everyone to renew themselves spiritually and recover their apostolic zeal.

The document presupposes a good knowledge of the situation in society and that of the Congregation and expresses the desire to bring about there a transformation. The Holy Father in his address to the GC26, on 31 March reminded us of this: «Your 26th Chapter is being celebrated in a period of great social, economic and political change, of heightened ethical, cultural and environmental problems and unresolved conflicts between races and nations. Moreover, in our time, communication between peoples is more intense, there are new opportunities for knowledge and dialogue and a livelier exchange on the spiritual values that give meaning to life. In particular, the appeals young people make to us and especially their questions about the fundamental problems are linked to their intense longing for a full life, authentic love and constructive freedom. They are situations that test the Church and her ability to proclaim Christ's Gospel today with its promise full of hope».⁴⁴

In fact, one cannot speak about evangelisation or vocations, about simplicity of life and new frontiers without having in mind the scenario of where we are living and working and the challenges that Salesian life and its mission are facing.

We have had before our minds the faces and the urgent demands of the most needy youngsters, those to whom our mission is addressed. We have chosen them as "the objects of our predilection", precisely because predilection for the poor "is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor

⁴⁴ *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*. Monday-Tuesday 31 March-1 April 2008, p. 8

for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty”⁴⁵. Such faith was that practised by Don Bosco and passed on in Salesian tradition (cf. C. 11).

What therefore are the keys to interpreting the document?

– The first: **Warming the heart** of the confreres, starting afresh from Christ and from Don Bosco. It is not a question of producing a superficial feeling or passing enthusiasm. What is involved is the laborious and urgent task of a conversion, of a return to the desert – as it was for Israel –, in order to meet there one’s first love, the one who enchanted us and filled our life with a promise and a future (cf. Hos 2,16-25). We need to encounter the Lord who comes to speak to us heart to heart, who helps us to rediscover our best energies, those that flow from the heart; who comes to give joy and enchantment once again to our lives and help us to deepen our motivations, to strengthen our convictions, to spur us on to follow a path marked by fidelity to the covenant, giving order to our personal, community and institutional lives according to the values of the Gospel and according to the Don Bosco’s charism.

There comes to mind the story of that “good and dutiful” monk, who went to his Abbot to ask for a piece of advice to improve his life, according to the stories told by the Fathers of the desert:

Once upon a time - it is told - Abbà Lot went to find Abbà Joseph and said to him:

- – *Abbà, as far as I can, I follow a little rule, I practise all the small fasts, I pray and meditate a little, I keep myself calm, as far as I can, I keep my thoughts pure. What else should I do?*
Then the old monk stood up, raised his hands to heaven and his fingers became ten torches of fire. And he said:
- – *Why don’t you change into fire?*⁴⁶

This is the aim to be reached with this Chapter: transform ourselves into fire! The story takes us straight back to the eloquent and meaningful scene of Pentecost: «Something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit» (Acts 2,3-4a). “Warming the heart” means nothing else but transforming oneself into fire, having lungs full of the Holy Spirit.

⁴⁵ Benedict XVI, Address at the opening of the V^a General Conference of the Bishops of Latin-America and the Caribbean, n. 3. Aparecida – Brazil. 13 May 2007.

⁴⁶ Quoted by José María Arnaiz, ¡Que ardan nuestros corazones! Devolver el encanto a la vida consagrada. Publicaciones Claretianas. Madrid, 2007, p. 34

All this is in harmony with the motto of the Congress on Consecrated Life (November 2004), in which we wanted to interpret and to live our religious life, starting from a great passion for Christ and a great passion for Humanity.

In the light of these two great passions the main priorities are:

- **Spirituality.** This means a very special commitment so that the Word of God and the Eucharist may really be the centre of the life of the consecrated person and of his community. We are convinced that the consecrated person ought to be the sign and the living memorial of the transcendent dimension that exists in the heart of every human being.
- **The community.** We are aware that the witness of communion, open to all those who are in need, is fundamental in our world and becomes not only support for the fidelity of religious, but also the witness to a form of life that is an alternative to the prevailing model, which often tends to lead us towards forms of individualism.
- **The mission,** to be realised and lived above all on the missionary frontiers such as exclusion, poverty, secularisation, reflection, formation and education at all levels.

It seems to us that these are the “places” where the consecrated ought to be present in order to express the missionary dimension of the Church. However, the mission also includes the “passion” – understood as suffering or confinement to bed – of so many religious who continue to pray for the Church and for the workers in the harvest, and the “passion” as with the martyrdom of so many religious imprisoned and killed because of the Kingdom. They represent the best expression of the Gospel.

If we want to feel our hearts burn and to inflame those of the confreres with passion, we need to follow the same path as the disciples of Emmaus. In the homily I gave the day after my re-election I said “More than a physical road it is a mystagogical process, of a genuine spiritual journey, valid above all today because it shows us our situation: disenchanted people, with a knowledge of Jesus but without an experience of faith, who know the Scriptures but haven’t discovered the Word. Therefore Jerusalem and the apostolic community are left behind and they are back where they started. The road to Emmaus is a pathway that leads from the Scripture to the Word, from the Word to the person of Christ in the Eucharist, and from there back to the community to stay there. There we can see our faith confirmed as we meet the brethren: «Yes it is true. The Lord has risen and appeared to Simon!”

– The second interpretative key is a Missionary spirit or the urgent need to evangelise, not driven by an eagerness to proselytise, but by the passion for the salvation of others, by the joy of sharing the experience of the fullness of life in Jesus.

During the Chapter one of the key issues and at the same time a transversal theme was precisely that of the urgent need to evangelise. The Apostle Paul expressed with a sort of existential imperative: «Woe to me if I did not preach the Gospel!» (*1Cor* 9,16b). This intense missionary sense embodies perfectly the command that Jesus gave his disciples: “You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth” (*At* 1,8). Don Bosco made his own this pressing demand of Jesus and immediately after the approval of the Constitutions (1874), on 11 November 1875, he sent the first missionary expedition to Latin America.

The GC26 invites us to be in harmony with what was the original inspiration of Don Bosco, the missionary dimension of his life, but also of his charism. All this represents a fundamental point of the spiritual testament that he left us. The Chapter just concluded offers us the opportunity to understand better what response we are called upon to give today.

The urgent need for a missionary spirit today is a particularly live issue because in the first place the whole world is once again “mission territory”; in the second place because nowadays, there is a different way of understanding the concept of the missionary spirit, of carrying out the “*missio ad gentes*”. In fact it is undertaken while respecting the different cultural settings, in dialogue with the other Christians confessions and the different religions, and committing ourselves to human development and being the leaven in culture (cf. *EN* 19).

But where did Don Bosco’s missionary spirit come from? What were the reasons for his tremendous missionary zeal?

In my opinion there are three major elements that ought to be for all of us a point of reference.

- *The first is that of being obedient to the command of the Lord Jesus who, at the moment of the Ascension, before leaving this world to ascend to the Father, said to us: «you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth» (Acts 1,8). In this way he gave us the whole world as the field for evangelisation and this until the end of time. For us Salesians, as for all believers in general, the first reason to be evangelisers therefore is in obedience to the mandate of the Lord Jesus.*

- The second element of the **missionary dimension of Don Bosco** is the conviction of the value as leaven and its transforming function that the Gospel has, its capacity to ferment all cultures. In the 'magna carta' of evangelisation the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* of 1975, Paul VI wrote that the Gospel can be inculturated in all cultures, that is to say, it can be expressed differently according to the cultures, without it becoming identified with any one of them. Not even with the Jewish culture in which Jesus was born, in the sense that no culture conforms fully with the novelty of the Gospel. Therefore all cultures are called upon to let themselves be purified and elevated. No genuine evangelisation exists that does not touch the soul of culture, that collection of values to which a person's basis for decision-making makes reference. Every culture is important, because it represents the context in which people are born, grow up, learn to establish relationships, to face up to life, but one also has to recognise that every culture has its limitations and needs the light of the Gospel. Then again, nowadays when we speak about the urgent need to evangelise, we are not thinking only of Oceania, of Asia, of Africa, of Latin America but also of Europe, which more than ever needs the Gospel and the Salesian charism.
- The third element, one that is very specifically part of Don Bosco's charism, is his **predilection for the young**, aware that in the policies of governments and in society in general, in spite of all the declarations, they do not count, and it would appear they need to be resigned to being mere consumers of products, experiences and sensations. But this does not correspond to the Gospel, to the practice and thinking of Jesus, who when asked «Who is the most important?», replied by calling a nearby child to him and put him in the centre. Putting the young at the centre of our missionary focus! This is one of the more specific elements of the rich spiritual patrimony that Don Bosco has left us. And the task that is being entrusted to us is that of taking it to all the cultures where we go and work and where often the young do not count. The greatness of Don Bosco was precisely this: having made the young protagonists, not only in their education, but also in his pedagogical and spiritual experience. Don Bosco, as a priest opening up new paths, believed in the young, and he spent himself totally with his apostolic genius to ensure that they had the opportunity to develop all aspects of their personalities and potential for good, to have their rights respected, to make them responsible (especially the better ones) for the continuation of his work down through history.

In the Chapter, after having re-emphasised the urgent need to evangelise, we have recalled that we Salesians carry out this mission according to the pedagogical charism that is our own. "Don Bosco's pastoral work can never be reduced to just catechism or liturgy, but covers all forms of practical pedagogical/cultural elements associated with the young. (...) It is a matter of that evangelical charity that takes practical form in freeing and fostering the young who are abandoned or gone astray"⁴⁷.

If an education that does not open up the young person to God and to man's eternal destiny is not Salesian, neither is an evangelisation that does not focus on the formation of persons mature in all directions, or does not know how to adapt itself to nor respect the evolving condition of the youngster, the adolescent, the young person.

It is true that in some secularised situations the Church encounters particular difficulties in evangelising the new generations. And even though obviously surveys and statistics are not the last word, and there is need to consider different kinds of religious practice, that can also include forms of deep spirituality, one cannot deny that in various countries there are signs of a progressive de-Christianisation. It can be seen that both religious practice and profound convictions are weaker among the young. "It is a question of the strata of the population that is more sensitive to cultural fashions and certainly more effected by the surrounding secularisation"⁴⁸. There seems to be a divorce between the new generations of young people and the Church. Religious ignorance and prejudices that every day are uncritically manifested by some of the media have produced in them the image of a conservative Church-institution, that opposes modern culture, especially in the field of sexual morality. It therefore becomes normal for many of them to undervalue or relativise all the religious ideas that are being offered them.

Another particularly serious dramatic situation is the break that has taken place in the chain in transmitting the faith from one generation to the next. The natural and traditional places (the family, the school, the parish) are seen to be ineffective in the transmission of the faith. Therefore, the religious ignorance of the younger generations grows, and so, among the young, the "silent drifting away from the Church" continues. "Religious beliefs are being tainted by pluralism and less and less follow church teachings: therefore gradually there is a fall in levels of religious practice: the sacraments and prayer"⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Cf. ASC 290, 4.2

⁴⁸ LLUIS OVIEDO TORRO', "La religiosidad de los jóvenes", *Razón y Fe*, giugno 2004, p.447

⁴⁹ LLUIS OVIEDO TORRO', o.c., p. 449.

It is not easy to determine the image that young people have of God, but certainly the Christian God has lost his central position in comparison with a *God of the media that leads to people from the worlds of sport, music and the cinema being divinised*. The young person feels a passion for freedom and doesn't cross the threshold of the church. There are so many young people who think that the Church is an obstacle to their personal freedom.

Faced with this situation we can ask ourselves: what sort of education are church and school institutions offering? Why has the question of religion been eliminated from young peoples' world? Youngsters, adolescents, young people are by nature generous and become enthusiastic about those causes that are worth the trouble. Why then has Christ ceased to be significant to them?

If she wishes to remain faithful to her mission as the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church needs to learn the languages used by men and women of every time, ethnic background and place. And we Salesians, in a special way need to learn and to use young peoples' language. There is no doubt that in the Church nowadays, but also within our own institutions there exists a "serious language problem". Basically it is a question of a communication problem, of the inculturation of the Gospel in social and cultural situations; a problem of education to the faith for the new generations. Here then a challenge and a task for us today: to be educators capable of communicating with young people and of transmitting to them the great treasure of faith in Jesus Christ.

In the transmission of the faith and of values, Salesian education always starts from the concrete situation of each individual, from his/her human and religious experience, from his/her worries and anxieties, from his/her joys and hopes, giving special attention to experience and witness. It takes care of the pedagogy of Christian initiation, in such a way that Christ is accepted more as a friend who saves and makes us children of God than as a law-maker, who loads us down with dogmas, precepts or rites. The positive and festive aspects of every religious experience are highlighted, faithful to Don Bosco in his dream at nine years of age: "*Start right away to teach them the ugliness of sin and the value of virtue*"⁵⁰

"Evangelising by educating" means for us knowing how to present the best news (the person of Jesus) adapting ourselves to and respecting the evolving condition of the youngster, the adolescent, the young person. The

⁵⁰ G. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory* Don Bosco Publications, New Rochelle 1989, page 18

young person is looking for happiness, the joy of life, and being generous, is capable of making sacrifices to achieve them, if we really manage to show him/her a convincing path and if we offer ourselves as competent companions on the journey. The youngsters were convinced that Don Bosco loved them and wanted their happiness here on earth and for eternity. And so they accepted the pathway that he put before them: friendship with Jesus, the Way the Truth and the Life.

Don Bosco teaches us be at one and the same time educators and evangelisers ("the grace of unity"). As evangelisers we know and seek the aim: to bring the young people to Christ. As educators we have to know how to start from the concrete situation of the young person and succeed in finding the appropriate method to accompany him/her in the process of reaching maturity. If as pastors it would be a disgrace to give up the aim, as educators it would be a failure were we not to succeed in finding the appropriate way to motivate them to undertake the journey and to accompany them in a credible manner.

— The third key to interpretation is the topic of the "**New frontiers**" as the natural place for consecrated life and as a call to become present in those poor places with the greatest needs, from both the religious and the cultural, environmental and social points of view.

Aware that the mission is the reason for our being Salesians and that the needs and the expectations of the young determine our works, in the General Chapter one of the topics that was the subject of considerable discussion was precisely that of the "new frontiers", where the young are waiting for us. It is a question of frontiers not only geographical but also economic, social, cultural and religious. Here we have to act with the criterion that guided Don Bosco's decisions, that is to say, "giving more to those who have least".

I am happy that for a number of years now in the Congregation there has been growing a sensitivity and concern, reflection and commitment for the world of the side-lining and hardship of young people. This situation no longer represents a special sector, identified with some special work or animated by some confrere or other particularly motivated. Attention given to the least, to the poorest, to the most disadvantaged is becoming an "institutional sensitivity" that little by little, involves many works in the Provinces. Social works have multiplied, net-working is beginning and we are operating in synergy with other agencies that work in the same field. It is as though we have begun to "go outside the walls", going around the

city and listening to the cry and the pleading for help from the young. For us all this means renewing our predilection for the poorest, for those most abandoned and for those who find themselves in a situation of psychosocial danger: youngsters who are lost, ill-treated, victims of violence and abuse. With Don Bosco's own heart we feel that we have to find new ways of opposing the evil that afflicts so many young people. We also feel that we have a duty to stem the present cultural and social trend, especially through what is our specific treasure: having an educational system that is capable of changing the hearts of the young and of transforming society. We cannot give as 'charity' what they have a right to as 'justice'. In this year in which the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights is celebrated, we need to move forward and locate all our educational project in the area of children's rights as I indicated in the Strenna for 2008.

Recalling Don Bosco's experience

According to what Don Bosco himself wrote in the "Memoirs of the Oratory", the experience that shook him and led him to a new way of being a priest was the contact he had with the youngsters in the Turin prison. He speaks about it in these words: "I saw large numbers of young lads aged from 12 to 18 ; fine healthy youngsters, alert of mind, but seeing them idle there, infested with lice, lacking food for body and soul horrified me".⁵¹

Here then the first element to notice: Don Bosco looked, listened and knew how to take in the social situation, interpret its significance and draw the necessary conclusions. From this experience there arose in Don Bosco an immense compassion for those youngsters. Being in contact with them he felt a great need to offer them a *welcoming place* and an *education* that met their needs: "On such occasions I found out how quite a few were brought back to that place; it was because they were abandoned to their own resources. Who knows I thought to myself, if these youngsters had a friend outside who would take care of them, help them, teach them religion on feast days... Who knows but they could be steered away from ruin, or at least the number of those who return to prison could be lessened.? I talked this over with Fr Cafasso. With his encouragement and inspiration I began to work out in my mind how to put the idea into practice"⁵².

⁵¹ G. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Don Bosco Publications New Rochelle 1989, pag. 182

⁵² *ibidem*

And so we find the second element to be recognised in the experience of our Father Don Bosco: a pastoral creativity, that led him to produce imaginatively and with generosity appropriate responses to the new challenges. All of this meant that he personally carried the burden of creating those structures that could make a better and different world possible for those youngsters.

It is in this way that Don Bosco thinks above all about *preventing* these negative experiences, welcoming the boys who arrive in the city of Turin looking for work, the orphans, or those whose parents couldn't take care of them, or didn't want to, those who are wandering about the city without any friendly contacts and without any practical possibility of a decent life. He offers them an opportunity for education focused on *preparation for work*, that helps them to recover confidence in themselves and a sense of their own worth. He offers a positive environment of joy and friendship in which they acquire almost by contagion moral and religious values. He offers *instruction in religion* that is simple, suited to their age and one especially nourished by a positive atmosphere of joy and guided by the great ideal of holiness.

Well aware of the importance of the education of the young and of the people in order to transform society, Don Bosco made himself the promoter of *new social projects of prevention and of assistance*. One can think of his dealings with the world of work, of contracts with employers, of free time, of the promotion of popular education and culture. Even if Don Bosco did not speak explicitly about the rights of the boys— it wasn't part of the culture of the time — he worked trying to give them dignity and to help them find their place in society in such a way as to be able to face up to life successfully (“empowerment”).

Here finally the third element, in my view very significant, that characterised Don Bosco's experience. He perceived that it was not enough to relieve the situation of disadvantage and abandonment in which his boys were living (palliative action). He felt himself more and more clearly being led in the direction of making a cultural change (transforming action), through a place and a style of education that would be able to involve many people who identified with him and with his mission. All this meant not only the launching of an Institute (the Valdocco Oratory), but also the stage of the development of that special intuition that led Don Bosco to begin a vast movement for the salvation of youth: the Salesian Family (cf. C. 5). The needs were many. Thus in the first place he tried to get his mother's collaboration, then that of some diocesan priests. With his best

boys he began the Society of St Francis of Sales, then he founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and started the Association of the Cooperators. His mind was a continuous "dream for the benefit of the young". His heart was a continuous "expression of the love of God for the young".

Let us, as Salesians, continue to cultivate in our hearts this passion for the poorest, for the abandoned, for the least. The more I know the Congregation, spread across the five continents, the more I become aware of how as Salesians we have tried to be faithful to this fundamental criterion of being close to and practising solidarity with those most in need, taking to heart those youth situations that society does not want to know about: street children, teenage soldiers, child labourers, youngsters exploited by the accursed sexual tourism, the people displaced on account of war, the immigrants, the victims of alcohol and drugs, those sick with HIV/AIDS, youngsters deprived of any religious sense... As I said before, we can see that nowadays our sensitivity to these things has grown and thanks be to God, continues to improve. Today the work of the pioneers has been taken over by the Institution, and above all a mentality is being acquired that allows us to locate ourselves anywhere with this interpretative key making the option on behalf of those most excluded and the marginalised. It is a grace to hear that in the Congregation this way of thinking is increasing: "giving most to those who have received the least".

While in developing countries the faces of youngsters marked by material poverty stand out, in developed countries the thing which marks them out is the loss of meaning to life, giving in to consumerism, hedonism, indifference, drug dependence. The responses necessarily need to be differentiated. In the light of these major issues that can and should change our lives and apostolic activities, the need we have to be converted to what is essential, to a life that is poor, sober and simple becomes more evident and compelling, to a life that will be the expression of our total detachment from all that can get in the way of our committing ourselves to the very limit to those the Lord has entrusted to us.

3. Decisions taken and a start made to put them into practice: prospects for animation and government.

The issues mentioned above were given a first expression in the various parts of the document. In fact, the main decisions of the GC26 regarding the spiritual rebirth and apostolic zeal have been presented in the "Guide-

lines” for each of the topics. They offer us guidelines to adopt so as to pass from paper to life. In fact they cannot be simply declarations of intent, but need to become real programmes for life, for animation and government, for educative pastoral work.

For the topic “Starting afresh from Don Bosco”, we have decided on:

Return to Don Bosco

Guideline 1

Be committed to loving, studying imitating, praying to Don Bosco and making him known so as to start afresh from him.

Return to the young

Guideline 2

Return to the young, especially the poorest of them with the heart of Don Bosco.

Charismatic identity and apostolic passion

Guideline 3

*Rediscover the significance of the **Da mihi animas cetera tolle** as a programme of spiritual and pastoral life.*

For the topic “Urgent need for evangelisation”, we have decided:

An evangelised and evangelising community

Guideline 4

Put encounter with Christ in the Word and the Eucharist at the centre of our communities, in order to be authentic disciples and credible apostles

Centrality of the proposal of Jesus Christ

Guideline 5

Propose to the young with joy and courage that they live their lives in the way Jesus Christ lived his.

Education and evangelisation

Guideline 6

See to a more effective integration in each setting of education and evangelisation following the logic of the Preventive System.

Evangelisation in various contexts

Guideline 7

Inculturate the process of evangelisation in order to give a response to challenges in regional contexts

For the topic “Need for Vocation Ministry”, we have decided:

Witness as the first vocational invitation

Guideline 8

Witness with courage and joy to the beauty of a consecrated life, dedicated totally to God in the mission to the young

Apostolic vocations

Guideline 9

*Instil in young people an apostolic involvement on behalf of the Kingdom of God with the passion of **Da mihi animas cetera tolle** and encourage their formation*

Accompaniment of candidates to the Salesian consecrated life

Guideline 10

Make explicit the invitation to Salesian consecrated life and foster new forms of vocational accompaniment and aspirantate/candidacy.

The two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation

Guideline 11

Encourage the complementarity and specific nature of the two forms of the one Salesian vocation and take up a renewed commitment on behalf of the Salesian Brother vocation

For the topic “Evangelical Poverty”, we have decided:

Guideline 12

Personal and community witness

*Give credible and courageous witness to evangelical poverty, lived personally and as a community in the spirit of **Da mihi animas cetera tolle***

Guideline 13

Solidarity with the poor

Develop a culture of solidarity with the poor in the local context.

Guideline 14

Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity

Manage resources in a responsible, transparent way, consistent with the purposes of the mission, putting the necessary checks and balances in place at local, provincial and world level

For the topic “New frontiers”, we have decided:

Main priority: poor young people

Guideline 15 (cfr. Guideline 13)

Put courageous choices into place on behalf of poor young people and those at risk

Other priorities: family, social communication, Europe**Guideline 16**

Give privileged attention to the family in youth ministry; improve the educative presence in the media world; re-launch the Salesian charism in Europe.

New models for managing works**Guideline 17**

Review the management model of works for a more effective educative and evangelising presence.

Mentioning the courses of action from the GC26 in this closing address has the purpose of emphasising the importance of their being taken up and ‘inculturated’ on the part of the Regions and of the individual Provinces. They will be the “practical message” of the GC26, which needs to be studied and translated, at pastoral level in the different contexts, identifying criteria for assessment and the elements of evaluation.

I will now say something about “Project Europe”.

Today, more than ever, we become aware that our presence in Europe needs to be re-thought. This consideration as I already said in the address to the Holy Father on the occasion of the Audience he granted to the members of the GC26 – is “aimed at re-dimensioning our Salesian presence for greater impact and effectiveness in this continent. That is, seeking a new form of evangelisation in order to respond to the spiritual and moral needs of these young people, who to us appear as wanderers without guides and without destination”.

It is a question therefore of rejuvenating with Salesian personnel those Provinces most in need to make the Salesian charism more significant and fruitful in today’s Europe. I intend to make clear therefore that:

- This is a project of the Congregation;
- It will involve all the Regions and Provinces in sending personnel;
- To strengthen the communities, called upon to be intercultural and to make Don Bosco present among the young, especially the poorest, the abandoned and those at risk;

- The whole process will be entrusted to the coordination of the three Departments for the Mission.

This project will obviously demand structural changes in the communities of the Old Continent. "New wine in new wine-skins". It is not therefore a work of the simple "maintenance of structures", but a new project to express a new presence beside today's young people. We are moving with the heart of Don Bosco, rich in his passion for God and for the young, in order to collaborate in the social construction of a New Europe, so that it may really have "a soul", so that it may find again its strong spiritual and cultural roots, so that at the level of society it may make room for and give equal opportunities to educational and cultural proposals, without discrimination or decisions regarding social exclusion.

Among the priorities I indicate the most important:

- Creating new presences for young people,
- Encouraging dynamic and innovative initiatives,
- Fostering vocations.

All this should help the Salesians who are working in this context to achieve a way of thinking that is more and more European, strengthening the synergy among Provinces in the different sectors and re-enforcing collaboration at Regional level.

4. Towards the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco: the Congregation returning to Don Bosco in order to start afresh from him

What would Don Bosco do today? We don't know! But we know what he did yesterday and therefore we can know what to do in order to act like him today. It is a question of knowledge and imitation.

We have insisted in this Chapter that it is absolutely indispensable to contemplate Don Bosco, to love him, to know him and to imitate him, so as to discover his most profound and compelling motivations, those from which he drew the energy that made him work tirelessly for the young; his most firm and personal convictions, that led him to never draw back, that rather made him attractive and convincing; his well-defined and clear aims, that made him go ahead, with just one reason to live: to see the boys happy here and in eternity.

Don Bosco felt the drama of a people that was distancing itself from the faith and he felt above all the drama of youth, specially loved by Jesus, abandoned

and betrayed in its ideals and in its aspirations by the men of politics, of finance, and even of the Church. I ask myself whether this situation is not, in many ways, similar to what we have identified in our General Chapter.

Well then, in the face of this kind of situation Don Bosco re-acted energetically, finding new ways to oppose evil. Against the negative forces in society he resisted, denouncing the double-standards and the danger of the situation, "challenging" – in his own way, one understands – the powerful forces of his time. This is what it means to have a pastoral mind and heart.

Tuned in to these needs he tried to respond with the possibilities offered him by the historical-cultural conditions and by the economic situation of the time, and that in spite of some of the opposition from the ecclesiastical world, from the authorities and the faithful. In this way he founded oratories, schools of various types, work-shops of arts and trades, newspapers and magazines, printing shops and publishing houses, religious, cultural, recreational and social associations for young people; he built churches, promoted the missions "*ad gentes*", activities of support for emigrants; he founded two religious Congregations, and a lay Association which continued his work.

He succeeded thanks also to his outstanding gifts as a born communicator, in spite of his lack of financial resources (always insufficient for his undertakings), his modest cultural and intellectual background (at a time when there was a need for a high profile response) and being the heir to a theology and a view of society with severe limitations (and therefore inadequate to respond to the process of secularisation and to the profound social revolutions in progress). Always urged on by great faith in difficult circumstances, he sought and obtained help from everyone, Catholics and anticlericals, rich and poor, powerful and wealthy men and women, members of the nobility, of the middle class, of the higher and lower members of the clergy.

Nevertheless the historical importance of Don Bosco, rather than in the manifold «works» and in certain relatively original methodological elements – the famous "preventive system of Don Bosco" –, is to be found in the intellectual and emotional perception of the *problem of "abandoned" youth* with its moral and social implications:

- In the intuition of the presence, first in Turin, in Italy, and then in the world of a strong sensitivity in civil society and then in the world of "politics" to the *problem of the education of youth* and its understanding by part of the sensitive sections of public opinion;
- In the idea that he launched of the *duty to intervene* on a large scale in Catholic and civil society, as the response that was necessary for the life of the Church and for the maintenance of social public order;

- And in the *ability to communicate this idea to large numbers of co-workers*, of benefactors and of admirers.

Neither a politician nor a sociologist nor a trades unionist 'before its time', *simply a priest-educator*, Don Bosco started from the idea that education could do a great deal, in any situation, if it were undertaken with the greatest good will, commitment and the ability to adapt. He set out to change consciences, to form them to human decency, to civil and political responsibility, and from this perspective he tried to "change" society through education. He transformed the firm values in which he believed - and which he defended against all comers- into social fact, into practical gestures, without any retreat into the spiritual or ecclesiastical order, understood as a place or experience exempt from the problems of the world or of life. Rather, sure in his vocation as a priest educator he was fully engaged in daily activity that was not without horizons but rather the incarnation of values and ideals; it was not a hiding place from nor a rejection of open discussion but a sincere consideration of a much broader and diversified situation; it was not a world limited to a few needs to be satisfied and the place for the repetition in an almost mechanical manner of traditional attitudes; it was not the rejection of every tension, of demanding sacrifice of risk or of struggle. He had for himself and for the Salesians the freedom and the pride of autonomy. Nor did he want to link the fate of his work to the unforeseeable variations of political regimes.

The noted French theologian Marie-Dominique Chenu, O.P., in the eighties of the last century, replying to a question from a journalist who asked him for the names of some saints who had a message that was relevant for the new times, stated without hesitation: "I should like to recall first of all the one who anticipated the Council by a century: Don Bosco. Prophetically speaking he is already a man who is a model of holiness for his work that is a break away from the style of thinking and of believing of his contemporaries".

He was a model for many; not a few follow his example and become in their turn "Don Bosco of Bergamo, of Bologna, of Messina and so on".

Obviously the "secret" of his "success" each one can find in one of the various facets of his complex personality: a most able manager of educational works, a farsighted organiser of national and international enterprises, a most skilful educator, a great teacher, etc. This is the model that we have and we are called upon to reproduce as faithfully as possible!

5. Conclusion

Dear confreres, we have celebrated the GC26 in the liturgical season of Lent and Easter. In this way the Lord invited us to recognise our need for an Easter experience, if we want to achieve the spiritual rebirth and the renewal of our apostolic zeal we so much desire. There can be no life without death. There is no *mystica* of "Da mihi animas" without the *ascetica* of "cetera tolle".

I should like to conclude referring again to a particular experience of Don Bosco. In summer 1846 he fell sick and was in danger of death. After some weeks he got over the sickness and while convalescing was able to return to the Oratory supporting himself with a stick. The boys seeing this got him to sit down in an armchair, lifted him up and carried him in triumph as far as the courtyard. In the chapel, after prayers of thanksgiving, Don Bosco spoke the most solemn and demanding words of his life: «Dear sons. I owe my life to you. But you can be sure of this : from now on I shall spend my whole life for you».⁵³ Don Bosco, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in a certain sense made a novel vow: the vow of apostolic love, of the handing over of his life for the young, one that he will observe every moment of his life. This then is what is meant by "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle", which was the inspirational motto of our General Chapter. This then the programme for the future for the spiritual rebirth and the apostolic zeal with which we want to arrive at the bicentenary of his birth.

I hope that we, and with us all those who identify themselves with the values of Salesian Spirituality and the Salesian Educational System may be able to love the young and commit ourselves as Don Bosco did in carrying out the Salesian mission. It is my hope that the young may find in each one of us (as the boys at the Oratory found in Don Bosco at Valdocco) people ready to walk beside them, to build with them and for them a educational presence that is attractive and significant, able to provide openings and ways of being involved to the extent that it will be able to bring about cultural change.

An Icon that perfectly illustrates this historic moment for the Congregation is the episode of the handing on of the "cloak and of the spirit" from Elijah to Elisha, his disciple (2 Kings 2,1-15). Elijah tried several times to send Elisha away, first at Galgal and then at Bethel and at Jericho, perhaps with the desire to be alone at the time of his death. But *Elisha wanted to be his principal spiritual heir* and stayed with him. How I would really like every confrere, with regard to Don Bosco, to make his own the desire of Elisha to re-

⁵³ cf. *BM* II, 386

ceive two thirds of the spirit of Elijah. Having become the spiritual heir of Elijah, Elisha takes up his cloak and puts on with it the spirit of the master too. Elisha repeats in identical fashion the last miracle of Elijah and that makes the disciples of the prophets certain that indeed "the spirit of Elijah" had come to rest on Elisha.

In this regard the words of Paul VI come to my mind when at the beatification of Don Rua he said that his beatification represented a confirmation of his quality as successor of Don Bosco, as his disciple, of his capacity in taking up and transmitting the spirit of the Father. Like Don Rua, so as to draw on the inheritance of Don Bosco, let us allow God, through our total availability, to work in us as he worked in him.

Here I am then, dear Confreres, handing over to you the fruits of the GC26, in which you have been protagonists. I am giving you a document yes, one that will be our navigation chart for the six-year period 2008-2014, but above all I hand on to you the spirit of the GC26. It was meant to be an intense Pentecostal experience for the profound renewal of our life and mission. It represents therefore for all Salesians the launch pad for the Congregation on the way to the great Salesian Jubilee of 2015.

May the Spirit breathe with His strength on the Congregation so that it may have the courage to ask with Don Bosco once again and always, "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle".

Rome, 12 April 2008

Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AT THE 26th GENERAL CHAPTER

General Council

1	P CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA Pascual	<i>Rector Major, President</i>
2	P BREGOLIN Adriano	<i>Vicar of the Rector Major</i>
3	P CEREDA Francesco	<i>Councillor for Formation – Moderator</i>
4	P DOMENECH Antoni	<i>Councillor for Youth Ministry</i>
5	P ALENCHERRY Francis	<i>Councillor for the Missions</i>
6	P MAZZALI Giovanni	<i>Economer General</i>
7	P BARUFFI Helvécio	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
8	P D'SOUZA Joaquim	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
9	P FRISOLI Pier Fausto	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
10	P KLEMENT Václav	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
11	P ORTIZ G. Esteban	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
12	P RODRÍGUEZ M. Filiberto	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
13	P VAN HECKE Albert	<i>Regional Councillor</i>
14	P STEMPEL Marian	<i>Secretary General</i>
15	P MARACCANI Francesco	<i>Procurator General</i>

Salesian Region: AFRICA - MADAGASCAR

16	P GEGANTONI Genaro	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa Ethiopia - Eritrea
17	P GEBREMESKEL Estifanos	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa Ethiopia - Eritrea
18	P TSHIBANGU Joachim	<i>Provincial</i>	Africa Central
19	P NGOY Jean-Claude	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa Central
20	P PULIKKAL Joseph	<i>Provincial</i>	Africa East
21	P SAHAYA Gnanaselvam A.	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa East
22	P DUFOUR François	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa South
23	P JOHNSON Jeffrey	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa South
24	P JIMÉNEZ Manuel	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa West French-speaking
25	P AKPOUÉ Adolphe-Marie	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa West French-speaking

26	P CASTELLINO Riccardo	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa West English-speaking
27	L JOB Samuel	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa West English-speaking
28	P NGENDAKURIYO Gabriel	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa Great Lakes
29	P GATETE Innocent	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa Great Lakes
30	P BASAÑES Guilherme	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Angola
31	P LASARTE Martín	<i>Delegate</i>	Angola
32	P VEGA DIEZ José Antonio	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Africa Tropical Equatorial
33	P KIFUAYI Grégoire	<i>Delegate</i>	Africa Tropical Equatorial
34	P DE SANTIS Erminio	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Madagascar
35	P SALERNO Rosario	<i>Delegate</i>	Madagascar
36	P LEAL GOMES Manuel	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Mozambique
37	P CHAQUISSE Américo	<i>Delegate</i>	Mozambique
38	P CZERWINSKI Joseph	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Zambia-Malawi-Namibia-Zim- babwe
39	L MAKUMBA Sylvester	<i>Delegate</i>	Zambia-Malawi-Namibia-Zim- babwe

Salesian Region: LATIN AMERICA – SOUTH CONE

40	P GARCÍA Fabián	<i>Provincial</i>	Argentina – Buenos Aires
41	L CEJAS Guillermo	<i>Delegate</i>	Argentina – Buenos Aires
42	P TIRABASSO Vicente	<i>Provincial</i>	Argentina – Bahía Blanca
43	P CAUCAMÁN Honorio	<i>Delegate</i>	Argentina – Bahía Blanca
44	P PALAZZO Leonardo	<i>Provincial</i>	Argentina – Córdoba
45	P YAMANOUCHI Fidel	<i>Delegate</i>	Argentina – Córdoba
46	P LÓPEZ A. Horacio	<i>Provincial</i>	Argentina – La Plata
47	P HAAG Miguel	<i>Delegate</i>	Argentina – La Plata
48	P LÓPEZ Joaquín Andrés	<i>Provincial</i>	Argentina - Rosario
49	P AGUIRRE Adolfo	<i>Delegate</i>	Argentina - Rosario
50	P ZANCANELLA Ovidio Geraldo	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil – Belo Horizonte
51	P FARIA Nilson	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil – Belo Horizonte
52	P DE CASTRO Afonso	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil – Campo Grande
53	P SHINOHARA Lauro	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil – Campo Grande
54	P MEDEIROS Damásio Raimundo	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil - Manaus
55	P ALVES Francisco	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil - Manaus
56	P TEIXEIRA José Valmor Cesar	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil – Porto Alegre
57	P FISTAROL Orestes Carlinhos	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil – Porto Alegre

58	P RODRIGUES João Carlos	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil - Recife
59	P MENEZES A. Alencar	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil - Recife
60	P BIAGGI Marco	<i>Provincial</i>	Brazil – São Paulo
61	P ZACHARIAS Ronaldo	<i>Delegate</i>	Brazil – São Paulo
62	P VITALI Natale	<i>Provincial</i>	Chile
63	P ZURA Juan Carlos	<i>Delegate</i>	Chile
64	P JARA Walter Luis	<i>Provincial</i>	Paraguay
65	P GONZÁLEZ José Pablino	<i>Delegate</i>	Paraguay
66	P ALGORTA Juan M.	<i>Provincial</i>	Uruguay
67	P STURLA Daniel	<i>Delegate</i>	Uruguay

Salesian Region: EAST ASIA - OCEANIA

68	P MOLONEY Francis J.	<i>Provincial</i>	Australia
69	P CAPRA Elio	<i>Delegate</i>	Australia
70	P LAM Simon	<i>Provincial</i>	China
71	P FUNG Andrew	<i>Delegate</i>	China
72	P WONG Andrew	<i>Provincial</i>	Philippines North
73	P MACASAET Martin	<i>Delegate</i>	Philippines North
74	P SANCHEZ Arthur (Jr)	<i>Provincial</i>	Philippines South
75	P VILBAR Roneldo	<i>Delegate</i>	Philippines South
76	P PUPPO Orlando	<i>Provincial</i>	Japan
77	P CIPRIANI Aldo	<i>Delegate</i>	Japan
78	P CALLEJA Andres	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Indonesia – East Timor
79	P DELIMARTA Andre	<i>Delegate</i>	Indonesia – East Timor
80	P HWANG Paul (Myeong Deok)	<i>Provincial</i>	Korea
81	P KIM Francisco (Ok Chu)	<i>Delegate</i>	Korea
82	P THEPHARAT P. John Bosco	<i>Provincial</i>	Thailand
83	P ALCOSEBA Aaron Emnace	<i>Delegate</i>	Thailand
84	P NGUYEN Van Them G. B.	<i>Provincial</i>	Vietnam
85	P NGUYEN Thinh P. Joseph	<i>Delegate</i>	Vietnam
86	L TRAN HOANG L. F. S.	<i>Delegate</i>	Vietnam

Salesian Region: SOUTH ASIA

87	P FERNANDES Michael	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Bombay
88	P COELHO Ivo	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Bombay

89	P	BERGER John	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Calcutta
90	P	CHUNKAPURA Jose	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Calcutta
91	P	POONTHURUTHIL James	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Dimapur
92	P	KURUVACHIRA Jose	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Dimapur
93	P	ALMEIDA Joseph	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Guwahati
94	P	MAWRIE Barnes Lister	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Guwahati
95	L	VALERI Nello	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Guwahati
96	P	MADDHICHETTY Noel	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Hyderabad
97	P	RAMINEDI Balaraju	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Hyderabad
98	P	KUTTIANIMATTATHIL Jose	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Bangalore
99	P	ANCHUKANDAM Thomas	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Bangalore
100	P	PALLIPURAM Varghese	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Bangalore
101	P	STANISLAUS Swamikannu	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Madras
102	P	JOSEPH Andrew	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Madras
103	P	KANAGA Maria Arokiam	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Madras
104	P	LOBO Charles	<i>Provincial</i>	India – New Delhi
105	P	PEEDIKAYIL Michael	<i>Delegate</i>	India – New Delhi
106	P	PIRES Loddy	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Panjim
107	P	NORONHA Romulo	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Panjim
108	P	SUSAI Amalraj	<i>Provincial</i>	India – Tiruchy
109	P	JOHNSON Albert	<i>Delegate</i>	India – Tiruchy
110	P	PINTO Anthony Humer	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Sri Lanka
111	P	FERNANDO Anthony	<i>Delegate</i>	Sri Lanka
112	P	YE MAUNG Joachim	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Myanmar
113	P	SEIN MYINT Edward	<i>Delegate</i>	Myanmar

Salesian Region: NORTH EUROPE

114	P	WÖß Franz	<i>Provincial</i>	Austria
115	P	OBERMÜLLER Petrus	<i>Delegate</i>	Austria
116	P	CLAES Jozef	<i>Provincial</i>	Belgium North
117	P	SPRONCK Herman	<i>Delegate</i>	Belgium North
118	P	BLAHA František	<i>Provincial</i>	Czech Republic
119	P	KOMÁREK Jan	<i>Delegate</i>	Czech Republic
120	P	MARIJANOVIC Ivan	<i>Provincial</i>	Croatia
121	P	ORKIC Pejo	<i>Delegate</i>	Croatia

122 P	PELLIZZARI Giuseppe	<i>Sup. Circ.</i>	East Europe
123 P	PISTELLATO Onorino	<i>Delegate</i>	East Europe
124 P	WINSTANLEY Michael	<i>Provincial</i>	Great Britain
125 P	GALLANGHER James	<i>Delegate</i>	Great Britain
126 P	GRÜNNER Josef	<i>Provincial</i>	Germany
127 P	MENZ Heinz	<i>Delegate</i>	Germany
128 L	MULLER Jean-Paul	<i>Delegate</i>	Germany
129 P	HORAN John	<i>Provincial</i>	Ireland
130 P	ATTARD Fabio	<i>Delegate</i>	Ireland
131 P	ŁUBIAN Sławomir	<i>Provincial</i>	Poland – Warsaw
132 P	KUŁAK Wojciech	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland – Warsaw
133 P	WUJEK Andrzej	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland - Warsaw
134 P	ŁEPKO Zbigniew	<i>Provincial</i>	Poland - Piła
135 P	CHMIELEWSKI Marek	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland - Piła
136 P	KLAWIKOWSKI Zenon	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland - Piła
137 P	KAŻMIERCZAK Bolesław	<i>Provincial</i>	Poland - Wrocław
138 P	DRUSZCZ Paweł	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland - Wrocław
139 P	CHRZAN Marek	<i>Provincial</i>	Poland – Kraków
140 P	GOCKO Jerzy	<i>Delegate</i>	Poland – Kraków
141 P	TURANSKÝ Štefan	<i>Provincial</i>	Slovakia
142 P	IŽOLD Jozef	<i>Delegate</i>	Slovakia
143 P	SNOJ Alojzij Slavko	<i>Provincial</i>	Slovenia
144 L	SUHOVERŠNIK Marko	<i>Delegate</i>	Slovenia
145 P	HAVASI József	<i>Provincial</i>	Hungary
146 P	ANDRÁSFALVY János	<i>Delegate</i>	Hungary

Salesian Region: WEST EUROPE

147 P	VAN DER SLOOT André	<i>Provincial</i>	Belgium South
148 P	BELBOOM Paul	<i>Delegate</i>	Belgium South
149 P	ENGER Joseph	<i>Provincial</i>	France
150 P	FEDERSPIEL Daniel	<i>Delegate</i>	France
151 P	CARVALHO João de Brito	<i>Provincial</i>	Portugal
152 P	PERIERA Artur	<i>Delegate</i>	Portugal

153 P	CODINA Joan	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain – Barcelona
154 P	ASURMENDI Angel	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – Barcelona
155 P	URRA MENDÍA Félix	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain - Bilbao
156 P	VILLOTA José Luis	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – Bilbao
157 P	RODRÍGUEZ PACHECO José	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain – León
158 P	BLANCO José María	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – León
159 P	MORAL LAMELA Luis Manuel	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain - Madrid
160 P	GARCÍA Miguel Ángel	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – Madrid
161 P	GUIJARRO Luis Alberto	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – Madrid
162 P	NÚÑEZ MORENO José M.	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain – Seville
163 P	FERNÁNDEZ M. F. José	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain – Seville
164 P	SANCHO Juan Bosco	<i>Provincial</i>	Spain - Valencia
165 P	ECHETO Antonio	<i>Delegate</i>	Spain - Valencia

Salesian Region: INTERAMERICA

166 P	RAMÍREZ José Pastor	<i>Provincial</i>	Antilles
167 P	LINARES Juan	<i>Delegate</i>	Antilles
168 P	ZABALA Juan Pablo	<i>Provincial</i>	Bolivia
169 P	ORTIZ Javier	<i>Delegate</i>	Bolivia
170 P	CORRAL Luis	<i>Provincial</i>	Central America
171 P	GUZMÁN René	<i>Delegate</i>	Central America
172 P	AUTHIER Richard	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Canada
173 P	PACE Michael	<i>Delegate</i>	Canada
174 P	PERESSÓN Mario	<i>Provincial</i>	Colombia – Bogotá
175 P	ROJAS José Raúl	<i>Delegate</i>	Colombia – Bogotá
176 P	NIEBLES Vidal	<i>Provincial</i>	Colombia – Medellín
177 P	GÓMEZ John Jairo	<i>Delegate</i>	Colombia – Medellín
178 P	SÁNCHEZ Francisco	<i>Provincial</i>	Ecuador
179 P	ESPINOZA Alfredo	<i>Delegate</i>	Ecuador
180 P	CHARLES Jacques	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Haïti
181 P	MÉSIDOR Jean-Paul	<i>Delegate</i>	Haïti
182 P	GONZÁLEZ PLASENCIA F.	<i>Provincial</i>	Mexico – Guadalajara

183 P	DELGADILLO Cornejo S.	<i>Delegate</i>	Mexico – Guadalajara
184 P	AGUILAR Miguel	<i>Provincial</i>	Mexico - México
185 P	HERNÁNDEZ V. José Antonio	<i>Delegate</i>	Mexico – México
186 P	SANTILLI Vicente	<i>Provincial</i>	Perù
187 P	ATARAMA Jorge	<i>Delegate</i>	Perù
188 P	HEUSER James	<i>Provincial</i>	United States East
189 L	DION Thomas	<i>Delegate</i>	United States East
190 P	PURDY David	<i>Provincial</i>	United States West
191 P	TRINIDAD Melchor	<i>Delegate</i>	United States West
192 P	REYES Jonny	<i>Provincial</i>	Venezuela
193 P	BIORD Raúl	<i>Delegate</i>	Venezuela

Salesian Region: ITALY – MIDDLE EAST

194 P	MOLINARI Giovanni	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - Adriatic
195 P	LABARILE Francesco	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Adriatic
196 P	MIGLIASSO Pietro	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy – Piedmont and Val d'Aosta
197 L	BERTAZZI Luca	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy – Piedmont and Val d'Aosta
198 P	BOZZOLO Andrea	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy – Piedmont and Val d'Aosta
199 P	MARTELLI Alberto	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy – Piedmont and Val d'Aosta
200 P	SOSIO Agostino	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - Lombardy-Emilia
201 P	CAMERONI Pier Luigi	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Lombardy-Emilia
202 P	SALA Rossano	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Lombardy-Emilia
203 P	LORENZELLI Alberto	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - Liguria-Tuscany
204 P	MADJIDI Karim	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Liguria-Tuscany
205 P	MARTINO Pasquale	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - South
206 P	CELLA Luigi	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - South
207 P	CRISTIANI Pasquale	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - South
208 P	RIVA Eugenio	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - North-East
209 P	BARDUCA Renzo	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - North-East

210 P	BONATO Giannantonio	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - North-East
211 P	PUSSINO Gian Luigi	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - Rome
212 P	MANCINI Leonardo	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Rome
213 P	COSSU Giovanni	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	Italy - Sardinia
214 P	MORFINO Mauro	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Sardinia
215 P	PERRELLI Vito Luigi	<i>Provincial</i>	Italy - Sicily
216 P	FICHERA Paolo	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Sicily
217 P	MONTANTI Calogero	<i>Delegate</i>	Italy - Sicily
218 P	GIANAZZA Gianmaria	<i>Provincial</i>	Middle East
219 P	SOUCCAR Bashir	<i>Delegate</i>	Middle East

Salesian Pontifical University

220 P	NICOLUSSI Giuseppe	<i>Sup. V. Prov.</i>	UPS
221 P	TONELLI Riccardo	<i>Delegate</i>	UPS

Generalate and the Vatican Community

222 P	BOLKOVAC Stjepan	<i>Delegate</i>	RMG
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Invited Observers

223 P	THELEKKADAN Jacob	<i>Invited</i>	Africa East
224 P	OSANGER Rudolf	<i>Invited</i>	Austria
225 L	SILVA Altair	<i>Invited</i>	Brazil - Campo Grande
226 P	LOOTS Carlo	<i>Invited</i>	Belgium North
227 L	JIMÉNEZ José Luis	<i>Invited</i>	Colombia - Medellín
228 P	GALVE Rafael	<i>Invited</i>	Philippines North
229 L	MARANGIO Claudio	<i>Invited</i>	Piedmont and Val d'Aosta
230 L	THAIPARAMBIL Mathew	<i>Invited</i>	India - Calcutta
231 P	ELLICHERAIL Thomas	<i>Invited</i>	India - Calcutta
232 L	BLANCO Antonio	<i>Invited</i>	Spain - Madrid
233 P	ONRUBIA Luis J.	<i>Invited</i>	Spain - Madrid

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Educative Pastoral Project/Plan

- The community to put into its educative and pastoral plan programmes for proclamation, catechesis and education to the faith appropriate for those to whom they are addressed and for their contexts, 38
- The Province to review its educative pastoral plan with a view to the new evangelisation, 39
- The Province to draw up a plan for vocation ministry as part of the Province's educative and pastoral project, 68
- The Province to ensure that in each work's pastoral and educative project there is a proposal of human development and education to the faith suited to the situation of the poorest young people, 107

Eucharist

- Putting the encounter with Christ in the Word and in the Eucharist at the centre of the community (guideline for action n. 4), 32, 34
- The Salesian gives pride of place to the daily Eucharist, 33
- The community proposes (to the young) the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life, 38
- *Lectio divina* and the Eucharist, lived each day are light and strength for the spiritual life of the Salesian, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26* page 90; *Address of the Holy Father in the Audience to the Chapter Members*, pages 123-124

Europe

- Salesian charism and presence in Europe, among the new frontiers: God's call, 99; situation, 102; guideline for action: re-launching the Salesian charism in Europe, 108
- The Rector Major with the Council to define the nature and the objectives of the Congregation's intervention for a renewed Salesian presence in Europe, 111
- Regions of Europe (deliberation n. 2), 115
- Commitment of the Salesians for a Christian presence in Europe, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26*, page 92
- "Project Europe", cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 147

Evangelical Poverty –

- Evangelical Poverty, 79-97
- Personal and community witness: God's call, 79; situation, 82; guidelines for action, 86-89
- Solidarity with the poor: God's call, 80; situation, 83; guidelines for action, 90-93
- Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity: God's call, 81; situation, 84; guidelines for action, 94-97
- Witness of evangelical poverty, lived personally and as a community in the spirit of *Da mihi animas cetera tolle* (guideline for action n. 12), 86
- The Salesian to cultivate interior detachment, and express his poverty through tireless self-sacrificing work, living the temperance that Don Bosco wanted, 87
- The community to make each year the *scrutinium paupertatis*, 88
- The Province to choose areas of greatest poverty in opening new works, 92
- The Province to rethink initial formation with regard to poverty, 96; cf. also 92

See also: *Poor youth*

Evangelisation

- Urgent need for evangelisation, 23-51
- An evangelised and evangelising community: God's call, 23; situation, 27; guidelines for action, 32-35

- Meaning of evangelisation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ and of his Gospel with words and action, 23. 24
- Evangelisation and education: God's call ("evangelising by educating and educating by evangelising"), 25; situation, 29; seeing to the integration of evangelisation and education following the logic of the Preventive System (guideline for action n. 6), 41. 44. 45
- The Province to review its pastoral and educative plan with a view to new evangelisation, 39
- Evangelisation in various contexts: God's call, 26; situation, 30
- Inculturating the process of evangelisation to give a response to challenges in regional contexts (guideline for action n. 7), 46-51
- Evangelising activity on behalf of the young and families of other religions, 51
- Making good use of social communication for education and evangelisation, 44
- The community to involve and form parents in educative and evangelising activity they undertake for their children; fostering the new forms of evangelisation and catechesis of families and by means of families, 109
- Review the management model of works for a more effective educative and evangelising presence (guideline for action 17), 112
- Evangelisation the main and priority frontier of the mission of the Salesians today, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26*, page 91
- A "missionary spirit" or the urgent need to evangelise, one of the keys to interpreting the GC26, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 137 sq.
- We carry out the mission of evangelisation according to the pedagogical charism that is our own ("at one and the same time educators and evangelisers"), cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, pages 139-141

Family

- The family one of the new frontiers: God's call, 99; situation, 102; guideline for action: giving privileged attention to the family in youth ministry, 108
- The community to involve and form parents in educative and evangelising activity they undertake for their children; fostering the new forms of evangelisation and catechesis of families and by means of families, 109
- The community to develop curricula for affective education especially during adolescence, 109
- The Province to coordinate and sustain the efforts of the educative and pastoral communities in the affective education of the young, 110
- The Province to foster family ministry projects together with lay people and the Salesian Family, 110
- The Rector Major with his Council to offer, through the Youth Ministry Department guidelines for the affective education of the young, 111
- Youth Ministry to be decisively open to family ministry, cf. *Address of the Holy Father in the Audience to the Chapter Members*, page 125

Formation

- Responsibility of each Salesian for his own spiritual and pastoral formation, 20
- Service of the Rector as the first in order of responsibility for formation in the community, 21
- Ensuring ongoing formation opportunities for confreres of every age, 22
- Formation accompaniment for those in practical training and confreres in the quinquennium, 35
- Preparation of confreres and lay people who share responsibility in the area of the pastoral disciplines, 39
- The Province to re-think initial formation with regard to poverty, 96; cf. also 92
- The Rector Major with his Council to encourage through the Formation Department, a more consistent theological and pastoral preparation in curricula for specific formation, 40
- Specific formation of the Salesian Brother, 59. 77

Inculturation

- The Province to study and deepen its understanding of the history of the Salesian charism in its own cultural context, 11
- Collaboration between the Salesian Study Centres to study the gradual inculturation of the charism in different contexts, 12
- Evangelisation in different contexts: God's call, 26; situation, 30
- Inculturate the process of evangelisation (guideline for action 7), 46-51
- The Rector Major with his Council to foster experiences of intercultural communities, 51
- The value as leaven and its transforming function that the Gospel has in every culture, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 138

Jesus Christ

- Centrality of the presentation of Jesus Christ: God's call, 24; situation, 28
- The encounter with Christ in the Word and in the Eucharist at the centre of the communities (guideline for action n. 4), 32-35
- Proposing to the young with courage and joy that they live their lives in the way Jesus Christ lived his (guideline for action n. 5), 36-40
- "May Christ be the centre of your lives! It is necessary to let oneself be seized by him and to start out afresh from him always," cf. *Address of the Holy Father in the Audience to the Chapter Members*, page 123

Laity

- Include specific occasions for the formation and updating in Salesianity for lay people who share responsibility for the mission, 10. 11
Involving lay people who share responsibility in the practice of Salesian assistance, 15

- The Salesian to share his faith journey, the richness of Salesian spirituality and apostolic activity also with lay people who share responsibility with us, 20
- The Salesian community to offer lay people in the educative pastoral community, who have made an option for Christ, a formation which helps them to be educators of the faith, 38
- The Province to strengthen the preparation of confreres and lay people who share responsibility in the field of pastoral disciplines, 39
- (On the part of the Region) to establish criteria and norms for behaviour to be followed by confreres and lay people who share responsibility for the Salesian mission, to guarantee the safety of minors in our centres and to prevent any kind of abuse, 17
- Involving lay people in vocation ministry, 60. 68
- Involving lay people who are competent, trustworthy and share our spirit in the management of the houses and the works, 96. 103
- Fostering with lay people and the Salesian Family projects of family ministry, 110
- The possibility in certain circumstances of entrusting to a lay person the functions of the local Economist (deliberation n. 8), 121

Management of resources (administration, economy)

- Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity: God's call, 81; situation, 84; guidelines for action, 94-97
- Moving from inadequate skills to a more professional approach in administration (process required for change), 85
- Manage resources in a responsible, transparent way, consistent with the purposes of the mission, putting the necessary checks and balances in place (guideline for action 14), 94
- The community to periodically study and assess the objectives and strategies of the work, its own economic situation, financial transactions of the various sectors, planning and management of personnel employed, 95
- The community to make the annual *scrutinium paupertatis*, 88
- The Province to accompany the financial management of the individual houses and make the necessary checks, 96
- The Province to ensure ethical sensitivity in the management of resources; educating the communities to being ecologically sensitive, 96
- The Rector Major with his Council to keep an eye on the management of the financial resources of the Provinces; ensuring effective supervision of the operations of the Provincial Economers, 97
- The Rector Major with his Council ensure that there is an equitable distribution of the resources and that benefactors' intentions are respected, 97
- Local Economist (deliberation n. 8), 121

Management of the works

- New models for managing works (one of the new frontiers): God's call, 100; situation, 103; guidelines for action, 112-113
- Relationship between community and work (deliberation n. 7), 120

Missions “ad gentes”

- Evangelisation in various contexts: God’s call, 26; situation, 30; guidelines for action, 46-51
- The Province to foster the missionary spirit, make personnel available for the *missio ad gentes*, encourage missionary vocations; educate the confreres in initial formation to a missionary sensitivity, 49
- Departments for Youth Ministry, Social Communication and the Missions (deliberation n. 4), 117
- “Missionary spirit”, Don Bosco’s missionary zeal, point of reference for our “*missio ad gentes*” today, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, pages 137-138

New Frontiers

- New frontiers, 98-113
- Main priority: poor young people: God’s call, 98; situation, 101; guidelines for action, 105-107
- Other priorities: the family, social communication, Europe: God’s call, 99; situation, 102; guidelines for action, 108-111
- New models for managing works: God’s call, 100; situation, 103; guidelines for action, 112-113
- The “new frontiers”, one of the “keys to interpreting” the GC26, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 141

Our Blessed Lady.

- Don Bosco was guided by Mary, Mother and Teacher in his mission to the young, 2
- From Mary we learn that a profound experience of God is at the root of our mission, 23
- Mary guide and teacher will help to communicate Don Bosco’s charism, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26*, page 93

Pastoral work

- Dedication of the Salesian to the study of Salesian history, spirituality, pedagogy and pastoral ministry, 7. 9
- Rediscovering the significance of *da mihi animas cetera tolle* as a programme of spiritual and pastoral life, (guideline for action, n. 3,) 19
- The Salesian to take responsibility for his own spiritual and pastoral formation, 20
- Making Jesus the inspiration, criterion and purpose of every educative and pastoral activity, 37
- Strengthening the preparation of the confreres and lay people who share responsibility with us in the area of pastoral disciplines, 39. 40
- The community to examine its pastoral activity in order to check that it is safeguarding both the proclamation in its entirety and the gradual way in which it is offered, 43

- Adapting the frame of reference for youth ministry to the changing cultural circumstances, 45
- Vocational ministry intimately linked with and the crowning of youth ministry, 53. 57. 60
- Collaboration between youth ministry and formation (for the accompaniment of candidates to Salesian consecrated life) 72. 73
- Special attention to the family in youth ministry, 99. 104. 108. 110

Poor Youth, main priority (new frontiers): God's call, 98; situation, 101

- Put courageous choices into place on behalf of poor young people and those at risk (guideline for action 15), 105
- The community to express predilection for the young and for the poor by planning initiatives with the educative and pastoral community dedicated to the poorest young people in the area, 106
- The community to seek responses to the spiritual forms of poverty of the young, 106
- In the Overall Provincial Plan there should be works dedicated to the poorest young people and those at risk; in the educative pastoral plan of each work there should be a proposal for human development and education to the faith appropriate for the poorest young people, 107
- Where necessary, the Province to take the decision to re-locate and re-dimension its works so that they may serve poor young people and ordinary folk, 107
- Cultivate a passion for the poorest, the abandoned, the least, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 144

Prayer

- The community to care for the quality of community prayer and of liturgical celebrations, 21
- The Salesian to make in his personal plan of life the necessary time for personal and community prayer, 33
- When age, health or other reasons prevent a physical presence among the young, the Salesian is to cooperate in the mission to them with prayer, showing interest, and offering his life, 14
- The community is to educate the young to personal prayer and take care of the form celebrations take, 38
- The Province to study the possibility of setting up spirituality centres which offer young people opportunities for prayer, days of recollection and retreats, education in listening to the Word of God and sacramental life, 16
- The promotion of vocations requires constant prayer 54. 56; the community to provide occasions for prayer for vocations, also involving the young, 63

See also: *Eucharist, Word of God*

Preventive System

- Dedication of the Salesian to the study of Salesian history, spirituality, pedagogy and pastoral ministry and of the preventive system so as to put it into practice, 4. 9
- Integration of evangelisation and education in the logic of the preventive system, 41. 45

See also: *Eduction*

Reconciliation (sacrament)

- The Salesian to make good use of the sacrament of Reconciliation, 33
- The community to offer frequently and with educative sensitivity the sacrament of Reconciliation, 38

Rector

- Service of the Rector as the first in order of responsibility for formation in the community, 21
- The Rector the primary animator of vocations, 68
- The Province needs to rethink the distribution of responsibilities in individual communities so that the Rector can carry out his primary duty, 113
- Respecting the constitutional distinction between the role of the Rector and that of the Economist, 121

Salesian Family

- Making the Salesian Family a true apostolic movement on behalf of the young (process required for change), 31
- Encourage the updating of confreres, lay people who share responsibility with us and members of the Salesian Family in Salesian studies, 11
- The Salesian to share his faith journey, the richness of Salesian spirituality and pastoral activity with members of the Salesian Family, 20
- Involving the Salesian Family in vocational ministry, 57. 67. 68
- Collaborating with the consecrated groups in the Salesian Family to offer vocational invitations also to young women, 72
- Fostering family ministry projects together with lay people and the Salesian Family, 110
- The Province to ask for and make good use of the contribution of the Salesian Family in view of common planning of its presence in the neighbourhood, 113
- Assignment of the animation of the Salesian Family to the Vicar of the Rector Major (deliberation n. 3), 116

Salesian Mission (youth)

- Don Bosco was guided by Mary, Mother and Teacher in his mission to the young, 2

- From Mary we learn that a profound experience of God is at the root of our mission, 23
- Evangelisation as the principal requirement of our mission, 24
- The need for each Region and Province to make the effort to identify the most suitable ways to carry out our common mission in the specific circumstances of each context, 26
- Witnessing with courage and joy to the beauty of a consecrated life, dedicated totally to God in the mission to the young (guideline for action n. 8), 61; cf. 52
- The practice of poverty requires a management of the resources entrusted to us consistent with the purposes of the mission, 81. 94
- The structures of our works to be suitable for the carrying out of the mission, 96
- "New presences" or "new forms of presence" effectively oriented to the mission, 100. 113
- Inseparable connection between "charismatic identity" and "apostolic passion", between *identity and mission*, cf. *Address of the Rector Major for the opening of the GC26*, pages 114-115

Salesian Brother and Salesian Cleric

See: *Salesian Consecrated Vocation two complementary forms*

Salesian consecrated Vocation: two complementary forms

- The two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation: God's call, 55; situation, 59; guidelines for action, 74-78
- Encourage the complementarity and the specific nature of the two forms of the one Salesian vocation (guideline for action n. 11), 74-78
- The community to accompany ordained confreres in highlighting their ministry through the educational charism, 76
- Make renewed efforts for the vocation of the Salesian Brother, 74. 76. 77
- Foster the presence of Salesian Brothers in roles of animation at community and Province level, 76. 77
- The Province to give support to the specific formation of the Salesian Brother, 77
- The Rector Major with his Council promote an up-to-date reflection on the complementary and specific nature of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation, 78
- Special attention to the vocation of the Salesian Brother, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26*, page 92

Salesian Presences and works

- New models for managing works (among the new frontiers): God's call, 100; situation, 103; guideline for action: review the management model of works for a more effective educative and evangelising presence, 112

- The Province to identify the interventions needed to set in motion “new presences” or to renew existing ones so that they are better orientated towards the mission, 113
- The Province to reflect on the complexity of the works and identify more flexible forms of presence through the Overall Provincial Plan, 113
- Relationship between community and work (deliberation n. 7), 120

Salesian Spirituality

- The community to include in the community plan specific occasions for the formation and updating in Salesianity, for the confreres and also for the lay people who share responsibility for the mission; to update the Salesian section in the House library, 10
- Centres as means for the study and the spreading of Salesian spirituality (Salesianity): UPS, Salesian Historical Institute and other Centres; places of the origin of the Salesian charism; Salesian sources and texts translated into various languages, 11. 12
- Spirituality Centres for the young (task for the Province), 16

Social Communication

- Social communication, one of the priorities in the new frontiers: God’s call, 99; situation, 102; guidelines for action: improve the educative presence in the media world, 108
- The communities should plan educative projects to help young people to a critical and responsible use of the various kinds of *media* and encourage their active involvement in the social communication field, 109
- The community should use the technologies of social communication to spread the charism, 109
- The Province should commit itself to making Don Bosco known through the use of the *media*, 11
- Prepare qualified personnel and foster formation initiatives that help in making good use of social communication for education and evangelisation and for a more incisive presence in the *media* world, 44. 110
- The Rector Major with the Council to reflect through the Departments for Social Communication, Formation and Youth Ministry, on the new challenges of the culture of *personal media* for the formation of Salesians, the preparation of the laity and to help the young, 111
- The Departments for Youth Ministry, Social Communication and the Missions (deliberation n. 4), 117

Solidarity

- Solidarity with the poor: God’s call, 80; situation, 83; guidelines for action, 90-93
- Moving from a local mindset, closed in on itself, to a Provincial and global spirit of solidarity (process required for change), 85

- The Province to draw up a plan of financial solidarity, 89
- Developing a culture of solidarity with the poor in the local context (guideline for action n. 13), 90-93
- Responsible management of resources in a spirit of solidarity (guideline for action n. 14), 94 sq
- The Rector Major with his Council to help the Provinces to grow in their commitment on behalf of social justice, 93
- The Rector Major with his Council to ask for more practical solidarity of resources and personnel among Provinces and Regions, 97

Structures of animation and government of the Congregation

- Transfer of the Vice Province of Myanmar to the East Asia – Oceania Region (deliberation n. 1), 114
- Departments for Youth Ministry, Social Communication, the Missions (deliberation n. 4), 117
- Evaluation of the structures of animation and central government of the Congregation (deliberation n. 5), 118; cf. also *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 133
- Election of the Regional Councillors (deliberation n. 6), 119

Vocational and spiritual accompaniment

- Commitment of the Salesian to be accompanied by a spiritual director, 20
- Preparation of spiritual guides (commitment of the Province), 22
- Accompaniment of candidates to Salesian consecrated life: God's call, 54; situation, 58; guidelines for action, 69-73
- The Salesian to be available for spiritual accompaniment, preparing himself, 70
- Fostering new forms of vocational accompaniment and aspirantate/candidacy, 69. 72

Vocation/s

- Need for vocation ministry, 52-78
- Witness as the first vocational invitation: God's call, 52; situation, 56; guidelines for action, 61- 64
- Apostolic vocation: God's call, 53; situation, 57; guidelines for action, 65-68
- Witness to the beauty of a consecrate life dedicated totally to God in the mission to the young (guideline for action n. 8): by the Salesian, 62; by the community, 63
- Vocation ministry as the crowning of youth ministry (process required for change, 60
- The community to draw up a proposal for vocation ministry, involving the educative pastoral community and the Salesian Family, 60. 67; avail of the apostolic and vocational resources found in groups, in voluntary service and missionary animation, 67
- The community to present the idea of the Salesian-Cooperator as an invitation to the lay apostolic vocation, 67

- The Province to draw up a plan for vocation ministry as part of the Province's educative and pastoral project, 68
- Encourage new forms of vocational accompaniment and of the aspirantate/candidacy, 69. 72. 73
- Collaborate with the groups of the Salesian Family, of the local Church and other institutions of consecrated life in vocation promotion, 68; collaborate with the consecrated groups in the Salesian Family to offer vocational invitations addressed to young women as well, 72
- The Province to plan for specific vocation ministry to young migrants from Catholic families or ethnic minorities and indigenous young people, 72

Witness

- Witness as the first vocational invitation: God's call, 52; situation, 56; guidelines for action, 61-64
- The Salesian to be committed to witnessing to a joyful life (as a vocational invitation), 62
- The community to make an annual scrutiny on its witness of life, 63
- The Province to foster among the confreres a strong sense of belonging in order to witness to the value of living and working together, 64
- Personal and community witness to evangelical poverty: God's call, 79; situation, 82; guidelines for action, 86-89
- The Salesian to give witness to evangelical poverty with inner detachment, tireless self-sacrificing work, with the temperance Don Bosco wanted, 87
- The community to make the annual *scrutinium paupertatis* in view of a more credible witness, 88

Word of God

- The Word of God and the Eucharist at the centre of our communities (guideline for action n. 4), 32-35
- The Salesian's commitment: meditating on the Word of God, 33; systematic and spiritual study of the Word of God, 37
- Practice of *lectio divina* with Salesian sensitivity, 10. 11
- *Lectio divina* and the Eucharist, lived each day are light and strength for the spiritual life of the Salesian, cf. *Letter of the Holy Father for the beginning of the GC26* page 90; *Address of the Holy Father in the Audience to the Chapter Members*, pages 123-124

Youth

- Return to the young: God's call, 2; situation, 5; guidelines for action, 13-18
- Return to the young, especially the poorest of them, with the heart of Don Bosco (guideline for action n. 2), 13. 14

- Presence among the young (Salesian assistance), 14. 15. 21
- Sharing one's faith journey, the richness of Salesian spirituality and apostolic activity with the young, 20
- Propose to the young that they live their lives in the way Jesus Christ lived his (guideline for action n. 5), 36 sq
- Safety of minors and preventative measures against all abuse, 17. 22
- The Province to promote the defence of the rights of juveniles and other young people, 107
- The Rector Major with his Council to support institutions concerned with youth policies, and that promote the rights of the young, 18. 93
- The predilection for the young, a specific element of Don Bosco's charism, cf. *Address of the Rector Major at the conclusion of the GC26*, page 138

