

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The main events in the Rector Major's chronicle during the six months from February to June 2022 are as follows:

January 2022 saw the Rector Major busy with the General Council Plenary Session from the 7th to 28th as usual. The Salesian Family Spirituality Days in Valdocco, Turin, from the 13th to 16th of the month were also important, dedicated as they were to the 400th anniversary of the death of St Francis de Sales and attended online by about 10,000 people, followed by four days of listening, prayer and discussion by 150 representatives of the 32 groups of the Salesian Family. In this 40th edition of the Days, the RM left a substantial message of kindness and freedom focused on the figure of our Patron. "It is kindness" he said, "that distinguishes us as Salesians and only in freedom can we approach God". Also dedicated to St Francis de Sales was the exhibition that the RM opened on the morning of 16 January. On display were works from France and Piedmont

related to the history of the Saint and the Visitandine Monasteries.

From 21 to 23 January, Fr Artime was in Madrid to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of St Dominic Savio House. In front of 300 educators from schools and social platforms, he recalled the great values of Christian education with the Salesian response, Still in Madrid, the Rector Major opened the centenary of Salesian work in the Tetuan district popularly known as *Salesianos Estrecho* because of the nearby metro stop. Then speaking to pastoral leaders in the parishes, he said: "We are parishes with open doors, we build bridges. We must continue to work on genuine pastoral conversion that also involves seeing to "communication" between pastoral settings in the work: parish, youth centre, school and social platforms." Back in Rome on 25 January, he took part in the Assembly of the IUS, the Salesian University Institutes, recalling among other things the value of respect for the person, honesty and attention to the weakest.

26 January saw the now tradi-

tional meeting between the SDB General Council and the FMA General Council at the General House of the Sisters. During the Eucharistic celebration, the RM said, among other things in his homily: “We are expected to be able to think and offer what is possible for current situation we are experiencing. We are called to give the best of ourselves, to put all our energies, skills, wisdom, into peace, the peace which is the fruit of God’s presence. We are united by the will to share, to collaborate and to be in communion.”

Fr Artime dedicated 28 January to visiting the San Tarcisio community in Rome.

On 30-31 January, the Rector Major was in Turin for the celebrations in honour of Don Bosco. His Mass was televised for the second year running by RAI, with Pope Francis as a surprise among the spectators – because he said so at the Angelus. On the same day as the feast day of St John Bosco, the RM sent a message to young people which was televised and broadcast in the various provinces.

FEBRUARY

From 4 to 9 February we find the RM in Ecuador in Quito where he preached the Retreat to 77

Salesians (Provincials and councilors) from 13 Provinces. The RM’s talks dealt with the verification of the 28th General Chapter and the Strenna on St Francis de Sales. The Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Andres Carrascosa visited during the Retreat.

From 10 to 12 February Fr Artime visited the Province of Ecuador for the second time. In spite of the pandemic, Fr Artime was able to meet with many including the Archbishop of Quito, Archbishop Alfredo Espinoza. He also met the FMA Sisters and young people from the Salesian Youth Movement.

On the 13th, Fr Artime arrived in Brazil. He preached the Retreat at Sao Leopoldo for another 70 confreres. As he said, “It is an unprecedented experience that seeks to bring the Provincial Councils closer to the 10th successor of Don Bosco and to encourage them, especially at this time when deeply Salesian values like presence and closeness to people have been affected by the pandemic.” The Rector Major also had the opportunity on 17 February to talk to the Salesian Radios Brazil online. What were his expectations of these broadcasters? “Fidelity to our precious charism, to Don Bosco, and a priority above

all for the poorest and those with less opportunities.”

From 22 to 28 February the RM was in Rome, where he met the personnel from the Pontifical Salesian University on the 26th .

MARCH

From 1 to 3 March the RM met as a Council together with his Vicar, Fr Stefano Martoglio and Sector Councillors. Fr Artime was also at home from the 4th to the 16th, days dedicated to reflection and writing. On 7 March, among other things he met with the communication team, which also included the co-spokesperson Fr Giuseppe Costa, and gave a number of pointers regarding the functioning of ANS and the Department itself.

On 17 March he began his journey to Cameroon where among other things he preached the Retreat to the Africa-Madagascar Region from the 18th to the 23rd. 96 Salesians from 14 Provinces and Vice-provinces on the continent were present, as well as the Regional Councillor, Fr Alphonse Owoudou.

The Retreat was held in Yaoundé at the headquarters of the Episcopal Conference. In his opening words, the RM emphasised that the participating confreres are re-

sponsible for the charism of Don Bosco as well as for animation and governance. He also stressed the great potential of the Region where, as always, the Holy Spirit is the real key player and Mary is also present and accompanies them. During his stay in Cameroon, the RM met the Salesian Family, accepted seven religious professions and visited the Theologate.

After leaving Cameroon on Friday 25 March, Fr Artime reached Equatorial Guinea where he remained until the 30th, visiting the Works in the country and meeting confreres and young people.

APRIL

The Interim Council meeting was held in Rome from the 4th to the 13th.

During the eight working sessions, various issues of governance of the Congregation were addressed. Before the Easter Triduum he met the Salesian Deacons at Sacro Cuore, Rome, who are residing at Gerini.

From Thursday 21 to Friday 29 April, the Rector Major returned to the African continent to visit Zambia and Zimbabwe, areas he had partly visited in 2016. He was warmly welcomed at the Zimbabwe airport. In the evening he reached the Community at

Hwange where he blessed the foundation stone of the new technical school. An important moment of the visit was the celebration of 40 years of Salesian presence in Zambia as a Province.

MAY

On 6 May, continuing his visits, the Rector Major went to Thailand where from 7 to 12 May he met the Provincials and Councillors of the East Asia-Oceania Region for their Retreat (73 participants).

According to the Thai confreres, these six days were a chance to bathe in Salesian spirituality and joy at being close to the Rector Major as well as for gratitude to the Lord and the 10th successor of Don Bosco.

From the 13th to 19th the RM visited the Houses of St Paul Province, Thailand. It extends over three countries: Thailand, Cambodia and the People's Republic of Laos, with a total of 110 confreres and 17 communities. The presence of the Salesian Family is rich and varied. The RM made a special visit to the Salesian house in Bagsak which cares for children affected by the Tsunami on 26 December 2004. On 18 May, he visited the school in Saeng Thong Vitthaya, encouraging teachers and educators to

witness to Christian love in a Muslim environment. Previously, the RM had also visited the General House of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Tsunami Memorial, as well as accepting the profession of ten young Salesians.

Back in Turin, on 21-23 May he took part in the Salesian Family World Council. On the 4th he took part in the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, celebrating the Eucharist in the Basilica and taking part in the Procession.

From the 25th to the 27th, Fr Artime took part in the Assembly of the Union of Superiors General at Sacro Fano (Rome).

On 28 May he inaugurated and blessed the new premises of the *Centro Nazionale Opere salesiane* (National Salesian Works Centre) in Rome, also attended by the Mother General of the FMA, Sr Chiara Cazzuola.

After visiting all the offices, Fr Artime said, "I am convinced that with what we are doing together we are carrying forward a beautiful dream."

On 29 May, the RM returned to Valdocco, Turin which continue to be his headquarters pending the completion of work at *Sacro Cuore* (Sacred Heart) in Rome.

JUNE

The Plenary Meeting of the General Council was held in Turin from 1 to 30 June. Among the topics that this session of the Council addressed were the appointments of the Superiors of East Timor(TLS) and India-Panjim(INM) as well as the sharing and study of the numerous reports on Visitations.

On 4 June, he went to Budapest, Hungary, for the Blessing and placing of the Reliquary with the remains of Blessed Stephen Sandor, the Salesian coadjutor brother martyred by the communist regime in 1953 and recovered from a mass grave. On that occasion Fr Artime accepted a number of religious professions of young Salesians and some promises of Cooperators. From the 6th he was busy with the course for newly-appointed Salesian Provincials.

On Sunday the 12th he went to Chiari to take part in the conclusion of the Diocesan Process of the Cause of Canonisation of Fr Silvio Galli.

On 17 June he went to Mon-

calieri to celebrate a Mass at the Visitandine Monastery to venerate the relics of St Francis de Sales on the 400th anniversary of his death, and to recall the choice of Don Bosco as the patron saint of the Salesians.

On 20 June, accompanied by Fr Stefano Aspettati, he was in Perugia to celebrate the centenary of the Salesian presence there.

Back in Valdocco, Turin, on the 24th the Feast of Gratitude was celebrated in memory of the one that was held in honour of Don Bosco on St John the Baptist's Feast day. Numerous confreres from Rome as well as from Piedmont and other provinces took part in the festivities.

On the 26th the General Council went to Annecy, France, for the Retreat preached by Fr Morand Wirth, a well-known scholar of St Francis de Sales.

JULY

The Rector Major was in Annecy until the end of the Retreat, then was involved in the General Council sessions until 26 July.