



acts

of the general council

year CIV

july-december 2022

N. 438

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Sede Centrale
Salesiana
Roma

acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

Year CIV
July-December 2022 **No. 438**

1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR	1.1 Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME "YOUNG MAN, I SAY TO YOU, RISE!" (Lk 7:14)	3
2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES	2.1 Fr Ivo COELHO THE FRIENDLY TALK WITH THE RECTOR, SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT AND ADMISSIONS: SOME GUIDELINES AND POLICIES	63
	2.2 Fr Miguel Ángel GARCIA - Fr Ivo COELHO THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EXPERIENCE: FORMATION PATHWAYS	88
3. RULINGS AND DIRECTIVES	(none in this issue)	
4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL	4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major	110
	4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors	115
5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS	5.1 Appointment of the new Secretary General	140
	5.2 New Salesian Provincials	141
	5.3 Our deceased confreres	143

Editrice S.D.B.
Edizione extra commerciale
Sede Centrale Salesiana
Via Marsala, 42
00185 Roma

Tipografia Salesiana Roma - Via Umbertide, 11 - 00181 Roma
Tel. 06.78.27.819 - Fax 06.78.48.333 - E-mail: tipolito@donbosco.it
Finito di stampare: Settembre 2022

“YOUNG MAN, I SAY TO YOU, RISE!” (Lk 7:14)

The Salesian option for young people at high social risk as a commitment to justice, peace and care for creation

INTRODUCTION. *In tune with the direction taken so far by the Congregation – 1. JESUS’ EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL APPROACH IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE. 1.1 Crossing the borders of unknown cultures. 1.2. Bearers and sowers of hope amid a culture of death 1.3 God’s love is also a mother’s love 1.4. An educative process 1.5. Spreading the good news. – 2. THE OPTION FOR THE POOREST 2.1 With a youth ministry for liberation and reintegration through our educational works and services 2.2 Pastoral care and accompaniment with suitable and prepared animators 2.3 Ministry that takes the family into consideration. – 3. COMMITMENT TO INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. 3.1 The importance of works for young people at risk and social innovation. 3.2 Complementarity of Salesian know-how and institutions. a. The Salesian contribution in the approach to human rights in our contexts. b. Social pedagogy from a Salesian perspective. c. Complementarity of know-how. 3.3 Involvement in active citizenship. a. Formation to active citizenship. b. Volunteering for building up social friendship. 3.4 Education to the faith and accompaniment in Salesian social works. – 4. THE SCOPE OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM. 4.1 A constant response. 4.2 New form of mission. a. The devastating effect of the COVID pandemic. b. The dastardly war in Ukraine. c. Other places of pain, death and hunger. 4.3 Salesian social works and services among migrants and refugees. – 5. SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIAL WORKS AND SERVICES. 5.1 The organisational structure in Salesian development activities. 5.2 Decision-making process 1. We must have a vision of the future. 2. We must have an integrated vision. 3. Always with an overall perspective on things. 4. Let us keep our eyes focused on the young – CONCLUSION - BIBLIOGRAPHY*

Turin, 8 September 2022

Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

“Don Bosco saw clearly the social implications of his work. We labour in economically depressed areas and for poor youth. We collaborate with them, educating them to a sense of moral, professional and social responsibility. In this way we contribute to the development of both people and environment. We share in a way appropriate to religious in the witness and commitment of the Church to justice and peace. While not getting involved in ideologies or party politics, we reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence. We cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man’s dignity. The advancement to which we dedicate ourselves in the spirit of the Gospel makes tangible the love of Christ which makes men free, and is a sign that the Kingdom of God is among us.”¹

¹ C 33.

INTRODUCTION

Dear confreres,

The immense gift that our charism represents in the Church has had a marked social character from the very beginning. The fact that Don Bosco is recognised as one of the social saints of 19th century Turin manifests the identity and intention of a particular mission carried out by the Salesians over the years and across five continents through a wide variety of pastoral settings.

The Gospel example of mercy embodied by Jesus led Don Bosco to fix his gaze on the poorest and most abandoned children and young people, those without a family, without a roof over their heads, the illiterate and unemployed, those lacking religious and moral formation, the weakest of the weak... In a word, on all those who are considered “excluded”, easy prey to a despair that can lead them to forms of delinquency or to being abused by unscrupulous exploiters. Hence, individuals who run the risk of being discarded by society, of losing their dignity, of not experiencing the beauty and goodness of being free children of God the Creator Father.

Once he had understood that the mission entrusted to him by God was not among those who were already in prison, rotting away in desperation, Don Bosco grasped the fact that his system had to be truly preventive, and as a result he channelled his pastoral intelligence into preventing the risks run by young people in 19th century industrial Turin and other cities.²

Together with his spiritual director he underwent a journey of discernment of his vocation and, open to the action of the Spirit, over the course of his life he discovered how to win souls over to God among those who seemed condemned to obscurity.

² Cf. SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO, “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?”. *Post-Chapter reflection* Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2020, p. 74 no. 7. Henceforth GC28.

The result of this discernment was translated into an educative, evangelising and charitable proposal. Every personal encounter, every project undertaken with his Salesians and co-workers were nothing but proof of God's love for his favourite children: the little ones and the poor.

This charity was translated into an integral experience of accompanying young people, strengthening their personalities so that they could reach maturity as free and autonomous individuals. They were all interventions to help them prepare for life.³ It is therefore understandable that the concept of the salvation of souls in Don Bosco's ministry was not an abstract argument but a concrete response capable of taking in each individual with the loving attention of a family which takes care of the basic needs of the little ones, educates them with appropriate skills so that they can earn an honest living, and helps them open up to relationships with others and with God so that they can find their "place in the world", their place in society and in the Church.

We *sum up* the totality of these educative and evangelising experiences that we discover in Don Bosco's life and the life of the community at Valdocco as the "Oratory criterion". With this same criterion, opening ourselves to the realities of our time, we Salesians continue to respond to the various forms of youth risk that can lead to situations of social exclusion.⁴ Forming good Christians and upright citizens among those whose human rights have been violated produces remarkable results in every part of the world where we are found. Even in the most radically secularist countries, our Salesian contribution to the most needy is positively recognised by civil societies and various governmental bodies as a positive proposal for building social cohesion.

Indeed, in many Salesian presences in the world, those who work in our Educative and Pastoral Communities (EPCs) in the

³ Cf. C 40.

⁴ Cf. CG28, pp. 73-74, no. 6.

social domain have established partnerships with local Churches, private associations,⁵ with regional and even national state governments, giving rise to strategies, intervention tools and structures that allow us to be credible and appreciated for the work we do.

Convinced that working with the young and with communities at high risk is one of the most beautiful kinds of sanctification that we have inherited from our Founder, we recognise, in all humility and without triumphalism, that we are called to continue to work with evangelical spirit and professionalism within these social works and services: it is the Salesian contribution to building up the Kingdom of God. As part of this same dynamic we are called to open up spaces for dialogue with non-believers from the perspective of what Pope Francis today calls “social friendship”,⁶ the point of convergence of all human efforts in building justice and peace: “Goodness together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day.”⁷

Undoubtedly, among the various settings of our Salesian Youth Ministry, the one known as “*Salesian Social Works and Services*” clearly shows the merciful gaze of Jesus, because there we encounter the various dramas of children, adolescents and older young people in high-risk social contexts that can lead them to multiple life-threatening situations. They live in impoverished communities where their rights are violated, forgotten on the invisible frontiers of today’s human geography, with little or limited access to education, health care and healthy food; where the possibility of employment is sporadic or non-existent and where the absence of quality of life is a common denominator.⁸

⁵ Cf. SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT, *Salesian Youth Ministry. Frame of Reference*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2014⁵, p. 111.

⁶ FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, 2; 5; 6; 94; 99; 106; 142; 154; 180; 233; 245.

⁷ FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, 11.

⁸ Cf. GC28, p. 104, n. 2.

As we have learned from the spirit of Valdocco, breaking the circle of poverty implies accompanying the young on the path that in today's language, in Pope Francis' words we call *integral human development*. This evangelising movement of *Salesian Social Works and Services*, born from the heart of the Church's Social Doctrine, has been the precursor of a community on the move, the same one that sets out and goes in search of those who are left behind in society, in order to recover them and, as far as possible, restore their dignity and future prospects.

The journey which the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project (SEPP) aims at for this setting sees to the articulation of its four dimensions with true apostolic zeal, so that by accompanying the educational process of young people in relation to their family (if they have one) and their environment, a true redesigning of culture takes place, mitigating the devastation of social evil found in their personal story. In our ecclesial commitment for the salvation of humanity, we strive to build processes of reintegration of these young people once left on the margins, excluded from society, to return them to it as people capable of autonomous development, as active and believing citizens – with absolute respect for their freedom.

Thus, by consolidating the Social Works and Services setting in our Congregation with renewed spirit, a safe path opens up along which we can walk without fear, with Salesian identity, with the methodology of social development and with the awareness of being a spiritual family that reaches out to the young people most in need. It is, therefore, an invitation to return to the sources of the charism and to be more daring and merciful, in the style of our Master, Jesus, in the Gospel.⁹

⁹ Cf. *The Rector Major's Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation after GC28*, in AGC 433 (2020), pp. 35-38 (priority no. 5).

In tune with the direction taken up till now by the Congregation

Already during the Salesian Special General Chapter 20, when the Congregation was doing an excellent job of adapting to the renewal demanded by the Second Vatican Council, we find pages which exude a great sensitivity and concern for the poorest young people, and in particular for those living in the harshest situations of marginalisation caused by a world that changes at great speed and often overwhelms the most defenceless in these changes. An authentic priority in Don Bosco's charism: "Don Bosco used this expression frequently, particularly in Art. 1 of the Constitutions. It is therefore *a priority among priorities: help to the most needy.*"¹⁰

In 2010, the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, dedicated one of his Letters to Salesian Youth Ministry, and in one of the sections in it we find an expression of concern for the world of youth marginalisation in the Congregation's journey. "Attention to young people in situations of risk has always been a characteristic of the Salesian apostolate. The new situation of our societies challenges us to find new solutions."¹¹ In the same text Fr Chávez expressed his concern about an ever-increasing poverty that is becoming a tragic reality affecting people and social groups, including many young people. It becomes a structural and global problem. "For this reason, during the last fifty years there have been many projects initiatives and works with the intention of responding to this situation and of offering young people a fresh opportunity to build their lives in a positive fashion and to take their place in society in a responsible way."¹²

Continuity of this journey undertaken by the Congregation

¹⁰ SGC (1971), no. 48.

¹¹ P. CHÁVEZ, *And he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length (Mk 6:34)*, in AGC 407 (2010), p. 41.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

and the steps taken even over the last twelve years, beginning with the text I have just referred to, is what led me to consider it timely, after General Chapter 28, to turn our gaze towards this growing and increasingly significant educative and pastoral field of our Congregation. The fact that there are more than 1,100 (one thousand one hundred) specific Salesian social works and services, together with the strong teaching of Pope Francis in recent years regarding the field of the excluded, the marginalised and the discarded, makes it very opportune, in my opinion, for a Salesian reflection on this field of educative and pastoral activity today.

1. JESUS' EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL APPROACH IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Our charismatic patrimony teaches us, from Don Bosco onwards, that to accompany the young it is necessary to establish approaches that allow for an encounter between educator and young person, and among these is the educative and pastoral community where the family and the various representatives of the social system meet.

One of the aspects of Luke's Gospel that strikes me most is precisely the 'encounter'. An encounter that generates joy and life, an encounter that creates expectations, an encounter that leads one to sense the presence and action of the Spirit of God in the history of every individual, every family, every group, every people.

Pope Francis speaks about a "culture of encounter" so that we can cultivate merciful attitudes towards others. It is "an invitation to work for 'the culture of encounter', in a simple way, 'as Jesus did': not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but stopping with them; not just saying 'what a shame, poor people!', but allowing yourself to be moved with compassion; and then to draw near, to touch and to say: 'Do not weep' and to give at least a drop of life'"¹³.

¹³ FRANCIS, *Morning meditation in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae. For a culture of encounter*, Rome 13 September 2016.

In the last General Chapter, GC28, listening to the young people present we perceived that they no longer asked us for building or structures but *only* for our physical presence. They asked us to be with them and among them, to share their life,¹⁴ to meet with them and be mutually enriched; to be with them. Because it is they who, thanks be to God, give meaning to our vocation and encourage us to discover pathways to travel together.

In the Gospel passage about the “raising of the son of the widow of Nain” in Chapter 7 of the Gospel according to Luke, we discover what could be understood as a beautiful approach proposed by Jesus, full of compassion and mercy in the face of the situation of the death of a young man, the disintegration of a family, the loneliness of a poor widowed mother and the impotence of a social group. In the light of this Gospel episode we can interpret our youth ministry as a ministry to family yet a social ministry at the same time, since the ultimate effect will be a community that generates dynamics such that its members live with dignity, in the freedom of the children of God

1.1. Crossing the borders of unknown cultures

“Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain” (Lk 7:11). Jesus goes beyond the Jewish geographical and cultural boundaries of his time. This time he goes to Nain, a place where even the trade routes of the time did not pass through. Nain is perhaps a region without hope. Jesus leaves the borders of his homeland, accompanied by people who are most likely unaware of the scope and reasons for his journey.

This novelty that bursts forth in changes and new forms is also found in the Church of our time, and has been strongly recalled since the Second Vatican Council and in recent decades. In an attempt to renew itself and respond to the new times, to move out of its “known territory”, as if going to another Nain, our Con-

¹⁴ Cf. GC28, pp. 72-73, no. 5.

gregation has responded to this call to renewal by also turning its gaze to the least, with a more decisive commitment to those most in need. Already in the middle of the last century, in many provinces, Social Works became important, and from which the decision to respond to the phenomenon of marginalisation and poverty arose. These differed from the Oratories, Schools and Vocational Training Centre settings – all undoubtedly wonderful services for young people – in responding with special attention and priority to the specific condition of their beneficiaries. Specialised and specific programmes were developed to assist street children and young people, some of whom had come out of the old orphanages; health care centres were opened even in very remote places for the most destitute; soup kitchens and food distribution centres were set up to help families with limited resources; even the missionary presence among native peoples created its own strategies and specific activities to better accompany and serve the most vulnerable communities and peoples.

There were Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who gave impetus to this kind of work with a social vision. These men and women full of faith, courageous “dreamers”, together with an innumerable and perhaps invisible multitude of lay people – women and men committed to dealing with the pain of others – have taught that alleviating the suffering of the little ones, the ignored, those who do not count, is an expression of divine mercy and a concretisation of Don Bosco’s charism and his *preventive system*.

This has allowed us as a Congregation to be ever more *signs of a Church going forth* towards the existential peripheries of humanity, where we find those who do not fit into the categories of utilitarian economic systems of exclusive economic advantage, and where we experience the joy of encountering those most in need. This undoubtedly gives strength to our charismatic identity and our awareness of serving the Kingdom of God. We also know that some of them – Salesians and lay people – have even been deprived of their lives to defend this cause.

On the road to Nain, Jesus is *accompanied by “his disciples and a large crowd”* (Lk 7:11). Jesus’ disciples had been drawn to him, had abandoned their earlier life and followed him; they had committed all their efforts, heart and whole being to the Master’s project. He had called them by name, and sent them to cooperate in proclaiming the Gospel and they followed him.

Jesus was also accompanied by many people who were fascinated by some aspect of his personality. They joined him along the way, saw the wonderful works he had done: he had healed some, had cast out demons from others, He taught many the Word of the Father with authority; many were filled with the multiplication of food, and so on. This multitude has discovered the immense benefit of being with Jesus. From here, new disciples will arise in the future – like the seventy-two he will send out two by two.

Others who have become part of this crowd will abandon Jesus: some will go away with a sense of gratitude in their heart and will certainly be witnesses to Jesus in other places; others will leave without even a goodbye or word of thanks. But all, in general, will have been looked upon with mercy by Jesus.

This is the pastoral condition in working with the poorest and most abandoned. Many vocations of all kinds and for all forms of Christian life have arisen from Salesian social works and services. In many of the contexts in which we find ourselves working, where religious denominations other than Christianity are dominant, we have experienced the joy of contributing to the formation of a beautiful human family with those who are welcomed into our presence – at times with their families – and have shared the many values we live by from the Gospel. The language of charity overcomes the barriers of beliefs and political structures, leading us to work alongside those who are concerned about building peace.

It is necessary to recognise that the pastoral option in the social field entails many difficulties and that the effort to find the

human and financial resources to support it represents a major challenge for those who carry out these programmes, since it requires strengthening “initiative and apostolic creativity”,¹⁵ characteristic qualities of the life and mission of our Founder. In any case, it is all immensely important and gratifying at the same time.

The needs of the young affected Don Bosco’s heart deeply, and he developed numerous initiatives with an inventive and enterprising spirit. These prophetic initiatives drew the attention and respect of many people from different social classes in Turin at the time. Even today, as Salesians in the Church, through the educational, evangelising and charitable dimension both in our social works and services and in the other settings in which we provide educational and pastoral services, we want to show that the Lord is present and that all our activities are an expression of God’s love for the least. An urgency as alive today as it was in Don Bosco’s time.

1.2. Bearers and sowers of hope amid a culture of death

“Hope is the smallest but the strongest of virtues.”¹⁶ “*As he approached the gate of the town*” (Lk 7:12). The Gospel narrative identifies Jesus’ action by pointing to a concrete place: the town gate. Jesus, who has crossed the borders of Galilee to go to pagan lands to bring the good news of the Kingdom of God to those who want to receive it, stops precisely at the town gate of Nain.

The image of the town’s gate allows us to think about and be aware of the many people, groups or populations who are not only distant from God for geographical reasons, but because walls have been erected around them: walls that condemn entire societies to stay away from social welfare, to shut themselves in because of racial status, or even to be isolated in refugee camps

¹⁵ C 19.

¹⁶ FRANCIS, *Angelus*, 15 November 2015.

that act as containment walls against the advance of what are considered unwanted migratory masses. The walls that enclose these people are sometimes invisible and can also be found in our cities. This is when we classify people according to social affiliation. Obviously, such walls not only enclose those who are “unwelcome”, but even make them invisible with the consequent dulling of the conscience and sensitivity of all others.

The gate in the Gospel account is the place of a very special encounter. Indeed, it will not be just an everyday event that happens at Nain, but something extraordinary and salvific. Interestingly, in the text of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus is also given authority in Nain, an unknown and pagan town. An action, his, realised by the very power of God. This manifestation will not be a “circus act”, nor the expression of empty demagoguery of some jumped-up politician. On the contrary, it will be the most evident manifestation of a God who loves his children.

“A man who had died was being carried out” (Lk 7:12). The image this scene offers us has much to say to our Salesian charism. On the one hand we see the group of followers accompanying the Master; and on the other, at the town gate, people walking amid tears and grief because they are saying goodbye to a young man who has died.

This scene continues to be reproduced day after day. It shows the encounter of life that brings hope and joy in the face of situations of despair and death in every corner of the earth.

The Salesian proposal in the social field seeks to be a sign of hope and life capable of encountering on a daily basis the cruelty carved on the sad faces of so many young people wounded by misery, violence, ignorance, exploitation and other types of abuse. Salesian social works and services aim to serve and restore dignity to those who have lost it and, in the name of the Lord, to transform mourning into joy. This is the conviction that accompanies so many educators and pastoral workers who, on a daily basis in Salesian houses, grasp what is happening beyond the

“walls of our conventional activities”, and allow themselves to be challenged by the situations that affect so many oppressed adolescents and young people, individuals and groups, among whom the most common victims are always the youngest.

1.3. God’s love is also a mother’s love

The young man who had died was “*his mother’s only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town*” (Lk 7:12). It is a painful scene, almost a cruel one. We see a mother who has lost her beloved son. We know that it is not “natural”, in the cycle of life, for a son to die before his parents. Besides, this suffering is not just any loss that can be understood by reason. Here the evangelist offers those who know how to interpret the Word as believers a direct connection with the deepest fibres of love, the love of God which, being immeasurable, in human language is comparable only to the love of a mother for her children. This is how God loves, with a paternal and maternal love. Unconditional. At birth, children’s umbilical cords are cut, but a mother’s bond with her children never fails. There are sons and daughters who, in the course of their lives, may forget their mother and father, but God never forgets his children.

General Chapter 27 offered important reflections on Salesian fatherliness and reminded us that “work and temperance”¹⁷ are, for us Salesians, an expression of our disinterested dedication and love for the young. As happened to Don Bosco, feeling and knowing that we are truly “*fathers*” urges us to dedicate our best energies to them so that they will be good, so that they will achieve their objectives. From our understanding of Don Bosco’s paternal identity, we Salesians feel the pain of so many young people who suffer; we are saddened by their suffering because they are our children. It is no coincidence that we say that Don

¹⁷ C 18.

Bosco always felt that he was the father of his children. He himself expressed this many times in writing.

It is necessary and urgent that, as religious, we discover more and more that our chastity is fruitful and that it must generate life in caring for those to whom we are sent, especially in those who have no one to care for them. In this respect, one of the most beautiful lessons that we consecrated men and women can learn from the laity who are employed in our works and who are often fathers and mothers of families, is the special sensitivity that many of them have for the situations of injustice that assail many of our children, adolescents and young people. We Salesians cannot live without feeling that we are educators, friends, brothers and fathers of our young people. And it is clear that one of the most opportune places to strengthen this dimension of our vocation is our work with young people at high social risk, those who walk “between life and death”.

“But it was precisely this experience of emptiness that would make the young priest Don Bosco aware of the difficulties of his own children, of the human and spiritual qualities that he himself would have to learn to take on in his own life in order to be the father of those who did not have a father and who would see him as the one who would let them savour life, in every way.” “The paternal void in Don Bosco’s life is transformed into a fruitful womb, rather than a trauma.” His family experience “would leave an indelible mark on his vision of life and his idea of education and evangelisation of youth.”¹⁸

In the knowledge that we are educators and fathers, Salesians and lay people, we can learn to meet young people in their world, in their environment, in their digital culture which is becoming more and more complex and which is getting a little (or a lot) out of hand for us adults. Sometimes, with their vulnerability, they

¹⁸ SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT, *Youth Ministry and Family*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2021, p. 18-24.

find themselves in the social networks of video calls and instant messaging, frequenting playgrounds such as Triller, Houseparty, Tik Tok, Genies, Lomotif, Bunch, Discord, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc. On these virtual meeting and entertainment platforms, many of them express their emotions, exhibit themselves to the world and share their daily lives trying to attract the attention of new friends. In light of this reality, it is important to emphasise that unaccompanied teenagers and older youth often become victims not only of media addiction, but also of many criminals who contact them through these media, exploit them and enslave them in various forms of illegal trade. Many minors, in search of easy money, fall victim to these situations. Many of them do not have adequate educational spaces in the family or at school and experience multiple situations of orphanhood and violation of their rights that have deprived them of social welfare. The pain and tragedy of these children cannot leave us indifferent.

As a Salesian, I believe I have been sensitive and attentive to the reality of youth exploitation to date, and as Rector Major I have promoted the openness of our communities to the presence of those young people who need us most, convinced also that they give us the possibility of exercising true fatherhood like Don Bosco, and of having truly profound concerns for which to “consume” our lives.¹⁹ I am certain that the provinces that have seriously chosen to work with the most fragile young people, those most deprived of support, are moving to strengthen their identity and ensure their significance. Young Salesians must also learn to be educators, brothers and fathers of the young to continue to ensure that the charism of Don Bosco, father of youth, is implemented in our Congregation. Together with the laity, a careful look at today’s contexts helps us to discern the kinds of assistance we can offer to ensure that young people have experiences that make them feel the love of a family.

¹⁹ *The Rector Major’s Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation after GC28*, in *AGC 433* (2020), pp. 35-38 (priority no. 5).

The story told in the passage of the widow of Nain presents us with the dramatic situation of a mother who lost her son and who was also a widow, having lost her husband. She could not count on the social support of a man to protect her, in a culture in which women had no autonomy as citizens. This woman could not even reach old age in the bosom of a family, could not reach the end of her life receiving the love of a son, could not aspire to a dignified death. The social system of the time (and the Mosaic law itself) determined mutual responsibilities in families, with the stronger taking care of the weaker. Parents cared for their children and children, as they grew up, cared for their parents in old age; this was the social basis of the fourth commandment “honour thy father and thy mother”, which responded to the cycle of life. We see in the gospel text how Luke, in so few lines, narrates the drama of the disintegration of a family and gives us a glimpse of the social consequences. The father had died off-stage; the son had died and, as a result, the mother was left alone and unprotected. Jesus knew well what could have happened to this widow.

In our case, our preferential option for the poorest young people means we must necessarily look at the different environments they come from. So the focus of these social works and services demands reflection and interdisciplinary intervention which offers processes of accompaniment for young people, their families (when they have one) and their core social group. This says that situations of poverty, wherever they arise, must be analysed seriously and in depth. It is clear that we must have as much preparation and expertise in accompanying people and communities in situations of vulnerability just as we do in the other “common and traditional” areas of our pastoral work, where we take care to respond to various needs with professional and quality offers. Charity and quality must go hand in hand when planning social works and services for young people at risk, because if we are not clear about this, we risk being *insignificant* in the face of the violation of these people’s rights.

1.4. An educative process

In the situation he encounters in Nain Jesus does not give superficial answers, but every word that comes out of his mouth, every gesture and every movement has a precise meaning and intention, as we see in Luke's account.

- a. *“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’” (Lk 7:13).*

Where Jesus is present, everything will be permeated with his love, and he cannot pass through people's lives without radically changing things in them.

Serious biblical studies agree that the adjective most frequently used in the Holy Scriptures to describe God – the attribute that best indicates his way of acting – is “mercy”. Jesus loves each person with the same mercy of the Father, who created all things and each person with tender love, because each person is part of his plan of salvation. When Jesus “sees” he perceives the evil that causes pain to this poor widowed mother; and it is she, the widow, for whom Jesus feels mercy, initiating the action that follows.

Jesus does not hold back and tells her: “Do not weep”. How is it possible for a stranger to tell a mother not to weep for the son she has just lost? Jesus tells the woman “do not weep” because he feels, in unity with the Father, that he can change that sorrow into joy and gladness. His words are not empty consolation. He acts, he intervenes because human grief must be accompanied and consoled.

How important it is for us to experience this same divine mercy, to let ourselves be challenged by the evils that afflict so many people everywhere. This question will hardly enter our lives as consecrated men and women if we remain sheltered within the safe walls of our houses waiting for good young people to come and register or participate in our initiatives. In the manner of Jesus, Pope Francis reminds us that it is we who must go out to meet the other in order to create communion, to bring about social change that allows us to participate in the living community of the Lord.

- b. *“Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’” (Lk 7:14).*

Jesus approaches, he does not stand off at a distance, does not remain calmly in the comfortable atmosphere of his group of followers and disciples. He knows what his mission is and why he was sent into the world. Coming close allows him to enter into a relationship, be challenged by others, to get to know their situation and love them as they are. Jesus’ action requires his presence and decision.

Going to meet a young person who is in a situation of death is a bold and courageous act; the only certainty lies in the knowledge that there is a young person there and that it is worth being at his side and doing something for him.

Jesus takes a further step. He goes further. As he did with the widowed mother, Jesus does not merely observe what is happening, but enters into communion with the young man: “He touched the bier”. There is no life without communion with the Master. Jesus’ touch is not indifferent. In fact, his hand reaches out to the bier and in that mutual contact he transmits, passes on the gift of life.

In our case, inhabiting the culture of youth means being attentive to the elements of death that may surround them, but above all knowing what generates life.

In the experience of meeting young people at risk, the support and offer of help are a salvific experience both for the young person and for the educator – lay or religious – who feels increasingly touched, committed and involved in the existence of the other where there seemed to be only death or no hope.

Of course, the process of changing a young person in the daily dynamic of Salesian social works and services is slow and difficult: sometimes discouragement can appear in those who invest their maximum energy every day. But it is also true that observing the change that God works in the lives of these boys and girls is the greatest reward one can experience as a Salesian educator.

Then, according to the Gospel text, Jesus says the words:

“*Young man, I say to you, rise!*” Once again, when Jesus speaks he generates life. His is a way of speaking and saying things with authority, an imperative that is, however, given in a loving way, with the offering of the hand to the young man so that he may rise, so that he may rise again.

This solemn process aimed at restoring to life so many young people who are dying all over the world is carried out in our Congregation, in the name of the Lord, by thousands of people passionate about humanity who are proud to work in the Salesian social sector and continue to think about formative approaches that help young people to consolidate their personality and become aware of their situation and reality.

Don Bosco continues to reach out to so many young, continues to extend his hand and offer opportunities for “resurrection”, and he does so through the many lay people who collaborate and support social works and services with their goods. He does so together with the many Mamma Margarets represented by educators of all kinds, fields and disciplines, who intervene in our projects for the accompaniment of young people at high risk; he does so through the response of so many Salesians who have found the concrete possibility of expressing their vocation in pastoral work and social education;²⁰ and he continues to do so also through the very many “collaborative networks” that his sons and daughters weave together for the good of others. Jesus continues to say to many today: “*Young man, I say to you, rise!*”

c. “*The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother*” (Lk 7:15).

We are witnessing the raising up of the young man, a raising up that – as we have said – is no magic act but a merciful act in God’s name.

The young person becomes self-aware and is thus able to relate to others: “And he began to speak”. If speaking is an expression of life, we can understand that not speaking, the lack of com-

²⁰ Cf. GC28, pp. 74-75, no. 8.

munication, is an expression of death. Many young people live in situations of death because the channels of communication with their parents, with the whole family and with their roots have broken down. As long as there is communication between people it is possible to accompany them on their journey through life. By approaching the young person and touching his reality of death, Jesus also knows what his possibility of life is.

Jesus has truly ended the woman's grief because he has brought an end to the situation that had caused it.

If the young man grows up, the family is re-established; by re-establishing the communication links between mother and son, the journey to the cemetery no longer makes sense and they set out for home again.

"He gave him to his mother": the young man can continue to grow, mature and take his place as an adult in society, a society that will no longer allow a helpless widow to be left alone to beg. No, because there will be a son to take care of her, who will guarantee her a dignified old age. In this way, social order will also be safeguarded.

This is the great miracle of this resurrection story: the presence of a God who accompanies his people, who restores hope and life to people, and who generates unity in families and society.

As the Salesian Congregation, we witness daily how the Lord continues to raise up thousands of young people and their families. In the different environments in which we accompany young people, we have the great mission of getting to know and inhabit the culture of young people, especially those who live in difficult situations that put their personal development at risk. Consequently, **it is clear that our Salesian social option runs cross all pastoral settings**. Directing our SEPP to this choice means offering services or programmes that open the doors to the less favoured with an oratory criterion²¹ that helps our EPCs not to get lost in the monotony and indifference that

²¹ Cf. CG28, p. 79, no. 13e.

becomes complicit in the various forms of injustice suffered by so many people. This option of ours makes Salesian communities authentically salvific.

Along the same lines, but with a specific SEPP,²² the Salesian social works and services setting responds to these situations of social evil that put young people at risk, violate their rights and those of their communities, and marginalise them from society. The impact of this Salesian setting facilitates the timely reintegration of children and young people into their families and their environment, with its own methodologies that aim at restoring violated rights, healing the various wounds that have lacerated the life of each individual, and enhancing capacities that guarantee them the full use of their freedom by giving them full meaning. It is the miracle of bringing young people back to life, which happens to the extent that we are able to implement the preventive system.

All this prompts us to engage more and more in processes of education and evangelisation through the social response of our presences, which adopt multiple legal forms of civil or ecclesiastical recognition as a requirement to be able to offer their services in different countries in a professional and transparent manner.

Our face in this sector is therefore one of Associations, Cooperatives, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Independent Businesses for Humanitarian Aid, Joint Agreements for the concerted provision of specialised services, Social Centres that provide psycho-social and health care in general, and which are also employment agencies, etc. As in other areas of our youth ministry, what distinguishes us from other similar organisations is this: we Salesians evangelise through the provision of social services, offering everyone a search for meaning and an openness to transcendence, while respecting the freedom of each individual.

To meet these needs, Don Bosco set up a Congregation at the

²² Cf. *CG27*, no. 78.

same time that religious orders were being expelled from Piedmont. Before civil society, in fact, the Congregation appeared as a charitable association of citizens. Thus he was the first in the Church to found a Pious Society and a Work of Men of God. This double dimension continues to enrich our works and social services and, at the same time, gives them an original and specific charismatic identity.

1.5. Spreading the good news

We know that the Kingdom of God grows in the midst of the world in a silent and discreet manner and that we are part of a Church that works generously for the good of the people. It is in this context that the Social Works and Services setting of the Congregation has been formed and strengthened in the various provinces, faithful to the charism of Don Bosco. With this same attitude of grateful humility, but convinced that we are witnessing a moment in history that requires the witness of charity, it is urgent that we develop an increasing ability to communicate in order to give visibility, in an exercise of transparency, to our actions and the good that is being done, and that we tell the world about the human fruits of the work we do.

It is striking that Jesus does not ask to be alone in Nain with the bier to carry out this raising up, nor does he do so in the privacy of the young man's family. This action takes place before the eyes of everyone. He communicates the power of God's love to everyone, without discriminating against anyone. This caused the witnesses to tell what they had witnessed everywhere; they themselves were the spreaders of the good news, and "this word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country" (*Lk* 7:17).

The Kingdom of God produces radical changes in those to whom it is announced and Jesus, in this event at Nain, does not impose silence or prevent others from communicating it. Moreover, in the following verses the Master himself will say: "Go and

tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them” (*Lk* 7:22). Sharing the faith is the result of walking with Jesus; celebrating it expresses the joy of belonging to the group that walks with him, and seeking social justice is one of the most important commitments of a Church that embraces the teachings of its Master.

In his two social encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis teaches that the contribution of the whole Church to human development is integral; that working for justice and peace also requires care for creation, which is our common home. Similarly, our Salesian pastoral action in every local community and in every province is called to be an integral pastoral action that is preferably addressed to young people, even if it is not limited to them. To really help them, we must look at their families (again, if they have any) and their social groups.

Integral human development is also directed towards establishing a dialogue with other faiths, with governments, social institutions and with all men and women of good will who unite their efforts in defence of human dignity. As Salesians, we participate in the construction of *social friendship*, expressing it openly and with concrete methods of intervention through the setting of social works and services. This setting is not new in our charism, since it responds to the founding inspiration, and it is for this reason that I invite all the confreres, the provincials and their councils, the rectors and their communities, as well as the educative and pastoral communities, to be courageous and to listen to the cry of the young – a cry provoked by social sin – and, therefore, to offer proposals that respond to this structural

damage of today's culture. To do this, we must "see the other" and feel compassion for him or her; only then will we find a way out of ourselves and see how to allocate the human and financial resources that will guarantee the implementation of solid accompaniment approaches for young people and communities at risk.

"Yet they [the excluded] are the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. These days, they are mentioned in international political and economic discussions, but one often has the impression that their problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way, if not treated merely as collateral damage."²³

This is also an invitation, addressed to us Salesian religious, to learn to be very free and modest, not to accommodate and respond to the adverse circumstances of life. We must also learn to translate our religious languages into those of civil societies and engage in the necessary dialogue. It is, therefore, an appeal that in the charismatic option for the social works and services setting we move towards a convergence of criteria which, while respecting the experience and work of every Salesian presence in the world, safeguards our evangelising and charismatic identity, to tell the world, with humility, simplicity and transparency, the impact of our presence in the social sector as a response to the love of Jesus.²⁴

2. THE OPTION FOR THE POOREST²⁵

With the language and methodologies of his time, Don Bosco proposed a new way of caring for teenagers and older youth. It was precisely the choice of the poorest that would guide all his

²³ Cf. FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, no. 49.

²⁴ Cf. FRANCIS, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 95.

²⁵ *The Rector Major's Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation after GC28*, in AGC 433 (2020), pp. 35-38 (priority no. 5).

action and the consequent consolidation and expansion of the Salesian Congregation, a Congregation that he himself founded, accompanied by some young men who lived and learned at Valdocco what it was to know and love Jesus and to want to serve the young people they met there. This led them to mature and dream “their own life project” (in today’s words), at the service of the mission of which they were the fruit. Being with the poor stems from Don Bosco’s own conviction, which he maintained faithfully throughout his life.

The young people who came to the Valdocco Oratory felt truly at home because there was room for everyone, without exception or discrimination. They all arrived with dreams, joys, frustrations, sadness and many of them were victims of the many harmful forms of social poverty. They all found the possibility of starting out on or resuming a path that ensured them a dignified life and a future they would have access to in order to achieve their goals. In his direct relationship with each one of them, Don Bosco allowed his heart to be moulded as an educator/pastor, and he bequeathed this characteristic to his sons, so that in any part of the world, and at any time in history, it is their poverty that would continue to inspire them to feel the need to be fathers, educators, brothers and friends. It is our attitude of faith that leads us to accompany children and young people in the difficult situations in which they live. Rather than responding to the cultural emergency of the times before us, we try to walk with young people on a path that gives them dignity and new opportunities.

Our Constitutions summarise the choice for the poorest young people²⁶ and show us the way to sanctify ourselves together with all the members of the EPC, a place where God asks us to be present in a family spirit, accompanying them in their daily lives. The capacity to be an “magnificent laboratory of youthful experiences” that characterised the *preventive system* of Don

²⁶ Cf. C 6; 26; 29 and 41.

Bosco which he lived and applied, has given rise, over time, to a rich heritage that feeds the pastoral life of the provinces and has been carefully collected in the *Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*.

2.1. With a youth ministry for liberation and reintegration through our educational works and services

I think we would agree that the educational task with children and young people must generate life, open them up to life and form them to life. In many circumstances and places it will be necessary to offer young people the opportunity to reintegrate into the core group from which they were expelled or from which they had to flee. One of the many ways of reintegration has been to foster specific environments that remove young people from the risk or the very fact of the violation of their rights. In other cases, the task of reintegration has focused on building social cohesion, trying to educate them to overcome rejection and exclusion, xenophobia and racism, and even language barriers and the lack of vocational training to prepare them for work. The social curricula thus conceived go beyond traditional academic structures and must also focus on safeguarding people's rights, on seeking their emotional, physical and spiritual stability, on empowering them through the formation of the social skills that will be indispensable in their relationship with the world and in their integration into the labour market.

In many contexts, due to particular legislation, the moment of intervention with young people at high social risk is a variable that pushes us to be creative and to have the capacity to establish partnerships in order to carry out our task effectively, minimising any situation that might again violate their dignity. Therefore, the educational task in the social sector is broad and varied, and for this reason, besides the fact that the social option must run across all our pastoral settings, we recognise Salesian social works and services as a specific setting for the provision of ed-

educative and pastoral services that can be conceived in various ways in both OPPs and SEPPs.²⁷

By way of example:

a. *Social programmes associated with other pastoral settings*

In many provinces there are educative and social services that function in the same structures as other pastoral settings, or that are a response to the social projection of a specific work.

In some of these cases, the idea is to educate people to spend their leisure time, or to offer academic complements and artistic or sports training workshops, for the promotion of civil coexistence, among others.

These are very effective ways in which our presences open their doors to the neighbourhoods in which they are located and bring them to participate in local life, making us close to the real situations of families and allowing us to get to know the sometimes very harsh reality of these boys and girls.

In other places, this service has developed through parishes, youth centres and oratories, where sensitivity has grown towards the inclusion of people with disabilities, children with learning difficulties, help for the advancement of women, help for families, multicultural and multi-religious encounters and the culture of non-violence.

In some countries, the provincials provide motivation and ensure the conditions for Salesians to have the opportunity to be integrated into social services; in others, the question of the “pastoral conversion” that motivates some confreres to want to live and serve in these peripheries is still pending. It is important for consecrated Salesians to be involved in these programmes because they are part of the preferential option of our mission, and for this reason we cannot abandon it, nor leave it to the laity alone, who sometimes feel and complain about the absence of the religious. This imbalance jeopardises the Salesian mission in the field of social service. Together we are called to revive, recreate

²⁷ Cf. GC28, p. 112, no. 45g.

and sometimes even re-found the spirit of Valdocco, in an atmosphere of mutual trust, since each is invited to contribute their own specific nature and qualities. Sometimes this can be a real return to the origins.

b. *Presences dedicated exclusively to the social works and services setting*

There are many provinces with Salesian presences whose dedication to the mission in the social sector is absolute. Because of the impact of the institutions in this sector, Salesian social works constitute a setting in their own right, as there are a series of charismatic factors, legal and regulatory requirements to which they must respond and which give them their own identity and dynamic. It is more and more common for this setting to be described and specified in the Overall Province Plans, with clear options and criteria for its development in the life of the province. In our Congregation we have simple social works and others that are more complex, both because of the number of programmes and services they offer, and because of their articulation and connection with other settings.

As in any process of growth and maturation of institutions, it is necessary to plan the future of these works, but always ensuring that they respond with quality and dignity to the needs of their beneficiaries. It is necessary to overcome the mentality, still persistent in some provinces, that causes there to be a gap and a difference between the buildings, equipment and profiles of the educators and operators of the works that cater to young people living without economic deprivation and those that cater to the poorest. This perpetuates the difference between those who have more opportunities and those who are less favoured and, to be faithful to the Lord Jesus and Don Bosco, we cannot allow this, because the poor deserve the best from us – as we learned from Don Bosco.

The situations in which the disadvantaged find themselves must never frighten us. On the contrary, every time we as Salesians meet these young people we must be enthusiastic about ac-

companying them in their process of preparation for life. Hence the need to be very professional in the formative processes we offer them, since each young person is a project of God that we have a responsibility to accompany.

Our strength as Salesians lies in letting ourselves be helped and also in learning from others. We cannot do good alone. For this reason, in the social works setting we must involve a large number of suitable people, trained in different areas of knowledge and disciplines, who can enlighten the reflection and action to be carried out on behalf of these young people and the communities they accompany. On the other hand, in the animation and shared governance of our works, we need to generate the necessary mechanisms so that the decision-making process is also shared with the laity and the culture of evaluating processes is established.

Of course, the question of profitability and economic sustainability of this type of work is always a concern. To ensure this, we have recourse to our pastoral intelligence and the ability to establish agreements with governments, regional or local administrations, private associations or organisations working in development cooperation, both nationally and internationally. What we must never forget is whose sons we are and what protection we have when working those he loved most.

A very important criterion to pay attention to at this point is the question of who to enter into partnerships with, so that in the search for financial resources we do not allow ourselves to be forced into actions that run the risk of selling out our identity. I must say that our evangelising intention in social works and services is non-negotiable. So the goodness of this setting lies in the fact that we sow the seeds of the Kingdom, even in non-Christian religious contexts, by our actions in the midst of the most disadvantaged communities, and always with respect and freedom for others, but without losing one iota of our Christian and Salesian identity.

2.2. Pastoral care and accompaniment with suitable and prepared animators

Every programme, every service and every social work of our Congregation shows that in the various provinces and EPCs, consecrated individuals and lay people have experienced a great openness of heart in feeling sent to young people at risk; they have reflected on the best strategies to follow in order to propose the relevant accompaniment processes for them and have made the appropriate decisions to guarantee the continuity required by the projects. This is a courageous action, because it is not easy to pursue initiatives that defend those who “create problems and annoyances”.

At this point I would like to express a well-deserved acknowledgement to the many lay men and women who work at the various levels of our works and social services, both as educators, as service staff and as specialists in the various sectors (social pedagogues and re-education experts, social workers, psychologists, health experts, school teachers and workshop instructors, work placement staff, management and administration staff, directors). To all of you I say: Thank you, in the name of our Father Don Bosco, for your good work, because through the contribution of each one of you, children, adolescents and older youth and the communities and neighbourhoods where rights are violated find true fathers and mothers who care about them and who make them feel God’s care.

I know that many of you live your profession with deep passion to the point of taking it on as a true vocation. This makes you true apostles of the Gospel. Many of you, in so many countries of the world, come from cultures and religious traditions proper to their contexts, and this makes us even closer, because it is on the basis of the values we share that we recognise ourselves as members of the same family born in Valdocco.

I know that you, dear lay people, return home at the end of your busy days to continue the work of your beloved families,

and that you often sacrifice part of your personal time to respond to the call of the young people in Salesian work.

I also know that on some occasions some of you have experienced moments of misunderstanding.

I encourage you to go forward, knowing that in the certainty of the vocation you have received you will always find the strength for a sincere dialogue that will help you to grow and mature. Thank you for your life, your friendship and your accompaniment of the young people, of the EPC and of us Salesians.

And I also address profound recognition to my dear Salesian confreres, coadjutor brothers and priests, who with immense pastoral charity have given themselves, or continue to give themselves, to the service of the poorest.

Many of my confreres have sanctified themselves in silent obedience and communicated God's grace to the suffering, to those who are most afflicted and needy, assisting them, standing by their side, counselling them, offering them new possibilities in which to direct their gaze. Many have faced misunderstandings because we have not always nor everywhere been prepared to understand the educational and social proposals. Many Salesians find a vibrant dynamic of our charism in the methodology of social works and services, because they are spaces that move away from rigidity, offering freshness and launching bold pastoral missions.

I ask the Lord for the grace that many young Salesians, starting from the formation houses themselves, may become enthusiastic about apostolates in contact with the streets and depressed environments where, as happened to John Bosco as a young priest, they may be moved by the situations of degradation of humanity, and find happiness in the friendship and being with these young people.

Thanks be to God there are many confreres today who direct

their vocational life project to working in this setting that allows us to see the face of the Risen Lord without any veil. It remains a challenge for our processes of initial, specific and ongoing formation to offer the tools that will enable Salesians to know and love the social dimension of our presence, so as to be competent in this field and thus pertinently propose the pastoral action that it requires.

2.3. Ministry that takes the family into consideration

The family is the natural home of every human being. It is in the family that one learns to be a person and a citizen. Many of the dramas experienced by teenagers and older youth in social services have their origin in their family situation.

There are families that are harmonious, stable, welcoming and attentive to the well-being of each of their members, but there are also families, faced with the problems of one of their children, where they have neither the capacity nor the resources to facilitate the healing and reintegration process. Some of these situations are, for example, drug use, involvement in criminal or violent groups, threats to personal integrity from third parties or legal proceedings.²⁸ In some cases, families fall victim to external causes that break them up, and children are left without supportive ties and bonds to support them, as in the case of regions where there are situations of war, forced displacement due to violence, natural disasters and, in particular, all types of migration. The phenomenon of poverty, combined with the emotional instability of some parents, leads them to have behavioural problems that often affect their children. The family becomes dysfunctional and ends up being an adverse and even abusive environment.

“The reality has become so complex that today we cannot think of family in the singular, but in the plural. There is not just

²⁸ Cf. *GC28*, pp. 69-70, no. 2.

one family, rather there are families. Despite the various configurations of families, we can affirm that the family relationship is a component of major importance because for better or for worse, it is the only access to construction and development of one's own identity. The family is a relational context that supports transformation; it is in fact the institution that 'organises' the primary relationships and fundamental differences of humans... When it comes to caring for the family, first and foremost, this necessarily implies caring for the members of the family, in their diversity and in their dignity; no institution must be above people and their integral human development."²⁹

The re-integrative element of Salesian social pedagogy seeks to enable the young person, in their process of personal maturation, to rebuild the broken ties with their family. From this point of view, the recent Salesian document "Youth Ministry and Family" teaches us that since our ministry is addressed primarily to young people, we cannot isolate them from the world to which they belong, and we are therefore called to accompany family realities to guarantee them the right conditions, both for living together and for mutual support, from affective to economic stability. A fragmented family puts each of its members at risk, and social intervention aims to establish the causes of this malaise in order to activate in the young person the possible paths to follow so that they can reintegrate into it, being part of a welcoming, affectionate and formative environment of which they feel an important part, and which they can help consolidate.³⁰ In this same movement, it is ideal that families join in the reintegration process of young people as a sure key to their recovery.³¹

²⁹ SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT, *Youth Ministry and Family*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2021, p. 12.

³⁰ Cf. CG28, p. 81 n. 15.

³¹ Cf. CG28, p. 82 n. 15h.

3. COMMITMENT TO INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The social doctrine of the Church has inspired and continues to inspire Salesian work. Our educational proposals have a spiritual perspective because we act in the name of God and direct our actions towards him; but they also have a socio-political perspective, because we are committed to the transformation of reality, and in this same respect we accompany young people to commit themselves and be dynamic agents of culture. This change of mentality requires that we break with the logic that enslaves and people by offering them ideologies, and move forward together towards integral human development. This concept is tied to the idea of “growth”³² which for many years guided indicators that sought to measure the evolution of societies from a financial point of view alone. Church teaching leads us to understand that every beneficial change in the material and social dimension of people is directly linked to their transcendence,³³ and is a call to be truly human, for this is God’s plan for all humanity and also, of course, for believers who find in Christ the measure of the perfect man.³⁴

This process brings together many efforts for justice, peace and care for creation. Pope Francis has published his valuable encyclicals *Laudato si’* (2015) and *Fratelli tutti* (2020) around this proposal, and since 2016 has even set up a specific Dicastery to regulate and administer issues relating to migrants, the poorest, the sick, the excluded and marginalised, victims of armed conflicts and natural disasters, prisoners, the unemployed and victims of all kinds of slavery and torture; as well as the COVID 19 pandemic accompaniment programme and the coordination of integral ecology through the *Laudato Si’* platform. It is clear that we cannot speak of Salesian Social Works and Services without recognising that we are involved in this call to participate in

³² PAUL VI, *Populorum progressio*, 14.

³³ FRANCIS, *Laudato si’*, 225.

³⁴ Cf. *Eph* 4:13.

the path of integral human development to which Pope Francis has invited the Church and the world. It is, so to speak, the official agenda of the Church to which we are institutionally aligned as a Congregation. This adds value to the significance of our works, reinforces the charismatic identity of our educational and social intervention and enlightens us in our choice of allies and *stakeholders*.

3.1. The importance of works for young people at risk and social innovation

The Salesian mission, in all its institutional manifestations and in programmes of assistance to populations in situations where rights are violated, generates processes that start from respect for each individual, accompanying them to discover their place in the world in dialogue with the evangelical values of the Christian faith or their own beliefs. Development theory calls this phenomenon of change “social innovation”, which takes into account the wealth existing in a population, seeking to generate habits in people starting from their possibilities, so that they can find their own path towards a more dignified life. In this way, Salesian charism and social innovation are like two sides of the same coin: the former in the theological and pastoral and spiritual sense, and the latter in today’s academic and civil language, which seeks to indicate processes of cohesion within the culture, leading individuals and communities to integral human development and, hence, from our worldview of life, to transcendence.

Pope Francis establishes an important and necessary dialogue in his magisterium between the language of the Church’s social commitment, which defends human dignity, and that of international organisations that guarantee policies for the well-being of peoples.

In recent decades, there have been many agendas promoted by Church and civil organisations working in the field of development cooperation, most of which converge on the concept of

sustainability. An organisation, in this case a social work or service, is sustainable when it generates a healthy balance between fulfilling its mission, the impact it has on the environment and the financial sustainability that sustains it. From this point of view, it is interesting to consider sustainability as a component that helps to evaluate the meaning of Salesian works and social services. It is an opportunity to overcome the danger that exists in many social (and sometimes ecclesial) institutions of reducing the values of the Gospel and social doctrine to merely philanthropic actions, by drawing real processes of accompaniment to transcendence from our intervention plans.

3.2. Complementarity of Salesian know-how and institutions

The pastoral model leading to integral human development in the Salesian social works and services is enriched by the contribution of various disciplines, among which I would like to highlight the following:

a. *The Salesian contribution in the approach to human rights in our contexts*

Cultural plurality and legal requirements have led the Salesian Family to feel the challenge of having to respond in a particular way to the needs of young people at risk in every context. However, the phenomenon of globalisation is making the factors that cause social injustice and the violation of people's rights, as well as the strategies that are generated to combat them, increasingly common and similar in all societies and places.

Understanding the sociological keys of each historical moment in the various contexts is an opportunity to strengthen Salesian work in the Salesian social works and services setting, and is a concrete way of projecting it into the future to ensure its significance. This discipline provides us with the tools to ensure that our commitment to the young is ongoing, because society is always evolving; it helps us to be profound and passionate

in our work, because the more we are able to analyse the condition of human change, the more opportunities we will have to find the keys to the changes that lead to integral development.

Using an interdisciplinary methodology, by setting up observatories that facilitate a careful and constant sociological interpretation of the phenomena that drive the dynamics of children and young people, the way is indicated for configuring educational processes to be followed and entrance is given to various forums, such as those that are set up in every country and in every region to denounce the violation of the rights of minors. At the same time, the opportunity is offered to work for the defence of these rights. The task of observing these phenomena is essential in this setting, because in the formulation of the SEPP a proper analysis of the context will make the offer of our social services conspicuous and will keep us relevant among social sector institutions.

As a Church and as a Salesian Congregation, we recognise that human rights are a precious gift that we must defend and promote. Our local and provincial communities have come a long way in this regard. In 2009, with the *Preventive System and Human Rights* Congress, the Congregation made the choice that this approach run across all settings and levels of our structures in the world. In a special way, we look at the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that the United Nations proclaimed in 1989 as a global agreement which gives importance to children as people who have the right to be educated in an integral manner, helping them to develop all their capacities and strengthen their personalities. In this way, a pathway is ensured through which humanity can safely advance towards the attainment of peace and human dignity, insofar as the new generations are respected and formed in this attitude.

It should reassure us to know that as religious and lay people of the EPC we take the necessary measures and develop the necessary tools to safeguard the integrity of children and the entire community, knowing that all its members must know, internalise, respect and observe them.

b. *Social pedagogy from a Salesian perspective*

When we speak of social risk, we mean the concrete possibility that people's human rights are affected or radically violated. In the most diverse human contexts we find many forms of poverty that affect children in general. However, contexts of high socio-economic poverty concentrate a large number of elements that put people's dignity at risk. There are many human peripheries that bring with them the marginalisation suffered by millions of people compared to some of the benefits enjoyed by ordinary citizens. In more scandalous and degrading cases, we see how millions of other human beings live in total exclusion, unable to have the opportunities that should be guaranteed in all societies.

Our charismatic option on behalf of the poorest demands that we commit ourselves, as far as possible, to help break cycles of poverty and exclusion, and we do this, fundamentally, through education. In most provinces that have social programmes there is the challenge of training social educators and social pedagogues, since it is not easy to find the right profiles in all contexts and, in many cases, there is not even an academic offer to prepare them as such.

From a lay perspective, social educators and social pedagogues are a very similar figure to the Salesian assistant that Don Bosco wanted for his settings. Through social pedagogy, we ask ourselves about the type of citizen we must accompany towards maturity, starting from the recognition of the uniqueness of the children, teenagers and older youth of these presences of ours.

Among the many valuable writings on social pedagogy, I would like to simply suggest the up-to-date reading³⁵ of the Preventive System offered by our Fr Jean Marie Peticlerc, who notes that there are three key moments in which Salesian social works and services currently propose accompaniment processes for

³⁵ Cf. PETICLERC JEAN MARIE, *I valori più significativi del Sistema Preventivo*, in AA. VV., *Sistema preventivo e diritti umani*, Roma 2009.

young people at risk: the pedagogy of welcome, the pedagogy of hope and the pedagogy of alliance.

- *The pedagogy of welcome* identifies the first steps that educators take to make contact with each individual young person. From there, the link is generated that will allow each of them to open up to the pedagogical proposals. This is possible because the young person recognises the credibility of the educator who accompanies him. Indeed, if trust is lacking, there will be no educational process.
- *The pedagogy of hope* allows one to see how educators and specialists from different disciplines propose approaches to accompany the young person, helping him (or her) to mature in an integral manner. One perceives that there is a path to follow, based on trust that will bear fruit.
- Finally, *the pedagogy of alliance* allows us to discover the network of networks that is being built and that must guarantee people, in this case young people who turn to our works and social services, the opportunities that will help them grow as citizens, exercise their rights and duties and participate in a healthy development of culture. This demonstrates the regulatory function of society as a guarantor of rights, channelled through the role of the state and public institutions, as well as the bodies that are supposed to ensure the well-being of citizens.

c. *Complementarity of know-how*

As I have already said, the pastoral and psycho-social model is based on building trust, hope and alliance. It is marvellous to observe how Don Bosco's Preventive System has the capacity to involve so many people – lay and consecrated – who enrich our presence with new languages, new educational experiences, new paths to follow in order to reach out to the young people most in need. In this work of complementarity, we consecrated Salesians also have the opportunity to contribute to the great wealth of personal and spiritual accompaniment of minors, their families and their neighbourhood or local communities.

In addition to a rich pastoral experience in our Congregation, we have an abundant intellectual patrimony that has given rise to schools, institutes, vocational training centres, centres for the care of minors, research groups and numerous scientific publications that make our Universities and Institutions of Higher Education true focal points enlightening reflection in the various spheres of knowledge, and that take on particular significance when this has an impact on the process of accompanying individuals and groups. This enormous capacity has been carried forward by Salesians and lay people who have offered, and continue to offer today, their intellectual capacities at the service of the mission.

Among the important higher education offerings, our Pontifical Salesian University in Rome, as a university of the Congregation, has seen significant academic productions in the fields of pedagogy and social pedagogy, psychology and sociology. We must continue along these lines and increase collaboration with other IUS (Institutes of Higher Education) and universities in the commitment to human development in multiple fields.

I appeal to the provinces, and to those who serve in social works, that in the midst of their intense apostolic work (educational and social), they perform a healthy exercise of pastoral intelligence so as not to give in to the tyranny of responding only to the urgent. We need to systematise our educational action and keep it constantly updated, with an ongoing analysis of reality, contexts and achievements that can make the mission meaningful. It is true that not all communities have the capacity to perform this task, so it is of great value to generate networks in this aspect too.

This is why I also invite our higher education institutions to ensure that much of their reflection on the social sector can come from the territories where our Salesian works are located and from the experience we undergo in them. May university research truly fulfil its social function of providing data and reflections that lead to a wise understanding of human and cultural phenomena, and may this enable the various social agents and

educators to make decisions, thus generating the necessary and even innovative actions for each environment.

Finally, I invite our Social Works and Services, our Salesian Universities, the Youth Ministry Sector, the Congregation's Missions and Social Communication Sector, the Mission Offices and NGOs of Salesian inspiration, and the Provinces to unite and coordinate more and more, and to work in multi-sectoral projects with a sense of communion and shared responsibility, to continue to offer the best possible and responsible responses to these minors and young people, and to their impoverished communities; and, all this, always in fidelity to the charism.

3.3 Involvement in active citizenship

From the logic with which I have presented the reflection up to this point, it is easy to conclude that it is not possible to have a proposal for integral human development that favours people without involving them in this very process, so I emphasise two very important aspects that help us to strengthen this purpose:

a. Formation to active citizenship

Active citizenship leads to the formation of people who are sensitive and attentive to the great challenges of humanity and the desire to do something to find common solutions.

It is very important to motivate and teach young people to reflect and propose paths, objectives and processes based on the value and wealth of the people in their place, territory and context. This will enable them to exercise leadership in the pursuit of the common good and the improvement of their own lives and those of others. From a faith and Christian perspective, this means preparing young people who will be true "missionary disciples" (using Pope Francis' words)³⁶ capable of being significant here and now.

There are specialised programmes for formation in active cit-

³⁶ FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 119-121.

izenship in a significant number of provinces, designed both to form young people and adults in this field and to generate projects that strengthen this dimension of active citizenship in the various pastoral settings.

b. Volunteering for building up social friendship

Volunteering is one of the realities found in Valdocco since the origins of the charism (even if it is a term more suited to our times than to those of that time). It was the young people themselves who wanted to help Don Bosco carry out his mission. From that experience some of them stayed with him, and with some of them Don Bosco founded the Salesian Congregation. It is beautiful to imagine what Mamma Margaret must have thought when Don Bosco asked her help to be the mother of his young people. She must have felt a lot of emotion and a deep joy in knowing that she was helping her son in something important. She may have felt nostalgia at leaving the house where she had lived for so many years: the land she had worked so hard for, her family and neighbours. She must have felt uncertainty in leaving for the unknown, as the life that awaited her at Valdocco was undoubtedly an unknown one. In spite of everything, she accepted her son's invitation and contributed to improving the lives of many young people.

The Salesian mission continued to spread throughout the world, fruit of the Holy Spirit (the true inspirer of the charism), and many people joined in. Like Don Bosco, we too need help today to continue building the Kingdom of God wherever the Lord has planted us. Like Don Bosco, we too can propose to young people that they be shepherds and educators of other young people, and one way of doing this, among the many ways of living and committing ourselves, is through volunteering.

We can promote a culture of solidarity through this experience, the opening of the heart's mind. Through encounters with others, in other cultures and geographies, the volunteer experience should offer people, especially young people who have been beneficiaries of our accompaniment processes in some Salesian

settings, an experience that helps them to gain a valid and rich perspective on their lives. The same Salesian presences that host volunteers are positively impacted by their presence.

There are various types of volunteer work in our youth ministry in which people generously donate their time, their work and their lives in Salesian houses or in the various services offered, which is also a very important indicator of these presences in the consolidation of integral human development. This experience, which takes place above all in our social and missionary works, is a gift from God that is lived in the Salesian world and has created bonds of friendship and belonging between volunteers, Salesians and young people in the works. The Salesian communities that welcome volunteers are also challenged by their very presence and often feel the challenge that contact and collaboration with volunteers represent in order to live being Salesians of Don Bosco in an ever more witnessing way.

3.4. Education to the faith and accompaniment in Salesian social works

At a time when Salesian social works seek above all to prioritise people (children, teenagers and older youth) rather than structures, services and management itself, we cannot forget that “for us evangelisation and catechesis are the fundamental dimensions of our mission”. Like Don Bosco, “we are all called to be educators of the faith”³⁷ on every occasion and in every context. Catechesis and education in the faith are not something we should offer only to the most fortunate, able and capable boys and girls. It is precisely those most in need who are the first to be enriched by the gift of the Lord’s presence in their lives, by the gift of faith – whatever their religion. *Let us not fall into the error of thinking that these privileged beneficiaries of ours are never sufficiently prepared to make this journey of Christian initiation or maturing in the faith.* This is why we wrote that “Don

³⁷ Cf. C 34.

Bosco passed on a passion for the salvation of the young, through his constant involvement in simple, essential catechesis adapted to the circumstances, age and culture of the young and linked with other educational and recreational offerings by the Oratory. Salesian catechesis does not happen as the end-point of a preparatory course but is implicitly at the heart of initial encounters and explicitly part of everything we offer. Don Bosco did not make a distinction between first proclamation and catechesis, but when he met a boy he immediately found a convenient moment to invite him to embark on a journey of Christian life.”³⁸

Faithful to the Salesian tradition, I believe it is essential not to overlook the fact that education in the faith and catechesis are placed at the service of the integral formation of the human person, always with respect for each individual.

4. THE SCOPE OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM

The Preventive System, in which we find the Salesian educational and spiritual identity, takes concrete form in a very special way in the care of teenagers and older youth at social risk in different educational and pastoral models. Every pastoral setting must be able to give an adequate and specific response to the reality of the young people with whom we share our lives, according to the Oratory criterion as a permanent source of inspiration.

Salesian social works and services have a twofold task: to prevent situations that may violate the rights of children and young people, and to heal the wounds caused by the violation of these rights, which have led to painful conditions of marginalisation.

The defence, restitution and safeguarding of the rights of children, teenagers and older youth – as well as their families, groups and neighbourhoods – give the Salesian Preventive System a very

³⁸ SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT, *Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2014³, pp. 150-153.

concrete characterisation and implementation. Mitigation of social risk, the restoration of rights, and reintegration into social life are the expected results of this pastoral action. Starting from our evangelising option, all our settings are called to have a social outlook in favour of the poorest and most disadvantaged.

We cannot judge young people only from their problems. It is true that it is not easy to work in the social works and services setting. Like Don Bosco, patience and a high tolerance of frustration must be enriched by faith and the certainty of working for the Kingdom of God. But at the same time, the enormous satisfaction of seeing the results in many of these young people, in each of them, each at their own pace and according to their own possibilities, each with their own gifts, continues to be a “sign of resurrection” as at Nain.

It is a joy that we experience as Salesians and lay people because we are certain that the option for Salesian social works and services reflects the very face of God.

4.1. A constant response

Don Bosco’s charism is a manifestation of God’s predilection for the young and, among them, for the least favoured. This is demonstrated by the multiplicity of projects that make up the Salesian Congregation’s social works and services sector in 134 countries. At present, Salesians and lay people in our presences care for children, teenagers, older youth and communities at risk in about 1,120 programmes in five continents, linked to the various pastoral settings of some works, or that make up educative and pastoral communities with specific projects based on the social model. These experiences are the result of many decades of generous work in which the local and provincial communities have responded with faith to the voice of the Spirit, reacting to the needs of the young people in their contexts and circumstances renewing and updating the way of interpreting and applying the preventive system.

In spite of the distances and cultural differences in which the various proposals were born, this setting is becoming increasingly consolidated, both because of the systematisation and professionalisation of the processes proposed in the face of the various youth problems, and because of the legislative evolution that has characterised the social sector (sometimes called the third sector). The phenomenon of globalisation has also standardised the problems that put people's dignity at risk and, in response to this, networking has led to responses that enable appropriate solutions to be offered.

As Rector Major I indicated the "absolute priority for the young, the poorest and most abandoned and defenceless" in my action programme for the Congregation after GC28 and I said with deep conviction that "if one day we were to leave behind the youngsters, older youth and, among them the poorest, our Congregation would begin to die".³⁹

I am very grateful to the Lord to see the progress made in many local and provincial communities. I now renew the invitation to continue to share the wealth of the charismatic heritage we possess, so that together we can continue to shape and consolidate the evangelising and educational identity of this important setting in which we are also witnesses of the Lord's love and goodness. In order to achieve this, we increasingly need to unify the languages that will lead us to understand each other and to dialogue about what we consider important in our proposals; we will thus be able to establish the minimum but common criteria that must guide the SEPP of this educative and pastoral setting in which we work with the poorest and most abandoned, and strengthen the networking among the provinces and regions within our Congregation. It is true that there are countries and provinces where this reflection is very advanced; in other cases it is proceeding more slowly, but significant steps are being taken.

³⁹ Cf. CC28, pp. 35-38.

With these words, I wish to accompany and support the efforts of many provinces that have decisively indicated the preferential option for the poorest in their OPP and dedicated all kinds of resources to this mission, and guarantee the sustainability of these programmes and services.

Likewise, I follow with great hope the consolidated work of some Provincial Conferences and Regions that have created coordination structures for the management, communication and formation processes of the social sector in their territories.

In this regard I would like to highlight the work carried out by Youth at Risk (YAR) in India; the Salesian Social Action Network in Brazil; the Salesians for Social Action in Italy; the Salesian Social Platforms in Spain and the experience of the Salesian Social Action America Network (RASS) which has been operating for more than 20 years of uninterrupted reflection and joint action and includes 18 Provinces from the 2 regions of the American continent. In all these experiences there are lines of action defined in quality action plans, consolidated youth intervention strategies, suitable technological support and joint formation programmes. Above all, I happily note the intense educational and evangelising passion on behalf of the poorest young people and those at risk.

A very significant part of these proposals is carried out together with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and other groups of the Salesian Family, where the significant contribution of each enriches the charismatic response of Salesian educational proposals in the world. This shared responsibility in the work of our family has been a source of revitalisation. And the commitment to working as a Salesian Family is a constitutive feature of our identity that makes our social works and services a true “theological place of encounter with God”.

There are also very significant cases where partnerships with other religious congregations and dioceses have come into being, making our work an increasingly ecclesial commitment.

4.2. New forms of mission

The World Consultative Council for Social Works and Services held in Rome in 2019, convened by the Youth Ministry Sector in the context of the Synod on Young People, ratified the path that this setting must continue to follow, in line with Pope Francis' proposal on integral human development. In continuity with the reflection carried out in 2019 and as part of *The Rector Major's Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation after GC28* I have considered it necessary to convoke an **International Congress of Salesian Social Works and Services** as a place for convergence of all the Provinces and Institutions to which they belong to pray, reflect, share and propose agreements and common actions that will consolidate this setting in our Congregation.

We live in an era of rapid social change and, for this very reason, social services are also evolving rapidly. In the face of this reality, this educative and pastoral setting must be defined not so much by the services offered, but by the method that leads it to impact, in terms of integral human development, on the lives of children, teenagers and older youth. The ongoing observation of social and cultural phenomena gives us the possibility of identifying which are the peripheries of the human situation and, therefore, of proposing new operational strategies to reach people. The ability to intercept all the situations that cause so much human suffering, so much marginalisation, and tend to create situations of "waste", especially among children and young people, drives us to provide concrete responses.

I cannot fail to mention, in this regard, at least three great wounds that afflict humanity at this time.

a. *The devastating effect of the COVID pandemic*

The arrival of the pandemic had dramatic effects on the world economy. Many production cycles came to a halt and the provision of services was reduced exponentially. However, our work in social works and services has been boosted by situations such as assistance to the sick, solidarity chains in the distribution of food

and other basic necessities. As for minors and young people at risk, at the time of the pandemic they were already there; that was their home, we could not turn them away and leave them on the street. Providence gave us the strength to accompany them and the resources to survive in the midst of the crisis.

As I write this letter, the scourge of the pandemic has not yet disappeared and the virus continues to mutate. The COVID 19 pandemic has affected all spheres and levels of society: both “affluent” societies and the poorest and those touched by misery. To the former belong the richest and most powerful of this world, who also have better chances of accessing treatment. However, we cannot forget that in the poorest and most abandoned places – in countries considered as “developing” – the health crisis caused by COVID 19 continues to be one of the most aberrant social injustices that exist today and to which many populations are subjected as a consequence of political negligence, corruption and lack of solidarity of one part of the world towards the other (the largest and poorest).

b. *The dastardly war in Ukraine*

As I have said in other texts, the dastardly war that led to the invasion of Ukraine has shattered many dreams of peace that had arisen over the past decades. Destruction, damage, deaths and families decimated by the loss of their loved ones are the first consequences of this drama. Our solidarity is with all the Ukrainian people and, in a special way, with our confreres and members of the Salesian Family who have not wavered in their mission to be concrete signs of God's presence among the people.

We have witnessed many signs of unity and solidarity. Our Salesian provinces in Europe (both SDB and FMA) responded admirably, activating plans to take in thousands of families displaced by the bombing and destruction. In many cases, processes have been implemented to link them to the social systems of the various host countries and to ensure their well-being. Salesian houses in the countries bordering Ukraine, and beyond, have served as reception and distribution centres for humanitarian

aid from all over the world. We have seen how, in the different places where our Ukrainian brothers and sisters have arrived, the faith that impels us to act in solidarity and to be one family has been celebrated and shared.

c. *Other places of pain, death and hunger*

It would be a serious oversight on my part if I did not mention here the reality of pain, death and hunger in many other places where war between sister societies, civil wars and terrorist groups (many of them in Africa) continue to be a scourge that seems to have no end, and which are not visible to the media because they take place in areas that do not respond to the interests of the groups that control economic power on a global scale. There too, our brothers and sisters, together with other members of the Don Bosco Family, are present with proposals of resurrection and life in the midst of a culture of death.

4.3. Salesian social works and services among migrants and refugees

In his Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis wrote that “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age”.⁴⁰ He emphasised that in the face of this drama of millions of people forced to leave their lands because of wars, poverty and violence, our common response could be articulated around four verbs: “welcome, protect, promote and integrate”. As GC28 said, migrants cannot be a problem, they are a great opportunity for us Salesians today to meet Jesus.

The Pope encourages us to “touch the wounds” of the bodies of those who suffer; when this happens we become truly sensitive

⁴⁰ FRANCIS, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018, “Welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants and refugees”*, Rome 15 August 2017.

to their pain and, as people of faith and pastors of the young, we are invited not to stand still in the face of this drama. The Salesian charism finds its full meaning in this field, which is the pastoral/social service that is growing the most in the Congregation, and in which we also develop proposals for accompaniment for the different types of migration, both within some nations and in the international migrations that a good part of the provinces deal with.

In this regard, I would like to emphasise our focus on permanent voluntary migration for economic, work or study reasons. We also deal with people in temporary voluntary migration, especially workers who enter seasonally to participate in the labour markets of developed countries. We accompany forced migrations undertaken by people fleeing their countries because of war, violence, epidemics or natural disasters. Some of these migrants are refugees seeking political asylum and many of them are forced to stay for long periods of time waiting for unsuccessful responses from governments. In this respect, I would like to thank our confreres for the great work done in the refugee camps of Palabek in Uganda, Kakhuma in Kenya and Juba (South Sudan), where, despite the difficult circumstances, our being there is a beacon of hope for these people.

All migrants have in common the search for well-being, their own and that of their families, who have often remained in their place of origin and for whom reunification is generally sought. This leads us to discover that the “affective” value in migration is one of the components to take into account when pastorally accompanying a person arriving from afar. We must ask ourselves what the migrant we see passing by our door must feel in their heart; we must question ourselves about their loneliness and the circumstances in which they left their home, loved ones, village and people. We Salesians cannot consider migrations as a “statistical phenomenon” to be analysed on the basis of figures; on the contrary, we must face this drama with the hope of generating life, freeing ourselves from

the habit of “political correctness”. The Gospel does not include “political correctness”!

Many proposals underway in some Salesian provinces seek to offer alternatives that bring dignity to immigrants. It is true that working with the poor, who are also from another culture or religion, who do not speak our language and who may carry a heavy burden of social resentment, is difficult and unrewarding. But we might ask ourselves what skills Don Bosco developed when he faced these same challenges with the boys at Valdocco. In the different contexts of our educational communities, we can ask ourselves what we can do to improve the condition of migrants in our cities. In this way, parishes, schools, oratories and vocational training centres can determine the number of migrants with whom to interact and offer them a more meaningful space in which they can grow and better integrate into society.

5. SUSTAINABILITY OF SOCIAL WORKS AND SERVICES

It is clear that the sustainability of projects and actions in the social sector is important in order to be able to continue doing good. There are three criteria that international development cooperation agencies indicate when they think about the sustainability of these social interventions. Sustainability is guaranteed if they have the capacity to generate social equity according to their mission, if they are able to guarantee ecological sustainability and if they have the financial resources to support this mission.

The balance of these three criteria in our presences must be checked periodically by the EPC core team and must meet the objectives and indicators of the SEPP. In any case, we are convinced that working with this orientation is fully compatible with trust and abandonment to Providence. Because doing things well, with great transparency and communicating the good that one

does, opens the way for the generosity of benefactors who work with us on the basis of trust and credibility. This is a very important factor. Let us not forget to be very demanding of ourselves in terms of clarity, honesty and transparency.

In fact, it is up to the management bodies of each presence, project or programme in the social sector (depending on the situation in each place) to ensure transparent reporting with quality criteria, since the ability to negotiate resources, obtain contracts with the various state bodies, establish inter-institutional partnerships and to access national and international projects with cooperation agencies largely depends on this. It could even be said that in most of the countries where we work as children's rights defenders, this is precisely what we depend on to get the licences that accredit or authorise our institutions to provide the service.

All this involvement leads us to strengthen our efforts in a planning and project mentality, in total harmony with what is proposed to us in the *Youth Ministry Framework*. We must not be lazy but be well organised in our apostolic action; without falling into sterile efficiency.

Dear brothers and sisters, this work is certainly challenging, but not impossible. That is why it is necessary to understand the logic of the social or third sector and to choose critically the profiles of the people who join the mission and accompany us in the various tasks to which we must respond. The careful care of human resources involves listening to people, accompanying them in common formation, and guaranteeing the quality of the work, always giving priority to those for whom the mission is intended. By guaranteeing all this, we will always be able to make the most appropriate decisions.

I therefore believe I can say that sustainability and the pastoral sense of Salesian works are two terms that complement each other.

5.1. The organisational structure in Salesian development activities

When we have a clear approach to the roles and relationships to be established in this particular field of Salesian mission, we understand even more clearly the need to start from a systematic and process-oriented pastoral approach in which authority is conferred on the basis of service to the poorest. And this is much more important than occupying this or some other position.

At the local level, those in charge of social works or social programmes must ensure that the service provided is adequate, i.e. that the educative and pastoral action responds to the needs of young people and their communities.

At the provincial level, the Planning and Development Offices of each Province (PPDO) or Project Offices can support the work of social works and services in the technical formulation of these processes.

Development cooperation is a commitment of different social actors. These offices have evolved in provinces, helping to provide an increasingly systematic and process-oriented mentality, both in the provinces and in the local communities.

It is also necessary, in order to ensure the quality and future of these works, to look after the personnel, always being fair in the relationship with workers and all those involved. To this end, we must first of all ensure compliance with the labour laws of each country, making sure that workers receive a fair wage, in line with their performance, and that they have decent working conditions. And I say this thinking especially of those countries where workers' rights are poorly protected and legal requirements are lower. We must distinguish ourselves as a Salesian Congregation by a clear desire for true justice (which goes beyond essential legality); otherwise the good we can do for the most vulnerable boys and girls will not be full and something will always be missing.

At the international level, some Salesian institutions at the UN and in Brussels are very significant. So are many of our Non-Governmental Organisations for development cooperation and our Mission Offices. All these institutions facilitate the participation of our Salesian Congregation in cooperation for the development of peoples. This new culture of collaboration, donation and aid that we are trying to generate in turn leads to changes in mentality in the territories and among the people, helps to ensure the sustainability of projects and also gives greater charismatic meaning to our social works and services.

5.2. Decision-making process

The Salesian operational model proposes an integrated structure in the animation and governance of social works and services, and designates the teams and decision-makers who are called upon to make the most appropriate decisions to promote a real response to the most vulnerable in this sector.

From this point of view, I would like to make some recommendations that I believe are important to be more meaningful and sustainable in this environment.

1. We must have a vision of the future

In the provinces where we provide social services, we need to overcome the individualism and territorialism that isolate works and hinder the development of the social sector. We need to project ourselves into the future, so as to ensure the path towards sustainability. I insisted on the need to have teams dedicated to the observation of social phenomena and knowledge of the legislation of each place so that we always know where we are going, so that we do not lose presence, validity and meaning in the service of those who need us.

2. We must have an integrated vision

It is necessary to allow local, provincial and, if necessary, national social services to make the necessary decisions and,

to this end, an appropriate delegation of authority is indispensable.

Given the lack of knowledge on the part of many managers of the logic of the social sector and the legislation to which they must respond, there is an urgent need for a profound sense of institutional leadership and governance, that is, a collegial ability to make decisions (each according to his or her responsibilities), according to a common plan guided by specialists in the sector.

This governance mitigates the risk of each house or province interpreting aspects of common interest differently and autonomously. Not paying attention to this aspect would lead (dare I say it metaphorically) to institutional “pachydermia”, moving slowly, lost in inefficient bureaucracies, and jeopardising the most important thing which is the proper achievement of our mission.

3. Always with an overall perspective on things

It is necessary to safeguard the unity of criteria and commit to a vision that also benefits social programmes, both for people and for the economy as a whole, avoiding the temptation to have some works that are economically rich while others are so poor that they may fail from institutional neglect.

Where sustainability is not achieved through agreements with public institutions, the provinces should look for ways to guarantee the life of these works and services included in the OPP; works and services that are never economically profitable, but are intended for the “least”, those for whom we have predilection.

I consider it important that there be a reference for social works in the provinces: a member of the Youth Ministry team, lay or religious, with adequate skills both in knowledge of the sector and the policies to which they must respond and in the ability to work as a team, to ensure the harmony of social works with the provincial, national and Congregational project.

4. Let us keep our eyes always focused on the young

Understanding that the core of our action is not in the man-

agement or the structures, but in the young people, and that these things are only the instrument for educating and evangelising, helps us to have the same outlook as Don Bosco.

When young people occupy our hearts, personal and institutional prejudices are put aside and we become more courageous and creative in seeking the best alternatives to welcome them. Understanding the main phenomena of poverty and exclusion of teenagers and older youth encourages us to continue to make Salesian social works and services a concrete and beautiful way of giving our lives for the less fortunate.

CONCLUSION

Dear brothers, dear sisters, Salesians and lay people, uniting myself with the thinking of the Church's Social Doctrine which, in the Magisterium of Pope Francis, invites us to rediscover and enhance the social dimension of the Salesian charism,⁴¹ I would like to invite you to be fearless, courageous like Don Bosco in your choices on behalf of the least favoured, the most "difficult", the discarded, all those whose rights are violated. Our apostolic creativity must always have as its criterion the good of those for whom we were born charismatically from the heart of Don Bosco.

We find inspiring examples in our Salesian Family of a holiness realised in the option for social action and for the poorest.

The imminent proclamation of the sanctity of Artemides Zatti, who offered his life in Argentina for those who were excluded from the healthcare system, simply because they were poor and could not afford to pay for treatment, fills us with immense joy. This great Salesian coadjutor brother saint, an Italian migrant, exalts the deepest values of divine mercy, and is a marvellous testimony that God's presence among his

⁴¹ Cf. *Pope Francis' Letter to GC28*.

people overflows with generosity and kind hospitality to generate life in abundance.

Together with Artemides Zatti, we recognise the great gift for the Church and for our Salesian Family of figures such as Blessed Maria Romero and her work in the Citadels of the Poor in Central America; Blessed Maria Troncatti and her commitment to health and the defence of the integrity of the tribes in the missions in Ecuador; like the Venerable Simon Srugi who did not hesitate to work as a nurse for the most rejected sick in Israel; and likewise we remember Blessed Louis Variara who was the apostle of the most forgotten and isolated sick in Colombia, where he also founded the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary to continue to spread God's tender love among the weakest. In Amazonia we have the testimony of the work with the native cultures of Luigi Bolla in Peru and Rodolfo Lukenbein in Brazil: confreres who were true prophets of charity, of the option for the poorest and of care for their culture and natural environment.

Integral ecology, as Pope Francis teaches us, tells us that “everything is connected”, and the care of creation, of our common home, is intimately linked to that of human communities: “Today, however, we have to realise that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”⁴²

Our path of sanctification in the midst of poor and abandoned youth continues to be enriched by the self-giving of Salesians and lay people who, in choosing to serve the poorest and most excluded, and with the methods of social action that we know today, discover the full realisation of their lives, and the safe space of encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life to the full.

⁴² Cf. FRANCIS, *Laudato si'*, n. 49.

I ask our Mother, Mary Help of Christians, to continue to take under her protective mantle the children and young people, families and marginalised and forgotten communities in the human and social peripheries and, thanks to her maternal heart, to continue to arouse in her Salesian sons and daughters and in the lay people with whom we share the mission, the same passion as Don Bosco for the salvation of souls.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ángel Fernández Artime". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- FRANCIS, *Encyclical Laudato Si' . On caring for our common home*, Rome 24 May 2015.
- FRANCIS, *Encyclical Fratelli tutti. On fraternity and social friendship*, Rome 3 October 2020.
- FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evaangelii Gaudium. On proclamation of the Gospel in today's world*, Rome 24 November 2013
- FRANCIS, *Morning meditation in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae. For a culture of encounter*, Rome 13 September 2016
- PAUL VI, *Encyclical Populorum progressio*, Rome 26 March 1967.
- PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION, *Directory for Catechesis*, LEV, Rome 2020.
- SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO, *General Chapter 27*, Rome 2014.
- SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO, *General Chapter 28*, Rome 2020.
- SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT, *Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2014³.
- SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT *Youth Ministry and Family*, Editrice S.D.B., Rome 2021.
- ALBERICH EMILIO, *La catechesi oggi. Manuale di catechetica fondamentale*, Elle Di Ci, Leumann (TO) 2021
- MEDDI LUCIANO, *Catechesi e persona in prospettiva educativa*, in *Catechesi* (2011-2012).
- PETICLERC JEAN MARIE, *I valori più significativi del Sistema Preventivo*, in AA. Vv., *Sistema preventivo e diritti umani*, Rome 2009

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 THE FRIENDLY TALK WITH THE RECTOR, SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT AND ADMISSIONS: SOME ORIENTATIONS AND GUIDELINES

Fr. Ivo COELHO

General Councillor for Formation

We are witnessing a new attention to spiritual accompaniment and formation, both in the Church and in the Congregation. In the Church, the latest signs of this are the Synod on Youth and the post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, *Christus vivit*.¹ In the Congregation we had the survey about young Salesians and accompaniment in 2017,² followed by *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* (2020),³ and we are now celebrating the year dedicated to Francis de Sales, a saint who is renowned for his teaching and practice of spiritual accompaniment. Spiritual accompaniment is at the centre of our charism: it is enough to look at Don Bosco's own experience and at his pastoral praxis with young people and his Salesians.

Recently Pope Francis expressed serious concern about the exercise of the role of authority and the way of handling what is shared in confidence with the superior.

And I would like to add – off-text – a word about the term ‘internal forum’. This is not an idle expression: it is a serious one! The internal forum is the internal forum and cannot go outside. And I say this because I have noticed that in some groups in the Church, those in charge, the superiors – let's call them that – mix up the two and take decisions from the internal forum to the external one, and vice versa. Please, this is a sin! It's a sin against the dignity of the person who trusts the priest,

¹ Francis, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christus vivit* (2019).

² See M. Bay, *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Results of an International Survey* (Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2019).

³ Salesian Formation Department – Salesian Youth Ministry Department, *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* (2020). Henceforth YSA.

manifests his reality to ask for forgiveness, [but the priest] then uses it to arrange things for a group or a movement, maybe – I don't know, I'm just making up stuff – maybe even for a new congregation, I don't know. But internal forum is internal forum. It's a sacred thing. This is what I wanted to say, because I am concerned about this.⁴

Despite the fact that we are in the process of revising the Ratio, and without entering into the complex question of the internal forum, we take the opportunity to reiterate and further clarify what was said in *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* about the friendly talk with the Rector, personal spiritual guidance, confidentiality, and admissions.⁵

1. Choice of spiritual guide

Our Constitutions ensure due freedom in matters of the direction of conscience⁶ by stating that in the friendly talk with the superior the confrere “speaks with confidence of his own life and work and, *if he so wishes, also of the state of his conscience.*” (C 70) Our Regulations declare formation communities “must have a Rector and a team of formation personnel who are specially prepared, above all as regards spiritual direction *which is ordinarily given by the Rector himself.*” (R 78) Following R 78, the *Ratio* (2016) declares that the Rector is the spiritual guide proposed, though not imposed, on those in initial formation. (FS-DB 2016 233)

⁴ Address of the Holy Father to participants in the Course on the Internal Forum promoted by the Apostolic Penitentiary (29 March 2019).

⁵ Salesian accompaniment is rich and complex: it is communitarian and personal, formal and informal. For more on this, in its relation to and distinction from the sacrament of reconciliation and the friendly talk with the Rector, see YSA 4.2: Clarification of the meaning of Salesian spiritual accompaniment (especially 100-105) and 4.7: Rector, spiritual guide and confessor: three key figures (131-136).

⁶ *Perfectae caritatis* 14. See also SCRSI, *The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life* (1980) 11; can. 630 §1; and CICALSAL, *Potissimum institutioni: Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes* (1990) 63.

The document *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines* makes a significant change in the way the *Ratio* (2016) outlines the role of the Rector.⁷ In place of the text that describes the Rector as “*the spiritual director proposed to, but not imposed on, the confreres in [initial] formation*” (FSDB 2016 233), the new text, following C 70, now simply reads: “*If the confrere so wishes, the Rector may also offer the service of personal spiritual accompaniment.*” (YSA 191)

Similarly, instead of speaking of the Rector of the postnovitiate as “following up and helping the postnovices especially through personal guidance and the friendly talk, *the spiritual direction of conscience* and periodical conferences” (FSDB 2016 417), the revised text now speaks of him as “following up and helping the postnovices especially through personal guidance and the friendly talk, periodical conferences, *and if the young confrere so wishes, also the spiritual direction of conscience.*” (YSA 191) YSA continues to see the Rector of the postnovitiate as continuing the action of the director of novices, but at the same time wants to ensure that the formee has full freedom to choose his spiritual guide.

It is true that the formulation “proposed but not imposed” does preserve the window of freedom of choice of spiritual guide. The new formulation, however, intends preventing abusive situations in which the Rector subtly imposes himself as spiritual guide, and where formees, out of fear or in order to protect themselves, declare the Rector as their spiritual guide but do not really open their hearts to him.⁸ Ensuring the conditions for a genuine freedom of choice of spiritual guide goes a long way in promoting a healthy practice of the vitally important instrument of forma-

⁷ See Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major, “Presentation,” YSA p. 11: “Dear confreres, I am happy to present to you *Young Salesians and Accompaniment: Orientations and Guidelines*, promulgating it *ad experimentum* for a period of three years. While not being a supplement to our *Ratio (Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco)*, it supersedes the *Ratio* in case of conflict.”

⁸ See YSA 57-60, 108, 119-130, 157, 192-193.

tion that is personal spiritual guidance and in avoiding the risks of psychological and spiritual abuse, which unfortunately are not rare even within religious life.

In the spirit of the Preventive System, the Rector is urged to gain the confidence of those entrusted to his care. In such a context, many might freely choose the Rector as spiritual guide, and to these the Rector will willingly offer the service of personal spiritual accompaniment.⁹

The more a formee makes himself known to his formators, the better it is for him and for all. The *Ratio* of the Church (2016) says that the candidate has the moral responsibility to be transparent and to reveal any matters that might have a bearing on his vocation. “In the process of formation, it is necessary that the seminarian should know himself and let himself be known, relating to the formators with sincerity and transparency.”¹⁰ Confidence, however, has to be gained; it cannot be institutionalized. The Rector has to *strive to make himself loved*.

In keeping with these changes, Provincials, Rectors and other formation guides will ensure real and effective freedom of choice of spiritual guide, taking care to avoid any form of coercion, whether explicit or implicit. (YSA 190-196, 197)

To facilitate a genuinely free choice of spiritual guide, the Provincial (or curatorium, in the case of interprovincial formation houses) will also present a list of Salesians (Priests and Brothers) who could serve as spiritual guides. This list will not

⁹ See YSA 197: “The charismatic figure and role of the Salesian Rector is not to be minimized in any way. Instead, the Salesianity of his figure must be enhanced, inviting him, along with his team of formators, to be truly and fully the Salesians they have professed to be. Ensuring genuine freedom in the choice of spiritual guide cannot translate into lowering of standards in the choice of Rectors. The direction to be taken is precisely the opposite: all our Rectors, and with greater reason those of formation communities, are called to exercise their fatherliness and authority in such a way that confreres will be drawn to open their hearts to them – as used to happen with Francis de Sales, as used to happen with Don Bosco.”

¹⁰ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation*. Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutionis Sacerdotalis (2016) 45.

include members of the local Council, but if some confrere wishes to freely approach one of these, he has the liberty to do so. The formee can also choose someone else, in consultation with the Provincial or Rector.¹¹ Provincials and curatoriums are obliged to make arrangements for the preparation and availability of suitably prepared spiritual guides.¹²

1.1 In the novitiate and prenovitiate

In the novitiate, the novice director is the mandatory spiritual guide of the novices entrusted to him. (Can. 650 §2)

As for prenovices, the person in charge of them is described as analogous to the novice director and has the special responsibility to help the prenovices discern their vocation.¹³

The one in charge of prenovices is sometimes distinct from the Rector of the house. In this case, according to FSDB (2016), it is this person rather than the Rector whom the prenovices approach for the friendly talk. (FSDB 2016 345)

Even in the prenovitiate, however, YSA asks for freedom of choice of spiritual guide. The reasons given are the need to respect the right to privacy, the Salesian tradition in which trust is earned not imposed, and also the widespread perception of lack of confidentiality reported in the survey of 2017:

The free choice of spiritual guide in the prenovitiate is a particularly delicate point... We need to ensure, first of all, that genuine family spirit

¹¹ See YSA 196: "Should the spiritual guide be chosen from within the formation team, and should he necessarily be a Salesian? Here again, the basic principle is the same: it is better to place our trust in the Salesian quality of the formators and of the community rather than in a rule or directive. It is important to ensure, however, also two further elements: that the guide chosen is someone familiar with our charism and spirituality, and that it is possible to meet him or her regularly. Within a relationship of mutual trust and confidence, the Rector will find ways of dialoguing and discerning with the person in formation about his choice of spiritual guide."

¹² See R 78. See also *The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life* 11, and *Potissimum institutioni* 63.

¹³ *Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco: Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum* (4th edition, 2016) 345. Henceforth FSDB 2016.

and the practice of the Preventive System prevails in our prenovitiates, most especially through careful attention to the composition of the formation teams and the prior preparation of formation guides, and especially of the one in charge of prenovices. In an atmosphere of mutual trust, it is possible to win the confidence of the young, while allowing them a basic freedom to choose their guide. The Provincial and the provincial formation delegate will do their part in indicating to the prenovices the delicate and critical role of the one in charge, especially as far as vocational discernment is concerned.

A related point in ensuring freedom of choice of spiritual guide is to ensure that the members of the formation team are specifically prepared for spiritual accompaniment, and also that there be at least one confessor among them who is not part of the local Council. (YSA 195)

YSA reminds us of the critical importance of the prenovitiate as far as personal spiritual accompaniment is concerned, because for a very large number of prenovices the first experience of such accompaniment takes place precisely in this phase. The way this new helping relationship is experienced and lived will obviously have deep effects on accompaniment in future phases of formation. (YSA 109-110) Let us not forget, further, that the discernment and decision about the Salesian consecrated life takes place in the prenovitiate and not in the novitiate. (FSDB 2016 346) It is extremely important, therefore, for provinces to select and prepare formation guides for the prenovitiate.

Attention to the prenovitiate inevitably leads us to think of the many kinds of aspirantate experiences in the Congregation. The quality of the accompaniment offered to each young person during these experiences has a formidable impact not only on discernment but also on the rest of the vocational journey. What we have been saying above is, therefore, to be borne in mind, with the necessary distinctions, also by those who are involved in Salesian vocational discernment and the experience of the aspirantate. Those entrusted with the service of animation and governance in the provinces would be wise to make their best formators available as guides to those taking their first steps in their vocational journey.

2. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an essential element in human relationships. It is a gift we can still give to people in a world with few secrets.¹⁴ Long experience in initial formation teaches us the importance of safe spaces in which a person can take the risk to explore his inner depths and to speak about them without fear. Confidentiality is essential in this regard. Where there is fear there is no formation.

The **sacrament of Reconciliation** is covered by absolute confidentiality. A Note from the Apostolic Penitentiary says:

The confessor is never and for no reason allowed ‘to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner’ (can. 983, §1 CIC), just as ‘a confessor is prohibited completely from using knowledge acquired from confession to the detriment of the penitent even when any danger of revelation is excluded’ (can. 984, §1 CIC). Doctrine has contributed to further specifying the content of the sacramental seal, which includes ‘all the sins both of the penitent and of others known from the confession of the penitent, whether mortal or venial, whether hidden or public, insofar as they are manifested in order to be absolved and therefore known to the confessor by virtue of sacramental knowledge.’ [V. De Paolis – D. Cito, *Le sanzioni nella Chiesa*, 2000, p. 345] The sacramental seal, therefore, covers everything that the penitent has accused, even if the confessor does not grant absolution: if the confession is invalid or for some reason absolution is not given, the seal must nevertheless be kept.¹⁵

Personal spiritual accompaniment also enjoys a very special confidentiality as described in the same Note:

In spiritual direction, the faithful freely open the secret of their conscience to their director/spiritual companion, in order to be guided and supported in listening to and fulfilling the will of God.

¹⁴ See Richard Gula, *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1996) 117.

¹⁵ “Nota della Penitenzieria Apostolica sull’importanza del foro interno e l’inviolabilità del sigillo sacramentale,” 29 June 2019, section 1: Sigillo sacramentale, at <http://www.penitenzieria.va/content/penitenzieriaapostolica/it/tribunale-del-foro-interno/magistero-e-biblioteca-di-testi/nota1.html> (as of 25.05.2022).

This particular area, therefore, demands a certain secrecy *ad extra*, which is inherent in the content of spiritual conversations and derives from the right of every person to respect for his or her own privacy (cf. CIC can. 220). Although in a way that is only ‘analogous’ to what happens in the sacrament of confession, the spiritual director is made part of the conscience of the individual faithful by virtue of his ‘special’ relationship with Christ, which derives from the sanctity of his life and – if he is a cleric – from the sacred Order he has received.

As evidence of the special confidentiality accorded to spiritual direction, one should consider the prohibition, sanctioned by law, to ask not only for the opinion of the confessor, but also that of the spiritual director, on the occasion of admission to Holy Orders or, vice versa, for the dismissal from the seminary of candidates for the priesthood (cf. CIC can. 240, § 2; CCEO can. 339, § 2). In the same way, the Instruction *Sanc-torum Mater* of 2007, regarding the carrying out of diocesan or eparchial enquiries in the Causes of Saints, prohibits the admission to testify not only of confessors, in order to protect the sacramental seal, but also of the spiritual directors of the Servant of God, even regarding all that they have learned in the forum of conscience, outside of sacramental confession.

This necessary confidentiality will be all the more ‘natural’ for the spiritual director, the more he learns to recognise and be ‘moved’ before the mystery of the freedom of the faithful who, through him, turn to Christ; the spiritual director must conceive his own mission and his own life exclusively before God, at the service of his glory, for the good of the person, of the Church and for the salvation of the whole world.¹⁶

As this text notes, Canon Law forbids the seeking of the opinion of the spiritual director on the occasion of admission to Orders or dismissal from the seminary. In our own tradition – going perhaps by the qualification made by Can. 630 §1 regarding the discipline of the institute (“Superiors are to recognize the due freedom of their members regarding the sacrament of penance and direction of conscience, *without prejudice, however, to the discipline of the institute*”) – we have always allowed the Rector to be part of the processes of admission at local level, even when he is spiritual guide of some of those being admitted.

¹⁶ “Nota” section 2.

This provision remains unchanged in YSA, though steps were taken to ensure genuine freedom of choice of spiritual guide, as outlined above. The document also insisted that, if the Rector happens to be the spiritual guide, he cannot divulge anything that he learns in this capacity to anyone, without that person's free and explicit consent. In fact, he cannot even make use of such information in the process of arriving at his own judgment and in the secret voting of the house Council.¹⁷

The **friendly talk with the Rector** has also enjoyed a very high level of confidentiality in a tradition that goes back to the Rector's manual of Paul Albera. This position has been repeated in subsequent editions of the manual up to the latest, *Animating and Governing the Community: The Service of the Salesian Rector*,¹⁸ as also in YSA.

The friendly talk with the Rector is itself protected by a very high level of confidentiality in all the documents of the Church and of the Congregation, which is also what is required by the code of conduct in many helping professions today, such as counselling. It is enough to quote the *Ratio*: 'Guidance at the different levels of formation requires that those who render the service... must abide by the principles of prudence and justice which, depending on the circumstances, imply discretion or absolute respect for a professional or sacramental secret.' (FSDB 264) As Fr Paul Albera says, there is such a close correlation between confidentiality and trust that even a slight 'leakage' in the first causes the almost complete and immediate loss of the second.

Even external things, if communicated to the Rector during the friendly talk, as for example matters of health or a personal difficulty, are considered confidential, because everyone has the right to his good name and privacy. They cease to be confidential, however, if the Rector later comes to know about them in the external forum; but it would be good for him to advise the confrere on this matter.

Further, since one of the purposes of the friendly talk is also the good run-

¹⁷ See *Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment. Admissions* (2000) [= CN] 21, cited below in section 3.2.

¹⁸ See *Manuale del Direttore di don Paolo Albera* 131; *The Salesian Rector* (1986) 264; *Animating and Governing the Community: The Service of the Salesian Rector* (2020) [= AnGC] 74; and YSA 155.

ning of the community..., the Rector has always the possibility, with the permission of the confrere, to act on the information received. (YSA 155)

Both AnGC and YSA, however, note that *the confidentiality covering personal spiritual accompaniment and the friendly talk is not absolute*, making mention of grave circumstances that can supersede it.

The secrecy covering the friendly talk – as also personal spiritual accompaniment – is not, however, absolute, as is the seal of the sacrament of reconciliation. There are, in fact, grave circumstances that can supersede it, as, for example, the case of abuse of minors, homicide or suicide.¹⁹

When a supreme good like life itself is threatened, the duty to do all that is possible to protect it prevails over safeguarding of confidentiality.

In Canon Law and in the Proper Law of Religious Institutes we also find reference to situations that can become an impediment to admission and profession. Some of these are mentioned in Can. 643 when it outlines conditions that invalidate the novitiate:

Can. 643 §1. The following are admitted to the novitiate invalidly:

- 1) one who has not yet completed seventeen years of age;
- 2) a spouse, while the marriage continues to exist;
- 3) one who is currently bound by a sacred bond to some institute of consecrated life or is incorporated in some society of apostolic life, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 684;
- 4) one who enters the institute induced by force, grave fear, or malice, or the one whom a superior, induced in the same way, has received;
- 5) one who has concealed his or her incorporation in some institute of consecrated life or in some society of apostolic life.

§2. Proper law can establish other impediments even for validity of admission or can attach conditions.

The last-mentioned point (can. 643 §2) means that we must bear in mind also the *absolute counterindications* mentioned in *Criteria and Norms* (2000).

¹⁹ AnGC 74 and YSA 155. Please note that this paragraph was added after GC28, and is therefore missing from copies of AnGC printed in 2019.

Let us therefore explain the sense in which the confidentiality covering personal spiritual accompaniment and the friendly talk is not absolute.

1. In contrast to the confessor who can in no case reveal anything that he has acquired in sacramental confession, even if the penitent releases him from this obligation, the Rector and the spiritual guide may, *if authorised by the person concerned*, reveal to others information acquired in the non-sacramental internal forum by reason of their office (religious superior) or the relationship of trust and confidentiality (spiritual guide). They cannot, however, on their own initiative and without the “liberating” authorisation of the person concerned, make known to others what they have learnt in an internal non-sacramental forum. The Rector may and sometimes must act on the basis of what he comes to know in the friendly talk, for the good of the confrere and the community, but he cannot reveal what he has come to know through the talk without the permission of the confrere concerned.²⁰

This does not take away the serious duty on the part of the Rector and the spiritual guide to speak clearly to the candidate when necessary and exhort him to make the right decision.

In the case of situations that are known externally and need to be addressed, concerning relationships, religious commitments, the community or the mission, it is the Rector himself who must often take the initiative to speak about it, making explicit the fact that it is something known externally. The fact that the Rector “also has a direct responsibility toward each confrere,” helping him “realise his own personal vocation and carry out the work entrusted to him” (C 55) also implies a duty on his

²⁰ Examples could be health problems or family situations that result in or call for changes in the ordinary rhythm of life and distribution of duties in the community. We remember that every person has the right to safeguard his or her good reputation. This is associated with respect for privacy which is increasingly protected in civil law and also in canon law: “No one may unlawfully harm the good reputation which a person enjoys, or violate the right of every person to protect his or her privacy.” (Can. 220 CIC)

part to correct and intervene for the good of the person concerned and for the common good. Here one sees the difference between the friendly talk with the Rector and the dialogue of spiritual accompaniment: each of these contributes to the good of the person, but in ways that are distinct.

2. The Rector and the spiritual guide are not obliged to respond if questioned by a judge about what they have learned in the non-sacramental internal forum. In both cases, the Rector and the spiritual guide are bound to secrecy, given that they are exercising the sacred ministry. Can. 1548 §2 makes this exception with the aim of protecting and promoting the trust placed by the faithful in the services of formative accompaniment and spiritual guidance, ensuring that people can open up with full confidence.²¹

The parties mentioned are obliged to respond, however, if they have received *information from other sources* regarding possible abuse, or else if they *formulate a judgment on the matter, based on well-founded motives, evidence, reputation, rumours, etc.*²²

²¹ See D. Salvatori, “Il dovere di rispondere al giudice e il dovere del segreto come causa esimente: la ratio dei cann. 1531 § 2 e 1548 § 2 nel rapporto deontologico fra giudice e interrogato,” *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiale* 26 (2013) 73.

²² Can. 1548 §2 states:

§2. Without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1550, §2, n. 2 [priests' incapacity to testify with regard to anything which is revealed to them in sacramental confession], the following are exempted from the obligation to respond: 1/ clerics regarding what has been made known to them by reason of sacred ministry... and others bound by professional secrecy even by reason of having given advice, regarding those matters subject to this secrecy.

The spiritual direction of the faithful is a form of exercising the sacred ministry. However, it is always possible for the person concerned to release the Rector and the spiritual guide from their obligation to maintain secrecy.

This principle is reiterated again in *Vos estis lux mundi* art. 3 §1, which concerns precisely the obligation to report:

Except as provided for by canons 1548 §2 CIC [cited above] and 1229 §2 CCEO [“the following are exempted from the obligation to answer: 1° clerics in regard to whatever was made known to them in connection with their sacred ministry...”], whenever a cleric or a member of an Institute of Consecrated Life or a Society of Apostolic Life has notice of, or well-founded motives to believe that one of the facts mentioned in article 1 [offences *contra sextum* committed

3. There are also, however, circumstances in which a higher good must be preserved, such as the life of the person involved in the confidential dialogue, or the lives of others, or the risk of sexual abuse of a minor, and in these cases this higher good overrides the mandate of safeguarding another great good, that is confidentiality.

But these are extreme cases and are understandable in the light of the supreme law of the Church, the salvation of souls,

with violence or threats or by abuse of authority, with a minor or a vulnerable person, or the crime of child pornography, or omissions intended to interfere with civil or canonical investigations into such crimes] has been committed, that person is **obliged to report promptly the fact to the local Ordinary** where the events are said to have occurred or to another Ordinary among those referred to in canons 134 CIC [“§1. In addition to the Roman Pontiff, by the title of ordinary are understood in the law diocesan bishops and others who, even if only temporarily, are placed over some particular church or a community equivalent to it according to the norm of can. 368 as well as those who possess general ordinary executive power in them, namely, vicars general and episcopal vicars; likewise, for their own members, major superiors of clerical religious institutes of pontifical right and of clerical societies of apostolic life of pontifical right who at least possess ordinary executive power”] and 984 CCEO [“§3 Major superiors in institutes of consecrated life, who have ordinary power of governance, are also hierarchs, but they are not local hierarchs”], except for what is established by §3 of the present article. [“§3. When the report concerns one of the persons indicated in article 6 (*Cardinals, Patriarchs, Bishops and Legates of the Roman Pontiff, pastoral heads of a particular Church, supreme moderators of Institutes of Consecrated Life or of Societies of Apostolic Life*) it is to be addressed to the Authority identified based upon articles 8 and 9 (*Art. 8: Procedure applicable in the event of a report concerning a Bishop of the Latin Church. Art. 9: Procedure applicable to Bishops of Eastern Catholic Churches*).”]

Art. 4 §1 states: “Making a report pursuant to article 3 shall not constitute a violation of office confidentiality.”

Therefore, a distinction must be made between “information or well-founded reasons” of possible abuse which a cleric or religious receives (information) or formulates (based on clues, reputation, rumours, etc.) and “what was manifested” to a priest in the context of spiritual direction (“by reason of the sacred ministry”) or to a non-cleric religious who is a spiritual guide or a religious superior (“who are bound by official secrecy”).

In the first case, *Vos estis lux mundi* places an obligation on the cleric or religious to report. **This obligation does not exist, however, in the second case**, as is expressly stated in the *Motu proprio*: “Except in the cases envisaged in canons 1548 §2 CIC and 1229 §2 CCEO”.

set at the conclusion and as the end of the Code of Canon Law: “In cases of transfer the prescripts of can. 1747 are to be applied, canonical equity is to be observed, and the salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law in the Church, is to be kept before one’s eyes.” (Can. 1752)

When the circumstances do not involve the extreme situations of danger of life or abuse, the spirit of the law is to preserve as much as possible the value of confidentiality, which consists in safeguarding the dignity of the person and the fundamental trust implied in relationships that demand confidentiality.

Summing up: the roles of Rector and of spiritual guide are distinct but convergent. The contents entering the dialogues in each case could be the same, but will be from different perspectives and perhaps not with the same depth of openness of conscience. Both roles, however, are necessary ecclesial mediations for the sake of vocational discernment and formation.

When information on situations that strongly affect vocational orientation is obtained in personal spiritual accompaniment or the friendly talk with the Rector, the guide or Rector is bound in conscience to speak clearly about the matter to the candidate and exhort him to make the right decision, but can take the matter further to the proper authorities only if he has the free and explicit consent of the person concerned. The only exception is when there is serious risk of endangering life (as in the case of abuse of minors, homicide or suicide).

Formators have to be attentive also to the civil laws of the countries in which they work. These laws might require religious superiors and spiritual guides to report certain matters. Here it would be best to abide by the stand taken by the Church in the papal magisterium and in the positions of the relevant Bishops’ Conferences, and to make such legal obligations clearly and regularly known to all, from the very beginning not only of the formation experience but also of the process of Salesian vocational accompaniment.

Obviously, the formation of Rectors and spiritual guides for

the service of accompaniment is both vital and delicate. They have to be able to help the confrere in formation face the reality of his life and history and make coherent decisions, and for this they need adequate knowledge of the teachings of the Church and of the Congregation, capacity building, as well as care of their own integral personal growth. They will be reminded also that the accompanying relationship rests on three pillars: respect for intimacy, the ability to keep secrets and trust.

There will always be a tension between respecting the sacredness of each one's conscience on the one hand and safeguarding the good of the Congregation and the Church on the other. At the same time, we must also recognize that the law will never be able to encompass all the variables presented by real life. Thus the mention of the risk of homicide, suicide and abuse of minors, far from exempting from discernment, calls instead for further and deeper discernment on the part of those actually faced with the concrete situation. The roots of the terms 'jurisprudence' and 'jurisdiction' indicate, in fact, this constant need for mediation and discernment in order to say what is right (*juris-prudentia*, *juris-dicere*) by drawing inspiration from the norm and evaluating the situation being confronted in all its concreteness. Discerning application calls, of course, for maturity and experience on the part of those offering the service of accompaniment, as also the willingness to themselves seek guidance and supervision.

The experience of meeting so many formation communities in the different regions of the Congregation shows that when there is a climate of mutual trust and a personal accompaniment that reaches the heart, it is much more probable that complex situations are addressed and resolved together by those in initial formation and their guides. Where, on the other hand, a climate of control prevails, along with a desire to detect and eradicate things seen as contrary to Salesian life, the likely effect is closure and insincerity. Fully adopting the Preventive System as our model of formation is undoubtedly very demanding but bears fruits that cannot be obtained otherwise. At stake here is not merely a choice of method but fidelity to our charismatic identity.

Obviously, the trust in question has to be mutual: becoming trustworthy and giving trust is required not only of formators but also of those in formation. Those who do not have this basic honesty and the capacity to trust are not made for our Congregation, and it is best that they make other life choices as soon as possible.²³

3. Admissions

3.1 The application

Up to June 2007, nos. 104-105 of the *Criteria and Norms* (2000), speaking of the application for admission to the novitiate, temporary and perpetual profession, the ministries, the diaconate and the priesthood, required candidates to state that they have the consent of their Rector (though not that of the spiritual guide and confessor). *Criteria and Norms* 105 reads:

While respecting its personal nature, *the application* addressed to the Provincial and given to the Rector, *should contain the following elements*:

- the name and surname of the applicant and the date on which it is made;
- reference to talking with the Rector and to his agreement with its being made;
- reference to the discernment undertaken and to seeking the opinion of the spiritual director and of the confessor;
- the purpose of the application, clearly expressed, that is: entrance to the novitiate, the first temporary profession or its renewal, perpetual profession, the ministries or the orders;
- a declaration of awareness of the public nature of the act that one

²³ YSA 170: “The community and the formation guides have their own important role, and we know that there are no perfect communities and guides. But nothing can substitute what is entrusted to each one’s free response. Even the best guide will not be able to help someone who is not ready to open up, sincerely share his experience, and embark on a process of growth. Similarly, if one’s core motivations are not sincere, and pretence is deliberately adopted as a way of ‘survival,’ the damage to discernment and to formation process is incalculable, and is the grave responsibility of the person himself.”

intends to perform and of the freedom to perform it, together with the fundamental motive.

In a letter of 24 July 2007 the councillor for formation communicated, on behalf of the Rector Major, a modification of the above text:

Decision. To avoid restrictive or juridically binding interpretations with regard to the freedom in making the application for admission, the Rector Major and the General Council acceded to the request to eliminate “to his agreement with its being made” from number 105 of “Criteria and norms”, and at the same time reiterated that in this number the expression, “reference to talking with the Rector”, ought to be retained.

Motivation. In the process of admission it is the one in formation who must first carry out a discernment to ascertain whether he judges himself suitable or not for the Salesian vocation. In this discernment he receives help from the Rector and the confessor, and if he happens to be a person other than the Rector, from the spiritual director. Since these persons have been accompanying him, they are in a very good position to offer him their opinion, be it positive or negative. It is then up to the individual to take their advice into consideration with all due seriousness, assume his own responsibility before God and decide in his conscience whether he should, or should not, make his application. Therefore, he does not need the agreement of the Rector to make his application.²⁴

The one intending to apply for vows, ministries or orders, therefore, asks the opinion of his Rector, spiritual guide and confessor before presenting his application, and states in his application that he has done so; but he does not need to explain the advice he might have received, and above all he is not obliged to state that he has the *consent* of the Rector or of the others. The onus of the decision to present the application is placed on the person concerned and not on the ones consulted.

The Rector and the others, on their part, must give their honest opinion to the candidate, and, if they are not the Rector, encourage the person to share this opinion with the Rector.

If, before the session of the local Council dealing with admis-

²⁴ F. Cereda, 24 July 2007, prot. 07/0505.

sions, the Rector judges that an individual is not suitable for admission, or that he is not prepared at that moment for presenting his request, he “is obliged in conscience to say this with charity and clarity to the one concerned that he cannot and should not – also for his own good – go ahead.” (Ricceri, ACG 281 49) *He cannot, however, prevent the individual from making his own decision and presenting his application. Should the application be presented, the Rector cannot divulge in the Council the advice given to the person concerned, and must act as in every other case* (see section 3.2 below).

This also applies to the Council itself: if the Council is of the opinion that someone should not apply for admission, the Rector has the right to communicate this opinion, but he must also make it clear that the individual remains free to arrive at his own decision.

One of the reasons why no application should be prevented from being handed in, is that the authority responsible for admission is the Provincial. The local Council has a consultative role. The provincial Council has an advisory role of the highest kind, involving the giving of *consent* through secret ballot. Once the consent has been given, the admission is the competence of the Provincial. This means that the Provincial cannot admit a person without the consent of his Council, but he can refuse admission even if his Council has given consent. The authority of admission is not collegial but remains vested in the person of the Provincial.²⁵

3.2 The Rector who is spiritual guide

We have already said that when requested by a confrere, the Rector will willingly offer the service of personal spiritual accompaniment. (YSA 197) The Rector, therefore, meets all his confr-

²⁵ Cf. can. 641 CIC. Cf. also *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (1986) p. 811: “The admission itself belongs to the provincial, and is a formal act of his personal authority and not of the council, though the consent of the latter is necessary.”

eres, especially those in initial formation, for the friendly talk, and could be the spiritual guide of some.

As per our tradition, the Rector continues to participate in the process of admissions at local level. In this tradition there is a tension between being formators and leaders in the Salesian style and the wisdom and prudence of the Church – a tension that the present orientations and guidelines try to integrate and make fruitful.

We have also said that the Rector cannot share with the Council or with anyone else any of the information he has received in the friendly talk or in spiritual accompaniment, with the qualifications made in section 2 above. Once again, he can neither divulge nor make use of what he knows solely through the friendly talk or spiritual accompaniment, not even in the secret voting of the house Council, unless authorized by the candidate concerned. *Criteria and Norms* (2000) is explicit on this point:

As regards the ‘professional secret’ it should be remembered that the Rector cannot make use of what he comes to know solely through the friendly talk, even in the secret voting of the house council. He may make use of it if the confrere freely and explicitly gives his consent. (CN 21)

A note explains ‘professional secret’: “In juridical terms it is sometimes called ‘confidential secret’ or of conscience, in that it is confided to the conscience of someone in view of the office held or exercised.” (CN 21 note 41) A second note cites *The Salesian Rector* (1986) 264:

The very nature of the friendly talk with the rector calls for rigorous secrecy and confidentiality. “Let the rector be careful never to reveal to others the faults a confrere may have, even when they may already know of them through other channels. Let it be obvious to his subjects that he is able to respect the confidentiality of what is entrusted to him. It only takes some small indiscretion to weaken and maybe entirely destroy the confidence they have shown him.”

For reasons inherent in your office, you may be asked by the provincial for your opinion on some confrere or other, and in such a case you have to give the necessary information objectively and responsibly. But it should be based exclusively on the external behaviour of the confrere

concerned and on what others may say about him. Confidences that may have been given in private talks are protected by a rigorous secret: *nihil, umquam, nulli*. (CN 21 note 42)

Clearly, the Rector and his Council, when processing requests for admissions, have to rely solely on what they have come to know in the external forum. (YSA 156) This requires, of course, that they be truly present with the candidates/confreres in initial formation, in the best and fullest Salesian sense of the word ‘presence.’ The informality of life is extremely revealing, sometimes even more than what is shared in the friendly talk or in spiritual accompaniment.

3.3 The role of the local Council

When a Council is dealing with admissions, it is very important to keep in mind the core perspective governing the process of discernment. The overriding question to be answered in the secret of the conscience is: from an overall perception of the life of the candidate, is he called to what he is applying for, and is he suitable? This is not the moment to address this or that incident or to correct this or that fault, behaviour or weakness – that must be done in the course of daily life and fraternal correction and during the trimonthly assessments. The moment of admission is a discernment before God about the overall vocational journey of one of his children, and therefore a very demanding responsibility before God, the Church, the Congregation and the candidate/confrere himself.

As we have said already, our practice is that the Rector (and analogously the one in charge of prenovices or of confreres doing higher studies during the period of initial formation), even when he is personal spiritual guide, continues to be part of the admission process at local level. It is worth repeating that, unless he has the free, explicit and preferably written consent of the one concerned, the Rector cannot share with the Council or with anyone else the information he has received solely through the friendly talk or in spiritual accompaniment. Neither can he make

use of such information in order to arrive at his own judgment about the suitability of the person for admission. (CN 21) “He makes his judgment solely on the basis of his own observations and of those of his Council.” (YSA 156)

The role of the local Council regarding admissions is *consultative*. Given that it is mandatory to listen to its opinion at this moment, the validity of the act requires that the opinion of all be requested (cf. Can 127 §1 CIC). After the members have expressed their opinion about the suitability of the candidate, giving their reasons, it is necessary that the judgment of suitability be expressed synthetically with a positive or negative secret vote (equivalent to a favourable opinion on the suitability or to an unfavourable opinion). This practice preserves the freedom of each councillor and avoids undue pressure from other members.

Membership of the Council carries with it the obligation on the part of each councillor to express his opinion. Abstentions, in other words, are not possible. “All whose consent or counsel is required are obliged to offer their opinion sincerely and, if the gravity of the affair requires it, to observe secrecy diligently; moreover, the superior can insist upon this obligation.”²⁶ Accepting membership of a Council therefore entails serious responsibilities. Anyone who does not feel ready for such a service would be better off not accepting it or else asking to be relieved of it.

At the time of admissions, therefore, the opinion of the local Council is to be expressed not only in a written judgment but also through a secret vote.

The practice of deciding in advance how to vote (the so called “fagioli concordati”) is absolutely to be stopped, because it invalidates the whole reason for the secret vote.

These orientations and guidelines can become truly effective when we invest in the formation and “capacity building” of the members of the Council at local and also at provincial level.

²⁶ Can. 127 §3 CIC cited in AnGC p. 217, with note 3: “On the basis of this norm, abstention is not legitimate.”

4. Passage of personal information

In the case of confreres continuing initial formation in another house or phase (including interprovincial formation communities) and those who opt for the missions *ad gentes*, the Provincial concerned will pass on a copy of the judgment at the time of admission and such other information as may favour the knowledge of those in formation by those responsible for that phase,²⁷ including the periodic personal assessments. It would be very important, however, to keep in mind the clear distinction between the periodic assessment, which is meant to help the confrere to grow in his vocation, and the judgement of admission that is a juridical act.²⁸

The different phases of formation are complementary. This has consequences with regard to formators, those in formation, and the unity of the formation process as such. Effective communication between formators of different levels should be a hallmark of this progressive complementarity of all that is put in place for fostering growth.

The confrere in initial formation is encouraged to be the first to take responsibility for integrating the help received through the periodic assessments into his personal plan of life, and to value it as a road map for his vocational growth, something to be

²⁷ FSDB 2016 298: “Let the **Provincial** see that, especially at the beginning of a phase of formation, those in formation are known by the ones responsible for that particular phase, and let him arrange for the communication of adequate information throughout the whole process of formation in the most convenient way possible.”

²⁸ YSA 168: “It is worth emphasizing that the assessment is not in itself a discernment process linked to the admission of a candidate to the next phase. Such admissions are juridical acts that involve the province and not only the house Council, while the main purpose of the periodic assessments is to foster the vocational growth of the one receiving it, through the qualified contributions offered by members of the local Council. The formation scrutiny is, instead, an assessment of the progress made by someone who is in formation. Used during initial formation to personalize the formative process, it is an instrument of considerable help to the Rector and the spiritual guide in their work of spiritual accompaniment.”

fruitfully shared with his Rector and with the spiritual guide he has chosen, especially when moving to a new community or phase of formation.

At the time of admissions, especially those that concern a definitive commitment such as perpetual profession and holy orders, it is important to keep in mind the whole journey of Salesian life of the confrere concerned.²⁹ It is therefore important to take into account the discernment that has taken place during the previous stages, through admissions, scrutinies and dialogue with the Province of origin, in the case of interprovincial communities (cf. CN 108). What has been said about discretion and respect for good name obviously also applies to the way of dealing with this information, which, however, being part of a discernment process carried out by local and provincial Councils, is not part of the internal forum.

Great care must be taken in the storage and transmission of information, folders, reports or any document with personal data such as those mentioned above, avoiding leaving them in easily accessible areas, even during Council meetings. Equal care must be taken when transmitting and storing in digital form, taking pains to avoid possible infringements of privacy and confidentiality.

5. Guidelines

1. ***Choice of spiritual guide.*** *To facilitate a genuinely free choice of spiritual guide the Provincial (or curatorium, in the case of interprovincial formation houses) will present a list of Salesians (Priests and Brothers) who could serve as spiritual guides, ensuring that they are either part of the community or else easily accessible, and that they are not members of the local Council, keeping in mind also that*

²⁹ FSDB 2019 518: “The admission to perpetual profession is made on the basis of an assessment of the entire process of formation, a verification of the candidate’s motivations, and his assimilation of the Salesian vocation project.”

the formee can, in consultation with the Provincial or Rector, choose someone else. The Rector and members of the local Council can also be approached for spiritual guidance if a candidate/confreere so wishes.

2. ***Application for admissions.*** *In his application for admission, the candidate must declare that he has consulted his Rector, confessor and spiritual guide; he is not obliged to say that he has their consent. The Rector and the others, in their turn, are obliged to give their honest opinion to the candidate about his suitability for the step being requested. They cannot, however, prevent the individual from making his own decision and presenting his application. Should the application be presented, the Rector cannot divulge, not even in the Council, the advice he has given to the person concerned, and must act as in every other case. Similarly, the local Council can advise the candidate about a possible negative opinion but cannot prevent him from presenting his application.*
3. ***Admissions – role of the Rector.*** *The Rector cannot share with the Council or with anyone else any of the information received in the friendly talk or in spiritual accompaniment, with the qualifications made above in section 2: Confidentiality. Neither can he make use of this information to arrive at his own judgment at the time of voting about the suitability of the person for admission.*
4. ***Admissions – role of the Council.*** *At the time of admissions, the local Council will express its opinion through a secret vote and through a comprehensive written opinion that is exhaustive if synthetic, on the overall suitability of the candidate. The practice of deciding in advance how to vote renders the vote invalid and is to be absolutely excluded.*
5. ***Passage of information.*** *When a candidate/confreere moves on to another phase of formation, whether in his own province or elsewhere, his Provincial will pass a copy of the judgment at the time of admission, and other information*

which may favour the knowledge and accompaniment of the candidate/confreere concerned, including the periodic assessments. This will make it possible to carry out a discernment at the time of admissions that looks at the whole arc of Salesian life and the formation journey of the person concerned (cf. CN 108).

- 6. Formation of formators.** *Provincials and animating bodies such as regional formation centres will organize formation courses for first time Rectors, for all Rectors from time to time, and for the members of local and provincial Councils. During these courses, the orientations and guidelines of the present letter will be presented and made the subject of personal study as well as group sharing.*

2.2 THE SALESIAN VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EXPERIENCE: FORMATION PATHWAYS

Fr Miguel Angel GARCÍA
General Councillor for Youth Ministry
Fr Ivo COELHO
General Councillor for Formation

1. The purpose of this document

This text stems from the desire to have a shared reference framework that will allow for the **reception and vocational guidance of young people who wish to gain a closer knowledge of Salesian life and to mature in and discern their vocation**. We want to offer these young people the environment, conditions and accompanying pathways for such.

The document is divided into seven points. First, a summary is offered, in chronological order, of the main references from the Congregation's documents since Vatican II, and then an overview of the Congregation's practice in the various regions. Next, a consideration is presented with respect to the origin of the candidates. Of particular importance are the points relating to the entry profile of young people, the formation pathway for accompaniment and discernment, and finally, the suitable environment and conditions that the Salesian house must guarantee. A pedagogical proposal is offered concerning times and ways of accompanying this experience, and finally, an in-depth examination of the topic of vocation animation in the Province.

These current reflections daw on some essential references of the Church and the Congregation.¹ They are not simply a collec-

¹ *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis de Sales; General Chapters of the Salesians of Don Bosco (CG); The Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco: Ratio Fundamental Institutionis et Studiorum, 2016; Acts of the*

tion of sources, nor a re-proposal of them in some sort of skilful synthesis, nor even an interpretation of them. The path thus documented highlights very clearly the value of the continuity, discernment and attention that has been taken up and has gradually matured through the different experiences of Salesian vocation guidance. **This document is concerned with understanding, exploring and enriching actual experiences of Salesian vocational guidance.** A mapping of the situation of the Aspirantate and its various expressions in all the regions of the Congregation (July 2021) has been taken into account in the drafting of the following guidelines.

2. Vocational guidance in documents of the Congregation following Vatican II

Reading the journey of the Congregation allows us to discover the persistent reflection on the situation of the aspirantate. Incentives are offered, new challenges are posed to which the Provinces ordinarily try to find innovative and up-to-date solutions. Reconstructing the thread of history is not a superfluous activity; on the contrary, it guides us in tuning into a very important reality in the field of vocation ministry and guidance.

Congregational reflection on vocational guidance was crystallised in the Constitutions and Regulations (1984). General Chapters studied the matter further and built up a very rich patrimony, integrating the Letters of the Rectors Major and initiatives of Provinces. Thus, recognised first and foremost was the Christian vocation to which all the baptised are called (C 37);

*Superior Council (ASC) and Acts of the General Council (AGC); Francis, post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit*, 2019; Synod of Bishops, XV Ordinary General Assembly: *young people, the faith and vocational discernment. Final Document*, 2019; Salesian Youth Ministry. *Framework of Reference*, 2014 (FoR); *Young Salesians and Accompaniment. Orientations and Guidelines*, 2019 (YSA); *Orientations on the experience of the Aspirantate*, 2011.*

for this reason, not only religious or priestly vocations, for which special care is required, but also lay vocations were conceived as ‘apostolic vocations’ (C 28).

In one way or another, the insistence has been that pastoral work for vocations is the crowning glory of youth ministry, “its unifying principle”², because the Salesian mission aims at helping young people discover their vocation.³

The concept of vocation ministry as mere ‘recruitment’ of vocations has been rejected on a number of occasions, confirming the dual aspect of vocation promotion, both general and specific.⁴ On the one hand, it calls for constant attention to discovering and accompanying vocations of special commitment in society and the Church with differentiated and appropriate initiatives; but it also sustains the awareness of a special responsibility for arousing an explicit invitation to a vocation of special service or consecration, in particular, to the Salesian charism in its multiple forms.⁵

This is why it is stated that the first objective of vocation promotion is to create a “culture of vocation” in every Salesian setting.⁶ Through relationships, communication, activities and projects, it encourages a vision of life as a gift and as service, proposing attitudes that foster vocational development, even leading to an explicit proposal of consecrated and priestly life.

The Congregation has never ceased to insist on the special care of the relevant and indispensable environments wherein it is essential to help young people discern their vocation and

² GC28 p. 24.

³ SGC 374; C 37; cf. GC23 247.

⁴ L. Ricceri, *Lettere circolari di don Luigi Ricceri ai salesiani* (Roma: Editrice SDB, 1996) 636-38. The document *Young Salesians and Accompaniment. Orientations and Guidelines* insists on clarifying the difference between vocational recruitment and accompaniment and vocational discernment (cf. YSA 183).

⁵ Cf. J.E. Vecchi, *Educatori appassionati, esperti e consacrati per i giovani. Lettere circolari di don Juan E. Vecchi* (Roma: LAS, 2013) 644. 649

⁶ In his letter for the Year 2000, “Now is the favourable time” (AGC 373), Fr Juan Vecchi introduces this expression used by Pope John Paul II. Cf. GC26 53.

respond to it consciously. These formative spaces have been called “aspirantates”, then “live-in community experiences”, “come and see groups” among others.⁷ In this respect, the teaching of the Rectors Major and Chapters has, over the years, urged the renewal of these vocational guidance proposals⁸, described in the Regulations as “vocational guidance centres” (cf. R 16 and 17).

Serious planning of vocation ministry is also needed⁹ within the journey of faith offered by Youth Ministry. This perspective has been emphasised in recent times by the Rector Major’s Action Guidelines following GC28: there is a need to accompany “the young with a view to their personal maturity, growth in faith”.¹⁰ This excludes the vocational process being an “ultimate”, “casual”, “elite” or “exceptional” moment, but the backbone of the whole faith journey.¹¹ The Youth Ministry Frame of Reference (2014) inserts the vocational dimension within the Provincial SEPP, not as something added to it but as something internal and substantial; it also explores the meaningful options for vocation discernment that are part of the process of education to the faith,¹² without setting aside vocations of special consecration.

GC21 (1978) offered the “first systematic guidelines for the renewal of Salesian vocational ministry”.¹³ It was already mentioned at the time that this is a formation methodology aimed at young people with greater sensitivity, willingness and spiritual richness, and who require differentiated and special attention. Besides, “the Provinces, and not the communities or individuals”¹⁴ are responsible for certain conditions: defining clear objectives, an educative

⁷ E. Viganò, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai Salesiani* (Roma: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996) 1225; cf. GC26 72.

⁸ Ricceri, *Lettere circolari* 657-64.

⁹ Ricceri, *Lettere circolari* 645-57.

¹⁰ GC28 p. 24.

¹¹ E. Viganò, *Lettere circolari di don Egidio Viganò ai Salesiani* (Roma: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1996) 1206.

¹² Cf. FoR p. 247. 248.

¹³ GC21 574.

¹⁴ GC21 118.

project and accompaniment in groups or communities¹⁵ where there are people who witness to authentic Salesian life.

The Salesian community is the “privileged place for vocation proposal and accompaniment”. However, we must not forget that the subject of Salesian Youth Ministry, where vocation discernment and life choices culminate, is the Educative and Pastoral Community, a communion of different vocations.¹⁶

Over the years, the Congregation has developed a reflection on guidance in the education to the faith of young people. It has identified vocation guidance as its founding and qualifying dimension.¹⁷ Some aspects support and complement each other in this vocational commitment: on the one hand, the guidance offered to all young people in the context of education; on the other, the constant attention to discovering and accompanying vocations of particular commitment in society and in the Church with differentiated and appropriate initiatives, so that young people can make a conscious and free choice (C 109); finally, a particular responsibility towards the Salesian charism in its multiple forms, through discernment and by nurturing the seeds of a Salesian vocation, both consecrated and lay, found in young people. To implement this last aspect, the Salesian vocational guidance experience will need to relate to Salesian consecrated life.¹⁸

Many of these issues are broadly developed in the letter “The Experience of the Aspirantate (2011)”¹⁹: the dimensions of Salesian formation, the value and urgency of accompaniment and

¹⁵ R 16; cf. GC26 72.

¹⁶ GC24 141.180

¹⁷ Cf. SGC 374 and 692; GC21, 110ff; GC23, 149ff and 247

¹⁸ cf. GC26 54, 58, 69 The Letter of F. Attard - F. Cereda, “Guidelines on the Experience of the Aspirantate” reminds us that these proposals are essentially an accompaniment experience (nos. 1 and 14) and of discernment on the Salesian consecrated vocation (no. 15).

¹⁹ The Letter of F. Attard - F. Cereda, “Guidelines on the Experience of the Aspirantate”, 27 July 2011, came about as a response to the GC26, 73 guidelines drawn up by the Youth Ministry and Formation Sectors.

discernment are presented in addition to the nature and purpose of the aspirantate. Ultimately, the text clarifies, on the one hand, the conditions to be ensured; on the other, the different forms. The same introduction emphasises that the vocational accompaniment of candidates to Salesian consecrated life is part of Youth Ministry and is therefore the responsibility of the Youth Ministry Sector, in close collaboration with the Formation Sector.

3. Various expressions of a single definition

a. - Our Congregation's Regulations use the term "aspirantate" to describe the **accompaniment of young people who show an aptitude for religious life and that will allow them to understand their vocation.** Young people in this experience can explore, verify and mature in the signs of a vocation that arise in their lives and that guide them to the possibility of a choice of Salesian religious life that they have not yet made publicly and consciously (cf. R 17).

This experience, carried out through a great variety of forms and approaches, must not be considered simply as an external structure, but as a maturing process that allows the young people involved to have targeted experiences of accompaniment and vocational discernment. In fact, the faith education dimension of the Salesian educative and pastoral project educates them to live from a vocation perspective. This is also the result of a good educative and pastoral path: leading the individual to experience a mature faith, and thus to realise the plan that God has for his life. In other words, vocational guidance is the summit and crowning of our educative and pastoral activity, not in the sense of the journey of faith reaching its ultimate moment, but as "an element always present, and one that must characterize every stage and every area of intervention" (GC23 247). As previously emphasised, the 23rd General Chapter had said that there had been a "long reflection" in the Congregation to address the new situation

and the traditional and new forms of vocation promotion, aiming at “new and varied experiences” (GC23 249).

In the first instance we mention no. 329 of the Ratio (revised in 2009) in reference to the pre-novitiate: “This first phase of formation [pre-novitiate] presupposes that the prenovice has previously gone through an appropriate period and experience of vocational growth, human and Christian maturing, guidance, community living and an exercise of Salesian pastoral ministry – all things one cannot do without.”

The Youth Ministry Frame of Reference tackles the vocation dimension: “This process allows a young person to make a calm, personal, free and well-motivated decision while having experience in a community where he is formed according to the charism to which he is called, growing in understanding and gradual conformation to it”.²⁰

b. - This period, which can **tend to be pre-novitiate oriented, is described in various ways**, generally as the “aspirantate”, even though the term varies according to place, culture and sensitivities.

Already in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of structures in some provinces gradually emerged which replaced the term, sometimes with new approaches compared to the classic aspirantates: “*comunità proposta*” (a live-in experience), “vocational welcome community”, “guidance house”, “Salesian vocational guidance centre” (R 17), “welcome community”, “Come and See programme”, “external aspirantate” (for candidates who, due to social, cultural, political or family circumstances, cannot be introduced immediately into a community). Other designations used before these years are “school aspirantate” (young people engaged in pre-university studies), “missionary aspirantate”, “aspirantate for indigenous vocations”.

²⁰ *Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*. Rome 2014, Chap. 6, 2.4.a (Called to life and faith).

What follows is the current situation and the different terms used in our congregation.²¹

VARIOUS KINDS OF ASPIRANTATES IN THE REGIONS (2021)

	RAFM	RAMI	RAMS	RASE	RASS	RECN	RMED
Systematic accompaniment		6					
School-based aspirantate	1			3	19		
Aspirantate after school/university	7		5	5	6		
Insertion into a community			5			6	
Missionary aspirantate					2		
<i>Comunità proposta</i> (live-in community)		6				4	9
Vocational volunteering		10			2		
External aspirantate	3		1	3		2	
Aspirantate for indigenous vocations			1				

Repeatedly and insistently, the need has arisen for in-depth reflection on the **apostolic schools** in which so many confreres are involved and which reach a large number of recipients (in the Africa and Madagascar Region and the South Asia Region).²² There is a need for verification and renewal, and it is urgent and important that those most involved in this field at the local, provincial and regional levels become part of this process, enhancing the guidelines already outlined at the congregational level – such as those mentioned here on the vocation ministry – and deepening the pedagogical sphere with respect to studies on

²¹ RAFM = Africa and Madagascar Region; RAMI = Inter-America Region; RAMS = South America Region; RASE = East Asia and Oceania Region; RASS = South Asia Region; RECN = Europa Central-North Rgion; RMED = Mediterranean Region.

²² Already in 1965, chapter members at GC19 (Part III - ASPIRANTS) insisted on the fact that "Apostolic schools are to be considered neither Aspirants nor Pre-Aspirants".

the age to which it is addressed and the characteristics of the school-type structures on which this educative and pastoral service is based.

c. - In any case, this welcoming environment for young people wishing to embark on a path of vocational discernment **is not a stage added to formation**: it seeks to be a setting “characterized by an intense vocational orientation, is still a valid form to help youth discover their own vocation and consciously correspond with it,”²³ the natural bridge between Salesian youth ministry and formation.

4. Origin of candidates

a. - This is a **necessary experience**, all the more so since these young people who are searching come from heterogeneous backgrounds with very different ages, family situations, levels of personal maturity, life experiences, faith and culture, and coming from a variety of Salesian circumstances and with different knowledge of Don Bosco.

» This particular experience begins for those young people who have already embarked on a *journey of maturing in the faith*²⁴ and of *vocational guidance*²⁵, ordinarily as part of the processes of Salesian youth ministry such as, for example: vocation weekends, camps and vocation groups, accompaniment by a Salesian in a house, accompaniment by the coordinator of the province’s vocation ministry, or as the result of volunteer experience.

²³ GC20, 662

²⁴ C 6, 28, 37 and R 9.

²⁵ Article 16 of the Regulations: “Vocational guidance centres welcome and keep in touch with young people who feel called to some commitment in the Church and in the Congregation. This service can also be carried out by organizing local and regional meetings, by means of activities of special groups, or by inserting young people in one of our communities.”

» Other young people attracted by Don Bosco's charism, *who have not lived in a Salesian Educative and Pastoral Community*, also begin this experience. These young people trust the Salesian charism as a charism open to the Church in its totality and embark in freedom on a vocational journey that can have different outcomes.

b. - To all these candidates, the Province offers specific accompaniment through a concrete proposal **that best meets the needs of their personal history and situation**.

These structures are mainly aimed at university students or high school youth. However, some provinces have maintained structures for aspiring adolescents and pre-adolescents, with a style more similar to the "minor seminary" structure: same study hours for all, less contact with the outside world and little pastoral practice due to age.

5. Some aspects of the entry profile

a. - from this perspective on formation it becomes essential to create **the most suitable conditions for the person to make the discernment step**. In fact, this period of "first acceptance" becomes an experience that can have very flexible configurations and vary in place and duration, including according to the candidate. It is necessary, in fact, for the young person to have a formation rhythm which is in accordance with his personal maturity and vocational journey, without confusing it with other stages.

The first condition to be taken into consideration in order to be admitted to the Aspirantate is that the young person enters this experience at the moment when he explicitly questions himself about a possible vocation to the consecrated Salesian life before God. In other words, he must have **expressed the desire and willingness to discern God's plan in the Salesian charism, and so be willing to embark on the path of veri-**

fying whether his initial attraction is truly a call from God and **discerning whether he has suitable conditions** for accepting it. In any case, the young person must remain open to other vocational outcomes.

It should be made clear that the one who accompanies him has no other interest than to help the young person discover before the Lord what he is called to and, if it is a vocation of special consecration, to initiate the process and if it is a calling to something else, then to guide it. *It is not about identifying or discarding religious vocations*, but a service (the crowning one of pastoral accompaniment) of help in identifying one's vocation and offering guidance for it.

b. - After this preamble, some conditions are important, i.e. some points that outline the **entry profile of the young man** who intends to live this experience, following the Church's criteria as follows: "To respond to our vocation, we need to foster and develop all that we are. This has nothing to do with inventing ourselves or creating ourselves out of nothing. It has to do with finding our true selves in the light of God and letting our lives flourish and bear fruit" (CV 257):

- » verification of a healthy lifestyle (physical and psychological), in a broad sense;
- » presence of a personal experience of God that has enabled him to perceive his call in some way (not that it is already clear); it is desirable that he has previously participated in vocational guidance experiences;
- » readiness for personal accompaniment;
- » commitment and fidelity demonstrated in one's work (personal study, apostolic activity, community service);
- » ability to interact with and relate to others in a positive manner;
- » readiness for apostolic work with young people, especially the poorest;

- » indications regarding age. Some provinces give preference to young people aged 17-18 and over; for candidates over the age of 35, the journey is accompanied to check its feasibility; other provinces welcome teenagers between 14 and 17 years old.

6. The formation path of accompaniment and discernment

The growth in maturity of the individual occurs, in this phase, by facilitating certain aspects that become specific objectives to be pursued. It follows that the great work of the formators lies in accompanying the young person to identify and implement the inner dynamics that lead him to harmonise and live *the various dimensions not as a spectator on the sidelines, but as someone who takes an active part in them*.²⁶

a. - **Human maturity** is the basis of the young person's vocational growth. It tends towards the goal of psychic and emotional balance and harmonious and integral growth, paying particular attention to becoming aware of any psychological weaknesses and initiating safe processes for overcoming them. In the aspirantate experience, the young person begins to mature:

- » An authentic and profound contact with self and, therefore, a good ability, serenity and maturity in being able to honestly read and decipher oneself, one's feelings and desires, the dispositions of the heart, the gifts received and any wounds.

²⁶ "the Synod proposes with conviction to all the particular Churches, to the religious congregations, to the movements, to associations and to other ecclesial bodies that they offer the young an experience of accompaniment with a view to discernment. This experience – whose duration should be determined according to contexts and opportunities – can be described as a time destined for the maturation of adult Christian life. It should involve prolonged detachment from habitual environments and relationships, and it should be built around at least *three indispensable elements*: an experience of *fraternal life shared with adult formators that is essential*, simple and respectful of the common home; a *firm apostolic programme* for living together; an offer of *spirituality rooted in prayer and sacramental life*" (DF 161).

- » Further opportunities are offered to understand the dynamics of community life and the elements of affective maturation, for example: the ability to respect others, to listen to and accept others' points of view, not to use others for one's own ends, to care for others while growing in empathy.
- » The ability to grasp the central motivational core of one's actions, beyond the more external and emotionally contingent aspects, such as, for example, new family balances.

b. - The area of **relationship with God and spiritual commitment** must be traced with certain references in mind:

- » The discovery and acceptance of the real primacy of God and its evangelical logic in the life of the Christian.²⁷ Familiarity with the Lord, the introduction to the life of faith and friendship with Jesus, are part of this²⁸ by seeing to prayer and liturgy.
- » Willingness to let oneself be helped and, therefore, openness to the practice of personal accompaniment and to *taking responsibility* for decisions. It is a process which, on the one hand, must verify certain steps in vocational suitability; on the other, it must deepen the vocational motivations of the young person making the journey (the needs, desires, interests, internal and external drives that incline the young person to such a choice).
- » Furthermore, the experiential dimension of Salesian youth spirituality must be privileged over the theoretical dimension in the reading of faith in daily life and in reflection on lived experiences.

c. - For the young person who is discerning a vocation as an educator and evangeliser of youth, certain elements of the **intellectual dimension** are desirable:

²⁷ "The incidence of faith on life, or its practical irrelevance, is clear today in some aspects of the existence of individuals or of culture, which therefore become its acid test. It is not a matter of particular points, but rather of areas where the significance, strength and contrasts of faith can be found" (GC23, 181).

²⁸ HP, 250.

- » Attention to everyday life as the place where continuity and constancy in taking care of one's study or work commitments, personal duties, required services, household chores is manifested.
- » The acquisition of habits of reflection and sharing, as well as the ability to reflect on situations and critically evaluate the surrounding reality.
- » Maturing in the ability to perceive evangelical and vocational values according to the Gospel and Salesian youth spirituality, rather than tracing them back to one's previous cognitive patterns.

d. - "The youngster trains himself to generosity and availability. These are two attitudes that give rise to joy: to gain life you have to give it".²⁹ Therefore his **educative and pastoral growth** includes:

- » Initiation to apostolic activity, lived in an experiential way and reinterpreted in accompaniment by privileging the typically Salesian moments of assistance and the systematic and continuous animation of a group. This educative and pastoral initiation becomes an opportunity to listen to the needs of the young; to know Don Bosco and the Preventive System; to discover the dimensions and characteristics of the Salesian animator;
- » The desire to subject one's pastoral activity to the scrutiny of others.
- » Flexibility in roles rather than a tailor-made ministry.

Focus on the intellectual dimension of the journey should not be *an excessive burden in terms of academic study, with little opportunity to work seriously on oneself.*

²⁹ GC23, 152.

7. The appropriate environment and conditions that the Salesian house must provide

As we have seen, this is the period in which the Congregation offers an experience to young people who are searching, seeing to accompaniment and personal discernment according to the criteria indicated. **The final objective of the process is the vocational decision.** The individual Provinces propose a Salesian house (or several houses in the Province) where young people are offered the valuable opportunity of fraternal life among Salesians and peers, in the simplicity of daily life where there is no lack of school commitments, domestic duties and relationships, apostolic proposals according to Don Bosco's charism and an offer of spirituality that helps to combine faith and life: "To anyone who is thinking of becoming a Salesian, an environment and suitable conditions are offered to enable him to discern his own vocation and to mature as a man and a Christian."³⁰

It is desirable for this type of experience to be lived, in particular, by those young people who are approaching fraternal life in Salesian communities for the first time and who have not previously frequented our apostolic life environments.

Four conditions are needed to obtain this result:

a. - **The community environment is a lively and open one,** simple, family like, cheerful but busy. Relationships of friendship and familiarity stand out. They can share some moments of prayer, spirituality, activities and friendship with the community (but not in the ordinary structure of religious life). That is, a family environment where there are suitable conditions for a period of time in which these young people can discover, take up and responsibly follow their life project.

Community life is a valuable opportunity to learn fraternity in relationships, discussion with educators, shared responsibility

³⁰ C 109

in services, generosity in giving oneself. To make growth in maturity easier, dialogue is certainly to be preferred to imposition, testimony to mere observation, shared responsibility to servitude, the internalisation of motivations to the mere carrying out of tasks, respect for the person and his processes in a personalised accompaniment to standardised approaches and anonymity.

b. - The Aspirantate is an **experience of accompaniment**. First of all the young person is offered *community accompaniment*. This is a set of relationships, an environment, a favourable climate and a pedagogy which are proper to the Preventive System and which go from the close presence of the Salesians in charge of the Aspirantate to discussion, guidance, support along the vocational and formation journey.³¹

In addition to this accompaniment, it is important to introduce the young person to *personal accompaniment*: spiritual, vocational, pastoral, in study. In this sense one speaks of an interpersonal relationship of “vocational dialogue” an attentive and immediate accompaniment in relation to each of the four areas of the formation process indicated above. Only a path of personal accompaniment can facilitate an adequate identification of the objectives of growth and awareness of what it means to live an apostolic vocation.

However, accompanying these young people must provide knowledge and encourage them to experience their own contingencies, needs, desires, weaknesses and wounds. Therefore, much attention must be paid to the human dimension of the person. To this end, it is necessary to address certain aspects that “touch on” the human being: self-differentiation (the ability to maintain one’s own sense of self, identity, thoughts and emotions in rela-

³¹ “It is always better to live the faith together and to show our love by living in community and sharing with other young people our affection, our time, our faith and our troubles. The Church offers many different possibilities for living our faith in community, for everything is easier when we do it together.” (CV, 164).

tionships with others), self-mastery (the control of one's feelings, behaviour, through understanding one's reactions, emotions, mood swings) and self-appraisal (linked to one's self-esteem).

This is a process that has to be verified in various ways: in personal discussion, observation of the experience by the formators, description of the results by the individual concerned.

It is a process that must, on the one hand, *verify* – God's call, vocational openness and availability, the specific nature of an option and suitability for it – and on the other hand *deepen* the motivations of the young person. If vocational maturity proceeds in the direction of Salesian consecrated life, the aspirant is guided towards pre-novitiate.

c. - The effectiveness of the experience depends largely on the **accompaniment team**: Salesians and others (lay people, experts) chosen to be in charge of this experience, who are particularly well prepared for the not always easy task of offering candidates personalised accompaniment for their human and Christian growth. Indeed, "The family atmosphere of welcome and of faith, created by the witness of a community which gives of itself with joy, is the most efficacious setting for the discovery and guidance of vocations."³²

It is preferable to have a *heterogeneous team comprising Salesian priests and Salesian coadjutor brothers* precisely to foster knowledge and appreciation of the two forms of the Salesian consecrated vocation.

Some important indications: there must be a person within the community who is clearly indicated as a reference point for the young person; the reference confreres, at the discretion of the delegate for vocation ministry, must be invited to the meetings of the vocations ministry commission.

d. - **Relationships with the family**: Aware of the importance

³² C 37.

of the family, the young person maintains appropriate ties with it and, starting with the vocational choice he intends to make, learns to establish new family relationships. Normally no young person starts the Aspirantate without prior contact with the family. Parents should be encouraged, if possible, to visit the Salesian community by being present at certain significant moments. In this respect it is advisable to begin by recognising and addressing any family problems in accompanying these young people.

8. Times and approaches

The timing and approaches of the proposal are variable, depending on the age of the young person, the path followed and the province's traditions. On the other hand, certain conditions can be considered fixed points:

Times are not too structured (both in terms of everyday life, which must be adaptable to the path of the young person, and in terms of the general framework of vocational experiences), but agreed together with the young person on the basis of his personal journey and the possibilities of those still bound by study or work commitments. In any case, young people continue their university studies/work commitments during this period.

Given the diversity of personal journeys, we like to think of the community as an open experience involving multiple kinds of stays, a gradual path of insertion that begins with:

- » an occasional or casual first contact,
- » then limited periods of stay at times considered significant for the life of the community or the young person himself,
- » and then move on to more challenging choices.

It is also necessary to promote periodic meetings that aim to bring young people together **with other young people who are on a vocational journey**, for example: days or weekends in which the young person lives an experience of prayer and shar-

ing with other young people (pre-novices, novices, etc.); vocational camps where both young people who have begun the aspirantate journey and young people who intend to begin this type of experience meet. It is very important to organise all these initiatives systematically and gradually, at local and zone level, in a vocations ministry plan within the Provincial SEPP.

Being a specific moment of knowledge and exploration, accompaniment and experience of Salesian life and mission to verify and mature this initial orientation, it becomes very interesting to put these young people in contact with other Salesian communities.

In general, some provinces report at least six months of a stable aspirantate proving to be sufficient **to make a first discernment that is able to respond to an initial question:** are they ready to being a process of accompaniment/discernment *with real guidance to Salesian life in the pre-novitiate?*

9. Vocation ministry in the province

a. - Vocation ministry must be the principle and summit of youth ministry. All ministry, and youth ministry in particular, is radically vocational: this dimension is its inspiring principle and its natural outcome. In other words, **vocation ministry emerges from youth ministry as the breath and concrete expression of its vitality.** This is why provincial vocation ministry offers a mentality, a sensitivity, but also a pedagogy. To the extent to which it makes its vocational dimension explicit, youth ministry finds its best motivation for its relaunching: it rediscovers life as a gift, as “being for” in a liberating and fascinating perspective because it takes place before the surprising and magnificent plan of God.

Personal vocation accompaniment is not a privilege for good people or some kind of exceptional pastoral activity: it must be a normal formation tool offered to everyone. This is why personal

vocational accompaniment of young people is a pastoral duty towards all young people and a right for every young person!

The local and Provincial Educative and Pastoral Plan must help the confreres and lay people who share for the Salesian mission to form a “culture of vocation”³³, a sensitivity, a way of thinking and – especially – a way of “seeing” the many boys and young men they approach every day. If all this is true, it is easy to understand how the provincial vocations animator and province approaches are at the service of this local responsibility, not as an alternative or a substitute for it.

Promoting vocation ministry is an essential task of youth ministry:

- » guaranteeing the guidance and accompaniment of all young people because the vocational proposal, from childhood onwards, is included as part of the process of education to the faith, as the point of convergence of all educational and evangelising efforts.
- » noting that vocation ministry is not simply aimed at recruiting pastoral workers, nor something isolated or just part of one or other Sector, but rather an activity linked to the being of the Church and therefore also intimately embedded in youth ministry;³⁴

³³ Speaking of the prophecy of fraternity, GC27 reminds us that “it is necessary to accompany young people, to walk with them, to listen to them, to provoke them, to shake them up so that they go beyond the comforts in which they have settled, to awaken their desire, to explain to them what they are experiencing, to lead them to Jesus, and always giving priority to freedom so that they respond to the Lord’s call in a free and responsible manner”. It is necessary to create a climate of trust, to make young people feel that they are loved as they are and for who they are. [...] The personal relationship with young people on the part of consecrated persons is irreplaceable. The third guidelines of GC28 also invites us to live the “Salesian sacrament of presence” according to which “The gratuitousness of presence saves the Congregation from any activist obsession and from any kind of technical and functional reductionism”.

³⁴ Cf, for example, Ricceri 645-57; GC26 58; Chávez, *Lettere circolari* 1039; YSA 183.

- » creating the appropriate conditions (a real path of accompaniment; communities that are friendly, committed and open to all young people seeking their destiny in life, etc.) so that each young person can discover, take up and responsibly follow their vocation;
- » proposing different vocational paths to young people without forgetting or underestimating the explicit vocational call to consecrated or priestly life;
- » encouraging a family climate with meaningful vocational testimonies.

b. - In this sense, the Aspirantate, as clearly stated in the letter “The Aspirantate Experience (2011)”: “It is our wish that these Guidelines be taken up by the Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry, so that he may accompany the Province vocation promoters and their Commission and may review that part of the Provincial Educative Pastoral Plan which concerns provincial vocation promotion. In this Plan it is also necessary to identify a model of vocation promotion at the local level that can draw in the Salesian communities and the educative pastoral communities. This sort of work also requires close collaboration with the Provincial Delegate for Formation”.

This accompaniment at the provincial level by the delegates and those who are responsible for the animation and governance of the province is all the more important when the care of the aspirants is entrusted completely to local communities (however the experience is defined in the various contexts). If there is no good planning and careful verification, there is the risk that what happens is in fact without any connection either with youth ministry, or with formation, or with the guidelines of the province and the Congregation. It is not enough to describe what the conditions are for good accompaniment in a document such as this text,. It is necessary to put in place all the measures at the provincial and then local level to ensure that it is actually put into practice.

10. Conclusion

We firmly believe that the acceptance and assumption of a vocation by young people is the educational process par excellence, towards which all the efforts and labours of every educative and pastoral Community are directed. Vocational guidance properly carried out, therefore, is the sure way to full human maturity and the source of true happiness. Therefore, all youth ministry is conceived, implemented and verified starting from this objective: to accompany each young person until they are ready to take the place the Lord has assigned them in the building of the Kingdom.

Today more than ever we feel the challenge and urgency of “creating a vocational culture in every environment, so that young people discover life as a call, and so that all Salesian ministry becomes truly vocational” (GC24 50). In this respect the vocational dimension³⁵ really does run across everything we offer. Although it presents itself with its own specific project, it represents the core of every pastoral proposal and must therefore be present in every environment. With regard to Salesian consecrated life, we believe it is urgent to offer young people these experiences of vocational guidance that *ignite desire and guide the heart*.

³⁵ For this dimension see FoR, 152-154.

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.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

After the Winter Session of the Council, the Vicar went to Sardinia to attend the funeral of the late Fr Franco Pirisi, who died prematurely and suddenly following a serious illness.

Back in Rome, on 30 January, he went to Novata to celebrate the feast of St John Bosco with the confreres and the entire Salesian Family and our school children in the city cathedral.

On 31 January, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, he presided at the concelebration of the Eucharist on the Solemnity of Don Bosco, broadcast live on TV2000, which was attended not only by the confreres of the community, but also by many of the faithful.

In the first ten days of February, the Vicar made a canonical visit to the Sacred Heart community in Rome in order to plan and prepare the upcoming work on the house at headquarters with the confreres.

After a short stay at the Salesian places he returned to Headquarters for canonical visits to the Vatican and San Callisto commu-

nities in Rome. They were very useful, as always, especially to meet the confreres who hold positions for the Church and the Congregation.

The time devoted to canonical visits to these houses directly dependent on the Rector Major was about four weeks.

From 9 March to 16 March, Fr Stefano was in Zagreb, Croatia, for a visit of animation and accompaniment for the Province. This allowed an acquaintance and exchange of ideas with the Provincial Council, Rectors, young confreres and other pastoral activities in the Zagreb area; always accompanied by the Provincial, Fr Tihomir Sutalo.

Back in Rome, the Vicar held meetings at headquarters and prepared the work of the Interim sessions of the General Council, which took place from 4 to 13 April 2022. This was the last council session held in Rome. In fact renovation work began on the building in Via Marsala in Rome on 4 April. These necessary renovations required the transfer of some confreres to other communities and the placement of lay co-workers in other facilities to continue essential services to the Congregation.

After Easter, the Vicar went to Valdocco, Turin, again, where he participated in some events:

- the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, which was held from 24 to 26 April in Mornese, Turin and Nizza Monferrato. It was a well-prepared celebration in the places of the origins to thank the Lord for the good that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have achieved over these 150 years.
- participation on 29 April in Udine in a valuable meeting held at the G. Bearzi Salesian Institute, which was attended by the President of the Italian Republic, the Hon. Sergio Mattarella, who directly wished to visit the Salesian house and meet the parents of Lorenzo Parelli, a young student from our vocational training centre who died tragically in January while doing an internship as part of his vocational training course.

In early May, the Vicar took part in celebrations at the parish of St Joseph the Worker in Rebaudengo, Turin and at the Monterosa Institute in Turin as part

of the events prepared for the centenary of the work.

On 6 and 7 May, Fr Martoglio spoke at the meeting of Provincials of the Central and North Europe Region, sharing a reflection on the care of our identity and religious discipline. This very valuable meeting took place at the Provincial House in Vienna.

On 13 May, the Vicar left for Caracas, Venezuela, but via Istanbul, staying for a day and a half with the confreres in this Turkish community for a celebration in memory of Fr Franco Pirisi.

From Istanbul, the Vicar of the Rector Major resumed his journey to Venezuela, where he remained from 15 to 26 May. It was a journey of animation in the name of the Rector Major, to accompany the beautiful presence of the confreres and Salesian Family in that wonderful land so tried by the situation they are experiencing. The animation visit had the declared aim of making the presence of the Congregation and the Rector Major felt in their context. This was shared in many meetings with Salesians, Salesian Family, lay people and young people in the houses at Caracas and Valencia. A wonderful experience.

On return from Venezuela Fr Stefano went straight to Valdocco, where he prepared for the impending Summer Session of the General Council.

The General Councillor for Formation

The Albera year came to a conclusion and the de Sales year began on 13 January 2022, during the Salesian Spirituality Days at Valdocco. An exhibition on St Francis de Sales was opened by the Rector Major at the *Museo Casa Don Bosco*, Valdocco. The four-language translations of the book by André Ravier, *St Francis de Sales* (LDC 2021) – an edition edited by Fr Aldo Giraudo, with contributions from Fr Morand Wirth and Fr Wim Collin – were completed and disseminated in digital PDF format at the beginning of February 2022. The first two videos on St Francis de Sales, of a series of five prepared by Fr Michele Molinar, the ICP Vice-provincial, in collaboration with the social communication and youth ministry office of that province, were also released in five languages.

From 3 to 4 February, the Councillor presided over the Jerusalem

curatorium in person, with some sessions also offered online to facilitate the involvement of Provincials.

From 14 to 19 February, Fr Coelho travelled to the AFC Province where he visited the pre-novitiate in *La Cité des Jeunes*, Lubumbashi, the novitiate in Chem Chem, Ruashi, and attended the *curatorium* of the theologate, Lubumbashi, and the post-novitiate, Kansebula. He also had a meeting with the Rectors of the houses in and around Lubumbashi, and with the Provincial and his Council.

From 14 to 27 March, Fr Coelho conducted the Extraordinary Visitation to the Malta Vice-province (MLT).

The Salesian Spiritual Accompaniment School (English version) took place in Valdocco and Colle Don Bosco from 3 April to 6 May 2022, with 20 participants and 5 resident facilitators, under the guidance of Bro. Raymond Callo.

From 4 to 13 April, the Councillor took part in the work of the Interim sessions of the General Council at Headquarters in Rome.

From 17 to 22 April, Fr Coelho preached the Retreat for the confreres in Leeds (Great Britain).

On 29 and 30 April, the Days of Social Communication for young people in initial formation in the Salesian Family were held at the UPS under the guidance of the Social Communication Sector and the University's Social Communication Faculty. Fr Francesco Santos was part of the team that prepared and organised the event.

On 2 May, the Councillor visited the Genzano novitiate, together with Fr Francisco Santos, where he met the novices from the two novitiates in Italy (Genzano and Colle), and the two formation teams.

From 10 to 12 May, Sector members led the Salesians participating in the ongoing formation course for formators held at the UPS in the first half of the year (11 confreres from 8 provinces). From next year, Fr Carlo Maria Zanotti, course coordinator, will take responsibility for organising a "Salesian week" for Salesian participants, with visits to the Salesian places.

On 20 May, Fr Coelho took part in an event at the Pontifical Gregorian University to commemorate 50 years since the publication of Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology*, where he gave a talk.

The statutes of some *curatoriums* and theological study centres, including Jerusalem, Gerini in Rome, Utume and Lubumbashi, were reviewed.

In addition, the Sector continued the work of revising the Ratio, with various online meetings. Since December 2021, a group of editors assisted by other confreres from different provinces around the world (about fifty people including Salesians and lay people) has been working on various parts of the text, and at the end of March 2022 handed the work over to the Sector. The next steps in the drafting of the text are now left to the members of the Sector, with help from others where necessary.

On 18 and 19 May, the curatorium of the novitiate in Gbdjomé and the post-novitiate in Lomé, AOS - Togo, was held, attended by Fr Silvio Roggia representing the Formation Councillor.

From 20 to 24 May, Fr Francisco Santos and other members of the Sector helped with the meeting of novices from Europe at Colle Don Bosco and Valdocco.

Fr Jose Kuttianimattathil, a new member of the Sector, arrived on 21 May. Fr Silvio Roggia has been transferred to the UPS

Vice-province from 1 September 2022, where he will be Rector of the Zefirino Namuncurá theologate, Rome (known as Gerini), while continuing to work with the Sector.

The Sector made the choice to move to Valdocco for the duration of the renovation work at Headquarters. Fr Silvio Roggia and Bro. Raymond Callo moved out on 15 March, Fr Francisco Santos on 19 May, and Fr Coelho on 23 May.

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry

In January, the official presentation of the brochure on Parish and Shrines entrusted to the Salesians took place through the Zoom platform on the 10th (in English) and 11th (in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish and French). Fr Miguel Ángel García Morcuende gave a summary of the entire document and proposed some strategies.

Also in the same month, the regional meeting of Youth Ministry delegates from the two regions of Europe was held in Fatima from the 8th to the 12th.

The Youth Ministry Councillor then participated in the online

formation day (12 January) with Salesians and lay people responsible for Youth Ministry in MEG Province. He was then present at the online formation day for Delegates of the School of Communication with the Salesians in the South Asia Region (13 January), the Interamerica Region (20 January), at the 7th *Jornada Salesiana de Comunicación* of the *Centro Nacional Salesiano*, Spain (24 February), and the same for Brazil (3 May).

The Councillor offered his contribution on the occasion of the online formation session with the new Salesian Family Delegates, and as part of the school promoted by the Salesian Family Secretariat, held in Valdocco (19 January). He was then asked to take part in the online formation session at the 6th IUS EG Seminar (26 April), held in Quito, Ecuador.

There were numerous coordination meetings arranged with Fr Joshtrom Kureethadam, coordinator of the Ecology and Creativity Sector of the (Vatican) Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development, to prepare the planning of this sector in the Congregation. Also with a view to greater collaboration, the Councillor held several meetings with the initial European Formation Centre man-

agement team, chaired by the Vicar of the Rector Major.

Coordination and planning meetings were then held for the implementation of DBTech Europe (20 January, 20 April and 27 May).

Fr Miguel Ángel chaired the DBI General Assembly in Rome (17 January) and attended the IUS General Assembly (24-28 January) at headquarters (Sacred Heart) in Rome. He gave an address on the second day of this important event.

The Councillor offered a message at the Planning Workshop (14 February) for Phase 2 of the ASEAN DB TECH, which was attended by the respective country coordinators, PDOs and other TVET representatives. He also spoke at several MGS-LEADS regional online meetings.

From 16 February to 30 April, the Councillor for Youth Ministry conducted the Extraordinary Visitation to San Luis Beltrán Province in Medellín, Colombia. At the same time, he took part in the Provincial Chapter of this same province.

Very enriching was the School of Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry organised in Valdocco

from 4 to 18 May, which was attended by 46 representatives from all Regions.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry was present with the Rector Major at the opening of the new headquarters of the CNOS National Centre in Italy.

During this time, Fr Miguel Ángel coordinated the drafting of a number of documents involving experts: “A youth ministry that educates to love”, “Don Bosco’s Salesians on the road to a sustainable world in the light of integral ecology”, “Charter of Identity of the Salesian School in Europe” and “No to hate speech. Building a culture of human rights together”. It is also important to highlight the online consultancy service to some provinces for the development and implementation of their plans (SEPP and OPP).

In these first five months of 2022, other meetings including coordination meetings with the DBI and the Sector Team continued on a regular basis.

Preparations continue for the International Congress of Social Works and Services to be held in Valdocco at the end of September this year.

Chronicle of the General Councillor for the Missions

During the Winter Session, from 14-17 January 2022, Fr Alfred Maravilla, General Councillor for the Missions, was in Tunisia to meet the confreres and get to know the Salesian works in Tunis and Manouba better. On 26 January, he attended the board meeting of the Don Bosco Network, held at *Sacro Cuore*. On 29 January, he left for the Philippines for the Extraordinary Visitation of the North Philippines Province (FIN). Upon arrival, the following day he underwent the five-day mandatory quarantine following COVID-19 protocols.

On 8 February, he met online with all the FIN Rectors, where he presented the Rector Major's letter of convocation from July 2021, in which he explained the purpose of the Extraordinary Visitation. On 9 February, he met with the Provincial Delegates of Provincial Commissions to talk about the reports they had previously sent him where they explained the strengths and challenges in their task of animating the Province. The following day he met with the Provincial Council to discuss important issues re-

lated to the governance and animation of the Province. On 11 February, he began the visit to the 25 houses.

During the visit, Fr Maravilla had a personal conversation with all the Salesians. He met most of our lay collaborators. He also met with the Parish Pastoral Councils and leaders in the different presences. He had the opportunity to address most of the students of the vocational centres (TVET), since the students were still studying online from home. During the visit, he met with representatives of the Salesian Family: ADMA, Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, VDB, CDB and Damas Salesianas. He paid courtesy visits to the communities of the FMA and the Caritas Sisters of Jesus. Although he was unable to visit the new community in Kuching, Malaysia, due to COVID-19 restrictions, he met online with the confreres and the Archbishop of Kuching to discuss ways to develop our missionary presence in the country.

On 30 April he presided at the perpetual profession of 10 theology students at the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Parañaque. On 20 May, together with the Regional Councillor

for East Asia and Oceania, Fr Joseph Phuoc, he met the Provincial Council to present his observations and recommendations. The following day, he presided at the concluding Eucharist, together with the Provincial, Fr Gerry Martin, and the Regional Councillor. The Mass was followed by his presentation of the relevant observations and recommendations to the confreres.

On the morning of 24 May, he presided at the perpetual profession of two coadjutor brothers at the Diocesan Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Canlubang, Laguna. In the afternoon, he took part in the pontifical coronation of the historic statue of Mary Help of Christians brought to the Philippines in 1922 by Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Guglielmo Piani SDB. This was the final act concluding the Extraordinary Visitation to FIN. At midnight he left for Rome.

On his arrival in Rome, he organised his temporary office and room in the Pontifical Salesian University, then met the members of the Missions Sector team. On 31 May, he gave an address on the urgency and importance of First Announcement to the members of the General Chapter of the

Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers), at the invitation of the Superior General, Father Stanislas Lubungu M.Afr. On the afternoon of 31 May, he left for Valdocco, Turin, to attend the Summer Session of the General Council.

The General Councillor for Social Communication

After the Winter Plenary Session of the General Council (December 2021-January 2022) and after a brief visit to family members in Brazil, the Councillor for Social Communication returned to the Salesian Headquarters or Generalate in Rome at the end of February.

After two weeks at headquarters, from 13 to 19 March he was in Poland on an animation visit to the Salesian Province of Warsaw, where he met with the Communications Delegates of the country's four Provinces; he visited TVP (Polish public television) with Fr Maciej Makula SDB, TVP's Catholic editor-in-chief; he took part in the national meeting of those in charge of Salesian schools in Poland, in the presence of Fr Roman Jachimowicz, Regional Councillor for Central and Northern Europe. After briefly

visiting both the Salesian communities in Lodz, Lutomiersk, and the Mission Office in Warsaw (where an aid centre for Ukraine is now based), he also gave an interview to TVP, at the headquarters of SOM (Salesian Mission Centre), in Warsaw. He had a meeting with the people in charge of the Salesian "Helping in Ukraine" Project – Fr Krzysztof Grzendzinski and Fr Jacek Zdzieborski – and was able to encourage volunteers and people helping to prepare relief work for Ukraine. Invited by the Warsaw Provincial, Fr Tadeusz Jarecki, he took part in a meeting with the members of the Provincial Council, presenting them with the Sector's guidelines for Institutional Communication. The meeting continued with discussion and calm dialogue.

Returning to headquarters from Poland, he began individual talks with each of the Provinces' Communications Delegates both to review local communication activities, and to update the Communication Plan according to the Rector Major's Guidelines following GC28, and also to revise the "School of Communication".

From the 4th to the 10th he attended the Interim Session of the General Council at Sacred Heart;

then, on 14 April, he left for Barcelona (Spain) for a visit to the EDEBÉ publishing house. Together with the management team, he learned about the Publishing House's educational and management plan and visited its book distribution centre. Following this, on the 18th he travelled from Barcelona to Seville to take part in the meeting of Provincials of the Mediterranean Region. On the 26th he presented them with the Congregation's Communication Project, the situation of the Publishing Houses in Europe and the planning of the Communication Sector for the Mediterranean Region.

Returning to Rome (on 28 April), immediately on 29-30 April he was at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS) in Rome – together with the Sector's Communication, the Dean of the Salesian Faculty of Communication of the UPS, SDBs from the Formation Sector and members of the FMA Communication Sector – involved in the Salesian Communication Meeting for young men and women in formation in Italy.

From 3 to 6 May, various meetings were held online with the Delegates of Communication from the following six Regions: South Cone America, Interameri-

ca, Africa-Madagascar, South Asia, East Asia-Oceania and Central and North Europe, for the preparation of the meetings of Communication Delegates and men in formation, which will take place from August in the various Regions of the Congregation.

From 9 to 15 May he participated online in both the preparation meeting for the Communications World Advisory Council (in Lisbon, October 2022) and the meeting of the coordinators of the “School of Communication”, and also in preparation for the Meeting of Radios and Publishers in the South Cone and Interamerica Regions. From the 20th to the 25th he worked on the preparation of the first draft of the Sector’s new Communication Text.

On the 21st, after speaking at the monthly recollection day for the Salesian community at Testaccio, in Rome, on the 23rd and 24th Fr Gildasio was in Valdocco to join in with the Feast of Mary Help of Christians together with some of the Sector’s Communication Team; and on 28 May he was at the opening of the “National Centre” (CNOS), in Rome.

On 31 May he left for Valdocco to attend the Summer Plenary Session of the General Council.

The Economer General

At the end of January 2022, the Economer General had several meetings with the Boards of Directors of different foundations and went to Beromünster (Switzerland) to meet some members of the NGO’s mission projects commission. He went to Belgium to celebrate the feast of Don Bosco in Brussels and to meet with officials of the European Commission and members of the European Parliament, all organised by the Salesian DBI (Don Bosco International). He then went to Germany for the Board Meeting of the Missions Office in Bonn.

In February, the Economer General together with his team began to organise the SDB Change Congress to be held at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome in September to be attended by Provincial Economers, Mission Office and PDO leaders. On 4 February, he conducted an evaluation of the vocational training projects in the Philippines. On 10 February, he visited the Verona 311 Centre in Verona to study the situation of young NEEETs and the possibilities of helping them re-enter their education cycle.

On the 16th of the month he met with the Major Archbishop of

the Greek-Ukrainian Church in Rome. On the 22nd, he discussed the topic of artificial intelligence and its impact on the education of young people in a talk with officials of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture. A few days later he met with the President of the Council of Bishops' Conferences in Europe (CCEE) for a dialogue on the situation of the Church in Europe. On 25 February, at the Gregorian University, he participated in the international conference on "Eradication of slavery". In the same month, the Economist's office and the *Don Bosco nel Mondo* Foundation office were moved to new headquarters in Rome, since renovations were undertaken at *Sacro Cuore*.

In March, the Economist General attended the DBTEC Africa conference and several meetings on non-formal vocational training.

After taking part in meetings with the other Sector Councillors, he travelled to Poland from 9 to 11 March to follow and coordinate support for the Ukrainian people, hard hit by the war with Russia. Later in Rome, he took part in and organised several moments of prayer for Peace in Ukraine and followed the care for refugees, especially young mothers with their children in the various provinces

of Europe, but also elsewhere.

In the middle of the month, he attended the *Pro Universitate Don Bosco* Foundation assembly, the USG Economers General Assembly, the DBN Donors Meeting and some emergency coordination sessions for Ukrainians in their country and fleeing the war, at the *Kuratorium* in Berlin. On 28 and 29 March, Bro. Muller and his entire team visited the UPS in preparation for the SDB Change Congress and the key points of the entire Congress were agreed upon.

He restructured responsibilities in the Economist's Office in view of his absence for the work of the General Council in Turin, and in an assembly for employees at the General Administration and the *Don Bosco nel Mondo* Foundation he implemented the new working regulations related to the AGI-DAE Contract.

During April, the Economist General took part in meetings of the Interim General Council to study the South Asia and Inter-america Regions, which took place from 4 to 14 April. In the second half of the month, he met with several Provincial Economers both in person and online to discuss together the issues and challenges affecting the various Sale-

sian works. On 24 April, he received a group of employees in Salesian works in Austria to give them an address on the structures of the Congregation and also give them a guided tour of Don Bosco's places in Rome. At a round table he informed them about the new discussions on Salesian anthropology in the challenges of the times (UPS). From 25 to 27 April, Bro. Muller attended the meeting of Provincials of the Mediterranean Region in Seville.

In May, several occasions were dedicated to the challenges of provinces in very delicate situations. On 11 May, at the invitation of the Patriarchate, he participated in a conference on the situation in the Holy Land after the violence in Jerusalem between different groups of residents. He continued his work for the support of the people suffering from the war in Ukraine throughout the month, for which the Economer General met with the heads of Salesian NGOs and had several meetings in person and online with international foundations and associations to request support. On 12 May, he showed his closeness to the Borgo Ragazzi Don Bosco in Rome with his presence at the Charity Dinner in the Chioistro Bramante. A highlight

was the participation on 15 May at the canonisation of 10 new Saints in St Peter's and the meeting with many members of the Salesian Family on this occasion.

On the 17th, he and his team held a formation meeting with the newly-appointed Provincial Economers. From 19 to 26 May, he visited the AFM Vice-province and met the various members of the communities in South Africa, Lesotho and Eswatini. At the end of the month, the Economer General, together with the other Council members, travelled to Turin to attend the Plenary Session of the General Council, which began on 1 June.

The Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region

The General Councillor for Africa and Madagascar left Rome on 29 January 2022 to travel to West Africa for the installation of two new Provincials appointed by the Rector Major last December. On 2 February, at St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Zogbo (Cotonou), he celebrated the installation of Fr Jesus-Benoit Badji. On this occasion, he made a quick inspection of the infrastructures that could temporarily house the new

Superior and the provincial services for AON. On Saturday, 5 February, it was the turn of Fr Denis Soro to be installed in his headquarters in Ashaiman (Accra), Ghana. After this tour of the two new locations, Father Alphonse stopped in Lomé to take stock of the unprecedented situation of the Akodessewa Postnovitiate, recently divided into two locations, the second of which is behind the novitiate in Gbodjomé.

After this brief trip to West Africa, the Regional went to Kansebula (DRC), from 16 to 18 February, to preside over the 2022 session of the *Curatorium*, together with Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation, and the Provincials and formators. On 18 February, the Regional went to the ACC Vice-province together with the Superior, Fr Manolo Jiménez. On 21 February, the Extraordinary Visitation to ACC began with a meeting with the Superior and his Council at Masina 2, Kinshasa (DRC). From the 22nd to the 25th, Fr Alphonse began the visit with the Provincial House/Headquarters, with its different sectors. He then attended the quarterly recollection of the confreres from Kinshasa in Lukunga, before crossing the

Congo River the following day to visit the three works in the Republic of Congo.

From 28 February to 3 March, the confreres of Pointe Noire received the extraordinary visit of the Regional, with a short visit to the sectors at Tchibambouka and Cote Matève. On 4 March, he returned to Brazzaville to visit the two communities in the city: from 4 to 6 March he was in Makélékélé Brazzaville, with a brief visit to the new presence of the FMA in Makana, and finally from 7 to 11 March, the visit to Massengo, the provisional seat of the novitiate, with a visit to the villages of Odziba (100 km from Brazzaville) and Lefini (200 km, on the borders of the archdiocese). On 12 March, the Regional concluded the Extraordinary Visitation for the confreres in the area of the Republic of Congo by meeting the three Rectors in the morning and the entire assembly of confreres in the afternoon.

On 14 March, together with the members of the Provincial Council and the ACC Provincial, the Regional flew to Cameroon, where the Retreat for the whole Africa and Madagascar Region was held, preached by the Rector Major, Fr Angel Fernandez Ar-

time. On the morning of 17 March, the Regional chaired the *curatorium* of the two inter-provincial formation houses in Yaoundé, namely St Augustine's Theologate and the Centre for Specific Formation for Coadjutor Brothers.

After the Retreat, Father Alphonse went to Nigeria to celebrate the installation of the new ANN Provincial, Fr Jorge Mario Crisafulli, on Sunday 27 March in Iju (Lagos). On 29 March, Fr Alphonse returned to Kinshasa to continue his Extraordinary Visitation to the DRC area. On 31 March, he left for Tshikapa, where he visited the Salesian work and the future community of Tshikapa-Sami from 1 to 4 April. Returning to Kinshasa on 5 April, he flew to Mbuji-Mayi where he visited the Salesian work, until his return to Kinshasa on 11 April to visit the Salesian work in Lukunga from 12 to 16 April. The Lukunga work is the oldest in Kinshasa. After presiding at the Eucharist for the confreres gathered in Kinshasa for the annual retreat from 17 April, the Regional interrupted the Extraordinary Visitation to join the Rector Major on a visit to the ZMB Vice-province.

Before arriving in Zambia, from 19 to 24 April, Fr Alphonse made a short stay in AGL to discover the Salesian project in Palabek on behalf of Sudanese refugees. He took the opportunity to greet his confreres in Bombo and Namugongo. Arriving in Zambia on 25 April, he stayed in Kabwe and Lusaka for the celebration of 40 years of Salesian presence, together with the Rector Major and the Salesian Bishop of Kabwe, Bishop Clement Mulenga. On his return to the DRC, the Regional Superior began the last series of visits to works in Kinshasa: from 1 to 3 May to La Gombe, from 4 to 7 May to Kingabwa, and finally from 8 to 11 May to Masina 1, near the Provincial House. The general conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation was celebrated in turn with the meeting of the DRC Area Rectors in the afternoon of 13 May and, during the day on 14 May, with the Provincial Council in the morning and the Confreres' Assembly in the afternoon.

Following the Extraordinary Visit to the ACC Vice-province – which was also preparing to begin its second Provincial Chapter at the end of May – the Regional went to Togo to preside over a special *curatorium* in the new

AOS Province for formation houses in Togo and Ghana. Many Provincials attended this *curatorium*, which took place over two days, from 18 to 19 May, to take stock of the formation houses already in operation in each of the provinces of the sub-region, to suggest some future perspectives to the Rector Major, and to analyse the responses of the post-novices and others in formation in this area to an extract of the 2017 questionnaire on accompaniment and formation. After this *curatorium*, the Regional visited the confreres at Don Bosco House in Akodessewa, and also went to Gbodjomé, also in Togo, to see the novices, as well as the possibilities for the renovation of the second site occupied since the beginning of this year by the third-year post-novices, with a team of three formators. From Lomé, on 28 May, the Regional began his return to the new headquarters in Turin.

The Councillor for the East Asia-Oceania Region

On 28 January 2022, at the conclusion of the winter session of the General Council, the Regional for EAO, Fr Joseph Nguyen Thanh Phuoc flew to Timor-Leste

for the consultation for the new superior. In this way, he could celebrate the feast of St John Bosco in Dili and participate in the liturgy presided over by Salesian Archbishop Virgilio (now, the newly appointed Cardinal). After a long period of Covid restriction he was able to see the gathering of many people and witness their love for Don Bosco. Three weeks in the country allowed him to meet all the Salesians and groups of confreres in initial formation as well as various groups of the Salesian Family. The confreres responded enthusiastically to the consultation and were able to see the bright vision of the growth of the Vice-province.

On 21 March, Fr Joseph travelled to Papua New Guinea for his 45-day Extraordinary Visitation to the Papua New Guinea-Solomon Islands Vice-Province (PGS). Unfortunately, the Solomon Islands Government had still closed its borders due to Covid restrictions. Therefore, he only made an online visit to the two communities in the islands. All other communities were visited and sufficient time was spent listening to each confrere and their Salesian missionary companions. He then concluded the visit with the involvement of the

Superior and his council on 12 April and he attended the Provincial Chapter of the Vice Province the following day.

The Easter Triduum was celebrated by the Regional in Vietnam (VIE) as he was asked to return to sign legal documents. He took the opportunity to visit the novitiate (14 novices), the post-novitiate (47 post-novices) and the theologate (19), and the pre-novitiate (18 first year and 14 second year).

From Vietnam, on 24 April, he travelled to Indonesia (INA) to visit some of the Vice-province's main presences, such as the provincial house, the post-novitiate (16 post-novices with 3 coadjutor brothers), the aspirantate and some technical schools in the country.

The high point of these summer trips was the retreat offered by the Rector Major to the provincials/superiors and their councils in Thailand from 7 to 10 May. 77 Salesians attended the Retreat and were encouraged by the Rector Major's talks in the morning and dialogue with the Rector Major in the afternoon. After the Retreat, the Regional accompanied the Rector Major on animation visits to different communities in the country. A historic event for

the Salesians in Thailand was the presence of the Rector Major who was main celebrant at the Mass for the first religious profession of 10 novices.

On 18 May, he flew to Manila, Philippines, and stayed in the Sandor community (formation house for coadjutor brothers in the Region) to meet with coadjutor and clerical confreres in specific formation. On 21 May, he participated in the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation by Fr Alfred Maravilla SDB.

On the evening of 21 May, he took the midnight flight from Manila to Phnom Penh to make another visit of animation to the Salesian Delegation of Cambodia. After 14 years since the previous visit, he was able to witness the enormous change/transformation of society and the great successes of the Salesian missions in the country as they recovered after the most tragic period in the country's history (1975–1990). He was informed that last April, the first local vocation made his perpetual religious profession and two confreres *ad gentes* will begin their 4-year specific formation in Parañaque.

Filled with enthusiasm and deep conviction about the significance and importance of the Salesian

charism in the region, the Regional returned to Turin on 30 May to attend the Summer Plenary Session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

After the conclusion of the Winter Session of the General Council, the Regional for South Asia, Fr Biju Michael, travelled to Bangalore, India, on 29 January 2022. After due quarantine, the Regional presided at the installation ceremony of the new Provincial of Hyderabad (INH), Fr Thomas Santiago, on 4 February 2021. On 5 February, he travelled to Dimapur to attend the funeral of Fr E. C. Michael. On 6 February, the Regional formally began the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Dimapur with a meeting with the confreres in their Quinquennium, followed by meetings of the Provincial Council and the heads of the Provincial Commissions on 7 and 8 February. From 9 to 10 February, the visit to the houses began with Golaghat. The visitation continued in the communities of Rangajan (10-11 February), Dergaon (11 February), Jorhat Aspirantate and school (12-13 February), Tuli (13 February), Amguri

Reservistate, school and parish (14-15 February), Tinsukia school and parish (16-17 February), Khobong school and parish (17-18 February).

On 18 February, the Regional went to Delhi to participate in the Province's Silver Jubilee celebrations, held on 19 February, and met with the Apostolic Nuncio. He returned to Hijuguri for the visit (20-21 February). On 22 February, he chaired a regional meeting of Rectors and those in charge of houses in eastern Arunachal Pradesh in Tinsukia. He then went on to visit the school and parish in Sadiya (22-23) and the school in Wakro (23-24).

On 25 February, the Regional went to New Delhi, the headquarters of the SPCSA, to attend the SPCSA Assembly and Council meetings held online (27-28 February).

On 2 March, the Regional went to Goa to begin the consultation for the new Provincial for the Panjim Province. On 3 March he held meetings with the Provincial Council. On 4 March, he led the consultation meeting of confreres gathered at Don Bosco Panjim. He also had a meeting with Bishop Alwyn Barretto of Sindhudurg and visited the houses at Oros and Pinguli. On 5 March he met

Bishop Filipe Neri Ferrão of Goa and visited the houses at Sulcorna and Quepem and led a consultation meeting for confreres gathered at Don Bosco Fatrorda and then visited the house of Loutolim. On 6 March he led a consultation meeting for confreres gathered at Don Bosco Trasi. On 7 March he met Bishop Gerald Isaac Lobo of Udipi and visited the houses at Shirva and Kelmбет. In the evening, he met Bishop Peter Paul Saldanha of Mangalore. On 8 March, he visited the houses at Paliem and Parra and addressed the members at the opening session of the Provincial Chapter, before leaving for Dibrugarh to continue the Extraordinary Visitation to Dimapur.

The Regional visited Doom Dooma school and parish (10-12 March), Rajanagar school and parish (12-13 March), Longding school (14-15 March), Mintong school and parish (16-17 March), Kheti school (17-18 March), Borduria school and parish (18-19 March), Mebo school (19-20 March), Paglam school and parish (21-22 March), Doimukh school (22-24 March), Palin school and parish (24-25 March), Itanagar school (26-27 March) and Itanagar parish (27-29 March). He chaired the Rectors and commu-

nity leaders of Western Arunachal meeting on 29 March in Itanagar. On the same day, he also met and interacted with Bishop John Thomas of Itanagar. He continued with an Extraordinary Visit to Itanagar college (29-31 March) and Harmuty school and parish (31 March - 1 April).

On 1 April, he travelled via Delhi to Rome to attend the Interim Session of the General Council, where a report on the South Asia Region was presented in view of the Team Visit to the Region in 2023. On his return to the Province of Dimapur, he again visited the University institute and parish of Itanagar (16-17 April) for the Visitation, and went on to visit Jorhat Life Plus (17-18 April), the schools at Mon (18-19 April), the school at Dibrugarh (20-22 April) and the school and parish at Lamphel (22-23 April). On 23 April, he met Bishop Dominic Lumon of Imphal, and on 24 April, he led the meeting of Rectors and leaders of the Manipur region. He then visited the school and parish in Chinmeirong (23-26 April), the school and parish in Khoupum (26-27 April), the school and parish in Tamenglong (28-29 April), and the school and parish in Maram (29-30 April), Maram University Institution (1-2 May),

Shajouba School (3-4 May), Mao School and Parish (4-5 May), and Kohima School and University Institution (5-7 May). On 6 May, he met Bishop James Thoppil of Kohima and led the regional meeting of rectors and community leaders in Nagaland. He went on to visit Kohima Christ the King (7-8 May) and Wokha school and parish (9-10 May).

On 10 May, he travelled to Shillong to attend the opening of the Provincial Chapter on 11 May 2022.

On his return, he attended the funeral of Fr V. M. Joseph on 12 May in Dimapur and continued his visit to the novitiate in Zubza (12-13 May). He visited the Salesian university institute in Dimapur (13-15 May), the BEd university institute in Dimapur (15-16 May), the DBVTC in Dimapur (17-18 May), the school and AIDA in Dimapur (18-20 May) and the Provincial House (20-22 May). On 23 May, he officiated at the perpetual profession of three confreres. On 24 May, he officiated at the first profession of thirteen young men at the novitiate in Zubza and continued his visit to Savio House in Zubza (24-25 May). On 26 May he met the Provincial Council and on 27 May he chaired the assembly of the

confreres and the meeting of Rectors and community leaders of the Province in Dimapur and concluded the Extraordinary Visitation with the celebration of the Eucharist. On 29 May, he travelled to Rome via Delhi and on 30 May he reached Turin, where the General Council meetings began on 31 May.

The Councillor for the America South Cone Region

On the same day the General Council's Winter Session ended, he left for Brazil.

On 31 January he presided at the celebrations for Don Bosco in Recife. On 2 February he presided at the perpetual profession celebration of a Salesian from BRE in Jaboatão dos Guararapes (Recife) and in the evening, presided over the opening celebration of the new Novitiate in Jaboatão, with 15 novices from the provinces of BSP, BRE and BPA.

From 13 to 19 February, after a few days visiting relatives, he took part in the Retreat with the Rector Major, all the Provincials and the Provincial Councillors in São Leopoldo (Porto Alegre-Brazil) and after a meeting between the Provincials of the Re-

gion, with the Rector Major.

On 21 and 22 February in Asunción (Paraguay) he had a meeting with the Provincial, some confreres on the Provincial Council and visited the Apostolic Nuncio.

On 23 February, he began the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of São Paulo, Brazil in the name of the Rector Major, which ended on 26 May. During this time he spoke with all the Salesians of the Province (128); he visited the 18 canonical houses and the UNISAL University Centre. He got to know the situation of the 11 colleges, one of which is completely philanthropic, the 14 parishes, some of which have rural areas with pastoral care, the two Shrines, the social works, youth centres and festive oratories, the vocational training courses.

He met twice with the Provincial Council and twice with all Salesian Rectors. He also spoke with 6 diocesan bishops, with Provincials of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and with Mother Provincial of the Caritas Sisters of Jesus.

In the communities he also met with the groups of the Salesian Family, some of which were founded there, such as *Canção Nova*. He spoke with the provin-

cial coordinators and presidents of all the groups.

On 6 May, he participated in the *Curatorium* of the Post-novitiate in Córdoba, an interprovincial house of five Provinces: ARN, ARS, CIL, PAR, URU.

He visited the houses of formation in the Province of São Paulo: the Theology Studentate (Lapa Pio XI) and the Post-novitiate in Lorraine.

He also attended the meetings of the Salesian Network of Brazil (RSB), the Provincial of Brazil (CISBRASIL) and the Provincials from CIS.

On 27 May, he went to Turin to attend the Winter Session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region

The Winter Plenary Session of the General Council ended on 28 January 2022. The Regional for Central and Northern Europe, Fr Roman Jachimowicz, conducted the Extraordinary Visitation to the Polish St Hyacinth Province of Kraków (PLS). The Visitation took place from 3 February to 23 April 2022.

During the Visit Fr Roman visited the following Salesian com-

munities – in February: 10-11: Zabrze, 14-15: Pogrzebie and Kobyla, 15-18: Kraków-Konfederacka and Stani tki, Saltrom, 21: Kraków-Beato Joseph Kowalski, 22-23: Kraków-Inspectoral Centre and afternoon of the 23rd: the Provincial Council, 24-25: Kraków-Nowa Huta, 28: Kraków-Youth Pastoral Centre (WDM); in March: 1-5: Kraków-Teologato, on the 5th in the Theological Studentate he celebrated the Eucharistic with the conferring of the ministry of Reader for confreres from the four Polish Provinces, 7-9: O wi cim-Jagiełły, 9-10: O wi cim-Zasole, 11-12: Skawa and Witów, 14-15: wi tochłowice, 15-16: Kielce and Niewachłów, 17-19: Szczyrk, Przył ków and Wisła, 21-23: Lublin, 23-25: Rzeszów, 28-30: Przemy l, Lipowica and Polana. In addition, on 13 March he took part in the Social Communication meeting in Warsaw (AWP) attended by the Councillor for SC, Fr Gildásio Dos Santos Mendes. On 19 March he took part in the meeting concerning the distribution of funding for Ukraine, and on the 20th in the KSIP Conference meeting in Warsaw (AWP). In April he went to the Ukraine where war is raging to visit the Salesian communities and see how the situation of the confreres

is: 5-7: Bibrka, Peremyshlany, Korostyshiv, 8-9: Zhytomyr and Korostyshiv, 10: meeting with the Provincial, Fr Mykhaylo Chaban (UKR), 11: Odessa, online meeting with the confreres. On 23 April there was the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation with the meeting of the Rectors, the conclusion of the Provincial Chapter in the Theological Studentate in Krakow and the meeting with the Provincial Council in the Provincial House in Krakow.

On 5-6 May, the Regional, Fr Roman, took part in the online meeting of the Social Communication Sector. Then on 5-6 May he visited the Formation Houses in Poland. On 6-8 May, he took part in the meeting of the Provincials of the Central and Northern European Region in Vienna (AUS) in the presence of the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Stefano Martoglio, the Rector Major's Delegate for the Salesian Family, Fr Joan Lluís Playà, World Delegate for Salesian Cooperators and Past Pupils Bro. Dominic Nguyen, collaborator for Missions Fr Pavel Ženišek and two lay collaborators (Italy and Spain) from the Youth Ministry Sector.

From the 12th-14th, Fr Roman made a visit to the Formation Houses in Poland. On the 20th he

participated in the funeral of the mother of the recently-appointed Provincial Fr Bartłomiej Pola ski of the Wrocław Province (PLO). On the 20th in the Marian Shrine of Twardogóra he celebrated the Eucharistic for the installation of the new Provincial of Wrocław Fr Bartłomiej Pola ski.

On 30 May, Fr Roman went to Valdocco, Turin, for the Summer Session of the General Council, which began on 1 June and ended on 25 June.

On 3-5 June he accompanied the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, to Hungary. On 4 June in Budapest, at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration, the Rector Major blessed the new casket containing the relics of Blessed Stephen Sándor, which were found and identified in 2019. The Reliquary was carried in solemn procession and placed at the altar of Mary Help of Christians in the Clarisseum Church, where the young Coadjutor Brother spent a large part of his religious life in the service of young people, as a master printer and educator loved and esteemed by the confreres and young people.

From 26 June to 3 July, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of the death of St Francis de Sales, Patron Saint of the Sale-

sian Congregation, the General Council took part in the Retreat preached by Fr Morand Wirth, SDB at the Jean XXIII centre in Annecy, France.

On 23 July, Fr Roman together with the Vicar of the Rector Major Fr Stefano Martoglio, the Councillor for Formation Fr Ivo Coelho, the Regional for the Mediterranean Region Fr Juan Carlos Pérez Godoy, went to the Province of Poland-Warsaw (PLE) for a meeting concerning the novitiates in Europe and particularly in the Central and Northern Europe Region.

The following day, after the conclusion of the Summer Session of the General Council, Fr Roman travelled to Poland.

The Councillor for the Interamerica Region

At the end of January 2022 he was due to leave for Haiti for the installation of the new superior, Fr Morachell Bonhomme, but one evening before departure he received the news that he was positive for the COVID 19 test, so had to cancel the trip and take a few days off until the test came back negative.

From 5 to 10 February, together with the Rector Major, he partici-

pated in a series of Retreats for the Provincials and their Councils held in the community of San Patricio in Cumbayá, Ecuador. It was an excellent experience of communion and accompaniment. At the end of the retreat he had the opportunity, together with the Provincials of the region, to conclude the annual meeting corresponding to the previous cycle, as had been previously agreed.

From 15 February to 26 May, on behalf of the Rector Major, he conducted the Extraordinary Visitation to the Sacred Heart Province in Ecuador. He spent 92 days in the country, visited 23 communities. He met for dialogue with 132 SDBs, 33 volunteers, 10 lay bursars and 4 bishops: Archbishop Alfredo José Espinoza Mateus SDB, Archbishop and Primate of Quito, Ecuador, Bishop Néstor Montesdeoca Becerra SDB, bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate Méndez, Bishop Pietro Gabrielli SDB, bishop emeritus of the Vicariate of Mendez and Bishop Luis Antonio Sánchez Armijos, bishop emeritus of Machala, as well as meetings with various leaders of the EPCs.

From 4 to 13 April, he attended the Interim Council sessions in Rome, to present the report of the study on the Interamerica Region

as part of the preparatory process for the next global visit.

On 14 April, he arrived at the Salesian community at Sampierdarena in Genoa to accompany the pastoral care of the Holy Days with the Latin community (Ecuadorians and Peruvians) participating in the parish of San Juan Bosco and San Cayetano.

On 28 May he arrived in Turin for the 2022 Summer Session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Mediterranean Region

At the end of the General Council's meetings, the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region went to Catania to continue the Extraordinary Visitation on behalf of the Rector Major to the San Paolo Sicilian Province (ISI) Italy. This second part of the visit began on 29 January by meeting the confreres from the San Tommaso Theological Studentate community in Messina until 5 February. He celebrated the Solemnity of Don Bosco on 31 January, and participated in meeting in person and online with the Salesian Family to present the Rector Major's Strenna in Messina in the FMA House. He then went on to visit a group

of Houses in the Province until 27 March: Ranchibile Palermo, Barriera Catania, San Francesco di Sales Catania, Santa Chiara Palermo, Gesù Adolescente Palermo, Camporeale, Marsala, Trapani, Barcellona, Viagrande, Randazzo Catania, Associazione Don Bosco 2000, Province Centre, Giostra Messina, Alcamo and Salette/San Gregorio Catania. During the visit, he took part in the Provincial Council of the Salesian Family on 2 February.

From 28 March until 1 April, he participated in the *curatorium* of the Region's formation houses in Messina, Crocetta, Il Colle, Nave, Genzano and San Tarcisio. On the weekend of 2-3 April he had a meeting in Rome with the Vicar of the Rector Major and other meetings. After which he returned to Catania to resume the Extraordinary Visitation on 5 April to the Associazione Meta Cometa and went to Tunisia, Manouba and Tunis from 5 to 11 April.

After the visit to Tunisia, he finished his visit to the Province Centre and celebrated the Easter Triduum in San Francesco di Sales, Catania. On 17 April he had the final meeting with the Provincial to share an overview of the visit and on the 18th with the Provincial Council in the morning and with

the Rectors in the afternoon, thus concluding the Extraordinary Visitation to the Sicilian Province and returning to Rome.

From 21 to 29 April, he travelled to Spain to take part in the various meetings of the Iberian Conference, the Mediterranean Region and the CIS in Sanlúcar la Mayor (Seville), taking the opportunity to greet his family and accompany the Councillor for Social Communication (who contributed an address to the Mediterranean meeting) for him to get to know some of the Houses of the Province of Seville (SMX) and some cultural visits.

On 30 April, he travelled with the Provincial of MOR Province to Israel and Palestine to continue the Extraordinary Visitation in this province. He started the visit at Ratisbonne, continuing on to Betgemal, Nazareth, Bethlehem and Cremisan, until 16 May. On the 13th he was able to participate with the Italian Consul and other local authorities in the inauguration of a children's park built on the grounds of our House in Cremisan with Italian cooperation and VIS. After a few days to finish the report of the Visitation, he met with the Provincial, the Provincial Council and the Rectors to share the overview of the

visit, and to conclude he had a nice online meeting with all the communities of the Province.

After finishing his visit to the MOR Province, he travelled to Portugal on 20 May for a visit to animate and get to know some of the houses there. He celebrated the Solemnity of Our Lady Help of Christians in Lisbon, celebrating Mass with all the young peo-

ple, educators and all the staff. On 28 May he visited the Salesian House in Málaga, taking part in the procession of Mary Help of Christians and on the 30th in the morning he spoke at the meeting of the two National YM Centres, Madrid and Rome. After this meeting he returned to Rome and on the 31st went to Turin to begin General Council Summer Session.

5.1 Appointment of the new Secretary General

During the Winter Plenary Session of the General Council, the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, with the consent of his Council, appointed the new Secretary of the General Council. He is Fr Guido Garino, a Salesian from the Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta Special Circumscription (ICP), who will take up the post from August.

Fr Guido Garino, born in Turin on 26 October 1969, attended the Salesian novitiate in Monte Uliveto Pinerolo, where he made his first profession on 8 September 1997; he then made his perpetual vows on 12 September 2004 at Colle Don Bosco; and he completed his entire course of philosophical and theological studies at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome.

He was ordained priest on 3 June 2006 by Cardinal Severino Poletto in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

After graduating in Law at the University of Turin (2003) and completing his Doctorate in Canon Law at the Pontifical Lateran University (2013), in 2009 he

joined the Piedmontese Ecclesiastical Court, first as Promoter of Justice and Substitute Defender of the Bond, then (2011-2022) as Interdiocesan and Metropolitan Judge.

A teacher of religion in middle and high school classes at the Salesian High School in Valsalice (2008-2011), he was also in charge of the Valdocco University College (2013/2017). He also held the roles of Vice-rector, Bursar and Catechist at the Vocational Training Centre in Valdocco, as part of the St Francis de Sales community there.

In 2017, he was sent as assistant Parish Priest to the St John Bosco Parish in Cascine Vica, Rivoli, a working-class suburb of Turin, where the following year he became Parish Priest and, subsequently, Moderator of the Pastoral Unit.

Fr Guido Garino succeeds Fr Stefano Vanoli, in office as Secretary of the General Council since 2015, and who was also the Moderator of the Congregation's 28th General Chapter (2020).

The new Secretary General officially begins his service as of 1 August 2022.

5.2 New Salesian Provincials

Below (in alphabetical order) are some details regarding Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council in June 2022

1. PIRES GUTERRES Anacleto Superior of the Timor-Leste Vice-province (TLS)

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, with the consent of the General Council, on 21 June 2022 appointed Fr Anacleto Pires as the new Superior of the St Callistus Caravario Vice-province of East Timor (Timor-Leste) (TLS) for the six-year period 2022-2028.

He succeeds Fr Apolinário Maria Neto Ornai, who led the Vice-province from 2016 to the present.

Fr Anacleto Pires was born in Afaloicai, Baguai, near Baucau, Timor-Leste, on 20 August 1967. After completing his high school studies at the ASALES Institute in Fatumaca, he was admitted to the novitiate on 13 June 1991, making his first Salesian profession on 13 June 1992.

From 1992 to 1995, he was sent to continue his formation and philosophical studies at the Driyakara philosophical institute in Jakarta, Indonesia. Returning

again to Timor-Leste, from 1995 to 1997, he was appointed as assistant to the novices, and once this formation period was over, he was sent to Parañaque, Philippines, to continue his theological formation from 1997 to 2001.

He professed his perpetual vows on 24 March 2000 in Parañaque, was ordained a deacon exactly one year later in the same location, and was ordained priest on 8 December 2001, also in Parañaque.

From 2002 to 2008, he was in charge of the ASALES institute in Fatumaca. He was then Rector of the community at Los Palos from 2008 to 2013, while also taking on the tasks of assistant parish priest and being in charge of the pre-novices.

From 2013 to 2015 he was sent to study in Italy, at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS) in Rome, specialising in Salesian Spirituality.

On his return to his homeland, he was entrusted with the post of Director of Novices, which he held from 2015 to 2021, when he was chosen as Rector of the Post-novitiate at Comoro, in Dili.

He was Delegate for Vocations from 2006 to 2014 for the TLS Vice-province, and has been a member of the Vice-province Council since 2019.

2. *TELLES Clive Justin Provincial of India Panjim Province (INP)*

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, with the consent of the General Council on 21 June 2022, appointed Fr Clive Telles as the new Provincial of the Province of India Panjim (INP). He succeeds Fr Felix Fernandes, who led the Province from 2016.

Fr Clive Justin Telles was born to John Telles and Inacinha Telles on 20 August 1976, and has two older sisters, Carol and Christine, and a twin brother.

Already at an early age, he had shown the desire to become a priest and attended the Salesian aspirantate at Don Bosco Lonavala. After completing his secondary studies, he entered the Bosco Udyogshala Pinguli prenovitiate. He completed his novitiate studies in Nashik and made his first profession on 24 May 1996. After completing his studies in philosophy in Divyadaan, Nashik, and theology at the Jnana Deepa Institute in Pune, he was ordained priest on 18 December 2006 in Goa. He has a Bachelor's Degree in English, a Professional Diploma in Educa-

tion (B.Ed) and a Master's Degree in Education.

He served the INP Province as a member of the Provincial Council for six years, the last three as Vice-provincial and Delegate for Youth Ministry. He was moderator of the Provincial Chapter and then elected Delegate of the Province at the 28th General Chapter, thus participating in that assembly in 2020.

As an educator, he served as a teacher and in administrative roles in various Province schools in the three States of Goa, Maharashtra and Karnataka. He worked as an administrator for three years at the Don Bosco Centre in Kelmbet. He then served as Principal for seven years at the Don Bosco High School and College in Sindhudurg, Maharashtra, the last three of which he also served as Director of the Institute. He has currently been Vice-rector and Principal of Don Bosco Secondary School in Panjim, Goa.

The INP Province has 105 confreres and 18 houses in the Indian states of Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Fr Telles will begin his service on 7 September 2022.

5.3 Our deceased confreres (1st list January-June 2022)

“Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ’s peace. They have spent their lives in the Congregation, and not a few have suffered even to the point of martyrdom for the love of the Lord... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission” (C. 94).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ADAYADIEL James	Auckland (New Zealand)	22.06.2022	90	AUL
P AIMAR BRUNO Miguel Ángel	Turin (Italy)	10.04.2022	76	BOL
P ANTÚNEZ DE MAYOLO LARRAGÁN José	Lima (Peru)	09.04.2022	95	PER
P AUGUSTYN Tadeusz	Oświęcim (Poland)	31.03.2022	51	PLS
L BERISIE Francis	Ashaiman (Ghana)	07.05.2022	48	AOS
P BERTAZZO Giulio	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	15.01.2022	85	INE
P BERTOLAZZI Bruno	Venosa (Italy)	19.05.2022	101	IME
P BÉRTOLO Natalio Vicente	Córdoba (Argentina)	02.05.2022	94	ARN
P BISRAT Temesgen Tekka	Addis Abeba (Ethiopia)	14.02.2022	41	AET
L BISWAS Sushanto	Bandel (India)	25.02.2022	76	INC
E BLANCO Jesús Tirso	Negrar (Italy)	22.02.2022	64	EP
<i>Fu Vescovo di Luena per 14 anni</i>				
P BOEM Ambrogio	Querétaro (Mexico)	13.04.2022	91	MEM
P BOGDANSKI Stanislaw	Przasnysz (Poland)	17.04.2022	80	PLE
P BOONE Antoon	Sint-Denijs-Westrem (Belgium)	06.06.2022	81	BEN
P BORDIGNON Giuseppe	Venice-Mestre (Italy)	21.01.2022	85	INE
P CALLINI Giuseppe	Roma (Italy)	28.02.2022	89	ICC
P CAMPAGNOLO Giovanni	Castello di Godego (Italy)	15.06.2022	77	INE
P CASTI (TOCCO) Giuseppe	Roma (Italy)	29.01.2022	90	ICC
P CUEVAS BASCUÑANA Agustín	Madrid (Spain)	07.02.2022	77	ATE
P CUEVAS MORENO Pedro	Madrid (Spain)	08.01.2022	79	SSM
P CZUMAKOW Aleksander	Odesa (Ukraine)	09.06.2022	64	UKR
P CHOVER MARTÍNEZ Jesús	Logroño (Spain)	17.04.2022	81	SSM
L D'SOUZA Anthony Senior	Mumbai (India)	27.04.2022	61	INB
P DE GIORGI Pierino	Roma (Italy)	17.04.2022	92	UPS
P DE NEVE Gaston	Heverlee (Belgium)	08.03.2022	95	BEN
P DEL BLANCO ALONSO Secundino	Logroño (Spain)	09.04.2022	73	SSM
P DEL NOTARO Palmiro	Castano Primo (Italy)	16.02.2022	94	ILE
P DI LIBERO Luigi	Caidate di Sumirago (Italy)	18.06.2022	79	ILE
P DI NICOLA Edoardo	Roma (Italy)	03.02.2022	86	ICC
P DUBÓN GONZÁLEZ Luis Fernando	Città del Guatemala (Guatemala)	08.01.2022	61	CAM
P EANTHANAMKUZHIYIL Michael	Injan (India)	04.02.2022	69	IND
P ECHAMENDI ARISTU Miguel Antonio	Barcelona (Spain)	18.04.2022	87	SMX
P ESCAMILLA ALAS Germán	San Salvador (El Salvador)	31.01.2022	83	CAM
P ESQUIVEL AMBRIZ Gonzalo	Ciudad de México (Mexico)	11.02.2022	85	MEM
P FACCHINELLO David	Amparaes (Peru)	24.05.2022	48	INE
P FALK Robert Joseph	Seoul (Korea)	13.04.2022	90	KOR
P FAVARO Giovanni	Roma (Italy)	13.02.2022	98	ICC

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P FERNANDES Bernard	Goa (India)	24.05.2022	56	INB
P FIGLIA Isidore Sydeney	Tampa, Florida (U.S.A.)	06.03.2022	91	SUE
P FORD Norman	Melbourne (Australia)	25.06.2022	86	AUL
P GAMBINO Lorenzo	Lima (Peru)	23.01.2022	99	PER
P GARCÍA MARCO Lorenzo	Bahia Blanca (Argentina)	19.01.2022	82	ARS
L GIUPPA Luigi	Napoli (Italy)	12.03.2022	94	IME
E GONZÁLEZ MORALES T. Osvaldo	Santiago del Cile (Chile)	12.02.2022	86	EP
<i>Fu Vescovo di Punta Arenas per 32 anni e per 16 Vescovo emerito</i>				
L GUINEA MURGA José Ramón	Kankan (Guinea Conakry)	14.05.2022	72	AON
P HANTSON Jacques	Bonheiden (Belgium)	28.03.2022	86	BEN
P HORVAT Avgust	Trstenik (Slovenia)	09.05.2022	82	SLO
P IRUNGA Désiré William	Nairobi (Kenya)	05.05.2022	54	AGL
P JANISCH Armin	Koln (Germany)	01.01.2022	86	GER
P KANEKO Dominico Ken-Nosuke	Suginami (Japan)	26.02.2022	96	GIA
L KENNEDY Colm	Maynooth (Ireland)	31.03.2022	96	IRL
P KERGOAT Yves	Pouillé (France)	22.01.2022	89	FRB
L KERKETTA Raphael	Guwahati (India)	03.01.2022	74	ING
P KLINICKI Wladyslaw	São Paulo (Brazil)	12.04.2022	107	BSP
P KOŠČAK Josip	Vitovica (Croatia)	23.01.2022	85	CRO
P LACCHIA Franco	Turin (Italy)	04.02.2022	88	ICP
P LARIOS GUTIÉRREZ Daniel	Irapuato (Mexico)	20.03.2022	76	MEG
P LENTI Artur	Downey, California (USA)	06.01.2022	98	SUO
P LEOCATA Francesco	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	08.01.2022	77	ARS
P LOHBUSCH Ferdinand	Essen (Germany)	26.02.2022	81	GER
P MANUEL ALBERTO Ernesto José	Luanda (Angola)	26.05.2022	35	ANG
P MARCA TICONA René	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	26.01.2022	59	BOL
L MARCONATO Lorenzo	Castello di Godego (Italy)	04.06.2022	93	INE
P MARCONCINI Paulo Crispino	Nova Trento (Brazil)	27.02.2022	77	BPA
P MARCOS MARTÍN Santos	Sevilla (Spain)	05.04.2022	83	SMX
S MARTIN Sugan Lailethkumar	Chennai (India)	03.01.2022	31	INM
L MARTINS Manuel Dionísio	Manique (Portugal)	22.05.2022	98	POR
P MARZANO Matteo	Caracas (Venezuela)	15.02.2022	79	VEN
P MATERIA Henryk	Środa Śląska (Poland)	06.06.2022	85	PLO
P McGUINNES Brendan	Frimley Park (Great Britain)	25.03.2022	94	GBR
P MÉNDEZ RODRÍGUEZ Álvaro	Mexico City (Mexico)	13.02.2022	78	MEM
P MIKLAVC Ivo	Trstenik (Slovenia)	19.03.2022	83	SLO
L MOJO Paul	Shillong (India)	09.02.2022	101	INS
P MONTES FUENTES Miguel	Irapuato, Guanajuato (Mexico)	09.01.2022	92	MEG
P MORENO ORDÓÑEZ Ramón	Seville (Spain)	14.04.2022	88	SMX
P MOWLES Alan	Maynooth (Ireland)	12.04.2022	87	IRL
P NANA Luigi	Sondrio (Italy)	07.02.2022	84	ILE
P NAUGHTON Patrick	Cape Town (South Africa)	23.03.2022	81	AFM
<i>Fu Ispettore per 6 anni</i>				
L NICOLETTI Adolfo Luis	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	26.04.2022	80	ARS
P O'BRIEN Henry	Bolton (Great Britain)	28.02.2022	91	GBR
P O'RIORDAN Daniel	Addlestone (Great Britain)	19.06.2022	83	GBR

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
D OGOULA Y'OGOULA Arnold	Yaoundé (Cameroon)	16.06.2022	37	ATE
P ONGENAERT André	Wilrijk (Belgium)	23.02.2022	91	BEN
P OZÓG PLO Jan	Lubin (Poland)	28.04.2022	68	PLO
P PAVLETIĆ Marko	Zagreb (Croatia)	30.01.2022	81	CRO
E PEDRON Bruno	Campo Grande (Brazil)	17.06.2022	78	EP
P PINHAL Manuel Carlos	Libona (Portugal)	05.01.2022	77	POR
P PINOLINI Juan Evasio	Rosario (Argentina)	02.02.2022	90	ARN
D PIRES Baltasar	Dili (Timor-Leste)	04.04.2022	81	TLS
P PIRISI Francesco	Ittiri (Italy)	19.01.2022	72	GER
L POLLANI Piergiorgio	Verona (Italy)	10.04.2022	79	INE
P PONGUTÁ HURTADO Martin Alonso	Bogotá (Colombia)	05.04.2022	79	COB
P PONGUTÁ Silvestre	Bogotá (Colombia)	29.01.2022	86	COB
P PORTMANN Joseph	Fribourg (Switzerland)	13.01.2022	92	FRB
P POTTUKALAM Matthew	Dibrugarh (India)	14.06.2022	65	IND
L PRSKALO Mihovil	Zagabria (Croatia)	07.01.2022	77	CRO
S RANDRIAMANARIVO Jean Bosco	Antsirabe (Madagascar)	29.03.2022	25	MDG
P RANKIN Peter Joseph	Melbourne (Australia)	14.01.2022	63	AUL
L RASTRERO BOADA Cándido	Arévalo (Spain)	19.03.2022	84	SSM
P REMÓN BAZTÁN Jesús	Barakaldo (Spain)	17.06.2022	81	SSM
P SALA Ambrogio	Turin (Italy)	21.03.2022	94	ICP
L SAMANIEGO Víctor	Azuay, Cuenca (Ecuador)	26.04.2022	89	ECU
P SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ Luis Emiro	Bogotá (Colombia)	30.06.2022	91	COB
P SCHAUMANN Franz	Derching (Germany)	25.03.2022	82	GER
P SCHMID Franz	Benediktbeuern (Germany)	07.02.2022	77	GER
P SCHREML Johannes	Muchen (Germany)	03.05.2022	81	GER
P SERAFINI Mario	Bahia Blanca	07.04.2022	85	ARS
L SOSIO Alessandro	San Cristobal (Venezuela)	25.03.2022	80	VEN
P SOTO HERNÁNDEZ Julio Alberto	Santo Domingo (Dom. Rep.)	22.03.2022	85	ANT
P SUCCI Giovanni Carlo	Turin (Italy)	23.01.2022	99	ICP
P SZYMEROWSKI Zbigniew	Wroclaw (Poland)	07.02.2022	78	PLO
P TARNOVSKI Sigmund Fridolin	Porto Alegre (Brazil)	23.02.2022	88	BPA
P THATTIL Chacko	Hyderabad (India)	19.04.2022	80	INH
P TIBERI Francisco	Cordoba (Argentina)	22.01.2022	89	ARN
P TIFI Roberto	Monopoli (Italy)	17.02.2022	80	IME
P TORRI Giulivo	Pietra Ligure (Italy)	05.04.2022	74	ICC
L TSCHOEPE Heinrich	Amberg (Germany)	06.06.2022	81	GER
P TUDU Kissun Cosmos	Dharan (Nepal)	10.01.2022	52	INC
P TURCO Ugo	La Spezia (Italy)	30.01.2022	93	ICC
P URBANCZYK Alojzy	Poznań (Poland)	23.02.2022	87	PLO
P URBAŃCZYK Stanisław	Oświęcim (Poland)	06.05.2022	92	PLS
L VAN LANKVELT Bernard	Apeldoorn (Holland)	26.03.2022	86	BEN
E VARGAS BASTIDAS Héctor Eduardo	Temuco (Chile)	07.03.2022	70	EP
<i>Fu Vescovo di San Marco di Arica per 9 anni e Vescovo di Temuco per 8 anni.</i>				
P VARIATHUKALAYIL Joseph	Dimapur (India)	09.05.2022	81	IND
L VILLANI Mario	Salerno (Italy)	28.04.2022	91	IME
P WEISSHAAR Philip	Hirschau (Germany)	02.04.2022	92	GER

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P WÓJCIK Stanisław	Żyrardów (Poland)	25.03.2022	63	PLE
L ZAPATA VEGA Arturo del Carmen	Santiago del Cile (Chile)	13.02.2022	91	CIL
P ZUBOVIĆ Nikola	Split (Croatia)	25.05.2022	95	CRO

