



# atti

## of the general council

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year CVII

july 2025

### N. 446

official organ  
of animation  
and communication  
for the  
salesian congregation

Sede Centrale  
Salesiana  
Roma

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

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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## IN THOSE DAYS MARY SET OUT AND WENT WITH HASTE... (LK 1:39)

### Spiritual experience, the soul of pastoral action

The first thing that Mary did  
after receiving the Angel's message  
was to go "in haste" to the house of her cousin Elizabeth  
in order to be of service to her (cf. *Lk* 1:39).

The Virgin's initiative  
was one of genuine charity; it was humble and courageous,  
motivated by her faith in God's word,  
and by the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Those who love forget about themselves  
and place themselves at the service of their neighbour.

Here we have the image and model of the Church!  
Every Ecclesial Community, like the Mother of Christ,  
is called to accept with total generosity  
the mystery of God who comes to dwell within her  
and guides her steps in the ways of love.

*Pope Benedict XVI*

25 March, 2006

My dear confreres,

I warmly greet you as I offer this reflection introducing the  
General Council's *Six-Year Project for 2025-2031*.

I would like to present this *Project* starting with a sen-  
tence from the Gospel that acts as a bridge between two signifi-  
cant experiences that are almost spontaneously linked: the An-  
nunciation to Mary and her visit to Elizabeth to offer her ser-  
vice: "**Mary set out and went in haste**" (Lk 1:39).

My desire to comment on this sentence stems from what I  
am experiencing and feeling in these first months of my min-  
istry as Rector Major. I see a parallel emerging more and more  
clearly between the experience of the Spirit that we had during  
GC29 and these first months of the six-year term. I seem to see

a living icon in Mary's dynamic experience that is very relevant for us, an icon that becomes light and a source of encouragement.

We experienced weeks where the main protagonist was the Holy Spirit of God. Many participants expressed the belief (or at least the perception) that his presence gave a different tone to the work of GC29. This presence was not only invoked in prayer, but was sought, felt and recognised through the various moments we experienced, the conversations we shared and the decisions we made together.

I would now like to comment on three attitudes that can help us live the choices we have proposed and the paths we want to follow well, and with pastoral intelligence. I trust that they will become ways of life so that our community life, together with our pastoral proposals, may become a reflection of God's own initiative in us, for us and through us. I hope that our response will be the mature fruit of that continuous listening to God's will that nourishes our being servants of young people. It is in this dynamic that our consecration finds its authentic identity.

I entrust you with these reflections of mine, these absolute convictions that I hold deep within my heart. Do not expect a theological or pedagogical treatise, I don't intend to do this. It is more like a good night – a little longer but a family sharing. Let us help each other and help me to make them true, to live them together in the same spirit.

**LISTENING – AVAILABILITY – GENEROSITY:** these are the three attitudes on which I invite you to reflect and which I encourage you to prioritise. Three attitudes that must be rooted and cultivated in a free heart so that they may then mature within the Salesian educative and pastoral experience. Only in this way can the contribution of every Salesian of Don Bosco truly become a precious gift shared within our Educative and Pastoral Communities (EPCs) for the benefit of young people, especially the poorest.

## 1. LISTENING

In a culture that now seems to be focused and concentrated solely on seeing, on being fast and fleeting, our eyes darting from one place to another, we seek the call that brings the Good News with it to help us recover the dimension of listening. The ancients said that faith comes from listening. This remains absolutely true and valid even for us today. The testimony that communicates the gospel cannot be replaced by a video, a drawing, an outward appearance. If seeing is like standing in front of a window or a screen and everything happens in front of us, it may seem that today it is enough for us to see what is in front of us, allowing ourselves to be superficially impressed. And we delude ourselves that we can truly “know” things just because we have seen them once, and perhaps not even looked at them closely. Seeing alone is not enough; it only gives us facts and figures. We need to listen carefully, calmly and deeply. Without listening, we cannot “understand”, interpret or grasp the meaning of events and their call to action.

Mary, who set out and hastened to serve, first experienced listening. It is from this experience of listening that Mary holds a profound and divinely saving truth. Mary, listening to the Word, welcomes the Word.

Her attitude of listening asks Mary to take the path of discipleship, and thus becomes a participant in God’s plan. Her listening is synonymous with obeying – *ob-audire*. Mary allows herself to be attracted by the Word, accepting being involved, entering into the mystery that is revealed to her. In Mary, the truth that is revealed to her and the freedom that already marked her come together. Truth and freedom: and here, faith is born. Faith as a true relationship. Faith marked by the Word, as a relationship with itself, with God and with others.

Mary does not ask for “proof” at the angel’s announcement; she does not ask to be shown the “reasonableness” or the meaning so that she can first see, understand and possess. She follows the voice and sets out. She listens and obeys, and so the

truth that is Christ in her occurs: the incarnation of Christ. The miracle occurs that causes the mother to move towards her cousin because listening makes the mother similar to her son. Listening becomes mission, dedication to brothers and sisters. Listening immediately leads to giving oneself for their good, to dying for them, to giving one's life for the lives of others.

In contemplating this first point, dear brothers, let us make an effort to return to that listening which is the source of life. Listening as an attitude that we live and renew every day so that our encounter with the Word may have the power to give birth to a true journey. We acknowledge that this journey nourished by the Word is difficult because it invites us to set out, to be disciples, to detach ourselves from what makes us less free. A movement that does not expect to see immediate results, that does not seek false certainty about what will happen. A journey that does not leave us as passive spectators.

## **Listening to God**

So, first of all, let's start listening to God. His word is a creative word. It is not just a collection of sounds; there is no confusion or falsehood in the word of God. It is the pure power of the one who creates a new world and draws us into dialogue so that those who truly listen may share in the joy of their Lord.

It is the difficult path of discernment, of making room for a voice that blows softly like a gentle breeze and is often drowned out by the many voices and distractions of our daily lives. And this is a continuous temptation for us Salesians. Being caught up in so many concerns, just and generous ones, but which risk distancing us from the voice of the Master.

The voice of God's messenger cannot be heard without training in silence and meditation. We do not have much information about Mary before Gabriel's call, but tradition has always told us about a girl who, from an early age, was taught to listen to God. Presented at the temple as a young girl, she pre-

served the ability to leave space in her day for silence, which is not simply an absence of sound, but a vessel for God's words. In this way, the angel can come forward and make himself heard in the space created by prayer.

Our father Don Bosco also struggled every day to find silence, despite the many trials and commitments that occupied him. Before and after Holy Mass, during meditation, he always sought silence because only then could he hear the voice of God and Mary urging him to carry on with his mission.

Here, then, is the importance of daily meditation for the Salesian. It is not so much a practice to be placed alongside all the others, that is, one of the various ways of praying that we can have and that we can replace with others that are more appropriate or more beautiful or more practical. Meditation is the soul of personal and communal prayer because it goes to the heart of prayer itself: it trains us to listen. God speaks always and continuously; the Word does not leave his disciples in silence, but always seeks a space that only listening can give.

### **Listening to our neighbour**

So the other place of listening is our neighbour, in the awareness that every brother and sister is the image of Christ, his beloved members, the presence of the Son of God on earth.

So Mary sets out in haste because the Angel's words urge her to continue, to go and listen to the words of those who need her most, because only in this way will she continue to listen to God. Then the Annunciation will not be an isolated event, experienced in an intimate way, but a journey that continues and fills an entire life, one's own and that of the people one meets and serves.

Mary will do so with Elizabeth, but also in Cana and then with the disciples in the Upper Room. Mary will always be with the least among us, as her apparitions over the past two millennia prove. Mary is with the little ones, with those in need, because that is where she is with her Son, and that is how she

continues to listen and to transmit his voice.

From this listening arises true and authentic discernment, which becomes spiritual practice lived in faith, because Christ, who is born in our hearts, continues to speak to us through the poor, through the most needy and abandoned young people. This is the reality that speaks of God and that shows us the mission today. Therefore, we need a community of believers who live by listening, a community that walks together, listening and responding to the cry of the poor – a *synodal Church*. In this experience, listening does not become mere sociological analysis, but an apostolic mission and a divine calling.

How urgent it is for all of us to realise that only if we listen to God, truly and sincerely, can we listen to our brothers and sisters, and can we respond in an educational and pastoral way that is full of compassion, hope and future.

## **Listening has its challenges**

### **Primacy of the Word over words**

The entire Scripture is permeated by the command to listen, because it is through listening that we enter into God's life and, above all, allow God to enter into our lives, which is the only way for us to truly live. Listening, therefore, is the most appropriate way to relate to God, and it translates into prayer, which is its natural form of expression, and in which our authentic self, the truth about ourselves and our deepest vocation, is realised.

We will hear the cry of young people and listen to God's plan for us only if we enter into the true dynamic of listening, which is not primarily investigation and study, but availability and openness. Listening therefore means discernment, vigilance, readiness, action.

Listening is always the beginning of a journey that, as it did for Mary, matures in a total opening of the heart, and precisely for this reason it does not hide the turmoil and the questions

that it raises in her. Yet this turmoil does not preclude her availability to God, who chose her, freely accepting his plan. Pope Francis explains the true meaning of this call when he says that “We need to implore his grace daily, asking him to open our cold hearts and shake up our lukewarm and superficial existence. [...] we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realise ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 264).

We need to learn to internalise, to take time to listen and not immediately try to take action. Action is sometimes overrated. The first step in acting is silence and listening. Only in this way does the seed bear fruit. If not, every action leaves only frustration and inner emptiness. We need to give time to listening, we need to persevere in it, fighting against the temptations of haste, of wanting everything immediately, where the Word is stifled.

### **Regular, systematic, “systemic” frequency**

Material and environmental difficulties will always be present: noise, lack of silence, a place not conducive to contemplation. In addition, there is the danger of entering a vicious circle that gradually encourages overestimation of action, giving rise to the feeling that time spent in silence and listening is wasted.

In this situation, we lose sight of the truth that mission is not just about taking action, but first and foremost about nurturing a dynamic spiritual identity that responds to the vocation we have received. In the absence of such conviction, various concerns, distractions, and ultimately fatigue and disillusionment take over. It is important to understand the roots and reasons behind the fatigue that many of us experience after a period of frenetic activism. We need to take a fresh look at those choices that have underestimated or even rejected the space for silence and prayer.

## 2. AVAILABILITY AND OPENNESS OF THE HEART

Listening, then, moves the heart. Like sound waves, it widens and opens up new horizons. It asks for a space for resonance which, before immediately becoming action, is emptying of the heart and openness to obedience, just like a handkerchief in God's hands, a recurring image in spiritual life.

Firstly, then, availability means leaving it up to God to take the initiative to create a space within our hearts that he can possess. Availability is emptying oneself, it is passivity, it is the path of *kenosis* of the person, who must imitate his Lord precisely in leaving all initiative to the Father.

Charity is so similar to Jesus, not because it is a specific action, but because it is pure imitation of Christ's own willingness, who did not consider anything of his own person a treasure to jealously guard. Christ emptied himself so that he could act as the Risen One.

So Mary must learn to put aside her own desires and dreams and go to Elizabeth with complete openness, that is, with a heart empty of herself. Filled with Christ, Mary thus flows into the charity of the *Magnificat*. She must help Elizabeth not simply on her own initiative, nor out of a sense of duty to her relative or out of simple kindness, but because she forgets herself and allows her actions to be dictated by someone other than herself, by that Jesus whom she already carries within her.

When faced with the angel's announcement, Mary does not negotiate or ask for confirmation, nor does she ask what her task will be or what her role will be. Mary is not worried about her "doing". She gives her whole heart and her whole self, without conditions. She submits herself in an act of faith and humility, offering her willingness to participate in the plan of salvation. Mary opens her "womb" in total trust, welcoming the Word, thus becoming a divine instrument for the future events of the history of salvation.

With her consent, Mary accepted the dignity and honour of Divine Motherhood, but also the sufferings and sacrifices associated with it. She accepted that her identity was in the hands of the Son, unconditionally. As a handmaid, she places herself in a position of total availability to her Lord, putting him before any claim or right for herself.

Mary understood the greatness of God and our human “nothingness”. Because of her humility, she was rightly surprised to hear the angel’s praise: “Greetings, favoured one,” and with the same humility she would accept whatever life would bring her, even the dramatic events of the cross. Thus, the sword that would pierce her soul is nothing other than the culmination of her *kenosis*, of her journey of self-emptying in imitation of her Son. It is not simply the suffering of a mother who sees her Son die, but the co-suffering of the Virgin who finds her definition in being wholly Mother of the Crucified Christ and nothing else.

### **First towards the Other, then towards the other**

Only this path of total openness to God leads to true charity towards others. Although it is often said that loving others is like loving Christ, and although the Gospel affirms this in a decisive and peremptory manner, this passage identifying the poor with Christ is not at all easy.

The great saints of charity are aware that charity is not simply love for humanity, but sharing in the very life of God, or even more, God dwelling in our lives. The life of Saint Teresa of Calcutta is an example of this: the most famous contemporary saint of charity towards the poor maintained her strong dedication to others thanks to incessant prayer, consisting of long daily adoration and constant union with God.

Don Bosco’s love for young people had no other cause than his being “consecrated” for them. The nine-year-old’s dream is a journey of re-centring young John’s charity, shifting not only from blows to gentleness, but above all from carrying out char-

itable acts for his peers in a way that emphasises personal initiative, to embracing Christ's charity, learned precisely from the Teacher he provided for him.

### **Contemplating, not just analysing**

It is consecration that establishes the apostolate, because it is our identity as consecrated persons that allows Christ's charity to take hold of us and make us 'in the Church. It is consecration that establishes the apostolate, because it is our identity as consecrated persons that allows Christ's charity to take hold of us and make us "in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially the poorest of them." (C. 2)

Thus, our projects are not so much the result of strategy, observation of reality, or generous impulses for the good of others, but above all the fruit of contemplation, that is, of taking God's point of view regarding ourselves, others, and the world.

Contemplation comes from true personal and communal prayer, from a mature discernment of God's will in order to understand what he calls us to be and to do for the good of others.

Thus, pastoral action for the good of others, like Mary's visit to Elizabeth, springs from intimate prayer, a "cor ad cor loquitur" – the heart speaking to the heart (St Francis de Sales). Action, then, is the continuation of the relationship that is founded on and flows from faith and love. It is breathing the Holy Spirit, it is coming out of oneself to enter into a Trinitarian relationship in which God himself speaks to our hearts and inspires our actions towards others.

At its deepest root, therefore, every pastoral project, every act of charity that we wish to carry out would be superficial if it were not the fruit of a vocation, of a call from the Father, which causes the Son to empty himself and thus gives space to the action of the Spirit within us and through us. It is essential to foster the genuine movement that drives our proposals and processes, a movement that begins with our love for God as a response, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts"

(Rom 5:5).

Contemplation and knowledge of God, meditation and pastoral planning, therefore, mean seeking the face of God and seeking it in our brothers and sisters, in those we meet, in those who call us to help, in those who cry out with their need. Contemplation, then, is to take on God's gaze, to see as God sees, and thus to have the same feelings as Jesus, the only one who sees and knows the Father, and always does his will. Can the disciple perhaps be more than the Master, living other ways of making the Kingdom grow?

How frequent and painful it is to see the danger of pastoral commitment that is not rooted in a life of prayer and in welcoming the Spirit of Jesus into our hearts. We know very well that when this happens, that is, when we stop listening to God, we end up in a labyrinth of relentless activism.

### **Transcending boundaries**

Such openness transcends boundaries: geographical, cultural, psychological and religious. True availability is always an "exodus", a departure from oneself, from one's own patterns, from one's own spiritual language. It does not fear difference, but rather seeks it out and welcomes it, because it recognises in others a brother or sister.

Mary must leave her home to "make true" the announcement she believed in and to which she gave herself. One could almost say that not only did the announcement she received prompt her to go to Elizabeth, but in a certain sense, if she had not gone to her cousin, the announcement would not have been completely true because the grace she received would not have been fully fruitful.

Charity makes us go beyond ourselves and thus breaks down barriers and distances. The charity that moves us does not "adapt" to our culture, but purifies it and creates a new one. If it is true that no charism, no power of faith can exist unless it is embodied in a culture, it is also true that no culture

can limit the power of God's call and his charity. Indeed, it is faith itself that purifies our worldview, our categories, our visions, and creates new ones.

This is why a Congregation such as ours finds its unity in its charism and sees diversity within and outside itself as an opportunity for greater unity, because it is God's diversity and unity that make us what we are.

Every view we have of the world is limited and limiting. Each of us has a limit beyond which we do not want to go or beyond which we see only negativity, hostility, danger, uncertainty, futility and threats. Only God's call to total availability, only contemplating the world through the eyes of the Spirit, makes even the unknown "our home".

Every "beyond" that sometimes seems impossible to reach is nothing more than a home we have not yet visited, and every stranger who appears on the horizon is nothing more than a brother or sister we have not yet met. There is no place or person in the universe where God is not present, where God does not sustain us and call us to share God's own charity as one family and one Church.

This applies both in space and in fraternal relationships, as well as in time: there is no future that is not in God's hands, and any attachment to the past is a betrayal of the availability we have vowed to give to God.

So I cannot stand still, but must push ahead even to the extent of recklessness (a word we Salesians know well because it was the style of our Founder, and also of various confreres who were pioneers and prophets), and do what God is asking of me. The heart cannot stop beating if it understands that God is calling it and that Mary has that grace ready for us, which may open up new horizons, as Patagonia did at the beginning. These are horizons that we cannot ignore.

Borders are broken down and we can leave to go to the other side of the world because the prompting that comes from within has no limits and has no half measures. It is not enough to go only as far as our strength, measured by earthly stan-

dards, promises to take us, but we must plan what is incomprehensible by human standards and go as far as God's urging demands.

This is why a son of 19th-century peasant farmers like Don Bosco kept a globe on his desk and used it to measure the scope of his projects: because he had to go as far as God's charity went, he had to go to "die", to give his life for all those to whom Christ first gave his.

### **As a response from the depths**

Mary, then, cannot stay at home. There is a kind of inner force that drives her to action, which arises precisely from contemplation and openness: Mary has no doubts, she does not put up obstacles: it is from the depths of her being, from the place where her conscience encounters God's call, that she feels that everything is urging her forward on her journey.

As was the case for Don Bosco (who could not remain in the home he had worked so hard to acquire), so it is for us too, and within us, the grace we have received takes the form of a divine gift, certainly free, but no less binding for that.

God's grace, the vocational call, the request for complete availability is made by God to bind us to himself. Not the kind of bond that prevents freedom from existing, but the kind that guarantees freedom can function properly. He asks us to be available to one another, being made for the gift, that is, for a gratuitousness that binds us to him, freeing us and opening up space for faith, which alone can fill the empty heart of those who obey God.

### **Availability and openness have their challenges**

#### **A reduced view of reality**

In a circular letter in 1885, Don Bosco wrote that Salesians must obey not because they are commanded to do so, but for a higher reason: the greater glory of God. This is the spirit that

underpins our obedience, availability and openness of heart. It is not a bureaucratic issue, made up of rules and regulations, and it cannot be resolved by simply applying them precisely. And that is why it is even more demanding. It requires a genuine adherence of the heart to the heart of the superior and, through him and the Congregation, to the very heart of God.

Thus, the family atmosphere, far from being a simple outward affection, is a binding bond of the heart and will, in total self-giving, that is, in renouncing the control of our own selves in order to allow ourselves to be truly and freely controlled by the One who has taken possession of our lives because we have believed in Him.

However, today availability is challenged on several fronts. The unavailable “I” presses to impose its own view of the world, of itself and of life, and it does so from its narrow point of observation, believing that this is the place from which the whole truth can be seen or revealed. But the whole truth, as the Gospel reminds us, cannot be seen unless one is filled with the Holy Spirit, and one cannot be filled with the Spirit unless one is empty of oneself.

And so the unavailable person has a narrow view of reality, thinks he knows the truth about things, and plans his life and pastoral action by limiting it to his partial perspective. He fails to realise that there is much more beyond his horizon, reducing everything to what he can see, measure and plan within the limits of his personal experience.

When we stop believing that there is a “beyond” and we stop letting ourselves be led out of ourselves by the charity that moves us, we lose the tension of waiting for the Son, and our missionary work becomes just something to be managed.

One cannot go to Patagonia unless one allows God to open or widen one’s eyes. But not going and not wanting to see distorts who we are and prevents the branch from bearing fruit because it is disconnected from the vine that nourishes it and gives it the strength to grow beyond its wildest dreams. And this is a project that is completely out of reach with our own re-

sources alone.

The six-year project, like our houses' and provinces' SEPP, is not a bureaucratic document describing what we could do according to our ideas, but a tool for sharing and community discernment to see beyond and obey God's will.

### **Self-referentiality and individualism**

We are facing challenges which, if not addressed, risk consolidating a distorted view of reality. We often delude ourselves that in our spiritual life and in the mission entrusted to us, we must first look to ourselves and only then to others, as if they were merely customers to whom we give what is ours. If we are used to measuring ourselves only by what we do, think or achieve, we end up fixating on ourselves or looking down on ourselves, deluding ourselves into thinking that we know ourselves better and see more of ourselves. Instead, we are called to look up and go towards the other.

Mary does not stop to reflect, she does not give herself time to understand what has happened, what she has become, what the consequences are. Mary quickly sets off and refocuses her whole life on Elizabeth's need.

If we defend our image and prioritise our beliefs with the tenacity of a fighter, we end up fighting for nothing, achieving nothing. We base our security on the belief that we are doing what "we want", whereas it is much safer for us to try to do what the Other wants.

The "mission" is not a private good that we share among ourselves. The mission is by definition communal because it is Trinitarian, that is, it belongs to God, not to our ideas and plans. We are not together because it is easier or more convenient, but we are together because I can only be myself by giving myself radically to the other, emptying myself for the community, being communion and thus making communion with everyone.

True availability is consecration, self-expropriation rooted in the courage to question oneself, to renounce oneself, even

when this appears to be a loss. It is the dynamic of *kenosis* that bears fruit, of setting off quickly for the mountains even though perhaps I myself would need someone's help to understand who I am and what will become of me.

### **Horizontal reading and interpretation of the mission**

We cannot afford to reduce our mission to the educational and promotional tasks of an NGO or non-profit organisation. The mission that is offered to us as our vocation is the continuation of the mission of the Saviour sent by the Father, and its horizon is Paradise, as Don Bosco often reminded his boys and represented iconically in the painting of Mary Help of Christians in the Basilica at Valdocco.

Our educational task cannot be limited to a social service or a purely human project, however worthy, valuable and essential these may be. We are educators and evangelisers, always, if not always in action, then in our intentions, in what animates and sustains us. The unique and indispensable source of all our work of education and evangelisation springs from a personal encounter with Christ. For this reason, from the very beginning, every educational process must draw inspiration from the Gospel, and evangelisation must adapt to the evolving condition of young people. With a distinctive formula that is not just a play on words, we educate by evangelising and evangelise by educating: understanding and living this is a guarantee that we are working within the Church.

We are aware that we are called to educate and evangelise mindsets, languages, customs and institutions, and this is only possible if we are enlightened by the Gospel, called by grace and driven by the Spirit. Only with a clear evangelical and charismatic identity can we encounter young people, all young people, "at their present stage of freedom" (C. 38).

Mary does not go to Elizabeth simply because she believes that her elderly cousin needs her help, given her particular condition, but because everything in her is real and takes shape within a vision of charity, that is, of dedication to others, with Christ as

her example, the Spirit as her vision and the Father as her ultimate destination. The visitation is not a gesture of kindness, but a decision that anticipates the way of being of the Son, who is already acting in the womb to conform his Mother to himself.

Even in the dream at age 9: the mission comes from Jesus and the form comes from Mary. The knowledge and obedience that young John must put into practice are not in relation to the needs of humanity, but rather an obedient response to God's will, that is, to his mission of salvation for humanity.

### **Conditional on results**

Finally, there is a very subtle but ever-present temptation: that of making availability conditional on results. We remain open as long as there are answers, results and recognition. But the availability of the heart cannot be a performance. If the root of availability is a *kenosis* on the part of the disciple, we must always remember that the measure of the mission and its success is that of the cross and not of worldly triumph.

Availability is a gift that must be cherished, exercised and invoked. It is a form of love that understands that one must die to save one's own life and the lives of others. The gospel cannot be considered something superfluous, like spiritual make-up or a beautiful ornament, which, in the end, we could do without. On the other hand, success can only be understood through the lens of the Paschal Mystery. Bread must always be broken before it becomes nourishment for the way of the world.

So even our mission cannot be based only on statistics, numbers, quantities of all kinds. The Salesian is called to give his life, and this is not just a figure of speech. Availability empties oneself even from oneself, and death can only be defeated by sharing in the same death as Christ. Once again, a sword must pierce the heart of the Virgin Mother, because her identity and mission cannot be different from those of the Son she carries in her womb.

Don Bosco's closeness to God and the intense love for his

neighbour that flowed from it cannot be explained without reference to a profound asceticism characterised by sacrifice, detachment, self-forgetfulness and patience.

Far beyond the facile triumphalism that often distorts his image, the saint shows his true face as an authentic disciple of the Crucified One, bent under the weight of unheard-of crosses that tear his heart apart. Don Bosco's life, Fr Ceria says, "was entirely strewn with sharp thorns": misunderstandings, conflicts, persecution, even assassination attempts, financial hardship; and then physical ailments so serious that his doctor said that "after about 1880, his body was almost reduced to a walking pathology cabinet."

Yet, "he never lost his serenity; indeed, it seemed that precisely in times of tribulation he acquired greater courage, since he was seen as more cheerful and jovial than usual." Nor did he ask to be freed from his ills. The reason for such disconcerting behaviour, Fr Ceria explains, is relatively simple: "Physical sufferings accepted with such perfect conformity to God's will are acts of great divine love and voluntary penance", and "souls who feel strongly drawn to God give themselves to mortification almost out of an irresistible instinct of love" (Ceria, E., *Don Bosco con Dio*, Chapter I, VIII and XX).

This is confirmed by the fruits of so much toil, by the saints and martyrs of our Family, and by the many confreres who have lived a truly sacrificial existence for the good of youth.

### 3. GENEROSITY AND GIFT OF SELF

Generosity is not just an occasional act or an impulsive response to a situation of need, due to the spontaneity of a beautiful soul. It is, rather, a deep inner disposition, rooted in a person's identity. It does not arise from calculation or from an external moral duty, but springs from an understanding of one's place in the world: that of being a gift and a meaningful presence for others.

This means that generosity, as a gift of oneself to others *toto*

*corde*, has its roots in taking on the very form of Christ, the very form of God. The openness that made our hearts capable of containing the form of Christ now becomes action and responsibility.

The grace received from the experience of *kenosis* thus becomes a personal capacity for self-giving, a daily response and a way of life. This is what happens at Pentecost: the community of disciples, having abandoned their sinful humanity and their attachment to the Law, is made new by the gift of the Spirit of the Risen One. This community – which remains the same in the people who make it up – now “becomes something else”, changes its life and becomes the herald of something that transcends it: the Word of salvation that is the root of all generosity and every gift.

Being generous and having the strength to perform one’s daily service is not limited to an act of will or kindness, but comes directly from the union with God that consecration has made possible. Don Bosco’s love for young people did not come solely from his spontaneous sensitivity, but stemmed directly from his vocation as a priest: a priest is always a priest, and this must be evident in everything he says. Now, being a priest means having, as a duty (or better still, as a vocation), the great interest of souls, the great interest of God, constantly before one’s eyes.

### **Non-objective dimension and expression**

Those who live according to the logic of self-giving do not act in order to receive recognition or gratitude in return, but to respond to a vocation that calls them to responsibility. Generosity is not a task or a goal to be achieved; it is a fundamental aspect of our identity, the way in which that identity is expressed and characterised.

Often silent, everyday, hidden, and precisely for this reason even more fruitful, generosity is our defining characteristic in the sense that it is part of the definition of our identity, both as individuals

and as a community. Since it is our mission that defines our identity and our place in the Church and in the world, generosity does not come later, it is not added to daily life from outside, it is not “something to be done”. Our mission is our suitability in action, and it is radically generosity, self-giving, the gift of one’s life for the salvation of the world and especially of young people.

Article 21 of our Constitutions comments on Don Bosco’s “generous heart” in a very vivid way: “The Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher. We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace... (this) closely-knit life project... He realized his aim with firmness, constancy and the sensitivity of a generous heart, in the midst of difficulties and fatigue.”

### **Response to a call**

Our vocation is marked by a special gift from God, a preference for young people: “That you are young is enough to make me love you very much.” This love is an expression of pastoral charity and gives meaning to our whole life (C. 14).

This vocation does not overlap with our identity at a later stage, nor does it intervene afterwards as something added to our lives. Our vocation is our life, it is our identity. We are radically called to be ourselves in total obedience and availability. Having already experienced our generosity at the beginning of the response, we respond in complete freedom and with full involvement.

Everyone called by Jesus has the opportunity to become fruitful through his service in the Kingdom, but only if all the contingent things he does and offers spring from an unlimited availability. Mary, in her total and immediate openness to the angel and to her brothers and sisters (her cousin Elizabeth), teaches us that the only way a person can respond to God is through unlimited availability. This gesture is the unity of faith, hope and love. It is the yes that God demands of the believer because it is the yes that God spoke in our regard. Only in this sense of absolute generosity does God plant the seed of

his Word and his missionary mandate.

This is why Jesus' demands when he welcomes the disciples he has called concern the very identity of the apostles, to the point of changing their names (from Simon to Peter). Because the disciple allows himself to be changed by the master in order to identify with him. And this is the guarantee that this same name, this new identity of self-giving, will be written in the Kingdom of Heaven.

This must be strongly emphasised, because today limited and conditional "yeses", subject to personal clauses, often paralyse vocations. What God can use according to the intentions of his Kingdom is only a total gift that does not impose any conditions.

### **Free and liberating**

Deep generosity is never imposed, yet it is always binding in its original calling. Thanks to the unifying and all-encompassing nature of God's plan for each of us, our response is similar to the experience we know well, that of being or becoming "a beautiful garment for the Lord".

Generosity in responding to the call and obedience to it as a consequence become a clear sign of the desire to be oneself.

For Mary, being the handmaid of the Lord was not a limitation of her desires and goals in life, but rather an open door to the full fulfilment of her freedom and identity: precisely, "of the Lord".

Mary is the fully realised woman, in complete freedom and self-determination. All this movement is nourished and guided by the bond with God, with his Son, and with the brothers and sisters she finds beside her (from Elizabeth, to the wedding couple at Cana, to the disciples themselves, to us).

### **Generosity and gift of self have their challenges**

#### **Look for fruits more than sowing "seeds"**

The path of generosity is not without obstacles. One of the

most insidious is the search for immediate results: living with the expectation of seeing the results of one's actions and processes immediately. This leads to discouragement, disappointment or even subtle forms of wounded pride. True generosity, however, is measured by the ability to sow even without seeing the harvest, to let time and grace do the rest of the work.

In a world that rewards those who show concrete, rapid and visible results, it is difficult to accept the idea that sowing is already a complete and sufficient gesture. Yet it is precisely here that the authenticity and beauty of those who give themselves are revealed: in their ability to “surrender” their desire for control, to trust in the strength of the seed that has been sown, even if it remains hidden beneath the earth for a long time, during the silent winters.

### **Seeking to establish oneself as a successful person**

Another obstacle to generosity is the constant drive to establish ourselves as successful people. The dominant message today is clear: “All that matters is what makes you stand out, what sets you apart, what makes you look better than others”: the symptom of the “like”! In this context, the free gift of oneself risks being perceived as weakness, as a waste of time or as a renunciation of one's potential.

Yet, paradoxically, it is precisely in the gift of self that a person finds their fullest fulfilment. It is not a question of denying or erasing one's identity, but of relating it to others, of building oneself not against others but together with others. A life given is not a life sacrificed, but a life multiplied.

### **Efficiency rather than effectiveness**

We live in a society dominated by the logic of efficiency: everything must be measurable, optimised, productive. Even in relationships, we sometimes risk evaluating our commitment based on the “results” obtained, as if people were projects to be completed. A mindset that rejects those who do not conform to

pre-established rules, leaving no room for the gradual progress that varies from person to person. Instead, true human effectiveness is not measured by numbers or graphs, but by the ability to transform internally, to touch the lives of others, and to build lasting and authentic relationships.

This challenge lies in our ability to “be” with young people, to “waste” time listening, to believe in the gift of compassion that recognises questions and humbly accepts that we do not always have the answers. A presence capable of glimpsing those invisible signs of potential growth and giving them the time they need.

### **Seeking results more than initiating processes**

I believe that a reflection Pope Francis made at the beginning of his pontificate helps us here: “Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces.... What we need, then, is to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 223)

Here we have the foundation of the project that the EPC carries out. A project that recognises and promotes a journey through the diversity of pastoral proposals. The goal is not a preconceived target to be achieved at all costs. Rather, it is the focus on promoting growth processes in which the community always plays a leading role, experiencing and testing the project itself.

Those engaging in the youth ministry field should be aware of the journey they are undertaking, where they are to begin from and the goal they are aiming at. They should acquire familiarity with the entire process of education that comes into play in concrete terms. Planning is an attitude of the mind and heart, before being something we do concretely. Planning is a process more than a result; planning is an aspect of ministry more than one of its activities along the way; planning is a process of involving and unifying strengths.”

(*Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*, p. 144, 2014<sup>3</sup>).

## CONCLUSION

I conclude with a reflection by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini that sums up the challenge we face.

The primacy of the Word is therefore matched by faith. If the Word does not find a response in faith, it reverberates in the air, it has no effect. When the Word is received in man through an attitude of faith, it exerts its effectiveness. The effectiveness that the Word accepted in faith by human beings exerts is charity. The seed is the **Word**; **faith** is the womb, the soil of man that receives the seed; **charity** is the fruit that comes from the seed.

From this very simple structure of the salvific process, we can draw some very important conclusions for our pastoral life. Do we want to grow in charity? Let us expand the roots of faith by opening ourselves to listen to the Word. It would be futile to expect more charity in the community if there is no growth in faith, and it is futile to expect more faith if there is no profound listening to the Word. The process – Word, faith, charity – constitutes the organic reality of all pastoral ministry.”<sup>1</sup>

**Word, faith** and **charity**: a trinity that, in the logic of **listening**, **availability** and **generosity**, impels us to live our calling today to be people who generate hope for the good of young people. Together with many co-workers who live and share the Salesian mission with us, the centrality of the Word testifies to the recovery of what is essential: for us, a person, Jesus Christ, Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. Mary is the woman who experienced this profound and radical dynamic in its fullness. With humility she welcomed the *Word* and with *faith she set out in haste* to give to others what she had received. Her “setting out in haste” conveys the gesture of *charity* that reflects a free and liberating heart. This is our calling, which we strive to live with the help of “She who has done everything”!

Don Fabio ATTARD, sdb  
Rector Major

<sup>1</sup> C.M. MARTINI, *La scuola della Parola*, Bompani – Milano, 2018, p. 470-471.

### THE 2025-2031 SIX-YEAR PROJECT

In light of the reflection on the example of Mary who, after the announcement of the Angel Gabriel, “set out and went with haste” (Lk 1:39), we are offering the 2025-2031 six-year Project which emerges from the experience of GC29. “*She set out and went with haste*” is a profound biblical echo that calls for the continuation of the invitation to a review of the life of the Congregation that the Rector Major Emeritus, Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, entrusted to us. That invitation marked the beginning of a journey that continues, one of considering the issues facing the life of the Congregation and pursuing them in the light of Christian hope, which Pope Francis asked us to keep alive as a source of inspiration during this Jubilee Year.

We recognise that the dynamics that emerged during the various weeks that GC29 was at work, characterised by listening and sharing, gradually fostered the emergence of a healthy and mature environment, an atmosphere where attention and openness to reciprocity led to an increasingly clear understanding of the challenges that the Salesian Congregation must continue to face.

This mutual listening confirmed the treasure of cultural diversity, ideas, and ways of interpreting the various realities in which we find ourselves. It also helped us to confront the different interpretations that arise and bear witness to the catholicity of a Congregation precisely through its cultural diversity as a fundamental element. This gives rise to the challenge of inculcating our charism and sharing best practices within our Congregation. All this indicates that our presence among young people and for young people is necessarily rooted in dialogue with their own circumstances and local cultures.

This dynamic that accompanied GC29 led to the maturation of some specific choices, contained in the **Final Document (FD)**, which we as the General Council now wish to present programmatically. This is a task that the entire General Council is called

to carry out during this six-year term and which will have an impact on the guidance and animation of the various regional, provincial and local processes.

Before moving on to the presentation of the guidelines, it is worth noting that one of the first challenges that has emerged with unquestionable clarity concerns the identity of the Salesian of Don Bosco. We believe that it is wise and pastorally strategic not to underestimate this challenge, which should be considered 'primary.' It is a calling that presents itself as the foundation and source of everything we are and, by necessity, of everything we do and propose. We are well aware that this call – *passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people* – was also the subject of study and reflection in both GC27 and GC28.

## 1. FOLLOWING DON BOSCO'S EXAMPLE, LET US STRENGTHEN THE CENTRAL ROLE OF CHRIST IN OUR LIVES

- *Resolutely renew the centrality of Jesus Christ, rediscovering the grace of unity and avoiding spiritual superficiality. (FD 18)*
- *Revitalise fraternal life in communities and strengthen service to the poorest young people as an authentic expression of the Salesian charism. (FD 28)*
- *Renew formation processes, taking care of accompaniment and formation in the mission. (FD 39)*

In this first guiding principle for governance, we are faced with a call that has profound practical and existential implications. The central role that Christ plays in our lives, the daily encounter with his Word, is a demanding journey that involves three fundamentally important choices which are closely connected. All three have to do with defining the identity of the consecrated Salesian of Don Bosco today, our response and our on-

going formation.

We must help communities and confreres to choose the forms and times of personal and community prayer most suited to their current mission, the composition of the community and the age of the confreres themselves. We need to be much freer in these choices of times and ways for daily evangelical and charismatic fidelity.

We find ourselves at a historic juncture marked by profound change. The risk of becoming irrelevant is always just around the corner and will drag us down if our roots are weak. If we take our choice to become consecrated person seriously, renewing it daily as a response to a plan that is not ours but God's, then we will have no reason to fear or feel inferior.

- In keeping with this logic we are called, both personally and as a community, to do everything possible to ensure that our response to God's call is marked *by the centrality of Christ, the soul and strength of our faithfulness, nourished by the Word of God.*

The daily commitment to meditation must be taken seriously in every community because this is where the true strength of our consecrated identity lies. Any weakening of this daily experience is an indicator of where our heart lies and of the authenticity of our witness. If our speaking *about* God is not the fruit and consequence of our speaking *with* God, everything becomes superficial and artificial. We end up not being credible and not even believed, because we are not authentic believers *of* and *in* the Word.

- Our community life is marked by the same experience as Don Bosco's. This requires *a knowledge of our Father and Teacher* that serves as our compass, helping us to embody the charism today.

The gift of the 'Salesian spirit' must be embodied and not just copied. Loving Don Bosco means that, as Salesians, we commit ourselves to knowing him well so that we can make his charism relevant and meaningful today. The challenges of

globalisation and post-modernity are reasons to encourage us, as well as a call to be prophets in the face of a world of young people looking for authentic adults who offer proposals of hope.

- The first sign of our Salesian consecration is that we are a welcoming environment. ***Making our houses and communities places of healthy and joyful humanity*** means continuing to offer young people that taste of ‘Valdocco’ that is often lacking today.

In a culture that is gradually losing its focus on the person, our witness of life proclaims a gospel perspective that overcomes indifference and individualism. The culture of communication and encounter needs people and spaces that offer hospitality, accompaniment and listening, and that lead to communion of hearts among ourselves and with young people.

In this context, communication is not only technological, but relational, rooted in the building of communion. Inspired by Don Bosco’s pedagogy of presence and personal encounter, Salesian communication creates bonds through listening, storytelling, daily life and prayer which has its inexhaustible source in Eucharistic communion.

It is in this source of authentic relationships that our ministry finds meaning and fruitfulness, both in our personal presence and in the digital world.

- As we read in the ***Constitutions, article 16***, this testimony is the root of every vocational proposal: “This is a witness that enkindles in the young the desire to get to know and to follow the Salesian vocation.” It is here that this ***vocational dimension***, which belongs to every aspect of our mission, finds its truth and its authenticity. This is where all kinds of vocational processes and programmes begin.
- All the processes we promote with regard to ***formation – initial and ongoing*** – which is closely interwoven with everyday life, are very relevant here. Allowing ourselves to be ac-

accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, we gradually discover how, in the experience of mission, we ourselves grow in awareness of our evangelical and charismatic identity. *Forming ourselves in the mission* means allowing ourselves to be shaped by God's will for us today, on behalf of young people, especially those who are most abandoned.

- The process of understanding and applying the *new Ratio* requires serious and in-depth study in order to address today's challenges. *The entire Congregation should be committed to taking seriously the various formation processes from the beginning of the vocational discernment process to the prolonged and urgent phase of ongoing formation.*

## 2. A CHARISMATICALLY UPDATED PASTORAL PROPOSAL, WITH COMPETENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM

- *Share spirituality, mission and formation with the lay people and members of the Salesian Family in every Educative and Pastoral Community. (DF 51)*
- *Offer gradual and systematic programmes of faith education and renew the practice of the Preventive System, ensuring safe settings everywhere. (DF 60)*
- *Be present in the new frontiers of the mission: the digital environment, integral ecology, the new expressions of the charism. (FD 69)*

In the years following the Second Vatican Council, the Congregation's great dedication in this direction demonstrates its shared conviction that the educative and pastoral proposal is a calling that requires multiple commitments and processes, which we are taking very seriously. The various processes experienced by the entire Congregation, at different speeds, are a testimony

that everything possible is being done to update the educative and pastoral proposal both at the level of gospel perspective and at the charismatic, pedagogical and professional levels.

This second guiding principle for governance takes into account *the variety of our educative and pastoral expression*. It calls for the strengthening of the choices of animation and formation that today emerge as priorities and require adequate and updated responses. We recognise that this journey today is affected by the accelerated pace of thinking, technology, organisational models and so on. There is an urgent need to strengthen our current commitment at various levels and in various sectors where we live the Salesian charism on behalf of young people, especially those most in need.

We live in a time characterised by constant change and cultural and social fragmentation. Our Congregation must become generative, not repetitive. It is not simply a matter of doing more, but of engaging with our time with the courage and hope that is in tune with what our young people are seeking. If we do not offer this, young people will seek it and find it outside the Church.

Every local community stands at a crossroads: either it joyfully accepts the challenge of being a sign of the Kingdom among the people, or it ends up being merely a sign of the past. The challenge of living in our times requires discernment, that is, the wisdom to read the signs of the times.

- In relation to this journey, it is important to highlight the existing commitment as well as new proposals for *formation processes between Salesians and lay people* in a growing number of provinces. These are successful experiences that respond to the need for formation that is increasingly shared, with methodologies suited to the concrete realities in which we find ourselves.
- There is growing attention in this field to the *various groups of the Salesian Family*. It is urgent to support this journey by offering *current and updated proposals for*

*formation*, for a growing evangelical and charismatic identity that meets today's challenges in the various continents and that *values the precious help of charismatic shared responsibility* that the members of our Family offer.

- Let us strengthen our conviction that we are called to offer *gradual and systematic processes and programmes of faith education and catechesis*. In cultural contexts that are subject to far-reaching changes in values, where the religious and transcendent dimensions, faith and spirituality risk being relegated to the margins, it is urgent for us Salesians to recognise that even in our own environments the pastoral dimension is often weak, sometimes even absent, or unable to counteract the influence of ideologies. Offering young people the frontier of meaning, of the transcendent and the divine, inspired by the message of Christ as communicated to us in the gospel, is a gift that becomes our primary responsibility. It is a choice that recognises and aligns itself with the search for meaning among the younger generations; for us, it becomes an unavoidable call to respond not only for young people but with young people. This call must naturally be understood and interpreted according to different cultural contexts.
- *The volunteer movement in all areas of the Salesian mission* has seen significant growth in recent decades, both in the various forms it takes in the concrete reality of Salesian presence and in terms of reflection on it and updating it. The path that bears witness to the drive and energy of the Congregation in this field so far is positive and must be continuously accompanied and verified.
- Let us, with pastoral intelligence, renew our commitment to ensuring that all pastoral environments and processes are an ever more evident expression of the Salesian charism, which is summarised in the pastoral charity of the Preventive System. Every province should promote efforts to ensure *safe*

*environments with clear choices in favour of safeguarding*, in order to foster healthy and integral growth for all, in communion with the Magisterium of the Church and in line with the requirements of national governments in this field. *Safeguarding* must be understood as a way of caring for the Salesian charism and pedagogy seriously and permanently; it is care for every face, a gift from God that is always greater than us. It means following a path that continues to foster safe environments for everyone: for Salesians, educators and young people.

- The Church's commitment to *integral ecology* has been taken up by the Congregation and must be strengthened with a charismatically inspired vision. May the commitment of young people to the common good and to our common home be increasingly rooted at the local level, with young people playing a leading role, sharing choices and participating actively and concretely. *Don Bosco Green Alliance* is a proposal that must be accompanied and supported.
- In recent years, the Congregation has taken the issue of *affective education* very seriously. The reflection undertaken, the literature produced and the paths taken so far testify to the urgency of commitment in this field. Let us take this challenge seriously by incorporating it into our educational processes as well as into the processes of accompanying families and in the initial and ongoing formation of Salesians and our co-workers.
- *Peace education* must be pursued with great care in our various educative and pastoral programmes. It is a challenge that is emerging in a scenario that is increasingly marked by ethnic and international conflicts. Such education is called upon to awaken an awareness in young people of their responsibility for promoting civil coexistence based on respect for diversity, solidarity and dialogue.

- The Congregation’s commitment to *human rights advocacy* is a journey that continues to grow. Representation at international levels, as well as various experiences at national levels, require us Salesians to strengthen our adequate preparation so that our voice and our proposal may increasingly find a significant space in these same environments and organisations. The positive and appreciated experience of such processes at the international level and in some countries encourages the sharing of best practices that strengthen our voice on behalf of the poor and excluded. It is not enough to do good. We work with the poorest and most marginalised people to change the conditions of our human reality that generate poverty and exploitation. We support social and political efforts to create better living conditions for young people suffering from poverty and their communities.
- Let us promote the following areas: *the smooth functioning of the EPC*, a space for synodality, youth participation and families, as well as pastoral planning processes, *the SEPP of each work and/or presence*, to be carefully contextualised in the various pastoral environments:
  - *Schooling* is the sector in which we are most active. The educational proposal is a key that breaks cycles of poverty and vulnerability, while opening new horizons for integral growth. The presence of the Salesians in this sector must be nurtured, prepared and accompanied. The future of many young people depends on this proposal. We are therefore called to prepare Salesians who are experts in the fields of leadership, teaching and teacher training. The respect and esteem shown by young people, parents, teachers and local authorities for our educative and pastoral programme is proof of the value of the education they receive in our schools, but it is also a responsibility that requires reflection, clear vision and planning.
  - *The vocational training proposal* confirms its status as a highly regarded educational excellence that sets us

apart. It opens up new perspectives that give dignity to the lives of young people, both today and in the future. It is an educational investment that is increasingly needed, which asks us to focus courageously on charismatic, pedagogical, technical and managerial formation, which are essential today. The progress in this sector is positive, and that is why it is urgent that we continue to support it by preparing Salesians who will ensure the charismatic identity of our presence together with the formation of our co-workers. The most revolutionary point is the culture of work: work as participation in God's creation; work as formation for life. It becomes a school of excellence, not a second-rate option for those who can't make it elsewhere. For us, vocational training is a school of integration for migrants and refugees in every corner of the world. There is an urgent need to improve support and care for young workers as both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a frontier that demands reflection and long-term planning.

- In the ***higher education*** field there is continuing focus on identity and coordination. It is urgent that we continue on the path towards a clearer evangelical, charismatic and pedagogical identity so that the Congregation's contribution in this field can help young people achieve the goals of an integral education capable of building a more dignified, just and supportive future. There are great opportunities here to continue offering educative and pastoral support to young people as they journey towards maturity in their lives.
- ***Youth centres and oratories*** continue to be a privileged place for Salesians to bring people together. The ongoing commitment to formation of pastoral workers, Salesians and lay people, adults and young people, is a choice that ensures the quality of our educative and pastoral proposal, journeys of faith, catechesis, and growth in values. We cannot be satisfied with simply offering places to occupy time;

we are committed to a proposal that opens up horizons of healthy active involvement, offering hope and a future.

- The experience of *works and services for young people in situations of vulnerability and exclusion* is the subject of constant attention and commitment on the part of the Congregation. The development of every type and form of intervention in this sector is a clear testimony in favour of the poor and marginalised. Growing awareness, ongoing formation and collaboration with other agencies at local and regional level are positive signs for the future. The challenge remains to strengthen the charismatic dimension of the proposal through the preparation of Salesians and lay people rooted in the charism, so that our presence may contribute to the evangelical construction of justice and peace, thus promoting human rights, using the universal language that puts us in harmony with those who, like us, are committed to the dignity of every person.
- The *parishes and shrines entrusted to the Salesians* remain a privileged opportunity for presence within a specific territory and context. The reflection undertaken in recent years is a testimony to how the Congregation is committed to ensuring that these are increasingly typically Salesian spaces that prophetically accompany and reach a wide variety of people, with particular attention to young people.

### 3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE EDUCATIONAL AND PASTORAL CHALLENGE

- *Let us give AI a pedagogy, let us enter a new world as educators, together with the younger generations.*

The third guiding principle for governance calls for conscious involvement by everyone in the advent of artificial intelligence

(AI), viewing it as a revolutionary challenge that is radically transforming our world. We are at the dawn of a period of innovation that will introduce new ways of learning, communicating and building relationships. This transformation is so profound that it represents a true and proper *paradigm shift*. It is interesting to note how AI, in its “artificial” form, offers us new possibilities to carry out our ministry, communicating and fostering authentic human relationships, which are close and real, inspired by the Preventive System.

Don Bosco was a visionary who saw hidden opportunities in innovation, both at the ecclesial level and at the educational, cultural and social levels. He moved forward at an astonishing pace, always with a critical and creative eye, because he could see how *innovation served the best interests of young people*.

- AI is part of our mission as Salesians living in the digital age. In this sense, AI is not just a *tool* for us, but also a *mission*, that is, a call to *explore the new frontiers that AI contains in its encounter with the educative and pastoral proposal*.
- The governance of the Congregation should commit itself to promoting *spaces for reflection and discussion* with experts who can help translate the encounter between the charism and AI and other challenges found in the digital world into processes and experiences. These processes must be guided by a positive and proactive attitude rooted in the Salesian charism.
- Furthermore, there should be a commitment to *forming ourselves to create coordination and synergies between the many experiences* existing in various parts of the Congregation in the AI field.
- From an *ethical and moral* point of view, we are called to help young people discern the contradictions and grey areas of the world, in light of the *presence of Christ’s message in the world*.

- We must do everything possible to *create authentic relationships* in this space, neither artificial nor virtual. We create genuine connections and a space for listening.

#### 4. PONTIFICAL SALESIAN UNIVERSITY

This fourth guiding principle for governance focuses on our **Pontifical Salesian University** (UPS). It is important to remember that UPS is the University of the Salesian Congregation, the University that belongs to all of us and with which we all feel a special bond. It is a structure of great strategic importance for the Congregation. We must do everything possible to enable it to fulfil its mission.

The role and presence of UPS are closely linked to promoting culture and qualification for Salesians, our co-workers and young people. Academic research and teaching, dialogue between charism and culture, must promote an ever more up-to-date knowledge of the figure of Don Bosco and of the Salesian educative and pastoral experience. This call is a task for the entire Congregation in every province. The institutional relationship between the UPS and the provinces of the Congregation, with the IUS of the Congregation, must be strengthened, in synergy with the RM and his Council.

- The governance of the Congregation continues to follow with dedication the two fundamental priorities for UPS: *the formation of educators and pastors, Salesians and lay people, at the service of young people*, as well as a deeper *cultural, historical, pedagogical and theological understanding of the charism that can be linked to the accompaniment of the provinces by the Offices at Central Headquarters, and offer a dialogue of thought that supports the Congregation in a climate of harmony between thought, animation and government.*
- Around these two supporting axes, the UPS is called to con-

tinue to develop its *commitment to research, teaching, and the passing on of knowledge*. The latest experiences in this direction, including the 150th anniversary of Don Bosco's text on the Preventive System, serve as a paradigm.

- The field of *Salesian studies* should be pursued with greater attention, in line with the efforts that the Congregation has been making in recent years to *promote the Salesian places*. These are not just physical places, but places where the encounter with the charism by many groups of collaborators is bearing positive fruit.
- The *synergy of study proposals and presence between UPS and the Salesian places* should be strengthened in a planned manner in order to enhance the positive experiences of ongoing formation that already exist and also to be able to respond to other opportunities that may arise. The heart of this journey is to move from imagining Salesian places as places to visit to a vision that prioritises the in-depth study of Salesianity, that is, to move from mere information to formation.

## Conclusion

In this section, we aim to offer four general guidelines that will then be developed systematically by the various Sectors and Regions, individually in some cases and in synergy and collaboration in others.

My concluding invitation in this presentation is twofold: first of all, I invite the entire Congregation to draw inspiration for this journey from the *Letter* that introduces it. I hope that the contemplative atmosphere that was so well experienced during GC29 will become the ongoing climate that accompanies our mission in our daily lives. Guided by the Spirit of God and nourished by listening to the Word, may we serve young people with an open heart and a generous spirit. May our community life be the most credible sign that offers welcoming spaces, communicates a sense of belonging and the ability to accompany others.

Secondly, let us all commit ourselves – Salesians and lay people alike – to gaining an ever deeper knowledge of Don Bosco. This journey helps us discover our origins, but above all it gives us the courage to live the perennial newness of our charism today. Walking this stretch of road together means making our homes and our presence other ‘Valdoccos’ today. Regarding this call, Fr Juan Vecchi left us with a reflection that is very relevant today:

When we think of the origin of our Congregation and Family, from which Salesian expansion began, we find first of all a community, which was not only visible, but indeed quite unique, almost like a lantern in the darkness of night: Valdocco, the home of a novel community and a pastoral setting that was widely known, extensive and open... Such a community gave rise to a new culture, not in an academic sense but in that of a new style of relationship between youngsters and educators, between laity and priests, between artisans and students, a relationship which had its effect on the area and on the city itself... All this had as its root and *raison d’être* the faith and pastoral charity, which tried to create from within a family spirit, and led to a deep affection for God and our Lady. (Fr Juan VECCHI, *Now is the acceptable time*, AGC 373, 2000).

## EPILOGUE

At the end of this journey, I would like to invite all of you, dear Salesians, and together with you all those who are part of our Educative and Pastoral Communities (EPC), to ensure that the call that has come to us through the experience of GC29 may be taken up with an attitude of profound openness towards the realities that the Lord is asking us to encounter. Let us be inspired and guided by Mary’s example in her attitude of *listening* to God’s will, which comes through accepting the word, but also through the stories of the young people we are called to meet, welcome and accompany.

I invite you to cultivate an *open and available heart* which allows itself to be guided by the cry and search of young people who often live in a situation marked by apparent indifference. This indifference, when faced with a willing heart like that of the Good Shepherd, melts away and in its place emerge meaningful

relationships and experiences that offer a future and hope to these same young people. May Don Bosco's example in his encounter with Bartholomew Garelli be a constant reminder to us of a willingness that can intuit opportunities for healthy and humanly enriching friendships.

Finally, let us recognise that our pastoral *generosity* needs the balance which comes from living the grace of unity every day: "a splendid harmony of nature and grace". (C. 21) It is a pastoral commitment and dedication that has solid, deep and rich evangelical and charismatic roots. It is these roots of our generosity that spur us on to be missionaries to young people wherever Providence sends us.

Let us place ourselves at the school of the Holy Spirit so that, following Mary's example, we too may 'set out in haste' with confidence and hope to serve young people.



### **A note on the six-year term project for 2025-2031**

The **Projects** of the past six years continued with several pages 'spelling out the six-year Project' following the priorities given by the Rector Major to the entire Congregation. They involved the work of each Councillor, following the division into: Objectives - goal - process - steps.

All of this was published together in the text of the **Project**, immediately defining a closed path.

In the spirit of GC29 and to ensure continued work on inter-sectoral projects, producing processes that must be implemented and evaluated, we have decided to separate this second implementation phase from the text of the **Six-Year Project**.

All aspects of the **Project**, in every sector and region, are being and will be developed in a continuous manner throughout the six-year term.

They will be shared in the Council, step by step, discussed and published as they develop, and will form the structure for the review of the six-year term, which will conclude with the report on the Congregation to be presented at the next GC30.

In keeping with what has always been done, we have introduced new aspects that promote collaboration within the Council, together with a much more structured implementation and review process involving the entire Congregation.

This is how we hope to express the spirit of CG29 in the animation and governance of the Congregation.

## 5. DOCUMENTS AND NOTICES

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### 5.1 New Salesian Provincials

*Below is some data (in alphabetical order) of Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council during the summer plenary session: May-July 2025.*

1. **CARLOS Ricardo**, Provincial of *St John Bosco Province of Belo Horizonte Brazil (BBH)*. He succeeds *Natale Vitali*.

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 9 June 2025, appointed Fr Ricardo CARLOS as Provincial of the Province of St John Bosco in Belo Horizonte, Brazil based in Belo Horizonte (BBH), for the 2025-2031 six-year term.

He was born on 6 February 1974 in São Bernardo do Campo, in the State of São Paulo, Diocese of Santo André. He is the son of Augusto Carlos and Dirce Therez De Mendonça.

He entered the Salesian novitiate in Indápolis (municipality of Dourados - MS) in 1993, professed his first religious vows on 31 January 1994, his perpetual profession on 30 January 2000 and was ordained a priest in Piacatu (SP) on 8 December 2001. He was Vice-Rector (2003-2007), Economist (2004-2009) and Rector (2007-

2013) of the Don Bosco community in Campo Grande. He obtained a Master's Degree in Education from the Dom Bosco Catholic University (UCDB) in 2009. After studying at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem, Israel (2014-2015), he was appointed Rector of the UCDB, Campo Grande and, since 2016, Rector of the Salesian St Francis de Sales Salesian House for the animation of the Don Bosco Catholic University.

From 2009 to 2013 he was also Provincial Councillor, a position he held again from 2016 to 2019.

On 10 December 2019, he was appointed Superior of the St Alphonsus Liguori Province of Campo Grande Brazil (also known as the Salesian Mission of Mato Grosso), a position he currently holds.

2. **LAVENTURE OTEGUI Ignacio José**, Provincial of the *Maria Kidane Meheret Province of Africa Ethiopia Eritrea (AET)*. He succeeds *Hailemariam Medhin Tesfay*.

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 23 June 2025, appointed Fr Ignacio José LAVENTURE OTEGUI as Provincial of the Maria Kidane Meheret Province of Africa Ethiopia Eritrea, based in Addis

Ababa (AET), for the 2025-2031 six-year term.

He was born on 27 December 1972 in Montevideo (Uruguay), diocese of Montevideo. He is the son of Eduardo Laventure and Martha Otegui.

He made his novitiate in Montevideo between 1991 and 1992, professing his first vows on 31 January 1992; he then professed his perpetual vows on 31 January 1998 and was ordained a priest on 30 September 2000, again in Montevideo.

A missionary in Ethiopia since 2000, he has held roles of great responsibility in the AET Vice-Province as Director of Novices and Rector at Debre Zeit (2010-19) and Rector of Gotera, Addis Ababa (2019-ongoing); Provincial Councillor (2011-19) Vice-Provincial and Provincial Secretary (2019- ongoing).

Fr Laventure Otegui was also Delegate of the AET Vice-Province at the 28th General Chapter.

3. *MIRANDA Ashley, Provincial of St Francis Xavier Province, Bombay, India (INB). He succeeds Savio Raj Silveira.*

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 2 June 2025, appointed Fr Ashley

MIRANDA as Provincial of the St Francis Xavier Province, Bombay, India, based in Mumbai (INB), for the 2025-2031 six-year term.

He was born on 1 May 1965 in Udipi, Karnataka (India), Diocese of Mangalore. He is the son of Aloysius Miranda and Nelly Miranda.

He made his novitiate in Nashik in 1982 and made his first profession in 1983, then perpetual vows in 1990. He studied Philosophy in Nashik and Pune, Theology at Kristu Jyoti College in Bangalore, and was ordained a priest on 18 December 1993 in Matunga.

Currently Fr. Miranda holds the position of Vice-Provincial, a position he has already held for six years. Prior to this appointment, he was a Provincial Councillor for two terms (2008-2014), during which he was Provincial Delegate for Formation. He served for six years as Rector of the post-novitiate in Nashik and when he was chosen to be Vice-Provincial he was Director of Novices.

Fr Miranda received his doctorate in philosophy from the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome and was a professor of philosophy at the post-novitiate at Nashik, which is attached to the same University. Among his assignments, he was also Dean of Philosophy at Nashik.

Recently, he participated in the 29th General Chapter of the Salesian Congregation as an elected Delegate in his Province.

4. *MORBA Peter Chinweike, Provincial of the St Artemides Zatti Province of Africa Nigeria Niger (ANN). He succeeds Jorge Mario Crisafulli.*

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 31 May 2025, appointed Fr Peter Chinweike MORBA as Provincial of the St Artemides Zatti Province of Africa Nigeria Niger, based in Lagos (ANN), for the 2025 to 2031 six-year term.

Peter Chinweike MORBA was born in Aguleri (Niger), diocese of Onitsha, as the son of Peter Onw Morba and Maria Atuanya; he has been a Salesian since 24 August 2003, the date of his first profession, at Ondo, at the end of his novitiate. The date of his perpetual profession was 17 July 2010, and he was ordained a priest in Onitsha on 7 July 2012, after his theological studies in Nairobi. In 1997 he obtained a Licentiate in Theology at the Teresianum.

After priestly ordination, he was sent to the community in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to take care of the oratory (2012-2014). Subsequently he was transferred to Kon-

tagora-Koko, Nigeria, where he held several positions: economer, parish priest and in charge of the community (2014-2019).

Since 2019 he has been Rector and Parish Priest of the Salesian community in Lagos, which represents an important centre of the Salesian presence in Nigeria. In addition, at the province level, since March 2022 he has held the role of Vice-Provincial.

5. *RACELIS Amelito Narciso, Provincial of the Mary Help of Christians Province of the Philippines South (FIS). He succeeds Fidel Maria Orendain.*

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 9 June 2025, appointed Fr Amelito Narciso RACELIS as Provincial of the Mary Help of Christians Province of the Southern Philippines, based in Cebu City (FIS), for the 2025-2031 six-year term.

He was born on 29 October 1965 in Manila, Metro Manila (Philippines), Diocese of Manila. He is the son of Gregorio Racelis and Lourdes Deveza.

He made his novitiate in Canlubang between 1984 and 1985, professing his first vows on 1 April 1985. He then professed his perpetual vows on 24 March 1992, at Parañaque, and was ordained a

priest on 8 December 1993.

Among his assignments in the communities of his Province, he was first Vice-Rector at Bacolod, in the house at Granada (1994-95), then Economer (2007-11) and Rector 2011-20 at the Talisay-Lawa-an Centre; finally, from 2021 to today, Rector of the house at Talamban, Cebu.

At the province level, he was a member of the Formation team (2008-12) and then Formation Coordinator (2015-21), and since 2021 Vice-Provincial

Among his academic qualifications, he also holds a licentiate in Sacred Liturgy from the St Anselm Pontifical University in Rome.

He currently holds the position of Vice-Provincial in the FIS Province.

6. *RAKOTONDRANAIVO Harisoa Jose Gaston, Provincial of the Mary Immaculate Province of Madagascar (MDG). He succeeds Innocent Bizimana.*

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, on 13 June 2025, appointed Fr RAKOTONDRANAIVO Harisoa Jose Gaston as Provincial of the Mary Immaculate Province based in Iva-

to (MDG), for the 2025-2031 six-year term.

He was born on 28 August 1977 in Soamandrakizay Betafo (Madagascar), Diocese of Antsirabe. He is the son of Rakotonindrina and Berthine Razafimahatratra.

He made his first profession on 8 September 2000 in the Salesian novitiate in Ivato, perpetual profession on 14 October 2007 in Fianarantsoa, and was ordained a priest on 12 July 2009 in Betafo.

From 2003 to 2012 he was in charge of the Salesian communities of Bemaneviky, Fianarantsoa and Mahajanga. From 2012 to 2014 he completed his studies at the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS), in Rome, where he obtained a Master's Degree in Youth Ministry. Back in Madagascar, he was in the community in Ankililoaka with the position of Economer and Vice-Rector, and from 2017 to 2023 he was Councillor and Delegate for Youth Ministry for MDG.

From 2023 until today he has served as Rector of the Salesian community in Betafo.

## 5.2 Deceased confreres (1° list January-June 2025)

“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
L Niemierka Franciszek Henryk	Łódź	01/01/2025	89	PLE
P Cano Rosales Miguel Ángel	Managua	02/01/2025	52	CAM
P Sturm Maximilian	Aschau-Waldwinkel	03/01/2025	88	GER
L Trevisan Bruno	Roma	03/01/2025	83	ICC
P Churio Baquedano Javier	Alicante	03/01/2025	82	SMX
P Kołyszko Władysław	Ślupca	03/01/2025	82	PLN
P Carnevale Cesare	Salerno	04/01/2025	98	IME
P Brewster Patrick	Dublino	04/01/2025	95	IRL
P Ponce Muñoz Ely Alfonso	Caracas	04/01/2025	77	VEN
P Trevisan Alberto	Castello di Godego (TV)	05/01/2025	90	INE
P Tescione Gioacchino	Salerno	06/01/2025	95	IME
P D’Cunha Chrysologus	Panjim (Goa)	06/01/2025	82	INP
P Pottie Frans	Heverlee	07/01/2025	90	BEN
P Kulathunkal Joseph	Jorhat, Assam	09/01/2025	83	IND
P Trettel Giulio	Castello di Godego (TV)	12/01/2025	94	INE
P Dziędziel Augustyn	Cracovia	14/01/2025	89	PLS
L Díez Valdivieso Asterio	Madrid	14/01/2025	82	SSM
P Kołosowski Tadeusz	Varsavia	14/01/2025	67	PLN
L Ghellioni Urbano	Castello di Godego (TV)	15/01/2025	98	INE
P Sendino Ortega Jesús Hermogenes	León	15/01/2025	91	SSM
P Pater Tadeusz (senior)	Przemyśl	18/01/2025	91	PLS
P Santos Emil	Makati	19/01/2025	77	FIN
L Roscini Mariano	Roma	23/01/2025	74	ICC
P Panackachaly Abraham	Calcutta	29/01/2025	90	INC
P Cattane Giovanni	Torino	29/01/2025	85	ICP
P Sastre Izquierdo Santos	Logroño	30/01/2025	91	SSM
P Dewes Klaus Peter	Köln	01/02/2025	84	GER
P Rodríguez Ballester Manuel	Badajoz	04/02/2025	91	SMX
P Tibaldi Enrico	Torino (TO)	04/02/2025	89	ICP
P Rinaldi Danilo	Campo Grande - MS	07/02/2025	82	BCG
P Tonolo Giorgio	Pordenone	12/02/2025	87	INE
L Mayer Charles	New Rochelle, NY	12/02/2025	82	SUE
L Castellaro Igino	Torino	13/02/2025	98	ICP
P González Centurión Diógenes	Fernando de la Mora	14/02/2025	81	PAR
P Francis Sebastian	Polur	15/02/2025	65	INM
P González López José	Sevilla	17/02/2025	80	SMX
P Darcis René	Pelt	18/02/2025	89	BEN

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
L Brinkman Michael	Temple Terrace, Florida	18/02/2025	92	SUE
P Benabaye Marcelino	Davao City	18/02/2025	73	FIS
P Kucharczyk Jan	Kraków	20/02/2025	73	PLS
P Mediavilla Vaca Guillermo	Lumbisi, Cumbayá	26/02/2025	96	ECU
L Joseph (George) George (Joseph)	Tiruchy, Amsam	27/02/2025	86	INT
P Scudu Antonio	Beitgemal	02/03/2025	82	MOR
P Burgui Ongay Miguel	Alcoy, Alicante	03/03/2025	82	SMX
P Edasserithottam Augustine	Guwahati	05/03/2025	75	ING
L Rodrigues de Araújo (Da Fonseca) António	Recife	07/03/2025	88	BRE
P Sleuyter Julien	Suginami (Tokyo)	14/03/2025	98	GIA
P Morales Urbina Daniel Enrique	Guatemala	15/03/2025	85	CAM
P Bataillie Guido	Kortrijk	22/03/2025	91	BEN
P Iglesias Vega Antonio	León	22/03/2025	82	SSM
P Panceri Giancarlo	Torino (TO)	24/03/2025	82	ICP
P Tse Ka-Yin (Che) Francis	Kowloon, Hong Kong	25/03/2025	87	CIN
P Bortolaso Dante	Castello di Godego (TV)	31/03/2025	86	INE
P Saggiotto Lorenzo	Betlemme	02/04/2025	75	MOR
P Martin Christian	Caen	04/04/2025	100	FRB
P Żebrowski Tadeusz	Dębno	07/04/2025	88	PLN
P Nathan Augustine	Polur	07/04/2025	80	INM
P Arul Valan	Gedilam, Maranodai	08/04/2025	54	INM
P Bernal López José Francisco	Tunja	09/04/2025	84	COB
P Brunelli Vincenzo	Santa Cruz	15/04/2025	86	BOL
P Žabot Ivan Janez	Ljubljana	15/04/2025	69	SLO
P Sztuba Stefan	Dębno	16/04/2025	72	PLN
P Coccato Giuseppe	Brescia	20/04/2025	89	ILE
P Biuso Vincenzo	Catania (CT)	20/04/2025	86	ISI
P Ricchiardi Luigi	Guayaquil	21/04/2025	92	ECU
P Cossu Giovanni	Roma	21/04/2025	83	ICC
L Bastianello Agostinho	Belo Horizonte - MG	23/04/2025	96	BBH
L García Conde Camilo	León	23/04/2025	92	SSM
P Lisjak Danilo	Diima	25/04/2025	73	RMG
L Merlateau Michel	Angers	27/04/2025	93	FRB
P Bonatti Mario	Campinas - SP	28/04/2025	92	BSP
P Artuch Marco Pedro	Barcelona	02/05/2025	90	SMX
P Rossell Soler Isidro	Barcelona	06/05/2025	90	SMX
P Krześniak Marian Henryk	Piła	11/05/2025	71	PLN
P Clément Léon	Tournai	14/05/2025	89	FRB
P Micheli Sergio	Guayaquil	16/05/2025	84	ECU
P Perrenchio Fausto	Torino (TO)	19/05/2025	84	ICP
P Saldaño Mella Hugo	Macul, Santiago	20/05/2025	90	CIL
P Cardenal Arques Joaquín	El Campello (Alicante)	21/05/2025	102	SMX
L Lambert Jean-Marie	Farnières	21/05/2025	87	FRB
L Lakra Justin	New Delhi	22/05/2025	61	INN
P Hernandez Zamora Francisco	Makati City	24/05/2025	66	FIN
L Cane Flaviano	Torino (TO)	27/05/2025	82	ICP

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P Rad Gozalo Juan Ángel	Bilbao-Deusto	27/05/2025	84	SSM
P Schilirò Rubino Antonino	Catania (CT)	27/05/2025	83	ISI
L Sánchez Pérez Julio	Sevilla	31/05/2025	95	SMX
P Morra Mario	Torino (TO)	01/06/2025	94	ICP
P Spagnolo Flaviano	Torino (TO)	01/06/2025	86	ICP
P Giaccaria Bartolomeo	Campo Grande - MS	03/06/2025	92	VEN
P Angulo Ruíz Diego Jesús	Caracas	03/06/2025	88	BCG
P Freitas Alves De Eurico	Belo Horizonte - MG	04/06/2025	95	VEN
P Falzone Antonino	Catania (CT)	05/06/2025	92	BBH
P Martínez Alvarez Santiago	Avila	07/06/2025	98	ISI
P Klimovič Pavel	Praga	07/06/2025	75	ANT
L Majszak Bogdan	Oświęcim	13/06/2025	93	SSM
P Pareyn Hügo	Kigali	18/06/2025	91	CEP
L Giubergia Stefano	Torino (TO)	20/06/2025	89	PLS
P Chaves Geraldo Magella de Carvalho	Belo Horizonte - MG	23/06/2025	85	AGL
P Vago William	Parma	24/06/2025	95	ICP
P Fantinato Luigi	Venezia-Mestre	27/06/2025	96	BBH
P Verstraete Adelin	Heverlee	27/06/2025	88	ILE
P Edou Menie Arsène	Bosemtelé	30/06/2025	43	INE
P De Cooman Adriaan	Leuven	01/07/2025	88	BEN
L Pérez Rúa Arturo	Sevilla	03/07/2025	78	ATE

### 5.3 Information about the Salesian Historical Archives

#### COMPLETION OF THE CRITICAL EDITION OF DON BOSCO'S CORRESPONDENCE

The critical edition of Don Bosco's correspondence (in an epistolary), an ambitious project carried out for several decades by the Salesian Historical Institute in the person of confrere Fr Francesco Motto, who was coordinator for ten years and director for twenty, has come to an end. The monumental ten-volume work is now available in both print (Rome, LAS 1991-2024) and digital formats (on the ISS website). With 60% of previously unpublished letters, it is destined to replace the previous popular edition by Fr Eugenio Ceria and the texts collected in the various volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs*. Given the extensive research carried out over the last 40 years, while the discovery of many new letters is unlikely, it is always desirable to recover originals from texts that have presumably already been published.

Collecting this material from all over the world, reading, comparing, deciphering, reconstructing, demystifying and indexing a total of 4,682 letters, mostly handwritten and difficult to read, was an undertaking that required determination and daring on the part of the editor from the outset, passion and courage as he proceeded, and trust and perseverance in bringing it to completion.

The Congregation and the Salesian Family, through an intelligent reading of the letters, the archival data that precedes them, the detailed apparatus at the end, and the rich indexes, especially the comprehensive one at the end of the tenth volume, can now delve into all the dimensions (human, spiritual, charismatic, educational, cultural...) an extraordinary life such as Don Bosco's, seen through his days, hours, and even minutes, from his youth (1835) to his deathbed (1888). His letters are a precise, reliable testimony to his life and works, his aspirations and the results of his tireless efforts. They are a rich source of accurate data and historical details that are unique in their kind; they can be used to reliably contextualise events, establish dates and facts, fill in gaps, and revise and correct judgements. This has been masterfully highlighted by various scholars last January at the Pontifical Sale-

sian University in Rome and in April at the State Archives in Turin, who presented the volumes to a diverse audience.

Bearing in mind that in order to build the international educational enterprise we all know from scratch, Don Bosco corresponded with over 1,500 people from all social classes and religious backgrounds across five continents, it is easy to see how such a documentary heritage can also offer useful contributions to civil history, the history of the Church, education, youth, the Italian language, spirituality, communication, publishing, missions and poverty in the 19th century, not only in Italy. The volumes are therefore intended not only for the Congregation and the Salesian Family, but also for civil and ecclesiastical libraries, seminaries, study centres, universities and anyone who, for reasons of study or simple curiosity, is interested in the above.

