

Elements for the formation of Salesians in Communication

DEPARTMENT FOR FORMATION
DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION
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ELEMENTS FOR THE FORMATION OF SALESIANS IN COMMUNICATION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Presentation	5
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GENERAL BIBLIO THEOLOGICAL FUNDAMENTALS

The God Who Saves by Communicating Himself, Needs Communications	10
JUAN JOSÉ LAFUENTE BARTOLOMÉ, SDB	
Homo Communicans, in the Image of the Trinitarian God	22
JOSÉ LUIS MONCAYO PLASCENCIA, SDB	

THE EXPERIENCE OF DON BOSCO AT VALDOCCO

Don Bosco, Communicator of God's Word	31
MORAND WIRTH, SDB	
"Teatrino" A Critical Element of Don Bosco's Pedagogy	61
MICHELE NOVELLI, SDB	
Printing and Publishing in Don Bosco's Mind and Mission	72
ALBERTO RUI, SDB	
Salesian Bulletin	83
BRUNO FERRERO, SDB	

SOME GOOD PRACTICES: PUBLISHING, RADIO, MULTIMEDIA

Società Editrice Internazionale at the service of the Italian school	94
SERGIO GIORDANI, SDB	
Elledici: A publisher Under the Banner of Don Bosco and Following his Dream	102
VALERIO BOCCI, SDB	
CCS Publishing, Madrid	112
JOSÉ ANTONIO SAN MARTIN, SDB	
ABYA Yala Publications	121
JUAN BOTTASSO, SDB	
The Salesian Charism in the Vatican	125
SERGIO PELLINI, SDB	

Salesian Educational Radio and TV Association, Bolivia Artesbol	136
JUAN FRANCISCO APARICIO, SDB	
TEJ-Prasarini: 20 Years of Passionate Media Initiatives	145
JOAQUIM FERNANDES, SDB	
Sampari Pictures: Agent of Cultural and Social Tranformation.....	151
JOSEPH PULINTHANATH	
A Paradoxical Approach to New Media!	159
JACQUES REY, SDB	
Beams: Multimedia Services AFE Province (Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan).....	182
SEBASTIAN KOLADIYIL, SDB	
WALKING WITH THE YOUNG COMMUNICATING WITH THE YOUNG	
Social Communication in General Chapter 20 to 26	188
JOSEP LLUIS BURGUERRA, SDB	
Being Educated and Educating to "Right Thinking" in the "Digital World"	199
MAURO MANTOVANI, SDB	
Credible and Fruitful Salesians: An Ongoing Challenge	224
FABIO PASQUALETTI, SDB	
Communication in Social Networks	253
GILDASIO MENDES, SDB	
Some Guidelines for Formation to Communication	260
DONATO LACEDONIO, SDB	
Social Networks and Salesian Assistance.....	274
JAVIER VALIENTE, SDB	
Marketing and Salesian Ministry: Importance, Possibilities and Risks	290
MARIANO DIOTTO, SDB	
Theology and Communication.....	316
JULIAN FOX, SDB	
HORACIO LÓPEZ, SDB	
Organizing Social Communication in the Province Using the SSCS.....	323
FILIBERTO GONZÁLES, SDB	

PRESENTATION

The mission and rationale of the Church is evangelization. This means: to communicate the good news of the merciful and unconditional love of God the Father to his children, to people, a love manifested in the Word made flesh. The Salesian vocation places us, as consecrated persons of apostolic life, in the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of that mission, sending us to be signs and bearers of God's love to young people, especially the poorest.

To be able to constantly grow and mature in the Church's mission, the Salesian is to enter into a process of comprehensive, uninterrupted formation, that increasingly makes him more like Jesus the Good Shepherd, in a constant evolving culture and society. It is a formation that helps him become, like Don Bosco, a sign and bearer of the love of God for young people, in each context and age. In this sense the Salesian formation is already defined from the start, as an ongoing and undeniable process of configuration to Christ - the Good Shepherd and the Communicator of the Father.

It is for this reason that the Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS), placing the person and the quality of human relations at the center, maintains as a priority that the Salesians, their collaborators and the youth be formed to be communicators of God's love. We put our best efforts at this because we are convinced that the integral and ongoing formation of people is our present and our future as a Congregation and as a Communication Sector at the service of the mission.

To realize this conviction, the Departments for Formation and Social Communication, jointly developed a program of basic formation to Social Communication in 2005. To continue and strengthen the process started, the Department and the World Advisory Council for Social Communication have endeavored to offer a range of topics to help formators and formees, teachers and students, to deepen the communicative dimension of the charism, mission and Salesian vocation among the young and the ordinary people.

Some of the themes point to the ever faster cultural changes that affect all of society, but in a special way the children, the adolescents and the young, and those who want to help understand and live in environments and spaces hitherto unimagined. The themes seek to help us understand these changes and live in the new cultural, social and pastoral fields where we mature in our vocation and where we develop the mission along with the other Salesians and collaborators and together with the young, who are the natural inhabitants of these new times and spaces. It is impossible to live outside of these, if we wish to be faithful. Our vocation and mission are conditioned by them, just as they

have modified the way we interact with others and with God; they modify our concepts of space and time, our work habits and consumption, our ability to know and learn, our moments of fun and fellowship, our way of feeling and valuing.

This anthropological and cultural movement that transforms the whole society including the people, the young and ourselves too, is irreversible although we are not aware of it. This is the context and the people who need from us more attention and understanding in view of drawing up a new formation and a new communication that responds to the mission to whom we are sent. The Salesian must acquire new skills to respond to the needs of the young. The frames of reference, indicated by the Formation (Ratio), the Youth Ministry, the SSCS and the Missions sectors, all help towards this purpose. All sectors are born from the same charism that begun in Valdocco, hence, these sectors are all at the service of the formation of the Salesians and the promotion of the same mission.

It is undeniable that the new vocations to the consecrated life and the generations of teenagers and young people to whom we are sent, belong to another era and live in a different dimension to that of Don Bosco and ours whether we like it or not. We ourselves and our collaborators, live there, almost by inertia, understanding and using, with more or less success, these technologies and new languages, feeling close or distant to the new generations. A formation that ignores or does not sufficiently value something obvious, runs the risk of not having new vocations, of not inculturating the gospel into this new context and of not being understood by the recipients.

Formation to communication goes far beyond regulating the use of technology and the internet, although in some moments control is necessary; it more than just offering random topics and workshops for critical understanding, although they also are important. We must promote ecological communication systems in communities, schools, parishes, oratories. It is our way to make alive the conviction that "people created in the image of the Triune God, are those that communicate and therefore they ought to communicate as persons created in the image of God." The media and mediations, although culturally important, will continue to remain as media. Pope Francis says that communication starts from the mother's womb and then develops into the "womb" of the family, in the group of friends and in the ecclesial community. The high quality of the media is not necessarily a guarantee of the quality of content, of processes or of languages. It is the formation of qualified people that will give quality to communication.

In his message for the XLIII World Day of Social Communications, Pope Benedict XVI said that new technologies are new relations based on dialogue, respect and friendship. For both the secular and consecrated, a solid education to responsible freedom is indispensable. However, for the consecrated, besides this, it is fundamental to have a formation to an authentic life which includes the love for one's vocation, for the mission, for the institution and love for the recipients to whom we are being continually sent.

By placing the theme of ongoing formation as a priority, starting at the initial stages, we want to respond to the most beautiful and challenging opportunity of the present and the future, an opportunity that is communicative and missionary, pastoral and educational, which places us more in the Salesian playground, where most adolescents and young call us to be. Here too we are challenged to update and put into practice the preventive system and the Salesian assistance. In this immense space which Benedict XVI named the "digital continent," new evangelizers, educators and communicators of God's love are needed. And Pope Francis says that a "pastoral conversion" is required.

The young people who live in this new reality and new continents, need a Salesian with a renewed missionary zeal, who does not confuse works with mission, a Salesian communicator with spiritual and intellectual depth, a Salesian who is a witness of God and the joy of the Gospel among the youth of the digital era, a Salesian who hastens, without fear or shame, to the needs and the realities of the least ones, a Salesian who goes out in search of persons, not staying to wait comfortably for others to come to him.

The members of the World Advisory Council, who are specialists and experts in Communication, have written these articles in view of collaborating in the formation of Salesians, educators and parents who give the best of themselves for the children and young people so that they may grow up as good Christians and honest citizens in their contexts that are culturally new and diverse.

This book, not pretending to cover all issues, is divided into four complementary parts: the first puts the biblical and theological foundations of Christian communication; the second presents some significant experiences of communication developed by Don Bosco in Valdocco; the third offers some good Salesian communication practices in the fields of publishing, radio and multimedia production; the fourth raises issues that allow the Salesians to enter into communication with young people and society in a more open, current, positive and authentic way.

At this point, we present our deep appreciation to each of the authors of the themes/articles, those who had to translate these articles and those who have worked and collaborated in its publication and distribution. I am sure that the best acknowledgement to be received for this book is that the Salesians and educators who, after coming into contact with the different themes, have grown in their passion to communicate the love of God for young people: with one's personal testimony, new media, new languages and practicing the Preventive System as "assistants" of the young in the new playgrounds.

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THE GOD WHO SAVES BY COMMUNICATING HIMSELF, NEEDS COMMUNICATORS

God's salvation proclaimed and communicated through witnessing

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It is observed that believers in our works today seem to feel more the absence of God in his silence. This diagnosis might be tough, but it is true: today believers are living through a time when we feel the absence of God more, and what we sense most is his silence. It is observed that believers in our world today seem to feel more the absence of God in his silence. This diagnose might be through, but it is true. An honest thinker like Heidegger said that no God could come to people and things visibly and clearly: reality is not God's home. He also insisted that there was something even worse than the lack of God that is impoverishing our times and this extreme poverty of our age has its roots in the clear inability to recognise that humankind's greatest poverty is its lack of God.¹

What heidegger diagnosed, more than half a century ago – as defining our times, is perhaps still a reality in the Church today. The spiritual situation we are experiencing is not characterised so much by obstinate denial of God's existence as by the apparent refusal to speak of a God that is interested in us. It is not that we haven't spoken of God much, or don't continue to speak of him, but that it seems God has opted for silence. To be honest, there are few Christians who can say they habitually hear God and fewer still are those who voluntarily spend time to listen to him.

This lack of people who hear God within the ecclesial community is even more shocking when, like no other time in its history probably, the Church is trying to give ear to human voices, and to give voice to those who have no voice. The phenomenon makes us think: giving greater sensitivity to current problems coincides with a reduced capacity to listen to God; it is as if the more attention believers give to urgent matters in the world the more lack of attention they are receiving from their God.

If this diagnosis is correct, the believing community should react quickly if it wants to maintain a relationship with God. The biblical God believes so much in dialogue: creating the world by speaking, and manifesting himself to man by talking; and he enjoyed communicating with man so much that he became the Word.

¹ Cf. MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *Sentieri interrotti*, Firenze, 1968, 247-249.

It is difficult to consider that a God who chose the Word as his way of being amongst men would close himself off in silence. This would mean not only condemning man to a fruitless search for God but would be equivalent in practice to the death of God: a mute God who says nothing, has nothing to say, that hardly means anything, might be a nice idol but would never be the true God.

1. IN THE BEGINNING, THE WORD

The feature that best describes the biblical God is his desire for dialogue, his capacity to manifest himself always through the word (Heb 1:1-2). He came out of anonymity, allowing his voice to be heard by a people who had lived without it (Ex 3:4-22; 6:2-8). And throughout history he has continually broken his silence to find interlocutors and friends who would speak for him (Gen 3:8; Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15). Different from false gods who have a mouth but don't speak, a throat but no voice (Ps. 115:5-7), the one and only God has a powerful, magnificent, sovereign voice (Ps. 29:3-8). Faced with dumb idols that leave their servants equally dumb (1 Cor 12:2), God turns those who pay attention to him into prophets (Am 3:8; 7,15; cf. Jer 1,6.9; 15,19; Is 6,5-7; Ez 2:1-8).

The Word is God's most powerful theophany; his most personal historical manifestation. It is that part of the Divinity that is accessible to us in our current situation, the only part which can enable us to reach out to God until, one day, we shall be able to see him face to face (cf. 1 Cor 13,12): The Word of God is his face, his best definition.² The biblical believer knows God because God has spoken to him. The Word that God speaks reveals not only his existence but indeed his very essence: his being consists in his Word, the Word is his only-begotten Son (Jn 1,1-4.14).

2. REALITY AND THE WORD OF GOD

But the biblical God not only pronounced himself by declaring his existence to us; he pronounced himself on behalf of what is real, giving it existence. In the Bible, the relations between the Creator God and created things are understood as a divine pronouncement: the world is his repeated word (Gen 1:3-25); man was born from a divine colloquy (Gen 1:26); thought up in God's intimacy and deeply loved by him, this man arose out of nothing and knew that he was in the image of the God who speaks (Wis 2:33); the people are the realisation of the word spoken, a promise kept (Gen 12:2; 15,4-5; 17:4-6; 22:15-18; Ex 3:6-10).

² JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *Escucharás la voz del Señor tu Dios*, CCS, Madrid, 1984, 14.

2.1 THE WORLD, A DIVINE PRONOUNCEMENT

What God speaks, happens: what God names comes into existence; by naming it he calls it and rescuing it from silence and nothingness (Gen 1:3-31; Ps 148:5). Everything that has life came to be through the word of the living God (Rom 4:17; 2 Cor 4:6), because He spoke and it existed; He sent it and it came into being (cf. Ps 33:9; Wis 9:1). It is God himself who spoke, since he exists, rather than reality, man included, who speaks of who God is; and because it is his word, what exists is also revelation; breaking his silence, God freed life from nothingness (2 Mac 7:28); and life continues to exist over nothingness since God continues pronouncing himself in its favour (Wis 11:25), be it stars (Is 40:26), the waters of the abyss (Is 44:27), natural phenomena (Ps 107:25; Job 37:5-13) or man himself (Wis 16:26; Dt 8:3).

2.2 MAN, THE IMAGE OF THE DIVINE COLLOQUY

The believer knows that he has been called into life by God. Born of a divine dialogue, he or she is destined for dialogue with God and for this, amongst all that has been created, he or she is the very image of God. The believer recognises that his presence in the world is not of his own decision: one doesn't live because one wants to live, but because one has been desired and wanted. Precisely because life is the effect of the divine wish, it cannot live outside the ambit of that will: one does not exist because one wishes to, nor should one live as one pleases; once life is conceived it must respect its limits (Gen 2:16-17) and the tasks it must accomplish (Gen 1:28-31).

The believer, by simply living, knows that he is called by God and responsible before Him. He lives because of God and as God wants him to live. He knows he is alive, for having been called by God he knows that he will live if he is faithful to his origins and keeps up communication with his God (Gen 3:17-19).³

His very existence, is for him the word of his God and at the same time a due response to his God. God called him into existence. Called by God, he is obliged to respond: by granting life, God has imposed dialogue. To be the image of a God who thought us into existence in dialogue with himself, we can only live by dialoguing with this God. Since God opened the dialogue that gave life its beginning, there is no other remedy than to continue it if we wish to remain alive. Life is God's pronouncement in our favour and therefore demands man's pronouncement in his favour.

³ JUAN J. BARTOLOMÉ, *"La Llamada de Dios. Un reflexión bíblica sobre la vocación"*: Misión Joven 131 (1987) 6.

We were not born of a divine colloquy in vain (Gen 1:26); the one who called us first obliges us to call on him. The one who gives us life, when he called us out of nothing, hopes that we will respond with life. The one who imagined us in dialogue with himself could consider us to be his image so that we can dialogue as Him and with Him. The creature that does not converse with his Creator flees from Him and his very own self (Gen 3,9).

2.3 GOD'S PEOPLE – COMMUNICATION MAINTAINED

Israel never doubted that it owed its existence in history to the discovery of a God who had a plan to free it from Egypt, its house of slavery (Ex 3,7-20). No other people could claim similar origins (Dt 7:6; 14:2). It was the God of their fathers who thought of giving them national independence at the same time as he converted them into a chosen nation and gave them a land to live in.

God's People believed they came into existence when God, who had heard their distress, left his silence: Israel's liberation was the free and sovereign word of a God without name, his personally identifying sign. Israel's very existence as a free people was proof of the existence of the God who liberated them (Ex 6:2-8; cf Is 43:1.7-15; 44:1-2.21.24; 45:11; 51:13; 54,5).

For Israel, the conviction that it had been chosen by God and the certainty of being a free people were two sides of the same awareness which the prophets explored in moments of doubt and infidelity. God loved Israel, since it was his child, and called Israel from Egypt to keep it as his son (Hos 11:1); he adopted it, still a child, when he found it abandoned (Ez 16:4-7); and since he was a virgin he seduced it, speaking to its heart (Hos 2:16-17; Jer 2:2; 31:2-3): out of all the nations God chose only Israel (Am 3:1-2) and he did not disinherit it (Is 41:9): as a creature of the Word of God, Israel must live by heeding him (Dt 27,9).

3. THE BELIEVER: BORN OF THE WORD AND AT ITS SERVICE

By the mere fact of being, man has to take responsibility (cf Gen 3 and 4). Being the only living creature that reflects God's dialogical nature (Gen 1,26), he must be responsible for creation (Gen 1,3-25), responsible for procreation (Gen 1,27-30; Ps 8:6-9; Ecc 17:1-10) responsible for his brother (Gen 4,9).

Irresponsibility, out of lack of communication or apathy, is the modern believer's temptation. And his sin is his stubborn commitment to reducing God to silence, the God who bothers him by wanting to get to know him, wanting to let him know he is desired. This is the most original sin, the first and most characteristic one of the believer today deluding himself that he is free before God and not responsible before Him for anything or anyone.

3.1 IMAGES OF GOD PROHIBITED, OR THE PEDAGOGY OF LISTENING

It should not be surprising that there are so few today who listen to God. Immersed as we are in a culture of image, we give primacy to a view of things as communications media and a tool for knowledge. We need to see in order to know and dialogue. We consider that what is not seen is not known and the unknown seems to us to be unpredictable; seeing what is real makes it less fascinating, more familiar, easier to manipulate. The word has been relegated to a subordinate role. It no longer expresses the essence of things, names do not define people. We are losing sensitivity for the written or oral word. Seeing is an event closed in on itself, but by contrast hearing is an open experience that tends to carry out what is heard: seeing is possessive, seeks the joy of seeing then rests; listening is reactive, seeks the listener's attention and provokes him to action.

The biblical God excluded being seen as a means of revelation. He never let himself be seen by anyone, but always made himself known by his word. Moses, the man who dared to ask God if he could see him face to face (Ex 33:11), did not succeed in seeing his face, he only saw him from behind (Ex 33:20.23; cf. Ex 24:10; Is 6,1). Israel, which never saw God, nor even wanted to because it wanted to live (Ex 19:21; Dt 4:12), could not even imagine him (Ex 20:4; Dt 5:8). It was strictly forbidden to represent the gods, in images made by their hands designed to suit their needs (Dt 4:16-20.23-29). The God of the Covenant, did not request any figure so he could be felt. And his presence was felt only through his voice (Dt 4:12.15).

It is probable that our difficulties in sensing God, his voice, come from resistance, not only of a cultural kind, to being guided by his word, resistance to relying on his promise, even if he is our God. We go, like Mary at the tomb, wanting to see and touch the Risen one to resolve our doubt if he is the one who is speaking

to us or is it instead a stranger (Jn 20:10-17). We cannot put up with a life of faith that implies always giving ear to an invisible God, and therefore an unpredictable, threatening one. A God we cannot see with our eyes nor touch by hand would never be our own handiwork, nor could be manipulated by our heart. A God we have to always listen to is a difficult God to live with; but there is no other. And that has its consequences.

3.2 **OUR VOCATION: COMMUNICATING WITH GOD FOR LIFE**

The biblical believer, knowing that his life is a pronouncement of God in his favour, can exclude chance or fortune, good or evil from it: having a Person who positively desired him at a particular moment and created him, will not cease to feel desired while he is alive; he will never become prey of fate and nothing unexpected will dismay him.

But by the same token, since he did not give himself existence, nor can he make all his plans of his own accord; he is not his own master: he has been subjected to the discretion of the one who desired him enough to want him alive. So he discovers that his life is a divine plan to be realised; his personal existence is proof of a pre-existing divine plan for him: life is always a mission since it was a pre-existing gift; it is something entrusted to him and a grace, not an automatic inheritance or due payment.

God may dispose of a man's life as he wishes since it was He who gave him life. The many stories of call that we find in the Bible show this characteristic feature of the living God in an exemplary way. The one who is called, is at times very reluctant, and others even unwilling but despite all the objections he cannot escape the call. Unless God revokes his call, he will always be his envoy; not even fleeing from God can one escape Him and his will, as Jonah found out (Jon 1:1-3,3). And what is worse, the one who is called feels that his life is taken from him, that he has been violently kidnapped, given a mission that did not enter into his calculations nor is it within his capability. He could never regard a mission he had not chosen as his own nor imagine why he was chosen for it (Is 49:1; Jer 1:5; Gal 1:15).

It is no accident that it is through dialogue that God habitually makes himself understood for those whom He calls. The God who calls in this way converts his interlocutor into his chosen one; addressing him about his plans, he imposes on him to listen and hopes only for obedience. He describes a plan for the one he

loves, "he does it in a way that the one who is called feels loved by God, an integral part of his plan; he glimpses something of God's heart but does not know his ultimate reasons: his being chosen will always remain a mystery. So then, the only knowledge of God and himself that the one who is called has, in accepting God's call, is in knowing that he is destined for others: when the biblical God calls, one is not called for oneself, for one's own benefit but for the people's; this is what the surprise is for the one who is called: the response he owes God for his call is to test it by responding to those who have been entrusted to him; God calls in order to send: mission is a way of living the fact of one's being chosen; it is its consequence and its proof"⁴.

The only answer that the God who calls expects, then, is what the one who is called does, meaning what one does, how we engage with those whom God destined us for when he called us by name.

4. GOD REVEALS HIMSELF 'BY SPEAKING AS A FRIEND'

"God speaks in a human way through others because he seeks us out by speaking thus".⁵ Identifying God's manifestation as a friendly conversation supposes a basic change in the way we perceive revelation. It implies a more concrete kind of salvation, something closer to biblical sensitivity one that radically questions the situation of faith today. It points to an idea of God, salvation and the Church that directly confronts our normal existence.

4.1 GOD'S SILENCE AS A PROBLEM

The biblical God is a God who speaks, whose being is revealed in his word. He is alive inasmuch as he speaks and whatever he pronounces exists. He exists inasmuch as he manifests himself and everything he says reveals him. The biblical God is a God with a voice, He speaks (he exists and gives life) and He keeps his word (faithful to his covenant) it will cost him his *life*. Only idols remain dumb, they have nothing to say and mean nothing.

God's silence is an enormous pastoral problem. A God who says nothing is worth nothing. Where is God's silence most perceived? What are its effects and its causes? But is it scarcity of listeners or their unwillingness to be obedient silences a God who comes to us in his Word.

⁴ BARTOLOMÉ, "LLAMADA" 12.

⁵ AUGUSTINE, DE CIVITATE DEI 17, 6,2: CCSL 48, 567

How can we speak with a God who says nothing to us (= *the believer problem*)? And how can one speak of a God who has not yet spoken (= *the missionary problem*)? In today's Church "there is no greater priority than this: opening up access to God again for man, the God who speaks and communicates his love for us so that we may have life in abundance (cf. *Jn 10:10*)"⁶.

Man's salvation as a conversation

"The novelty of biblical revelation consists in God making himself known through the dialogue he wishes to hold with us... There was never a time for God when the Logos did not exist".⁷ Revealing himself personally coincides, for God, with saving man. His Word is expressed throughout the history of salvation, is salvation consummated. The one who lives in dialogue is saved, open to the Other and responsible before Him for others.

For the Christian, silencing the other is non-salvation. In a culture that does not dialogue, that seeks to see but not to listen, exploit but not contemplate, take control of without deluding itself, ignore without getting involved, dialogue is shunned, responsibility denied, our neighbour is silenced and then God is next.

The effectiveness of salvation depends on the presence of witnesses who speak of what they experience and talk of what they do. When words are backed by life the testimony sounds real and the result is convincing.

4.2 THE WORD OF THE TRINITARIAN GOD

"God uttered the eternal Word in human fashion; and his Word 'was made flesh' (*Jn1:14*). This is the Good News".⁸ Without the Spirit there would have been no incarnation of the Word nor of Word of God given to us in the Sacred Scriptures. One cannot, then "understand the Scriptures without the help of the Holy Spirit who inspired them".⁹

The Word of God is his Son, Jesus Christ

"Jesus Christ born of the Virgin Mary, is truly the Word of God made consubstantial with us. So the expression "Word of God" refers here to the person of Jesus Christ, eternal Son of the

⁶ *Verbum Domini*, 2.

⁷ *Verbum Domini*, 6.

⁸ *Verbum Domini*, 1.

⁹ *JEROME, Epistle 120, 10: CSEL 55, 506.*

Father, made man... All this helps us to understand why the Sacred Scriptures are so venerated in the Church, although the Christian faith is not "a religion of the Book": Christianity is the "religion of the Word of God", not a "written and dumb word, but the Word incarnate and alive" (Saint Bernard)".¹⁰

Jesus Christ, not a theological discourse, not something historical, not a set of rules as sublime as they may be, is the Word of God. Whoever meets him in person hears God and hearing God encounters his Son (Mk 1:11; 9:7). To facilitate this encounter with God he 'abbreviated' his Word: "the eternal Word made himself small, small enough to fit into a manger. He became a child so the Word would be within our reach".¹¹ His unique history is the Word that God has spoken to humankind. Without a personal encounter with Christ the Word is silenced or becomes an unsolvable puzzle.¹²

Without the Spirit there would have been no incarnation of the Word, nor would there be understanding

The Word became flesh when conceived by Mary "through the work of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:18. 20; Lk 1:35). The same who spoke about the prophets, as the disciples were reminded of what Jesus told them (Jn 16:7) the same spirit and who coming down upon the Apostles sent them out into the world to preach the Gospel and under whose inspiration the sacred authors wrote down the message of salvation.¹³ "Without the effective action of the 'Spirit of truth'" (Jn14:16) the Lord's words could not be understood... Given that the Word of God coming to us in the Body of Christ, in the Eucharistic body and in the body of the Scriptures, through the action of the Holy Spirit, can only be accepted and truly understood thanks to the same Spirit"¹⁴.

¹⁰ *Verbum Domini*, 7.

¹¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Homily during Christmas Eve Mass* (24 December 2006): AAS 99 (2007) 12.

¹² "En darnos, como nos dio a su Hijo, que es una Palabra suya, que no tiene otra, todo nos lo habló junto y de una vez en esta sola Palabra... Porque lo que hablaba antes en partes a los profetas ya lo ha hablado a Él todo, dándonos el todo, que es su Hijo. Por lo cual, el que ahora quisiese preguntar a Dios, o querer alguna visión o revelación, no sólo haría una necedad, sino haría agravio a Dios, no poniendo los ojos totalmente en Cristo, sin querer otra cosa o novedad" (JUAN DE LA CRUZ, *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, II, 22).

¹³ *Dei Verbum*, 7,9.

¹⁴ *Verbum Domini*, 15.

"Whoever reads the Scriptures must be filled with the Holy Spirit if he wishes to understand them".¹⁵ The testimony of the ancient liturgical texts is a sobering one. The texts require that we call upon the Spirit before proclaiming the Word of God to the faithful: "Send your Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, upon us and help us understand the Scriptures inspired by Him; and grant that I may interpret them worthily, so that the faithful assembled here may benefit". "One cannot understand the meaning of the Word unless one takes account of the action of the Paraclete in the Church and in the hearts of the believers".¹⁶

4.3 THE CHURCH, CREATED BY THE WORD THAT IS HEARD, EXISTS TO PAY HEED TO IT.

The biblical God, the God who speaks as a friend, saves by bringing us together and converts his hearers into his people. God has no other way of saving except by bringing those who listen to him together. Those who are called into this assembly are saved by him. The value of common life, a way of experiencing God's salvation, depends on the ability of the believer to listen and not on God's willingness to communicate.

The individualism which is in force today thus becomes an obstacle to God the Saviour: the personal experience of faith and its pastoral care has common life as its origin and goal the Christian is born with a willingness for universality which is in God's own heart. There is no call or vocation where there is no convocation; no Word of God, no Spirit of God, where there is no Church.¹⁷ Individualism grows within Christianity from the absence of the Word of God or lack of attention to it: "only in the 'we' of Church, in reciprocal listening and acceptance, can we understand our relationship with the Word of God more deeply".¹⁸

¹⁵ ORIGENES, *In Ezechielem* 4,5: PG 12, 320. "If the Spirit is not in the hearts of those who listen, it is useless for the Master to speak" (GREGORY THE GREAT, *Homiliae in Evangelium* II 30,3: PL 76, 1222).

¹⁶ *Verbum Domini*, 16.

¹⁷ "The Church does not exist for itself, but for the Gospel, and always finds new direction for its journey in the Gospel. So a consideration that all Christians must make and apply to themselves... The Church lives from the Word of God and the Word of God resounds in the Church, its teaching and its whole life" (op. cit.).

¹⁸ *Verbum Domini*, 4.

Born of listening, born to be heard

The Church comes out of listening to God. And it listens to the Word in order to proclaim it; so, “Only one who first listens to the Word, can then become its herald. The Christian does not teach his own wisdom, but God’s, that often seems to be a scandal to the world’s ears (cf. 1 Cor 1, 23)”.¹⁹

The Church “exists to evangelize, — to preach and teach” (EN 15). According to Luke, the Christian community came into existence to preach the Easter experience to the world (Acts 1:6-8; cf Mt 28:16-20) and to present itself to the world by preaching the Resurrection (Acts 2,14-36). The new people of God, then, owes its existence to the communication of the Gospel.

So it is no accident that in the same way, at the beginning of the generating process of Scripture, its driving force and ongoing motivation was preaching a common faith; the Church’s tradition gave life to the living Word: the very existence of the Scriptures is documented proof of the pre-existence of preaching. God spoke then and continues to speak today through the experience of his witnesses who celebrate their faith in worship and have the mission of proclaiming it.

The Word existed before the Scriptures: and before the Word, there was a listening People. The Church came before the Bible: the Scriptures came out of its life, like a daughter. So if the cradle of Scripture is the living tradition of the Church, the proclamation of the faith is the place for the creation and recreation of the Word. Whoever preaches the Word today builds up the People of God, and is alive inasmuch as he proclaims.

The ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1), the service of the Church par excellence, is carried out through proclamation of the common faith; from the very beginnings of the Church, this proclamation consisted basically in putting forward its own Christian experience: Augustine, a master of rhetoric, insisted that one must speak *sapienter* more than *eloquenter* “to help those who listen”.²⁰ And Paul, the first author of the NT, reminds his faithful that “as soon as you heard the message we brought you as God’s message,

¹⁹ BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the International Congress*.

²⁰ AGUSTINE, *Doctrina christiana* I 4,5,7.

you accepted it for what it really is, God's message and not some human thinking" (1 Thess 2,13). Historically and logically before there was a preached faith, there was a lived faith the NT apostle is not a prophet, a person of the word, nor someone who sees, a person of images, but a witness, a person of experience (1 Jn 1,1-4; Acts 1,21-22).

The one who accepts the Gospel communicates it

Therefore it is his own experience of Christ that is the apostle's content of the Christian Gospel: "what I give you is not mine. What you eat is what I eat; what you live from is what I live from. Our common larder is in heaven: the Word of God comes from there".²¹ If there is someone who fulfilled this law of apostolic preaching we find it precisely in Paul, par excellence. His personal experience was exceptional, but oddly it proved to be his way to faith and his unique apostolic mission, and he always returned to this experience as a way for ultimately legitimising his mission and as the central theme of his preaching despite the logical misunderstandings that arose from such a controversial ministry, he never hesitated to present his personal experience as theme and reason for his evangelising. He was witness only to Jesus Risen, of his new life and not of his death nor his public ministry, and the Gospel he preached was contained within the limits of his experience; the church he founded only had the world as its limits. His achievement continues to serve as inspiration for apostles and a norm for evangelisation in the Church today.

²¹ AGUSTINE, *Sermón 95,1: Obras Completas*, BAC, Madrid, 1983, 629.

HOMO COMMUNICANS, IN THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITARIAN GOD

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INTRODUCTION

To speak of communication is to make reference to a fundamental question of human existence. This is so evident that it hardly needs argument to demonstrate it. "It means immediately focusing attention on man, since the fact is universally recognised that to communicate is an intrinsic and determining reality of human nature."²² In his effort to define it, this author states that it is a case of "a kind of instinct related to socialisation, an instinct that leads man to seek community life as an existential dimension."²³ It is evident that communication has always existed since the human being has existed, to the point where we can call him, by analogy with other fundamental dimensions, "homo communicans".

However, we are not about to develop this aspect in all its anthropological extension (which would also imply, for example, analysing both his likeness to and difference from other living beings, since animals also "communicate"). What interests us here is to develop and clarify the *theological* perspective and more concretely its Christian one. Presupposing a reflection that is based on the Sacred Scriptures we can point ourselves more in the direction of systematic theology or *theological anthropology*.

1. A BASIC OUTLINE OF THE QUESTION

The basic affirmation of Christian anthropology is focused on the inalienable character of each man or woman as created in the *image and likeness of God*: this is a belief we already find in the first pages of Scripture (Gen 1:27). It is not, therefore, just a simple phenomenological analysis of the kind common to the "human sciences", but its specific focus consists in understanding "the human phenomenon" from the perspective of God's Revelation inasmuch as man is created in his image and likeness.

²² C. CARNICELLA, *Comunicación*, en: R. LATOURELLE – R. FISICHELLA (Dirs.), *Diccionario de Teología Fundamental*, Madrid, Paulinas, 1992, 193.

²³ Ibidem.

At first sight, however, it might seem that such a focus, applying it to the concrete question of *communication*, might not find an adequate response. Indeed, the human faculty of communication, more than showing our likeness to God might seem to distinguish us and separate us from Him; this for two main reasons.

Firstly, because human communication is, before anything else, an expression of man's *precarious nature*. A human being locked up within himself and unable to communicate could not survive nor develop his essential qualities. Every person *needs to communicate*. This precariousness cannot, for sure, be reconciled with divine perfection.

Secondly communication, requires corporeality inasmuch as it expresses the totality of the human being, essentially, both as regards *verbal language*, but more so, *non-verbal language*. This is not about setting up dichotomies of the body-soul kind, since it is not the "body" which man communicates, but the person: what happens is that all of man's corporeal and spiritual being is involved in such communication. How might we imagine that this feature *likens* us to God? It might seem to be contrary: it distinguishes us from Him who is "Pure Spirit".

Connected with this second aspect we cannot ignore as well the fact that while corporeality is essential for communication, it can also be an obstacle to it. I can *communicate* something that does not correspond with who I am deep down, precisely because the other person cannot know me in the very depths of my being; in other words, I can *lie*.

We will not answer these objections just now, precisely because they are based on a presupposition which is completely open to debate. It believes it knows what God is like without having spoken of the Christian God who revealed Himself definitively in Christ Jesus. And again, it is precisely in Him that we describe a God who wants to *communicate* with us. This is why it is essential that we base ourselves on the identity of the Christian God, especially in his manifestation/revelation to humanity.

2. **"...WHEN THE KINDNESS AND LOVE OF GOD OUR SAVIOUR FOR MANKIND WAS REVEALED" (TITUS 3: 4).**

We too often understand the fundamental nature of the human being in the "image and likeness of God" in a static way, as if it were something given once and for all. But from the beginning, Christian theology has attempted to understand it in a *dynamic* way. Including through the dialectic that comes from distinguishing both words: created *in the image* of God, we are called to be *like* Him: it is an intelligent idea

that we already find somehow in St Irenaeus, and which is then further developed by St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas.

We can also look at it from another perspective, inspired by the famous discussion in the 1950s on the relationship between human nature and God's Grace: a discussion that was subsequently quickly forgotten. One of the aspects of this controversy focused on the need to safeguard God's freedom and absolute gratuitousness in saving mankind, in practice minimising the Christian belief in God's universal desire to save.

To understand this idea, let me quote once more that line from Genesis in a slightly modified form: "Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves". This version emphasises that God, wanting to create someone *in his own likeness*, created man. A belief expressed in a beautiful phrase from our theological tradition: Prius intelligitur deiformis quam homo. We need to understand the human being theologically first as 'deiform' or 'in the shape of God' rather than as man", meaning: God did not give this direction to man as an afterthought, but man's fundamental orientation towards God constitutes a totally free gift from God, certainly however "given" to human nature as such. If we continue with our gloss on Genesis, finally when God contemplates what he has made, he can exclaim with satisfaction: "Indeed it was very good... however creating the human being, man and woman, is the best thing I could have done" (cf. Gen 1: 31).

The great theological tradition has liked to express this greatness of man through two expressions of extraordinary depth. Every man and woman is *capax Dei*, meaning that he or she has the capacity to know Him, communicate with Him, dialogue with Him and finally, find his or her fullness and happiness in Him alone. This is why one of the human being's essential features is *potentia oboedientialis*, the ability to *listen to/obey* this God who did not create man because he needed to, but so that he might need God... because God created him and loved him unconditionally²⁴.

God's entire plan of salvation can be summed up in a single word: epiphany, *manifestation*. God was not content with just loving us, but wanted to *manifest* his love for us; and this manifestation has a concrete name: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Word made Flesh.

Vatican Council II, speaking of this Revelation, indicates that it happens "through intrinsically connected works and words; the works that God does in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and the realities that the words mean; in turn, the words proclaim the works and explain the mystery" (DV, 2).

²⁴ We could recall here the classic work of KARL RAHNER, *Oyente de la Palabra*, (in English, 'Hearer of the Word') Barcelona, Herder, 1967.

3. **"...THAT LIFE WAS MADE VISIBLE: WE SAW IT"(1 JN 1, 2): GOD'S REVELATION AS COMMUNICATION, IN ST JOHN...**

..in the New Testament, concretely: in the Gospel and letters of St John we encounter a "theology of communication" focused on the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God made Man, called the Logos of God. The term *logos*, is an extraordinarily fruitful one for manifesting the salvation that God offers man, seen under the heading of *communication*. We know that historically it has served as a bridge since the second century after Christ between the Old Testament concept of the creating Word and God's effectiveness (the *dabar* of the Lord) and Greco-Roman, hellenistic thinking (recalling that the Logos did not only mean "word", but also reason, *meaning* – so that the adjective *logical* means not only "verbal", but *reasonable, not absurd or without meaning*).

At the beginning of his first letter the Apostle writes "Something which has existed since the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word who is Life –... that Life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life, which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:1-3). Christian faith basically consists in the encounter with a visible and tangible Person who has communicated with us. It is to the Person, Jesus, that the Apostle gives testimony so that the believer may also be in communication/communion with God.

This communication/communion with God makes Jesus Christ the Logos possible, and is the core of human perfection or, evoking the beautiful expression of St Augustine, is the satisfaction of the yearning of each human heart, that can find rest and fullness only in God. To Philip's question: "Lord, let us see the Father and then we shall be satisfied", Jesus answers: "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? To have seen me is to have seen the Father" (Jn 14:8-9). This complete communication, without reserve, is an expression of his friendship shown to the fullest by giving his own life. "I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father" (Jn 15:15).

Just the same we can go even deeper. It is cause for a certain oddness that, in his farewell discourse during the Last Supper, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Paraclete, the Spirit of *Truth*, who issues from the Father" (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). In the Johannine logic (and even more

in the light of the later Trinitarian theology) one would expect him to be called "the Spirit of Love". Without pretending to offer an exegesis in the strict sense of the term, I would suggest a theological hypothesis for interpreting this Johannine title. The substratum of a Johannine paradigm that understands Revelation as Trinitarian *communication*.

We should not forget that the presentation of Jesus, the Son of God made Man (in fact, the title "Son of Man" in John connotes this function of *revelation*²⁵) as *Logos* is encountered as a consequence, and in dialectical tension with the invisibility/ineffability/transcendence of God: "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known" (Jn 1:18). In human experience, the word (understood in its broad sense, not just as "*flatus vocis*") expresses what the mind of man *thinks*. However without such an expression, he could know nothing. So that there is perfect agreement between *thinking* and the word, *truth* is essential: lying, therefore is the distortion of what I think/feel and what I express.

Similarly, between the absolute transcendence of God ("no one has ever seen him") and his definitive revelation in Jesus Christ, *Logos* of the Father, we find the *Spirit of Truth*, who is united with the Father and the Son. This title is perfectly encapsulated within the *communication paradigm*.

Sub contrario, it is equally significant that, in the Johannine work, we find opposition to God characterised as *deception*, lying: 1 Jn 1:5, 8, 10; 2:4, 21-22, 27; 4:1, 6, 20; 5:10

This "Trinitarian communication" however does not end here. As Church, all Christians are called to continue the mission of the *Logos* through the power of the *Spirit*: that is, make this Love of God present and true. In fact, in his first letter John repeats the same expression used in the Gospel: "No one has ever seen God" and then links it with Christian fraternal love. "No one has ever seen God, but as long as we love one another, *God will live in us and his love will be complete in us*" (1 Jn 4:12). This is what the Pope emeritus, Benedict XVI reminded us of: "*caritas in veritate*".

In summary, let us recall the end of John's first letter: "We are in the true God, as we are in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, this is eternal life" (1 Jn 5:20). And in his second letter: "*In our life of truth and love, we shall have Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father*" (2 John, v. 3).

²⁵ Cf. FRANCIS J. MONOLEY, *The Johannine Son of Man*, Roma, LAS, 1976.

4. FROM GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO GOD-COMMUNION

At the beginning we left a number of questions without answer: concretely, how to understand the basic nature of the human being, fundamentally capable of communication since he is made in the image and likeness of God. We could not answer that without first asking ourselves about this God in whom we believe, and in whose image and likeness we have been created.

We have already pointed to the fundamental aspect of God's relationship with humanity understood from the point of view of *revelation/communication*. However the decisive question comes now: does God's communication belong only to his action, or is it a characteristic of God himself? This evokes the famous "Rahner axiom," not: the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity; in other words: God does not reveal himself any differently from how he is²⁶.

This is why all that we have said earlier was not just by the by, nor has it led us away from our central concern. On the contrary, it has made us see that our faith has nothing to do with abstract speculation or concepts but with a history of *love/communication/salvation* between God and his sons and daughters, focused on the Gift par excellence, the gift of his Son Jesus Christ for us: "God so loved the world that He sent his only Son" (Jn 3:16).

The God whom we believe is not a solitary, self-sufficient, non-communicating or uncommunicative God: he is Father, Son and Holy Spirit: God-Love, Three and One. And this is the central mystery of faith.

Traditional theology has not sufficiently emphasised the nature of *communication* as a central aspect in intra-trinitarian life, probably because it has not reflected sufficiently on the same thing in human experience; however, it has not been absent from it. It is enough to consider how this feature already appears in the biblical description of Creation: First, as a concern of God himself when he sees man's lack of satisfaction amongst all created beings: "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18) and second, as a consequence of sin. Here it is communication is blocked at the level of the couple (Adam and Eve) and the family (Cain and Abel) and involves all of society, ending up in the destruction of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

Despite this "oversight" in trinitarian reflection, it has always been there somehow especially as seen from the perspective of complete *communion and communication of Trinitarian Life*. To express this theology coined the key theological notion of *perikoresis*. The full "flow"

²⁶ For a critical presentation of Karl Rahner's thinking cf. LUIS F. LADARIA, *La Trinidad, Misterio de Comuni3n*, Salamanca, Secretariado Trinitario, 2002, pp. 11-64.

of divine life between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Hans Urs von Balthasar did not hesitate to call this “inter-trinitarian kenosis,”²⁷ the total, unreserved co-involvement between the divine persons that enables us to speak responsibly of a God who is (and not just “has”) Love. To provide a basis for this central idea, we need to analyse, from human experience, the gift implied by love in any of its authentic manifestations, from a communication point of view. Since we do not communicate “something” in this giving, but commit our very selves fully and completely. There is no more complete communication than love. Furthermore, Trinitarian theology somehow shows that this communion/communication makes up who the Divine Persons are: it is enough to recall the expression of St Thomas Aquinas: “*relatio subsistens*”. “Thinking” of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as “personal cores of relationship” goes beyond all understanding, going infinitely beyond any human capacity for communication.

In this sense I dare to say: there is no communication in God, but God instead is Communication. We have been created in the image of this God in order to end up being like him, through love (cf. Eph 1:4). Here we see the dynamic of a fundamental dialectical process reappear. Each man and woman is by nature in the image of the One God, and nothing can eliminate this essential feature of our identity (not even the most serious sin, not even eternal condemnation, as the terrible, ultimate possibility of human freedom). However, we are called to become like the Triune God: “Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you” (Jn 17:21) is Jesus’ prayer to the Father at the Last Supper.

Let’s pick up the initial idea: that human communication might seem rather to distinguish us than liken us to God for two reasons: one the *precariousness* that lies behind the human need to communicate, and the other, the essential *corporeality* as the basis of its manifestation: these are both things we cannot attribute to God.

To respond to this we might recall that speaking of “image-likeness” implies situating ourselves between *equality* and *difference*. Christian thinking has always spoken, in this regard, of analogy. We are *like*, not “equal” to God. However, we have to avoid the danger of thinking that the analogy leads to “weakening” communication in God; in fact it is quite to the contrary: human communication is a weak reflection of the Mystery of God who communicates. “The greatest of Goodness cannot exist except

²⁷ HANS URS VON BALTHASAR, *El Misterio Pascual*, in: J. FEINER-M. LÖHRER (Eds.), *Mysterium Salutis III*, Madrid, Ed. Cristiandad, 3ª Ed., 1992, p. 677: “El anonadamiento de Dios en la encarnación es ónticamente posible porque Dios se despoja eternamente en su entrega tripersonal” (broadly, in English, “God’s complete stripping of himself in the incarnation is ontically possible because God eternally strips himself in his tripersonal self-giving”).

through the greatest communication. This can exist because we have to exclude both sterility and avarice in God, meaning that he could or would not wish to give of himself completely. However God the Father desires and can communicate entirely the divine essence to the Son and the Spirit, and thus God is not alone."²⁸

If we analyse more deeply these two aspects from our experience, we can see that the human reality of communication is fed from two opposing realities: *precariousness*, without a doubt, but also plenitude. *The more and better we communicate*, the more we become persons. But the big danger would be when one aspires to be self-sufficient, with no need to communicate with others (this would be the best description of hell).

On the other hand, we mentioned above in reference to corporeality, an undeniable dialectic: the body is the instrument of communication (verbal or non-verbal), but it can also make it "opaque", make it difficult or impede communication (in the case of deception).

How often we end up saying to those who ask us: "I would like you to see my heart, my most intimate feelings"! This "opaqueness" in human communication is totally absent in God. One then can conclude, in what is undoubtedly a paradoxical way, that we are *like* (not equal, certainly, but neither are we different from) God precisely as "incarnate beings".

In the full communication of God's love and with our brothers and sisters we encounter our own human happiness/fullness; in Christian terminology, our salvation. "And eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3).

²⁸ LUIS F. LADARIA, *La Trinidad, Misterio de Comunión*, p. 135.

The Experience of Don Bosco at Valdocco



DON BOSCO, COMMUNICATOR OF GOD'S WORD

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INTRODUCTION

As an educator of the young and someone who formed the people, Don Bosco certainly had a global vision of good things to communicate to those to whom he was sent. His concern included bodily health, education in general, moral virtues to develop, and the general intention of forming upright citizens and good Christians. However, recalling that his system was based on the famous trio: "reason, religion, loving-kindness", we must not forget that his primary focus was religion, and as a consequence that God's Word was to be communicated.

The aim is to try to show in the first place the importance of God's Word for Don Bosco, and secondly how and with what means – he sought to communicate it to others, especially the young.²⁹

Before proceeding, we need to determine the meaning of certain terms. The Bible is certainly God's Word par excellence, but it usually reaches the faithful through many channels, and according to Don Bosco they are also worthy of the name 'bible'. In his manual of Christian formation and piety entitled *Il giovane provveduto*, or, in English, *The Companion of Youth*, he advised young people to read books that deal with spiritual things. Among Don Bosco's suggested readings here "The Imitation of Christ", St Francis de Sales' "Introduction to the Devout Life", the *Apparecchio alla morte di sant'Alfonso* (Preparation for Death, by St Alphonsus), "Jesus at the heart of the young". Then he explains that the Word of God is "sermons, explanations of the Gospel and catechism".³⁰ In the *Chiave del paradiso* (Key to Paradise), where he addresses the faithful of all ages and circumstances, he gives this recommendation: "Read for example

²⁹ This article is based on studies published in M. Wirth, *La Bibbia con don Bosco. Una lectio divina salesiana*. I. *L'Antico Testamento*, Roma, LAS, 2009; II. *I quattro Vangeli*, Roma, LAS, 2011; III. *Atti, Lettere, Apocalisse*, Roma, LAS, 2012.

³⁰ *Il giovane provveduto per la pratica de' suoi doveri degli esercizi di cristiana pietà per la recita dell'Uffizio della Beata Vergine e de' principali Vespri dell'anno coll'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre ecc.*, Torino, Tipografia Paravia e Comp., 1847, 18. See reprint in G. Bosco, *Opere edite*, vol. II, Roma, Las, 1976, 198 (= OE II 198).

some chapters of the Gospel".³¹ In the *Ricordi generali di san Filippo Neri alla gioventù* (General reminders by St Philip Neri for youth), which can be found in the *Porta teco cristiano* (Christian handbook), we read this recommendation that Don Bosco made his own: "Read the lives of the saints often, my children; listen to God's Word".³²

So by dealing with the 'Word of God' as an object of communication, we must always keep in mind that for Don Bosco, the expression means the Bible or the Gospels both in the strict but also in the broad or derived sense.

1. CENTRALITY OF GOD'S WORD FOR DON BOSCO

The centrality of God's Word for Don Bosco can be deduced especially from the formation he received. But also from his many statements about the importance and value of the word in itself. We can quickly look at seven points related to this idea.

1.1. DON BOSCO'S LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

To understand Don Bosco and his love for God's Word we need to begin with the teaching he received from his mother. Margaret Occhiena was illiterate, but she knew her catechism perfectly. She was able to present to the sons a precise and systematic exposition of the truths of Divine Revelation, illustrated by examples drawn from Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints. "In those days", writes Fr Lemoyne in his Biographical Memoirs of Fr John Bosco "it was not unusual to find the Scriptures or lives of the saints in the homes of some of the better-off farmers". Some good elderly character...would read out some pages on a Sunday evening to the family gathered around him, in the stable if it was winter, or under the hay shed if it was summer or autumn. Mamma Margaret had also learned many passages of Scripture by heart or passages from the lives of the saints".³³

After his mother's instruction, John Bosco came into contact with God's Word by attending catechism classes and listening to sermons. The dream he had when he was nine, and that he would later tell in the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*,

³¹ *La chiave del paradiso in mano al cattolico che pratica i doveri di buon cristiano*, Torino, Tip. Paravia e Comp., 1856, 38 (= OE VIII 38).

³² *Porta teco cristiano ovvero avvisi importanti intorno ai doveri del cristiano acciocché ciascuno possa conseguire la propria salvezza nello stato in cui si trova*, Torino, Tipografia di G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1858, 36 (= OE XI 36).

³³ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. I, S. Benigno Canavese, Scuola tipografica libraria salesiana, 1898, 52.

is proof that he knew about Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and his Mother, teacher of wisdom.³⁴ When he was ten he was able to tell his friends "examples he had heard in sermons or catechism classes" and repeat parts of "the explanation of the Gospel he had heard in the morning".³⁵ When he was eleven and about to make his First Communion he says that he knew "all of the little catechism".³⁶ His encounter with Fr Calosso when he was fourteen, allowed him to begin "tasting what the spiritual life was." In effect this priest taught him to make "a short meditation or better, spiritual reading" every day.³⁷

During his studies at school in Chieri (1831-1835), John was involved in many religious practices which at the time were part of the school programme. Catechism, spiritual reading, explanations of the Gospel, instructions, the Office of Our Lady with the Psalms, the Christmas Triduum and the retreat during Holy Week among those that made lasting impact on the young John Bosco. Along with his closest friends he also attended Church at St. Anthony's, where the Jesuits had "wonderful catechism classes".³⁸ His friendship with Jonah brought him into contact with the Hebrew setting in Chieri and gave him an opportunity of examining the relationship between the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). To Jonah's mother who strongly objected, saying: "You Christians don't believe in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses nor in the prophets", Bosco retorted: "Indeed we believe in all the holy patriarchs and all the prophets in the Bible. Their writings, what they said, their prophecies are the basis of the Christian faith".³⁹

But his interest in the Bible would develop especially during his years at the seminary in Chieri (1835-1841). At a time when there was still not a true and proper course in Holy Scripture, he benefited from free time and holidays to take up his favourite studies. He gave himself enthusiastically to reading works that were not part of the programme and amongst them, *The History of the Old*

³⁴ G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*. Introductory essay and historical notes by Aldo Giraudo, Roma, LAS, 2011, 62-63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 91. Half a century later he would write to a Jew from Milan more or less in these terms: "We Catholics strictly follow Moses' teaching and all the books that great prophet left us. The only difference is in the interpretation of these writings". See G. Bosco, *Epistolario*. Introduction. texts and critical notes by Francesco Motto, vol. IV: (1873-1875) 1715-2243, Roma, LAS, 2003, 97.

and New Testament by the French Benedictine, Augustin Calmet, Jewish Antiquity and The Jewish War by Flavio Giuseppe, and also the Holy lessons on Divine Scripture by the Jesuit Ferdinando Zucconi.⁴⁰ "One subject I took very much to heart was Greek", he writes in the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*. With the help of a Jesuit, "who knew Greek very well", in four months he succeeded in translating "almost all of the New Testament". At the same time he was also studying "The principles of Hebrew", saying that "these three languages, Hebrew, Greek and French were for me my favourites after Latin and Italian"⁴¹ According to his biography, during the four years at the seminary John "read and studied the entire Bible".⁴²

Don Bosco was also interested in anything that could help with understanding the Bible, especially biblical geography. "To gain a clearer understanding of the Holy Scriptures" Lemoyne writes again, "Don Bosco had carefully studied the ancient geography of the holy places and regions bordering on Palestine, not leaving out Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Greece". One of his close friends said that in 1849 he had hung on the wall in room, on cardboard with a picture of Our Lady, a map of Palestine.⁴³ In 1850 and 1851 Don Bosco gave lessons in "sacred geography" at the seminary in Turin.⁴⁴

1.2. GOD LIKES TO COMMUNICATE HIS IDEAS

The Bible contains God's Revelation. In the "trattenimenti di un padre di famiglia co' suoi figliuoli secondo i bisogni del tempo", part of the book entitled *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, Don Bosco dedicated the third item in the first part to the problem of Divine Revelation. Taking the part of the father of a family, he explains that man can, in the light of reason, know certain truths that are part of so-called natural religion, but many truths could be known only quite imperfectly or remain completely unknown "such as the father of goodness", which God had not revealed. In fact, without revelation many peoples had fallen into serious errors. On the other hand, "would it not be ridiculous of him to say that the omnipotent God could not do what men he created could do, manifesting and communicating to others their inner thoughts,

⁴⁰ G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio*, 117.

⁴¹ G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio*, 119.

⁴² G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. I, 412.

⁴³ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. III, S. Benigno Canavese, Scuola tipografica e libreria salesiana, 1903, 590.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 618.

and not do what all teachers do by showing their knowledge to scholars?" And could one doubt that he does not want to do so "he who is so good to man and loves him so much"?⁴⁵ We note this verb "communicate" applied to God, "the great communicator" through love.⁴⁶

God began communicating his ideas from the beginning of humankind, explains the father of the family who is Don Bosco's spokesman. He gave our forefathers "knowledge of spiritual things, filled their hearts with feelings, and gave them a way of knowing good from evil". A few things were revealed to the ancient patriarchs and especially Moses and the prophets, whether by inner inspiration or through angelic ministry. Finally, God has spoken to us through His Son Jesus Christ, sent to save all human beings and to teach them the way to salvation. "The books then that contain the principal things revealed by God", the father of the family continues, "are those that taken as a whole we call the *Holy Bible*, that is, the book par excellence".⁴⁷ Until today, the books of the OT are held in great honour and lovingly accepted by both Christians and Jews. They are "perfectly in agreement" with Christians in saying that they contain Divine revelation and proclaim the coming of the Messiah. Christians, for their part, believe that the Messiah has already come and is called Jesus Christ.⁴⁸

But God also communicates to us what he is thinking through Tradition. "Sacred history", he describes in *Maniera facile per imparare la Storia sacra* "is found in the Bible and in tradition". What is tradition? "By tradition we mean the Word of God not written in the holy Books". In fact there are things that we believe from tradition, for example, that the holy books were kept intact and have come down to us as such, that we must make holy Sundays

⁴⁵ See Trattenimento III (Necessità della rivelazione) in G. Bosco, *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione. Trattenimenti di un padre di famiglia co' suoi figliuoli secondo i bisogni del tempo*, Torino, Tipografia dir. da P. De-Agostini 1853, 20 (= OE IV 214).

⁴⁶ Saint Francis de Sales, speaking of the mystery of the Incarnation, had used the words "communicating" and "communication" writing thus: "God knew from all eternity that he could make an unlimited number of creatures, of various kinds of perfection and quality, with which he could communicate, considering that amongst all the ways of communicating there was no better way than to join in with some of the nature he had created, so that the creature would be embedded and inserted into the Divinity and become one person with him, with his infinite goodness – which of itself leads to communication – he decided, then determined to proceed this way" (*Treatise on the Love of God*, second book, chapter 4 4).

⁴⁷ *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, 22 (= OE IV 216).

⁴⁸ See Trattenimento IV (Veracità dei libri dell'Antico Testamento) in *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, 24 (= OE IV 218).

rather than Saturdays, that the Apostles Creed is a summary of Christ's true teaching. In the Life of St Paul, he recalls two kinds of Revelation citing the recommendation of the Apostle to the faithful at Corinth: "In order not to fall into error, keep to the traditions you have learned from me and from my letter".⁴⁹ Don Bosco then explains that "tradition is preserved by the ongoing belief of the Church".⁵⁰

1.3. OUR FAITH IS COMPLETELY BASED ON GOD'S WORD

In the preface to his Bible History, Don Bosco writes that the Bible is "the foundation of our holy Religion, containing its dogmas and proofs".⁵¹ In latter editions this is softened a bit in favour of bible history which is in some way the Bible of simple people: "The study of bible history shows its very excellence by itself, and has no need to be recommended". Actually, "Bible history is the most ancient of all histories; it is the most certain, because it has God as its author; it is the most precious because it contains the Divine Will as shown to men; it is the most useful because it makes clear and proves the truths of our holy Religion".⁵²

One of his first publications, entitled *Il divoto dell'Angelo custode*, recalls that theologians and spiritual teachers base themselves on "the authority of the Divine Scriptures".⁵³ Speaking of the cult of the Saints in *Vita di san Martino*, he likes saying "as the teaching of the Catholic Church is clearly contained in the Bible".⁵⁴ For Don Bosco, the Bible is the source of faith and Christian life. In the meditation on faith for day seven of the *Mese di maggio*, he states that faith "is not based on the authority of men who can fall into error, but is completely based on God's Word, which is eternal, immutable, and can never vary in anything". And in the *Vita del sommo pontefice S. Urbano I*, he goes on saying that the Church

⁴⁹ *Vita di S. Paolo apostolo dottore delle genti* per cura del Sacer. Bosco Giovanni, Torino, Tip. di G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1857, 69 (= OE IX 235).

⁵⁰ *Maniera facile per imparare la Storia Sacra ad uso del popolo cristiano* per cura del sac. Bosco Giovanni, Torino, Tip. Paravia e Compagnia, 1855, 5-6 (= OE VI 53-54).

⁵¹ *Storia sacra per uso delle scuole utile ad ogni stato di persone arricchita di analoghe incisioni* compilata dal sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, Torino, Speirani e Ferrero, 1847, 7 (= OE III 7).

⁵² *Storia sacra per uso delle scuole e specialmente delle classi elementari secondo il programma del Ministero della pubblica istruzione utile ad ogni stato di persone arricchita di analoghe incisioni e di una carta della Terra santa* pel sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, edizione decima, Torino, Tipografia e libreria dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1876, 4 (= OE XXVII 210).

⁵³ *Il divoto dell'Angelo custode*, Torino, Tipografia Paravia e Comp., 1845, 6 (= OE I 92).

⁵⁴ *Vita di san Martino vescovo di Tours* per cura del sacerdote Bosco Giovanni, Torino, Tipografia Ribotta, 1855, 72 (= OE VI 460).

is fully based on “the infallible authority of the Bible”, which also includes the cult of the saints and even of their relics.⁵⁵ We read the same concern in the preface to the *Cattolico provveduto*, where he states that the first purpose of this manual of practices of piety is “to guide the Christian to the sources from which such practices draw their origin”, observing how they are based “on the Bible or on ecclesiastical institutions wholly consonant with what has been revealed in the holy books”.⁵⁶

The word of the Holy Scripture is a divine word and every human word must cede its place to it. Therefore, as he says goodbye to his readers, his almanac for the *Letture cattoliche* called *Il Galantuomo* says it is not only powerless to express in brief everything it wants to say, but is eclipsed by another word. He further added “It is not even me who wants to say goodbye... But another authoritative, nay even divine word. I open the Holy Scriptures which is God’s book, and blessed is he who listens to it and follows it”. Following that he gives some advice drawn from the Bible, addressed to “parents”, “children”, “youths”, “the poor”, and finally “everyone”, in turn.⁵⁷

1.4. NUMEROUS BIBLICAL CITATIONS IN DON BOSCO’S WRITINGS

Don Bosco published more than a hundred books or works of a certain consistency.⁵⁸ As well as works already quoted, there are a fair number of his writings his published works include no less than 38 volumes of around 500 pages each that refer either directly or indirectly to the Bible. Nor should we overlook the collection of his letters and other manuscripts also available today in critical edition. According to calculations by Fausto Perrenchio, there are around six thousand biblical quotations or allusions in them of which two thousand are from the OT, two thousand from the Gospels and two thousand from the rest of the NT.⁵⁹ A rapid overview of all his writings lets us see the biblical stamp they have which varies according to the nature of the work, but it remains constant and certainly was a conscious choice.

⁵⁵ *Vita del sommo pontefice S. Urbano I* per cura del Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni, Torino, Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1859, 102 (= OE XI 396).

⁵⁶ *Il cattolico provveduto*, VII (= OE XIX 7).

⁵⁷ See *Il Galantuomo*. Almanacco per l’anno bisestile 1868. Anno XVI, Torino, Tip. dell’Orat. di s. Franc. di Sales, 1867, 77-78 (= OE XVIII 321-322).

⁵⁸ See the complete list of books and works and their relative editions in P. Stella, *Gli scritti a stampa di san Giovanni Bosco*, Roma, LAS, 1977, 25-79.

⁵⁹ See a precise study by F. Perrenchio, *La Bibbia negli scritti di don Bosco*, Roma, LAS, 2010.

Amongst the category of handbooks written for school, as well as the already quoted Bible history, the Church history in 1845, with obvious roots in the NT.

Also the History of Italy does not fail to offer certain links to biblical and Gospel history. With regard to the latter, Fr. Lemoyne dared write that “almost all chapters close with a line from the Book of Proverbs”.⁶⁰ But this statement does not reflect the literal truth and can only be justified by the *sapiential* feeling of the book and the frequent recall of the law of retribution during earthly life.

Don Bosco wrote a good number of biographies which are of an educational and edifying nature. Holy Scripture helps him highlight the model he is offering for imitation or to show the Gospel authenticity of the individual, as we see in the Life of Luigi Comollo (1844) and later in the Lives of Dominic Savio (1859), Joseph Cafasso (1960), Michael Magone (1861), Francis Besucco (1864) and Louis Colle (1882). We should not overlook the lives of deceased Salesians either, since these exemplary lives are illustrated with some lines drawn from the Bible.

Don Bosco was a passionate reader and author of the lives of the saints. In 1848 writing the book entitled *Lo spirito di san Vincenzo de' Paoli*, he copied a French author almost entirely, but “inserting only some lines from Holy Scripture on which these maxims were based”, amounting to 213 quotations or allusions to the Bible.⁶¹ The *Vita di san Martino* (1855) ties many of the Saint's miracles to their biblical origin. Quotations and allusions to the Scriptures also appear in the Lives of St Pancratius (1856), Blessed Catherine De-Mattei (1862), Blessed Maria degli Angeli (1865) and in a play he wrote on St Alexius (1866).

The Scriptures are clearly present in devotional writings or ones for religious education such as *Il divoto dell'Angelo custode* (1845), the *Esercizio di divozione alla misericordia di Dio* (1847), the already cited *Giovane provveduto* (1847) and its feminine version *La figlia cristiana provveduta* (1878), the *Chiave del paradiso* (1856), the *Mese di maggio* (1858), the *Porta teco cristiano* (1858) and especially the *Il cattolico provveduto per le pratiche di pietà* (1868), a compendium of prayers and devotional exercises brought together by Fr. Bonetti and published under Don Bosco's guidance, with almost 400 biblical references.

⁶⁰ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. V, S. Benigno Canavese, Scuola tipografica e libreria salesiana, 1905, 496.

⁶¹ *Il cristiano guidato alla virtù ed alla civiltà secondo lo spirito di San Vincenzo de' Paoli*, 4 (= OE III 218).

After 1848, the year of the liberal revolution, his main concern was the defence of the faith and the Catholic Church. His strategy consisted in showing that the Catholic Religion was based on the Bible. The manual of Christian instruction entitled *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, appeared in 1853, and contained no fewer than 390 quotations from the Bible. This book is a perfect illustration of the new tactic Don Bosco has employing. There is no lack of references to the Scriptures in the other works of an apologetic nature, such as the *Fatti contemporanei* (1853), the *Vita infelice di un novello apostata* (1853), the *Raccolta di curiosi avvenimenti contemporanei* (1854), *Il giubileo* (1854), the *Due conferenze intorno al purgatorio* (1857), or *Massimino ossia incontro di un giovanetto con un ministro protestante* (1874). In defence of the Church and its institutions he wrote *Vita di san Pietro* (1856), and *Vita di san Paolo* (1857), both based on NT texts, while the Lives of the Popes of the first three centuries only occasionally mention facts or biblical expressions.

Publications on devotion to Mary Help of Christians increased in number from 1864, the year he began the church in her *honour* at *Valdocco*. They make a broad use of the Scriptures, but interpreted allegorically and figuratively, and aimed at exalting the image of the Virgin Mary, as we see especially in the *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice* (1868), or *Rimembranza di una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice* (1868).

In the final category of Don Bosco's writings, where we put those regarding the Oratory, Congregation and Salesian work, correspondence, circulars, articles which appeared in the *Bollettino Salesiano*, conferences and his accounts of his dreams, we also find references or allusions to the Bible. There is a substantial number of them in the Introduction to the Salesian Constitutions and likewise in his letters and circulars.

1.5. GOD'S WORD IS FOOD, GUIDANCE AND LIGHT

The first food for the soul is the Word of God, says the author of the *Giovane provveduto*: "Since the body without food gets sick and dies, the same happens to our soul if we do not give it its food. The Word of God is nutrition and food for our soul".⁶²

Like a sure guide, God's Word leads a person along the right path. On day nine of his *Mese di maggio*, Don Bosco writes that Jesus "wants to give me God as a father, the Church as a mother, the divine Word as a guide".⁶³ The gift of God's Word is one of

⁶² *Il giovane provveduto*, 18 (= OE II 198).

⁶³ *Il mese di maggio consacrato a Maria SS. Immacolata ad uso del popolo*, per cura del sacerdote Bosco Giovanni, Torino, Tip. G.B. Paravia e Compagnia, 1858, 62 (= OE X 356).

the three signs of "Christian dignity" which is what instruction is about.⁶⁴ Dominic Savio's Life is an illustration of such a truth because this young man "had anchored in his heart that the Word of God is man's guide on the way to heaven.

Therefore every idea he heard in a sermon was for him a reminder which he could not forget. This is where his exemplary tenor of life came from, which continued to progress from virtue to virtue, his exactness in fulfilling his duties, beyond which he could not go further" where does the quote start?⁶⁵ In the *Avvisi alle figlie cristiane* by Mons. Strambi which Don Bosco printed a few thousand copies of in 1856, we can read: "Daughter, listen willingly and frequently to the Word of the Lord, and all the holy advice that comes from God's ministers of healthy teaching, since the Word of the Lord ever purifies the heart, sets it on fire with holy love".⁶⁶ And in the "*appendice sopra san Giustino martire ed apologista*", placed at the end of the *Vita de' sommi pontefici S. Sisto, S. Telesforo, S. Igino, S. Pio*, Don Bosco draws a portrait of this philosopher converted "to the study and constant meditation on the holy books", and showed that he was "full of admiration and respect for the august majesty of the Holy Scriptures, which slow our passions, calm the doubts of the human spirit and make it tranquil".⁶⁷

The Word of God is light. In the *Cristiano guidato alla virtù ed alla secondo lo spirito di S. Vincenzo*, the author shows how this Saint allowed himself to be enlightened in each circumstance by the light of faith drawing on the Word of God Don Bosco wrote: "he followed this holy enlightenment so completely that they were like a lamp always lit for him, which guided every step of the King and Prophet: *Lucerna pedibus meis verbum tuum, et lumen semitis meis*. Through this torch which shone in the darkest places, he saw in sensible objects what the eyes of the body could not make out".⁶⁸ Commenting on this verse of psalm 119 which evokes the light of the divine commandments (Ps 119:105), Don Bosco, in his *Cattolico istruito*, offers this explanation: "The Word of God is called light since it enlightens man and directs him to believe, act and love. It is light because well explained and well taught, it shows man the road

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60 (= OE X 354).

⁶⁵ *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico allievo dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales, per cura del Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni*, Torino, Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1859, 38-39 (= OE XI 188-189).

⁶⁶ *Avvisi alle figlie cristiane del venerabile Monsignor Strambi. Aggiunto un modello di vita virtuosa nella giovane Dorotea*, Torino, Tip. G.B. Paravia e Comp., 1856, 4 (= OE VIII 490).

⁶⁷ *Vita de' sommi pontefici S. Sisto, S. Telesforo, S. Igino, S. Pio I*, 63 (= OE X 63).

⁶⁸ *Il cristiano guidato alla virtù ed alla civiltà secondo lo spirito di San Vincenzo de' Paoli*, 125 (= OE III 339).

he must keep to to reach a blessed existence. It is light because it calms a man's passions which are the real darkness of the soul, darkness which is very dangerous, and cannot be expunged except by God's Word. It is light because when well preached it infuses the light of divine grace in the heart of its listeners and makes them understand the truths of the faith". But the true light is Jesus Christ, Living Word of God, light that enlightens every person who comes into the world. Citing an ancient author, Don Bosco clarifies that "by the word lantern we mean Moses' law, and by light we mean Jesus Christ. Thus Moses' lantern illumined just one nation; the light of the sun of justice which is Jesus Christ, illumined the whole earth".⁶⁹ At the end of the *Vita de' sommi pontefici S. Sisto, S. Telesforo, S. Igino, S. Pio I*, Don Bosco wanted to publish an ode by poet Silvio Pellico in honour of St Justin, with these words from Proverbs: Lex lux (Pr 6,23 Vg). This is in order to say that the Word of God, for the believer who trusts in his law (lex), is truly a light (lux) for his way.⁷⁰

Everyone "needs God's Word" and everyone is invited to listen to it in God's House, writes Bishop. Ferrè, bishop of Casale Monferrato, in an "argument" reported by Don Bosco in his book entitled *Rimembranza d'una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice*: "The faithful on earth need God's Word as bread of life, and this bread is distributed in plenty in the sacred temple. The little ones come here and find the wisdom that instructs them, enlightens them, guides them. the adults come here and still find wisdom that with its milk and wine of truth and heavenly love nurtures and supports them. The doubtful come here, and those in need of advice in the arduous contingencies of life, and always find the divine Teacher who confirms them in their good resolutions and marks out the way they must tread to overcome difficulties and reach the homeland of the saints. Those in tribulation and the oppressed come here and receive the purest of consolations, tasting the sweet taste of heavenly happiness".⁷¹

1.6. THE GOSPEL IS LIGHT FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

With the apostolic zeal that characterises Don Bosco he wanted to bring the divine word of the Gospel not only to those near him but to the whole world. Already in the early years of priesthood, towards the end of his stay at the Ecclesiastical College at Turin, "the idea of being a missionary had never left

⁶⁹ See *Trattenimento XXXV (Vani sforzi dei Protestanti per diffondere lo spirito privato)* in *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, 253-254 (= OE IV 559-560).

⁷⁰ *Vita de' sommi pontefici S. Sisto, S. Telesforo, S. Igino, S. Pio I*, 85 (= OE X 85).

⁷¹ *Rimembranza di una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice*, pel sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1868, 114 (= OE XXI 116).

me." Fr Lemoyne, in the *Biographical Memoirs* added the reason for this desire, saying that "he felt a strong inclination to bring the light of the Gospel to infidels and savages. There too he would have encountered thousands, millions of children".⁷² Since he was unable to go himself, he sent the Salesians and the Salesian Sisters.

During the parting ceremony for the first Salesian missionaries for South America and Patagonia, on 11 November 1875, Don Bosco spoke thus of the Gospel to be proclaimed to the people: "Our Divine Saviour... when he was on this earth, before going to His heavenly Father, gathered his Apostles and said to them:... Go throughout the world... teach everyone... preach my Gospel to all creatures. With these words the Saviour gave not advice but a command to his apostles, so they would go and bring the Gospel to the whole world. This command or mission gave the name missionaries to those in our countries or foreign countries go to promulgate, or preach the truths of the faith".⁷³

The Gospel to be preached is the one same Gospel, as is the Church, Don Bosco reminds them in his sermon before their departure. He said, "As small as we are, we too place our little stone in the great edifice that is the Church. Yes, go in courage, but remember that there is only one Church that extends throughout Europe and America and the whole world and receive into its bosom the inhabitants of all the nations who wish to come and take refuge in her maternal bosom. Christ is the Saviour of souls, here as well as there. Thus the Gospel preached in one place is the same as preached in another, so that while separated in body we have unity of spirit everywhere all working for the greater glory of the same God and Saviour Our Lord Jesus Christ".⁷⁴

1.7. OUR FIRST DEVOTION MUST BE TO THE WORD OF GOD

In the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, a book which Don Bosco recommended for everyone, St Francis de Sales tells Philothea: "Be devoted to the Word of God",⁷⁵ almost as if to say that devotion to the Word of God has to be the first of all the 'devotions'. This expression is not found in Don Bosco's writings, but we can suppose that it expresses his thinking exactly. In fact the words drawn from the Bible are truly God's words. For Don Bosco that is so true as to make him almost completely ignore

⁷² G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. II, S. Benigno Canavese, Scuola tipografica e libreria salesiana, 1901, 203.

⁷³ *Da Torino alla Repubblica Argentina. Lettere dei Missionari salesiani* pel sac. Cesare Chiala, Torino, Tipografia e libreria salesiana, 1876, 44-45 (= OE XXVIII 278-279).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51-52 (= OE XXVIII 285-286).

⁷⁵ Second part, chapter XVII.

or minimise the part played by human authors. When he quotes a passage from the Scriptures, he generally mentions only the principal author, saying: "God says" or "The Holy Spirit said".

In the fifth talk in the *Cattolico istruito* on "divinità dei libri dell'Antico Testamento", he highlights "the sublimity and holiness of the teaching of the Holy Bible, which is so pure and perfect that only God himself could be the author". We need to accept as God's word what is contained in these books. Their authors were actually inspired by God, they are animated by the Holy Spirit when they speak. Their books contain facts that cannot be humanly explained by speech, especially the prophecies that come true in the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. On the other hand how do we explain "the admirable effectiveness that it has on the hearts of those who read it?" Whoever reads the Bible without prejudice cannot but feel touched inwardly, to the point of saying that this is God's work. At the end of the treatise, the father of the family, faithful interpreter of Don Bosco, expresses himself thus: "Meanwhile we, our hearts filled as they are with gratitude to God, who deigned to teach us himself through these holy books, read them with all respect, persuaded that we will find his word in them, his heavenly and infallible teaching".⁷⁶

Nevertheless the invitation to read the Bible is rarer with respect to listening to God's Word. This is what the father of the family emphasises in the *Cattolico istruito*: "I have never found that God commands the people to read the Bible. I do not recall ever having seen it written: Read the Word of God.... To the contrary we have clear expressions with which God commands us to listen to his holy word.... *Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei, et custodiunt illud*. I want you to note, my children, that the Saviour does not say here: Blessed those who read, or interpret the Word of God, but blessed those who listen to it".⁷⁷

To listen to it well we need to call on the Holy Spirit. When the young Christian girl hears the reading of the Epistle during Mass, she prays thus: "Divine Spirit, you have deigned to tell me through the prophets and the apostles your word, which is light for my steps. I thank you for having enlightened me through them, and I beg you to forgive me for having, until now, corresponded so badly to your goodness. Give me O Lord a docile heart to put your into practice the salutary instructions that the holy books give us

⁷⁶ See Trattenimento V (Divinità dei libri dell'Antico Testamento) in *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, 28 (= OE IV 222).

⁷⁷ See Trattenimento XXXV (*Vani sforzi dei Protestanti per diffondere lo spirito privato*), *ibid.*, 260-263 (= OE IV 566-569).

and their wise counsels, to guide my soul on a healthy path. Your judgements are right and they gladden my heart. Your precepts are clear, and they enlighten my mind; your law is immaculate and converts souls. I, your most unworthy handmaid, resolve to observe it by meditating on your help".⁷⁸

Don Bosco did not like the holy words of the Bible to be treated lightly. In the Historical outline on the life of the cleric Luigi Comollo, he recalls that it was he himself who was reprimanded one day by his seminarian friend: "It happened that I jokingly used the word of the Holy Scriptures, and I was keenly reprimanded, telling me that I should never make fun of the word of the Lord".⁷⁹ Fr. Rua has told us that Don Bosco, in turn, did not hesitate to "offer a kindly reproof when someone joked with the words or sentences from the holy books". *Nolite miscere sacra profanis*, he would say with a tone of voice and a look that showed how much he suffered at the irreverence for God's Word".⁸⁰ During a dinner with priests where one of them was parodying the words of Job, he reacted keenly"

Tell me: if St Francis de Sales was here, what would he say if he heard the words of Holy Scripture being profaned like this?"⁸¹

2. GENERAL WAYS OF COMMUNICATING GOD'S WORD

After illustrating the central nature of God's Word for Don Bosco, I would like to take into consideration the general ways he tried to communicate it to others, especially the young. There are five main ways.

2.1. CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION OF THE YOUNG

As a basis for the religious instruction of the boys, Don Bosco used the catechism, a summary of the Revelation contained in the books of the OT and NT. But a catechism illustrated with "examples" drawn mainly from the Holy Scriptures. According to the Biographical Memoirs he said one day that "for youngsters the little catechism should be like the Bible or St Thomas for

⁷⁸ *La figlia cristiana provveduta per la pratica dei suoi doveri negli esercizi di cristiana pietà per la recita dell'Uffizio della B. V. de' Vespri di tutto l'anno e dell'Uffizio dei Morti coll'aggiunta di una scelta di laudi sacre*, per sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, quarta edizione, Torino, Tipografia e libreria salesiana, Torino, 1883, 91-92 (= OE XXXIII 269-270).

⁷⁹ *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo morto nel seminario di Chieri ammirato da tutti per le sue singolari virtù, scritti da un suo Collega*, Torino, Tipografia Speirani e Ferrero, 1844, 25 (= OE I 25).

⁸⁰ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. III, 619.

⁸¹ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VI, San Benigno Canavese, Scuola tipografica e libreria salesiana, 1907, 1004-1005.

theologians", that the catechism is "a compendium of knowledge adapted to their age".⁸² While implicitly recognising that the catechism had become a kind of substitute for the Bible, a book accessible to youngsters being catechised, he said that with it all the importance of the Holy Scriptures and its source value of inestimable worth. In 1855 he would write a *Breve catechismo pei fanciulli ad uso della diocesi di Torino*, preceded however by a "compendium of Holy Scripture".⁸³

In 1847, he was able to publish a Bible History aimed firstly at all the children in the schools. In his preface, Don Bosco stated that his aim was "to popularise knowledge of the Holy Bible as much as possible, since it is the basis of our holy religion", a reason for which "no other teaching is more important or useful than this".⁸⁴ His method was somewhat original, and is described in these terms: "What we have that is most useful about this book is its pedagogical approach by which every scriptural fact leads to an educational maxim and is expressed in a way that is adapted to youth".⁸⁵

How did he put this book together? He says so in the preface: "I told a number of boys of every level the facts of the Holy Bible one by one, carefully noting the impression the story made on them and the effect it then produced. This became a guide for leaving some out, just hinting at others and telling others in detail".⁸⁶

What is Don Bosco's teaching method? Essentially narrative. More than depending on lectures, he narrates the facts, episodes or anecdotes, appealing to the listener's or reader's imagination, also the effect produced by suspense. It is enough to think of the way he told his dreams with all their imaginative descriptions. We have about 120 of the dreams Don Bosco told.⁸⁷ We can add dialogue to the narrative method. Not only the Catechism but also the Scriptures and Church History were presented through question and answer. Almost all his didactic works, in other words those that were not biographies, or just simple stories, take this form. Once Don Bosco was reprimanded by the Holy See because he presented

⁸² E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XIV: 1879-1880, Torino, SEI 1933, 838.

⁸³ See P. Braidò, *L'inedito "Breve catechismo pei fanciulli ad uso della diocesi di Torino" di don Bosco*, Roma, LAS, 1979.

⁸⁴ *Storia sacra*, 7 (= OE III 7).

⁸⁵ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. II, 394.

⁸⁶ *Storia sacra*, 6 (= OE III 6).

⁸⁷ See the calculation made by F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco et la vie spirituelle*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1967, 48.

his report on the state of the Congregation with questions and answers... A model of this "literary genre" is *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, which is presented from beginning to end as "a father of the family talking with his children". Also in the sermons where we find dialogues, as in his panegyric on St Philip Neri.⁸⁸

2.2. LITURGIES AND FEASTS

Reading Don Bosco's writings, we immediately become aware of the importance he attached to worship and liturgy for communicating the mystery of God. His insistence certainly comes from his love for the liturgy of the Old Testament, pre-dating that of the Church, but it also reveals a direct apologetic effort to defend the legitimacy and necessity of outward, visible and public cult, based on the Bible. In the appendix "On liturgies" which follows the Two conferences on purgatory, he presents the Coptic, Syriac, Nestorian and Armenian liturgies, as well as Greek and Latin ones.

There are also ancient displays of cult: sacrifices offered by Enos, Abraham, Job, Jacob, Hebrew feasts, the sanctuary built by Moses in the desert with all its trappings, and called a "portable oratory", suggesting a comparison with the Oratory of St Francis de Sales at its beginnings.⁸⁹ The collapse of the wall of Jericho happened during a procession around it.⁹⁰ But it is especially the building of Solomon's temple which is the event on which he focuses most of his considerations. Solomon had "a magnificent temple" built, "where gold, silver, ivory, sculpture adorned every part of the building".⁹¹ Don Bosco exalted the splendour of worship accompanied by music and hymns (2 Chron 5:12-13), emphasising especially the centrality of the altar of sacrifice.

Certainly, to external worship, the internal homage of the heart is added, according to its expression. But God wants to be honoured not only by interior worship "which we render with our heart and soul", but also exterior worship "that we give through our actions by means of the sense of the body". Such exterior worship, which becomes public worship "when it is given by human society gathered together", is the expression of society's recognition for God. Effectively, "God himself being creator, benefactor and

⁸⁸ The dialogue in his panegyric for St Philip Neri can be read in G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. IX, Torino, Tipografia S.A.I.D. "Buona stampa", 1912, 215-216.

⁸⁹ *Storia sacra*, 64 (= OE III 64).

⁹⁰ *Storia sacra*, 68 (= OE III 68).

⁹¹ See Trattenimento II (Necessità di una Religione) in *Il cattolico istruito nella sua religione*, 16 (= OE IV 210).

preserver of society, and of each person in particular, must be honoured by society with worship that is visible to society and therefore public".⁹²

Don Bosco willingly detects external signs of devotion. Jesus prayed on his knees, St Peter went to the temple to pray. The publican dared not raise his eyes to heaven. Priestly vestments serve to recall Jesus' paschal mystery. Quoting St Paul, he reminds us that visible things are a means to lead us to the invisible (cf Rm 1:20). The altar is an instrument of sacrifice and the Eucharist is offered on the altar. Don Bosco loves solemn liturgy like the one celebrated in heaven, as we see in the Book of the Apocalypse. He built three large churches for celebrating the sacred mysteries, two in Turin in honour of Mary Help of Christians and St John the Apostle and Evangelist and one in Rome in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Liturgy is feast, and there is no feast without liturgy. The sense of festivity is manifested concretely in the Oratory feasts.⁹³ The Oratory came into being as a festive oratory and its inseparable features were the practice of "the duties of a good Christian" and recreation of all possible kinds. With the development of this initial work, this festive and joyful character was not lost.

Besides ordinary Sundays and great solemn liturgies (Christmas, Epiphany, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, Corpus Christi), Marian celebrations were given emphasis (Birthday, Immaculate Conception, Mary Help of Christians). Some of the Saints' memorials especially dear to him were also highlighted. St Francis de Sales, St Joseph, St Aloysius Gonzaga, St John the Baptist (Don Bosco Bosco's 'official' name day), St Peter and St Cecilia. These feasts were usually preceded by triduums or novenas. Let's not forget some special days like the monthly recollection (with the austere name of "exercise for a happy death") and the annual retreat, all privileged opportunities for communication and listening to the Word of God.

So in the Oratory, by deliberate effort of the Director, they went from "feast to feast". "Study", Fr Ceria observed, "offered the boys' minds and imaginations a varied pasture that switched their thinking from less wholesome things, was a constant for the holy educator. Like drama performances, he directed the same idea to feasts in church and out of church, which were to be celebrated not only with pomp and cheerfulness, but also at intervals so that when

⁹² *Ibid.*.

⁹³ See the chapter "Svagli e feste all'Oratorio", in M. Wirth, *Da don Bosco ai nostri giorni. Tra storia e nuove sfide (1815-2000)*, Roma, LAS, 2000, 109-120.

the memory of one was fading, there was soon the expectation of another".⁹⁴

2.3. PREACHING

The most usual way of announcing and spreading God's Word is preaching practised in the exercise of ordinary ministry, in retreats or even in extraordinary "missions" in parishes. "Many parish priests in Piedmont wanted him [Don Bosco] in their churches" writes Fr Lemoyne, adding that "if he could, he never refused".⁹⁵ Throughout his life Don Bosco preached often and to all kinds of people, beginning with the young. We know that his preaching was focused on the Bible and especially on the Gospel. His biography assures us that he used to begin "with a scriptural text",⁹⁶ and that "his sermons were marvellously effective, because they were based on Sacred Scripture and on the Fathers".⁹⁷ It had become a habit for him. A day after preaching in a parish when he was still a seminarian, the parish priest offered a critique as to the form, but recognised that his sermon had been full of "scriptural thoughts".⁹⁸

We have preserved a number of his sermons that go back to his time at the seminary and the early years of his priestly ministry. One of them, with the title "On the Word of God", begins with this quotation from Luke's Gospel: *Beati qui audiunt verbum Dei et custodiunt illud* (Lc 11,28). Others have classical topics like the last things (death, judgement, purgatory, hell, and heaven), sin, Jesus' passion, mercy, forgiveness, charity, chastity, institution of the Eucharist, and frequent communion.⁹⁹

Recollections or retreats were considered privileged times for listening to the Word of God. Most of the sermons he prepared were meant for these occasions. Along with the obligatory sermons on the last things we also find the theme of charity, forgiveness, chastity, the Word of God and the Eucharist.¹⁰⁰ Every year he took part in the retreats organised by the Shrine of St Ignatius, at Lanzo. We have the notes he took during the retreat in 1842, with no lack of references to the Good Shepherd and St Paul's hymn to charity.

⁹⁴ E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XII: 1876, Torino, SEI, 1931, 136.

⁹⁵ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. V, 765.

⁹⁶ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. III, 62.

⁹⁷ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. IX, 342.

⁹⁸ G. Bosco, *Memorie dell'Oratorio*, 86

⁹⁹ See *Archivio Salesiano Centrale*, A225 Prediche.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

In 1849 Don Bosco organised for the first time a retreat for the boys at the Oratory in Turin. On a Sacred announcement, with 1500 copies announcing the event, we read this exhortation: "The Lord is calling you to listen to His holy Word and gives us a favourable opportunity to receive his graces and blessings. Take advantage of it. Blessed are you if you help the young to observe the divine law".¹⁰¹

2.4. NEWSPAPERS AND POPULAR PUBLISHING

In October 1848 Don Bosco began a newspaper that he called *The Friend of Youth*, with a view to "enlightening and strengthening youth against everything that might obscure the truths of the faith, corrupt them or mislead the people and lead them on false and wrong paths".¹⁰² Although it did not last very long from October to May the following year we see that he had grasped the growing importance of this means of mass communication.

He made many efforts throughout his life in the publishing area through various initiatives.¹⁰³ Amongst the serials or periodicals he published, his *Catholic Readings* occupy front stage. Their purpose was to "disseminate books of a simple style and popular language" and the publications had to be "moral instruction, nice stories, edifying stories, but exclusively about the Catholic religion". So the topics dealt with avoided any kind of political argument. To get them around, Don Bosco took a lot of care to look for correspondents and he used them to find many subscribers or 'members'). In this way he succeeded in creating a good distribution network throughout Piedmont, and then here and there in the rest of Italy. From 1853 to 1888, a good 432 of this little books were published, of which about seventy came from his own pen. The *Catholic Readings* saw a lasting success, with a monthly print run of fourteen thousand copies around 1865. The total number printed during the first eight years would have reached around two million.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. III, 605-606.

¹⁰² «L'Amico della gioventù». *Giornale religioso, morale e politico*, D. Giovanni Bosco gerente, Tipografia di Giacinto Marietti. Only no. 1 Saturday 21 October 1848 has been preserved. See G. Bosco, *Opere edite*. Second series: *Contributi su giornali e periodici*, vol. XXXVIII, 290. The roneod copy is found at the end of the volume.

¹⁰³ Cf E. Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana dalle origini alla morte di S. Giovanni Bosco (1841-1888)*, Torino, Società editrice internazionale, 1941, 683 690; E. Valentini, *Don Bosco e l'apostolato della stampa*, Biblioteca del «Salesianum» 47, Torino SEI 1957.

¹⁰⁴ On Don Bosco's good fortune with publishing, see S. Pivato, *Don Bosco e la "cultura popolare"*, in F. Traniello (a cura di), *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare*, Torino, Società editrice internazionale, 31988, 272-276.

Don Bosco also had the merit of knowing how to form and launch many collaborators and writers in their careers, like Bonetti, Lemoyne, Francesia, Barberis and others. Fr Bonetti became the editor of the Salesian Bulletin and author of a History of the Oratory which, says Fr. Ceria, was a "precious monument to Don Bosco".¹⁰⁵ Given easily to argument, he received many a reminder from his editor-in-chief about being calm and serene. Fr Lemoyne, more at ease with poetics and narrative, is known especially for his Life of Don Bosco and the Salesian Society and as author of the first nine volumes of the Biographical Memoirs. The smiling and candid Fr Francesia was a Latinist of note, friend of the famous Vallauri from Turin. Don Bosco's Salesians also launched other series before their father died: the *Letture ascetiche* on spirituality, the *Letture drammatiche* on youthful theatre, the *Letture amene* and the *Bibliotechina dell'operaio*.

Don Bosco saw the value of the press as a way of spreading "good books". So, what is a good book? It is a book in which "the thoughts, principles, morality" draw their consistency "from the apostolic tradition and books". He would write in a circular in 1885 with these well-weighted statements: "I do not hesitate to call this approach divine, since God himself used it to regenerate mankind. It was the books inspired by him that brought correct doctrine into the world. He wanted all the cities and villages of Palestine to have copies so that every Sabbath they would be read in religious assemblies. At the beginning these books were the patrimony of the Jewish people alone, but brought by tribes in captivity to Assyria and Caldea, the Holy Scriptures were translated into Syro-Caldaic and all Central Asia were able to have them in their own language. Given the power of Greece at the time, the Jews brought their colonies to every corner of the earth and with them the Holy Books multiplied infinitely and the Septuagint, through their version, enriched even the libraries of the pagan peoples; so orators, poets, philosophers of those times drew more than a few truths from the Bible. God, principally through his inspired books, prepared the world for the coming of the Saviour".¹⁰⁶

On the first page of the first edition of the *Bollettino salesiano*, under the title, there was a Gospel text as a kind of slogan: "Whoever welcomes a little child in my name, welcomes me" (Mt 18:5). Beginning with January of the second year of the *Bollettino salesiano* we find other Scriptural quotations or ideas inspired by Scripture: "Make use of the time until I arrive, reading

¹⁰⁵ E. Ceria, *Profili dei Capitolari Salesiani*, 151

¹⁰⁶ G. Bosco, *Epistolario*. Introduction critical texts and notes by Francesco Motto, vol. IV (1873-1875), Roma, LAS, 2003, 318-319.

to the people, preaching and teaching" (1 Tim 4:13); «You are sure of the end to which your faith looks forward, that is, the salvation of your souls"» (cf 1 Pt 1:9); "...contribute our share to their work for the truth" (3 Jn 8).

Don Bosco had the apostolate of the press at heart until the end of his life. With this in mind the Salesian press and bookshop at Valdocco, set up in 1861, was then followed by others in Sampierdarena and S. Benigno Canavese, then abroad in Nice, Marseilles, Lille, Barcelona, Buenos Aires. It is easy to guess their influence, also considering the Salesian expansion. In 1881 Don Bosco would also begin setting up a new and much larger printing press. Speaking about it one day with the future Pius XI, he said: "In this Don Bosco always wants to be in the vanguard of progress".¹⁰⁷ We recall that Don Bosco has been chosen as the Patron of Publishers.¹⁰⁸

2.5. A "SCHOOL OF THE WORD"

Don Bosco made an effort to pass on to his disciples an awareness of and love for the Word of God. He asked young Salesians, future priests, students of philosophy and theology, to learn seven verses of the NT, the so-called "Testamentino", off by heart every week. Nor was he happy with just reciting these but added, as we see in his biography, "a brief literal explanation with a few, but truly magnificent comments, concluding with a moral that encourages love of God and the way to behave".¹⁰⁹ He gave this recommendation to future preachers: "Seek testimonies of what the Holy Scriptures say especially the words and deeds of Our Lord Jesus Christ".¹¹⁰

Praying the breviary was for him a real school of the Word of God. When the occasion presented itself, Don Bosco did not refrain from doing what was needed. He used to say: "When clerics say the breviary they are praying with the whole Church; they are instructed by the Word inspired by the Holy Scriptures, lessons from the Fathers, the lives and example of the Saints; they pray with

¹⁰⁷ See E. Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, 683.

¹⁰⁸ «Stabiliamo in perpetuo e proclamiamo San Giovanni Bosco, confessore, principale celeste Patrono presso Dio della Società degli Editori Cattolici d'Italia, con tutti gli onori e privilegi liturgici che di diritto competono ai Patroni principali di Associazioni. Dato a Roma, presso San Pietro, sotto l'anello de Pescatore, il 24 maggio, festa di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice, 1946, VIII del Pontificato». See ASC A 3010512; official text in «Acta Apostolicae Sedis» 42/7-8 (1950) 425-427.

¹⁰⁹ G.B. Le moyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VI, 206.

¹¹⁰ G.B. Le moyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. IX, 23.

the psalms and canticles of the People of God and with liturgical hymns. The breviary will give these clerics more understanding than many books and guide and inspire them in their teaching their pupils the knowledge of God and the soul".¹¹¹

It is significant that the Constitutions of the Salesian Society put the Bible in first place in the program of ecclesiastical studies: "Praecipuum eorum studium totis viribus dirigitur ad Biblia Sacra". Only then does it list Church history, dogmatic, speculative and moral theology, and books for Christian education of youth.¹¹²

3. PARTICULAR WAYS OF COMMUNICATING GOD'S WORD

Other than the five ordinary ways of communicating the Word of God in a broad sense, we can highlight another five particular ways Don Bosco used, of which three are prevalently of an artistic nature.

3.1. CHOOSING A "SLOGAN" DRAWN FROM THE SCRIPTURES

A motto can be an effective way of communicating one's own project of life. The biblical verse "Da mihi animas, caetera tolle," taken from the Book of Genesis (Gn 14: 21), not in its literal sense, which he knew perfectly well (give me the people, I'll take the booty!), but in its spiritual sense, was chosen by Don Bosco to express his apostolic passion, and it would also become the Salesian Congregation's motto.¹¹³

We do not find in Don Bosco any detailed comment on the motto, but various allusions in different circumstances. In the Life of the young Dominic Savio, we learn that this biblical line was written on the door to his room. This is how he presents the arrival of the boy in October 1854 at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin "Having arrived at the house of the Oratory he came to my room, to put himself, as he had said, completely into the hands of his superiors. His gaze immediately fell on a card on which in large letters were written the following words that St Francis de Sales often used say: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*. I got him to read them carefully; and I wanted him to understand their meaning; therefore I invited him, in fact I helped him translate them and extract this meaning: O Lord give me souls and take away all the

¹¹¹ E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XI: 1875, Torino, SEI 1930, 293.

¹¹² See *Regulae Societatis S. Francisci Salesii, Romae*, Typis S.C. De Propaganda Fide, 1874, 30-31 (= OE XXV 282-283).

¹¹³ See M. Wirth, *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*. Interpretazioni esegetiche e uso spirituale di un versetto biblico (Gen 14,21), in R. Vicent - C. Pastore (a cura di), *Passione apostolica "Da mihi animas"*, Leumann (Torino), Elledici 2008, 7-21.

rest. He thought for a moment and then added: I understand. Here we do not do business with money, but business with souls. I see; I hope that my soul will also be part of this business".¹¹⁴ This writing on the door, then, gave him a good opportunity for an interesting dialogue.

On 31 December 1863, while he was giving the Strenna for the New Year, Don Bosco explained the personal meaning he was giving to the biblical phrase: "A programme for this house that is written up in my room: Da mihi animas, caetera tolle. All I want is your souls, I only want your spiritual good.... I promise to give you everything that I am and have. For you I study, for you I work, for you I live and for you I am also ready to give my life".¹¹⁵

In 1868, Don Bosco published a manual of Christian living for the faithful, with the title *Il cattolico provveduto per le pratiche di pietà*. It contained a meditation on zeal, where he strongly repeats that zeal for the health of souls is not only reserved for God's ministers, ecclesiastics, but is everyone's business. At a time when "the devil is doing everything possible to tempt or gain souls", nobody can stand back and say like Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Because in reality God commands each of us to care for his brother. This is why the author of the manual invites the Christian to say this prayer: "Give me the souls of my brothers, my parents... give them to me so I can give them eternal happiness, or better give them to Mary's tears, since she has prayed so much for them and still prays; give them to the tears of your Divine Son, who shed his blood to cancel out the sins of the world".¹¹⁶

For Don Bosco the motto was a prayer addressed to God, as we see from this statement in the *Il Galantuomo* in 1880: "My prayer is give me souls and take away the rest"¹¹⁷. During the Conference to Salesian Cooperators at Borgo S. Martino on 1 July 1880, he asked them to become "true followers of St Francis de Sales, who was everything to everyone in order to win them for God, and often said: Give me souls and take away the rest".¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ G. Bosco, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico*, 38 (= OE XI 188).

¹¹⁵ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VII, Torino. Libreria salesiana editrice, 1909, 585.

¹¹⁶ *Il cattolico provveduto*, 537 (= OE XIX 545).

¹¹⁷ *Il Galantuomo. Almanacco per l'anno bisestile 1880*. Anno XVIII, Torino, Tipografia Salesiana [1879], 25 (= OE XXXI 85).

¹¹⁸ E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XIV, 547.

In 1884, when choosing the official coat of arms for the Salesian Society, opinion was divided. Don Bosco resolved the question with this statement: "There is one motto that I have adopted since the beginning of the Oratory..., when I was visiting the prisons: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*. The Chapter clapped Don Bosco and accepted this historical motto"¹¹⁹.

3.2. BIBLICAL WRITINGS ON THE WALLS

To increase the doctrinal and catechetical instruction and make it "visible", Don Bosco also decided to decorate the walls and porticoes of the House at the Oratory with writings drawn from Scripture.

In the building constructed in 1856 he had 28 quotations from the Bible put on the walls of the archways, linked to Confession and the Ten Commandments.¹²⁰ On the one built in 1861, he added seven new quotations from Scripture, to do particularly with the idea of adolescence.¹²¹ And finally a further four biblical citations were added in 1864 to draw attention to the salvation of the soul, prayer, singing and confession.¹²²

The biblical texts were in Latin with an Italian translation. We list some of them here in their Italian version:

– *Corriamo a presentarci davanti a Lui coll'orazione e coi salmi celebriamo le sue lodi* (Ps 94,2). – *Vivo darai a Lui laude, vivo e sano darai laude e onore a Dio, e ti glorierai di sue misericordie* (Sir 17,27). – *L'elemosina libera dalla morte e purga i peccati, e fa trovare la misericordia e la vita eterna* (Tob 12,9). – *Coloro che commettono peccato ed iniquità sono nemici dell'anima propria* (Tob 12,10). – *Ma uno dei giovanetti Maccabei che era il primogenito disse: Che cerchi tu, o che vuoi sapere da noi? Noi siam pronti a morire, piuttostoché trasgredire le leggi paterne dateci da Dio* (2 Mac 7,2). – *La traccia dell'aquila nell'aria, la traccia di un serpente sulla pietra, la traccia di una nave in mezzo al mare, così la traccia dell'uomo nell'adolescenza* (Prov. 30,19). – *Buona cosa è per l'uomo l'aver portato il giogo fin dalla sua adolescenza* (Lam 3,27). – *Nessuno disprezzi la tua giovinezza; ma sii tu il modello dei fedeli nel parlare, nel conversare, nella carità, nella fede, nella castità.* (1Tm 4,12).

¹¹⁹ E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XVII: 1884-1885, Torino, SEI 1936, 366.

¹²⁰ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. V, 543-547.

¹²¹ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VI, 948-949.

¹²² G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VII, 426.

3.3. MUSIC AND SINGING

For Don Bosco music was not only a powerful medium for education of feelings and for joy, but also for communicating God's Word. In his *Companion to Youth* he published various songs and sacred hymns. He composed several hymns himself, and put them to music, such as some Masses, a *Tantum ergo*, psalms for Vespers. He set up a choir whose performances were much appreciated. It was a novelty at the time, because churches in Piedmont at the time only knew adult male voices, and these usually a soloists. The children's voices, the choir at Valdocco was often in demand and put on performances in Turin, Moncalieri, Chieri and elsewhere.

For Christmas 1842 he wanted to prepare a Christmas Carol. He wrote the lyrics and put them to music. Here are his simple verses:

Ah! si canti in suon di giubilo,
Ah! si canti in suon d'amor.
O fedeli, è nato il tenero
Nostro Dio Salvator.
Oh come accesa splende ogni stella
La luna mostrasi lucente e bella
E delle tenebre squarciasi il vel.
Schiere serafiche, che il ciel disserra
Gridan con giubilo: sia pace in terra!
Altre rispondono: sia gloria in ciel!
Vieni, vieni, o pace amata,
Nei cuor nostri a riposar.
O bambino in mezzo a noi
Ti vogliamo conservar.¹²³

Towards 1859, the director of the Oratory had this item from Scripture written on the wall of the music hall: *Ne impedias musicam* (Sir 32,5). Later he would tell a teacher at Marseilles: "An oratory without music is a body without a soul".¹²⁴

¹²³ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. II, 129-131.

¹²⁴ E. Ceria, *Memorie biografiche del Beato Giovanni Bosco*, vol. XV: 1881-1882, Torino, SEI, 1934, 57.

Besides, he had the merit of not only discovering talents, but also of nurturing them by relying on them.¹²⁵ The first was John Calgiero, "The Coryphaeus [leading figure] of Salesian musical tradition". Teacher of music and singing at the Oratory, Cagliero was also a composer of note, and also received praise from Verdi. Encouraged by Don Bosco, Cagliero composed religious and secular operettas. Amongst these we could pick out songs and music in honour of Jesus, Mary, the Guardian Angels, Saint Cecilia, Saint Rosa of Lima, St Aloysius, Te Deums, Tantum ergos, some pastorals for the Christmas novena, a Stabat Mater, various Masses and Vespers, a Gregorian method for intoning the psalms. After he left for America in 1875, he would be worthily replaced by Brother Joseph Dogliani as director of the schola cantorum and composer.

In 1882 Don Bosco published five collections of sacred music, entitled *Arpa cattolica*, in honour of Jesus Christ, Mary, the Saints for the principal feasts, novenas, and also on the 'Last Things'. To promote hymn singing Don Bosco in his presentation to the reader, recalls the spiritual favours granted by Pius IX "to whoever freely teaches the singing of sacred songs, practising them in public or in private at least occasionally", and also "to whoever sings publicly or privately in the oratory".¹²⁶

3.4. THEATRE

As well as music, the theatre (which Don Bosco preferred to call by the name 'teatrino' or 'little theatre'), at the Oratory. Plays and acting developed increasingly along with "academies" of a poetic or musical kind, to a point where they became an essential part of major feasts at the Oratory.

In order to popularise bible history he also used this medium. The *Biographical Memoirs* have preserved the programme for a performance on 15 August 1848 entitled *Saggio dei figliuoli dell'Oratorio di San Francesco di Sales sopra la storia dell'Antico Testamento*. The programme involved a performance of each of six periods from the Old Testament: from the creation to the flood, from the flood to the call of Abraham, from Abraham to the Exodus, from the Exodus until the foundation of the Temple by Solomon, from then until the deportation into Babylon, from Babylon until the birth of the Saviour. The performance had 'intermezzi' dedicated to hymns to the glory of God, the Virgin, St Aloysius, and in honour of Pope Pius IX and King Charles Albert.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ E. Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, 695-701.

¹²⁶ *Arpa cattolica o raccolta di laudi sacre sulla passione sulle feste principali del Signore e sui novissimi*, S. Pier d'Arena/Torino, Tipografia e Libreria di S. Vincenzo, 1882, 3-4 (= OE XXXII 359-360).

¹²⁷ G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche di Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. III, 428.

Don Bosco also wrote apologetic works in dialogue form (An argument between a lawyer and a Protestant minister, Dialogue between a barber and a theologian). For the Feast of St Cecilia in 1864, he wrote *The House of Fortune*, a dramatic performance, in which one learns amongst other things of “Providence that watches over human destiny, and often allows the evil men do, or want to do to others, to fall upon them themselves”..¹²⁸

Don Bosco discovered and developed theatrical talents amongst his sons. Thus Fr. Lemoyne, his secretary, wrote a play with a biblical background entitled *David unto King*. Fr. Francesia even wrote plays in Latin: *De sancto Aurelio Augustino*, and *Leo I pontifex maximus*.

From 1858 to 1866, the ‘little theatre’ was done in a refectory under the Church of St. Francis de Sales. Then a study hall was eventually used for this purpose. It would be up to his successor, Fr Rua, to carry out Don Bosco’s wish: a theatre that was opened in 1895.

Don Bosco saw a “school for morality, good social living and even holiness” in the Little Theatre. The *Regole pel teatrino* (*Rules for little theatre*) drawn up by Don Bosco in 1871 focused on performances with the following aims: “lifting spirits, educating, instructing the young as much as one can, morally”..¹²⁹ So did he need to moralise at any cost? It was more the case that he wanted an overly moralising Fr Lemoyne to see that one could do things in such a way that morality was part of the story and not to be treated as a separate item.¹³⁰

3.5. ART

The Gospel is also proclaimed through art, especially sculpture and painting. The consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin took place on 9 June 1868. We note here some of the Gospel scenes that were pictured, and that have served to nurture the piety of the faithful.

In the description we find in the book *Mary Help of Christians* an account of some graces we see especially that outside, above the cupola is the Annunciation scene when Mary receives news from the Angel of her royal motherhood (cf Lk 1:32-33). Don Bosco writes: “Halfway along the church is the grand cupola surmounted

¹²⁸ G. Bosco, *La casa della fortuna. Rappresentazione drammatica*, 57 (= OE XVI 57).

¹²⁹ The Rules for the Little Theatre were reported in G.B. Lemoyne, *Memorie biografiche del Venerabile Servo di Dio Don Giovanni Bosco*, vol. VI, 106 108.

¹³⁰ See E. Ceria, *Profili dei Capitolari Salesiani morti dall'anno 1865 al 1950*, Formazione salesiana II 3, Colle Don Bosco, LDC 1951, 396.

by a statue of the Blessed Virgin. Two bell towers stand on both sides, both with a little cupola on top and they two have two statues with branches of beaten gold, each two and a half metres high. One of these statues is of the Angel Gabriel offering a crown to the Blessed Virgin".¹³¹

Of the five altars in the church, following indications by Don Bosco in the same book, the richest of the Gospel scenes was the altar to the left as one entered, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. There you could admire seven paintings which aimed at "highlighting through symbols, facts and parables from the Gospel the goodness and mercy of the Saviour to mankind". In one of the crescent-shaped areas there is a painting of Jesus' Last Supper "showing the moment of institution of the Eucharist amidst his wondering disciples" (cf Mt 26:26-29). On the side wall to the right we find the scene of Jesus amidst the children "giving them loving advice and caressing them affectionately" (cf Mk 10:16). Beside this is the Samaritan woman "listening to words of life from the Nazarene, discovering the mysteries of her past faults; there is wonder on the Samaritan woman's face, she is troubled, but there is new determination to act well, and on Jesus' face the holy serenity of someone who is rebuking her, but with mercy" (cf Jn 4:1-26). On the left near the altar is the Agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, receiving the chalice held by an angel. "The artist", Don Bosco writes "has tried to picture the divine face with the profound pain he must have felt at the thought of his coming passion" (cf Mt 26:36-46). In the painting to the side there is the Good Shepherd finding the lost sheep (cf Lk 15:1-7), and Don Bosco says "There is a beautiful expression of the unhappy situation of the sheep caught in a bush on the edge of a precipice, and the loving concern of the mystic Shepherd kneeling on the edge of the cliff and trying to extract the sheep unscathed, while in the distance the faithful flock is in the sheepfold marked by a shining cross"..¹³²

The decoration of the altar of St Peter recalls the Gospel scene at Cesarea of Philippi (cf Mt 16:19). "The picture, with a large gilt frame and triple crown", writes Don Bosco, "represents Jesus Christ in the act of handing over the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the prince of the apostles".¹³³ "Above the altar", he continues,

¹³¹ *Maria Ausiliatrice col racconto di alcune grazie ottenute nel primo settennio della consacrazione della Chiesa a Lei dedicata in Torino per cura del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, Torino, Tipografia e Libreria dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales, 1875, 40 (= OE XXVI 344).*

¹³² *Ibid.*, 48-51.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 52.

"a large canvas covers the large crescent-shaped window showing the expulsion of the merchants from temple in various colours".¹³⁴ Obviously here he wanted to inculcate respect for the church as God's house and a house of prayer.

The large painting standing above the main altar represents Mary with the Child but presented ideally in heaven with the twin symbols of power and grace, inspired by the Gospel of Luke, especially when the birth of Jesus was announced (Lk 1:26-38) and by the Song of the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55). In the *Marvels of the Mother of God invoked under the title of Mary Help of Christians* we find this description: "The Virgin stands out in a sea of light and majesty, standing on a throne of clouds. She is covered by a mantle held up by angels who are offering her a crown for she is their queen. In her right hand she holds a sceptre which symbolises her power, almost alluding to the words we find in the Gospel: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est* From above a ray of heavenly light descends; the eye of God that descends to Mary's head. The words: *Virtus altissimi obumbrabit tibi*... are written there. On the opposite side other rays come down from the dove, the Holy Spirit, and they also descend to Mary's head with the following words written in their midst: *Ave, gratia plena* This was the greeting to Mary by the Archangel Gabriel when he proclaimed in God's name that she would become the mother of the Saviour. Below are the holy Apostles and Evangelists St Luke [and] St Mark".¹³⁵

As in the Church of Mary Help of Christians we recall that Don Bosco also had the Church of St John the Evangelist built in Turin, and the Sacred Heart Church in Rome, and we could make similar observations regarding these. Thus the Gospel was illustrated and proclaimed also in art, as well as music, theatre, or in other words by all the things that pass through the body's five senses.

Don Bosco was a communicator of God's Word

Don Bosco is a man of God's Word. His familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures is impressive, and his biblical quotations amount to very many. All that comes from his love for Divine Revelation as handed on through the Sacred Scriptures and the Church's tradition. There is no Christian education for him without this basis and we cannot but admire his effort to base everything on the

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹³⁵ *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice* raccolte dal Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco, Torino, Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Franc. di Sales, 1868, 127-128 (= OE XX 319-320).

Scriptures, to spread knowledge of them everywhere and to use them as the direct means par excellence to educate all those to whom he was sent to faith and life.

For Don Bosco the Word of God was truly at the centre of his concerns as a communicator. To achieve the goal he had set himself he used every means possible at the time and in his real circumstances. He not only used the traditional means at his disposition such as the catechism, bible history, worship, preaching, but he understood the new importance of the newspaper, the press, and imagined possibilities for art and the things that were especially pleasing to the young: music, singing, theatre. Today technical progress, computer science offers exponential growth in new forms of communication through new media. We can ask ourselves: what would Don Bosco have done in our time to spread God's word everywhere?

“TEATRINO”: A CRITICAL ELEMENT OF DON BOSCO’S PEDAGOGY

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PREFACE

In order to present what is most important about “*Teatrino*” in Don Bosco’s educational system in just a few pages, we have had recourse to the excellent study by Fr Saverio Stagnoli (“*Don Bosco e il teatro educativo salesiano*”) which cannot be found in the Congregation’s libraries because it was never published by Salesian publishers, and only appeared as an article in the journal “*Eco degli Oratori*” (1967-68).

It is a basic work on the question of Don Bosco’s “*Teatrino*”, by a competent author, meticulous researcher and enthusiast of the educational tool that Don Bosco himself considered indispensable.

In his preface he summarises his research process thus: “*We wanted to engage in research on the beginnings of Salesian theatrical activity at the Oratory in Turin (chapter 3), its development in the first college-boarding school (chapter 5) and its expansion; as well as that group of settings (chapter 7), noting how Don Bosco had intervened concretely through his direct educational activity, writing theatre scripts himself (chapter 4) and drawing up a small book of rules (chapter 6). and so he recognised the need... for a convenient introduction to set the scene, one which would outline some features of the history of youth theatre for educational purposes up till halfway through the 19th century, and sum up Don Bosco’s educational system, in which the Salesian theatre came about and is still expressed (chapter 2). So in natural rapport with this introduction, we arrive at conclusions which emphasise how the tradition merged with Don Bosco educational theatre (chapter 8) and what is new and characteristic about it for history and life (chapter 9).*”

... What has urged me to write this is the realisation that there is no systematic and sufficiently complete work available on the topic, along with the hope that from this documentation other research can be taken up which can go more deeply and properly into the matter. But what has determined and encouraged me most, is the intimate belief, which has been gradually confirmed, that there is a profound relationship between theatre and education, between youth theatre and education of the young.

Fr Saverio's note of the lack of earlier studies on Don Bosco's *"Teatrino"* continues to be valid, since not even after him has further research been done, except perhaps for Fr Marco Bongioanni's intention to produce 4 volumes on Don Bosco's personality as a: "Communicator Educator"; it was left incomplete because of his untimely death, meaning he only completed the first two 1. *Una 'personalità teatrale'* - 2. *Nel 'gioco drammatico'*, and the remaining two never went to press: 3. *Nel 'teatro giovanile'* and 4. *Nella 'drammaturgia musicale'*.

This leads us to say that Fr Stagnoli was really the last one to take up the question of Don Bosco's theatrical charism. We could say of him: "Après moi, le déluge", since it is 45 years since he carried out his research. At the time he was writing (end of the 1960s, in chap. 7) he could say with satisfaction: *"In Italy despite every kind of difficulty. there is still the "largest youth theatre group in Europe" because "there are around 2,500 young actors and 40,000 collaborators: UNESCO delegates were surprised to hear of these figures. and we should note that this theatrical activity in general, and by youth in particular was to be found prevalently in Salesian settings. This was said authoritatively, though implicitly, by, Anton Giulio Bragaglia in 1952 and confirmed by statistics found in "Teatro dei Giovani". A more recent calculation leads to an average of some 700 Salesian performances on a single Sunday"*.

Today we note that after *"Espressione Giovani"* closed (1984, L.D.C. journal which came out of the enthusiasm of Salesian at Arese, which kept up the tradition introduced by Don Bosco - in 1885- through his *"Letture drammatiche"* and followed, for a century, by an incredible range of publications and journals), we have spent more than thirty years in a bubble which has frozen that immense legacy, other than for a handful of personal efforts of a nostalgic nature'.

An entire generation, or perhaps two, of young Salesians and young leaders have lost contact with that tradition and are amazed to hear stories from their 'elders' of the magnificent times when they were on stage every Sunday, when the superiors (as the kids at school called the Salesians) had them reciting or acting and did the same with them.

If this document at least succeeds somewhat in firing people up again, as was the case in the first Oratory at Valdocco and for the hundred years that followed, we will have contributed to the Rector Major's pressing call to 'return to Don Bosco' and be faithful to him.

WHO ARE THE READERS?

The following considerations are addressed to recent generations, those to whom we have not handed this particular testimony of fidelity to the origins, and who are, at least most of them, not preaped to today in this basic element of our charism for education. We address those who are not aware of the extraordinary relevance of Don Bosc's educational thinking concerning the

use of theatre, and are corrupted by less-than-Salesian ideas suggesting, for example, that liturgy is a serious matter and we cannot introduce 'theatre' into liturgical celebrations, or that we should not waste time at school by tackling 'theatre', or that catechetics has little to do with dialogues and sketches, that it is better to listen to music than to make music, and that if we have to recite, then anything is fine so long as the kids like it.

The idea behind "*Teatrino*" for Don Bosco, permeates all his educational activity; it is a style of pedagogical relationship with young people. Therefore we are not so much called to 'make theatre' in special places or for big occasions, but it is instead almost something we wear, a 'state of mind' the Salesian educator adopts in whatever he does as an educator. Each of the young Salesians and young leaders is destined for a specific role in the broad field of our mission, and the style which he is called to employ at school, in the oratory, with catechetics, for young people who are left out, in the missionary or vocational area, needs to take advantage of "*Teatrino*" as a substratum of any formation or education approach.

DON BOSCO THE COMMUNICATOR AND HIS SALESIANS

Don Bosco's communications style was that of the dramatist. He did not stop at passing on ideas and content but wanted to be in tune with feelings, on the same emotional wavelength as youngsters. So he deliberately gave a theatrical style to his relationships of a communicational and pedagogical nature with others. His was a dramatic charism, an attractive and winning personality, strongly interested in dialogue. Fr Bongioanni tells us: "*He dialogued a lot, giving a theatrical touch to his relationships with simple people and the young so he would be understood and could communicate with them. It was this kind of temperament that led John Bosco to do gymnastics, play the clown, in order to dramatise and communicate the simple catechetics he had learned from his parish priest and his mother*" (*Giochiamo a teatro*, LDC, p. 35).

Martina Crivello points out in an article in the Italian Salesian Bulletin (January 2008): "*through these kinds of popular, country-style theatrics, John learned to communicate with his young friends and get them involved in an atmosphere of festivity, celebrating values that he felt called to pass on and share with young people following a plan from Providence on high. He did this since that dream when he was nine marked his life so radically. For people, especially the boys he would meet in the Piedmontese Capital as a young priest, he employed a kind of theatre that was strictly connected with his own life, with his venture into education where he put all of himself into things. The theatrical style of his communication got people involved and was able to channel not so much ideas as feelings and authentic values*". His youthful apprenticeship in this would later lead him to put a stamp on his Oratory as a grand dramatic 'game' where theatre and music were its soul.

Nobody- pretends that all the Salesians would have the same capacity as Don Bosco in this: it would be impossible. He was unique. Just the same, for anyone who does not have this nature, this educative detail of dramatic communication can be nurtured over the years of formation and one cannot really do without the tools that make this kind of educational communication work: theatre and music. They are not picked up just through theory, but they can become natural through experience, being 'Salesians like Don Bosco'. We cannot ignore or just throw out Don Bosco conviction: *"Theatre, if comedies are well chosen, is a school of morality, good social life, and even of holiness"* (Fr Barberis' diary). And then there is the famous 'Good Christians and upright citizens', also attributed to *"Teatrino"*. We may be surprised at the reference to holiness (our first and absolute aim) also achievable through theatre? How come we have relegated theatre to the attic for more than thirty years, as if it were redundant in education?

In that conversation with Fr Barberis, we hear Don Bosco saying: *"The happiness wrought by these little theatrical moments made some decide to stay in the Congregation"*. Amongst the reasons for the current drop in vocations we should not hesitate to add this one too, amongst many others. As we might also suspect that there is a direct and mutual relationship between the decline in the number of Brothers (Coadjutors) and the abandonment of *"Teatrino"* given that they were formidable supporters and key figures in it.

"TORRONI, TORRONI, WHO WANTS TO BUY TORRONI?"

Dialogue as a style: Don Bosco's characteristic way of communicating. According to G. Bonetti (Cinque lustri dell'Oratorio or in English - now out of print - *"Don Bosco's Apostolate"*) we read that on Sundays and feast days there was *"instruction or a sermon in the evening in dialogue form. Good Fr Borel, mixing in with the boys, would play the penitent or student and would come up with questions and answers that were so interesting that it kept everyone attentive and laughing, while Don Bosco, from up front, would instruct or moralise according to need"*. On other occasions *"Don Bosco would come into church pretending either to be a businessman, or a wild young lad forced by his mother to come and listen to the sermon, or someone the Rector had invited to the Oratory, or a friend who had brought some of his mates along... Don Bosco would come down the aisle like a street-vendor shouting: 'Torrioni, torrioni, who wants to buy torrioni?...'"*

I ask myself why these kinds of things today have been relegated to the class of deprecated forms of communication, especially when we know that our 'ex cathedra' catechesis doesn't grab people, bores them, and has little effect. This is what we mean when we are talking about Don Bosco's dramatic character. If the aim is to get through to the youngster, dialogue is the best way, therefore Don Bosco made constant use of it, in any area or situation.

We are amazed at the 'Eight Dialogues on the Metric Decimal System' that he wrote when Piedmont changed its system of measurements. We admire them as brilliant intuition, but I don't think it ever occurred to anyone to repeat the experience at an identical moment such as the introduction of the Euro in place of national monetary systems.

"Also the so-called 'Good Night', Fr Stagnoli says, "very often took on, especially in the early Oratory days, a dialogue form, usually improvised, sometimes prepared beforehand". But also when Don Bosco told stories about the day, or narrated his dreams, whoever reads them "is faced with dramatic scenes that are not only surprising for their variety and flexibility, but begins to understand how his youthful audience, that would sometimes hear these things told in episodes night after night, and involved them, were not listening to a story but seeing something real; this brought about conversions, radical changes of conduct and good resolutions". In a statement of this kind, we find the most eloquent definition of educational theatre, not just the on-stage type, but something that happens in any situation of educational rapport.

Even in his letters Don Bosco used sometimes employ the dialogue form. To Canon Pietro Giuseppe De Gaudenzi he sent this letter on Christmas Eve 1851: *"Din-din-din - Servant: Who is it? - B. Don Bosco needs to talk to you... - S. I'll go immediately and bring him in... - Arc. Dear Don Bosco, what breath of fresh air has brought you here? Are you well? Come and sit down.. - B. Everything's ok. I had a good trip..."* and on it went until the end.

We can get lost trying to draw up a list of Don Bosco's writings that take on dialogue form in his literary style, as if it were a stage backdrop. We can take his major works (Bible history, Conversion of a Waldensian, Who is Don Ambrogio?, The Catholic Companion, Basics of the Catholic Religion, Arithmetic and the Metric System made Simple...) and then go to the many shorter works written for the Catholic Readings.

Dialogue is a style that his Salesians incarnated to the point that many of the passages from Lemoyne's Biographical Memoirs make great use of it (the famous encounter with Bartholomew Garelli) and others, like Francesia, transferred to the many theatrical works that they were brilliant writers of.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM AS A "CLIMATE" FOR "TEATRINO"

Chapter 2 in Fr Stagnoli's work is entitled: *"Don Bosco's educational system as a climate for his youthful theatre"*. In fact one cannot talk of *"Teatrino"* as an element in itself of Don Bosco's educational approach, without locating it as part of the broader panorama of his entire system of pedagogy.

In the part where he picks out salient points in the system, Fr Stagnoli speaks at greater length (paragraph 3) of the *"Expressions of preventive loving*

kindness and the theatre", where he develops a discussion on cheerfulness in family spirit: *"Cheerfulness not as a methodological accessory, or means, expedient for accepting what is of substance"*, but a deep need of family life and of a state of Grace. Cheerfulness that above all show up spontaneously in the playground (*"I am happy to see you enjoy yourselves, play, that you are cheerful; this is a way to be holy like St Aloysius, so long as you don't commit sin"* - M.B. XI, 231). It is easy to go from the playground to other kinds of cheerfulness: theatre, music, singing, outings (*"We give them plenty of room to jump, run, have fun; gymnastics, music, little theatre, outings are very effective means for obtaining discipline, and are good for morality and health"* he wrote in his small work on the Preventive System).

We can deduce from this the central that that Don Bosco wanted music and theatre to play in his Oratory to create the family spirit essential for education. Fr Ceria's biography says: *"Whoever does not understand at least those who lived in the Oratory at the time, would have no idea of the enthusiasm that dominated there for everything musical"* (Annali, p. 697). This ('dominating enthusiasm') of Ceria's perhaps sounds exaggerated today. But many of us who grew up in that atmosphere, even at the distance of a hundred years, are not surprised by a statement that left its mark on our formation as Salesians. The testimony of boys whom we got to act is explicit and sincere: *"I have never enjoyed myself so much"* and the prestige of the theatre animator grew along with the familiarity that came from the experience.

"TEATRINO" AND NOT THEATRE

We have been using this term *"Teatrino"* abundantly so far (even in the title): for many it might seem a lesser word to be using about Don Bosco's theatrical experience if in fact we are trying to magnify that experience. For Don Bosco *"Teatrino"* was never just a surrogate, as if the boys had to make do with some kind of minor theatre. He needed to give it a character which would distinguish it from other kinds of contemporary theatre which did not correspond to his insight: using theatre as a characteristic feature of his educational goals.

Either theatre is educational (therefore *"Teatrino"*) or there is no sense in having comedies and dramas (theatre) that do not achieve that end. Something not easy to believe including for those who, after the early years of the Oratory at Valdocco and when Don Bosco ha delegated control of theatrical activities to others, continued on with theatre but deviating from the purity of intent of those early days. At a meeting of Rectors of the first boarding schools (in 1871) Don Bosco complained: *"I see that here amongst us things are not as they should be and like they were in early times. There is no more 'Teatrino' but real theatre"*.

To consolidate his thinking he wrote *"Rules for Teatrino"* (which went to two editions), recommendations and letters, but above all he tried his hand at writing some scripts as examples for subsequent performance.

So what were the features of *"Teatrino"*, as Don Bosco wanted them? And how can we join these to the requirements that come from rapid changes in society, especially the world young people live in? We can reformulate them, drawing from those Rules and from suggestions and episodes in the Saint's life.

"TEATRINO" IS PLANNED – THEMATIC - DIDACTIC

Don Bosco's theatre begins with the idea that it is an educational medium for developing the youngsters' personalities. So it is not just a simple pastime, but channels content, values, teachings that will remain impressed on youngsters' minds. Don Bosco described his *"Teatrino"* as moral, meaning (with a 19th century word that sounds rather strident today) that the script would have content that educators can hand on to young people. He controlled the scripts rigidly, personally at the beginning, then by recommending who should exert this vigilance, and complaining when they let things go that did not pass on good values. And as if spoken recommendations were not sufficient, he put them in writing (in the Rules for *"Teatrino"*) as part of the Rectors' tasks: *"Keep a close eye on the Rules we have set up for teatrino, and remember that it has to serve for amusement and education of the boys whom Divine Providence sends to our houses". We could ask ourselves what importance we give today to "Teatrino" if this direction has fallen into disuse. Even more so, it shows us the importance that Don Bosco attached to "Teatrino" when he told Rectors that they: "were invited to send the provincial drama texts as examples of the rules laid down. They should collect all the ones they know, examine the ones referred to, keep them if ok and make any due corrections".* We could imagine that provincials have other things to think about today than thinking about what plays and music to keep; but the fact is that in the Congregation today there is no single place preserving the thousands and thousands of theatrical items produced over the years: there is a huge legacy just lost in a thousand little streams, if they did not end up in the bin.

In the Rules for *"Teatrino"* (1877) Don Bosco put in an explicit paragraph on 'Adapted material' detailing what he believed should be banned: *"You should exclude tragedies, dramas, comedies and farces of a cruel, vindictive, immoral nature unless the plot actually deals with correcting or emending these things... Duels, pistols or rifles, violent threats, atrocious acts should never be part of teatrino. God's name should never be taken in vain; only as a prayer or for teaching; and less so cursing.. You should also avoid words which, said elsewhere, would be judged as uncivil or too blatant".*

Article 5 of the Rule was no less clear: “*See that scripts are pleasant and help amuse, enjoy, but that they are also instructive, moral, short*”. It is an effort for us today to create a synthesis between the religious and social, political, cultural setting. For Don Bosco instead the two planes are wedded together so that one was no less important than the other; they were absolutely equal. His youngsters did not suffer the schizophrenia between the sacred and profane; these dualisms didn’t exist. Moral education was a complete, global education. No one could therefore accuse Don Bosco of promoting *pietistic*, moralising theatre.

In the contemporary case, educational theatre is even more effective if there is a “Formation plan” (which might translate ‘moral’ into today’s terms) for the whole community and that people looking after theatre then translate into performances.

“TEATRINO” IS CREATIVE – POOR BUT PROFESSIONAL

For Don Bosco the script does not need to be a “straight jacket” hemming the youngsters in. They need creative space, beginning with adaptations to scripts, and the way they are acted; all perfectly coordinated and in tune with the performance. There needs to be creativity in scenery, costumes, all the basic requirements, using “simple materials”, recycled, re-adapted, re-used.

There should be no “business” expenses (*hired costumes*, commissioned stage sets) but everything should come from volunteer work, using free assistance from mums, dads, grandparents... The only expense should be the raw material like nails, hammer, paints... *bricolage* and “do-it-yourself” are the watchwords.

This does not prevent the final product from being effective, or something that professionals would not be envious of. If any investment is made it should be in the area of “Services” for good lighting or adequate sound.

“TEATRINO” IS YOUTHFUL – PEDAGOGICAL - LIBERATING

Between spectators and young actors, the major effort (if not the exclusive one) should be for the advantage of the latter. Before satisfying the spectators, Don Bosco’s “*Teatrino*” was there to put youngsters at centre stage in educational terms.

Each young person involved, then, is of central interest to the educator coordinating things. An adult is necessary, not necessarily an expert in the technical side of things, but as the educator. Over the long time it takes to get a performance up and running, this daily contact with the youngsters aims at creating an educational relationship which is the only reasons for being there with them.

Comforted by this positive and constructive relationship, youngsters are freed from things that constrain them, their fears and doubts and are accepted for the best that each one can offer. Very often they discover hidden qualities.

Don Bosco's "*Teatrino*" is extremely relevant to pedagogy today. Fr Marco Bongioanni writes: "Ample freedom is implicit in Don Bosco's theatre, but along with a gradual, deep need for discipline, aimed at building up the man and the Christian in the youngster. It is the nail on which he can hang his entire life".

"TEATRINO" IS COMMUNAL – CELEBRATIONAL – BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

For Don Bosco theatre was not for those who were afraid of work, or for the privileged ones, or people who were full of themselves, or just to create a gang. "*Teatrino*" plays its part in the Educative Community involving the young players. The communal side (entire oratory, parish, school) leads the actor not to do things for him or herself, but for the whole setting.

Beginning with the theme of the performance (chosen in accordance with the educational plan), the day of performance (Community feast day), involving where possible other groups, theatre becomes an opportunity for bringing the whole community together.

At Don Bosco's Oratory they put on comedies, farces, academies, dialogues, musicals and even dramas in Latin and other languages. There are many genres today and every genre is ok. But a priority given to Musical theatre seems to be one most adapted to sensitivities of young people today. Finally, given development of technology, educational theatre can take advantage of so many media (projection, recording, images...).

"TEATRINO" IS GLOBAL – OPEN TO ALL

If Don Bosco's "*Teatrino*" was especially known for being "educational", the leader should not "choose" who to educate or who not; the theatre experience is open to everyone who chooses it. The leader entrusts tasks to whoever can do them best, acting or technical support.

The script, then, is chosen on the basis of who can take part, how many there are, and not vice versa. Roles can be added to or reduced, characters changed, adapted to the character of the young players. These determine how the practice sessions go: the script then becomes a script which adapts to the group putting on the performance. One of the most worthwhile experiences is something put on by using all components of the Educative Community: it becomes a privileged medium for building up harmony amongst groups.

"A FACTOR IN COMMUNION"

The previous consideration offers us a way of concluding by noting one of the most effective and important values of Salesian theatre: communion. It is no accident that boys and teachers at Arese (the most effective and brilliant of theatrical experiences in modern times) chose to call their first publication of testimonies: *"Theatre, a factor in communion"*. Describing one of their preparations, they concluded: *"There are no more barriers: once again theatre has created 'communion', fellowship, everyone involved: the miracle has happened again"*.

Communion happens not just amongst the actors (*"Educating young people to theatre together, you educate them to society, cooperation, working as a group, all basic needs of young people"* those from Arese say, in the introduction to their book), but it cements an entire community around the play, sharing common aims and hidden harmonies. They quote Saint-Exupéry to make their point: *"If you want them to be brothers, get them to build a tower. If you want them to hate each other, throw them grain"*. In our case, preparing a community performance is just like building a tower, where every individual is asked to contribute a brick. We often think that building community and communion happens by way of tools like meetings, with their infinite waste of words, or eating around the table. These are small tools, and often irrelevant. Anyone who has experienced the results from putting on a performance involving all the groups in the parish, or every class at school, will do it again every year, because there is no better way to create a sense of belonging, build family, generate mutual empathy.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing remarks, brief compared to the number of possible topics to be dealt with, have a triple aim.

The first is to demonstrate that *"Teatrino"*, as Don Bosco wanted it, is an integral part of his charism. To a journalist (25 April 1884, in Rome) who asked him what his educational system was, Don Bosco replied: *"Very simple: give young people full freedom to speak about the things they like most. The point is to discover in them seeds of good dispositions and try to develop them. And since everyone takes pleasure only in what he is able to do, I take this principle and my boys work not only actively, but with love"*. There is no doubt that youngsters really like music and theatre where they find a chance to express themselves and play a part in their own education. This is why Don Bosco wanted music and theatre to be privileged tools of education. Not using them, or even just minimising their charismatic value is a basic mistake we make in our mission. Rediscovering Don Bosco, today, means also discovering the decisive impact that music and theatre have always had in the preventive system.

There is no doubt that today we see a revival of interest in theatre amongst young people. But it is still a worry that Don Bosco had to complain about his own times: *"There is no more 'Teatrino', just real theatre"*. The way Don Bosco outlined "Teatrino" is gradually being contaminated by commercial products offered by the media. Without generalising, we can quote the wonderful example of teachers at Arese (the best performances, around the 90s, of how Don Bosco wanted "Teatrino") to be, and the postnovitiate experience at Nave (for 30 years young Salesians have come together to put on a performance based on the Rector Major's Strenna). These are examples to be followed, to be made known and to be included in formation plans for new Salesians and leaders in the Salesian Youth Movement.

Finally, all this is only possible with the convinced involvement of Salesian institutions. There needs to be rethinking from the top first of all, concerning the long absence of useful directives and adequate financing, and then by taking the tiller in hand again to foster development of initiatives to reactive this aspect of the charism. No less a factor would be the renewed interest on the part of our Publishers in having another look at the bright history in Italy, not only in the Salesian world, but also as a service to the whole national panorama of Youth Ministry. And if it is necessary to update and modernise efforts, using the computer network is one way to be taken into serious consideration for rendering a charismatic service to the legacy left us by Don Bosco and by so many of his competent followers in this field. The charism is a gift received (like the talents of the Gospel) that cannot be hidden or jealously guarded within a strict circle, but it has to flourish, that is has to be given to everyone.

PRINTING AND PUBLISHING IN DON BOSCO'S MIND AND MISSION

ALBERTO RUI, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE AND PART OF THE PORTUGUESE PROVINCE.

HE HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE EDIÇÕES SALESIANAS.

Don Bosco's interest in Social Communication is a known fact in the Salesian context. It is one of the things that reinforces his "modern" image. Don Bosco was an innovator in ministry and his involvement in new technologies (for his time) is a proof of that.

But it may be interesting to go beyond the usual places and try to see exactly what Don Bosco did, what motivated him and what kind of communication praxis he attempted. It is the only way to see whether Don Bosco's commitment (and that of the Salesians) was just a fortuitous "accident" or an essential choice which is part of his identity.

Don Bosco's presence in the media world is not 'obvious'. He defines his pastoral style through his close interaction with young people. He did not want to be like the clergy of his time, hiding behind more or less anonymous structures. Don Bosco saw himself as someone who brought the Gospel by being part young peoples' lives through encounter and dialogue with them¹³⁶. So why invest time, money, effort? Why expose himself to so much hostile criticism and struggles in such a 'heavy' field of apostolate?

Perhaps Don Bosco's commitment to the "good press" is not such an obvious fact to be taken for granted. Perhaps he felt that, despite it being counter-intuitive, his idea of ministry required a presence in the emerging world of the media. If so, maybe today in the 21st century, we can understand that it might not be possible to be faithfully and creatively Salesian in our activity without a consistent presence in the *media* world.

THE CONTEXT

The 19th century, especially during the time when Don Bosco was fully engaged in pastoral ministry was witnessing a serious crisis in the model of Christianity which had supported the activity of the Church over the centuries. Processes of democratic renewal were often associated with an anti-clerical stance. A good number of the elite (political, financial, cultural) were on the margins of the Church or on a clear collision course against it.

At the same time the industrial revolution gave rise to a cultural revolution. Like the steam engine was for the press (invented by Gutenberg in the 15th

¹³⁶ Just read the biographies of young people he wrote to see this conviction of his.

century) a local craft model of production evolved into being a true industry. It became possible to produce much larger print-runs at relatively low cost.

At the same time, this modern cultural climate led to new cultural consumers at every level of society. Desired paths of social climbing went hand in hand with, and to some extent further than the social desires that real circumstances allowed for, through cultural *empowerment*¹³⁷.

Whether in social-political debate, or the school, the market for written publications grew.

DON BOSCO AS A WRITER

In 1844, then 29 years old and three years a priest, Don Bosco published his first work: *Cenni storici sulla vita del chierico Luigi Comollo*. It was not a systematic nor even a scientifically historical work. It was a tool of edification for seminarians. It could be distinguished from other literature of the kind for its chronological presentation of facts about the life of his friend Comollo, from birth to death. It did not limit itself to providing a list of virtues and edifying deeds that were more or less a mixture of facts and anecdotes.

Another detail was Don Bosco's personal involvement. He was the narrator and also one of the characters (even if more or less anonymous).

This work begins Don Bosco's role as a writer. It was the first of a wide range of writings. Pietro Stella¹³⁸ has categorised Don Bosco's writings into six groups.

1. **Scholastic works:** With the expansion of the school network (public and private), Don Bosco anticipated the need for pastorally appropriate texts to be on hand (or at least 'neutral' texts; the important thing was to counter the anti-clerical stance of some textbooks and offer an alternative view. Whether for Bible history, Church history, History of Italy or explaining the decimal metric system, Don Bosco drew inspiration from relatively up-to-date pedagogy and never lost an opportunity to be edifying. He knew his reader was not church educated or cultured people from the university. He wrote for young people who had no great cultural upbringing, but with a sincere desire to increase and deepen their knowledge. This approach brought him a few problems stemming from 'good Churchmen' who supported the classical tradition of knowledge and culture.

¹³⁷ This process of cultural *empowerment* also grew with the increase of legislation promoting education. This legislation had very good intentions without allocating the necessary means for making it happen but it had the undeniable merit of sending a signal to all of society. Similar processes were going on at the same time throughout most of Europe.

¹³⁸ STELLA Pietro, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, Vol I, pp. 229-248.

More than being the archeologist dealing with the past, Don Bosco as a writer became a “narrator”, someone who wanted to build a bridge between content and the real life of his readers.

2. **Pleasant writings and tales:** Don Bosco classified some of his writings as “pleasant” reading. This adjective doesn’t go down so well in today’s culture. Maybe the easiest way is to describe it as “soft”, simple literature. Don Bosco used the term to describe literature that was both uplifting and pleasant to read. Perhaps it could be associated with the idea of the “feel good movie”. A cursory look might suggest this as being superficial, hollow. But it functions at a much greater level of complexity: for an audience steeped in a complex and contradictory world (like ours, but it was also the case for Don Bosco’s), this genre of film (but the idea could be extended to other art forms) offers a modicum of reasonableness, reasons for facing the future courageously, reasons that can sustain certain values. In the same way, these “pleasant” works offered a safe haven to adults and young people. They had grown up in a Christianity that had furnished them with little more than superficial information and Christian values, in a society in upheaval, so with these “pleasant” works these readers could rebuild a plausible set of values and Christian attitudes in an either indifferent or hostile world.
3. **Hagiographical writings:** Convinced of the educational and pastoral potential of the memory of the great believers, men and women who had radically lived their faith, Don Bosco wrote the lives of various Saints. He was also motivated by the need to react to Protestant proselytism. Here too Don Bosco was not particularly original. He was not a professional biographer. He was not concerned about being a historian. His greatest concerns was to “edify”, tell a story that would go down well with the people, show heroes in action; action that would arouse wonder and the desire to imitate, in the reader. He wasted no time in these writings with pages on doctrine or psychological introspection. There was action, movement, dialogue all to dramatic effect.
4. **Biographical writings:** The biographies of young people that Don Bosco wrote came out of the post-tridentine tradition of edifying lives bound up with seminaries or at least boarding institutions. Of rather unequal narrative quality, they oscillated between well-framed action accounts or somewhat moralistic episodes: spirit of prayer, academic commitment, desire for penitence, fruitful sacramental practice, devotion to Mary, experience of a good death.

The biographies of his pupils, Savio, Magone and Besucco were an especially curious case of interrelationship with reality. In the biography

of Savio, Don Bosco writes a “biography” but it is more of a special presentation of his educational and pastoral experience in the Oratory. It is quite interesting to observe how in the biography of Besucco, the reading of the life of Savio was one of the important moments in his life.

5. **Works on religious instruction and piety:** It is not easy to separate “catechisms” from prayer books in Don Bosco’s production. He understands the deep connection that exists between *lex orandi*, *lex credendi* and *lex vivendi* especially for a handbook of Christian living. Today, the *Giovane proveduto* (Companion of Youth) would be presented as “youthful holiness for dummies”! Here the concern is not so much with anti-clerical or anti-Protestant polemic. His readership were youngsters, workers or peasants, offering them a sure path of growth in happiness and true faith.
6. **Works connected with Salesian activity:** Most of his letters, regulations, and all the literature aimed at cooperators and benefactors, fall into this category. It is real literature but today we might classify it as public relations. Such a distinction may make sense for us today but it does not seem to have had much influence on Don Bosco. See, for example, the *Memoirs of the Oratory*. Even a cursory reading allows us to see the quality, fluid narrative with the power to draw the reader into the story¹³⁹. But Don Bosco is not trying to emulate the introspective works of the great mystics; he was writing something much more functional and useful.

DON BOSCO’S WRITING PROCESS

It is the 19th century that created the romantic myth of the lonely author examining his soul in order to put on a blank page all the beauty and depth he holds within. There could be nothing further from Don Bosco’s praxis! According to Stella, “Don Bosco enjoys writing but is not motivated by the desire to proclaim the results of lengthy reflections and theoretical constructs”¹⁴⁰. Don Bosco felt he was a populariser, not an “author”. He had two concerns: getting problems understood and resolved. The fact that he wrote and the way he wrote were functions of his pastoral intuitions; he wanted a strong Catholic culture to penetrate the minds and hearts of the young and the popular classes. He was also an occasional writer: when a certain need arose (for the Church, his own work, for the good of young people...) he took up his pen and wrote.

There is a strong interaction with reality in his writing. What happened, urgent situations, difficulties... all strongly influence his literary style.

¹³⁹ This quality of the *Memoirs of the Oratory* could be due to the fact that Don Bosco had, at the end, a greater existential and literary maturity.

¹⁴⁰ op. cit., p. 237

If we evaluate Don Bosco as an author with today's criteria, he could be accused of plagiarism in many cases. It is clear that some of Don Bosco's writings were undeniably his own work. Others were written in collaboration with priest friends or Salesians. In some cases, these Salesians were really *ghost writers* for Don Bosco¹⁴¹. In many others, Don Bosco adapts things according to his needs, beliefs, public conventions that had pre-existing works at heart. The degree of originality of this adaptation is quite variable. There are works where the hand of Don Bosco is very strong and there are others that are no more than free translations¹⁴². This practice may seem strange to our culture, so aware are we of copyright. But 150 years ago the legal and moral sensitivity to these issues was quite different from ours. But if we insist on a moral, anachronistic analysis, we find that Don Bosco has some extenuating circumstances. First is his functionalist orientation: he is concerned, above all, with making available to society and young people the instruments he considers suitable for implementing his pastoral project. He is not interested in making a career in literature or being regarded as a genius innovator protected by the lyrical muse. The second circumstance is cultural. With a lot of freedom, but always obeying his spiritual and pastoral insights, he feels legitimised in taking on pre-existing materials and transforming them according to the needs of his boys. The contemporary mashup culture is a good analogy for understanding the legitimacy of what Don Bosco (and many others) was doing at the time.

Don Bosco draws inspiration from writers, his contemporaries or earlier writers, who were doctrinally solid, held as authorities, learned, zealous and, if possible, holy. The mental priority that Don Bosco gave the task of disseminating good content led him, often, to take as the point of departure for his works not erudite sources but works written by others.¹⁴³

The preparation that Don Bosco applies to his sources is greatly reduced. He takes on the ideas or phrases that he considers useful and puts them in his texts. When Don Bosco sees something that clearly expresses his own convictions, which can enrich the work at hand ... he does not hesitate: "copy & paste"! This way of writing demonstrates, once again, the tendency to disseminate and his concern about the quality of the reader experience. Don Bosco is a very 'decentered' author himself. He understands himself as a builder of good bridges between "content" (wherever it comes from) and the young, whom he loves, with their limited cultural resources.

¹⁴¹ This identification of literary style amongst the first Salesians and Don Bosco could be spontaneous: identification with the father figure of Don Bosco leads, even unconsciously, to a process of stylistic imitation.

¹⁴² There are also works in which Don Bosco explicitly cites his source and assumes that he is merely making an adaptation.

¹⁴³ This may call into question the idea that Don Bosco had a certain biblical or patristic erudition. According to Stella (*op.cit.*, pp. 239-340) his was a "secondhand scholarship": Don Bosco limited himself to quoting, at times lengthy passages, from works by others.

BOSCO BEGINS PUBLISHING

For much of the 20th century the publishing industry was highly specialised¹⁴⁴. The author prepared his work in various fields. This was delivered to a publisher, who reviewed it, prepared it for printing, ensured it was printed by his own press or other, then marketed and advertised it. In more complex organizations, the number of people and tasks involved are quite high but even in the simplest processes we can always identify four distinct tasks: authoring, editing, printing, marketing. To understand Don Bosco's editorial process (common to many other writers and publishers) we have to leave aside this rigid scheme so typical of the 20th century and accept that many of these tasks and functions were mixed up with each other.

When Don Bosco began publishing, printers were not distinguished from publishing company. Each printer-publisher had his own clientele and political line. Today, we tend to see printing activity as largely neutral, merely technical. Not so in Don Bosco's time. A printer-publisher might well refuse to publish an author who was not similar to his thinking. For more than 20 years after 1844, Don Bosco worked with several printers who had no explicit links to different political currents.

Usually the publishing process saw Don Bosco writing the original and delivering it to a printer to publish. The printer bore the expenses and was in possession of the material produced. The books were sold by the printer. Don Bosco had the right to acquire a good number of his books at a reduced cost.

This process was anything but romantic. The average price of books was high in relation to purchasing power. The dissemination of religious books was not a large market. The alternative was to reduce production costs. Firstly that meant increasing the print run¹⁴⁵. It is true that public education policy tended to increase the market potential of (young) readers, but even so, authors and printers had to undertake good risk management to be able to collocate books produced at a price that coincided with the "sweet-spot", with the point at which the value assigned to the book outweighed the real financial possibilities of the people.

1848, with everything that was happening in Europe, was a turning point for Don Bosco as an author, a result of degraded living conditions in the country and a result of the fascination that urban industrialization increasingly offered the masses who flocked toward the city of Turin. This proletariat mass was in the mood to get ahead in life, learn, add to the winds of change (or revolution). Not without conflict, press freedom, patriotic fervor, the growing politicisation of the middle and working class were the new gains. This had an effect on the

¹⁴⁴ Today we are witnessing a more or less accentuated crisis in this industrial model.

¹⁴⁵ Often these higher print runs were done without completing the book-binding. The printed pages were left in deposit with the printer who would then have them bound according to stock or demand.

market so that authors and publishers could run the risk of higher print runs (associated with lower costs) to bring their ideas and proposals to the masses.

The Church did not remain outside these processes. Some voices merely reacted, lamenting the “evils” of press freedom and the attacks they were suffering because of it, while weeping crocodile tears for the nostalgic times of royal absolutism. But other more dynamic sectors assumed a more pro-active approach. They supported, financed, assisted the more moderate newspapers which were more attuned to ecclesial sensitivity. It was in this environment that “The friend of youth, a political and religious newspaper” came into being. Don Bosco was the manager responsible for it. The paper commenced at the beginning of 1849, and came out three times a week.

It ended in May, with 61 editions. The number of subscribers was always insufficient to cover expenses and needed some benefactors to back it with capital. The failure of this experiment may be due to the excessive reliance of the project on volunteers, the excessive optimism as to its viability but also the doubly hostile environment. The “Friend of Youth” wanted to get into the socio-political debate by defending a moderate political stance, open to dialogue and building bridges. But by that moment the social and ideological context had already been radicalised. The radical opposition (anti-clerical) became increasingly aggressive and responded with intransigence. Hence the Pro-church moderate positions lost ground. In the *Memoirs of the Oratory* we can perceive some of the conflicts of these years. In publishing and journalistic terms, this resulted in the loss of subscribers, financial support and unsold titles.

But this experience, though unsuccessful, taught Don Bosco something. Firstly, there was a large number of priests, either in the capital or in the provinces, who were ready to collaborate with religious and popular press at the drafting stage and distribution. Secondly, it taught Don Bosco to “separate” politics from his real interest: education to the faith. And finally it confirmed Don Bosco’s place amongst the moderates in church terms, more concerned with building bridges with those (still) without faith rather than in just affirming his own beliefs.

THE “CATHOLIC READINGS”

The need to maintain a qualified ecclesial presence in the press led the bishops of the Turin region to promote a publishing action plan in 1849. This meant an increase in production of materials but it still seems inadequate in meeting the real cultural needs of the target population. Keeping the concerns of the bishops but by choosing a more popular style, Don Bosco and Bishop Moreno launched the “Catholic Readings”.

At the level of discourse this project was aimed at combatting the anticlerical dechristianisation promoted by newspapers and threat of Protestant proselytising. It is possible that repeated reminders of these “dangers” served to mobilise energy and collaborators. It aimed at being a collection of “religious” and “pleasant” reading material (booklets). This project did not fit into the “politics” understood as discussion of government activity and political parties. More a matter of popular and youthful guidance, the collection was opened for subscription at affordable prices. In order to win the price battle, costs were reduced as much as possible: low quality paper, unpaid volunteers for translation, authorship and review. The market response was very positive. What caused some problems was the distribution: the materials arrived irregularly in the villages served by a poor postal system. In addition to individual subscriptions, they also promoted group ones: by getting a local leader in some areas to drum up local subscribers. Many priests and bishops committed themselves strongly to this project.

DON BOSCO AS A PUBLISHING IMPRESARIO

In the 1860s, Don Bosco took a leap forward: instead of being a customer of the printers he set up his own publishing business, taking control of the entire book publishing cycle.

In 1862 he made his debut with a small print shop at the Oratory. And he began by printing the “Readings” there.¹⁴⁶ From Don Bosco’s viewpoint, this option was full of advantages: it ensured regular work for his print shop and ensured autonomy and cost reductions for the “Readings.”

He started at with very basic, local equipment. The Salesian print shop grew in complexity, first at Valdocco and then at Sanpierdarena. At the national exhibition in Turin (1883) Don Bosco left a strong impression on visitors with the quality of his printing and paper-manufacturing equipment. The sign that Don Bosco put up at the Exhibition tells the story: “*Don Bosco - Fabbrica di letter, tipografia, fonderia, legatoria e libreria salesiana*” (MB XVII, p. 244).

This “technological pride” was not just a mechanism to publicise the educational quality of his works. It seems to have been something that Don Bosco took really seriously. Achilles Ratti, the future Pius XI, never forgot something Don Bosco said, while he was visiting the oratory: “In these things, Don Bosco wants to be in the vanguard of progress”.

¹⁴⁶ Don Bosco was strongly opposed by Bishop Moreno, one of the founders of the *Catholic Readings*, in this choice. He felt it was an individual apostolate on Don Bosco’s part. The legal question of who controlled the “Readings” was in the courts until 1867.

CIRCULAR ON SPREADING GOOD BOOKS

On 19 March 1885, Don Bosco sent the Salesians a circular on spreading good books. We are in the final stage of the founder's life. Don Bosco was aware of this and wanted whatever he said to help structure the charismatic identity of his Congregation.

The circular was intended for the entire Congregation, not just the confreres involved in the production of books. It was about the distribution of good books and not only their production. It had to do with the quality of pastoral action by the whole Congregation.

Don Bosco began by extolling the role of books: "I do not hesitate to call this means divine." Books in general shared, for him somehow same respect as the books of Holy Scripture.

The books that interested Don Bosco ("good books") were a mandatory pastoral tool. It was with them that he could "keep alive the Saviour's alive kingdom in so many souls". This merit of books was justified by two orders of argument. The first was the need to counteract the deleterious effects of "bad books" as Don Bosco described it: "fight weapons with weapons". The other argument shows how Don Bosco was aware of living in a mediated society and culture in which the media (even if at the time this was only books) had an unheard of communicative and pastoral autonomy and potential: the book had the ability to produce results far beyond the usual channels of pastoral communication.

It is also interesting to note the four reasons with which Don Bosco tries to draw the Salesians into this pastoral diffusion of good books. Firstly Don Bosco identifies his mission as a mandate of Divine Providence and this apostolate of good press is one of the tasks assigned by Heaven to Don Bosco. The second argument is Don Bosco's publishing success; success measured by the number of copies produced and sold, but also by the number of times each item was read. This success can only be explained theologically and thus reinforces his first argument. The third reason given by Don Bosco is constitutional. He appeals to our Rule of life. He cites Article 7 (the Constitutions of the time): "[Salesians] undertake to spread good books amongst the people, using all the means that Christian charity inspires. Through words and writings they seek to shore up things against the impiety and hereby that in so many ways were insinuating themselves amongst the ignorant and the poor. They should address the sermons they give from time to time to the people, triduums, novenas and the spreading of good books, to this end". The fourth argument is much more down to earth and appears as a blatant Salesian publishing advertisement. Of all the good and edifying books, those of (Salesian) domestic production are to be preferred, both because this would contribute financially to the work of the Congregation and because "our publications tend to form an ordered system." This "ordered system" may be a mere reference to the collection of

“Catholic Readings” but could also indicate a real appreciation of a pastoral communication project. Don Bosco is not just a loose publisher. He is looking for a systematic pastoral approach that for many years took the form of books.

A further insight from the circular is the original way he sees young people: not just as readers, consumers of books, but as true collaborators in the dissemination of good books. They can become multipliers of this very evangelising platform which is good books: “through your words and example get the boys to do the same: become apostles of spreading good books”. We find here the best teaching and pastoral insights: he calls on young people to overcome a passive falling in with more or less repressive standards¹⁴⁷ and to adopt a pro-active stance by becoming apostles in spreading good books and discover a better way of developing their own lives through a service for the others.

Don Bosco finishes by giving indications of “style” for our books. For this ministry of “good books” to succeed it was necessary to overcome the temptation to be scholarly, using complex sentences that could demonstrate the author’s mastery of grammar but became unreadable for potential readers. The concern for accessible language had always been a constant for Don Bosco, even at the risk of appearing not too learned: “We do not love and do encourage others to love that kind of knowledge which the apostle calls ‘inflated’ and which that St Augustine, despite his own erudition, complained of when he became bishop. He preferred an ordinary language without style or elegance, rather than risk being not understood by the people”.

SUMMING UP DON BOSCO’S THINKING AND PRACTICE

It is always exciting to revisit the memory of our founder. But it is also challenging and instructive for now.

Don Bosco, always overwhelmed by so many demands (time, money ...) invested much time (and money) in this area of communication. This investment was no accident, it was not a distraction of Don Bosco’s in relation to the rest his educational and pastoral activity. Don Bosco strove so strongly in this apostolate of good press because he realised that the world in which his young people lived was no longer the world of face to face relationships in Piedmontese villages. It was no longer even the world of simple relationships that he describes in the *Memoirs of the Oratory* and the biographies of his boys. His young people now lived now in a world where there were books and newspapers. Even if they did not know how to read them or did not have the resources to buy them, these printed materials influenced the ideas, the ways of life, the very youth culture that Don Bosco wanted to evangelise.

¹⁴⁷ A few months before this circular, he had written another on control and suppression of bad books in our settings.

It was his singular passion for education and evangelisation that led Don Bosco to engage strongly in this field as author, publisher and industrialist. In this area he followed the very same strategies that he had followed in the more 'normal' practices of the Oratory. He cultivated a double fidelity, in his practice, to the revealed message and the sociocultural status of his recipients. He involved others in this activity: parish priests and committed laity became subscribers and distributors of his material. He was profoundly creative when designing his marketing mix, he sought was finding original solutions to overcome problems.

Basically, we can say that the educative and pastoral activity which Don Bosco calls his Preventive System is a model he extended through his publishing activity.

SALESIAN BULLETIN

BRUNO FERRERO, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN VILLARBASSE, NEAR TURIN, ITALY. HE HAS BEEN A PROLIFIC WRITER OF BOOKS AND ARTICLES AND IN CHARGED OF SALESIAN PUBLICATIONS LIKE ELLEDICI AND ESPECIALLY FOR THE SALESIAN BULLETIN

UNDERSTANDING IT

The Salesian Bulletin is 135 years old, and has preserved an amazing vitality. This is all due to the one who started it, something with an astonishing, clear view of the future.

Don Bosco was a born communicator. Of his very nature, he was irrepressible. He adjusted himself via communication became more he exerted effort to update in his ideas, and invented ways to teach. He showed that he had understood industrial civilization, which ? he was in enemy. And like all great communicators, he experienced fear but also made others fearful. And the same effect continues, 125 years later.

In order to study the relationship between Don Bosco and media we need to start from the moderate churchman (apparently), then the magician and gymnast, the priest who organized kids making them roar with delight, someone who founded schools, publications, and organized concerts.

And then his masterpiece of communication: his reinvention, just to suit the industrial city, the Oratory. An integrated system of school and work, free time and religion: "The perfect machine whereby every communication channel, from games to music, theatre to press, managed minimalistically, re-sued and discussed whenever communication comes in from outside" (Umberto Eco).

The general sense of the final discussions on Don Bosco have indicated what was ancient and new, clever or puzzling about the one who founded the Salesians. Or rather, as it might appear, contradictorily, two centuries later.

It begins with a broadsheet with the unlikely title *Bibliofilo Cattolico*, which he changed then to *Bollettino Salesiano*.

This word *bollettino*, according to the dictionary, means "an official publication saying something of a public nature" or something.

Of noble origins. The word comes from "*bolla*" the seal or stamp used for public writings and solemn kinds of documents. Papal Bulls - if that helps. It is still employed today for practical purposes: medical bulletins, war bulletins among others.

It points to something practical in style, without too many frills, managerial in nature. This is why Don Bosco liked it.

BEING THERE

"Since I cannot visit you in person..." these words or something similar were written by Don Bosco in his circular about spreading good books. And here, one could find St Paul's letters. It tells us something particular about Don Bosco and his system: be there, be present, stay with.

Don Bosco was a master of congenial conversation, a wizard of the word. Even the Roman cardinals had noted this in 1858: "Finding himself one might in a conversation, we are not sure if it was at Cardinal Grande or Cardinal Altieri place, and other prelates were there too, His Eminence said: "Don Bosco, what lost a brief sermon like the one you give to the boys."

But, how am I supposed to do that?" asked Don Bosco.

"Do I have to..."

"But", asked Don Bosco, "how do I have to do that? Do I have to do it while I am talking to Your Eminence and these other Reverend gentlemen?"

"Yes, something along those lines".

"But don't you think it would be better if they were preaching to me and I was the one listening?"

"No, no", the Cardinal added, "preach to us just as if we were your boys".

And Don Bosco calmly began: *Me cari fieui*, and he continued on for a while giving them a bit of Church history in *Piemontese*, interspersing his talk with lively exchanges, proverbs, advice, warnings, promises, questions and exhortations for his listeners. And given things they understood and some they did not, they began to laugh, until the Cardinal, doubled up with laughter, interrupted him and barely managed to say: -"That's enough! That'll do!"- However at the same time they had all come to understand the marvellous power of Don Bosco's words to his boys" (*Memorie Biografiche* V, 892).

COMMUNICATING

At the basis of the Salesian adventure there is Don Bosco's instinct as a communicator. His "shrewd smile", His almost magical perception of others and his word "He was still very young and he was already studying my friends' characters. And looking at them straight in the face, he could work out what plans were in his heart. And this is why my friends both loved him a lot but also feared him". This was said about him when he was ten years old. And it happened that way throughout his life. And, it would seem, it is still happening. So this shrewd smile, and a perceptive eye.

And thirdly the word: "What made them gather around me and wildly attracted them, were the stories". A word that would become powerful and bring about concrete effects even before being uttered: "One day a policeman,

seeing me get silence amongst four hundred boys with a mere wave of the hand, and these were boys who had been jumping and shouting out in the paddock, exclaimed: if this priest were a General, he could fight the most powerful army in the world".

At the origins of the power of the word, something decisive for Don Bosco as a communicator, there is something more basic than just the content of the word. The message comes later: in the beginning there is the marvel of a word that the other notes as immediately addressed to himself. Testimonies concerning this magic of the personalised word, that follows on from the magic of the knowing look, are considerable in number.

When he finally got to the dining room, if his usual table companions had already left, he would eat surrounded by the boys, who would crowd and press about him, deafening him with their chatter, raising dust, and jarring nerves. But he did not mind. In fact he loved it, so much did he have the welfare of his boys at heart.

Pope Ratti, the Pontiff who canonised Don Bosco and in autumn 1883 had been his guest in the Pinardi House, recalled: "Here he was answering everyone: and he had just the right word for each, something that really makes us wonder: at first we are surprised and then we are just left in wonder".

Some things are already a message by themselves and Don Bosco made a life proposal out of them: "Good Father Guala and Father Cafasso willingly gave me books, medals, little crosses to give out. Sometimes they gave me material to clothe the more needy ones, and feed others with bread for several weeks".

SIMPLICITY

Don Bosco never stopped as a communicator. He did not theorise, and had no plan other than feeling the urgency to evangelise along with his communicator's instinct.

Perhaps Don Bosco followed just a single rule in shifting from ways of providing support to ways of communicating. "Abandon classical style, speak in the common language where possible, or also in Italian, but in popular, popular, popular style". Out of that rule came newspapers, books "for putting into the hands of ordinary folk". The brochures called "Reminders for Catholics". The small work with the title "Advice for Catholics". And then the "Catholic Readings" which began in 1853 and aimed to be "books for the people", in "simple style, and popular language". Even those opposed to him recognized his "great gift" of "getting the people to read and understand his writings".

LINKING

The first issue of the Salesian Bulletin opens with a letter from Don Bosco: "To the Salesian Cooperators. Our Regulations, my good and deserving Cooperators, prescribe a monthly Bulletin that would be published in due course to keep you informed of things that have been done or are yet to be done to obtain the aims we have agreed to achieve. We are now fulfilling a common desire, so that everyone can carry out his work in unity of spirit and unanimously direct our efforts to a single purpose: The glory of God, the good of Civil society.

To this end we judge that a Bulletin will help you, one that has been printed now for some years in our printshop in Turin and which will be printed in future from the Refuge of St. Vincent in Sampierdarena. This Bulletin will tell you about:

1. Things that members or their Directors choose to offer for the general and particular good of associates who follow the practical rules of the Cooperators.
2. And exposition of facts that are fruitful for members and can serve as an example for others. So things that have happened, or we've heard about or read: so long as they are linked to the good of humanity and religion; news and letters from Missionaries working for the faith in Asia, Australia and especially those of the Salesians spread throughout South America amongst native tribes: all this is appropriate material for us.
3. Communications, notices of various kinds, works we are proposing; books and maxims which should be spread around, will make up a third of the Bulletin".

Don Bosco wants his friends to still feel part of the family, still breathe the air from home, even if by now they find themselves far away.

BENEFICIARIES

Don Bosco never excluded anyone. This is why the Bulletin is addressed to all friends of Don Bosco and to those who, if they will get to know him, would become his friends.

One might think of a series of concentric circles rippling out from the centre using the most effective method of all: a "handing on of the word".

Don Bosco made Salesian initiatives known and sought help everywhere. Invia il BS a più gente possibile e, dove c'è speranza di una maggiore adesione, aggiunge il diploma di cooperatore salesiano. The SB was sent out free, and went to the homes of the rich as well as the poor. The rich sent in a consistent supply of offerings which enabled him to send the SB out to the poor and increase the print-run to respectable dimensions.

VISIBILITY

"We are in times where we need to act. The world has become material, therefore we have to work and make known the good that is being done. Even if one performs miracles by staying in his cell and praying day and night, the world takes no notice and no longer believes. The world needs to see and touch. The world today wants to see the clergy work, teach and educate poor and neglected youth with charitable works. And this is the only way to save the young" (*Memorie Biografiche XIII*, 126-127).

"One could say that the SB, the many circular letters sent out... determined how the world discovered Don Bosco, this extraordinary man. Up until 1874 the Salesians were just a regionally based Congregation. After that date, especially after the 80s, Don Bosco more frequently took on boys who were recommended by clergy or laity, requests multiplied to open houses in various cities and countries" (*Stella, Don Bosco*, 1968).

"The Bulletin, according to our Father's way of thinking, must be the very effective instrument of the propaganda, which he so much and so often wanted, to carry out the Gospel precept: "Videant opera vestra bona". So let us not overlook this potent means of propaganda, the Bulletin, which has the precise aim of throwing light on and spreading awareness of our works, of the work we do, our efforts, also the heroic efforts of our confreres in the Missions" (*Ricaldone, ASC no.87*, 1938).

IMAGE

"It would be well then, entering into those modern perspectives that Don Bosco had in fact anticipated, for us to recognize in the SB that special type of publication that big organizations circulate to create a positive image of themselves in public opinion. We will see the results" (*Ricceri, ASC, no.287*, 1977).

The responsibility of the SB to be a "calling card" of the Congregation, involves its content, style and graphics. It is about presenting a dynamically alive Congregation, including through marketing.

It offers the image of a Salesian educative and religious movement, with its own particular approach.

"It will provide room for Salesian activities in the world, especially works which represent a service to the young in forward-looking structures and in activities which brings them back into society.

And also being a missionary Congregation, it will be the case that missionaries themselves become "correspondents": whatever is not made known "does not exist" (*Cfr. Viganò, AGC 336, 1991, quoted in no. 2.*)

INFORMATION

In the first draft of the Cooperator Regulations “Each month with a Bulletin or printed sheet, members will be kept informed of things proposed, done or that are proposed for doing» (*Memorie Biografiche XI, 538*).

According to Don Bosco's insights the Salesian Bulletin is not a simple list of news events, but shows up the spirit of the Congregation by telling about deeds and works, more than by spreading speculative ideas. *Esso offre una lettura della realtà contemporanea dal punto di vista salesiano ed accoglie le provocazioni del mondo giovanile ed ecclesiale in vista di un progetto educativo e pastorale più globale.*

“The Salesian Bulletin had as its aim to maintain amongst the members of the Pious Union the greatest possible identity of thought and harmony of action in order to achieve a common aim” (*Memorie Biografiche XIII, 603*).

“It is good that we recognise in the SB a kind of “house organ” (*sic*) (*Ricceri, ASC no.287, 1977*). “The setup that Don Bosco wants to give you responds to a concern about uniting Salesians through information on works and activities that the Congregation is carrying out around the world. Success and lack thereof, initiatives and needs, the SB, in Don Bosco's thinking, makes us aware of the life of the Congregation in its joys and sorrows, its triumphs and trials. One understands then how a reading of the SB serves to foster fraternal charity of Salesians and we see a bond of unity rubbed out in the Congregation when the SB is not read or is reduced to a periodical of merely local interest” (*Ricceri, ASC no. 258, 1969*).

BRAND

The company brand or business logo is to be safeguarded at all costs. The credit of trust that the “Don Bosco” and “Salesian” brand have in the world today is one of our greatest strengths.

FIDELITY

Loyalty is, amongst everything else, a less fashionable quality. There's not so much research on this one. But there is plenty of research on “loyalty to the brand”, a phenomenon that symbolises our times.

Loyalty to a brand is a phenomenon by which a consumer tends to always use a product by the same brand. The word ‘loyalty’ is fully justified, because there is often an emotional relationship with a product. We all now people who speak movingly of their camera, or light up when you mention the brand of car they drive, or are enthusiastic about clothing of a certain brand. A brand brings together a whole lot of memories and experiences, a way of being, a style, and it is much more important than the quality of the product.

Not only. A brand has the magical property of holding within itself faculties and powers that every one of us wants to have: buy these shoes and you'll have winged feet; acquire this bottle of liquor and you'll immediately be seen as part of the aristocracy; use this perfume and you'll have the beauty of the gods. It is easy to understand that whoever has to sell a product will try out every way of ensuring our fidelity and so is ready to promise anything so we will buy it. *Il consumatore deve conti-nuare a dare i soldi a lui e non ai concorrenti.* And the longer this bond with the consumer lasts, the more it is strengthened. It begins very early in the piece: loyalty to the brand can be aroused even in childhood so that it remains a constant over the following years.

Loyalty to the brand is anything but a superficial thing. I am convinced that it is based on our desperate need to have trust in someone or something, to love and to be loved, to have stability, protection, a place to belong, meaning. We have a great need to be loyal.

But why this great need for loyalty? The answer is simple: because the continuity and stability of relationships has become a rare item of merchandise. *Viviamo nell'Era della Distrazione, che è anche l'Era dell'Interruzione, in cui siamo di continuo invitati a pensare a qualcosa di di-verso da ciò cui stavamo pensando.* Loyalty is precisely the opposite. It is "staying with". It is not losing the thread of the discussion, not getting distracted.

MISSION

On 17 September 1885, speaking to the Council of his Congregation, Don Bosco spoke of the Salesian Bulletin as a 'powerful medium for my purposes'.

In the Third General Chapter of the Congregation, which took place in 1883, Don Bosco had already said: "It does not matter to us if we receive a hundred lira more or less, but what matters is to give the glory to God". This is why, if Governments will not give us support, the Salesian Bulletin will become a strength, not for itself but for the people that it will bring together".

Fr Viganò speaking to Bulletin editors: "The SB is a *magazine of a charism*, not simply a listing of superficial deeds; it informs, communicates, lets the vitality of the Salesian movement be seen, from consideration of problems around us, to cooperating with timely intelligence in new evangelisation".

GC 22, in 1984, in the definitive edition of the Constitutions retouched the article of the Regulations which then became no. 41, which says: "The Salesian Bulletin, founded by Don Bosco, spreads knowledge of Salesian spirit and activity, especially in its missionary and educational aspects. It is concerned with the problems of youth, encourages collaboration and tries to foster vocations. It is as well an instrument for formation and a bond of union between the different branches of the Salesian Family. It is edited in accordance with the directives of the Rector Major and his council in various editions and languages".

INVOLVEMENT

Don Bosco had the charism for involving a huge mass of collaborators. Amongst them his own youngsters occupy a singular place. He had bands of volunteers in his houses: men and women, young people and adults, clergy and laity. He also set up the Cooperators. He wanted a typical and original association for them.

He won over others, leading them out of too much self-preoccupation, and opening them up to an educational and evangelising mission on behalf of others.

He set up missions. He made something of an epic out of them, getting people to feel the joy and enthusiasm of power and giving.

Per Don Bosco non si trattava solo di portare a conoscenza delle opere buone, di dare pubblicità al bene perché gli uomini divenuti materialisti si potessero rendere conto che vi erano quelli che operavano il bene, ma di diffondere le idee che sostenevano e motivavano il bene che si faceva, di fare tutto questo pacificamente, per cercare di «conquistare l'affetto delle persone alle nostre istituzioni».

One could reasonably say that Don Bosco, with his positive view of people, circumstances and history, had the inner intuition that good achieved and made known was able to reawaken good feelings and also the desire to get involved at a practical level.

Questa è la convinzione espressa da Don Ricceri nella sua lettera circolare in occasione del primo centenario del BS: «La conoscenza positiva della realtà salesiana nel mondo può suscitare - in persone oneste, di sentimenti cristiani, e pensose per il futuro della gioventù - un desiderio di conoscere di più la realtà salesiana così impegnata in questo campo, e di associarsi a noi. Avviene uno spontaneo e graduale passaggio dall'assunzione di valori salesiani al formarsi di una vera e propria mentalità salesiana. E parallelamente matura il loro desiderio dell'appartenenza».

GLOBALISATION

A charism has no bounds no limits linguistic. It is simply "human". What Fr. Raineri said seems to be completely the case: "The SB should be considered as a Salesian work founded by Don Bosco which over time, has multiplied, like the Oratory, the Missions. Its purpose is to make the Salesian charism present and spread it as widely as possible, not for 'salesianismo' sake, but because 'salesianity' is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the whole Church"

The final document of GC 24 says: "Don Bosco conceived the SB as an instrument of linking, animation, formation and for involving many lay people who look sympathetically on our works.

Today the Bulletin, printed in many editions in various geographical parts of the world, is a precious instrument of communication for a more complete sharing of the Salesian spirit and a more updated involvement in the educational and evangelising mission of the Salesian Movement and Family”.

In a healthy organisation the whole is more important than the parts.

ENTHUSIASM

The Bulletin’s colour is enthusiasm. This means passing on through the overall tone of the magazine a conviction about participating in a grand enterprise willed by God. It is the metacommunication that shows through the choice of each element in the publication.

THE 4Ps

The 4Ps are the four variables in the *marketing mix*: Product, Price, Positioning, Promotion.

The Product is not only the product in itself, but of the entire *whole* that goes with it. The Bulletin can be an opening gambit for many other initiatives.

Price and Promotion of the Bulletin actually adopt the most politically incorrect formula one could imagine: gratis and for everyone. It is the same modern technique of advertising pamphlets that commercial centres have, as well as *call centres*.

Let me quote a non-Salesian source to express one of Don Bosco’s certainties.

“The case of the holy individual Bartolo Longo is typical. His name will be forever bound up with the Sanctuary of the Madonna of Pompei. Having come to seek out Don Bosco whether in 1884 or 1885 we are not sure, he asked him ò what his secret was for winning over the world.

“Here is my secret”, Don Bosco replied: I send the Salesian Bulletin to whoever wants it and to those who don’t want it”. This was a revelation for his questioner. He had not yet woken up to the power of the press; but returning to Pompei, he improved the printing shop he had, added to the number of machines and multiplied the number of copies of his bimonthly *The Rosary and the Madonna of Pompei*. From the four thousand in 1884, in ten years he arrived at seventy two thousand. *Per tale motivo don Bosco viene considerato laggiù come colui che “segnò il passo alla seconda tappa del periodico di Pompei”».*

Positioning is a bit more delicate: it is about *identification* of the product amidst so many other products. It means that the “client” has to be attracted by values which the product is the bearer of. It is the interiorisation of the message. This is just what Don Bosco wanted.

A POPULAR PRODUCT

The ABC of the chronicler (and of the Evangelist Mark) for an authentically popular product are the following: Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity.

ACCURACY

Control of sources
Language

BREVITY

No repetition
Not superfluous
No rhetoric

CLARITY

Speak in the readers' language
One idea per sentence
Each sentence a complete idea

SWOT

SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) is a good monitoring approach. The criteria on which it is based allows you to consider internal values and external factors at the same time so you can exploit the strong points of the enterprise, contain the weak ones, maximise opportunities and minimise risks.

Some Good Practices: Publishing, Radio, Multimedia



SOCIETÀ EDITRICE INTERNAZIONALE AT THE SERVICE OF THE ITALIAN SCHOOL

SERGIO GIORDANI, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN ISEO, DISTRICT OF BRESCIA, ITALY. HE WAS ALREADY INVOLVED WITH LAS AND HAD SERVED IN THE GENERALATE. HE HAS BEEN WITH SEI FOR MANY YEARS AND NOW ITS VICE PRESIDENT.

The *Società Editrice Internazionale* (SEI) or 'International Publishing Society' in English, came into existence in Turin on 31 July 1908, with the full encouragement of the then Rector Major, Blessed Michael Rua, and managed by a group of Italian and foreign Salesian Cooperators. It came into being as the *Società Anonima Internazionale*, meaning 'International Society Limited', in English, for disseminating good press (SAID), with branches in Barcelona, Liege, London, Nice and Vienna. The official communication means for this new publishing body was the Salesian Bulletin, printed in nine languages. The printing and mailing or dissemination, up till then was looked after by the Salesian Press at the Oratory, Valdocco, was handed over to SAID.

SAID was also given the publishing property and copyright for publications until then handled by the Salesian Bookshop and Press at the Valdocco Oratory by request of the leaders of the Salesian Congregation, and this new publishing group then planned to reach the market in school publishing. The Salesian catalogue in fact was made up of school texts, edifying and popular literature, theatrical and musical publishing, and devotional material and apologetics. The Salesian Book shop used to publish on average 30 titles a year.

By shifting offices, storerooms and book deposits from the Salesian Library across to SAID the former's director, Giuseppe Caccia, a Salesian Brother was also made available and the Superiors of the Congregation, because of his experience, appointed him to SAID. He was the senior authority of SEI and managed it for a good fifty years.

Once the enterprise was firmly established from a publishing point of view, the next step concerned its expansion throughout Italy, beyond regional borders. This came about in 1912 with the opening of two bookshops: one at Parma the other in Catania. These were the first pieces in a mosaic made up of affiliates of SAID spread throughout key centres around the country. This initiative was aimed at strengthening the distribution network and its own presence beyond traditional Salesian commercial channels.

With its renewed catalogue SAID continued along the same publishing lines and increased its production: between 1909 and 1923 2,400 titles were released, almost half of them text books.

The first publications were aimed at primary education, especially teaching of Italian through literature, as well as gaining profits from other books strategically consistent with the Salesian educational approach, since they offered the possibility of proposing edifying material and stories. This attention to the primary education sector came from the belief that it was fundamental to the moral development of the child and responded to the mission of an apostolate for good press which Don Bosco had preached. However a significant part of the school catalogue was also aimed at the middle and upper school levels, especially the academic secondary classes and the technical schools, places where the Salesian Congregation was very active.

In 1912 they began to publish collections of classical studies *Latin authors with commentary for schools* and *Greek authors with commentary for schools*, which had a notable success under the impetus of the 1923 school reform which put much emphasis on classical literature and also prescribed the study of ancient Christian authors. The same year, 1912, *Didaskaleion* was launched, the only Italian journal specialising in philological studies of ancient Christian literature. The purpose of this Quarterly was to promote the study of ancient Christian thought. The *Biblioteca del Didaskaleion* collection was connected with this magazine. In those years Salesians Paolo Ubaldi and Sisto Colombo collaborated with the Publishers: Ubaldi held the first Italian Chair of Latin and Greek Christian Literature at the Catholic University in Milan and Colombo was his successor. Latin and Greek Grammars written by Salesian Giuseppe Puppo and Felice Dacomo also had great success for the teaching of those languages. *Nell'insegnamento del greco*, is worth mentioning. A text by theologian Marco Pechenino *Verbi e forme verbali difficili o irregolari della lingua greca (Verbs and difficult or irregular verb forms in Greek)* is also worthy of mention. Its first edition had been published halfway through the 19th century by the Salesian Bookshop, then passed on to SAID and even today is still reprinted by SEI.

For teaching Italian production shifted from collections of the classics, *Nuova Biblioteca della gioventù italiana*, to grammars, anthologies, exercises, histories of literature. The Salesian Michele Martina, a teacher at Ferrara and in Switzerland stood out in this field but especially Carlo Calcaterra, professor of Italian Literature at the Catholic University of Milan and then the Athenaeum at Bologna. These were amongst the best literary and historical critics in the first half of the twentieth century.

The Publishing House did not forget other disciplines. It offered handbooks for students in lower and upper secondary, in foreign languages, history, geography, arithmetic, computer science and natural sciences.

One author with much talent and success was Pietro Gribaudo, whose texts went beyond a million copies in the Thirties. He had been helped by Don Bosco as a boy and grew up at his school. Gribaudo taught in various secondary schools and in 1907 took over the Chair of commercial Geography at the Turin Higher School of Commerce. A prolific writer, Gribaudo made a mark on his time with *L'uomo e il suo regno* (*Man and his reign*), a geography course for lower secondary, which went to thirty editions from 1913 to 1946.

The First World War had serious consequences for the Publishing House's activities. Publication of the Salesian Bulletins was suspended and all publishing activity slowed down. The years following the Great War were marked by a decisive recovery in publishing activity and a strategy for expansion. On 19 August 1920 by a decision of the Assembly of Members the Publishing House adopted the current name of *Società Editrice Internazionale* (SEI), a name whose acronym also included the motto: *Serenant et Illiminant*.

Between 1919-1924 three new bookshops were opened in Milan, Turin and Genoa. In 1927 it was Rome's turn to gain a branch. Publicity campaigns intensified for specialised magazines and promotion of school editions was further enhanced. As for commercial relations, SEI acquired exclusive representation for works published by the *Istituto Geografico De Agostini* at Novara, and publications by the French A. Mame and *Fils di Tours* Publishers, as well as *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan.

The school reform set in place by Giovanni Gentile in 1923 also implied a publishing reform. The serious economic situation post-war and the sudden change of school programmes meant notable financial outlay. The main publishing firms went from a mainly family structural base to a societal one, involving financiers, representatives of large banks, businessmen and politicians in their administrative councils.

SEI responded to the challenge, maintaining its independence, thanks to the support of the Congregation, and by quickly renewing its catalogue. SEI, with a strong catalogue in every discipline, located itself in the lead in the national publishing panorama. The re-introduction of the teaching of religion in school contributed to this success. It was a sector in which SEI could already boast of a tradition, and the expansion of non-State Catholic schools, the possibility of being able to choose our own authors from amongst the best teachers in Salesian schools, the prestige of the Salesian Family, culminating in Don Bosco's Beatification in 1934 were part of that success. To these factors we need to add careful administration and an editorial policy which was competently and courageously pursued.

In 1924 the *Lecture di Filosofia* collection was begun, entrusted to Salesian Fr Antonio Cojazzi, teacher and principal at Valsalice, Turin. Fr Cojazzi's activities extended to editing various magazines and collection which SEI promoted:

Catechesi and *Rivista dei Giovani* magazines; the *Biblioteca della Rivista dei Giovani*, *Linea recta brevissima*, *Cristiani laici moderni* collections. Fr. Cojazzi called on Luigi Stefanini to collaborate with SEI. He was a young teacher of Philosophy and History at senior secondary level and then a lecturer at the University of Padua. Stefanini wrote the *Handbooks of Philosophy and Pedagogy for use by Teacher Training Institutes* for SEI, in response to programmes set up by Gentile for new teacher-training institutes. The same author then wrote *Problemi teorici e morali nei classici del pensiero* and *Sommario storico della filosofia*, *Storia della filosofia*. SEI entrusted Stefanini with editing the collection of classics in pedagogical thinking: *Lecture di Pedagogia*.

With a view to responding to current thinking contrary to the Church's teaching, in 1929 SEI founded *Convivium*, a Literature, Philosophy and History Journal, entrusted to Calcaterra, Ubaldi and Stefanini to edit. The journal proposed to "rightly highlight Christian literature and oppose the spread of false philosophical ideas".

The renewal of text books in the area of classical disciplines was entrusted to Salesian Salvatore Sciuto, author of the Latin grammar *Roma mater* (1926) and to Ottavio Tempini, author of *Grammatica sintetica della lingua latina, con dizionarietto completo dei verbi anomali e meno regolari* (1924). Paolo Ubaldi and Sisto Colombo continued their work of appreciation of Latin and Greek classics, the former as founder and the latter as editor of the collection *Corona Patrum Salesiana* on Patristic studies.

We also need to point to text books for the teaching of religion, introduced into schools by the Gentile reform. Just between 1930-32, SEI published around 15 courses. These texts went from complete religion courses, to the history of Christianity, Bible History, biblical geography.

In 1936 the Publishing Council came into being, requested by the Rector Major Fr Peter Ricaldone and was entrusted to Fr Renato Ziggotti, General Council for Schools, who became its President. This shows the direct interest of the Superior Chapter in SEI, which Fr Ricaldone described as "a clearly Salesian work and as such to be maintained and preserved". The Council comprised 15 members, each of whom was an expert in a specific discipline. The Regulations of the Council recalled SEI's mission: "to maintain and continue Salesian traditions in printed material. To ensure that SEI's publications correspond ever more perfectly to the needs of the school, religious culture, the good of souls. To see that SEI preserves – as its peculiar moral status – its nature as an Institution for good press, which it has inherited from the spirit of our Father and Founder Saint John Bosco".

Having overcome the difficult years of the Second World War, in the Fifties and Sixties, SEI renewed its writing body and gave birth to a catalogue of modern and innovative teaching aids. It knew how to recognise the importance

that the visual message had taken on (one needs to remember that 1954 saw the beginning of RAI television) and decided to begin production of school and educational film under the slogan *Nel film didattico l'avvenire della scuola*. In 1952 in Rome, the Scholastic Educational Film Office was set up under the direction of Remo Branca, an art scholar after the war and pioneer of didactic cinema. He was replaced some years later by Filippo Paolone, a scholar of cinema and documentary film. As well as documentaries, around 80 filmstrip were produced, meant for students in primary and lower to middle secondary. These were divided into history, geography, science, history of art, recreational and educational.

After the Second World War, collaboration between the Publishing House and the Higher Institute of Pedagogy at the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum became stronger. Fr Gino Corallo published *Educazione e libertà* (1951), *La pedagogia della libertà* (1951) and a wide-ranging monograph on John Dewey (1950), all with SEI. In 1954 the publication of *Orientamenti Pedagogici* began, a bimonthly journal which became the official voice of the Higher Institute of Pedagogy, and a significant one in the pedagogical culture of the era. In 1964, Fr Luigi Calonghi founded *Scuola Viva*, a fortnightly magazine for updates and experimentation in the teaching field, coming out in three editions dedicated to middle school teachers, technical and professional school teachers, and senior level and teacher training level, respectively.

Over the five years period from 1955-1960 branches opened in Padua, Naples, Bari, Palermo, Bologna, and Florence which consolidated SEI's presence.

Eugenio Visentini, Rector of the Salesian Pontifical Athenaeum, worked in the religious publications area. He was able to involve lecturers such as Alfons Stickler, Gino Corallo, Antonio Maria Javerre, Pietro Braido. Igino Giordani, also published along these lines. He was a journalist and member of the Constituent Assembly. He wrote a life of St. Pius X, Pius XII, Catherine of Siena and an extensive *Gesù di Nazareth*.

In the second half of the Fifties, SEI opened up to publishing large works. The *Dizionario generale di cultura* by Salesian Augusto Brunacci, was published. Carlo Calcaterra launched the *Enciclopedia Classica*, a collection of critical and up-to-date monographs on classical studies entrusted to outstanding individuals like Paolo Enrico Arias, Carlo Del Grande and Giovanni Battista Pighi. This project was divided into three sections: *History and Antiquity*, *Language and literature*, *Archeology and history of classical art*.

The collections of higher studies placed SEI amidst the keen social and cultural debate of the time. Under the direction of Salesian Giacomo Lorenzini, psychologist and pupil of Agostino Gemelli, the *Psicologia e Vita* collection made the work of foreign psychologists, who dealt with human holistic growth, known in Italy.

Attention was also given to philosophical studies. A reference person in this area was Federico Michele Sciacca, lecturer in theoretical philosophy at the University of Genoa, and founder of the *Giornale di Metafisica*, a bimonthly journal of philosophy. He also launched the *Biblioteca del Giornale di Metafisica* series. He also looked after the translation of various philosophical studies in the series that he edited such as *I classici della filosofia* and *I classici della filosofia e della pedagogia*.

The beginning of the Seventies was marked by problems and crises. It was evident that the catalogue needed to be renewed. It was no longer enough to have 'famous' authors who were now passé. The opportunity to break out of this ageing process was offered by the December 1962 school reform. Also evident in those years was the need for the business to be reorganized so it could respond to the needs of a market which was developing and expanding as a consequence of the unified middle secondary reform. The administration gained a new and more sophisticated data processing centre, able to guarantee greater precision and timely presentation of data. Various bookstores in the commercial sector were gradually closed down (Genoa, Rome, Parma, Turin, Milan) to have a network of more agile affiliates instead as well as a network of agents who were prepared for a more active and constant propaganda. An Administrative Team was created, separating administration from publishing roles.

In 1966 Fr Francesco Meotto was assigned to SEI, with the task of organising this Administrative Team, which he did in the following way: "make the teaching sector methodologically valid and tackle serious knowledge in the area with a view to passing on Christian values". He led SEI's publishing activities towards "recognising the authentic nature of secular values, their autonomy and relevance for the faith, and going beyond any kind of religious hardline approach".

Fr Meotto gave a notable push to a wide range of areas under 'varia', "a field", he said, "where big publishers who create public opinion and culture are active. This is the point of encounter with judgments, values, the way people behave, where the image of the human being is formed, a view of life that determines individual and collective existence". Under his guidance SEI began to be part of what was happening in the nation and paid attention not only to educational issues but also social and cultural ones. Fr Meotto knew how to get people of culture and journalism involved. Amongst his greatest successes we should note the best seller *Ipotesi su Gesù* by Vittorio Messori.

But the wide-ranging restructuring was still not enough in the short term. The oil crisis, with its repercussions on the cost of paper, work, interest rates, and strong social tensions just made the "book crisis" more acute.

The Seventies were also tough years for text books, since school and teaching had become more authoritarian. This phenomenon pushed SEI into new areas and to risk teaching materials of an electronic nature. The Publishing

House took on a new direction: it began production and sale of electronic teaching materials aiming to bring schools updated learning technologies. The Teaching Studies Centre was set up to research new teaching technologies and the updating of teaching personnel. As well as production of multimedia teaching materials (slides, films, videocassettes, a-v software) SEI improved planning, production, commercialization and maintenance of language and multimedia workshops, teaching networks, data networks, language tapes and laboratories. At the time SEI installed 4 thousand language and multimedia labs in Italy and overseas, in 35 countries. Halway through the 80's, SEI was the only group able to offer a specific catalogue for computer didactic software.

The lower secondary school reform in 1979 gave SEI the chance to relaunch, which it did through a renewed business and organizational push which brought SEI to the head of Italian scholastic publishing houses. Some data: the number of textbooks sold went from a million, seven hundred thousand in 1977 to more than three million in 1981. In the years that followed, this expansion was slowed down by the increasing parallel market for used books and the gradual demographic decline. To this we need to add the illegal market of photocopied texts and review copies.

In the 90's, in order to respond to new market strategies, SEI tackled its most demanding stage of reorganisation: it divested itself of its industrial side (print shop and multimedia production workshops), with a consequent drastic reduction in personnel, and then it directed its activities mainly to its tradition school publishing area, *its core business*. It is now in the Secondary area (1st and 2nd grade as it is termed in Italy now, meaning lower-middle and upper secondary) and is amongst the first of the Italian publishers to adapt to this new reform.

As its educational mission, SEI aims at developing a critical, aesthetic, moral sense in young people and helping them to be open to religion. Its publishing activity aims at fostering in young people a sense of personal and social responsibility, a correct appreciation of values, the desire to broaden their understanding and knowledge, the ability to adopt an active and critical attitude to events, an openness to human and transcendent values.

New challenges are now represented by the evolution of teaching tools from paper to ICT (Information and communication technologies) which is a whole change of the manner of learning: online, hybrid, collaborative. The teacher now has to be an "expert guide", someone who in ever stricter collaboration with colleagues, advises, supports guides the individual and the group in projects and in building pathways to knowledge. The new technologies allow for personalised teaching and going beyond the physical limits of the classroom, but it is a methodology that has to be built up and can also lead to new forms of exclusion.

It is a case of inventing new “settings” for learning which are more open and flexible, adapted to an internal organisation which is no longer articulated in classes and time at school which is no longer marked by a rigid timetable. This is a new approach he have has to be understood in its dynamics as they apply to learning, and that requires notable investment, with uncertainty as to the real financial return in terms of profits, and a radical rethinking of the business structure of a publishing house. The digitalisation of knowledge leads to a difficult re-organisation of publishing processes. Without forgetting that information and communication technologies risk being monopolised by the powerful incumbents running search engines and those who produce applications for managing digital content, who tend to impose their own rules.

On 22 November 2012 SEI was enrolled in the *Registry of Historical Enterprises*, set up by Unioncamere (Italian Chambers of Commerce) in June 2011 for the 150th anniversary of Italian unification.

ELLEDICI: A PUBLISHER UNDER THE BANNER OF DON BOSCO AND FOLLOWING HIS DREAM

VALERIO BOCCI, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN ROME, ITALY AND HAS BEEN CONNECTED WITH ELLEDICI

FOR MANY YEARS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLICATIONS

HE HIMSELF IS AUTHOR OF SEVERAL BOOKS

In Italy and beyond, Elledici Publishing House is synonymous with catechetics. This aspect of its DNA has developed over 70 years with a passion for education and fidelity to the signs of the times, and with languages and approaches that are both intelligent and innovative for all ages. It has been accompanying the process of formation in the Salesian Congregation and the Church under the banner of Don Bosco but also following his dream – he was, after all, the first Salesian catechist!

1. FROM THE BEGINNING – A POWERFUL IDEA

At the end of the 1930s there were stirrings in the Congregation indicating a desire to relaunch the catechetical side of the charism. When preparing to celebrate the first centenary, which coincided with the “simple catchism lesson” Don Bosco gave to Bartholomew Garelli on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception 1841, in the summer of 1939 the Superiors founded the *l'Ufficio Catechistico Centrale Salesiano* (UCCS) in Turin. The idea of this Office was to sensitise ecclesial communities regarding problems of catechetics and religion teaching in schools (IRC as they called it). But also to prepare and update catechists through courses and congresses and develop tools to help catechists and others.

The same year Fr Ricaldone sent confreres a circular on the *Oratorio festivo catechismo formazione religiosa* (religious and catechetical education in the festive oratory). It was a kind of manifesto, a strong reminder of our work in catechetics. Then a “catechetics crusade” started with a national competition aimed at encouraging study of the catechism through meetings, conferences, exhibitions, competitions and prizes.

The UCCS activity soon became a publishing effort, publishing teaching materials and other aids for organisation of these events. One item stood out in particular, the *Il re dei libri*, a coloured catechism for primary classes considered as a true teaching and technical model, and published by the *Società Editrice Internazionale* (SEI).

Following the success of these initiatives in the catechetical field, Fr Peter Ricaldone had the idea of linking a publishing house to UCCS, as a way of spreading its ideas. That is how the "L.D.C" (Libreria Dottrina Cristiana or now *Elledici*) came about. It came into being as a solemn vote from the Rector Major and his Chapter members in Don Bosco's rooms on the morning of 8 December 1941. Fr Ricaldone had this to say:

"Gathered in filial piety around our beloved Father's bed we beg pardon for our failures and those of his sons throughout the world and in everyone's name we promise him to remain faithful to our Constitutions, regulations and Salesian traditions. With a view to perpetuating this important day, the 8 December 1841, the birth of our Society with the first lesson our Father gave to the young orphan Bartholomew Garelli, we promise:

1. to found the *Libreria della Dottrina Cristiana* at the birthplace of Colle St John Bosco;
2. to see that every province in the Society makes efforts to begin a new Orphanage for poor and abandoned youth.

So the Bernardi Smeria Institute at Colle Don Bosco was the birthplace of Elledici. A graphics school was immediately set up, entrusted to young Brothers who were enthusiastic about catechetics due to Fr Ricaldone's charismatic efforts. From 1943, during the height of the Second World War, Elledici began its intense activity, to the point where the Holy See entrusted UCCS with organising the 1st *International Catechetical Congress* (1950) as well as running the associated exhibition.

2. VATICAN II

Production initially was a mix of tradition and innovation. The *Lux* collection would be a good representation of the traditional aspect, a collection made up of smaller collections, small in size and number of pages as well, which according to Fr Ceria ran to six or seven million copies, leaving aside translations. Also significant, but more towards the more innovative side, was the pioneering production of hundreds of "*Filmine Don Bosco*" (*filmstrips*), which were very soon a great success in Italy and abroad.

The activities of the new Publishing House, which multiplied the possibilities of service to catechetics inspired the Superiors to broaden the outreach of UCCS to the Italian Church. In the immediate postwar period this Office became the *Centro Catechistico Salesiano* (CCS, 1947) the inspirational basis (*Centro Studi*) for Elledici's publishing work.

The CCS planned, experimented, organised courses, study days and weeks throughout Italy, meeting priests catechists, leaders and leading to the establishment and organisation of many diocesan catechetical offices.

For its part, the Publisher printed and distributed many books, other materials and audiovisuals in very clear language and with solid content, but also began producing journals which were fundamental to its mission. Amongst these we could immediately mention *Catechesi*, for its theoretical contribution to catechetical reflection, and its methods and approaches. It was started in 1932 by the Bishop of Piacenza Bishop Enrico Montalberti, inspired by Cardinal Schuster. Fr Cojazzi was involved from the outset and it was printed by SEI. Alongside *Catechesi*, there was also the flourishing *Teatro dei giovani*, *Teatro delle giovani*, *Voci bianche*.

Catechesi was taken over by UCCS in 1941 and relaunched in the years immediately preceding Vatican II. It did this, for the most part, through national conventions like "*Amici di Catechesi*" with technical and logistic support from the Publishers in 1959, 1960, 1962 and 1966. It brought thousands together and had a threefold advantage: it disseminated innovative thinking about catechetics, as promoted by the international catechetical movement, throughout every diocese; it was an expression of the request for central organisation of catechetics in Italy (recognised in 1960 by the creation of a catechetical commission in CEI, and in 1961 with the setting up of the National Catechetics Office); and we finally said goodbye to the by now outdated Catechism of Pius X (which happened immediately after the Council).

3. LEUMANN

In 1963, Elledici and CCS left the Mother House at Valdocco (where they had been since 1959) for a more organised effort together at the new and larger building in Leumann in Turin. These were years of considerable expansion for the Publishers and of notable influence on the catechetical ministry of the Italian Church, and beyond. Two documents confirm this: *La scoperta del Regno di Dio* (*Discovering the Kingdom of God and Il nuovo catechismo olandese* (*Dutch catechism*)).

The first, a three volume work for teaching religion in Italian middle school (11/14 year olds) presented the Christian message in a strongly biblical and liturgical way following the direction of the proposed *kerygmatic approach* by Jungmann and his circle. The choice made by CCS and Elledici marked a point of no return with its success over similar texts but of a doctrinal-theological kind based on the Catechism of Pius X. It outlined Christian doctrine along the following lines: dogma ("The Creed", first volume), morals ("Commandments", second vol.), Grace (Sacraments and prayer, volume three).

The second “publishing novelty” exploded in 1962. The *New Dutch Catechism* which was a complete change compared to the traditional catechisms. In the exciting climate of the early post-conciliar period, Elledici succeeded in publishing this famous and much debated catechism with its “supplement” as requested by Rome. It did so not without much effort and determination: that is, despite opposition from certain members of the hierarchy and strong competition from the secular publishing world, very interested in a publishing opportunity that seemed to have easily predictable success lying before it.

Amidst these two outstanding publishing efforts, Elledici was doing its best to spread ideas from Vatican II through its *Collana Magistero conciliare*, 16 substantial volumes offering the genesis, editing process, structure of and systematic comments on each text from the Council. It was particularly active in liturgical reform in every sense, including sacred music. It was regularly producing missals, materials for liturgy generally, sacramental celebration, Liturgy of the Hours, singing the Psalms.

All this liturgical production was given theoretical support from reflection in the authoritative *Rivista Liturgica* published by Elledici, along with theological and pastoral volumes studying all kinds of expressions of worship.

Elledici has given particular attention to liturgical and recreational music, continuing Don Bosco’s tradition, for whom “an oratory without music is a body without a soul”. This is why it published the *Il canto dell’assemblea* and *Armonia di voci* journals and still does so today; they are amongst the best known collection of such music. Also *La famiglia cristiana nella casa del Padre* (since 1969) and the new *Repertorio nazionale dei canti*, in collaboration with the liturgical office of the CEI.

4. **BASIC DOCUMENT: MILESTONE FROM THE 1970S**

In the seventies Elledici gave support to the Italian Catechetical Project, involving some Salesians from CCS first hand in drawing up a *Basic Document* for the Project (1970) and for various official catechisms that followed at the time. As a service for this entire project, Elledici saw to the most complete and authoritative commentary on the *Basic Document* and “guides” for the official catechisms for various age groups, also providing further material on them. All of this was then made known throughout most of the Italian dioceses by CCS experts who went the length and breadth of the Peninsula to spread the new CEI and National Catechetics Office proposals.

During this 'high season' of Italian catechetical renewal, CCS and Elledici set up meetings and courses for new pastoral workers and catechists who were fully formed in the spirit of the Council. Thus the *Bienni* for pastoral and catechetical formation came into being to prepare leaders in the catechetical field, and directors for diocesan catechetics offices. These were also replicated outside Turin, and offered an effective contribution to renewal of Italian pastoral catechesis and, aching people from many regions, also helped make Elledici and CCS better known.

The result of these *Bienni* and collaboration with the Catechetical Institute at the UPS was also a first series of handbooks (*Quaderni*) on catechetics that tackled various aspects of catechetics from a theoretical point of view. The collection, which was continued and updated continues today under the title of *Studi e ricerche di catechetica. Nuova serie*.

Still in the catechetical and religious field, we could indicate another important publishing initiative of Elledici that demonstrates its attention to the area of culture. In the context of post-conciliar catechetics, which pays attention to the dimensions of anthropology and experience, works and kerygmatic approaches like *La scoperta del Regno di Dio* began to show their limitations and were less usable in an increasingly secular and pluralist school setting. Halfway through the Seventies, then, Elledici published *Progetto Uomo*, one of the early texts to take up the anthropological perspective in school religious education. It was an immediate publishing success and became a point of reference for similar works published by others.

Continuing along this line, the *Catechesi* journal issued a series of binder products for a number of years, *Catechesi Fotoproblemi*. Each was a collection of photos on a particular issue, not strictly religious but of catechetical interest, supported by a guide which the catechist could use. At the same time Elledici supported more traditional catechesis with a series it developed on *cartelloni catechistici*, which could be used in classrooms.

A Publisher which aims to support the Church's ministry also needs to be interested in the Bible. Using experts from within or outside of CCS, *Il messaggio della salvezza* came into being, a several volume introduction to biblical texts. Often updated and reprinted, these handbooks, under the title *Logos*, were a flagship item for Elledici. Then came the success of the *Enciclopedia delle Bibbia*, in six huge volumes published in the seventies.

To inform and form a broad public in 1971 the bimonthly *Parole di vita* was launched, belonging to the Italian Biblical Association (ABI) and in 1990 *Il Mondo della Bibbia*, a translation and adaptation of the journal by the same name in French.

Still aiming at a higher level of culture, *Bibbia Tob*, one of the most up-to-date and complete biblical commentaries was published with introductions, and notes and comments from the *Traduction Oecumenique de la Bible*. An edition of the *Bibbia in lingua corrente* (TILC) was both original and of high quality, put together by Catholic and Protestant specialists under the auspices of the Universal Biblical Alliance (ABU) and CCS-Elledici.

The seventies were also the years when individual religious families were involved in seriously rethinking their charisms and identity in the light of the Council. Elledici did not forget its Salesian foundations and saw to a special collection of studies aimed at helping Salesians to live their founder's charism effectively today. In this area there was a strong and successful effort to present Don Bosco to a broader public by publishing new biographies and texts concerning him. They were disseminated outside of Italy through various translations.

The Salesian 'stamp' was also observable in the attention Elledici gave to youth ministry and education in general. Amongst the outstanding efforts here privileged place needs to be accorded to *Note di pastorale giovanile*, *Mondo Erre* and *Dimensioni nuove*. These periodicals reach thousands of readers and help them with human and Christian formation, alongside other productions aimed at leisure time like theatrical texts, recitals, youth songs, games and summer holiday material. The journal *Teatro dei giovani* was dedicated to theatre, and then came *Espressione giovani*.

5. SCHOOL

New encouragement for publishing activity came from the choice of CEI to draw up official new Italian catechisms, initially published only "for consultation and experiment". The Bishops' decision encouraged Elledici to formulate new and more adequate texts around the structures for catechetical ministry that had already been prepared in the earlier decade. Here we note the success of *Dossier catechista*, probably with the widest dissemination in the world, running to 75,000 copies. Along with *Dossier catechista* came two other journals for religion teaching in school: *L'Ora di religione*, for the primary school, and *Insegnare religione* for middle and upper secondary. This because, following the revised Concordat between the Holy See and the Italian State (1984), the role of religion teaching in the public school was given a new shape. Elledici got involved in helping teachers assimilate the new approach to this discipline through its two journals, and with handbooks and specific texts which, amongst other things, made known in Italy some of the problems that were also bothering other European countries in this regard.

Elledici also gave special and substantial attention to the world of communication and its new tools. Slides substituted the glorious filmstrips and as a more modern *medium* helped offer hundreds of catechetical topics: biblical (old and new testament), history of the Church, hagiography, morals, liturgy, sacraments, sacred art etc. More 'profane' topics were not ignored either, but in each case they had educational value: blood donation for example. Symbolic of this period was *Diagroup* which was made up of a collection of slides in each edition illustrating a particular topic. The collection was accompanied by a printed booklet with useful material explaining the images, and an audiocassette.

Noting the development in the mass media area, Elledici then got involved in massive production of cassettes, initially, then DVDs, all of which helped pastoral workers to benefit from the large television productions like *Gesù di Nazareth* by Franco Zeffirelli, *Mosé* by Gianfranco De Bosio and the *Atti degli Apostoli* by Roberto Rossellini.

Similarly it went ahead with forming pastoral workers at various levels. Thus the publishing catalogue was enriched with data and indications emerging from broad sociological research involving thousands of Italian catechists, which took place between the eighties and the nineties. The same catalogue offered a complete series of handbooks of theology offering the possibility for serious and up-to-date theological formation for people tackling theological studies. Particularly appreciated were the dictionaries published with the help of the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome: *Dizionario di Catechetica*, *Dizionario di Pastorale Giovanile*, *Dizionario di Scienze dell'educazione*, *Dizionario della comunicazione*, *Dizionario di Omiletica*, *Enciclopedia di bioetica e sessuologia* (along with the Society for biology and sexuality) and *l'Enciclopedia delle Religioni*, which came out at this time in a renewed edition.

6. FROM 2000 UNTIL TODAY

For the early years of the new century we can register two important publishing initiatives by Elledici. Serving those who were working with the official catechisms of CEI, the *Progetto Magnificat* was developed to help catechists organise their catechetics by using all the elements in their texts: biblical, liturgical and anthropological.

The whole question of catechetics, however, was rapidly developing and the Italian Church between the end of the nineties and the first few years after 2000 made the choice of offering catechetics from the point of view of "Christian initiation", or the catechumenate. Aware of this development, Elledici, as well as spreading and commenting on the new direction, printed *Progetto Emmaus* on this basis. Another successful

product, reprinted in its thousands, and particularly innovative from a teaching point of view, was the *La Buona Notizia* project. These are small hypertext collections, an approach that “digital natives”, used to chatting, multitasking and constant web connection, find easy to work with.

Throughout its history, Elledci has always had the valuable backing of CCS, which was renewed in 1999 and given a new name: *Centro Evangelizzazione e Catechesi don Bosco* and supported by a large Salesian community. In the eighties there were as many as 53 priest and brother confreres working, thinking, planning and praying together, and greatly adding to the catalogue of Elledici with some 3,000 titles and 200 new items per year.

There are around a hundred lay people working with the Salesians, between the central location and bookstores in twelve cities.

But a gradual reduction in the number of confreres working with us led, in 2011, to the closure of that community and an overall reshaping of the Publishing House. On the vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate in 2012, the main offices transferred, in close connection with the *Centro Catechistico*, to a new and more functional building. The Publishing House has abandoned its imposing five-storey red-brick building, with dozens of windows, and taken on a more agile and functional garb, more in line with the times.

The distance between the old address at Rivoli, the House of Savoy summer residence overlooking the Alps, and the new, close to Turin city centre, is not much. But there are kilometres of written words, mountains of printed books, quintals of ink that separate them! Also an infinite series of filmstrips, slides, drawings, images and musical notes. A precious treasure today condensed into the three thousand titles of the catalogue and two hundred new items per year.

But one of the things that does tie the past to the present is the priceless human heritage represented by hundreds of Salesian writers, artists and musicians, authors and collaborators who have accompanied the formation of generations of children, youth and adults with the same passion for education that Don Bosco had.

The new offices are certainly a milestone which we have been waiting for and have worked for, coming after years of reflection, discussion and planning. But it has also been a courageous choice because it has been carried out at a time when the publishing industry is going through an enormous crisis.

7. SEEN THROUGH GOD'S EYES

On the day the new building was opened, 30 January 2013, Fr Pascual Chavez said in his passionate address that “this new place is a point of departure, not arrival, for publishing house that has written golden pages in Italy’s cultural history. It is a time of crisis but as Don Bosco taught us, we also need to look at the positive side, thinking of the opportunities offered rather than the difficulties. This is especially true if we consider that our first thought must always be for the young people who need words of hope and encouragement”.

In line with the Rector Major’s reflection, two important places still remain next to the historical location, run by young people and thought up by them: the bookstore and the *EllediciLab*, a research centre made up of a study group from the Publishing House, by *Ellediciscuola* (with the AIMC, the *Associazione Italiana Maestri Cattolici* or Italian Catholic Teachers’ Association as partner) and the *Elledici Edu.c.a.r.e* (Communication, Animation, Relations, Education) working together with the *Animagiovane* cooperative, experts in animation and formation). It is a real workshop or laboratory “where ideas and people meet” in in a constant give and take between the Publishers and the different educational circumstances around the nation. A *new entry* thought through and planned to respond to new challenges and questions coming out of social and ecclesial situations.

Leaders and teachers/educators who work with young people in parish groups and oratories revolve around this group of well-prepared professionals. Future publishing and multimedia products emerge from this exchange, in first place materials for summer activities, an intelligent mix of stories, activities, videos, songs, games, prayers.

Also knowing that “ideas and people meet”, to continue what Fr Chavez said, in “virtual playgrounds”, Elledici has invested enormous resources and energies in *online* material, with a fully renewed site, enabled for *e-commerce* and *social networking*. The dialogue with the new generations and their formators and proclamation of the Good News no longer passes just through the pages of a book but also through sites that make up the virtual world in which Don Bosco would also be present today, *chatting* with youngsters and communicating through *Youtube*, faithful to his “love what the young love if you want the young to love what you love”.

And it is the young people who are the fundamental point of reference for this Publisher's mission. Fr Chávez made reference to this: "I have one thing at heart: your books, magazines, dvds and new media must help us look at the world through God's eyes, see God in everything and see everything through his eyes".

Behind this concern is a bitter awareness: "In today's world" Fr Pascual went on, "there is a tremendous dose of pessimism. This pessimism regards the young in particular. Young people are not the future, they are the present and they need opportunity. As Don Bosco used say: we need to enlighten their minds, strengthen their identity, help them to grow in freedom and responsibility".

It is this which the new Elledici is committed to doing with renewed optimism and enthusiasm, and with a great future.... behind it! Under the banner of Don Bosco and following his dream.

CCS PUBLISHERS, MADRID

JOSÉ ANTONIO SAN MARTIN, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN LA CORUÑA NEAR COMPOSTELA, SPAIN. HE WAS A FORMER PROVINCIAL OF LEON, ALSO A PROFILE WRITER OF BOOKS AND AUDITOR. HE WAS THE GENERAL EDITOR OF CCS.

CCS Publishers Madrid has a long history whose beginnings go back to the final years of the Second World War when the then Rector Major, Fr Peter Ricaldone, opened the '*Casa del Boletín Salesiano*' in Madrid.

It was 31 January 1944 when the '*Casa del Boletín Salesiano*' and the first two Salesians set up shop at Calle de Alcalá, no, 164 in Madrid. One of them, Fr Miguel Riera, was the Director in charge. The first name given to this enterprise was the *Sociedad Editora Ibérica* (SEI) which lasted until 23 October 1958. From 27 July 1964 it was called *Central Catequística Salesiana* (CCS) and obtained a licence to "published and sell books, disks, slides, medals, rosaries". In 1974 the Iberian Provincial Conference asked the Rector Major to hand over responsibility for the Publisher to the Spanish provinces. However for the moment it seemed more convenient that it continue to be tied to the General Council. It was in 1993, the Rector Major being Fr Egidio Viganò, when the property of CCS passed to the Iberian Conference. Currently, the official name is **Editorial CCS**, or CCS Publishers in English.

MISSION

In the beginning the intention of the new publishing house was "*publication of school and religious books, especially for catechetics*". As well as the "*Boletín Salesiano*" other publications were added: Texts, teaching aids for catechetics, pedagogical texts, history books, Christian teaching and books on Salesian topics. In 1957 the production and dissemination of books grew and publication began of religious and formation audiovisual materials, and the well-remembered slides which made the *Central Catequística Salesiana* so famous.

Since 1994 the Editorial CCS became an autonomous work, independent of other activities in the Casa Don Bosco at 164 Alcalá street. The entrance was moved to no. 166 in the same street. Beginning from this year the Publishers gained new impulse through a major business reorganisation, more adequate structures and qualified personnel, focusing on book production. Since then there has been a gradual increase in new production finally arriving at more than 100 titles a year. In 2012 new titles under the heading of education and social intervention reached 52 and catechetical ministry, 64. Reprints have also

exceeded 100 titles. Production has expanded considerably, especially in the education field and topics of social interest, keeping what was already being done especially with regard to catechetics and ministry. Today the Publishers have two separate catalogues, one referring to education and social questions, and the other for religious formation such as catechetics, liturgy, ministry, Salesianity. There is also an active web page, www.editorialccs.com, recently established and which is growing in number of visits. The entire range can be found there and is available to clients: new titles, projected new titles, news, book and author of the month, a blog and the possibility of buying online.

We are aware that both categories, catechetics-ministry and education-social intervention offer various challenges in our Church and in society today: Adapting to new times, pedagogies and lifestyles, teaching or the faith and personal values. The fact that there is collaboration with Salesians and educators, teachers and catechists who are actually experiencing youthful settings first hand, means that book production is right up-to-date and ready for practical application. This fact is much appreciated. The Publishers has seen that everything that is made available for Salesian communities and the public is immediately useful and comes out of experience in the world of children and older youth. It is quite a challenge that we are aware of and which we constantly try to tackle, seeking the collaboration of Salesians and the entire Salesian Family as well as of catechists and teachers of the faith who are a point of reference today in our local church and in academic settings.

DIFFERENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Historically speaking, audiovisuals gave prestige to CCS in Spain and Latin America. It pioneered the introduction of slides and audiovisuals in catechetics. But it is a publishing line that for the moment has been abandoned for various reasons. Currently we publish books, journals and other materials to satisfy the needs of educators, pastoral workers and socio-cultural leaders; at the same time we offer materials for university students and teachers at pre-school, primary and secondary levels. The most significant contribution of CCS is in social intervention and animation/leadership for free time. Various series focus on these topics: School leadership, games, workshops, theatre, education of youth and to social action, social interventions etc.

The *Central Catequística Salesiana* currently published the **Misión Joven** magazine, founded in 1960 under the title *Técnica de Apostolado*, and it continues to offer interesting reflections on Youth Ministry. **Catequistas** began in 1985, dedication to catechist formation as well as formation of leaders of faith groups and parents. It has published the **Juventud Misionera** magazine, founded in 1926, for a number of years, whose aim is to educate teenagers to solidarity. Now it comes under the Madrid Mission Office. We need to add **Cuadernos de Formación Permanente**, founded in 1983, with articles

for formation of religious and Salesian communities, *Tiempos Litúrgicos*, for children from 8 to 12 years of age so they can experience Advent and Lent better.

We can also point out the yearly diaries or calendars that are clearly confessional in nature; these aim to reach particular roles: catechists, through the *Agenda del Catequista*; children and teenagers, *Agenda de Primaria y Secundaria*; teachers, *Agenda de la educación* and the *Agenda de bolsillo*.

CCS publishes, administers and also distributes the *Boletín Salesiano* whose subscribers are currently at 69,000 for the monthly edition. There are some small-scale audiovisual productions, for example the film on Don Bosco.

CCS tries to achieve an animation/educator style inspired by Salesian pedagogy that aims to engage young people and make them active players in their own complete education. Editorial policy is summed up in the motto: “*useful books, practical materials*”. This is why we publish educational, pastoral and catechetical materials that have already been experienced. Therefore our clients contact us knowing we offer practical materials applicable in the classroom and in the various pastoral and educational interventions with guaranteed results. Theatre works are another proud product of CSS following tradition abundant material in this area has been published in recent years. Three theatre collections are available: One focusing on catechetics, another on school and the third is theatre properly speaking.

On the other hand, we have always tried to involve the Salesian communities so they could see the imprint of our charism in the production of varied CCS materials. This is a support for ongoing formation of members and provides appropriate material for their pastoral and educational work in schools, parishes and leisure activities. This objective requires, simultaneously, a continuous work of animation by provincials and leaders of the various Provincial areas so that the materials offered are known and used; books, brochures and magazines.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROJECTS

Without doubt the first great success of *Editorial CCS* was, for many decades, the collections of slides distributed throughout Spain and Latin America, some adapted from the original Italian and others produced here, like for example the series on *Educación para el amor*.

In collaboration with the *Centro Nacional de Pastoral juvenil* there was another great publishing success with collections like *Ala y Viento* and *Documentación y Servicio*. Currently this latter collaboration continues with some interesting publishing results, highlighting, amongst others, *Itinerario de Educación en la fe*.

The work exclusively of the publishers and totally original was *Plan de Formación de Animadores*. More recently there have been series such as *Catequesis Familiar*, *Intervención Social Orientación*, *Educación y Terapia Familiar*, *Valorandia*, *dultos en Formación*, which continue to bring prestige to CCS. Here too we can highlight series like: *Materiales para Educadores*, *Celebrar y Orar*, *Recursos de Pastoral*, *Don Bosco*, *Educación*, *Campus*, *Escena y Fiesta* and finally, *Sal y Luz*.

MANAGEMENT

The Publisher is the property of the Salesian Provinces of Spain. The management and administration are entrusted to a Salesian, an expert in the field of social communication and publication, assisted by three other confreres dealing with education, pastoral care and other work respectively. All the other members of staff are lay people. *Editorial CCS* like all businesses, has an *Administration Council*, and a *Board of Directors* and an *Editorial Team*. We do not have our printing press.

We also market holy pictures, postcards, posters, pendants and booklets of Salesian images. In preparation for the Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth (1815-2015) we have launched a range of gift items with an image of the Saint. These have been well accepted in the Salesian world and have helped create a good climate in places where the Don Bosco Casket went during its visit to many of the Salesian works in Spain.

Marketing channels are developed through distributors and book stores. We are present in Spain and Latin America. CCS is an established company that is well maintained in its field, with prestige in the field of education and pastoral work-ministry, especially with its magazines.

Projects of interest we have worked on lately have been the translation of the Dictionary of Education, in its new edition, published by the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome, and especially books about Don Bosco, his spirituality and pedagogy to get to know him better in preparation for the Bicentenary, noting, in particular, the three volumes of A. Lenti, *Don Bosco: Historia y Carisma*, a work which has been very well accepted in Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries.

The needs of the market today and the short duration of a book require continuous innovation and competitive pricing, things not always possible to combine. It is obvious that we must focus on quality and expertise in a few areas, leaving aside other fields. Besides, some ministry areas are constantly altering their approach. This obviously has an effect on our publications. But we still maintain the strength of our "*publishing brand*" in the domestic market, and strengthen as much as possible our sales network, trying to stay ahead. At the same time we would like to broaden our presence in Spanish-speaking areas of Latin America.

EDEBÉ: EDICIONES DON BOSCO

ANTONIO GARRIDO, SBD

BORN IN MALAGA, SPAIN. HE HAD BEEN A MANAGER FOR DIFFERENT COMPANIES IN THE PUBLISHING SECTOR, BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE SPAIN.

HE IS GENERAL MANAGER OF THE SALESIAN PUBLISHING GROUP EDICIONES DON BOSCO – EDEBE

EDEBÉ: HISTORY

1884. The year the house at Sarriá was founded, initially known as *Talleres Salesianos* or Salesian Workshops.

1888. *El joven instruido* (The Companion of Youth, in English) was published — the first edition in Spanish was in 1886 printed at San Benigno Canavese, Italy — and printed by the *Escuela Tipográfica de Sarriá* (Salesian Press, Sarriá). The cover indicated it as *Tipografía Salesiana*, Barcelona-Sarriá. That year and the years to follow, the entity has various names: *Tipografía de los Talleres Salesianos*, *Tipografía Salesiana*, *Imprenta de los Talleres Salesianos*, *Tipografía y Librería Salesianas*...

In the beginning there was no distinction made between publishing and printing, as the publisher, the bookstore and printing school actually formed a unique set - and not just in name, almost to the mid-sixties of the twentieth century.

1892. Play scripts were published under the publishing title of *Tipografía y Librería Salesianas*, in the very fine *Galería Dramática Salesiana* collection which went on for decades and stood out for its brilliance at various points.

1894. The *Lecturas Católicas* (Catholic Readings) began to be published at the *Escuela de Tipografía*. It was a most unusual novelty for the times: launching a 96 page monthly booklet or sometimes even more; a risky project for an organisation with only basic means.

1908. The *Manual del Encuadernador*, (The Bookbinder's Handbook) was the foundation stone of the *Biblioteca Profesional Salesiana* (Salesian Vocational Education Library) a prestigious collection in the Spanish-speaking countries of the Salesian Congregation for its influence on the formation of apprentices and technicians.

1931. A political change resulted when the Spanish Republic was proclaimed and this influenced the precise designation of the publishing enterprise - it adopted a more secular name: *Editorial Pax*. (Peace Publishers). In this period a number of basic texts in graphic arts, carpentry and mechanics were published that would give rise to further expansion.

1939. In the difficult post-war period, we had to start from scratch, because almost everything had been looted and burned: library, branch store works, stocks of paper... only the press had been partly respected, as the occupants had needed its services, but several machines had been seized and sent to different printers around the city.

When the Salesians came back in January 1939, they wanted “everything the way it was” and since the name *Editorial Pax* had not been entered into the Registry of Industrial Properties this name was abandoned and it took on *Librería Salesiana* and even more frequently *Editorial Librería Salesiana*.

1966. The idea arose of finding a more commercial name for our publications and the name *Ediciones Tibidabo* won out, but few books were published under that name even though the Tibidabo Corporation tried to gain a place in the Industrial Properties Registry.

There was an effort to unify the proliferation of small publishing houses in Salesian Spain even if they were only publishing little items like calendars and year books. In fact there were two in Barcelona: the traditional *Editorial Librería Salesiana* and the *Ediciones Domingo Savio*, which published youth magazines.

At the national level an attempt was made to establish a single Salesian Publishing House with various branches but the idea failed. What remained was the name *Ediciones Don Bosco* which almost exclusively used the Publishing House in Barcelona.

1968. After not a few problems they managed to join forces and create a single Publishing House in Barcelona Province under the name of *Ediciones Don Bosco*, which brought together *Editorial Librería Salesiana* — aka *Ediciones Tibidabo* — and *Ediciones Domingo Savio*. It was located in a newly constructed building in the grounds of the Salesian Vocational Schools at Sarrià in Barcelona.

The first publishing objective was to update some basic but quite outdated works in Vocational Training and then the Publisher began new projects: 30 titles in graphic arts and over 200 technical titles in different specialised areas were published over a 15 year period, more or less. It certainly resulted in a huge effort and contribution to vocational training, a specifically Salesian area.

1983. Before the reform of secondary education, Don Bosco Publishers planned further expansion and looked for new challenges outside of the Vocational Training area. Using the logo *Edebé* (consisting of the initials of Don Bosco Publishers in Spanish), it published the first books

in General Basic Education for the primary stage. This resulted in a significant increase in activity which led *Edebé* to become the fourth educational publisher in the country and a leader in various areas, such as Religion teaching.

In 1992 its publishing interests expanded into Latin America and in collaboration with various Provinces, new *Edebé* Publishing Houses were set up in Mexico, Argentina and Chile. We began publishing curriculum materials especially in Religion along the lines of the Salesian Educative Project, adapting these to the needs of each country.

This year also saw the beginning of publishing in the youth and childrens literature field setting up the Youth and Children's Literature Awards, looking for new talent in the wide range of literature for children and older youth. These became some of the most prestigious awards in the Spanish language.

Also in 1992 several regional publishing units were launched (*Rodeira* in Galicia, *Giltza* in País Vasco, *Marjal* in Valencia and *Guadiel* in Andalucía) to respond to needs posed by the new political re-organisation in Spain and which took on publishing educational materials adapted to the curriculum in each region as well as in the local languages now officially part of the Spanish State.

1993-1995. Publishing expands with the addition of a large number of specialists in various areas. An editorial team was set up to take care of the publishing project for secondary education. Two years later publishing advanced further by publishing books for the *Baccalaureate*.

Then finally, in 1999 this was extended to materials offered for children under 3 years of age, meaning that *Edebé's* entire range of educational materials now covered 0 to 18 years.

Already since 2006 *Edebé* has been producing a broad range of digital materials for teacher support, and during 2009, with the launching of "Escuela 2.0" by the Spanish Government, development of new digital educational content began for the primary and secondary education stages. A new digital teaching approach was created, applying all the resources offered by new information and communications technologies to the learning process. At the same time the necessary tools were developed for using this content, launching a school of virtual learning and later, a platform for complete digital management of schooling. This can promote significant modernization and optimization of resources in the management of schools, in the process of teaching and learning, and family-school communication.

2012. The new Edebé Mobile label is developed in the area of multimedia apps for mobile devices, aimed at producing interactive materials for young readers.

At the beginning of 2012 a new Publishing House was set up in Brazil in collaboration with the *Rede Salesiana de Escolas de Brasil*, or Salesian Network of Schools in Brazil. Local teams were set up to develop, adapt and produce educational materials as print and digital support, for distribution within the Brazilian educational community.

EDEBÉ'S MISSION

Edebé is a Salesian Publisher whose principal objective is developing educational and pastoral activity through books and educational content generally. It promotes a type of education and formation that supports holistic, harmonious and gradual development of the individual, in all his or her dimensions incorporating values that can guide the individual's activity throughout life.

- a. Physical and psycho-motor dimension
- b. Intellectual and cognitive dimension
- c. Affective and emotional dimension
- d. Socio-cultural dimension
- e. The dimension of openness and transcendence

Thus Edebé seeks to contribute to the formation of autonomous individuals, both in their intellectual and cognitive aspects and in their social, affective and moral development. This autonomy culminates in the construction of identity, in establishing a positive self-concept and developing a project of life which incorporates values.

To develop these objectives, Edebé bases its educational activity on certain basic principles that guide development of its material:

1. Education is a process of personal construction.
2. A process focused on the individual pupil. Personalised education.
3. Process-oriented. Learning with meaning.
4. A shared process. Learning with others.
5. The educator is a mediator in the learning process.

Edebé serves education by publishing educational content which also includes the digital management of learning, and through publications in the field of children's literature, in different formats and media.

In this sense, Edebé faithfully follows the advice that St John Bosco passed on in his Circular to Salesians on spreading good books (19 March 1885):

"Only God knows the good that comes from a book...

...I implore and beg you not to neglect this most important part of our mission."

ABYA YALA PUBLICATIONS

JUAN BOTTASSO, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN PEVERAGNO OF MONDOVI, ITALY AND HAS BEEN PART OF ECUADOR FOR MANY YEARS. HE HAS BEEN THE DIRECTOR OF ABYA-YALA AND ALSO CONNECTED WITH THE UPS OF QUITO.

The Abya Yala Cultural Centre is a Salesian institution aimed at promoting interculturality and the identity of the indigenous peoples of Latin America, and providing references to cultures and peoples and informing civil society about their rights, creating new possibilities for intercultural society through the social sciences. This activity has taken shape through several cultural and academic initiatives, the best known of which is the Abya Yala Publishing House. We should also mention in this regard the Faculty of Applied Anthropology Documentation Centre and the Amazonian Museum, all in Quito.

In 1975, in the Salesian mission at Sevilla Don Bosco, the *Mundo Shuar* Publishers came into being. It included a documentation centre and a series of publications to disseminate documents which were difficult to access as well as anthropological studies on the indigenous Shuar, an Amazonian tribe. This also meant translating texts from English into Spanish and, in some cases into Shuar. It also helped in the recovery of their linguistic and cultural riches by helping the new generations recover their own traditions.

Before being a way of disseminating ethnographic and scientific investigation, *Mundo Shuar* also became a place for creating "para-educational texts" for the Shuar. It was jointly produced with the help of the Shuar youth, then organising cultural days with them as well as collecting data on cultural traditions in their communities. The collective history was reconstructed from biographical accounts of life stories and direct consultation by youth with their elders.

The pupils at the Sevilla Don Bosco mission, with their teachers, organised the information they had obtained in their discussions with their elders and then disseminated these through publications. They used it also as teaching materials for the Bilingual Education System and Radio Federación Shuar. This early experience was very important, because it brought in academic experts, who helped organise the knowledge methodically. Amongst the first collaborators were Fr Silvio Broseghini and Santiago Fruci, and other Salesians.

The emergence of *Mundo Shuar* cannot be understood without the creation of Federación Shuar, in 1964, the most important event both for this Amazonian people and for the Salesian missions themselves, who took up the historical goals

of the Shuar in response to an increasingly strong trend in the Church's mission in Latin America.

When Fr Juan Bottasso went to Quito, and then to the house in Cayambe, the publishing initiative broadened to include other peoples and related knowledge networks. In 1981 the first book on the indigenous peoples of the Andes was published, entitled *Escolarizar al indígena*, written by Fr Antonio Polo SDB. It was an investigation of the influence of the school at the intellectual level and the forming of the personalities of children in some indigenous communities in the province of Bolívar. This saw the beginning of the *Mundo Andino* series, followed by around forty other publications aimed at fostering knowledge of the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples in the Ecuadorian Sierra. This work was then added to the Mundo Shuar production.

The same year, 1983, the publication service broadened with the half-yearly production of *Boletín Kipu*, a documentary service still active today, which reproduces according to a set of ordered themes, news on the indigenous world that appears in the press. Today it is a valuable inestimable and much appreciated source which records the process of the indigenous movement and the public policies in Ecuador over the years. In 1985, while taking part in the International Congress of Latin American Scholars in Bogotá, the need arose to socialize and disseminate a significant number of manuscripts and information for the academics taking part in the above-mentioned forum. This is when the Publishing House began its ongoing involvement in the Congress of Latin American Scholars, marking an important milestone in the life of this Publishing house.

These works, together with existing publications, allowed the Publisher to gain access to a broader and more diverse public. In this stage of great expansion, the Publisher included themes on Afro-americans, beginning with contact with the Afro-ecuadorian Cultural Centre in Quito. From 1984 they have produced booklets on black oral tradition and essays of analysis and interpretation of poetical forms. It should be noted that none of these new initiatives meant abandoning previous work.

Thus, Abya-Yala managed to respond to the expectations of political, anthropological and ecclesial networks, and seeing to an increase in publications from other countries. Production became more participatory, a practice still in force today: the co-publishing model, which consists in publishing through shared contributions, is one of the elements that has permitted the Publishing House to remain sustainable. Thanks to a specific and detailed publishing policy, which exploited advances in on-demand digital production, many publications were achieved, satisfying the diversified needs of the public. In this way they contributed to the spread of diverse research interests which would not otherwise have found an adequate way of dissemination.

It succeeded in setting up coordination in Latin America made up of people working in outposts in Brazil, Peru, Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia, Colombia, and Venezuela. Within the framework of this network they entered into discussion of class and poverty, versus the cultural reality to which were added other questions such as development, intercultural policies, environment, shared with other social movements. It was hard work maintaining this network: it began with ordinary mail, then came fax. Finance had to be found to travel to meetings, which was very costly. In all these meetings Abya-Yala always showed its readiness to publish the conclusions, circulate the talks, and promoted ongoing feedback.

Over these many years of publishing work (37), the almost 3,000 titles on various topics related to social sciences in Ecuador and Latin America are now a cultural heritage of considerable importance and is a reference and a benchmark for measuring the pulse of the sociocultural production and reflection in Latin America. Today, it is not only the Publisher with the most titles published in Ecuador, but is also the first amongst other brands to have produced a web page for information and on *line sales* (www.abyyala.org).

Many ask what Abya Yala means. It is not a term chosen for its exotic sound. It is a name that the Kuna Indians in Panama use for the American continent as a whole (it means fertile land) and was suggested by the Aymara leader, Takir Mamani, who proposed that all indigenous peoples use it in documents and oral declarations. According to him, "by calling our cities, people and continents by a foreign name, it is the same as submitting our identity to the will of our invaders and their descendants".

For its logo, Abya Yala chose a "mucahua", a fine item of Quichua pottery (Curaray – Ecuadorian Amazon for a reason marvellously illustrated by the ancient myth of the Californian Diggers. "In the beginning God gave each person a cup of clay and each drank his life from this cup. They were all covered by water but each cup was different... Now our cups are "broken". Ruth Benedict, *El Hombre y la Cultura*, 1971, p. 34). Abya Yala aims to make as much data known as possible on the culture of the original Americans, which today is threatened by total destruction. Collecting their history, oral traditions, myths and idea of life is a way to help them keep their "cup of life" intact.

Its publishing work has been widely recognised in Ecuador and elsewhere. The Américas House in Madrid, for example, awarded it the Bartolomé de las Casas International Award (1992), the Latin America Faculty of Social Sciences, gave it the "Pío Jaramillo Alvarado" National Social Sciences Award, (1998) and the Ecuadorian Government gave it the Eugenio Espejo Award for Science and Culture (2008).

Today, Abya Yala Publishers belongs to the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana in Ecuador and both its management and editorial council are led by people from that university. Without losing its publishing identity Abya Yala is delegated to run the publishing program for the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana and has various agreements with other publishers belonging to the Salesian Communications Group to enable distribution and dissemination of its works.

For the Salesian and missionary world in particular, the Publisher provides ways for developing dialogue between academia, social movements and the Church, groups sometimes critical of each other – and confrontational – however those encounters are crucial for making an intercultural society possible. Similarly, this experience shows how to construct spaces and ongoing forums for discussion and for disseminating positions and reflections that affect the indigenous peoples and the different populations.

THE SALESIAN CHARISM IN THE VATICAN

SERGIO PELLINI, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN LEGNAGO OF VERONA, ITALY AND HAD BEEN SECTOR IN VALDOCCO AND COLLE DON BOSCO. FOR SOME YEARS NOW, HE IS THE DIRECTOR VATICAN PRINTING PRESS AND CHAPLAIN

Telling something of one's own story in the Vatican is especially emotional; one feels part of a dream and senses the joy once again of being a "son of Don Bosco in shirt sleeves" at service of the Holy Father; one feels part of a providential design that continues on after 75 years of history.

Salesians were called by His Holiness Pius XI in 1937 in early August of that year, to take up the difficult task of managing the so-called "*Poliglotta*", to look after the administration, dissemination and printing of the *L'Osservatore Romano* (until 1991 separate tasks, then combined into one) and to immediately put into practice what Don Bosco's charismatic tradition had taught various generations through experience of professional and managerial activity. The acceptance of this new task, which was offered to Don Bosco's successor, Fr Ricaldone, was perfectly in line with the Founder's thinking, in a **spirit of obedience to the Pope**. "No effort is to be spared when it is a question of the Pope or the Church" Don Bosco often told his sons, and the esteem that Pius XI had for religious, and especially the Salesians, had grown along the way. This was a time, when the Holy See entrusted many activities to Religious Institutes, according to their charism, to contribute to ecclesial communion, to total dedication for the Church and to overcome the temptation towards unedifying social climbing that was harmful to the Institute itself.

The Pope had understood well **the importance of social communication** and so tools, resources and people to work strategically on proclamation using the Providence had given the Church. He wanted people and tools available for him to help him spread God's Word far and wide. So he invited the Salesians to work with their skills, their intelligence, and their managerial ability so that the many texts of the Word of God, Papal teaching and the Magisterium could be printed within the Vatican and in a way that was adapted to reaching the multitudes. These texts, in terms of their printings, translation into many languages, were always appreciated for their quality.

Attention given to the new needs of the times along with the greatest availability, so much work and so much sacrifice all carried out with discretion and in silence. The training given to the employees, young and not so young, always went beyond just example to a faithful and consistent form of witness.

In January 1980 Fr Martina, a Jesuit, had to prepare a Congress on Religious and Rome, and he needed the best information available on the Salesians in the Vatican, so he put this question to Fr Toti: "What led Pius XI to call the Salesians to look after the technical and administrative leadership of the *Poliglotta Vaticana* and the *L'Osservatore Romano*?"

Above all it was the long-standing knowledge that Pius XI had about the Salesian Congregation. As a young priest he spent some days as a guest of Don Bosco in Valdocco, Turin, precisely to get a close-hand view of what this Piedmontese priest was doing through his oratories, and the vocational schools in particular. As the Nuncio in Poland, too, he was close to our work, and when he was elected Pope he elevated the then Provincial, Fr Augustus Hlond, to the cardinalate

Another reasons that did not escape Pius XI was the growth of vocational schools after the First World War not only in Italy but throughout the world and especially in Latin America.

In 1934 the great moment came: Don Bosco's canonisation, unusually held on Easter Sunday that year.

There was much public recognition over those years and the Holy Father placed much trust in the Religious.

We could sum up the desire for the future of this wonderful presence by hypothesising what Don Bosco might want today in order for us to remain faithful to the charism for which Pius XI called us to the Vatican:

- The Salesian charism of the Press, at the service of knowledge and the apostolate. This is our daily work in a vital and delicate sector of spreading the teaching and activities of the Holy See through the Press.
- A clear declaration of intent well known to all: fidelity to the See of Peter.
- Particular affection for the Pope in person, a family trait that binds us to Francis now and to any successor of his in the future.
- Our style: hard work and professionalism, without arrogance, almost hidden, honest and transparent, "pro-government" (because our choice is always for the Pope), correctness, rigorous management in a typically Salesian family style.
- We need to affirm our merits: complete and disinterested dedication, full time, full time given without recrimination or complaint, and spontaneously. All of this has value and meaning if it serves to achieve the purpose of being effective and consistent with the proposed and strongly desired objective.

- United in the community which is our strength and our family. A united, calm and welcoming community; a community which is part of the great Vatican family, open to communication with authorities and our benefactor friends, and where everyone who comes in feels at home; a community aware of its responsibility for acting in Don Bosco's name and the name of his successors, exposed as we are to constant scrutiny of our work, given weight through our words, attitudes, management, relationship with individuals and especially the way we administer our goods".

May Don Bosco guide our steps in continuing and communicating our educational passion for the young, our love for the Church and work so we may gain our place in Heaven.

RADIO DON BOSCO MADAGASCAR

"The more I listen the more I like it"

LUCA TREGLIA, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN MIRANDOLA DI FORMIA OF GAETO, ITALY. HE BECAME PART OF MADAGASCAR AND EVENTUALLY INVOLVED IN SOLID COMMUNICATIONS ESPECIALLY AS DIRECTOR OF RADIO DON BOSCO IN MADAGASCAR.

PREFACE

Radio Don Bosco Madagascar (RDB) forms part of the educational and pastoral activities that the Salesians carry out in Madagascar at the service of the Church and the Congregation. This Radio project draws its inspiration from the "Educative and Pastoral Plan of the Salesians in Madagascar, approved by the Vicar of the Rector Major with the consent of his Council on 4 January 1996.

Since he was a young man, Don Bosco had immediately understood the importance of Social Communication and particularly the press, not only for the moral and religious education of the young and ordinary people in defence of their faith, but also for their cultural and professional formation. This is why Don Bosco did not hesitate to choose simple and popular means like the "Catholic Readings". These were small booklets which in simple language spoke of religion, catechetics, morals, agriculture, history, geography, mathematics... He also opened print shops: partly to teach the process but also to produce and spread books and magazines.

Today times have changed and with them also technology. But Salesians around the world have taken up this apostolic and educational impetus of their Founder and set up Publishing Houses, Journals, Multimedia centres, Radio and Television stations with a view to educating the youth and the ordinary people.

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

When the first Salesians arrived in Madagascar in 1981, they sought to transplant Don Bosco's charism in the country through the characteristic works that put this charism on evident display such as technical and trade schools, centres for the advancement of women, literacy centres for young people at risk and providing places for poor young people, oratories, parishes, mission areas. In this broad panorama of activities, Social Communication has always been there and this is why the Salesians began, from the outset, a communications centre which then became known as Media Don Bosco Madagascar with limited means and few personnel, it began producing books, flyers, video or filmstrips. But evidently that not everyone was able to buy books or a cassettes, especially

people in the rural areas. Like Don Bosco, we asked ourselves then what might be the simplest and most popular approach. And the answer was Radio: it reaches everywhere, including where there are no roads; and there is no need for electricity because batteries will do; everyone, the young and old, listens to it, those who cannot read or write. The radio and it can be found in every family. The Social Communication Commission began to reflect more deeply on the problem and then offered the results to Fr Luigi Zuppini, then superior of the circumscription, who with the support of his council decided to set up the Radio project to be called "Radio Don Bosco". That was 11 April 1994. In September that year Fr Zuppini invited Fr Luca Treglia to be Director of the Radio and Fr Rosario Salerno to coordinate formation activities that needed to follow.

Beginning from 1990 the first free radio station began in the capital Antananarivo: about four or five in all, they were mostly tied to political parties. Obtaining a radio licence was a tough task. Although on the one hand the Ministry responsible had said that anyone could open a radio station, on the other they posed many problems during the preparation of the essential documentation. Despite this we were not discouraged, and finally many months later, Radio Don Bosco was given permission.

But a more difficult task was the choice of the first collaborators. As free radio was putting down its first roots in Madagascar, it was a new experience, and there were no persons with proper preparation for this kind of activity: such as journalists, producers, leaders, technicians... The University of Antananarivo had only just begun courses in journalism. So we had to roll up our sleeves and prepare our first workers through short formation courses. With this in mind after first doing some basic testing, around 150 young people were identified out of whom around fifty were finally chosen. The preparatory phase lasted a year and a half, and most of the formators came from Radio National Malagasy and the University of Antananarivo, but other professionals helped. At the same time parallel technical preparations were taking place. The initial idea was to create a small local radio for the Ivato Airport area where two Salesian communities in the capital were located. But the Vice Province Council decided that the radio should cover at least the entire capital and surroundings. Once it had been decided where to place the transmission tower, on one of the higher parts of the city, the technical stage began: building the tower, the studios and the other buildings at Ivato, and setting up the necessary equipment.

On 27 June 1996, at midday exactly, in the presence of the Archbishop of Antananarivo, and various military and civil authorities, artists and other invited guests, Radio Don Bosco made its first broadcast. The slogan chosen was: "*Plus je l'écoute e plus je l'aime*" (The more I listen, the more I like it).

IDENTITY - LISTENERS - VALUES

1. **Radio Don Bosco describes itself especially as a *Catholic Radio*.** Its point of reference is the religious and moral stance of the Catholic Church with particular emphases coming from the documents of Vatican II and the teachings of the Holy Father, especially the post-synodal "*Ecclesia in Africa*" of John Paul II (nos. 71. 124. 125. 126).

This meant that Radio Don Bosco:

- Openly declared its identity and faith.
- It is attentive to history and is in dialogue with it, promoting its expectations, struggles, listening to its sufferings and joys, especially those of the young (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* n.1).
- It recognises the autonomy of worldly matters and their dynamics (*Gaudium et Spes* 35-36).
- It is ready for dialogue and for the search for Truth with other Christian denominations, other religions and all people of good will.
- In education, society and development it recognises the central point of the Gospel proclamation.

For which Radio Don Bosco:

- dialogues with the Diocesan and the National Social Communications Commission and works with them in determining its manner of acting and its programming.
- is open to all kinds of collaboration, service and assistance for Catholic bodies working in the Social Communication field such as other Catholic Radio stations, be they diocesan or community; with the Catholic weekly Lakroa; with Catholic Publishing Houses.
- offers privileged place to the Archbishop of Antananarivo and his collaborators, the Bishops Conference, Catholic Associations for specific opportunities, especially in the area of ministry and teaching, which can fit in with other programming by RDB.
- is open to dialogue with other Christian denominations accepting proposals they offer for programmes.
- is available and in favour of discussion or dialogue with anyone who loves and seeks the truth, the good of young people, the development in the nation, aside from any kind of religious ideological or political fundamentalism.

2. **Radio Don Bosco is a Salesian Radio station.** It draws its inspiration from the Salesian educative and pastoral plan for the holistic education of the young (C. 31-39).

This is why:

- its listeners are young people and the ordinary average citizen in the context of their lives, their problems, their expectations.
- its choice is always an educational choice. This leads to a cultural interest in anything to do with the world of the young. Which means that all the programmes produced must always be clear about their value for education. This is a reason why RBD favours music, theatre, sport, culture, interpersonal communication, everyday problems, affections, the world of work, development, politics, religion, faith, moral behaviour.
- it is committed to development of the nation in the belief that it is up to young people today to build the nation of the future.
- evangelisation is always part of its programming to help young people understand and follow Christ.
- it is called to take a consistent policy 'consistent policy' with regard to serious situations in the nation. This is a duty it cannot turn its back on. But following Salesian tradition, RDB is independent of "all ideologies and party politics" (C. 33). It decries "anything that leads to poverty, injustice, violence" and cooperates with "anyone who wishes to build a society more worthy of mankind". Like Don Bosco its politics are those of the "Our Father": committed to development of all peoples without distinction, because they are children of God.

For which Radio Don Bosco:

- aims to reach out to as many young people as possible choosing programmes that are of greatest interest to young people.
- is open to all young peoples' interests and concerned with educational content in its programmes.
- takes particular care with religious programmes using language accessible to the young, touching their intelligence, heart and desire for God which is written into the heart of every young person.
- pays particular attention to national problems and political life but does not take sides with any individual or political party. It is always ready for dialogue and serious debate.

3. **Radio Don Bosco is a "Youthful Radio"**, in the sense that it addresses the young. But this alone is not sufficient. To be truly "young" its organisational structure chooses active youthful involvement, both in programme choice and production. Young people best understand the world of the young, speak their language, channel their messages, notice the rapid changes in the world.

For which Radio Don Bosco:

- chooses to form its young collaborators listening to them simply and with a fatherly heart.
- develops its "program" and presents it wherever there is culture, art, politics, formation and education.
- is in constant contact with all cultural, artistic, sports and religious associations which have the education and the formation of the young as their intent.

4. **Radio Don Bosco is a Malagasy Radio.** It is a well-prepared and intelligent Malagasy voice for Malagasy people able to sum up things dynamically, in a youthful, intelligent way for Malagasy culture with all its values, its Christian faith. Its message is Don Bosco's Preventive System which keeps the needs of the heart (love), intelligence (reason) and desire for God (religion) at the center of things.

For which Radio Don Bosco:

- is well informed of resources and tries to spread values that come from Malagasy culture, tradition and the history of Madagascar.
- aims to bring Malagasy educational values into a dynamic encounter with Don Bosco's Preventive System.
- pays attention to all national events, but from a universal, worldwide perspective.

RE-SAT PROJECT

From the outset Radio Don Bosco was well accepted by its listeners (most of them in the capital and its surroundings) not only for its audio quality which was far superior to other stations, but especially for its quality programming. Its choice of target was important: offering people a dynamic, young radio but one which was also concerned with other sectors of the population, and including in its programs a time for reflection, deeper understanding of the faith, prayer, all of which were well prepared and appreciated also by the non-Catholic audience.

This style and success drew the attention of the Bishops who wanted a Catholic radio in their dioceses to provide social and pastoral leadership, but who had neither the experience nor the personnel to venture into the field. So the Madagascar Episcopal Conference turned to Radio Don Bosco (through the provincial and his council) and asked the Congregation for concrete assistance to install Catholic radios in each diocese. Thus the “Re-sat” project came into being (literally, satellite project). An agreement was signed between the provincial and the episcopal conference, whereby Radio Don Bosco would be involved in forming diocesan teams, technical installation (studio – transmitter) and maintenance, and distribution of certain programmes: this meant the birth of the first Malagasy radio network.

The project was demanding, but at the same time ambitious. We began work immediately seeking finance which soon came, especially from the Italian Episcopal Conference which saw that the project was both original and effective. Despite initial difficulties due to the political crisis in Madagascar in 2001, in less than two years Radio Don Bosco had formed around 700 individuals, most of them young, from all over Madagascar: journalists, leaders, technicians, directors.

The second stage followed on from this formation: technical installation of the equipment needed for radio. The problem remained of how to distribute programmes produced by Radio Don Bosco to other radio stations. Madagascar is a big country, and has few roads and it is often difficult to send the programmes by post. That is how the idea of using satellite came about. It was a difficult proposal, also because the laws in Madagascar had not yet considered satellite access by private institution. But in the end we managed to overcome even this seemingly insurmountable obstacle: Radio Don Bosco was authorised to use satellite facilities for distributing its programmes to other Catholic radio stations.

Currently all dioceses in Madagascar have their own radio station and are linked to Radio Don Bosco via satellite, the latter making its programmes available (certain programmes are thought up precisely with national distribution in view); local radio stations have the possibility of transmitting them live or delayed, depending on their programming needs. Everyone is committed to broadcasting at least five programmes chosen by common agreement with the directors of the stations. Each local radio also sends Radio Don Bosco its local news daily or weekly and these are then retransmitted nationally.

Through this network Radio Don Bosco has had the opportunity of expanding beyond its initial geographic area and has therefore increased its number of listeners. We believe that for certain programmes (such as news) there are more than 6,000,000 listeners. The project has also had positive repercussions throughout the African continent, inasmuch as it is the first Catholic radio network involving around twenty radio stations.

PROBLEMS

Because it is loved and listened to by so many people, Radio Don Bosco is considered as a Radio that creates public opinion. At times it is not appreciated by the some government sectors. Though neutral politically, Radio Don Bosco cannot avoid denouncing situations of abuse of power or negligence, the poverty of the people, lack of respect for human rights especially where children are concerned, corruption, the grab for natural resources by a small circle of people, religion used as a political weapon. Radio Don Bosco tries to give everyone their chance for a voice, especially the poor so that their cry of suffering can be heard by those who govern. In 2008 the Ministry for Communications suspended one of the best loved and most listened to programmes: "karajia", that gave everyone a chance to express themselves by ringing in. This programme is still suspended. Despite intimidation by government officials, Radio don Bosco always tries to be faithful to its identity: seeking the truth.

TEAMWORK

Radio Don Bosco is part of the Salesian educative and Pastoral Plan in Madagascar. So it plays an active part in pastoral and educational activity. Despite difficulties of personnel and sometimes time, it always tries to have clear points of reference, especially in the youth ministry area. This is why the delegate for Youth Ministry is part of the council for the radio, an internal structure for the radio that brings together those mainly responsible, such as the director of the radio, the provincial economer, the advertising director, the chief editor. They meet regularly to see how the radio is going, look at its problems and propose solutions including to the provincial council.

Radio Don Bosco is part of a family of three Salesian radio stations in Madagascar. Radio Don Bosco offers its collaboration to the other two, especially in the area of formation and programme exchange.

FUTURE

After sixteen years, Radio Don Bosco is necessarily called to plan for its future keeping in mind social and cultural development in the setting in which it operates, but also the rapid technological changes which also affect the poorer countries. with the advent of new technologies such as cell phones and, internet, satellite tv reception, which radically change the way many people live, especially the young, we need to review strategies and targets we have had up till now and calibrate them according to new kinds of language, so that our message is in harmony with our listeners. If on the one hand we need to discern what we have done up till now, on the other we need to have the courage to make new and prophetic choices, even at the cost of overturning the way

things happen currently. For a number of years many people, including in the Church, have been asking Radio Don Bosco to also get involved in television. The Social Communication Commission has reflected on the problem, offering the provincial and his council some practical suggestions. Opening a TV station possibly goes well beyond the real possibilities of the province; but a hybrid solution could resolve the problem: integrating a mini-TV station into the radio using certain programmes produced for radio (especially live programmes) for its programming which would however be integrated with local production and programmes coming from outside (such as CTV, Centro Televisivo Vaticano, KTO from the French Episcopal Conference,...).

SALESIAN EDUCATIONAL RADIO AND TV ASSOCIATION, BOLIVIA ARTESBOL

JUAN FRANCISCO APARICIO, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN LA PAZ, BOLIVIA. HE WAS INVOLVED WITH FORMATION
AND ALSO SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS AND OTHER SERVICES

PREFACE

We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission.

Our Founder had an instinctive grasp of the value of this means of mass education. Which creates culture and spreads patterns of life; he showed great originality in the apostolic undertakings which he initiated to defend and sustain the faith of the people.

Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization. (Salesian Constitutions C. 43)

In the different countries where the Salesian Congregation is present, it has produced various SC media: general publishing, magazines, audiovisuals, radio, television channels, print shops, etc., which carry out activities of information and formation both within and beyond the Congregation.

At the moment, Salesians have taken up the goal of being an alternative front to the alienating, culturally impoverished and consumeristic forms of communication by other media and wish to offer a liberating and participative communication which functions as a tool for encounter amongst the people and is at the service of the new evangelisation, human development and Christian culture.

Social Communication in the Salesian Congregation is aimed at building and gradually making available a system in the Salesian Congregation of a professional, stable but flexible nature:

- to encourage the creation of a 'communicative ecosystem' involving everyone (Salesians SDB, Salesian Family, educators, those being educated) in the Salesian spirit and mission, at the level of the Congregation, Provinces and communities
- to guide and give greater importance to the bonds of communication and involvement with the General Administration and between it and the Provinces;

- to encourage internal *charismatic communion* – with a sense of belonging first of all to the Congregation, beyond one's own Province - and within the Salesian Family by means of focused information;
- to prepare Salesians and lay collaborators as producers of culture, and for a positive attitude of acceptance and familiarity in the use of instruments and techniques of communication, with a view to development of their educational and pastoral mission;
- to develop in the Congregation the sense of SC as a *field of mission* and as a place for involving young people (GC25, 47), for maintaining the belief that mass communication and InfoTech development are ways of achieving a new mindset (GC25, 3) – and new cultural models;
- to offer a specialised service of communication and information tied to the Salesian mission, that encourages the strong mobilisation of society;
- to more courageously present the Congregation for *public opinion*.

The Salesian mission in Bolivia, in this area, currently offers the following:

– **Information within the Province:**

- Bimonthly Salesian Bulletin
- Provincial newsletter, the “En Comunidad Fraternal”, ten times a year
- ANS correspondent
- Press office
- Web page for the institution and for other works and organisations of the province
- Small multimedia production to support Youth Ministry and catechetics

– Enterprises

PRINT SHOPS:

- Don Bosco print shop
- Michael Magone print shop + graphics school
- Print shop for the Don Bosco Higher Industrial Education in El Alto
- Don Bosco Publishing House: production of school texts
- Don Bosco Bookshop

RADIOS:

- "María Auxiliadora" (Montero)
- "Ichilo" (Yapacaní)
- "AudioBosco" (Sagrado Corazón)
- "Domingo Savio" (Independencia)
- "Don Bosco" (Kami)
- "Sariri" (Escoma)
- "Radio Salesiana" (USB)

TELEVISION

- Escoma, Independencia, Kami, Yapacaní, Sagrado Corazón.
(re-transmission with our own very minimal production)
- Member group of "Católica TV" belonging to the Archbishop of La Paz

ARTESBOL: ASOCIACIÓN DE RADIO Y TV EDUCATIVA SALESIANA DE BOLIVIA

At the end of the 1980s, the radio and TV channels, with a view to unifying their mode of working, decided to come together to form the ARTESBOL Association which came about to achieve the following objectives as indicated in the statutes:

- Coordinate educational efforts in radio and television media
- Allow and foster popular involvement in communication
- Inspire radio and TV activities in the Church's social teaching and in Don Bosco's pedagogy of the Preventive System.
- Provide financial support for tele-education.
- Promote and coordinate professionalism of personnel in broadcasting.
- Promote service and not-for-profit aims.

The founding members who subscribed to this on 27 February 1990, were: Fr. Arturo Bergamasco (Radio Ichilo), Fr. Mario Pani (Radio María Auxiliadora), Fr. Dante Invernizzi (radio Sagrado Corazón), Fr. Serafino Chiesa (Radio Don Bosco Kami), Fr. Pascual Cerchi (Radio Domingo Savio Independencia) and Bro. Pacífico Feletti (in charge of Salesian radios).

CURRENTLY

Area of activity for Salesian radio: our Salesian radios can be described as being of two kinds according to the context in which they find themselves:

- “Urban Radio” in cities, aimed at a broad public. This is the case for Radio Salesiana, La Paz and María Auxiliadora, Montero.
- “Rural” radio, located in rural towns, aimed at farming communities. This is the case for Radio Sariri, Escoma, Domingo Savio, Independencia, Don Bosco, Kami y CIC Don Bosco, Sagrado Corazón.

Features of Salesian Radio

- Radio “María Auxiliadora”

Founded on 24 May 1982, located at Montero, 50 km from Santa Cruz.

It has two frequencies and two programs corresponding to two radio stations:

- Radio “María Auxiliadora” properly so-called, which transmits on AM with a frequency on average of around 850 KHz and an output of around 5000 watts.
- Its programming is focused on formation and information, and both are much appreciated especially by the rural population in northern Cruceño.
- Radio Concierto FM, which transmits on the 105.5 Mhz frequency at 2500 watts. Its programming is principally musical and informative, directed mainly to young people in the urban population.

- Radio “Ichilo”

Founded on 6 August 1981.

Studios at Radio Televisión Ichilo are located at Calle Calama N° 163, barrio 24 de Junio, an urban area in the Yapacaní municipality, Ichilo province in the district of Santa Cruz, belonging to San Carlos Parish.

The transmitters for FM 101.1 and Canal 13, are of 1 KW currently working at 70% of their capacity. Installation of main transmission antenna for the radio, located on a small hill (approx. 100 m. above the city), allows it to cover most of the urban and rural communities in the municipalities of Yapacaní, San Carlos, San Juan and Buena Vista, with the difficulty that in communities closer to Montero, there is interference from other transmitters of higher frequency. At Yapacaní, the presence of another five transmitters, most with a poorer bandwidth, causes other problems in quality of signal reception through interference.

The television channel with its signal covers the capitals of the four municipalities in Ichilo province and other localities on the outskirts that have electricity.

– **Radio “AudioBosco”**

Founded 13 June 1986 under the name Radio “Sagrado Corazón”.

It is located in a tropical region in the Santa Cruz Department, in the “Sagrado Corazón” Parish.

It operates at 1500 watts, FM

The radio features cultural integration for settlers who have come from other regions with the original inhabitants of the area.

– **Radio “Domingo Savio”**

Founded in 1988.

The operating centre is in Independencia, province of Ayopaya in the Cochabamba District.

Programmes concern information and human, Christian, technical development, for the benefit of the Quechua communities in Ayopaya province.

– **Radio “Don Bosco”**

Radio Don Bosco is owned by the Salesian Society and broadcasts on the 1530 and 1580 AM frequencies and 107.5 on the FM frequency. It is located in the mining centre, Kami at 3.800 metres above sea level. Latitude 17° 23' Longitude 66° 48'.

Kami forms part of the first municipal section of Villa in Independencia in the Ayopaya province in Cochabamba District, and is 165 km. from Cochabamba.

The first broadcast from radio Don Bosco was heard on 6 August 1985 (National anniversary date); then officially opened on 12 August the same year.

Radio Don Bosco is mostly listened to by communities and people in the Independencia municipality, Ayopaya province, the Tapacari municipality in Cochabamba and the Fourth and First municipal sections of Inquisivi.

With its transmitter at Pongo it can reach almost the entire province of Tapacari, Arque and Bolívar in Cochabamba.

Beneficiaries are mostly miners, farmers, and other sections of the population (people in Kami, teachers, truck drivers, health personnel)

The people speak Quechua, Aymara and Spanish and are mostly a rural population, approximately 70 thousand listeners.

- Radio “Sariri”

Founded on 2 February 1992.

It is located at Escoma, on the high plains.

Since the year 2000 until now it has a transmitting capacity of 800W.

The information and education programs are aimed at the Aymara speaking population around Lake Titicaca.

- Radio “Salesiana”

Founded in 1992, and management is shared with the Sociedad Antonio Barbato, which guarantees shared responsibility on the part of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco and the Salesian Society.

Since 1 July 2008, it has been transmitting from the Salesian University in Bolivia, in La Paz.

It has an official coverage of a radius of 28 km, but can effectively reach three cities: La Paz, El Alto and Viacha. It has a 1 Kw capacity.

It is a cultural, educational and evangelising medium. It follows Salesian principles which guide its programming towards youth, education, family and life.

It is an open, inclusive radio, with an intercultural, sensitive touch for current problems and crating public opinion.

Networking

- Six of the seven radios are affiliated with ERBOL
- The Province, through OFPROBOL, succeeds in managing a project of Cultural Development and non-formal Education through Radio, which over five years (2004-2008) has benefited Salesian radios in Bolivia in many ways, such as technical updating of personnel, improvement in equipment (software, consoles, computers, microphones, recording, two motorcycles, etc.), besides financial support for payment of salaries to almost all personnel.

- There are regular meetings during the year to coordinate efforts, share common guidelines and work on common projects.
- The Province, from the Provincial Solidarity Fund, supports the financing of the radios in accordance with particular needs of each.
- On 30 July 2011 the first "VOCES NUESTRAS"(Our Vocies) program was broadcast using the ERBOL satellite network, in a common effort with other broadcasters who make up ARTESBOL. We have completed program no. 37.
- The Provincial Salesian Radios Plan is in preparation and also formulation of plans for finding resources and for upgrading.

PERSPECTIVES

Mission	Vision
Salesian Radios are institutions working with a Salesian style. We evangelise popular and youth culture, educating, guiding, involving and informing (SSCS, 90)	Salesian Radios promote the formation of associations, the participation of young people and the working classes; we arouse in them a critical sense of reality and help human and Christian values to permeate society. (SSCS, 91)

I.1 THE SALESIAN RADIO PROFILE IN BOLIVIA

It is radio that:

1. is animated by the **Salesian community** which lives and works in the local Church, trusting in Providence and the presence of the Holy Spirit, with criteria of communion and systematic participation with lay people who share responsibility for the mission and with other apostolic efforts in the area;
2. develops a **planning and practical mentality**, with defined aims which respond to the signs of the times and to the current circumstances in our social setting;
3. allows and fosters participation and popular and youth access to media
4. is developed on the basis of a holistic **and systematic plan**, inspired in its evangelising spirituality by the Church's Social Teaching and **Don Bosco's Preventive System**: with the missionary zeal of the *da mihi animas*, it evangelises by educating to vocational maturity, by means of working as a group and through communication;

5. pursues social service objectives: it is missionary and service oriented and goes out to meet those who are furthest from us, enculturated in popular, urban or rural settings, in cultural and religious diversity, committed to the Gospel with the poor, open to ecumenical dialogue it pursues objectives of not-for-profit service;
6. educates to critical awareness, in the light of the Church's Social Teaching, and to social involvement and commitment from the point of view of the faith.
7. proposes networking with like-minded institutions with affinity with the Church's mission in the area.
8. makes its communications and evangelising project a sustainable one, guaranteeing transparency and seeking the human talent and financial resources needed to carry out its mission.
9. gives preferential attention to the young and the working classes and indigenous peoples, using the languages which are proper to radio (Word, Music, Silence).
10. accompanies the moral, cultural Salesian and technical formation of the radio personnel

I.2 CHALLENGES

1. **The Salesian identity of the radios:** in the service of new evangelisation, human development and Christian culture, inspired by Don Bosco's Preventive System.
2. **The content of Salesian radios:** fostering culture, education and religion through programming of recognised technical and ethical quality.
3. **The kind of audience we wish to reach:** youth, popular settings, an audience with various cultural identities (indigenous, aboriginal, mestizos, etc.)
4. **Financial sustainability of the radio:** one which allows broadcasting to continue and at the same time allow for human, technical, professional improvement.
5. **Use of ICT (info and communication technology):** computerised systems, internet (web, blogs, social networks, email...), digital telecommunication, radio online, etc.

I.3 CONCRETE OPTIONS (STRATEGIC AIMS)

1. A radio with professionals in the radio and sound communications field (professionalisation)
2. A radio that organises media activities through an administration and management which applies current business criteria and methods (business organisation)
3. A radio that fosters mutual reinforcing of relationships between internal and external media to promote joint effort and support individual initiative (structuring).
4. A radio with explicitly evangelising and catechising content (new evangelisation).
5. A radio that values the religious and cultural expression of the people from a positive Gospel point of view (new evangelisation).
6. A radio in touch with the common feeling of the people, in a religious way, fostering and promoting community encounter through media, offering our radios as powerful tools for encouraging and accompanying personal and community development. (human development).
7. A radio that seeks ethnic and religious integration through a culture of acceptance and dialogue (Christian culture).
8. A radio that supports youth in their growth as human beings with Christian values (youth audience)
9. A radio that motivates young people to seek MCS (youth audience).
10. A radio that encourages direct involvement by the people and representative institutions showing their priority needs in its programming. (popular, indigenous audience).
11. A radio that satisfies the programming needs of the people. (popular, indigenous audience).
12. A radio that motivates the people to be involved in cultural activities. (popular, indigenous audience).

TEJ-PRASARINI: 20 YEARS OF PASSIONATE MEDIA INITIATIVES

JOAQUIM FERNANDES, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN WORLI OF MUMBAI, INDIA. HE IS DIRECTOR OF THE TEJ-PRASARINI, DON BOSCO COMMUNICATIONS, A PUBLISHING HOUSE AND A PRODUCTIVE MULTIMEDIA CENTER.

1. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Tej-Prasarini (The Diffuser of Light) is a Media and Communication Institution run by the Salesians of Don Bosco (Mumbai Province). It combines multimedia production with training in creativity and media education for peace. It is a member of SIGNIS, the World Association of Catholic Communication.

Tej-Prasarini began in 1992 as a modest audio-cassette initiative in response to the catechetical needs of a rural Christian population in central Maharashtra. It was to be the vernacular ministry of the already existing Salesian Catechetical Centre, Pune, which had for its motto, "To tell people about the Light". This theme inspired the title, Tej-Prasarini. In 1993 it was re-located at the Salesian Provincial House in Mumbai, the media capital of India. In 1995, it was approved as the official multimedia production centre of the Salesian Province of Mumbai. Thus, Tej-Prasarini expanded. It began producing books and audiovisual materials in English, Marathi and Hindi. Its productions were based on a variety of themes, such as Catechetics, Youth Development, Media Education and Peace initiatives. It catered to the needs of different audiences like parents, youth-leaders and teachers of various educational institutions. It began training programmes that developed the critical awareness with regard to themes like media, creativity, love and peace. Moreover, it began to network with schools and other like-minded centres of learning, thereby earning the reputation of an institution to equip educators with media resources for social change.

In 2001, the demand for youth-related audio-video material led to the setting up of a recording studio, named Tej-Kiran (Ray of Light). Major training programmes that involve large numbers are held in an auditorium that is shared with the Don Bosco Youth Services located in the same edifice. In 2004, Bosco Information Service was also created as part of an all-India network in the collection and dissemination of Salesian news.

Today, the building in which Tej-Prasarini is located has a media centre where items of many other production houses on catechetical, educational and development themes are available for purchase.

Leadership at Tej-Prasarini changed hands three times. Fr. Peter Gonsalves, SDB, was the founder-director. He was succeeded by Fr. Darryl D'Souza, SDB, in April 2001. From May 2006, Fr. Joaquim Fernandes, SDB, as Director continues to guide and broaden the vision of Tej-Prasarini. The official website of Tej-prasarini is www.tejonline.com

Among its many **activities**, the salient initiatives worthy of mention are as follows:

2. **MUSIC MINISTRY**

The idea of 'Tej-Prasarini' first began in the villages of drought-stricken Ahmednagar, about 250 kms from Mumbai. Here the rural folk continue to proclaim their beliefs through community prayer songs called *bhajans*. Early experiments in recording some of these expressions of faith, gave birth to the idea of preserving and promoting them in the form of audio-cassettes. The recordings thus executed were sold back at discounted rates to the villagers who were delighted to hear their own music through their domestic cassette-radio players. After the modest success of this initiative, and with its base shifted to Pune, Tej-Prasarini launched out into more professional recordings. Collaboration with the late pioneering Marathi lyricist and Radio Evangelist of Pune, Mr. Jayantkumar Tribhuvan, greatly improved the quality of the Marathi productions. The shift to Mumbai in 1993 further boosted music recordings in English and Hindi. Feedback has shown that the songs have proved extremely useful to religious educators in schools and parishes.

3. **QUALITY LIFE EDUCATION (QLE)**

One of the greatest contributions of Tej-Prasarini to the field of secular education (education open to people of all beliefs) is the QLE series. Each volume is a manual of ready lesson-plans for educators to be used in formal and non-formal educational settings. The themes chosen are meant to promote values through a reflection and discussion on reality-based issues. The contexts within which they are presented are thoroughly South Asian. The pedagogy promoted is participatory and interactive. The titles are: *Exercises in Media Education*, *Exercises in Education to Love*, *Exercises in Education to Creativity*, *Exercises in Peace Education*. Each of these volumes are followed up by courses for educators who are trained on how the manuals can be profitably used. Media Education and Peace Education, in particular, have attracted sizeable participation from various educational corners of India.

4. VIDEO DISCUSSION KITS

In order to promote the QLE project more educational tools were needed. In the age of moving images one could not ignore the absolute necessity of providing video resources on issues contained in the manuals. At the same time it was necessary to make these video productions independent of the manuals to serve a wider audience, even beyond a formal curriculum. Thus the Video Discussion Kits took shape. They were designed for young adults to develop healthy critical thinking skills on life-based issues. Once again the underpinning thrust was towards networking with socially conscientious video-documentary producers. Their productions had to be streamlined to facilitate short and relevant group discussions. The final product was a sleek kit for education.

5. NATIONAL COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR SALESIAN FORMATION

Tej-Prasarini played a leading role in co-ordinating the first ever attempt at creating a national plan for training Salesians in Media and Social Communication. The time of training covered nine years, from the pre-novitiate to the third year of theology. Co-ordination of the project involved putting together ideas, designing a master plan and soliciting contributions from various experts in the fields of communication, education, psychology, philosophy and theology. The project was nicknamed an 'experiment' on account of the almost impossible task of matching breadth and scope with quality and depth. The final result, ready by the year 2000, was a 400 page tome, entitled, *Shepherds for an Information Age*. The logistics involved the co-ordination of nine province delegates around a single project through the length of two years. Five national seminars were held through 2001 to promote its implementation. The manual is now available to those responsible for the formation of seminarians in media and communication at a members-only website at this address: boscomproject@gmail.com

6. COLLABORATION WITH UNICEF

In 2001, Tej-Prasarini had yet another opportunity in networking. It was invited to collaborate with UNICEF on the promotion of 'AIDS Awareness' among school children. The programme involved the participation of students from three zones in India in the creation of original short-films on the topic. They were taught the process of communication, given opportunities to meet doctors and HIV positive patients, devise questionnaires, conduct surveys on the public awareness of HIV-AIDS in their localities, and write a tele-film script based on the findings of their survey. On the occasion of World AIDS Day, 2002, the project director Mr. Ajay Kanchan, UNICEF, Delhi and one who conceived the Innovative

Communication Project on HIV/AIDS also received the President's Award from President Abdul Kalam in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Award was in recognition for the innovative process of involving adolescents to talk to peers on HIV AIDS. Tej-Prasarini, Don Bosco Communications, Matunga had implemented the project in Mumbai.

This project in the Mumbai Nodal centre was carried out under the supervision of Darryl D'Souza sdb, Director of Tej-Prasarini, Mr. Sanjay Jha, Film-maker and Programme co-ordinator of the Project and Tej-Prasarini staff in collaboration with 8 schools in Mumbai and active support from Unicef.

7. PEACE CAMPAIGN

The same year, Tej-Prasarini intensified its campaign for promoting peace, especially in the western region of India. The promotion constituted three principle stages in the journey towards peace, namely, preparation, production and promotion. On November 13, 2003, the first 'Don Bosco Film Festival on Peace' was held. Thirteen short films on peace were screened, all of them made by students of seven schools and colleges. The best film was aired on Doordarshan, the national television network.

8. THE VISIT OF THE RECTOR MAJOR REV FR. PASCUAL CHAVEZ SDB.

The Media co-ordination for the visit of the Rector Major Rev Fr. Pascual Chavez, sdb from the 8th- 11th February, 2007 was done by Tej-Prasarini, Don Bosco Communications. Tej-Prasarini published the book "A Symphony of Love – The Rector Major speaks to the Province of Mumbai"

9. DUBAI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN ASSOCIATION WITH TEJ-PRASARINI AND UNICEF

Tej-Prasarini in collaboration with UNICEF and Dubai International Film Festival organized a five-day residential workshop on film-making from October 27-31, 2007. Twenty students from various schools in Mumbai participated in this workshop. Actor Jackie Shroff was the chief guest at the workshop.

10. MEDIA WORKSHOP FOR BISHOPS

Tej-Prasarini conducted a 5 day Media Workshop for the Bishops of India on the theme "Shepherds of the Media Age" from March 3-7, 2008 at Don Bosco Provincial House, Matunga in Mumbai. Nearly 18 bishops attended the workshop. The workshop was organized by the

Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) Commission for Social Communications in collaboration with Tej-Prasarini.

The workshop featured training in computer skills and included significant sessions in Pastoral Communication Skills, New Trends in Media, Internet & Email, Computer Applications, Power-Point and Video Conferencing.

11. INDIAN MISSION CONGRESS 2009

Fr. Joaquim Fernandes was appointed as the media convener for the India's first ever Indian Mission Congress on the theme 'Let Your Light Shine', christened Prabhu Yesu Mahotsav. It was inaugurated by the Vatican Ambassador to India and the representative of Pope Benedict XVI, Archbishop Pedro Lopez Quintana at the St. Pius College, Goregaon, Mumbai on 14th - 18th October, 2009. More than 100 bishops, hundreds of men religious, nuns and lay people travelled from India's 164 dioceses in representation of the country's three different rites, Latin, Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankar. The management and staff of Tej-Prasarini designed the backdrop, the website, daily newspaper, the videography, photography, and the public relation office with the press and integrated the new media for this occasion around the globe.

12. WORLDWIDE RELIC PILGRIMAGE OF DON BOSCO VISITS THE MUMBAI PROVINCE

Tej-Prasarini co-ordinated and managed the media during the visit of the relic of St. John Bosco to the Salesian Province of St. Francis Xavier, Mumbai from 12th August – 16th August, 2011. A commemorative souvenir was published by Tej-Prasarini and a documentary on "Don Bosco Among Us" was released by Fr. Michael Fernandes, sdb Provincial of Mumbai. At the same event, an audio CD "Don Bosco – A witness to Light" was released by His Eminence Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Bombay.

13. COMMUNICATIONS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

In 2000 the CBCI approached Tej-prasarini with the request to produce a syllabus for diocesan seminaries similar to the manual, *Shepherds for an Information Age*. However, it was only in 2010 that the work was completed by the then Executive Secretary, of the CBCI Commission for Social Communications, Fr. George Plathottam, SDB, the National Salesian Coordinator for Communication, Fr. Louis Kumpiluvellil, SDB and Principal of Divyadaan, Nashik, Fr. Robert Pen, SDB. The series

in three volumes is entitled *Communications for Pastoral Leadership*. The books were inaugurated by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications on 12th February, 2011. These three books have been published by Don Bosco Communications India, Tej-Prasarini, and the CBCI Commission for Social Communications.

A 'Communications for Pastoral Leadership' seminar for the Rectors and animators was organized by Tej-Prasarini on July 2, 2010. Seven sessions on various topics such as Media Management, Advertising and its Impact on Youth, New Trends in Media, Facing Press Conferences, Internet and Convergent Media was held by professional speakers and staff.

14. ***SIGNIS INDIA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY 2012***

The IX *SIGNIS INDIA* National Assembly was organized by *SIGNIS INDIA* in association with Tej-Prasarini, Don Bosco Communications at Don Bosco Matunga, Mumbai from 24th – 28th February, 2012. The theme of the convention was "Creating Images for a Better Tomorrow". *SIGNIS* is a non-governmental organization that includes members from hundred and forty countries. It has a consultative statute with UNESCO, Ecosoc (United nation as in Geneva and New York, the council of Europe). Every year *SIGNIS INDIA* engages all the members in serious discussion on current topics prevalent in the World. This convention had ninety delegates attending the convention from all across India

15. **DON BOSCO CREATIVITY WORKSHOPS**

Tej-Prasarini provides a creative platform for young people especially from poorer families who are unaware of their talents and do not have much time during the scholastic year to pursue their interests. The workshops are proficiently designed by professional tutors to enable participants develop their creative skills. Courses are offered in speech, drama, guitar, keyboard, creative writing, dance, radio jockeying, film making, video editing, and audiography. To these skill-training courses, one may also add the six-day 'Master Your Mind' workshop held in the month of August for children, youth and adults.

As we look towards the future with the same optimism, we thank Almighty God for all the graces He has showered on us. We owe a big thank you to all the past and present staff of Tej-Prasarini, for spreading the light through media. Thanks also to all the well wishers and benefactors for supporting the activities of Tej-Prasarini.

SAMPARI PICTURES: AGENT OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

JOSEPH PULINTHANATH, SDB

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AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS.

INTRODUCTION

Sampari Pictures is an Agartala-based communication initiative of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Silchar Province, that focuses on the arts, particularly film, as a medium of community empowerment. An institutional member of SIGNIS, the world body of the Catholic Church for cinema for more than a decade, Sampari Pictures, through its productions and promotions, has been on the vanguard of grass-root level empowerment of the indigenous peoples of Tripura.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The presence of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Northeast India dates back to 1922, when, at the behest of the Holy See, the Congregation accepted the Assam Missions. In time, the Northeast proved to be a flourishing mission, and Salesian works spread to most parts of the region. The first Salesian presence in the state of Tripura, however, became a reality only in 1991 when the Salesians were given charge of the parish of Mariamnagar.

As years passed by and Salesian presences in the state increased, it was found that the indigenous population of Tripura, especially the *Debbarma* sub-tribe, among whom incidentally all Salesian presences were then located, were particularly disposed to accepting the Christian faith. Evangelization along with education, therefore, were made important ingredients of all Salesian works in the state.

Ten years of active presence among this most numerous sub-tribe of Tripura's indigenous population brought home to the Salesians the need for their involvement with the community at a different level, one which took cognizance of the collective trauma the community went through only decades ago.

The 'trauma' refers to the large-scale influx from neighbouring Bangladesh into the then sparsely populated state of Tripura during years following India's Independence, and during the Bangladesh War. It brought about a total reversal in the demographic make-up of the state. Tripura, an independent princely kingdom with an impressive line of kings, continued to have tribal majority until the large-scale influx following its merger with India. (cf. annexure 1)

Subsequent decades saw large-scale influx into Tripura, caused by political and religious factors in Bangladesh. This reduced the tribals of Tripura to a minority group in their own home state. The indigenous people now only constituted a mere 30 percent of the state's total population. This reversal also divested the tribal community of its power and relegated it to the margins of society.

In fact, the reversal of Tripura's indigenous population from the majority position of strength to that of a powerless minority in their own state is a story that modern Tripura is trying to forget. The 1.2 million indigenous people of Tripura, who today are condescendingly referred to as '*upojati*', (the secondary race), feel that they have been, over the years, pushed to the margins and denied adequate space, voice, and legitimate rights.

The numerical disadvantage of the tribal community was further exacerbated by the cultural, commercial and educational invasion they suffered at the hands of the settler community that crossed over from neighboring Bangladesh and became majority in the tiny state of Tripura. The all-pervasiveness of the Bengali culture easily overrode indigenous art and culture, lifestyle and language. Bereft of power and influence, the tribals got pushed to the margin of society. As a result, even the tribals came to think of indigenous culture and its expressions as 'uncivilized' practices one ought to be ashamed of it marked the first 'edge' which the settlers had over the tribals in the psychological warfare between the two groups that even now characterizes Tripura. More significantly, it signalled the loss of self-confidence and identity of the tribal of Tripura. That indelible scar on the psyche of the tribal continues to have an effect on him to this day and decades of government-sponsored 'development' have not brought about any significant change in their situation.

SALESIAN INVOLVEMENT

The decade-long encounter with the Tripura situation brought the Salesians to the conclusion that in order to make substantial inroads into the community, it was absolutely necessary to take into account this deep-rooted scar on the psyche of the tribal. Circumventing it or ignoring it could even render less effective other forms of ministry the Church engaged in with the community. On the other hand, it seemed, other ministries, especially the work of evangelization could be enhanced a great deal, if this underlying sense of 'loss' and 'marginalization' that tribal community seemed incapable of tiding over, was addressed adequately. To a disillusioned community which, within a short period, willingly embraced what was perceived then to be a better culture (*Banglaization*) and a novel ideology (Marxism), and emerged none the better for it, a Christian option that did not penetrate their worldview ran the risk of appearing merely as yet another exploitative phenomenon.

In a bid to address and assuage this core angst of the tribal community the Salesians stumbled upon 'promotion of culture' and thought it an appropriate means to instill in the community a sense of confidence, self-worth and hope. The approach seemed eminently relevant to adopt in the case of a community whose cultural expressions were fast vanishing due to neglect, and low esteem by other communities and by members of their own community.

Restoring to the community a collective sense of confidence, self worth and dignity presented itself not as a different service but as an additional help in order to render existing ministries like evangelization and education more meaningful and satisfying. In the course of time, the assumptions of the Salesians were proved right. 'Promotion of culture' not only brought about the good will of the people, but it also gave the Salesians easy entry into villages. The emotional bonding that unified focus on culture brought about between the community and the Salesians dispelled the feeling that Church is an alien body, unconcerned and ignorant about their actual life issues and struggles. The much-needed feeling of 'a group that stands for us and with us' came to be associated with the Salesians, and with the Church, by and large. It is a mental alignment that even now assists the Salesians a great deal in their work of evangelization and work for the youth in Tripura.

BIRTH OF THE SAMPARI HUKUMU BODOL

Sampari Hukumu Bodol (SHB), or Sampari Cultural Group, an association of young people who felt strongly about culture was formed under the patronage and guidance of the Salesians. Through a series of measurable and intangible efforts, they strove to preserve and promote cultural practices and expressions of the community. Through the initiatives taken by SHB, the Salesians began to be seriously involved in the promotion of traditional art forms - song and dance, ornaments and costumes, artifacts, implements, theatre, folklore, cuisine and traditions of the indigenous community.

In keeping with the Salesian predilection for youth, SHB remained a youth group and had youth as its target and special focus. Over the years, countless young people from all parts of Tripura have been influenced and assisted by the services rendered by *Sampari Hukumu Bodol*. The awareness programs that SHB carried out has certainly contributed to the turnaround that has happened in people's perception of their culture in the last two decades. There is an appreciably greater awareness and pride among the common folk about all matters pertaining to their culture.

SHB has also focused a great deal on language as part of its culture promotion. Through a variety of programs ranging from seminars and workshops to street plays and theatre, SHB continues to give importance to

the need for uniform script, standardization of language as well as publications in the language.

BIRTH AND SCOPE OF SAMPARI PICTURES

Realizing the vast vacuum that existed in the area of visual media and the power and potential of 'cinema' to uplift culture, explore heritage and thus empower the community, Sampari Pictures was formed in 2001. Although it shares with SHB the same objective of uplifting the community through promotion of culture, Sampari Pictures is solely devoted to cinema in particular and focuses on cinema education on the one hand and cinema production on the other. It trains and educates youth in various aspects of cinema-making and cinema-appreciation. It also strives to produce 'culturally sensitive' movies that can become valuable additions to the cultural corpus of the community.

SAMPARI PICTURES: PRODUCTIONS AND PROCESSES

Productions of Sampari Pictures up till now include two full-length feature films (*Mathia* and *Yarwng*) and a dozen short films, few of which are documentaries on social issues.

The production of most short films by Sampari Pictures was the result of unforeseen and urgent situations that called for intervention. For example, the tragic death of nearly 40 children in areas surrounding Kanchanpur in North Tripura called for intervention, and in collaboration with the Government authorities Sampari Pictures produced a short film, primarily meant to generate awareness among the people regarding health and sanitation issues.

The short films, often although more affordable, are not any less easy when it comes to the making. The short films have helped Sampari Pictures to involve numerous individuals from within the state in the work of production, as our collaborators and co-workers. It has helped forge new friendships and relationships and also helped Sampari Pictures to share its vision and mission of film making with numerous people.

Mathia and Yarwng

Sampari Pictures is better known for its two full length-feature films. 'Mathia', (the Bangle) is a 132-minute long love-story that revolves round the social issue of witch-hunting. The 95-minute long Yarwng (Roots) too is a love story of sorts. It depicts the love life of Karmati that gets blighted and submerged by the waters of a dam, which was built when the Gumti Hydel project was commissioned in the state.

Witch-hunting was rampant in Tripura until recently. Women, especially widows often got branded as witches and were brutally killed. In the years immediately preceding Mathia, an average of 30 women were killed each year in the belief that they were witches. The film, without being overtly didactic, allowed this bewildering practice to be at the centre of the love story it built up around Kwchwngti and Banthu. The film not only exposes the absurdity of this superstitious belief, but also uses the story to explore in depth the complexity of life, love and elements that make both life and love meaningful. In recent years, incidents of witch-hunting have remarkably reduced, although it has not been entirely wiped out.

Yarwng resurrected a buried story of great interest and injustice for public debate and consideration. When The Gumti Hydel Project was set up in the late 70s, thousands of indigenous people lost land and property. They continue to be ineligible for compensation and so live dispossessed even today. Yarwng wove this 'forgotten' story around the fascinating character of Karmati.

Even to this day, 'displacement' is a problem in Tripura. The story of Reang refugees who have been living in relief camps in North Tripura for nearly 15 years, emerges time and again to haunt governments and political parties. Historical happenings in Tripura have ensured that no one can feel indifferent to a story of displacement. In one way or other, it is an issue everyone in Tripura is affected by.

By choosing 'live issues' as themes for features films, Sampari Pictures sought to delve deep into issues that continue to affect people in intimate ways.

MAKING A MARK LOCALLY, NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

In a country of billion plus people, it is never easy to make a mark. It is true with films too. The Indian film Industry being one of the largest in the world, there is fierce competition. This is precisely why the success of Mathia and Yarwng were notable moments of pride for Tripura and its people. Not only were both the films included in the prestigious 'Indian Panorama' section, of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the Country's premier film Festival but Yarwng was also chosen as the Inaugural Film of the Panorama in the 2008 edition of IFFI. Yarwng also brought to the state of Tripura, it's first ever National Film Award. It was screened in over 45 international film festivals in many parts of the world – mostly in USA, Europe, Australia, and Asia. Besides the National Award, Yarwng also received two other international awards.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

For the Kokborok language and for Kokborok speaking community, the success of the films was a source of legitimate pride and satisfaction. It did much to restore in the community, a sense of self-confidence and self-worth. The very word 'Kokborok' became known in many parts of the world for the first time. The world community also took note of the plight of the people that were depicted in the films.

In a state that has no film making tradition yet, the story of the making of these films became 'stories' of remarkable courage, endurance and faith. And for the Kokborok language that cannot boast of more than five films till date in its kitty, Mathia and Yarwng became remarkable possessions.

A MIX OF PROFESSIONALISM, SIMPLICITY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

In the process of making Mathia and Yarwng, Sampari Pictures also underscored the truth that good communication need not necessarily presuppose large infrastructure and huge amounts of money. Without owning the smallest of equipments or infrastructure worth the name, with no tradition to follow or deviate from, and without the advantage of easy finance, the Sampari team played out their story in some of the most inaccessible and remote areas of the state that as yet had no electricity, clean drinking water, or even an elementary school.

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER, WITH THE YOUTH AT THE CENTRE

Sampari Pictures insists on being the message it wants to transmit. Its film-making is, among other things, an exercise in unity and brotherhood. Artistes from nearly all sub-tribes of Tripura worked together at Sampari projects. Besides technicians from the Bengali and Assamese communities, *Mathia* had artistes and collaborators from Debbarma, Jamatia, Reang, Rupini, Molsom, Halam, Hrangkhwl, Munda, and Marak tribes. In a profession where 'means' are often made subservient to 'ends' and conflict interests often wreck projects, *Sampari Pictures* insists that picture-making is as important as the picture itself.

The shooting of the film in very remote villages of Tripura enabled the Sampari team to interact with the people on the art of film-making. The villagers' experience of being at the sets, in their own words, brought about a "different attitude to things we see on the screen".

The fact that Sampari films are devoid of celebrities gives it a freshness seldom found in Indian films most of which are inhabited by 'bigger than life' people. Sampari productions celebrate the ordinary man and accord to him maximum space and voice. Sampari Pictures thereby makes it possible for the ordinary man to occupy a space generally associated with celebrities.

In the best tradition of every Salesian venture, film-making by Sampari Pictures is a youth project. It insists on giving maximum opportunities to youth to develop their talents and make best use of their 'never-say-die' spirit. Invariably, it becomes for the youngsters a confidence-boosting experience.

EVANGELISATION AND DIALOGUE THROUGH THE MEDIUM

There are at least two ways in which film production of Sampari Pictures has helped the work not only of Salesians but the Church in general. First, it has removed from the minds of people the false notion that Christianity and the Church are opposed to local and indigenous cultures. One of the oft-repeated allegations in the past was that Church destroys local culture and implants a foreign culture. The culture-related activities of Sampari Pictures and Sampari Hukumu Bodol demonstrate that the Church, rather than being opposed to local culture, is an active promoter of local culture.

Second, the film has become an entry point for the evangeliser into villages and communities up to now unfriendly. Groups who are not inclined to welcome a missionary for the reason that he comes solely to preach religion are happy to welcome someone who goes to show them one of their own films. In most cases, after the initial contact, the ice is broken and a warm relationship is established between the missionary and the villagers. This at times results in the villagers accepting the faith.

CONCLUSION: THE POWER OF CINEMA AT ITS BEST

There is yet another way in which Sampari films have an impact on the community: through what it communicates to the viewer. The unmistakable power of cinema points to the power of communication. It has been the conscious endeavour of Sampari Pictures, to present to the indigenous community of Tripura through cinema, carefully chosen images, symbols and metaphors in the light of which the community can view itself with greater understanding.

In other words, the films seek to provide to the viewer images that are intelligible and appealing to the community. These images not only serve as eloquent symbols that communicate their concerns, but more important they become enduring metaphors of the tribe and the collective predicament they grapple with.

As an example one could look at the protagonist of Yarwng. The Karmati character of Yarwng, although affected by the winds of change sweeping across the countryside, has yet within her enough resilience to face life bravely, even defiantly. Literature and cinema abound in universally appealing Karmati-like archetypes, who

are “destroyed-but-not-defeated.” But for the Tiprasa (son of the soil of Tripura) that watches Yarwng, Karmati is an extraordinarily charming figure because she embodies the battered past of his community and also the residual hope it still harbors within.

The ending shot of the film attempts to sum up its meaning through an image. For the Tiprasa, there is something ‘intimate’ and ‘sacred’ about the lonely figure of Karmati, precariously positioned on a tiny boat, and at the height of her vulnerability, sailing away into the unknown. He can easily discern on her face a decisive resoluteness, bordering defiance, a readiness to face life come what may. The image not only lays bare on the silver screen the collective psyche of Tripura’s indigenous community, it also uplifts and infuses it with hope.

A PARADOXICAL APPROACH TO NEW MEDIA!

JACQUES REY, SDB

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DELEGATE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS BASED IN PARIS
AND ALSO ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION.

This contribution does not pretend to be exhaustive nor all-encompassing. Instead it speaks of our experience and what we have done (France, West Europe). However, at a time of globalisation, you might find material worth reflecting on in what follows. Did Marshall McLuhan¹⁴⁸ not say that the world, thanks to media, has become a village? We have gone beyond that even. Young people have been born into this global village and are immersed in a world where the digital occupies more and more space, giving rise to a new culture. We are speaking of young people like the Digital Natives or Generation Y¹⁴⁹!

1. THE CONTOURS OF THIS NEW GENERATION

Tackling the question of multimedia as a language for education and evangelisation supposes that we are well aware which young people we are addressing. The time when we could approach them with a nicely defined box of tools has gone forever. In the media scene, young people know more than we do. To parody Asterix¹⁵⁰, we could say they have fallen into a pot of magic potions. Even before they are born they are on the Internet via their parent's ultrasound! They are embedded in this new culture. Young people have many ears and drink from many sources. A young person taking part in a meeting is listening to his favourite music through his headphones, sending SMS messages, consulting his Facebook account and he would swear he is paying close attention to your every idea. Suggest to him that he should devote himself to just one task and he will be deeply unhappy. We are dealing with a connected generation!

A fundamental change in the media world took place with the advent of the digital and the internet and their many developments. Awareness of the importance of a particular media is no longer enough. It is a question of understanding the extent to which young people along with their behaviour and way of understanding the world is profoundly different. We are faced with a major anthropological shift.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) was a Canadian educator, philosopher, sociologist, professor of English Literature and a communications theorist. He was one of the founders of contemporary studies on media.

¹⁴⁹ Why? This is one of the questions that young people always ask when you tell them something, or when they are given an order. See : http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJCIL_4g_48

¹⁵⁰ The Gallic comics hero who as a child falls into a pot of magic potion, giving him many powers against the Roman Legions.

1.1 NEW PRACTICES IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Generation Y, the Digital Natives Generation, builds its worldview in a setting of video games, computers, tablets, mobile phones and virtuality. By way of example, in France, 84% of 11-24 year olds have a mobile phone, according to a recent study involving 4,200 young people. The 11-24 year olds represent 2.1 millions users who are different from their elders in the use of their mobile phones: 42% send more than 100 SMS a week and 77% are connected to mobile internet daily and very often every day. They have a strong addiction: 89% say they are constantly looking to see if they have a message and 74% say “they could not live without” their mobile connection to the Internet.

Current usage linked to mobile phone is at the top of their list of activities (phoning, sending messages, photos, listening to music). 90% of teenagers subscribe to a social network. On average they spend two hours a day in front of a computer.

This has a number of consequences. “The Digital Native does not have the same motivations or way of thinking as his elders. The way they relate to time, space, information, morality is influenced by the digital world; they way they handle authority is radically different.¹⁵¹”

1.2 A CHANGE OF TEMPO

Young people experience hyper-sensory stimulation from multiple sources. Everything goes faster, the digital world imposes a new tempo when one holds the world in the palm of one’s hand. Images change more rapidly. Spending more than 3 minutes watching a video on the Internet becomes a challenge. Young people show an amazing dexterity in this world, giving the impression of an adult world which has become boring. But this is the opposite. Under such conditions, how can one give quality attention? Focusing on something for any length of time has become difficult for young people. Teachers are facing this problem every day.

It is true that the messages coming at us from the media are more rhythmic and striking, if not aggressive. Commercials impose their own rhythm. A cinema short today last no more than a few seconds. Everything encourages young people to switch channels, just out of curiosity : *I gather info*, then get bored : *I feel the need to move on quickly to something else*. This channel-hopping habit can also be a way of handling problems : *“I run into a difficulty, I*

¹⁵¹ This comes from a BVA (polling agency) study on the behaviours of Digital Natives.

hop off to something else rather than face up to it. Like on Google, I will end up finding the right idea...". Add to this the preference for everything that is practical and illustrated. Prime image and conceptual discourse is only accepted with difficulty.

1.3 **FACED WITH SO MUCH DATA TO INTEGRATE**

Young people's relationship with knowledge is undergoing profound change. Consider that today 70% of available information is digital. This collection of data is growing at breakneck speed. This is an opportunity. Internet has become a huge encyclopedia. Young people type with astonishing ease. Information is strongly democratised. It is accessible to all regardless of background. The other side to all this accessibility is that many young people do not try to integrate this information. *"I know where it is; I will look for it when I need it"* It is enough to know that it is on Google or Wikipedia to get it when the time comes. So there is a great temptation to rely mainly on "copy-paste". But knowing is not simply collecting data on the fly and information, the value of which is determined by its ranking on search engines. Knowledge supposes integration in a coherent and constructive way within one's own world. It is not enough just to forage for nectar – one must also make the honey. A young person needs to build knowledge. The role of parents, educators and teachers is fundamental here so the youngster can organize data and be given a sense that the world is not a place of noise and sound. We will come back to this.

1.4 **A WONDERFUL FEELING OF FREEDOM**

Thanks to new media young people have a great sense of freedom and autonomy. We could mention here the Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace by John Perry Barlow¹⁵² in 1996. Certainly much water has flowed under the bridge since then and young people today would not formulate things in quite the same way, but one cannot deny that these ideas still permeate the Internet.

"Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.

¹⁵² Poet essayist, retired rancher in Wyoming, political activist, former Grateful Dead lyricist. One of the founders of the Eletronic Frontier Foundation.

We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true reason to fear.

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. You have neither solicited nor received ours. We did not invite you. You do not know us, nor do you know our world. Cyberspace does not lie within your borders. Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows itself through our collective actions..."

This text reminds us today of the actions of Wikileaks or Arab revolutions where Internet and mobile phones were the means of active protestation. In France it is the same for student demonstrations, improvised gatherings of large groups... Some cry anarchy, others speak of a new participatory citizenship. Without going to quite that extent, one cannot deny that the mobile phone and Internet give youth a feeling of freedom and independence. The young person is no longer just a passive viewer or listener (he also neglects the TV set) but becomes an actor creating a blog or using social networks, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube or other. One can really speak of interactivity here.

Young people's way of consuming is equally evolving given the sense of power to influence. One can choose, compare prices, exchange, sell things with a few mouse clicks. There is pleasure in finding a good deal and it becomes almost a game.

Note here the playful nature of all things digital. And this does not only concern young people; it is enough to see the craze for the latest gadget in fashion. In this case, today, tablets.

However, this freedom has its downside. *"Armed with power, with the world just a click away, the mobile phone allows one to play with presence and absence. The relationship of teenagers with their parents is a particular illustration of this game. This tool provides a form of autonomy and at the same time, parents can call at any time to remind me that I'm still a child."*¹⁵³ "The mobile phone can become a means of surveillance, certainly for concerned parents wanting to know where their offspring are ("Hello, where are you?") but even more for the economic system, which in turn is interwoven

¹⁵³ Michael Stora, psychoanalyst and clinical psychologist for children and adolescents, a member of the Observatory of Digital Worlds and Humanities (OMNSH)..

with the Internet. Youth becomes a monetised datum for those who are promoting consumption, an attractive 'product'. Each item of data collected on the tastes and habits of potential consumers helps adjust advertising closer to its target and send it back, mirroring the user. Internet then can be very intrusive. What we are seeing here is the pseudo-freedom of the Internet and its relationship with public and private life, an aspect we will develop further on.

1.5 A NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH AUTHORITY

This new freedom has changed the experience young people have today in the way they relate to authority. Surveys show that they do not really question the family's authority but that they are aware they have better control over the Internet than their parents. On the other hand parents often feel helpless because their children, "digital natives", know more than they do.

*"With regard to internet networks, there is no authority by right but only by fact: something recognised as a good reference because it is high on the list of responses from Google."*¹⁵⁴ Beyond the family, young people have a major distrust of authority based on hierarchy and age. This is especially true for political parties, trade unions, and even the Church, which lack credibility in their eyes. The recent Italian elections are a good example of discredited traditional political impact and social networks via the Internet. Comedian Beppe Grillo did not benefit from any interview in the classic media, but this was no obstacle to his success. He relied completely on Facebook and Twitter, allowing the emergence of a new class of elected representatives (Democracy 2.0...). Young people have difficulty accepting arbitrary decisions without explanation of their motives. Hence their questioning, "Why"? that gives them the qualification Y?

The relationship with legality is in difficulty when one sees how easy this latter is bypassed. One thinks of illegal downloading of music. States are struggling to regulate these exchanges. We could dream of self-regulation but it is a question of education.

Finally, the group most likely to be of authority for young people is the group closest to them, friends, family, 10 to 20 people at most. This is the group in which they place full confidence. Their advice is paramount, social cohesion is defined within this small group. Some speak of a tribe.

¹⁵⁴ E. Salobir o.p. « Évangélisation sur Internet et autorité de l'Église ».

1.6 BLURRING OF THE LINES BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The media are a place for socialisation and within media the Internet generates a connected culture. Adolescence is a time for making friends. Internet and adolescence make a great match! This helps us understand their attraction to social networks. They are the sites they visit most.

Apart from these, there are different communities forming around various themes (games, free software, a particular hobby, etc..) And personal blogs (more than 10 million in France). Young people create networks of friends. They have 200 each. To forge these links, they present themselves, disclose their private lives. They reveal their lives and if needs be become several identities online. It is a life story of gossip in which they engage more or less consciously. Thus the psychiatrist Serge Tisseron¹⁵⁶ developed the idea of extimacy: "I voluntarily reveal my intimate self which becomes part of my social life". In other words it is the need a young person has to reveal himself to gain approval of his peers and build self-esteem. This can have a positive side. *"For online presence to be attractive and to work, there needs to be exchange...Internet leads some to take responsibility online, lead discussion groups, teams of players... There is a small minority who volunteer to maintain links¹⁵⁷".* But this exposure can be dangerous in some cases with sometimes tragic consequences. In France we have experienced several situations where young people have been driven to suicide following false exposure of personal data which they had naively made available on the Web.

For this generation of young people, the boundary between public life and private life may be blurred. But it is not only young people; just listen to people on the street or on public transport speaking on their mobile phones. Everyone can enjoy a declaration of love, falling out of love, a health bulletin, a missed appointment, anger, etc.. One is almost tempted to say that public space becomes the representation of the human comedy in its most intimate moments...

1.7 NEW PLAYGROUNDS

In itself digital space often takes on a playful dimension. This is also true for adults. A friend of mine, a photographer, has confessed to spending long hours in front of a computer. He told his wife, who

¹⁵⁶ We remind ourselves that here we are speaking of a European population in West Europe!

¹⁵⁷ Doctor of psychology, psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, author of *Intimacy overexposed* Television Book Prize in 2002. www.sergetisseron.com

was asking questions about it, that it was part of his work: sorting and editing photos, etc. In fact it was far from it, and he cheerfully admitted that he was enjoying himself very much.

It should be noted that over these last fifteen years, whether on computers or consoles, computer games have invaded the world of teenagers. The technical quality of these is amazing and is also what attracts the adult world. However one question keeps arising in this discussion: the violence in many of these games.

It is mostly there, in varying degrees. Weapons are handled in the first person and the look is subjective, favoring immersion in action ("shoot 'em up" in the language of gamers). Psychologists and psychiatrists discuss the consequences of this brutality. Opinions are divided. For some, it is an excellent outlet. For others, it trivializes violence and undermines the idea of respect for the person and life. Some facts can confirm this latter view but they are rare. What is regrettable is that these games are designed by young programmers who have spent a lot of time in their young lives at a computer and they breed a culture acquired on their screens. A culture lacking humanity and ethical reflection. This raises the question of the education of such technicians.

More than the phenomenon of violence, we should worry about the addiction that video games can cause. Again, we should not generalize, but some young people spend whole nights alone, in front of their console playing on line games with other gamers, sometimes on the other side of the world. Others create a digital life, equally engaging, through an avatar¹⁵⁸. All this can only make parents, teachers and educators be attentive to balance in a young person's life.

Note that the most recent generation of console offers new behaviors. We are more active in front of the screen and the body is put to use since it must mimic actions: hit a ball, a billiard ball, etc.. One way to break the isolation and rediscover the virtues of a board game.

2. PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS FOR THE DIGITAL NATIVE GENERATION

The media world has changed so profoundly over a short time generating the new generation we have just described. When young people are so immersed in the media that they have mastered so well, one might ask what the role of the educator is. What can we teach them where they are?

¹⁵⁸ The word comes from Indian mythology. In computing, an avatar is a virtual person representing the user on the Internet and in video games. The game *Second Life* has popularised avatars.

In fact there are two possible presence amongst young people in the digital world. One does not exclude the other:

We can position ourselves people who accompany and enable them to make best use of these new means of communication and avoid the pitfalls. We know that this support will often come from parents and teachers.

We can be there as actors/producers and be part of this new media flow to address them and provide educational or catechetical material adapted to their culture..

2.1 ACCOMPANYING YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET AND FACEBOOK

The role of the assistant, so important in Salesian pedagogy, seems especially pertinent here. It involves presence, support and prevention. The educator must be present in this vast digital playground, not only because it falls within his educational role or is a fad, but because he has to love what young people love. We recall what Don Bosco said: *"The Salesian is able to make his own what is good in the world and refuses to bewail his times. He accepts all that is good, especially if it appeals to the young"*.

To fulfill this role, educators and parents do not need to be aware of the latest technologies. All adults can help young people regardless of their skills and digital competence provided they are attentive to the world around them.

*"By refusing to pay attention to the media environment in which an adolescent develops, he is abandoned to his own discretion: he is left to learn the keys to interpretation that may be useful in deal with the pitfalls on the web and to discern the true from the false, the helpful, and know the difference between gossip and opinion"*¹⁵⁹

A. GIVE THE MOBILE PHONE ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE

We have shown the importance of the mobile phone for young people both regarding the number who have one and the time they spend on it. It is not just a phone but it stores messages, music, photos, films and then, with Smartphones, they find they have a mini pocket-computer attached to the Internet thanks to Wifi or 3G and even 4G.

¹⁵⁹ Mario Asselin, former principal Québec, consultant recognized on both sides of the Atlantic, and editor of the blog <http://carnets.opossum.ca/>. Interview on www.cafepedagogique.net.

Their phone allows them to move from one tribe to the other, be here and elsewhere at the same time.

We have already noted that the laptop is perceived by the young as a tool for freedom and at the same time something that allows the owner to be traced. But there is another important aspect we should recognise, the relationship between the young person and the phone.

Psychiatrist Serge Tisseron says: *"... For them the mobile phone is not just a tool of information and expression, but also a place for identity construction. In adolescence, everything changes indeed incredibly fast: body, emotions, interests ... so much so that identity, forced to constantly adapt to these multiple shocks is particularly fragile. The collection of intimate documents the adolescent stores in his phone is a way of ensuring the stability lacking in his subjective person... Today's teenagers... find their bearings more and more outside the family group. So the mobile phone becomes the ideal tool with which they plan not only in a space beyond their family, but also, at other times, in a constantly interconnected world... A world in which it is not physical proximity that determines the intensity and genuineness of the relationship, but the strength of shared interests ... Taking a teenager's phone off him is to deprive him of the interconnection with peers and countless information on the web and put him in a position of being subject solely to the direct influence of the adults around him, just like a baby!"* We should not be surprised at the violent reaction of a young person whose mobile phone has been confiscated and, to put it simply, the difficulty he has in understanding this.

The educator might need to intervene to regulate the use of this instrument so the youngster can experience direct contact with people around him and live in the present moment. Quoting Serge Tisseron once more: *"Placing limits can be constructive when the adult first shows understanding of the anxiety the young person has in this matter. This restores confidence in the adult in question mainly when parents are no longer perceived as credible interlocutors".*

This positioning based on trust seems, after all, very Salesian. The mobile phone can become an object of dialogue between family and educator. In fact, showing the benefits and harm of this type of phone. Young people learn to master its use by setting some rules, some limitations (the noise of the phone, the attention that is brought to the present moment, the need to stay connected to the group, the responsibility for what is published on social networks, issues related to theft ...). Letting them also understand that short text messages or Tweets (140 characters) generate a rather precise communication without nuances and that real dialogue often deserves more development.

The ease of use of photo and video functions on their phone should not make them forget the rights of individuals to their reputation/image and respect. A minimum of information and moments of reflection should be proposed to them, especially since this can touch on some real legal issues.

Within a school, a youth or holiday centre, consultation may lead to drafting a policy for phone use. And then, why not give the opportunity to work with this tool? It can be an opportunity for dialogue. Thus, in the video clip Festival we organize, we no longer exclude productions made from a mobile phone, even if it requires organizers to small cultural revolution.

To conclude this question of guidance that young people can understand, adults should begin to apply to themselves the advice they want to give regarding the phone, recognising that at times things are far from clear.

B. BEING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

One of the roles of the educator should be to give young people the keys to interpreting the world around them. Obviously, the Internet is a great tool but it does not absolve us from demystifying some of its aspects. Help young people to take a step back and understand the mechanisms and implications of this media.

- CONSUMERS WITH AWARENESS

One first has to do away with the myth of 'free'. Get young people to understand that the principal driver of the Web after the military and then the university is the economy today.¹⁶⁰

"Think different" slogan used by Apple, an important player in the media scene, could just as easily be translated as *"Let's all eat/do the same thing"* and, of course, these are products of a brand whose business model tends to make the customer captive. In this case, economic activity, which is aggressive, is carefully hidden by a 'young' image and ultra soft design, largely consensual.

Faced with this, we should attempt to train responsible consumers by giving them the curiosity to see what lies behind. It is fashionable today to present "backstage" work in movies, then encourage young people to watch these often instructive scenes. Some investigation of television can help decrypt the financial, political workings of our society. Let young people see and discuss these things.

- **ALLOW ACCESS TO REAL KNOWLEDGE**

"Research has been disrupted by the Internet in the sense that it is possible for everyone to seek information and not just competent persons. However, this research requires skills¹⁶¹".

We have shown that young people face, via the Internet, a mass of data whose reliability is judged by its ranking on search engines and the group to which they belong. The major search engines, of which Google is the leader, are entirely robotic. By now it is the machine that prioritizes the information and economics is not absent, once again, in the algorithms used; advertising is never far from the information generated.

Even when young people are suspicious of the quality of the data, the ease of copying and pasting is tempting. Finally, in all this, the appearance of content that we were not looking for breaks the logic of research. While this may be satisfying for our curiosity, it does not help an analytical mind which is fundamental in knowledge acquisition. In fact, young people have difficulty in assessing the results of their research and the quality of their source.

This is where the teacher, parents have an important role to play in children's learning to deal with the information collected. The support of research in the framework of a working group within a class, a CDI¹⁶² can be an opportunity to empower young people, to help them sort, classify, prioritize and check the data collected using multiple sources and qualified people. A teacher facing a "copy and paste" paper should intervene to force the young person to reformulate the data in his own terms.

Internet is a formidable instrument. But although its use seems obvious, it does not exempt one from a methodology, culture and open mind which is acquired by having experienced people to advise, interpret. The logic of the internet is based much more on interactivity than interiority. The presence of the educator can help develop this latter dimension.

- **KNOWING HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

Adolescence is a time when the young person constructs his personality. He is in search of his identity Internet allows anonymity and high exposure of his person at the same time. On forums, gaming sites on the net a young person can seize any opportunity hidden behind a pseudonym or avatar. Most of the time this is not

¹⁶¹ André Tricot, university professor in psychology at UFM Midi-Pyrenees. Extract from «L'ut ilisation d'Internet permet-elle de nouveaux apprentissages documentation?»

¹⁶² Centre de Documentation et d'Information.

about deception but part of the game. It can also be a way to mark a separation between cyberspace and real space. A way of creating another life of fun on the Internet.

On Facebook, on the contrary, the young person will reveal parts of his life illustrated with many photos. Even aware of the dangers, this does not stop him from publishing sometimes imprudent photos that he can forget to delete from the web.

He creates a relational identity that needs to be recognized by many, even if his true friends are limited to twenty people, as we have already pointed out. There is, somewhere, a search for notoriety with the temptation to add to the 'buzz'. Notoriety can sometimes be disastrous when elements of the privacy of the young are discovered to be widely disseminated or misused for slanderous and malicious purposes. Cases exist, unfortunately, on the part of other young people when there is a conflict, or by adults for real blackmail. This can lead young people to act out of desperation. In France, a survey of 3,600 college students showed that about a quarter of them have been victims of violence on the Web. Five or 6% have suffered more constant cyber-harassment.

Getting young people to reflect on their manner of presence in Facebook is essential. This is why it is best to take advantage of concrete opportunities for discussion. Even get them to raise the issues. For example, the joint creation of a blog theme that will ask a few questions about the right young people have to publish a particular image, the writings that may turn against them, the statement of facts they have not been able to verify. Teenagers need to understand that speaking on a social network is to speak in public. They are no longer speaking only to their 20 best friends, but to many more. They need to consider the reactions of the public and anticipate these. Fr Jean-Marie Petitclerc, a Salesian educator, often tells young people: *"Is what you put on Facebook, the same as you would yell out on the playground?"*

We need to give more visibility to the boundary between public life and private life, which tends to become blurred. This is not simply a matter of convenience but it affects the right of individuals and ethical issues. In these areas the presence of the adult must be interpretative and meaningful, especially if one wants to appeal to a Christian ethic.

On the question of presence, accompaniment, listen to what Sébastien Robert, Salesian, formator and webmaster has to say about Facebook: *"Facebook is a tool for sharing and*

*communication that currently corresponds well to the young and allows them to construct themselves. Before, it was the street where we discovered ourselves. But the extended recreation place when we come home from school is now Facebook. It is therefore necessary for young who are constructing their identity... As an educator, I know that I can not be connected all the time, but when I'm there, it's like the playground: I see, I read things, and I decide to act or not. And, if I do it is a bit like the playground – I don't go yelling things out to everyone in the world; I do it through an e-mail or a private message, not on the Facebook 'wall'. If we sense a problem, a big question, even a moment of despair, we must dare to proffer a word which can lead to a real exchange with me or another teacher. Because Facebook will never replace the real educational relationship".*¹⁶³

We become aware of the need for forming educators. In Lyon, the Jean Bosco Centre has recently been offering formation on social networks for all educators in the Salesian network in France and Belgium-South. We cannot limit our efforts in this area. The school itself must offer courses of good use of the Internet and especially Facebook.

Finally, if you want to restore specific social ties beyond a relationship such as Facebook or Twitter, this means giving young people opportunities to experience groups where they can express who they are and what they worth, including through extra-curricular activities. In this process of recognition where they can appreciate who they are, the presence of the educator allows young people to be in the right place without being undervalued or overvalued.

- INTERNET AND SEX

We can not ignore this aspect of the Internet. Pornography and worse can be hidden behind an advertisement or a site thought to be harmless. Unfortunately teens or children are confronted at one time or another with such sites. To think otherwise would be naive. Violent pornographic scenes give a distorted view of sexuality and a poor image of women. But prohibiting use of the Internet is not a very effective approach and parental controls are easily bypassed by expert youth.

The solution lies in a dialogue with young people and sex education that is not limited to the physiology of sex but addresses an ethical vision. Respect is learned, respect for self,

respect for others. The virtual lends itself to fantasies, it should bring young people into the real world where relationships are sometimes complex but infinitely richer; relationships that involve a commitment to self. Ultimately, it is to make them understand that happy, friendly sexuality is in tune with real love.

2.1 HELPING TO DEVELOP CONTENT IN AN EVER MORE DIGITAL WORLD

Supporting young people in this world of digital communication does not exempt us from being hands-on, in other words, to be there proactively and as producers. Salesians around the world are largely active in this area.

At this point, we can offer our experience. We simply want to offer one approach amongst others which could give rise to further reflection.

The Experience of Atelier Multimédia (Multimedia Workshop)

Following a request from our Province to provide our schools with the tools needed for evangelizing youth, we decided fifteen years ago to work with video which seemed the most modern approach at the time.

We created a collection entitled Living and Believing. These were thirty minute videos built around a passage from the Gospel.

They involved:

Two living testimonies from people with experiences close to the Gospel scene chosen.

The reading of this Gospel inserted into the scene in a consistent way.

A video, clip illustrating the same theme with a song.

With video a booklet was provided with ideas for educational use and a poster to be displayed on the wall to remind people of the group discussion that took place around the video.

This idea aimed at bringing a younger dechristianised population whose religious culture was poor, into direct contact with the Gospel. The evidence was there to show that the Gospel is at the heart of human reality today. This project responded very directly to a process of evangelization, and has resulted in a series of productions first on VHS and then DVD and then streamed over the Internet.

We do not deny that the idea was to show the human roots of the Gospel, but it seemed to have its limits. The most important was that it did not necessarily involve key youth issues and that the words used were not necessarily theirs. We felt the need to phrase our language in their culture.

A meeting with the Slovak Salesians showed us an interesting initiative: summer camps where young people were freely making short films. It was a place of both learning and a video creation tool in a leisure atmosphere.

This gave us the idea, after reflection, of creating a video festival for young people, and we called it FestiClip. In fact, for us, the idea of the festival was not so much the festival itself as providing something to give unity to local initiatives. In the Salesian France-Belgium South Province, we wanted young people to create short films by themselves, illustrating their current problems.

Our idea is simple: produce a film, 7 minutes maximum with a theme that would get other young people to think in positive terms. This was summed up in the slogan "films by the young for the young". Quality and content are essential.

The Festival has become the place to share various productions beyond the simple Salesian network today. But we hope that this sharing goes beyond the festival.

Our Workshop reserves the possibility of offering teams whose achievement seems more interesting the possibility of turning the film into something more professional so it can be available to educators. For this we created a collection called On click. A dozen films are now part of the collection. The themes are particularly meaningful concerns of young people and they are a means of alerting parents and educators to situations that can be problematic. Thus, several videos addressed the issue of slander or defamation on social networks a good two years before the "official" media seized on the topic. These films can be watched and are freely downloadable on the Internet (www.donboscomedia.com).

If we analyze this experience (the Festival is now in its 9th year), it seems to us to respond quite well to this generation of digital natives in the sense that it respects their language while making adjustments to what we believe are excessive or harmful voices in the expanding virtual world.

We can also list the aspects that seem more positive and could be extrapolated to other experiences.

The group is accompanied by a teacher (we can say more about this type of presence).

Creating something of the required duration.

Agreeing to comply with an approach that can open what the young people make to a larger group than just their own.

Deciphering the procedures of public media that young people face in being able to make a critical reading.

Presenting what they have done to others.

Accepting a critical appreciation of what they have done.

Fostering the sharing of these creations by offering a real place for exchange.

Discovering and appreciating talents that can then be a contribution to our own productions or later provide opinion leaders in public media.

N.B. Our reflection on this experience is not yet complete. We have relied heavily on a great respect for production by young people in the remakes we do, erasing the larger errors and providing tools for more efficient production. We note, however, that this makes it difficult to win against films which have used highly sophisticated young producers. Should we do more about our post-production to make them more effective, have greater impact? This is our question today.

There are many similar experiences in the Salesian world. In India, street children, via video clips, show their companions how they live and suggest ways to cope; in Spain, they have a contest of advertising clips promoting preventive action; in Italy, there are a number of festivals where young creators present values; in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the Salesians form youth in media and in Malta, a young team produces professional films, etc.

What is important is that all these initiatives respond to a Salesian educational project. Educational activity through the media, so long as it offers content for reflection, we believe helps young people play an active role in their own education and puts them in the position of being educators themselves for other youth. Was this not Don Bosco's plan?

The content requirement is essential for FestiClip. However, we do not exclude other approaches. Each year, we host a multimedia workshop at Campobosco in France. A small group of young people make a video on a topic of their choice in a very short time (three half-days). The video content is essentially playful. The educational aspect is focusing on each youngster playing a part within the group, the possibility of everyone being able to express themselves and assert their talents. Here it is not the top quality of the final product but the premium quality of the development process, especially the human relationships that are established in the group. It brings out the personality and wealth of each individual. Hence, the importance of an educational presence that accompanies and enhances the each individual's success.

This does not prevent producing a presentable film with the help of the facilitator, providing public recognition of the quality of work of the group and its individual members. This becomes the icing on the cake.

Accompanying a group in a creative process like this requires skills and we need to avoid the temptation to take over when things are going too slowly. The process is gradual, to avoid false paths and allow the group to move through trial and error, supporting leaders while allowing everyone to express himself or herself and offer respect for everyone.

Starting over again, getting the group to continue demand much patience and constant presence, accompaniment. In short, it tests one's humility. If all the Salesians were super-heroes in education it could be better, but their duty is to be serious craftsmen.

We have spoken here of video, but we could just as easily apply this to theatre¹⁶⁴. Don Bosco in his own time had an insight into the pedagogical importance of this activity (they didn't speak of media then). Faced with a world where things are more and more virtual, theatre offers a medium where the person's relational dimension gains even more importance. Theatre involves the young person with other actors, a director, stage and public. Emotions are directly experienced and there is nothing virtual about the exchange.

Moreover, like the audio-visual creation, the theatre is part of a process requiring a long-term commitment; a commitment that requires an effort (learning text, understanding and assimilation of a speech which is often more elaborate than the language usually spoken). The body is involved and finds its full dimension of expression. Theatre develops the extroverted side of the person while the computer component reinforces the more introverted side. It brings the young actor out of his comfortable role as an armchair spectator. These qualities certainly difficult for young people today, but oh so necessary.

As Salesians we need to preserve and promote this valuable tradition of theatre. It is not outdated, quite the contrary, it corrects the shortcomings of a media technology that cannot achieve everything.

3. COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IN THE DIGITAL ERA

The Church is widely present on the Internet and has been for a long time. The Breviary, the Bible in various translations, Vatican II, homilies, songs, and many other texts or information are online. Each congregation, diocese, parish, or association has its site. We are facing a huge library of global dimensions. But we blithely navigate on Web 1.0 with powerful search engines like Google. What about interactive Web 2.0 which began with Gmail, Yahoo, Facebook, Twitter, where the user operates in a reactive and creative way? Because that is where the youth of today are. We are challenged to support these young people in these new areas of relationship so why not participate ourselves?

Last spring Pèlerin magazine awarded the Catholic blog prize to Une catho à l'hosto¹⁶⁵. On this blog which began in September 2011, Dopamine (the pseudonym of this young lady) recounts her life as a young doctor, working each day in a public hospital in the north of

¹⁶⁴ When we speak of theatre we can include many other things : clown, street theatre, magic, dance, etc.

¹⁶⁵ A familiar and shortened way of saying "A Catholic in hospital". From an article by Benoit Deseure in Don Bosco Aujourd'hui N° 972.

France, with a good dose of humour, even able to laugh at herself ¹⁶⁶ but also with a lot of depth: *"I grew up in a family with a Catholic culture. At the beginning of my graduate studies, I encountered the charismatic renewal and this is where I had my personal conversion. God became a living person who brightens my life and which I try to show ... On this blog, I just want to tell of my experiences, my encounters, and share my reflections as a Catholic who recognizes the suffering Christ in the face of any patient"*. This is a good example of the abundance of the Christian presence on the Internet and it responds to Pope Benedict XVI's appeal *"To you young people, in particular the duty amounts to evangelization of this digital continent. Remember to support enthusiastically proclaiming the Gospel to your contemporaries"*. But this blog is also characteristic of the style of a powerful language for challenging users on faith, the Gospel message, the Church.

3.1 EXPERIENCE IS A CHANNEL FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE

Such experiences are of course encouraged. There are questions that remain, as we have seen, regarding modes of communication on the Internet: the nonlinear but fragmentary information, the relationship between this information and truth. *"If users have ceased to trust institutions, including the church and the media, they now rely on their contacts on social networks, 'It is true, all my friends say so on Facebook!' The voice of parents goes by the board in favour of the experts, then peers. The truth is that the web is popular. Speaking the truth which is Christ requires that we say has credibility and that we can make this truth popular"*¹⁶⁷. The use of experience seems like a good way to make this Gospel truth popular. The testimony of the aforementioned blogger is for anyone navigating the Web, and this approach is valid for all institutional discourse because it offers a role to experience, to what is human.

We need to open our language to the media today where image, game, humour and laughter, artistic expression and emotions prevail. In France, clips on discovering the priestly vocation or a particular religious community use advertisements or sketches that are popular with young people. And they are all the "buzz", to use their own language on the Internet. Paul invited us to be 'Greek' with the Greeks we have to likewise be 'Digital Friendly' with digital natives. In other words, we should not hesitate to use the cultural codes of the world today, and why not also amuse people?

¹⁶⁶ See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3OJH7CKiJ8> et http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJCIL_4g_48

¹⁶⁷ E. Salobir o.p. "Évangélisation sur Internet et autorité de l'Église".

But we should never forget that the human dimension of speech is probably the preferred channel through which the message of the Gospel is channeled. In France, the film "Men and Gods" about the life and death of a community of Cistercian monks in Algeria was thought initially to be of limited appeal. Its religious character, simplicity to the point of austerity, was thought to go against it. In fact, it was a huge success among young adults, believers and unbelievers. This movie was just awesome for its humanity, a humanity that allowed it to break contemporary media 'rules'.

3.2 OFFERING A WAY FOR COMMUNICATION BY CHURCH

If the Church wants to be present in these new media, it must provide the means. Making a blog is an inexpensive operation, but it is not the same as putting a website online. It is now essential to invest in the appropriate personnel (webmaster, programmers, designers, directors, etc..) and the material means (amongst others, video). We need to accept the cost. Nor should we fear being tied in with the professional world. We need competent lay people. Salesian Spain's experience with DOSA Communications¹⁶⁸, a startup network serving Salesian centres, seems interesting for its dynamic and its business model. Young people also need our support because they are fully into digital culture. We must not be afraid to give them microphones and cameras.

We need to encourage new, innovative projects, and not hesitate to share and pool our research, our designs or our means of production (the Missioni Don Bosco policy at this level is an interesting one). How many videos, programs could be exchanged in the Salesian world as long as these resources are catalogued and communicated! It is the same with the Internet. Meetings between webmasters should be widely successful.

3.4 E-COMMUNITIES AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

There are many questions about who Jesus is in the Gospels, so we should not be frightened if we find similar questions, opinions on the Internet. But at the same time, we must bring this issue to the heart of the Gospel question: "And do you say I am?" The Gospel message brings with it the mystery of love, which is not just a set of values, principles, or abstract ideals. According to the Gospel, the mystery of love is the Word of Life who challenges the listener to take up a stance. We have to be present on the forums,

¹⁶⁸ <http://www.dosatic.com>

and why not offer them our answer to this question. But also on Facebook, Twitter.

But again, ultimately, it comes back to communities of flesh and blood because it is in them that the message of love of the Gospel is enfleshed. The virtual needs to become flesh at some time or another. While using these new media, we have to couple them with concrete appointments. Our commitment to this field, at the heart of an approach which is fully charged with humanity, is essential. This is one of the roles of the teacher who wants to be with the young. The success of the last World Youth Day in Madrid in the summer of 2011 is a good example of this 'incarnation'. The Facebook generation was indeed there on Spanish soil where it became meetings between real people. The organizers also "hijacked" a fun feature of Facebook: "You will come back with 1.5 million friend requests," one of their slogans said. Digital media can be a fabulous Tom-Tom to gather the tribes, but real tribes.

Internet, Facebook, and the like are great tools for creating links. And etymologically it is the goal of religion to create links. The Internet user builds a vision of the world around which virtual more or less syncretic communities can form, what some call e-communitarianism. This raises the question of membership in an ecclesial community faced with the risk of being mini-cults without a guru, without a faith tradition behind it, or support from a Church community. To fight against this danger, while still using today's language, it supposes that our sites prominently display their ecclesial identity, their commitment to a church that uses not an institutional discourse but one nourished by the Gospel. A true but straightforward form of discourse. And in return, the Church must provide recognition of these sites (800 sites are now linked to the portal of the Catholic Church in France).

It is also necessary to extend our use of clear language in the many debates that flourish on social networks. We can not simply listening or take a passive stance. Besides, young people, who are accustomed to hearing many opinions, does not take offence when they hear our views, our beliefs.

"... We can say that on the Internet, teaching is mainly through experience. This pedagogy of initiation is no stranger to the Catholic Tradition... It was even one of the foundations of ancient monasticism. It is still necessary that our presence on the web does not talk too much of our Church, its activities, its views ...

It must speak of God's presence; what this presence says to us. But not God in general. This is of little interest to the user. We need to speak of Him as Emmanuel, "God with us", or rather God with him (the user); God who is present in his life."¹⁶⁹

Communication media have advanced so much since the time of the first Christian communities, but the proclamation of the Gospel seems not to have been affected by these developments. Indeed, it is always addressed to the heart of man, which is always more human. The love that is at the heart of the Gospel cannot be digitalised. We should not be afraid of this digital world where distances are shrinking and where time is accelerating. Faced with all these technologies we have to remember that the human aspect plays the biggest part. Our role is to provide a presence, assistance, using the Salesian term. We have to bring the human aspect, the vertical and the spiritual to the core of these virtual worlds and a Web that is horizontal by nature. This is the condition for any of our communication to make real sense. Our commitment to this area which lies at the heart of the busy human communal world today is irreplaceable.

The more technology advances the more it needs people in it who can bring the relational and the spiritual to it. This is the paradox.

¹⁶⁹ E. Salobir o.p. *Évangélisation sur Internet et autorité de l'Église*.

The Internet world:

Facebook is a social network on the Internet allowing anyone with an account to create a profile and publish information, but controlling what can be seen by others, with or without an account. The use of this system extends the simple private sharing of information (by means of photographs, links, text, etc.) to setting up pages and groups to publicise institutions, businesses, or various causes.

YouTube and Dailymotion are two websites which host videos where users can upload, watch, or share videos.

Twitter is a social network tool that allows a user to freely send brief messages called tweets on the Internet, by instant messaging. These messages are limited to 140 characters.

MSN is an Internet service provider. It is used as a mailbox and for instant messaging.

Blog is a kind of website, or part of a website. As its etymology indicates (weblog means web log), a blog is meant to contain regular new posts, meaning posts that agglomerate over time on a given topic.

Picasa is software for image management and is also used for seeing and organising photos on the Web.

Deezer is a music listening service allowing the user to listen to artists, tracks, favourite albums but also to create and exchange playlists thanks to a catalogue of 15 million titles involving every possible music genre.

These definitions are taken from Wikipedia, a multilingual universal encyclopaedia, freely available over the Internet.

BEAMS: MULTIMEDIA SERVICES

AFE PROVINCE (KENYA, TANZANIA, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN)

SEBASTIAN KOLADIYIL, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN KANNOT, CALICUT OF KERALA-INDIA. HE BECAME PART OF THE EAST AFRICA PROVINCE, WORKING IN KENYA AND TANZANIA. HE IS NOW DIRECTOR OF THE DBYES THAT INCLUDES THE BEAMS.

1. BRIEF HISTORY

Bosco Eastern Africa Multimedia Services (BEAMS) is situated at the Don Bosco Youth Educational Services (DBYES) which is a youth animation and empowerment centre. DBYES was used as the residence of the Salesian students of theology until 2000. This community was then known as Utume. When the Utume community was moved to the premises in Langata, the province decided to use this property to start a new Salesian presence – the Don Bosco Youth Educational Services. St. Kizito is the patron of this community. Fr. Glenford Lowe, who was also then the Provincial Youth Ministry delegate and the first Rector. DBYES was meant to reach out to schools to offer weekend retreats and seminars for Christian and leadership training of youth. Right from the beginning the Centre also offered training sessions for teachers and lay collaborators from Salesian settings, while making available the facilities for other youth oriented programmes organised by Church and Non-Governmental organisations.

2. BEAMS-ITS BEGINNINGS

- The EPP* of a communication centre was approved by Provincial Chapter 2 (PC2). PC2 approved the starting of a communication centre.
- At the end of PC2, at request of Fr. Glen, Fr. Tom, who joined DBYS was given a computer, table, and a chair to start something on communication.
- In 2001, Fr. Tom was sent to the USA to study communication. At the request of Fr. George Chalissery, the provincial Fr. Tom returned in 2002 to set up a communication centre.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF BEAMS

PHASE-I

- Fr. Tom was appointed as the Social Communication Delegate of the province in 2002.

- Before Fr. Tom came back to the province from USA, Fr. Provincial wrote to the New Rochelle Mission Office for money to buy equipment for the new communication centre to be started in AFE and the mission office gave money for the same. Fr. Tom came with the equipment such as video cameras, computer for editing and the accessories.
- The first section to start was Studio Bakita, desktop publishing in January 2004. Studio Kizito, video, multimedia, web sites, AV resources started in October 2004.

PHASE -II

- A project was presented to the Rector Major and was approved by the province.
- Fr. Tom went to the US in 2005 to buy equipment for studio Bosco, an audio studio.
- New Rochelle Mission Office also helped in completing the project. The Studio opened in 2006.

PHASE III

- Work with UNESCO/peer.
- From the money generated by the work done for UNESCO, a printing section was further developed, one more video editing was started.
- Studio Otunga 3D animation started in 2008 but was closed in 2009.
- In 2008, 10 000 Euro were given to prepare the resource material "Salesians for a Cyber age for Africa," for media education and to make a website for CIVAM. Both these were CIVAM projects.

4. MISSION STATEMENT – DBYES/BEAMS

- We, at DBYES, empower, accompany, and animate young people by training them together with the various agents of Youth Ministry to transform the society and church in Kenya.
- Through Bosco Eastern Africa Multimedia Services – BEAMS, we enhance this ministry by using the power of the modern media for education, evangelization, and development.

THE TEAM

- Social communication consists of members from the countries which cover the province: Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan, but due to the geographical distances meeting is rather difficult.

5. AREAS AND ACTIVITIES

INFORMATION

- The Social Communication Delegate with the help of his team takes care of maintaining the website www.dbafe.org.
- He keeps all the confreres of the province and those who are outside updated on all the events of the province through Harambee Link which is a digital news service.
- He collects and edits materials for Salesian Bulletin, Don Bosco Eastern Africa and publishes it, four times a year.
- He sends news to ANS.
- He sends radio programs to Vatican Radio English service if times permits.

ANIMATION

- The Social Communication Delegate visits the communities to animate in the field of communication as time allows.
- He presents communities and various groups various documents of Church and Congregation on Communication.
- SSCS was presented to the Rectors meeting and other groups meetings.

FORMATION

- The Social Communications Delegate with his team plans and organizes classes on Communication to various stages of formation: Pre-novitiate, Novitiate, Philosophy, and Theology.
- He organizes Smart Communicator, once a year to train the young Salesians, FMAs and collaborates on the proper use of the media consumption and production.
- The SC delegate teaches at the Tangaza College of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

PRODUCTION

- With the help of BEAMS (Bosco Eastern Africa Multimedia Services), the production wing of SC, the SC Delegate produces Youth, Resources Materials, Missionary Animation Materials and Materials for Formation.
- Social Communication Department of AFE brings out Salesian Bulletin four times a year.
- SC department has come out with many Video and Audio productions in the areas of Youth ministry (Youth Resource Materials, Missionary Animation Materials, and Formation Materials).
- It has produced Media Education Books. (*Communicator for a Cyber Age in Africa and Critical Media Education in African Context*).
- Produces Radio programs which is aired regularly on the Catholic Radio stations in Kenya and South Sudan.
- Video programs produces by BEAMS are aired on some TV stations.
- BEAMS also produce all kinds of Audio: Church choirs, songs, motivational speakers, etc. This also helps us to generate income to maintain the centre.
- BEAMS produce Videos: ordinations, religious professions, documentaries etc. for outsiders which helps us to generate income for the centre.
- BEAMS also design and print school magazines, brochures, flyers, posters, etc. for outsiders in order to generate income for the centre.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- The Social Communication department with the help of BEAMS takes an active part in the activities of the National Catholic Media Houses and takes part in the celebration of the National Catholic Media Festival every year.
- Through the SC of the Province SIGNIS, the World Association for Catholic Communication has initiated the process of starting SIGNIS, Kenya.
- This year 2013, in May SIGNIS is holding a training for Video Journalists (VJs) from all over the world at DBYES in partnership with BEAMS.

- BEAMS is networking and partnering with Lola Kenya Screen, an audiovisual media platform for children and youth in Eastern Africa.
- BEAMS productions have won international awards in some International Media Festivals such as Don Bosco Film Festival, Kochi India and Catholic Film and Multimedia festival Niepokalanowie, Poland.

6. **HOPES AND DREAMS**

- BEAMS have plans to upgrade studio equipment.
- It was one of our dream to have a live shooting area and a projection area. The place is available but is not yet fully furnished.
- We would like to make it as a centre for Training and Research in the field of Media.

7. **CHALLENGES**

The challenge The SC Delagate has one the several responsibilities given to him.

- He is the Rector and administrator of the community; he is a resource personnel for the formation programs that take place at DBYES and outside, he is a lecturer at the Tangaza College.
- The AFE province spreads out to three countries: Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan. This geographical distance makes it very difficult to reach out to the communities and formation houses.
- He is a member of the Social Communication Team of Africa-Madagascar region and member of the World Consultative Forum.
- There is not enough understanding of Social Communication in the province. There is no budget set aside for Social Communication in the province.

*Walking with the Young
Communicating with the Young*



SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN GENERAL

CHAPTERS 20 TO 26

JOSEP LLUIS BURGUERA, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN VALENCIA, SPAIN. HE WAS IN CHARGE OF ANS BASED IN ROME (1997-2002) AND IS THE PROVINCIAL DELEGATE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS OF HIS HOME PROVINCE.

SPECIAL GENERAL CHAPTER (1972)

Fr. Ricceri, Rector Major during the Special General Chapter, said in the Preface to the final Chapter Document I (SGC) that this "sought to review our identity in depth in the light of modern circumstances and according to the directives from the Council in response to issues in the Congregation itself". With this premise, the SGC tackled the study of Social Communication (SC) in Document VIII, under the title "Communication in and beyond the Congregation". The SGC recognised that SC is "a service to fraternal communion that we cannot interfere with" and that, since the Don Bosco, it has been "a most important part of our mission".

The SGC's proposal was to facilitate the right kind of communication at all levels of the Congregation. It indicated the following: local level, through small publications; Provincial level through the "Provincial Newsletter" of interest to communities and confreres, tackling issues in the Province, promoting initiatives, looking at ideas and experiences. Finally, at world level it asked the superiors to promote the circulation of news.

The SGC returned to SC again in Document VI: "The SC Media in Salesian ministry". It understood these media as press, cinema, radio and televisión and, following the then recent Conciliar document, *Inter Mirifica*, defined them as "instruments prepared for man by Divine Providence". The SC Media, the Chapter says, require education to be used well and education to expose the negative view in advertising that comes with them.

Chapter members recognised the absence of Salesians in media such as theatre and youthful music and the lack of a systematic, coordinated, and appropriate respect for SC.

The preparation of the Salesian in SC was also questions a point of reflection in the SGC: "It is necessary to initiate candidates to Salesian life into a gradual education to artistic taste and a critical appreciation of cinema, radio, and television", so that this preparation can allow the Salesian to make intelligent use of media in ministry, liturgy, and catechesis, to be guides and companions on the journey for young people.

Three levels of formation of the Salesian in SC appeared for the first time: a general formation in SC to prepare every Salesian, a specialized formation for leaders/animators in this area in the houses and provinces and the other was a "scientific" preparation for those who would be dedicating themselves to production and audiovisual enterprises.

The Chapter made an interesting appeal for the laity to be involved in Media and affirmed the need to prepare them and guide them to the tasks of creating and producing at a time when things were "almost exclusively controlled by the religious".

The SGC asked Salesians to get involved in educating young people in Media, and to this end advised a concrete project to free young people from the negative conditioning that results from media abuse, trusting with a certain naivety, that young people could make choices, discuss, and control media use.

In the "Guidelines for action", the SGC said the following:

- a) the Superior Councillor in charge of Media (but not only of these) will establish a central secretariat for directing a Media documentation centre; he would also coordinate initiatives of promotion and use of media and see that similar secretariats were set up in the provinces.
- b) Publisher and Salesian Press need to dedicate their efforts to spreading the Gospel amongst the young and ordinary people. Salesian publishers in the same country or language should work together in mutual effort, support, and exchange.

To sum up: the SGC recognised the importance of SC in the Congregation as a basic element of the mission. However, while it took a more scientific and systematic view of things, it reduced it to "Media". Basically, we note the lack of a group to reflect on communication in the Congregation, something that would come many years later. Nor were they free yet of a negative view of SC and seeing it simply as a tool for the apostolate.

THE 21ST GENERAL CHAPTER (1978)

"Salesians, evangelisers of the young" was the theme of this GC that saw an improved situation in the Congregation with regard to the grater attention given to SC media in reference to evangelisation.

The GC went a step further and considered SC as "a complex and dynamic reality with a great capacity for persuasion". The step froward in insisting more on SC than on SC media was now happening, although the turnaround in the new terminology – more adequate – was not yet complete: "The SC media", the Chapter said, "are a true and authentic alternative school for large sectors of the world population, especially the young".

The Chapter also noted a growth in commitment to SC in the Congregation: firstly, there was an increase in a “more mature and efficient” use of SC media, and they cited the following: ANS, Salesian Bulletin, short films, cassettes, and slides. There was also an improved apostolic and educational activity through SC media and “group media” like audiovisuals, theatre, and youth music.

Secondly, there was increased production of materials, instruments, and programs for extending the Gospel through publishing centres, radio and television broadcasting. Production of audiovisuals and efforts to coordinate publishing were on the increase.

However GC 21 also offered a precise list of weak points in Salesian SC: insufficient formation of Salesians in this area, lack of planning, programmes, specialists in this kind of material. Here was a lack of an “authoritative, stable and secure” guidance for information in Salesian Bulletins and Salesian information production in general. Important too was the lack of correspondents, animation structures, and relationship with Church organisations in the sector, at provincial and national level. Finally, it also asserted the lack of people and Salesian groups able to develop evangelising content in the new languages (the first time the term “language” is used in reference to SC). To sum up: the Congregation was lacking many tools, structures and Salesians qualified for enabling a more effective presence in the SC world; “a lack of a future vision”, the Chapter described it.

CG 21’s guidelines were aimed at central as structures of government as well as at province level.

- a) To tackle the problem of forming Salesians in the use of SC media. Some confreres needed to be assigned for qualification and specialisation in SC media, “which does not mean losing out on apostolic efforts, but in fact multiplying them”.
- b) It is necessary to introduce the total language of communication into pastoral activity like catechetics, prayer, or liturgy the (first reference to communication as a whole).
- c) Seek coordination between provinces and regions to avoid waste and duplication.
- d) A need to create specific activities in various countries for SC service aimed at youth and for this there was a need to introduce formation courses into schools, vocational forming center, youth centres, and parishes.
- e) Use SC media “ordinarily” in educational activity.

The Chapter's guidelines were:

- a) To create an SC media secretariat as part of the Formation Department; this would have the task of looking after, coordinating and ensuring growth and animation in SC in the Congregation; it was also to organise regular meetings for planning and evaluation.
- b) A Central Advisory Body in SC was created, made up of Salesians and lay people.
- c) Provinces were argued to appoint someone to coordinate, animate SC in service of the mission of evangelisation.

GC 21 also went ahead with reforming the Regulations with direct reference to SC, Article 28 established that the Provincial and his Council were to determine the ways of being present in the media through well-prepared confreres and services organised by Salesians themselves.

The step forward taken by this GC compared with what had happened earlier was a really important one because it laid the foundation for a stable structure and animating presence in SC, both at the central government level and in the provinces, while placing strong emphasis on the importance of formation and specific training for this field for Salesians.

22ND GENERAL CHAPTER (1984)

The 1984 General Chapter was the one that produced the final and definitive edition of the Constitutions and gave SC broad and profound reflection, far from mere voluntary activity and the terminological and theoretical hesitation of previous Chapters.

Fr. Viganò, in his closing address to GC22, proposed an effort towards pastoral preparation of the Salesians in their educational activity in four areas, one of these being SC. He said: "This GC took the stance that it is willing to get involved in the SC area, especially on behalf of popular settings". It is a case of developing popular culture through SC to have an impact on criteria of judgement, important values, models of life... cultivating artistic expression, media, press, and others. The time, the interest shown by the great communication multinationals, and the technology itself have softened a certain degree of naivete in the proposal, so characteristic of its time, but while the commitment to a Salesian Social Communication of quality might be put more strongly, it could not have been put not more clearly.

In the definitively approved constitutional text, Articles 6 and 43 make direct reference to SC and in the Regulations also in Articles 34 and 41. This GC established an SC Department, and from this decision there would be a General Councillor who would also share another responsibility the Salesian Family.

In line with the constitutional text that placed SC amongst the priorities of the mission, GC22 said that SC must be one of the keen and essential aims of Salesian apostolic activity, which would mean a change in thinking and a new kind of presence. And the Chapter document had this to say about education: "We must work together for a diverse communication that can be an educational force capable of shaping ways of thinking, and create a culture that arrives at being an "alternative school". The Chapter also indicates that the Salesian Family should help in advancing in this new frontier and do so with all its human potential.

With a more evidently solid theoretical base, chapter members made it clear for the first time that the message is more than the media, and that it has to be clear, comprehensible, and relevant. The message and language, they insist, is much more than media. Here we have an affirmation with profound consequences for SC practice in the Congregation in the coming years.

THE 23RD GENERAL CHAPTER (1990)

In the context of New Evangelisation launched in those years by Pope John Paul II, GC23 planned how to educate young people to the faith, young people largely conditioned by a sense of the immediate and the utilitarianism which had grown through the media.

By taking a look at young people in this context, the chapter document noted that young people communicate with great ease in these new languages like music, television, and video clips – the first reference to video used in the service of an audiovisual narrative genre which is rather special but of great relevance at the time.

The GC made an important theoretical statement: "The new languages generate a new culture and spread models of life, and produce a constant flow of information; on occasions they create critical awareness, while often they also create uncritical dependencies". A paragraph like this could only result if behind it there was the support of some of the great theoreticians of the time like McLuhan, Umberto Eco, Adorno and, in the ecclesial arena, Pierre Babin.

Reflecting on how to form the faith and awareness of the young, the GC said that the community should develop a new form of communication. While recognising that young people are "bombarded by media", the Chapter recognised that this situation was a challenge for the Salesian educator and the community given that it would have to make the effort to acquire the ability to maintain a Salesian and evangelising word in a world of multiple languages. In this new scenario, the media are essential for proclaiming the word of salvation and, recalling Article 6 of the Constitutions, the chapter document says: "The Congregation feels that it is implicated in this". This is, without doubt, a transcendental statement.

GC23 lays out some commitments in this sector at three levels:

- a) The local community: will see to its communicative capacity, helping each Salesian to be a good communicator; by taking advantage of all communications media at its disposal (media in the broad sense), and encouraging the education of young people in communications media.
- b) The Provincial: appoints someone 'in charge of SC at province level, who will carry out his service within the context of the youth ministry team (here it is important to note the situation in the organisation at province level – within youth ministry). His task is to help local communities progress in their commitment at local community level and also be of service to other sectors in this activity as well as establishing links with Church and civil bodies involved with SC.
- c) The SC General Councillor will work to improve the formation of the Salesian communicator, will help communities in using communications media and guide the implementation of concrete projects in SC.

To sum up, the practical commitment is evident and well-ordered, but the inclusion of the provincial person "in charge" of SC within the Youth Ministry Team does not seem a wise decision in the long term and the functions of the General Councillor for SC are not as precise as chapter reflection on the issue would have led us to think.

THE 24TH GENERAL CHAPTER (1996)

"Salesians and lay people: sharing the spirit of Don Bosco" was the title and aim of reflection by GC24.

Reflection on SC in this GC was not as extensive as in the two previous Chapters and chapter members focused more on communication in the broad sense, defining it as an essential vehicle of communion at every level in the Salesian Family, in the educative and pastoral community and in other areas. "The time has come to see to the quality of the message, more than words and elocution", the chapter document states.

Communication, one of the areas of involvement taken up by GC24, is valued in all its forms as something which drives involvement and responsibility in the Salesian mission and is essential for this to happen.

Very relevant also is the reference to Don Bosco's practice in this matter: "By communicating, St. John Bosco helps us to understand that his mission has no boundaries." Communication for Don Bosco was the instrument of culture, evangelization, and even vocational proposal.

In his closing address to the GC by the then Rector Major, Fr. Vecchi, SC is seen as a new Areopagus and is considered as a concrete manifestation

that we are in the “global village” (McLuhan’s ideas and Babin’s). The Rector Major recognises that the Congregation has not always matched up with the most significant ways for educating and evangelising, referring no doubt to the subsidiary role that SC had in the Congregation at various times, as we have seen.

The chapter document states that the SC is a popular instrument of evangelization and cultural activities and recognizes its educational dimension, and entrusts to the Salesians and laity the task of being trained in SC and thus, opening the way to creating what would become the current Faculty in Social Communication at the Salesian Pontifical University (first ISCOS, today FSCS). It also created a Councillor for SC and asked for SC to be promoted in the Provinces; it sought technological renewal of central services of the Congregation, advocated forming Salesians and lay professionals in the field and promoted a quality Salesian Bulletin.

This was an ambitious array of objectives then outlining directions for government at General Council level, the Department, and the Provinces.

GC24 was looking at the future and proposing that attention be given to forms of communication which are valid for creating greater involvement, so as to increase awareness of the motives and values of the Salesian mission and that information leads to a more significant presence in an area.

The GC maintained that to evangelise and to educate is to communicate and that faith is of its very nature communicative, other than that it needs to be inculturated.

The practical guidelines from GC24 are expressed in the three areas we already know:

- a) Local: the Salesian community will plan formation opportunities with Salesians and lay people together, on SC and youthful languages. For its part, the educative and pastoral community will make use of already existing information media such as the SB, ANS, provincial newsletter, and others, all of these aiming at creating communion.
- b) Provincial: the “Province person responsible for SC” (it does not yet speak of a delegate), will promote, in agreement with the provincial a provincial SC team which should also involve lay people A Province SC Plan will be drawn up, which sees to animation, formation, consultation, also providing appropriate structures and instruments.
- c) World: the Rector Major and his Council to study a practical plan for evaluating, promoting, and coordinating SC. Also the SC Councillor will offer provinces the practical guidelines they need to draw up the Province SC Plan which will involve Salesians and lay people.

The GC also recognised the value of the Salesian Bulletin as a means of communication for sharing the Salesian spirit and for greater involvement of the Salesian Family and Salesian Movement in education and evangelisation.

In a few words: GC24 established the basis for Salesian SC today: a time for making the information services more professional, encouraging communication at every level, using the advances in telecommunications that allow for this; and beginning from this GC a process of animation and formation in SC is established for all Salesian regions in the world; the relaunching of the Salesian Bulletin and a reflection on Salesian presence in the publishing and radio broadcasting world, so that it could be more professional and established on solid Salesian foundations.

THE 25TH GENERAL CHAPTER (2002)

The driving factor for Salesian reflection in this case was “The Salesian community today”. It was the first General Chapter in which the ANS coverage of what was going on in the main auditorium was almost in real time: daily news, photos, interviews, all thanks to communication technology (Internet, e-mail, and digital photography) already well established across a broad area of the Congregation and habitually in use in provinces and houses.

GC25 studied the positive aspects of SC and said that in local, provincial, and world areas, thanks to this there was a much keener sense of belonging. The Chapter also highlighted some negatives: the media invasion that detracts from time and fraternal and community relationships.

“The community”, says the Chapter document, “undertakes to ensure that the evangelical counsels make crystal clear its gratuitous and unconditional offering.... through the education of its members to the appropriate use of the means of social communication, including the most recent such as the internet, DVD, etc., and periodically assessing their positive and apostolic use”. The community, furthermore, will make itself present in the local area by cooperating with Church and civil bodies in SC.

There is an important appeal by the Chapter for the community to work through projects and to move from “ministry made up of activities” to a “ministry of processes”, thus, opening itself up to forms of education and evangelisation that see the value of SC as a new vital space for bringing people together and for encounter with the young. We can also see a preview of something that would come a few years later, where with the explosion of social networks, “the virtual playground” would be recognised.

Among changes to the Constitutions affecting SC, the novelty was the creation of a General Councillor SC dedicated only to this sector. His function was to animate the Congregation in this sector by fostering Salesian activity in

SC and coordination globally of centres and structures which the Congregation runs in this area. This was an important step for giving “political weight” to the SC Councillor so he could plan and animate Social Communication more effectively in his own department and in other occasions in the Congregation. The first edition of the *Salesian Social Communication System* would become a good example of the serious work being done in this sector.

THE 26TH GENERAL CHAPTER (2008)

Second to the last of the General Chapter under the presidency of the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez had as its title and plan the well-known line from Don Bosco “*Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*”.

GC26 coins the term “new frontiers” to express the new physical or joyful places where Salesians at all levels ought to be, in response to the demands of our new times, New Evangelisation and in dynamic fidelity to our Founder. SC is one of the new frontiers.

“The new technologies”, the Chapter document says, “question the Salesians and offer them challenges, amongst them “*personal media*” (computers, smart phones, and other gadgets connected to the Internet including wifi); these are already the normal habitat for young people and are bringing a world of new possibilities and also dangers.

The Chapter urges the Salesian to “to present in the *virtual playground* to listen, enlighten, and guide”.

Analysing the state of the Congregation with regard to SC as a whole, the Chapter notes the growth in sensitivity and involvement of the Congregation in SC.

Very clearly and concisely the Chapter presents a short list of advances in the area: consolidation of the Faculty at the UPS, the various projects in *media education*, growth in Salesian institutional portals (websites) on the Internet, the greater familiarity Salesians have with the Net for exchanging and for distance formation/learning and the new organisation of the SC Department. However, at the same time the document signals that many of the virtual worlds inhabited by young people escape the Salesians because the better don’t share or provide leadership in them due to lack of formation, time, and sensitivity. Definitely a hard but accurate assessment.

The GC26 guidelines also flaunt clarity and audacity:

There is a need to shift from a timid approach and sporadic presence in media to a responsible use and a more incisive educational and evangelising activity.

This is to be made concrete at the usual three levels:

- a) The community: is asked to implement educational projects to lead young people to a “critical and responsible use” of media (understood in the broad sense) and encourage them to be proactive in this field. There is also the encouragement to use new technologies to give greater visibility to our presence and spread the Salesian charism. We see here for the first time in a Chapter document a reference to dissemination of the corporate image, a highly topical issue, although such dissemination always needs to be achieved with pastoral good sense.
- b) The province: needs to define strategies for Salesian educational presence and popular artistic expression so that can play a greater part in SC. There is also a request to prepare people in this area.
- c) The Rector Major and his Council: the GC guideline asks the central government in the Congregation to reflect on the new challenges of the culture of personal media in forming Salesians, lay people, and the assistance it can give to young people in this regard. The main novelty is the request for three Departments to work together. The Chapter asks the Rector Major and his Council to form an interdepartmental team between Youth Ministry, Social Communication, and the Missions, but preserving the unity of pastoral activity.

CONCLUSION

The Salesian Congregation, over the last forty years, has made a valiant effort to get SC and Communication in general to where Don Bosco unequivocally wanted it, amongst constitutional priorities, and especially as now demanded by the current progress of information science and technological instruments.

General Chapters 20 to 26 have refined reflection, analysis on and arrangements for SC: from considering SC as appropriate for spreading news of the family or the Acts of the General Council reflection has moved to creating a faculty of social communication, professional dissemination of news and concern for the corporate image, among other advances.

There has also been substantial provision at the level of the Constitutions to see that there is a General Councillor for SC with his own department free from other concerns like the Salesian Family. There has been progress at the Province level arriving at appointment of a Delegate in each province.

Some fears and defensive positions in this sector have remained, such as a reductionist viewpoint interested more in catechetical structures to achieve greater effectiveness in the *apostolate*, rather than exploring the appropriate languages for arriving at those to whom we are sent, especially the young.

The various General Chapters have also been refining their terminology, relegating the expression "Communication Media" to second place in favour of other more appropriate terms in current research into communication, such as "Social communication", "*Mass Media*", or the more recent "*Personal media*".

The commitment to formation of Salesians in SC, and of communities and laity has become constantly clearer. The circular letters on SC from the last three Rector Majors have only helped to further encourage this essential need.

One also needs to add the desire to give the Congregation a solid organisation in SC at two levels: general government and province level government, and define the areas as animation, formation, information, and production. The *Salesian Social Communication System*, recently approved in its second edition is the current response to the need to follow this new mentality in communication in the Congregation, that the Rector Major, Fr. Pascual Chávez, in his final address to GC26 referred to when he said: "We must learn to use the languages of the young to communicate and inculturate the Gospel".

BEING EDUCATED AND EDUCATING TO “RIGHT THINKING” IN THE “DIGITAL WORLD”

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INTRODUCTION

“What the Pope has given us through this message” said the Councillor for Social Communication, Fr. Filiberto González, commenting on Pope Benedict XVI’s Message for the 47th World Communications Day, that focused on social networks “encourages us to reflect as Salesians both as religious and as educators of the young. We are called in person to have the attitudes suggested by the Pontiff”.¹⁷⁰ From a positive view of social media, while not being naive about it, here we find here an appeal, Fr. González went on:

To educate ourselves to knowing how best to use this new circumstance of the social networks authentically and maturely, prudently and without fear, preventing rather than repressing. Our Congregation has a wonderful past of evangelising creativity through old media; just think of the films, slides, paper materials, ... It has to be no less the same for the future with new media. I already see many fine initiatives which are being spread by many Provinces: apps, formation courses for the young and for Salesians in initial formation, working alongside Church bodies. Our charism offers us a clear criterion: wherever the young are, let us be there too evangelising, educating, growing in holiness – together.¹⁷¹

Thinking of the challenges and opportunities offered by the development of new *media* and their impact on society and the way young people live, beginning with our young Salesians in formation, I would like to offer some pointers on formation to “right thinking” in our current context and of the importance precisely for this reason of exercising critical intelligence and “in-depth” reflection. It could be useful to ask oneself, from an educational point of view, how the “digital world” forces us to rethink some of the more common categories and concepts, including some of them that are important for the formation of the Salesian communicator. Many ideas, including philosophical and sociological ones, are in fact called into question, such as the very notion of reality (physical and virtual),¹⁷² in terms of person, time, space, presence,

¹⁷⁰ Cf. ANS - Agnezia Info Salesiana, *Solid Networks: portals to truth and faith; new areas for evangelisation* (25 January 2013).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² The philosophy teacher is well aware that when he uses the term “analogy” he is aware that auditory “hearing” is no longer understood as the median between being univocal and equivocal, but it understood in the opposite way as “digital”!

culture, relationships, education, community, group, etc., all things that carry weight in the formation – not just intellectual – of Salesians and the young.

The Rector Major correctly notes that

There have been many ‘revolutions’ at a pedagogical, psychological, religious, political, cultural, philosophical, technological, demographic level that have taken place over the 20th century. By now the world has become a ‘global village’. It is permeated by ongoing media innovation of a global nature, influencing every culture on the planet. Our way of thinking seems to be marked by new cultural criteria such as productivity, efficiency, assessment, scientific rationality. So from this way of reading social phenomena, many of the old categories of interpretation seem to have been left behind.¹⁷³

So how are we meant to think of and experience, for example, the Preventive System in our current context of the “digital continent”, a place we cannot be extraneous to us since we are living “in it” and being called to encounter young people who in habit it?

Given this, I believe that the recovery of the category of being educated and educating is crucial to “right thinking”, an expression used by Pope Paul VI as an ongoing commitment for formators and educators of the young: “Right thinking! Dear brothers and sisters! Remember that we must begin from this point. Remember that it is not easy. Not only for the mental effort it requires, which for professional thinkers, philosophers, seekers of speculative truth can be seriously dramatic (we recall the great converts), but also, and this is for everyone, for a certain effort that right thinking demands”.¹⁷⁴

It was not by chance that Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate* took up Pope Montini’s expression (*Populorum Progressio* [1967], no. 85) that “the world is in trouble because of the lack of thinking”:

He was making an observation, but also expressing a wish: a new trajectory of thinking is needed in order to arrive at a better understanding of the implications of our being one family; interaction among the peoples of

¹⁷³ P. CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA, “*Like Don Bosco the educator let us offer the young the Gospel of joy through the pedagogy of kindness*”. Second year of preparation for the Bicentenary of his birth.. Strenna 2013, in *Acts of the General Council* 94 (2013/1), no. 415.9.

¹⁷⁴ PAUL VI, *Insegnamenti*, vol. X, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1974, p. 200. this is how the Pontiff puts it: “We recall pascal once more: *travaillons... à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale*: try to think rightly, this is the basis of moral existence (*Pensées* 347)». *Ibid.*, IX, 529. Montini also said: “Do not be afraid of thought. No substituting the affective warmth of devotion to the nagging concentration of the mind. No wandering in the practical simplicity of good through distrust of the conquering speculation of truth. No empiricism of missionary activity tempted by rapid, great success”. Cf. http://digilander.libero.it/uniboFilocalia/giovanni_battista_montini.htm (3 March 2013).

the world calls us to embark upon this new trajectory, so that integration can signify solidarity rather than marginalization. Thinking of this kind requires a deeper critical evaluation of the category of relation. This is a task that cannot be undertaken by the social sciences alone, insofar as the contribution of disciplines such as metaphysics and theology is needed if man's transcendent dignity is to be properly understood.¹⁷⁵

On 28 January 2011 the Congregation for Catholic Education issued the Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy [Decree],¹⁷⁶ which was followed on 15 July 2011 by a Note on putting it into practice,¹⁷⁷ with a view to "helping higher ecclesiastical teaching institutions to offer an appropriate contribution to the ecclesial and cultural life of our time".¹⁷⁸ The Document, as emphasised in one of its more significant comments, expresses the need to grow, in the light of one's own holistic formation and in accepting what "promotes and purifies the faith and rejecting what denies it", in the ability to critically evaluate "one's dominant culture and thus, indicate the aspects that could deny reason, as well as denouncing truth turned into ideology".¹⁷⁹

The time for studies and – one could add – "ongoing formation" today which is essential, are to be seen as an opportunity for assimilating an appropriate habitus, especially "acquiring a solid philosophical *forma mentis*"¹⁸⁰ that "is opposed to the relativism of knowledge, and an assimilation of determined essential content..., like the ability to achieve true and universal objectivity, body-soul unity in the human being, the dignity of the human being, relationship between nature, reason, freedom, and the need for conformity between the moral and civil law".¹⁸¹

Thus, we read in the Decree:

With the acquisition of intellectual, scientific, and sapiential "habitus", reason learns to know more than empirical data. In a particular way, the intellectual debate in pluralistic societies, which are strongly threatened by relativism and ideologies, or in societies without authentic freedom, demands that the students in Ecclesiastical Faculties acquire a solid philosophical

¹⁷⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2009, no. 53.

¹⁷⁶ CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2011.

¹⁷⁷ CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Note on putting into practice the Decree on the Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2011.

¹⁷⁸ Decree, no. 13.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. R. VALDIVIA GIMENEZ, *Koinonia veritatis*. El estudio de la filosofía en los Centros de estudio Teológicos, in *Isidorianum* 39 (2011), 34.

¹⁸⁰ Decree, no. 11.

¹⁸¹ Cf. VALDIVIA GIMENEZ, *Koinonia veritatis*, 31.

forma mentis. These “habitus” make it possible to think, know and reason with precision, and also to dialogue with everyone incisively and fearlessly. The “habitus” are, though, connected with the assimilation of firmly acquired contents. In other words, they derive from the knowledge and deepening of the most important truths gained by philosophical labour, sometimes with the help of Divine Revelation.¹⁸²

It seems interesting to me to note in this regard that the idea of these *habits* is very much part of discussion today of education and technical formation, taking into consideration and using categories such as “*work-habits*” or “*study-habits*” as part of a renewed attention to virtues and ethics. How do we develop all this in the vital area of social networks?

It is to be noted that with regard to the huge *opportunities* the Web offers: though on the one hand they allow for care and development of certain newly understood cognitive aspects, on the other they can lead to risk factors. For example, technical abilities and prowess which continue to be honed thanks to new tools do not always correspond with quality cognitive processes. Accumulation of information can easily lead to distraction and require greater ability and responsibility in selection and evaluation. Without going to catastrophic, apocalyptic lengths or exclusive attitudes of protection and defence, indeed, by seeing them as precious gifts, we should also bear in mind that the new *media*, because of their extraordinary possibilities for contributing to shared construction of knowledge, challenge us to openness in their regard but with a critical stance, as we see from Pope Benedict XVI’s Message.

In my view, beyond particular circumstances, it is precisely the nurturing and practice of philosophy that can show the importance and necessity in the current socio-cultural climate marked by complexity and so-called “liquid modernity”,¹⁸³ a situation that is a true and real challenge for anyone involved in the area of intellectual formation and education in a world of constant transformation, which includes the “digital”.

Fr. J.E. Vecchi in his letter *For you I study* written as Rector Major reaffirms the importance of taking up again a tradition of institutes of consecrated life where communities are always a proposal of spiritual life humanly full of meaning, and also places of education and culture according to their specific charism.¹⁸⁴ From a perspective of being educated and educating to wisdom, dedicating oneself to study and deep reflection is not only not an impediment to, but is materially useful for loving God and one’s neighbour which are the very engines driving this dedication. Thus, it presents itself as an authentic act of love, of which the Salesian is a sign and bearer in whatever he may be doing.

¹⁸² Decree, no. 11.

¹⁸³ Cf. in this regard the significant publications of Z. Bauman.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. J.E. VECCHI, “*For you I study*” (C 14). *Adequate preparation of confreres and quality of our work of education*, in *Acts of the General Council 78* (1997) no. 361, 8.

This is also true for the (within the) digital environment, that “the digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication which builds relationships: a considered understanding of this environment is therefore, the prerequisite for a significant presence there”.¹⁸⁵

THE DIGITAL “WORLD”, AND NOT ONLY THAT WORLD

Coordinates for the digital world

Here especially, I recall certain elements proper to the “digital universe” and its features. The Italian term “digitale” is “an anglicism referring to the significance of ‘figure’ in the English term *digit* (which in turn comes from the Latin *digitus*, that is ‘finger’). So, anything that can be represented by numbers (or done through numbers) is digital, an adjective that can be regarded as synonymous with ‘numerical’”.¹⁸⁶ So, today we speak of *digital divide*: the divide – at world level – between those who can use information technologies and those who instead have no access, and there is also the term “digital native” referring to “the generation born for the most part between the ‘80s and the beginning of the ‘90s, who grew up with a *computer*, video games, cellphones, *Internet*. This generation is putting in crisis both the scholastic system, largely unable to rethink and re-adapt to the new *cultural digital landscape* and the family, that is often anxious and concerned about the ‘naturalness’ their children show when it comes to digital technical tools and *Internet*”.¹⁸⁷

As noted, the term *Internet* refers to the idea of connection indicating *interconnected networks*, so, a system of relationships made up of a very rapid and extensive exchange of information going on constantly between millions of nodes, or host (*computers*, cellphones, or almost any other kind of tool for connecting and exchange of data) connected amongst themselves. Certainly, the individual host might not always be connected to such a complex of exchanges, but the ‘net’ itself never stops existing and being active: its uninterrupted persistence is a feature of primary importance.... Another significant aspect emerges from the recurring use of the expression (*‘network of networks’*), a saying which means that it unites among all of them a series of private, or business, public, commercial, or other kinds of networks, although

¹⁸⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation*. Message for the 47th World Communications Day (24 January 2013). For a careful study of Church documents on these topics, cf. also M. JIMÉNEZ CARREIRA, *Análisis panorámico de los Documentos de la Santa Sede sobre las Tecnologías de la Información*, in *Isidorianum* 42 (2012), 407-458.

¹⁸⁶ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, Laterza, Bari - Roma 2013, 23.

¹⁸⁷ F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione, ovvero quando i pesci sono felici di stare nella rete*, in *Orientamenti Pedagogici* 59 (2012/4) n. 350, 628.

not all can be consulted. It is a case therefore, of an infinitely pluralistic universe set up at various levels.¹⁸⁸

The spread of digital technologies effectively allows people, today more than every before, "to stay 'connected', that is to have the possibility of easily opening, immediately, and at accessible or no cost, channels of communication which can overcome many barriers and distances".¹⁸⁹ The *Internet* is a complex system, since it is a "network", and features *non linearity in the relationship between elements* of which it consists like a very intricate "galaxy" with surprising features and behaviours: "the complexity of human processes (social, economic, technological, cultural, and – for our purposes – communicative) in which we are immersed by now reaches levels that make it ever more difficult to understand – and even less dominate – in their expressions and details of development".¹⁹⁰

The Net, if we consider its existence and way of functioning, shows a *mutability* which is ever more accelerated and a basic *un-governability*, which comes from its very *a-centricity*: it is effectively very difficult to control even if at the same time it offers huge opportunities for control. By emphasising somehow the intrinsic *liquidity* of our reality, "it is the new ocean that post-modern human beings navigate. ... It is thus, no accident that the emergence of the Internet has been perceived by some as a tipping point in the evolution of our species, a 'singularity'".¹⁹¹

F. Vecoli notes:

As seems ever more evident at the beginning of the third millennium, Internet is one of the principal factors contributing to the 'liquidity' of things, to use the term that Zygmunt Bauman attributes to our post-modern society, or whatever we want to call it. Between an exaggerated consumerism and indiscriminate globalisation, our contemporary world, more or less caught up in the spiral fed by these two dynamics, seems destined to become more fluid for the systematic lack of stable points of reference, solid support, or in other words lack of certainty. And we should note that such a state of things is not the result of an exclusively economic or social transformation: this fluidity is also the result of a new awareness of what is real in a broad sense, the result of recent developments in various fields of knowledge and know-how.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 15.

¹⁸⁹ A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia. Pensare il cristianesimo al tempo della rete*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2012, 119.

¹⁹⁰ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 12.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁹² Ibid., 3.

As has been noted, from the beginning of the third millennium we began to speak of *Web 2.0*, an expression representing the development of *Internet* particularly important for an increase in the *interactivity of relationships* of the Net with users, thanks to new functions that make digital reality every more immersive: "the connected individual is no longer just a passive spectator of the sites visited, but has the possibility to play a part offering his or her own contribution (at an elementary level in *blogs* or *forums*). This naturally notably increases the likelihood of the appearance of virtual communities, as well as the perception of a Net that is alive, able to receive – and sometimes react to – an intervention by a single user".¹⁹³

Thus, *cyberspace*, as C. Revelli emphasises, is marked by substantial *immateriality* of data, the *instantaneous nature* of communications, the *cancelling of distance*, and the "*distorting*" of interpersonal relationships.¹⁹⁴ The term "*cyberspace*", in fact, is used today as a metaphor to indicate the Net, but placing the emphasis on its environmental and territorial aspects: and if it is dealing with the latter, one needs to define its 'status', like someone tried to do in 1996, publishing – partly seriously and partly facetiously – a now famous declaration of independence of cyberspace. But then it has also been said that the term has a very particular meaning coming from a fact deprived of any reference that exists in reality: at best it could indicate a spatial visualisation of the circular flow of information in global information systems.¹⁹⁵

Since the Net can be modified very quickly and under everyone's eyes, and "the most glaring phenomenon regarding the birth of *social networks*, platforms offering the possibility of creating our own profile, lists of friends we want to share with, exploring the friends lists and activities of others belonging to the same platform".¹⁹⁶ And we can note of course "the intellectually collaborative organisation emerging from the Net as a phenomenon which is not so radically new but certainly of extensive proportions".¹⁹⁷

H. Jenkins has found eight features of the "culture" of the Net: innovative, convergent, daily, interactive, participative, global, generational, unequal.¹⁹⁸ In this new circumstance in which it seems that *connectivity* succeeds in intersecting real life and *online* activity almost without one being distinguished from the other, there are some therefore who speak of a "collective human

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 16-17. Cf. also P. ANDERSON, *What is Web 2.0? Ideas, technologies and implications for education*, in *JISC Technology and Standard Watch* (2007), <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/services/techwatch/reports/horizonscanning/hs0701.asp> (3 March 2013).

¹⁹⁴ Cf. C. REVELLI, *Intelligence stratégique sur Internet*, Dunod, Paris 1998.

¹⁹⁵ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 27.

¹⁹⁶ F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 626.

¹⁹⁷ A. SPARADO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 119.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. H. JENKINS, *Cultura convergente*, Apogeo, Milano 2007, 318-324; F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 649-650.

culture" coming into being, a "planetary nerve system", making reference to authors like P. Levy or even Teilhard de Chardin.¹⁹⁹ All this shows features that are more prominent than they are worrying.

So, while finding ourselves in this situation opening new and unheard of opportunities, if at the same time we consider the nodes of contemporary culture that influence the educational process the most, as listed in *Orientamenti pastorali* by the Italian Episcopal Conference, *Educare alla vita buona del Vangelo*, here we find some aspects instead that are almost symmetrical, though negatively so: "the obfuscation of the dimension of interiority, the uncertain formation of personal identity in a plural and fragmented context, the difficulties of dialogue between generations, the separation between intelligence and affectivity. It is a case of critical nodes that need to be understood and tackled without fear, accepting the challenge of transforming them in into educational opportunities".²⁰⁰ The symptoms of how people struggle so much to give a sense of profound meaning to their lives are found, according to the document, in the "disorientation, the withdrawal into oneself and narcissism, the insatiable desire to possess and consume, the seeking of sex detached from affectivity and commitment in life, anxiety and fear, lack of any capacity for hope, the spread of unhappiness and depression. It is also reflected in the loss of authentic meaning of educating and its irrepressible need. The myth of the self-made man ends up by separating the individual from his own roots and from others, leading him in the end to love himself and life very little".²⁰¹

Does something of cyberspace come into these "nodes"? The Web opens up many questions including about the way we live and express religious experience in the digital world, to the point where they become an interesting object of study, not only the "teachings passed on in such virtual reconstructions, but also the religious import of these worlds in themselves. Their pervasiveness – notes F. Vecoli – is such as to make up an imaginary province that competes directly with traditional religious institutions: we are not dealing here with a simple 'game territory, but an extension of the potential of real life'".²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Cf. A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 119-132.

²⁰⁰ CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE ITALIANA, *Educare alla vita buona del Vangelo. Orientamenti pastorali dell'Episcopato italiano per il decennio 2010-2020*, ElleDiCi, Leumann 2010, n. 9.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., IX. Cf. also K. RADDE-ANTWEILER, *Religion Becoming Virtualised. Introduction to the Special Issues on Religion in Virtual Worlds*, in *Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 3 (2008), <http://online.uni-hd.de> (3 marzo 2013).

Amongst the reasons that can help us understand the current situation of “mistrust of life” and “crisis in education” A. Bagnasco said in a conference at the UPS, we can identify the phenomena of “enervation of faith” and the “crisis of reason”:

From the point of view of the believer, it is a languid, enervating faith, without its original life force, that is the ‘heart to heart’ with Christ, trusting him without reserve, a warm sense of belonging to the Church. Without this light, or with a light that is dimmed because not fed and invigorated every day, everything gradually goes out, and the suggestions of the world – thinking as if God did not exist – invade and drown us. But the crisis of education might depend not only on the enervation of faith, but also the crisis of reason. If we look at the cultural movements that seem to dominate the Square, in fact, we have to recognise that ‘a disquieting guest’ is at work in Europe: Nihilism. It penetrates feelings, confuses ideas, cancels out horizons and future prospects, weakens the soul, makes passions sad and bloodless. ... In such a desert of values man finds himself disoriented, and a sense of being lost comes over his inner world, the construction of what he is in himself, his universe of ideas, sensations, feelings, impulses, emotions, and drives...a world that has to be ordered so that out of chaos make come a universe, harmony, beauty. But without some unifying criteria, without a centre, an ‘unum’ to look to, will it be possible to build that living and dynamic order without which one lives without understanding anything of oneself, trusting oneself to the strongest claimant? This sense of being lost also invests the world of external relationships with others and with things, with events, history, living, and dying. It is the question of meaning that bursts ever more acutely into the midst of the nihilism that would also like to make it look ridiculous in the eyes of the young, an ‘idle question’ as Comte, Marx, and other masters of the suspect have said.²⁰³

The “word” today, writes P. Barcellona, seems to lose its ability to “give shape to the invisible and the ultra-sensible and fall to the level of mere information. ... To be in network, in connection with the flow of information, does not mean talking with others and maybe not even communicating, but rather being part of the chain of stimuli and reactions that structure the process of life at every level”.²⁰⁴

Despite all this the Salesian – as our Constitutions indicate, and as the Rector Major repeats often enough, “is able to make his own what is good in the world and does not bewail his own times: he accepts all that is good, especially if it appeals to the young”.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ A. BAGNASCO, *Educare alla vita buona del Vangelo: il contributo delle Università*, Università Pontificia Salesiana, Roma (24 febbraio 2011).

²⁰⁴ P. BARCELLONA, *La parola perduta. Tra polis e cyberspazio*, Dedalo, Bari 2007, 11.

²⁰⁵ *Salesian Constitutions*, no. 17.

New categories and cognitive aspects of the digital world

I would like to stay for now with a thought that might seem obvious, but I believe it is worth expanding on: the idea that new media condition the processes of expression thinking tied to the way we learn, reason, and behave,²⁰⁶ and encourage us to rethink certain traditional categories.

How many of us every day turn on our *computer*, open a word programme and write, or delete a *file* that we believe is no longer useful? All this activity which is true for us, is for the *computer* just a sequence of commands in machine language, but none of us regards it in any sense as a lie or not true. What we have written or put into local memory or on a remote *server* is our ideas and plans, our notes, favourite music, our films, documents, all more to us than just a series of 1s and 0s. We are ever more trusting of browsers telling us what street to take, and how to use our time best. It is this mimicry on the machine's part that makes its relationship with us so fascinating. The more the *computer* disappears, the more the interface offers us the chance of expressing ourselves, and the more our relationship with the *computer* becomes a form of connivance and dependence.²⁰⁷

There are some, like N. Negroponte, who view digital development so positively that they see it as a *natural strength* which naturally, thanks to improvements in communications, puts humanity in the situation of almost automatically bringing about "a harmonious and peaceful society, leading to our being transformed into *cyborgs* (human beings integrated with embedded machines, aimed at overcoming the weaknesses of the flesh). The basic presupposition – a rather naive one to be truthful – is that evil comes from a defect in communication between human beings: enabling tools for connection and information can only bring about greater empathy".²⁰⁸

Internet is thus considered almost a *new metaphysical dimension* so that planetary interconnection would constitute, in this optimistic view, the most appropriate tool for allowing human beings to cooperate more effectively, bringing people closer together "following a process of gradual convergence destined to culminate in perfect spiritual union. Humanity will finally achieve a superior level of connection, empathy, and harmony. It will then achieve perfect cohesion, a kind of thinking collectivity on a planetary scale. The thickening of this 'noosphere' is the final goal of the human journey, its *Omega phase*".²⁰⁹ The encouragement to theoretically analyse – from a realistic point of view and not a naively optimistic nor even pessimistic one – the *organic* and *dynamic*

²⁰⁶ Cf., for example, J. MEYROWITZ, *Oltre il senso del luogo. Come i media elettronici influenzano il comportamento sociale*, Baskerville, Bologna 1995; F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 632-639.

²⁰⁷ F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 631.

²⁰⁸ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 33. Cf. <http://www.mit.edu/~bhdavis/NegroponteLec.html> (3 March 2013).

²⁰⁹ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 35-36.

dimension of *social reality* such as the phenomenon of globalisation and development of new technologies, throws light on, and today is a fundamental task for adequate reflection on metaphysical nature and historical reality and society,²¹⁰ and also for a fresh look at education.²¹¹

The “digital world” also places before us the question of the meaning of what is “virtual”:

In fact, one tends to associate virtual with artificial, but this is insufficient for fully describing the specific concept indicated by the term in question, because despite the number of artificial objects produced by man, it seems evident that not all can be considered virtual. Nor is it legitimate to contrast, as often happens, virtual and real, as if the first belonged to the area of illusion and what is false; in reality the idea of virtual fits in best if understood as ‘potential’, and so contrasted with ‘actual’ – as Gilles Deleuze suggests – instead of with ‘real’. We also need to make a distinction between the possible that is static and already determined in its development, and the virtual which is dynamic and undetermined, so a ‘kind of complex problem, a node of tendencies or forces accompanying a situation, event, object or entity, and that requires a process of resolution: actualisation’. In short, what is virtual could be understood as a pool of potential that ‘tends’ to make itself shown.²¹²

This potential, subject to actualisation, is always such in a context of *deterritorialisation*:

Virtual reality, inasmuch as it is the result of an electronic simulation of the physical world, is something about which we can say that ‘it is not here, but we cannot argue with the attribute of ‘real’ nor about the function it imitates—without nevertheless being tied to it – the laws of the physical world. In the virtual worlds created by the computer we can, for example, simulate the effects of gravity, but this certainly does not constitute an intrinsic or necessary law for this setting, only the result of imitating the dimension offline re-contextualised inside a new geography. The simulation keeps in force the rules and habits of the reality that precedes the de-territorialisation, but only to give the user familiar and recognisable reference points: deep down, what we want is a new and better world, not an unrecognisable and disorienting one.²¹³

²¹⁰ Cf. on this the interesting theoretical proposal of Salesian theologian and philosopher, Fr Tommaso Demaria: cf. M. MANTOVANI - A. PESSA - O. RIGGI (a cura), *Oltre la crisi. Prospettive per un nuovo modello di sviluppo. Il contributo del pensiero realistico dinamico di Tommaso Demaria*, LAS, Roma 2011, III Parte, 269-546. Cf. also E. MARANDI, *La società è “un uomo in grande”. Per riscoprire la sagomatura degli “antichi”*, Marietti 1820, Genova - Milano 2010.

²¹¹ Cf. G. TACCONI, *Per una pedagogia del “noi inclusivo”*. Essay by Tommaso Demaria, in M. MANTOVANI - A. PESSA - O. RIGGI (a cura), *Oltre la crisi*, cit., 357-378.

²¹² F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 24-25. Cf. P. LEVY, *Becoming Virtual. Reality in the Digital Age*, Plenum, New York 1998, 24.

²¹³ F. VECOLI, *La religione ai tempi del web*, cit., 25-26.

Digital technologies also contribute to redefining the sense of *presence* and *being with*, as well as of *contemporaneity*. If we take account of some of the main features of the *Internet* regarding the process of cognitive and intellectual formation, we could also see that “firstly, it is true that the *Internet* seems to place itself beyond the temporal nature of the physical world because it exists in an eternal and uninterrupted present, has no memory and never sleeps. There is an historical reason explaining this fact: the circumstances that marked its rise, tied to the apocalyptic international tensions of the cold war, meant that the intention was to create a system that would always be alive”.²¹⁴

This is why the way of considering time and space changes, passing from objective coordinates of reference regarding what belongs to the material world, to dimensions subject to distortion or to laws that lie outside our immediate perception of what is real, even more so in today’s circumstances where the Web is “a new dimension of the real which, like others, presents itself under different aspects as opaque to our intelligence and elusive with regard to our control. Here too space and time are distorted beyond remedy, and lack a centre – an omphalos – for establishing a geography of the territory”.²¹⁵

From the point of view of space we are in fact seeing a paradigmatic change: what distinguishes the packet of data travelling through the Net and which makes it up in some ways, like the single idea that with others makes up our intellect, it is the communications protocols that identify it as a message which the terminals it reaches can understand. But the routes taken to arrive at its destination are almost impossible to reconstruct: like the basic particle in quantum physics, the information transmitted becomes resistant to human observation. These technical features can explain, at least in part, why the internet can be depicted as a place without a ‘where’ and a ‘when’, like in myth.²¹⁶

F. Vecoli notes again that when we consider the universe of the Web the point is no longer (as it was instead for Newton) the lack of the piece needed to complete the *puzzle* of our understanding. In fact, we know insofar as we are its creators, how the *Internet* functions, just that we are no longer able to follow it in detail, control each aspect, see how it develops or even stop it: the vastness of our creation is by now beyond our control, to the point where we have (almost) conferred an autonomous status on it. It certainly always remains true that someone one day built the first pieces of the *puzzle*, but with the passing of time this has become simply too extended: everyone has put a hand to it, adding pieces, lots of pieces, assembling or disassembling in a way that completely defies central direction (there are only agencies providing rules to follow in order to be part of the creative effort). In the end, to someone looking

²¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 7.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 41.

from the outside, the *puzzle* seems to have taken life, thus, introducing a basic ambiguity as to its status – dependent or non-dependent on its creators – which seems to be well expressed in the words of the chief character in the film *The Lawnmower* who tries to explain the nature of virtual reality: ‘Sometimes I think I have discovered a new planet, but I am inventing it, not discovering it. ... and I have barely touched one of the shores of one of its continents’.²¹⁷

Today, where the *crisis of certainties* seems to have become a stable condition with the regular and ever quicker appearance of “changes of paradigm”, also well expressed by the concepts of “horizon” and “scenario”, we tend culturally to highlight especially the insurmountable barriers of our knowledge, such that

This spiral of interpretation – which is why the scholar investigates the object of his questions by always beginning from pre-posed positions, predetermining in fact the object of the investigation and so his analysis on the basis of a pre-understanding (the Gadamerian *Vorverständnis*) – now overflowing impetuously from the banks of human sciences... and flooding the area of the more exact sciences. And, we note also for computer science, as we recall phenomena such as the so-called *Heisenbug* (the *bug* from Heisenberg, after the name of the physicist who defined the principle of indeterminateness), a digital bug that disappears or becomes modified if the *computer* tries to analyse it. ... After all, we are trying to study a reality that we sense cannot be reduced to our analytical tools, almost as if they are no longer able to let us cross the unbridgeable gap between subject and object, a gap that open up on the frontiers of knowledge today.²¹⁸

The world of *Web 2.0* and *social networks* also for this reasons seems to be more and more characterised as an *environment* in which “the lack of single responses, the non-hierarchy of truths, the possibility of a thousand different points of view oblige us to seek, debate, judge, not worry about strict logic”.²¹⁹ Using the Internet undoubtedly develops the “logic of the search engine”, with its enormous possibilities for exchange and rapid acquisition of knowledge but also the risk of leading us to think that the answers we find are valid or all on the same level.

P. Czerski says this to the generation of “digital natives”:

We have learned to accept that we will find many answers instead of just one, and from these we can deduce the most probable version and reject the ones that seem less credible. ... For us the *web* is a kind of external shared memory. No need to remember superfluous details: dates, calculations, formulas, street names, special definitions. All we need is a summary, the

²¹⁷ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

²¹⁹ F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 636.

essential thing for drawing up information and referring it to others. If details are needed we can get them in a few seconds. ... Being part of cultural life is a normal thing for us: global culture is at the basis of our identity and helps us to define who we are through traditions, stories from history, social status, genealogies, and the language we use. ... This is why we feel that culture is becoming both global and individual. And this is why we want free access.²²⁰

A new way of considering relationships is also under development. A. Spadaro notes that "the development of web 2.0 has made us understand how relationships between people are at the centre of the system and exchange of content, that seems more and more tied to who produces it and who indicates it. ... The *social networks* are not a collection of individuals but a collection of relationships between individuals. ... All of the *social network* platforms are of potential help to relationships and a threat to them".²²¹ The new *media* show in effect that *content passes through relationships*: "digital society is no longer conceivable or understandable through content alone but especially through relationships and exchange of content happening within relationships between people. The relational base of knowledge on the Web is radical. In fact, thanks to the logic of *links* each item of content can be directly related to other content on the net, wherever it happens to be located".²²²

From the point of view of the subject, also the *relationship between identity and otherness* is called into question: one only needs to think of *Facebook*, and of how there is a need for profiles and choosing an image to represent the user. "Thinking of *Facebook* without a photo for the profile, would be like saying that you can have an ID card without a photo, or a citizen without an ID card. When we relate to others, we need to show ourselves, present ourselves to the other, show who we are, with all the pros and cons hidden within it (and not only in 'virtual' experience)".²²³ P. Padrini notes that "concretely, there can be further modifications by *Facebook* at the level of content management, but it will always be possible for us to make all the necessary choices of *privacy*, while keeping the relational component intrinsically contained in the act of sharing content with other users".²²⁴ We know well, nevertheless, how "the difference between an encounter *de visu* on the Net and an identical encounter in a social context is and can be very heavy from the point of view of relationships, emotions and also – unfortunately – affective serenity (which always has to be safeguarded)".²²⁵

²²⁰ P. CZERSKI, *Cresciuti con la rete*, in *Internazionale* (2012), n. 940, 96.

²²¹ A. SPARADO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 50. Cf. also, by the same author, *Connessioni. Nuove forme della cultura al tempo di internet*, Pardes, Bologna 2006.

²²² A. SPARADO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 69.

²²³ P. PADRINI, *Facebook internet e i digital media. Una guida per genitori ed educatori*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2012, 12.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

Here it is worth highlighting certain aspects of Benedict XVI's Message:

The culture of social networks and the changes in the means and styles of communication pose demanding challenges to those who want to speak about truth and values. Often, as is also the case with other means of social communication, the significance and effectiveness of the various forms of expression appear to be determined more by their popularity than by their intrinsic importance and value. Popularity, for its part, is often linked to celebrity or to strategies of persuasion rather than to the logic of argumentation. At times the gentle voice of reason can be overwhelmed by the din of excessive information and it fails to attract attention which is given instead to those who express themselves in a more persuasive manner. The social media thus, need the commitment of all who are conscious of the value of dialogue, reasoned debate and logical argumentation; of people who strive to cultivate forms of discourse and expression which appeal to the noblest aspirations of those engaged in the communication process. Dialogue and debate can also flourish and grow when we converse with and take seriously people whose ideas are different from our own. "Given the reality of cultural diversity, people need not only to accept the existence of the culture of others, but also to aspire to be enriched by it and to offer to it whatever they possess that is good, true, and beautiful".²²⁶

Being educated and educating

In a letter addressed to the Diocese of Rome in January 2008 on the urgent task of education, which then inspired *Orientamenti pastorali* (2010-2020) by the Italian Episcopate, Pope Benedict XVI recalled how differently from what happens in the technical or economic field, where today's progress can be added to progress in the past, "in the area of the formation and moral growth of individuals there is no similar possibility of accumulation, because man's freedom is always new therefore each person and each generation has to tackle his or her decisions anew. Even the greatest values of the past cannot simply be inherited, but we have to make the our own and new again through an often difficult personal choice".²²⁷

In one of his addresses, Fr. Chávez Villanueva identified the "drama of modern humanity"²²⁸ in the *rupture between education and society, in the divide between school and citizenship*. It is not by chance that the Rector Major repeated on the one hand the importance of "convergence between

²²⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Social Networks: portal of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation*, cit. (24 January 2013). Cf. also BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso nell'Incontro con il mondo della cultura*, Belém, Lisbona (12 maggio 2010).

²²⁷ BENEDETTO XVI, *Lettera alla Diocesi e alla Città di Roma sul compito urgente dell'educazione* (21 gennaio 2008).

²²⁸ P. CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Educazione e cittadinanza*. *Lectio Magistralis per la Laurea Honoris Causa* (Genova, 23 aprile 2007).

education and education to faith (integration of faith and life)" and "the belief that education is an essential tool for enlightening the mind".²²⁹

We need to see the worth especially in the "non digital" as well as the "digital" world of the human and personal aspect of education and communication, which John Paul II pointed out as "the ability to see especially what is positive in the other, accepting and valuing it as a gift from God" and serving our brother "carrying one another's load"(Gal 6,2)".²³⁰ "Man is not perfect in himself" Pope Benedict XVI reminds us –; man needs relationships, is a being in relationship. It is not just cogito that can cogitate all of reality. There is a need to listen, listen to the other.... Only this way can one know oneself, only this way become oneself".²³¹

Hence, the invitation to get involved in the digital world and its specific languages, to

form (people) to a social and political sensitivity, which leads... to investing one's life as a mission for the good of the social community, with constant reference to inalienable human and Christian values. This means working under the banner of a more consistent practice in the specific sector. ... But that also supposes a more specific theoretical and lively involvement, inspired by a broader view of education itself along with realism and concreteness. Proclamations and declarations are not enough. There is also a need for theoretical and practical concepts translated into definite and well articulated programs.²³²

From the perspective of the holistic education of the individual in his identity and relationships it is also possible to see the *Internet* as an opportunity:

The new era of communication also uses technical tools to spread data, information and news on a global scale and in real time. Without doubt this is a new area of encounter for ideas and what we think about other cultures and different religions. The intensity of scientific exchange too has undoubtedly benefited from the internationalisation that has resulted from the *Internet*. ... The *Internet* also means the possibility of avoiding selfish stances and through the range of information available, receiving further impulses for actively shaping the world around us. The availability of techniques, the information

²²⁹ P. CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA, «Come Don Bosco educatore offriamo ai giovani il Vangelo della gioia attraverso la pedagogia della bontà», cit., 10.

²³⁰ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2001, n. 43.

²³¹ BENEDETTO XVI, *Discorso a conclusione degli Esercizi Spirituali in Vaticano* (27 febbraio 2010), citato in E. DAL COVOLO, *In ascolto dell'altro. "Lezioni" di Dio e della Chiesa sulla vocazione sacerdotale*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2010, quarta di copertina.

²³² P. CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA, «Come Don Bosco educatore offriamo ai giovani il Vangelo della gioia attraverso la pedagogia della bontà», cit., 14-15.

highway of the Internet, will be a normal way in future for interaction and exchange at a practical and professional level".²³³

The importance of a unified and systematic view of knowledge and what is real.

The topic of *reason*, in Salesian tradition, is considered a fundamental element in the educational ("preventive") system of Don Bosco, which "emphasises values of Christian humanism, such as the search for meaning, work, study, friendship, cheerfulness, piety, freedom with responsibility, harmony between human wisdom and Christian wisdom".²³⁴ In our Salesian tradition it is called *practical wisdom* in "accepting" reality in all its manifestations without being opposed to it but allowing it to challenge us, beginning with the needs of individuals, so it leads to a more detailed understanding of their situation.

In a more general sense, we can understand how the *Decree on Reform of Ecclesiastical Studies of Philosophy* wanted to clearly re-propose the task indicated by John Paul II in *Fides et ratio* for all Christian thinking in the third millennium, meaning the *achieving of a unified and systematic view of knowing*.²³⁵ This is effectively one of the main intentions of the *Decree*:

On the one hand, the defence and promotion of truth are an essential form of charity: 'Defending truth, offering it with humility and conviction and witnessing to it in our life are demanding and essential forms of charity'. On the other hand, only truth allows for true charity: 'Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity'. Finally, what is true and good are strictly linked: 'Truth means more than knowing: knowledge of truth has the knowledge of good as its purpose. This is also the meaning of Socratic questioning: What is the good that makes us real? Truth makes us good and goodness is truth'. Through the offering of a systematic view of knowledge not separated from love, the Church can give its specific contribution which can have a real impact on cultural and social projects.²³⁶

We cannot avoid analysis of the idea of interdisciplinarity as approximation which is integrated with knowledge, as it emerges from the widespread tendency in the sciences to go beyond the limits of each discipline, especially in the face of circumstances that seem ever more complex and interrelated. The topics of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, located historically and culturally in the area of the debate which in the second half of the 20th century led to more clearly defining content and problems, make necessary and

²³³ G.L. MULLER, *Ampliare l'orizzonte della ragione. Per una lettura di Joseph Ratzinger-Benedetto XVI*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2012, 22-23.

²³⁴ P. CHAVEZ VILLANUEVA, «Come Don Bosco educatore offriamo ai giovani il Vangelo della gioia attraverso la pedagogia della bontà», cit., 11.

²³⁵ Cf. *DECRETO*, n. 5; GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Fides et ratio*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1998, n. 85.

²³⁶ *Decree*, no. 6. Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, cit., nos. 1, 3, and 5.

opportune an explicit philosophical contribution which allows us to *consider knowledge and interdisciplinarity beyond merely pragmatic horizons*, in view of an anthropological rehabilitation which, with the background of the crisis in the model of positivist science, allows us to give reason for the reality of the world and man in an integrated fashion and, as far as possible, a unified one.²³⁷

Fides et ratio says that

In effect, every philosophical *system*, while it should always be respected in its wholeness, without any instrumentalization, must still recognize the primacy of philosophical *enquiry*, from which it stems and which it ought loyally to serve. Although times change and knowledge increases, it is possible to discern a core of philosophical insight within the history of thought as a whole. Consider, for example, the principles of non-contradiction, finality and causality, as well as the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth, and goodness. Consider as well certain fundamental moral norms which are shared by all. These are among the indications that, beyond different schools of thought, there exists a body of knowledge which may be judged a kind of spiritual heritage of humanity. It is as if we had come upon an *implicit philosophy*, as a result of which all feel that they possess these principles, albeit in a general and unreflective way. Precisely because it is shared in some measure by all, this knowledge should serve as a kind of reference-point for the different philosophical schools. Once reason successfully intuits and formulates the first universal principles of being and correctly draws from them conclusions which are coherent both logically and ethically, then it may be called right reason or, as the ancients called it, *orthós logos, recta ratio*.²³⁸

Cultivating philosophy at a time and in the horizons of the "digital world", also helps from an epistemological point of view to overcome the sectoral aspect of knowing that "inasmuch as it leads to a partial approach to truth, with the consequent fragmentation of meaning, impedes the inner unity of man".²³⁹ Reflection on truth in itself has in fact always been a central argument in philosophy: already in Aristotle, as noted, we read that "it is correct to call philosophy the science of truth. The aim of theoretical science is truth, the aim of practical science is action".²⁴⁰ Both have to be correlated and never separated. They take on importance today in a special way, faced with the risks that come from the Net, the stable arrangements to avoid immediate and

²³⁷ Cf. G. FALABELLA, *Dall'interdisciplinarietà alla transdisciplinarietà, la possibilità di un contributo filosofico*, in C. DESBOUTS - M. MANTOVANI (a cura), *Didattica delle scienze. Temi, esperienze, prospettive*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2010, 287-308.

²³⁸ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Fides et ratio*, cit., n. 4.

²³⁹ *Decree*, no. 1; JOHN PAUL II, *Fides et ratio*, cit., n. 85.

²⁴⁰ Cf. ARISTOTELE, *Metaphysics* II, 993 b 20.

preconceived answers, overcome superficiality, allow oneself to be challenged by the real “tutto intero” and history.

This is why we must keep attention focused on not collapsing *dialogical rationality* and *attentive and wise reading* that continual presence in the Web can contribute to weakening, while we always need to keep alive cognitive centres of language, memory, and imagination. The instance of a reflective nature, and cultivation of creativity²⁴¹ and artistic abilities, help the individual to intellectually achieve the essential intellectual work of “restructuring” what appears to be fragmentary or unstructured, to connect and relate aspects or dimensions that can seem disjointed or uncoordinated, to establish priorities and know how to recognise a “meaning”, a direction, and objectives so as to also know how to identify the necessary and appropriate means to achieve the ends.

Human technique, an expression of the superiority of spirit over matter, shows how a knowing human project can organise matter itself; in this sense the technique carries with it a dimension of ambiguity, since its use for good or for evil depends on human freedom. This is why technology is intimately bound up with man’s way of understanding and experiencing the world. As Pope Benedict XVI says in *Caritas in veritate*, “it is impossible to separate the human being from his material environment, from signs and images through which he confers meaning on himself and the world. In the same way, one cannot separate the material world – and still less its artificial part – from ideas through which technical objects are conceived and used by the men that invent them, produce, and use them”.²⁴²

Here the suggestion offered by J.G. Müller on correct behaviour with regard to the *Internet* whether to be learned or passed on, with the idea of representing a true “enabling” of opportunities for good and for “meaning”:

The Web can be an enrichment – so long as the user is guided by thinking of it as a way of improving the circumstances of life of people, using it for example for humanitarian organisations acting at worldwide level, or for supporting research in all fields of scientific activity. In this case, it is at the service of personal dignity and *unites people*. Radical positions, political extremism, acts of violence, and criminality disseminated through the Web, on the contrary, *separate people*. ... It is not the technique that is to blame, but the mistaken use made of it. Therefore, in educating future users, it would be important to emphasise the ethical factor and bring the *Internet* out of the grey area of educational disengagement. Whoever puts content on the Web which is contrary to the person and human dignity is rebelling against creation and spreading – around the whole world – a view of man that denies any connection with transcendence.²⁴³

²⁴¹ Cf., on this, the open dialogue in the work by R. SENNETT, *L'uomo artigiano*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2008.

²⁴² BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, cit., no. 70.

²⁴³ G.L. MULLER, *Ampliare l'orizzonte della ragione*, cit., 32-33.

Seekers of truth in the new agora

Admiration in the face of reality, and the desire to know, are at the root of the human search for truth that then formally becomes "philosophy". It is no accident that Aristotle considers theory as "*a form of life*" determined by the virtue of the "better": "a unique activity" – emphasises X. Zubiri – "fully loved in itself... and not for what it can provide".²⁴⁴

In this sense, so we read in Miguel de Unamuno:

Homo sum: nihil humani a me alienum puto, said the Latin comic. And I would say rather: *Nullum hominem a me alienum puto*; I am a man and I do not consider any other man to be foreign to me. Since the adjective *humanus* seems to me to be as suspect as the corresponding abstract noun *humanitas*, humanity. Neither the human nor humanity, neither the simple adjective nor substantive adjective, but the concrete noun: man The man of flesh and blood, the one who is born, suffers, and dies – especially who dies – who eats and drinks, plays, and sleeps, thinks and loves; the man we see and listen to, our brother, our true brother.... This concrete man of flesh and blood, is the subject and at the same time the pre-eminent object of any philosophy.²⁴⁵

Man over the course of history has always sought to interpret the world through the use of technologies which have gradually helped him to represent matter analogically, as it happens for example thanks to photography or cinema: "representations", notes A. Spadaro "that open up new cognitive spaces for interaction between the subject and the external world. 'Technology', then, is not a collection of modern and avant garde objects. It is part of the doing with which the human being exercises his ability to know, be free and responsible".²⁴⁶

So from this perspective, while changing the technologies that can channel them, there is no diminishing of essential questions concerning the *existential question of the meaning of life*. During his apostolic visit to the UK in September 2010 Pope Benedict XVI spoke of this explicitly:

At the spiritual level all of us, in different ways, is personally involved in a journey that offers an important answer to the most important question of all, the one regarding the ultimate meaning of human existence. ... within their area of competence, human, and natural sciences provide us with an inestimable understanding of aspects of our existence and show us our way of understanding the way the physical universe works, which can then be used to bring great benefit to the human family. Nevertheless, these disciplines do not answer, and nor can they, the fundamental question, because they operate at a totally different level. They cannot satisfy the deepest desires of the human

²⁴⁴ X. ZUBIRI, *Cinque lezioni di filosofia*, Augustinus, Palermo 1992, 47.

²⁴⁵ M. DE UNAMUNO, *Del sentimento tragico della vita negli uomini e nei popoli*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1999, 47.

²⁴⁶ A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 20.

heart, nor fully explain our origin and destiny to us, why and for what purpose we exist, nor can they give us an exhaustive answer to the question: 'Why does something, rather than nothing, exist'.²⁴⁷

Human existence presents itself in fact in its superabundance, complexity, and energy. It is a mixture of imprecise contours, made up of contrasts, paradoxes, ambivalences; emotions desires, memories; faith, love and hope; fears, illusions, frustrations and consolations; comedy and tragedy; corporeality, tradition, history, language; light, shade and 'chiaroscuro'.²⁴⁸ This is why "intellectual activity", says G.B. Montini "that does not accept limits, commands, applications, temperaments, zeal... for life, human experimental reality, where sorrow, sentiment, morality and social needs constantly interact, remains sterile".²⁴⁹ Thus, today it is always more important the need for authenticity in social relationships and personal *participation*, finding ourselves in a media panorama ever more dominated by social networks:

Their ever greater involvement in the public digital forum, created by the so-called social networks, helps to establish new forms of interpersonal relations, influences self-awareness and therefore, inevitably poses questions not only of how to act properly, but also about the authenticity of one's own being. Entering cyberspace can be a sign of an authentic search for personal encounters with others, provided that attention is paid to avoiding dangers such as enclosing oneself in a sort of parallel existence, or excessive exposure to the virtual world. In the search for sharing, for "friends", there is the challenge to be authentic and faithful, and not give in to the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself.²⁵⁰

And in his Message for World Communications Day 2013 Pope Benedict XVI emphasised how the development of social networks is contributing.

I wish to consider the development of digital social networks which are helping to create a new "agora", an open public square in which people share ideas, information and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can come into being. These spaces, when engaged in a wise and balanced way, help to foster forms of dialogue and debate which, if conducted respectfully and with concern for privacy, responsibility, and truthfulness, can reinforce the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family. The exchange of information can become true communication, links ripen into friendships, and connections facilitate

²⁴⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *meeting with representatives of other religions* (Apostolic Journey to the United Kingdom, 17 September 2010).

²⁴⁸ Cf. D. BERMEJO, *Prólogo*, in ID., *Homo sum. El ser humano en la filosofía española contemporánea*, Perla Ediciones, Logroño 2010, 15.

²⁴⁹ G.B. MONTINI, *Carità intellettuale*, cf. http://digilander.libero.it/uniboFilocalia/giovanni_battista_montini.htm (3 March 2013).

²⁵⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *Truth, proclamation and authenticity of life in the digital era*. Message for the 45th World Communications Day (24 January 2011).

communion. If the networks are called to realize this great potential, the people involved in them must make an effort to be authentic since, in these spaces, it is not only ideas and information that are shared, but ultimately our very selves..²⁵¹

This is why the development of social networks deadens great commitment, because it involves the individual in building relationships and finding friends: “people are engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained, but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how. The networks are increasingly becoming part of the very fabric of society, inasmuch as they bring people together on the basis of these fundamental needs. Social networks are thus nourished by aspirations rooted in the human heart”..²⁵²

The horizons of the digital world broadens the question of relationships:

As a spiritual being, the human creature is defined through interpersonal relations. The more authentically he or she lives these relations, the more his or her own personal identity matures. It is not by isolation that man establishes his worth, but by placing himself in relation with others and with God. Hence these relations take on fundamental importance. The same holds true for peoples as well. A metaphysical understanding of the relations between persons is therefore of great benefit for their development. In this regard, reason finds inspiration and direction in Christian revelation, according to which the human community does not absorb the individual, annihilating his autonomy, as happens in the various forms of totalitarianism, but rather values him all the more because the relation between individual and community is a relation between one totality and another. Just as a family does not submerge the identities of its individual members, just as the Church rejoices in each “new creation” (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17) incorporated by Baptism into her living Body, so too the unity of the human family does not submerge the identities of individuals, peoples and cultures, but makes them more transparent to each other and links them more closely in their legitimate diversity..²⁵³

A. Spadaro in fact correctly notes that “if the Net, called to connect, actually ends up isolating, then it betrays itself and its meaning. The problem consists in the fact that connection and sharing in a network are not identified with ‘encounter’, that is a very demanding experience at the level of relationships”..²⁵⁴ “It is useless” P. Padrini writes, “taking Facebook away from your children if you don’t speak to them at home or if you don’t give them

²⁵¹ BENEDICT XVI, *Social Networks: portal of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation*, cit. (24 gennaio 2013).

²⁵² Ibid..

²⁵³ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, cit., no. 53. Cf. anche S. FONTANA, “*Metafisica della relazione tra le persone*”. *Note su un possibile itinerario di ricerca*, in M. MANTOVANI - A. PESSA - O. RIGGI (a cura), *Oltre la crisi*, cit., 319-327.

²⁵⁴ A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 51.

room (and time) to meet up with their friends at the oratory. What we have to get them to understand is that their lives need relationships and these have to be 'healthy' e 'nutritious', aside from tools (which also need to be evaluated) they choose to use".²⁵⁵ Pope Benedict XVI notes that it would be sad if our desire to support and develop *online* friendships "were to be at the cost of our availability to engage with our families, our neighbours and those we meet in the daily reality of our places of work, education and recreation. If the desire for virtual connectedness becomes obsessive, it may in fact function to isolate individuals from real social interaction while also disrupting the patterns of rest, silence and reflection that are necessary for healthy human development".²⁵⁶

If appropriately experienced, the *internet can also be an experience of gift*; the Net can be a place for offering gratuity. A. Spadaro writes: "ideas like *file sharing, free software, open source, creative commons, user generated content, social networks* all have the idea of 'gift', even though expressed in different ways, different from the idea of 'profit'".²⁵⁷

Also a "*quality time*" from both an individual and relational point of view:

The question to be tackled, rather than that of *time spent on the internet*, should be, more importantly *internet time*. The question of time relative to *internet* cannot be limited to the question of time spent navigating, but should focus on the quality of *time for living* that our children have while navigating – places where they live, not places they flee to – places on the *internet*. The questions to ask should relate to the quality of time spent, productivity, what it has to do with life, and not exclusively the number of minutes spent.²⁵⁸

E. dal Covolo wrote that Pope Benedict XVI

has made of the friendship between faith and reason one of the marks, maybe the most important one, of his Magisterium. The reason in Don Bosco's Preventive System, integrated and perfected by 'religion', recalls precisely the *logos* that the Holy Father often speaks of, a *broad* and *trusting* idea of human reason: broad because not limited to so-called empirical and scientific reason, but open to fundamental and essential questions of human existence; trusting because, if it accepts the insights of Christian faith and the sovereign law of

²⁵⁵ P. PADRINI, *Facebook internet e i digital media*, cit., 94-95.

²⁵⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *New technologies, new relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue, friendship. Message for the 43rd World Communications Day*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2009. Cf. also, S. TURKLE, *(Together but alone) Insieme ma soli*. Perché ci aspettiamo sempre più dalla tecnologia e sempre meno dagli altri, Codice Edizioni, Torino 2012,

²⁵⁷ A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 85.

²⁵⁸ P. PADRINI, *Facebook internet e i digital media*, cit., 38.

love, it becomes an engine for civilisation which recognises the dignity of the human being, his inalienable rights and the importance of his duties.²⁵⁹

This should also be experienced in the “digital world” by doing everything we can to make it so. In his last apostolic letter, written in 2005 to those responsible for social communication, Pope John Paul II noted that new technologies create new opportunities for communication “understood as a service to pastoral government and organising the many tasks of the Christian community. One thinks, for example, how the *internet* not only provides resources for more information, but habituates people to interactive communication. Many Christians are already using this new tool creatively, exploring its potential for evangelisation, education, internal communications, administration and government”.²⁶⁰

We should believe it.

CONCLUSION

The Net “is a place for man, a human place because it is populated by humans. No longer an anonymous and ascetical context but an anthropologically qualified one”.²⁶¹ “the challenge then should not be how to ‘use’ it well, as we often think, but how to ‘experience, live’ our time there well”.²⁶²

Social networks are – even though not automatically – both a factor in human development and a tool for evangelisation, and especially *an environment to evangelise*.

The ability to employ the new languages is required, not just to keep up with the times, but precisely in order to enable the infinite richness of the Gospel to find forms of expression capable of reaching the minds and hearts of all. In the digital environment the written word is often accompanied by images and sounds. Effective communication, as in the parables of Jesus, must involve the imagination and the affectivity of those we wish to invite to an encounter with the mystery of God’s love. Besides, we know that Christian tradition has always been rich in signs and symbols: I think for example of the Cross, icons, images of the Virgin Mary, Christmas cribs, stained-glass windows and pictures in our churches. A significant part of mankind’s artistic heritage

²⁵⁹ E. DAL COVOLO, *Tra scuola e università. Il contributo educativo oggi, in una società complessa, liquida, secolarizzata*, in C. CAFFARRA - E. DAL COVOLO, “L’educazione è cosa di cuore”. *La responsabilità degli educatori oggi*, Lateran University Press, Città del Vaticano 2012, 32.

²⁶⁰ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Il rapido sviluppo*. Lettera apostolica ai responsabili delle comunicazioni (24 gennaio 2005), n. 9.

²⁶¹ D. POMPII, *Il nuovo nell’antico. Comunicazione e testimonianza nell’era digitale*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2011, 62.

²⁶² A. SPADARO, *Cyberteologia*, cit., 22.

has been created by artists and musicians who sought to express the truths of the faith.²⁶³

This is why the acquisition of wise *habitus* in this situation is so important, and might take on the shape of an Easter dynamic, involving renunciation, vigilance and gift, silence and word, sacrifice and offering, sorrows to accept and joys to increase, death and resurrection. Whoever has the “vocation to thought” knows this well, when we see how it can also be a “vocation to obscurity”, solitude, but at the same time an experience of true wisdom can be a light for the mind and heart, taking on features of sharing and communion, intellectual and other.

As F. Pasqualetti puts it, the challenge today is to “transform the Net from a technology of connection to one of communion”.²⁶⁴ For the 33rd World Communications Day in 1999, John Paul II spoke of a “ecclesial culture of wisdom” that should preserve the culture of *information* of the *mass media* “from becoming an accumulation of facts without meaning”.²⁶⁵

Pope Benedict XVI in the summer of 2011 spoke thus to young university professors at El Escorial:

young people need authentic teachers; people open to the whole truth in different branches of knowledge, knowing how to listen and experience such interdisciplinary dialogue; people convinced, above all, of the human ability to advance on the journey towards truth. Youth is a privileged time for seeking and encounter with truth. As Plato once said: ‘Seek the truth while you are young, because if you do not, it will escape from you’ (*Parmenide*, 135d). this high aspiration is the most precious one you can pass on personally and vitally..., and not simply some techniques and anonymous, even cold data, used only functionally. I urge you, then, never to lose that sense of enthusiasm and concern for truth. Always remember that teaching is not just about communicating content, but about forming young people. You need to understand and love them, to awaken their innate thirst for truth and their yearning for transcendence. Be for them a source of encouragement and strength.²⁶⁶

This is also in the horizons of the “digital world”.

²⁶³ BENEDICT XVI, *Social Networks: portal of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelisation*, cit. (24 gennaio 2013).

²⁶⁴ F. PASQUALETTI, *Web 2.0. Educazione e comunicazione*, cit., 652.

²⁶⁵ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Mass Media: presenza amica accanto a chi è alla ricerca del Padre*. Messaggio per la XXXIII Giornata Mondiale delle Comunicazioni sociali, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1999.

²⁶⁶ BENEDETTO XVI, *Incontro con i giovani professori universitari (Basilica del Monastero di san Lorenzo all'Escorial, 19 agosto 2011)*.

CREDIBLE AND FRUITFUL SALESIANS: AN ONGOING CHALLENGE²⁶⁷

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When I was given the task of writing this article the title was "Communicating who and what we are to the young and ordinary people: religious rooted in Christ like Don Bosco". One could have begun by identifying who are the young today, what we mean by 'young' and 'ordinary people', then go on to analyse a range of possible techniques of communication or things we need to know in order to communicate with the world of the young today, through Web 2.0 and everything that revolves around the Web as a new collective image. But after spending some time on this, I became aware that the paradigm underlying these kinds of issues is based on the assumption that (a) the young are the problem, inasmuch as, they live in their world apart from the adults and (b) that the solution lies in acting so that the adults, be they teachers, parents or other, find the right strategies and techniques to communicate. If we achieve this then we have done the task right.

I believe there could be nothing more mistaken, because the problem today lies rather with the adults and with institutions unable to offer a dream²⁶⁸ which is big or human enough, and that can offer models of behaviour and alternative lifestyle to the ones imposed by the market and the media, and that can allow them to "touch with their own hands" the plausibility of the dream: it is possible to live by cooperating for the common good; the other, whoever he or she may be, is a gift and not an adversary we are in competition with; life is not only about working to consume; the time spent in relationships, study,

²⁶⁷ Each item is the result of personal reflection but also of discussion and collaboration with other people. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks for the careful reading, the fraternal corrections and valuable suggestions to: d. Franco Lever, d. Juan Picca, Mr Adriano Zancacchi, d. Rossano Sala and d. Mauro Mantovani. I believe that this is also a way of "living and working together" consolidating the concepts.

The title is an adaptation of this quote: "As fruits of the GC27 we want to make our Salesian life even more authentic and therefore visible, credible and fruitful. This will be possible when it is based profoundly and vitally on God, when with courage and conviction rooted in Christ and his Gospel, its charismatic identity is strengthened." (Don Pascual Chávez, ACG 413, 9.)

²⁶⁸ Gaudium et Spes, n. 31 says: "One can legitimately think that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and hope." In the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World Gaudium et Spes, (29/06/1966) in http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_a_resultconst_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_it.html (14.02.2013), n. 31.

looking after the environment, helping the needy, in art and science, is time that prepares one for a better future and for whoever comes after us. It is with these assumptions that I have preferred to construct this reflection beginning with an analysis of changes around us. We cannot in fact consider alternatives if we have no idea what it is that is changing our lives. It is no accident that over recent decades the frequency with which the Church has warned us of the risk of reducing humanity just to the material dimension has increased. We can also add to these appeals the one by our Rector Major who invites us to our own radical evangelical testimony. But at the same time, perhaps with greater urgency, it is important to identify the causes of loss of significance and credibility that the Church and religious institutions have undergone over these years. In other words, we need to ask ourselves seriously why our proposal - Christian and Salesian as it is - is not interesting enough to fascinate the young we meet.

Communication always implies a relationship, a rapport. If we want to communicate something to someone we need to establish a relationship of trust, because whoever is proclaiming something needs to be credible. In our case we are not talking about a credibility which is only subjective; it needs to be communal and institutional, testified to by concrete life choices, as further proof that it is possible to live a Christian life. Understanding then what credibility is and what its salient features are, seemed to me to be another obligatory step to offer in this reflection.

It is by our fruits that we are recognised as bearers of a true and meaningful message. This is why it is important to understand how the process of communication, beyond "speaking", always implies a "being" and a "doing" that come together in an harmonious and credible whole. This capacity for coherent proclamation has to come from our faithfulness to the radical choice which the Gospel asks of every Christian and, more so, those who choose to consecrate their lives to following Christ.

Therefore I propose to reflect on two crucial areas for our credibility. The first regards the internal aspect: the healthy and credibility of an institution is measured by the capacity of its members to live and practise justice, on their modest lifestyle, their ability to cooperate in carrying out the mission. These elements, justice, modest lifestyle and cooperation, are three indicators of prophecy in a cultural context that glorifies selfish consumption, waste and individualism. The second important area of credibility comes from our ability to respond to challenges from changes happening around us. The changes in social scenarios calls us to better identify who it is we are working for and to renew our choice for the poor by means of an appropriate cultural and educational proposal. We can add other challenges to this one: the "economic challenge" which questions our ability to choose financial models which are consistent with Gospel values; "the technological challenge" of a society

which is connected and that questions our communication model and ability to live with technology, without being enslaved; and finally “the ecological challenges”, just as important because they imply serious reflection on the way we relate to the environment.

1. CHANGES HAPPENING NOW

In recent decades, personal and social existence is in constant and rapid flux, thanks to incredible technical, computer science innovations. It is enough to consider that in 1990 the *world wide web* did not yet exist and today the daily lives of so many people, though not all, seems interconnected with the Web to the point that the very concept of the net or web has become a metaphor for our society.²⁶⁹ The technological revolution has wrought a gradual cultural change now over some time, a slow but constant wave gathering strength from a liberal and consumer culture that in the post-war period has saturated every vital and mental space through the media, marketing and advertising. This constant supply of products around us has gradually instilled in us the idea that life has meaning in relationship with the financial possibility of buying things. Gilles Lipovetsky has defined this change as the birth of a new anthropological model - *homo consumericus*.²⁷⁰ Zygmunt Bauman picks up even more radically the disappearance of ‘*homo politicus*’ and the birth of ‘*homo consumens*’. The salient features of this latter are the omnivorous voracity with which he consumes something. The consequences at the social level are even more serious because as well as the loss of meaning of the common good, there is an increase in those marginalised and made poor in a society which is more and more hyper-technological but socially unstable.²⁷¹ From a cultural point of view we have been speaking of moving from modernity to post-modernity. This passage usually includes the processes of globalisation of finance, development of the web at worldwide level, the collapse of great ideologies, especially communism and the triumph of capitalism, a disenchanted view of the world and history that seems to lose every prospect of ultimate purpose, exasperated individualism and the gradual ‘showiness’ of all social life. Prophetically, already in the 1960s, Guy Debord²⁷² foresaw that society’s principal product would be spectacle. In

²⁶⁹ See the works, for example, already classic: Manuel CASTELLS, *La nascita della società in rete*, Milano, UBE, 2008; Manuel CASTELLS, *Galassia Internet*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2010; Lee SIEGEL, *Homo interneticus. Restare umani nell’era dell’ossessione digitale*, Prato, Piano B, 2011.

²⁷⁰ Cf. Gilles LIPOVETSKY, *Una felicità paradossale*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2007.

²⁷¹ Cf. Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Homo consumens. Lo sciame inquieto dei conquistatori e la miseria degli esclusi*, Gardolo (TN), Erickson, 2007, 8.

advanced capitalism goods become de-materialised and take on in social relationships symbolic values disconnected from the object of production itself. We do not buy perfume today but the attraction it represents; one doesn't buy a car, a computer or a cellphone, but a *status* that one takes on. To this process of symbolic transformation we could also add the de-materialisation of environments. The concept of non-place of Marc Augé²⁷³ in fact points to the falling away of what has been the significant and symbolic environment of modernity. The environment, made up of history and symbolic relationships for whoever inhabits it, is replaced by spaces such as commercial centres, stations, airports and transport means of all kinds where people move, transit, consume, touch but not meet, and especially do not establish any significant relationship neither with that environment nor with people. Globalisation, finally, brings with it a kind of 'macdonaldisation' of society where: functionality, efficiency, low cost, control, standardisation offer huge profits but homogenise cultures and tastes to a planetary level.²⁷⁴ Even amusement suffers the same effect, to the point where we can speak of 'disneyfying' society where magic, fable, enchantment, and dreams are equal for everyone. A place where, contrary to daily existence, everything is spectacular and everything runs perfectly every day.²⁷⁵ If on the one hand the mediated and media world around us offers a fantasy collection of adventurous and stupendous existences where everything glorifies individuality, on the other we are going through truly difficult, times of economic crisis that hides an even more profound existence, the one in which we are losing our very humanity. The financial crisis that since 2008 until today has affected the whole world, is based on theoretical foundations found in the US schools of economy that since the 1950s, with exponents of the calibre of Milton Friedman, equated financial laws with the laws of nature and created an ideological link between capitalism and freedom, in the "certainty" that outside of this viewpoint freedom could no longer exist. The political choices of the 1980s in favour of a free financial and unregulated market has led us to the current situation of a true and proper – though disguised – "dictatorship of the markets". Journalistic terminology describes the markets with expressions connoting 'divine' features such as when they write, for example, that the "markets are not satisfied" and that "we need to make sacrifices to calm the markets". Banks, *rating* agencies, multinationals and power lobbyists impose the political line on governments through a rite of structural adaptation: *deregulation*, *privatization* and cuts to social expenditure; states offer

²⁷² Cf. Guy DEBORD, *La società dello spettacolo*, Milano, Baldini & Castoldi, 1997.

²⁷³ Cf. Marc AUGÉ, *Nonluoghi*. Introduzione ad una antropologia della surmodernità, Milano, Elèuthera, 2009.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Geroche RITZER, *McDonaldization*. The reader, London, Pine Forge Press, 2010.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Alan BRYMAN, *The Disneyization of society*, London, SAGE, 2004.

tribute to this exorbitant divinity by promising economic recovery which in the collective imagination means the likelihood of having money to acquire consumer goods. In reality, however, the result is that people lose their hard-won rights, experience precariousness and lose any hope or prospect of a lasting future.²⁷⁶ These scenarios pose a serious problem to whoever feels the urgency of bringing a message of hope and salvation. It is not enough to say some nice, often prefabricated words and facts; today we need to *let it be seen* that it is possible to live in a different way and be happy. In concrete we have to be able to respond to the following questions: is it possible to escape from this logic of the market? Is it possible to learn to live in a more collaborative and human way? Is it possible to place a limit on the enrichment of people and institutions or do we have to resign ourselves to the fact that no matter how much we have, we will have still more and those who have less will lose the little they have? Is it possible to live in a society without corruption and mafias? Is it possible to love others even when they are different from us? Is it possible to have progress that is not only material? Is it possible to believe that wealth is something more than just money? Is it possible to build a more just world or do we have to relegate justice to an illusory “beyond”?

Vatican Council II was a sign of openness and a direction that the Church offered at a time marked by divisions between imperialisms and fear of nuclear war. It was an expression of a need for renewal in being and doing strongly felt within and beyond the Church. From 1962 until today, nevertheless, we have experienced an historic acceleration of social and technological changes such that the celebration of fifty years of Vatican II in 2012 seemed to mark a distance that seemed, in my view, of at least five hundred years. What we are going through at the moment is that in fact the Church and the idea of Christian life carry little weight in the lives and daily choices of the people, despite so many “indicators” that speak of the return of the spiritual and the sacred. In fact the life and daily choices of so many are guided by values often contrary to the ones they profess. There has been a growing awareness of this loss for some time, and we find traces of it in various analyses and recommendations coming either from the Popes or the Superiors of Religious Congregations.

²⁷⁶ About the Economy and financial disasters, various contributions have come out in recent years, here I indicate some of those published: Loretta NAPOLEONI, *Economia canaglia*, Milano, Il Saggiatore, 2008; Naomi KLEIN, *Shock economy. L'ascesa del capitalismo dei disastri*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2007; John PERKINS, *Confessioni di un sicario dell'economia*, Roma, BEAT, 2005; Michael HUDSON, *The monster. How a gang of predatory lenders and wall street bankers fleeced America - and spawned a global crisis*, New York, St. Martin 's Griffin, 2010.

The preoccupation of the Church and the Congregations, almost an obsessive one, to want to connect with the young, arouse their interest, should be balanced by another concern, just as necessary, which is to ask ourselves what alternative we have to offer to present scenarios, not so much through words but in lifestyle and concrete choices.

1.1 THE CONCERN OF THE CHURCH: SCENARIOS OF CONFUSION AND APPEALS TO A RADICAL GOSPEL WAY OF LIFE

In his post-synodal exhortation in 2003, *Ecclesia in Europa*, John Paul II spoke of “the blurring of hope” for so many men and women who seem disoriented faced with current changes. The signs of this blurring of hope were then identified: “loss of memory of Christian heritage”; “fear of facing the future”; a widespread “fragmentation of existence” evident in an increase in loneliness and divisions and contrasts; “weakening of solidarity” especially at an interpersonal level.²⁷⁷ Essential for getting out of this crisis, according to John Paul II, was “returning to Christ”. This return meant the rediscovery of his message, the courage of witnessing to him through the “service of man in society”.

Nearly ten years later the cultural and social panorama has not changed much, if Benedict XVI felt the need to offer a Year of Faith highlighting how:

A spiritual 'desertification' has advanced over these decades. What would life, a world without God might mean, at the time of the Council we could already know from some of the tragic pages of history, but now unfortunately we see it around us every day. It is emptiness that has spread. But it is by beginning from this desert experience, this emptiness, that we can discover anew the joy of believing, its vital importance for us men and women. In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for life; so in the contemporary world there are numerous signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, of the ultimate meaning of life. In the desert there is a special need for people of faith who, through their lives, point the way to the Promised Land and thus give rise to hope. A lived faith opens the heart to God's Grace which frees us from pessimism. Today more than ever evangelising means giving witness to new life, transformed by God, and thus

²⁷⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Sinodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Europa*, (28.06.2003), in http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa_it.html , (14.02.2013), 4.

pointing the way.²⁷⁸ *Desert, what is of essence and the people of lived faith* seem to be the three key ingredients for relighting hope through a process of evangelisation that substantially "...witnessing to a new life transformed by God".

Also the Rector Major of the Salesians, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, in harmony with the desire for greater authenticity expressed up till now in the documents presented, in his letter of convocation of the 27th General Chapter, indicates the Chapter theme as: *Witnesses to a Gospel lifestyle*. In his letter Fr Pascual Chávez recalls how already six years earlier, in his letter of convocation to the 26th General Chapter, he had claimed that:

More than a crisis of identity, I maintain that for us Salesians today there is a crisis of credibility. We find we are in a situation of stalemate. We seem to be under the tyranny of the "status quo"; there is resistance to change, more unconsciously than intentionally. Even if we are convinced of the effectiveness of Gospel values, it is an effort for us to reach the hearts of the young for whom we should be signs of hope. We are shaken by the fact that in building their lives the faith is irrelevant. We note the scarce harmony with their world and a distance, not to say an irrelevance for their projects. We see that our signs, gestures and languages are ineffective; it seems they do not have an impact on their lives.²⁷⁹ Continuing in his letter, Fr Pascual Chávez maintains that for the Salesian there is need for a new profile defined by specific features: *mystic, prophet and servant*. These three traits make reference to what we find in no. 38 of *Ecclesia in Europa*. Thus the mystic dimension consists in "*recognition of the absolute primacy of God as experienced by the consecrated in their total gift of self*"²⁸⁰, while the prophetic dimension finds its expression in taking our distance from secularism and consumerism, so that consecrated life is a "sign of hope", affirms "the transcendent dimension of existence"²⁸¹ and gives "testimony to evangelical fraternity, making it an encouragement to purification and integration of different values, by overcoming contrasting views."²⁸² Finally, the dimension of service is realised in "taking care of the needy" and tackling "new kinds of poverty and

²⁷⁸ BENEDETTO XVI, Omelia, Santa Messa per l'apertura dell'anno della fede, Piazza San Pietro, 11.10.2012, in http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20121011_anno-fede_it.html, (11.02.2012), 3.

²⁷⁹ Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, Da mihi animas, cetera tolle, in ACG 394, Roma 2006, 9-10.

²⁸⁰ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 38

²⁸¹ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 38

²⁸² GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 38

marginalisation”²⁸³ creatively. The analysis of today's malaise in the Church and consecrated life could continue in an even deeper way. Nevertheless the problem remains of making these exhortations credible: in other words transforming them into real life.

One of the problems noted as amongst the hardest to resolve, the effort we find in renewing ourselves quickly, is picked up flexibly by the liquid life metaphor used by Zygmunt Bauman, who explains how today, “situations human beings act in change before their way of doing things can consolidate into habits and procedures. ... Liquid life, like liquid-modern society, is not able to preserve its own shape or stay on course for long.”²⁸⁴ All this produces a sense of insecurity in particular in institutions that by historical tradition, like the Church, believe they are based on the solid pillars of tradition. One aspect that does not contradict Bauman's analysis, but perhaps completes it, is noting that people adapt easily to changes, especially technological ones. It is enough to consider how the Internet and mobile communication have become an integral part of the daily life of hundreds of millions of people. Not similarly immediate is the understanding of how these rapid changes modify the environment we live in, our relationships, our way of communicating, and finally, our way of being. This is also true for consecrated life, especially institutes of active life that live in contact with the people and society and so, more quickly should modify their way of being and acting.

I would like now to offer a reflection beginning with the dimension of communication to see if we can succeed in finding what might be the criteria for living and witnessing to a radical Gospel way of life in a quickly changing world without being overcome by uncertainty or by being anxious about being inadequate or insignificant.

1.2 STRENGTH AND FRAGILITY IN THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

The naturalness with which we communicate every day at an interpersonal and mediated level does not eliminate the complexity, fragility and in many ways the marvel of communication. We could say that every act of communication is a wager and a risk that the parties involved put on the “plate” of their relationship.

Each of us, when we meet someone for the first time, quickly runs his eye up and down and vice versa. Doing this, that happens at a more or less conscious level, we make a “pre-judgement” on

²⁸³ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ecclesia in Europa*, n. 38

²⁸⁴ Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Vita liquida*, Bari, Editori Laterza, 2010, VII.

the basis of who we are and what we believe, based on values, and expectations etc. If we have time and the chance to get to know the person we have "pre-judged" better, we then quickly adapt our first impression, confirming our "pre-judgement" or modifying it on the basis of how the relationships is going. This process could be more truthful depending on the time shared and the quality of the relationship we succeed in establishing with the person. With the passing of time a more truthful "judgement" will emerge, beyond the masking attempts that both parties - more or less intentionally - can exercise, and this because in interpersonal relationship what we are communicates of its own accord and is perceived beyond our wish to control the communication. From this process springs the experience of the other in his or her greatness or poverty. If we are honest, sincere, right-intentioned, all this emerges, even though filtered maybe by an unfriendly or irritable character. On the contrary, if we present ourselves as open, self-assured, sympathetic, but are instead upstarts, go-getters hungry for power and fame, this too over time will become very clear.

This daily experience of people also happens with institutions, secular or religious. In other words every encounter, every relationship begins with expectations, mutual hopes that resolve in the development of the encounter between the two parties. The problem of personal and institutional credibility is a dynamic one requiring constant revision that can highlight and readjust what only does not work *ad intra* in our personal or institutional behaviour, but also what doesn't work *ad extra* in responding to current cultural and social changes. Credibility in fact cannot be simply exhibited, because it is recognised and attributed by the party entering into relationship with us. Being Christian, then, has always brought a disconcerting side with it, one proclaimed by Jesus when he said: "Blessed are you when they insult you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you for my sake." (Mt. 5:11).²⁸⁵ Credibility then is neither gratuitous nor universal; besides being credible for some is no guarantee that we will be for others. Indeed it will be precisely our fidelity to the Gospel that will cause problems to explode not only *ad extra*, but sometimes also *ad intra*, especially when the times in which we live are times of existential mediocrity. But what does credibility consist in?

²⁸⁵ For the Bible citations, I have used the CEI 2008 version at <http://www.bibbia.net/>

2. WHAT IS CREDIBILITY?

The problem of credibility does not depend exclusively on communication strategies, like we sometimes believe when we think that it is enough to know the right techniques to have effective communication. Credibility implies a complex range of things which we need to take into consideration.

The Treccani online dictionary explains that the term credibility indicates the

Possibility of being believed: c. of a statement, testimony; in every good legislation it is quite an issue to determine exactly the c. of the witnesses (Beccaria). In Catholic theology, rational acceptance of what is attested to by divine or human authority, worthy of faith. With sign. and a more recent usage (also through influence of Eng. credibility), the ability that a person, especially a politician, personality in the finance world, or a group, society, government, has to inspire trust, gain credit and recognition: have, acquire, lose credibility.²⁸⁶ We can infer that credibility implies a source to which one makes an act of trust because recognising credible elements in that source. So it is not a personal or institutional claim, but implies recognition on the part of another within a relational dynamic.²⁸⁷ Credibility is based on three aspects that always need to be present, even though in different proportions, in people and institutions. these three aspects are anchored in the *cognitive, evaluative-normative and affective-expressive levels*.

At the *cognitive* level, credibility is recognised by the quality of *knowledge and competence* we attribute, for example to a scientist, a teacher, an expert or specialist in some area of knowledge.²⁸⁸ Television has habituated us to experts who explain, illustrate or give their opinion influencing the opinion of the people. Nevertheless the expert's knowledge in a field does not mean he is an expert in everything else, and that could be a knowledge that comes from experience, like the craftsman that can combine experience, tradition and innovation. At the *evaluative* and *normative* level, credibility is more complex and is basically attributed to someone who incarnates ideal ways of being and acting we believe in, we look positively upon, that we consider good, just, desirable. ... values on which credibility is based can vary based on two main points of reference: preferences given to different forms of social relationships (hierarchy/status or belonging/solidarity) or to some privileged category

²⁸⁶ Credibilità, in Treccani.it L'enciclopedia Italiana, Vocabolario on line, in <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/credibilita/>, (13.02.2013), 1.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Guido GILI, *La credibilità. Quando e perché la comunicazione ha successo*, Soverina Mannelli (CZ), Rubbettino, 2005, 4.

²⁸⁸ Cf. GILI, *La credibilità*, 8.

of time (past/tradition or future/innovation).²⁸⁹ We understand that in life there are those who prefer to give credibility to values of hierarchy, status and prestige, placing the emphasis on the institutional level; usually these are also people who give more importance to traditions and the past. On the opposite side there are those who prefer values of solidarity and belonging to a community or group; these tend to give credibility to people who express values of friendship, faithfulness, loyalty and solidarity in the group they belong to, large or small though it may be. These people are more likely to feel the need to innovate and give a response to social changes around them.²⁹⁰ The two positions can be found within communities, but they don't necessarily have to be factors in opposition, inasmuch as they can coexist to maintain a relationship of fidelity to an original charism, and at the same time, motivate involvement in the present and the future. The *affective-expressive* level impacts on bonds of trust at an interpersonal level. To explain this level we usually refer to the relationship between two people who like each other and nurture mutual esteem and credibility which can also make up for any lack of competence there may be. Often in communities the *affective-expressive* level can be the weak link when individualist behaviour takes over and dialogue is reduced to a minimum level of information. Failures at the *affective-expressive* level risk weakening the other two levels also.

These *cognitive*, *evalutative-normative* and *affective-expressive* levels are then important and should also be found in a person or institution, although in different proportions. One level, in fact can stimulate or reinforce the other two, or vice versa. If credibility is attributed to a person or institution for competence it could happen that an affective relationship emerges, and this in turn could also foster recognition of normative values and finally we get a global credibility in a person or institution. Or the affective dimension towards a person we think credible for behaviour and lifestyle could motivate imitation of that as normative behaviour because we think it is consistent. How do these three levels manifest themselves in a relationship?

2.1 CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF A CREDIBLE INDIVIDUAL

In the communication process of credibility three functions can be distinguished: the *animator*, the direct image the interlocutor experiences in the communication relationship: everything comes into play, body, dress, communicating style, non-verbal language, character and temperament; the *author*, the one who produces the content of the message, but does not necessarily communicate it; the sender, institution, group or individual given the mandate of

²⁸⁹ GILI, La credibilità, 8-9.

²⁹⁰ Cf. GILI, La credibilità, 9-11. Cf. GILI, La credibilità, 9-11.

representation and on whose behalf he speaks taking responsibility for what is said.²⁹¹ In fact we can experience all three functions in life or one at a time, according to tasks entrusted to us. But what counts first in the communication process is the *integrity* of the source.

Integrity is a complex of qualities like dignity, honesty, seriousness, that is the profile of individual values the individual has and practises in his conduct - a life which the interlocutor appreciates. As for the professional field there are then special codes of conduct regulating "morality" in the role according to social expectations which characterise it.²⁹² One has already been able to understand up till now how being credible implies a set of values and attitudes that cannot be taken for granted and whose achievement is the result of a fair amount of personal and community work.

In the case of an institution's credibility other features come into play. The first regards the history of the institution and its tradition and consists in remaining faithful to the institution's characteristic feature, for example fidelity to the Salesian charism. History and tradition determine the reputation an institution has at a local, national and international level. History and tradition have not always been enough to maintain credibility, because the present is involved and the ability to respond to its mission today. Finally, an institution can leverage some figures that have known how to interpret the institutional charism and mission authentically. For us, for example, the knowledge and memory of Don Bosco and the first great Salesians, together with Salesian Saints and Blesseds.

Another characteristic which is decisive in establishing credibility of a person or institution, is the degree of *interest* perceived in the relationship with interlocutors. The more the relationship is perceived as disinterested and free with regards its ends, the more the relationship is perceived as credible. The same goes for the degree of *independence* that the person or institution enjoys with third parties.

Just as important is *spontaneity*. Whoever is able to understand when a person is reciting a script and when instead he is spontaneous, sincere, frank, transparent in ideas and feelings. Certainly there are people who know how to recite their part well, but in the long term this doesn't work, and sooner or later, their true face emerges with the immediate loss of any relationship of trust and thus of credibility.

²⁹¹ Cf. GILI, La credibilità, 19.

²⁹² Cf. GILI, La credibilità, 21.

Finally, *sympathy*, which depends on various factors, like personal character, ability to listen and dialogue in a friendly way, and put the interlocutor at ease.²⁹³ The features analysed – *disinterestedness* of service, *independence* from power, *spontaneity* in communication and *sympathy* in relationships – are the result of a constant exercise of acceptance of Christian values at play in our life. Inevitably we observe how often it can happen that our own interests prevail in consecrated life, deference to influential people for career motives, greasing people up and sympathy which is a facade.

A study of credibility could be further developed; but here we are only interested in its foundations and characteristic traits to emphasise their importance and especially help us to understand how credibility is a relational process that needs to be built up in every area of personal and institutional life. Beginning with the social context today, we can ask ourselves what it means to communicate our charism credibly, that is, be Salesians today.

Credibility for a religious congregation has two sides: one internal, today with the perception that members have of their institutional credibility, and the other external, how others perceive us.

2.2 BY THEIR FRUITS YOU WILL KNOW THEM

If credibility, as we have seen, does not only depend on who is proposed as worthy of credibility, but also on recognition by the interlocutor, this happens because it is the interlocutor who perceives harmony and consistency between being and acting on the part of the one proposed. The Christian is a bearer of a proclamation of salvation that involves him in all his being and action. This proclamation implies a radical change of mindset. There is a daily risk of dissonance between what we say and what we do. In intuitive Gospel simplicity, this is tackled clearly and keenly when Jesus warns: "Beware of false prophets who come in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Can people pick grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" (Mt 7,15-16).

Then there is the global communications factor of our way of being (integrity), that says what we are and shows up in our thinking, words, actions, choices. We talk about ourselves through what we do and how we behave. Our lifestyle reveals and talks about our inner self. In a culture like ours that has exacerbated the

²⁹³ The characteristics are taken from Cf. GILI, *La credibilità*, 23-24. While the adaptation into the religious context is mine.

outward image, Jesus warning to the Scribes and Pharisees is even more impelling when he says:

Everything they do is done to attract attention, like wearing broader phylacteries and longer tassels; like wanting to take the place of honour at banquets, and the front seats in the synagogues, being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them "Rabbi". (Mt 23:5-7).

The process of communication is always one that transforms, for good or for evil, the players in the process. For a Christian whose mission is to proclaim the Gospel through his life, the "Word" he proclaims cannot be just ordinary. Freire, speaking of education as a way to practise freedom - and the Gospel cannot be anything else but this - said that

If action is missing from the word, reflection on the word is automatically sacrificed, and all you get is a lot of sound, verbiage, bla-bla-bla. The word become alienated and alienating. It is an empty word, and one cannot await the condemnation of the world because there is no authentic condemnation without the commitment to transform, and there is no commitment without action.²⁹⁴ As obvious as it might seem, we cannot communicate what we are not, what we do not know, what is not part of lived experience, and if we do try to do so it becomes a mere verbal exercise, something that in the long term not only convinces nobody but is counter-productive. The effectiveness, then of what we say and of our lives will be proportional to our actions and choices.

Today's changes hinted at earlier, the Church's and the Rector Major's concerns oblige us to take some problems in our Salesian religious life seriously to try to understand what building a consistent and credible life means. The credibility of a Congregation has to count not only on individual efforts but on everyone's as a whole. Even though I am not so fond of analogies from the business world one has to admit that even the world of commerce has understood the importance of total quality, from the production chain to communicating²⁹⁵ an image consistent with its business *mission*. All the more so then why people like us who claim to "be in the Church signs and bearers of God's love to the young, especially

²⁹⁴ Paulo FREIRE, *La pedagogia degli oppressi*, Torino, EGA, 2002, 78.

²⁹⁵ I indicate two interesting works which testify to the attention today towards corporate total quality and towards communication. Giuseppe TRAVERSA – Isabel Alice WALBAUM ROBINSON, *La qualità è fatta di comunicazione. Metodi e strumenti per migliorare il processo di comunicazione*, Roma, Aracneeditrice, 2006; Raffele VALLETTA (Ed.), *Emozione ragione. Le nuove modalità di comunicazione nell'era della qualità totale*, Bologna, Logo Fausto Lupetti Editore, 2012.

the poor”²⁹⁶ have the moral obligation of managing our own lives and mission consistent with what we proclaim, not overlooking the details. It is not enough to have good intentions; heart and body have to act in harmony with the choices we proclaim. There are some strategic areas of life in a Congregation where credibility must achieve levels of excellence. These can be analysed negatively through symptoms of non-credibility like: gradual acceptance of an easy life, individualism, cultural superficiality, excessive activism, careerism, self-assertiveness, ageing in the Congregation, etc., or we can consider them positively by seeing the value in modest lifestyle, collaboration, cultural wealth, correct investment of time in activities, awareness of role as service, knowing how to act behind the scenes, growing old gracefully, etc...

The symptoms are certainly easy to observe and identify; many of thus just listed, however, find their roots in an absence of a strong link with the enthusiasm and radical nature of the Gospel. What is happening at the personal and Congregational level is a little but like what the following story describes

Imagine a pot full of cold water and a frog swimming around happily inside. Light the fire under the pot. The water warms up gradually. It is soon lukewarm. The frog is happy enough and keeps on swimming. The temperature begins to rise. The water is warm, infact a little too warm for the frog but at the moment he is not too bothered, especially because it is making him tired and a bit stunned. Now the water gets really hot. The frog begins to find it quite uncomfortable but is so weak he puts up with it, tries to adapt and stops swimming. The water temperature now starts to rise gradually, without notable changes, until the frog is cooked and dies without ever escaping the pot. But if thrown suddenly into a pot with water at 50°, the same frog would quickly try to leap out of the pot.²⁹⁷ The story illustrates how some behavioural pathologies in human life, develop over time: along the way, habits and ways of acting surreptitiously insinuate themselves and gradually reduce sensitivity to the need to create consistency between what we say and what we do. This can happen through physical ageing, but spiritual ageing is the decisive factor. As Clerc says, “When there is a slow and imperceptible deterioration, you must have an

²⁹⁶ Nature and mission of our Congregation, in the Constitutions of St Francis de Sales in http://www.sdb.org/it/Documenti/Costituzioni/Costituzioni/Costituzioni_Prima_parte#2 , (20.02.2013)

²⁹⁷ Oliver CLERC, *La rana che finì cotta senza accorgersene, e altre lezioni di vita*, Milano, Bompiani, 2010, 13-14. The author of the book says that this metaphor was first narrated for the first time in the book of Marty Rubin, *The boiled frog syndrome*, 1987.

acute awareness or a good memory to realize it, or a very reliable parameter by which to assess the situation."²⁹⁸ Today's cultural context, globalisation, rapid social, and technological changes and the phenomenon of networked communication impose greater awareness of the perception of ourselves in context, of our actions and behaviours. Over the last sixty years, consumer, capitalist and post-modern culture has soaked into our lives and imperceptibly entered schizophrenically both our ways of acting and also of thinking. Recalling the story of the frog, we cannot but see that we have become somewhat "cooked"; but maybe we still have a chance to make an effort to leap out of the water and readjust our lives. It depends on us and our willingness to become aware.

2.3 THE GOSPEL DEMANDS RADICAL CHOICES

The Gospel, with its disarming simplicity, faces us with radical choices whose consequences are truly decisive, not only for the life of each individual but also for the lives of communities or a people. There is a deep down instance faced with which each Christian is called to take a stance: "No one can be the slave of two masters; he will either hate one or love the other, or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. You cannot be the slave of both God and of money." (Mt. 6:24).

There is no doubt that at a global level the world has chosen money as its god, wealth, material goods. Our life is ruled by money and the commercialisation of every resource. A country's well-being is calculated on the basis of gross national product and not how ethical its population is or its level of education. Everything is measured according to the level of profit and interest. The very term "human resources", which we even often use, is a reduction of the human being to a marketable good. Markets have taken on connotations of divine personality to the point where it is true – as already seen – that we have to make constant sacrifice so their thirst for business can be satisfied. Their moods and progress affect the daily lives of billions of people, deciding their fate.

We cannot hide the fact that we are somewhat resigned to this logic and take it for granted that the world is like this. This approach, however, drastically reduces our credibility: the young person wanting to give meaning to life cannot accept a world exclusively given to regulation by money and the markets.

²⁹⁸ CLERC, *La rana che finì cotta senza accorgersene*, 21-22.

If we want to redeem ourselves in the eyes of the young we need to reject the economic approach, that is, the belief that *more* means *better*. The good and happiness can be gained at less cost. The discovery of true wealth in flourishing of convivial social relationships in a healthy world can come about with serenity in frugality, modest living, simplicity, and even a certain austerity in material consumption. An accepted and well-thought out decrease does not impose any limitations on expenditure of feelings and production of a celebratory life.²⁹⁹ These words, said by a non-believer like Serge Latouche, are full of humanity and dwarf the mediocrity of some of our speeches and sermons which are unable to think of an alternative to the overwhelming economic and consumerist power. We cannot avoid noting that, unfortunately, right now "wealth" is winning out, producing global wealth for a few while suffering, injustice and marginalisation for many, especially the poorest. The problem is not only economic, it is something that social justice has already condemned for years, but has been irreversibly compromised, on the one hand, by the authority at all levels. Although this is not the place to address the burning issue of globalisation of markets and its impact on people's lives, we should call attention to what is happening: where the prevailing logic of the primacy of wealth and power exists, there is always someone who wants to grab everything for himself and is willing to do anything.³⁰⁰ In this same logic, however, man is defeated in his own humanity, because he is reduced to being one of the many goods to be bartered in exchange for wealth. If we as consecrated people cannot offer an alternative word, or demonstrate that it is possible to live differently from the model offered by the marketplace, we radically diminish our calling to a healthy and challenging approach to a world which is ever more incapable of being fraternal and charitable.

²⁹⁹ Serge LATOUCHE, *Decolonizzare l'immaginario. Il pensiero creativo contro l'economia dell'assurdo*, Bologna, EMI, 2004, 15.

³⁰⁰ Tragically interesting, to understand the logic of power at world level, is the work of John Perkins, *Confessioni di un sicario dell'economia*, Trebaseleghe (PD), BEAT, 2012. From the back cover one reads: "The 'economic hit men' are an elite group of professionals who have the task of guiding the modernization of the countries in the developing world to a continuous process of indebtedness and enslavement to the interests of multinational corporations and to the more powerful governments in the world. For ten years John Perkins was one of them, and has seen at first hand the darker side of globalization in countries like Indonesia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, before facing a realization that led him to be the defender."

3. **SO THAT CONSECRATED LIFE CAN BE TRULY CREDIBLE**

Intrinsically linked to the economic crisis there is a social crisis of justice not only in the civil world but also in the Church and in consecrated life. Just as in the political scene we are shocked by the squalor of moral behaviour of those who should be representing us; by the high degree of corruption that emerges daily in the political scene; by the 'naturalness' with which condemned and legally processed politicians tranquilly continue with their activities as if nothing had happened; so we should also be shocked when similar if not exactly the same things happen in the Church or in consecrated life. In these areas there is sometimes an additional aggravating factor: often the crimes go unpunished, hidden under a blanket of complicit silence.

3.1 **BUILDING CREDIBILITY AD INTRA: THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY AND JUSTICE**

The health of an institution is measured by its ability to be ethical, understood as the ability to exercise justice. Justice is the basic virtue, the condition for every relationship and every institutional behaviour.

Lack of truth makes systems of thought false and useless. Lack of justice renders institutions immoral and damaging. Thus we establish a fundamental criterion: there are sound institutions, that is, ethically acceptable ones because they are just, and sick institutions that is ethically reprehensible because they are unjust.³⁰¹ Even religious authority, to be exercised effectively, needs credibility. It is a credibility based on a statement of Jesus himself in response to a mother asking that her sons can sit one on his right and the other on his left:

You know that among the pagans the rulers lord it over them, and their great men make their authority felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mt. 20:7-28).

Jesus' word locates authority right outside the logic of the cult of the person and the image. Paradoxically to be great you have to become servants and to be first, become slaves. There are no half measures in the logic of service. Putting God's Word back in centre place along with the radical nature of the Gospel means a commitment to making concrete choices every day on many fronts, keeping in mind a very attentive and sensitive cultural and social panorama.

³⁰¹ D'AMBROSIO, Istituzioni, persone e potere, 86.

It is true that the credibility of an institution may be compromised by the action of individuals; just think of the problem of pedophilia or financial crashes due to poor economic management of the assets of a house, of a province or of the congregation, but it is also true that these same problems are a symptom of serious difficulties in government of the institution.

The service of justice in charity is everyone's duty as the Gospel reminds us:

If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge.. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community, and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector. I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven. (Mt. 18:15-18).

It is not uncommon to find confreres frustrated or resigned to the fact that even in religious life there are scenarios where the "smart" ones prevail, those who break the rules, those who do not do their duty but know very well how to look after their own interests. But they also have the backing of the superior. and what do we say of some confreres who, either because they are uncomfortable or get in someone's way, suffer a kind of bullying or are sidelined. Like weekly gossip there are those who just like to sow weeds. There are others who allow themselves everything, from a personal vehicle to a bank account, without any need to render account. All this makes one think that the rule in force is, tacitly but respected at community level: "live and let live". There is a kind of accepted agreement whereby we accept the other's mediocrity so that one's own does not come under scrutiny.

This style of life and government with the passage of time creates a permanent state of mediocrity, and its clear symptom can be seen in everyday occasions where communication becomes a sham. Thus we find ourselves celebrating the Eucharist but not living in communion, sharing the table but not sharing a family agape, working in the same place but each with his own project.

Now, if an institution is unable to establish a rule of justice which safeguards the common good and equality through clear

rules, correction in the case of transgressions, this institution is bound to be corrupted and fall into real pathologies, ending up in cronyism and subterfuge.³⁰² If reminders of the rules and leadership are not accompanied and supported by a real service of authority fostering in each of the confreres his observance of his duties, impunity becomes a systemic disease, indicating the decline of the institution itself. When the community is not able to differentiate between a confrere who lives his religious life faithfully and consistently according to the Constitutions, and one who does what he wants, any prospect of growth and future is at risk, because what is constructed with effort by one another is shot down by the banality of an empty and contradictory life of someone else.

The antidote to these dysfunctions is management of community life which sees everyone involved responsibly, those who are responsible for the service of authority have an understanding of their role and every confrere likewise, because we are all servants of each other.

In these situations, the temptation for those in authority to surround themselves with people who think like them and do not create problems, is understandable, but doing so increases the risk of losing clarity in seeing and judging situations, and weakens the necessary prophetic tension. When these people, having no alternative insights, are content to please those in authority rather than help them to understand problems in a timely manner, and identify new ways of implement the right choices, they do not offer good service either to those in authority or to Church. Cardinal Martini, in his final interview before he died, to the question put to him by Fr Georg Sporschill, "Who can help the Church today?", answered:

Father Karl Rahner liked the image of the fire under the ashes. I see in the Church today so much ash covering the fire that I am often assailed by a feeling of impotence. How can we free the fire from ashes so that the fire of love can reignite? First we have to seek out this fire. where are the individuals full of generosity like the good Samaritan? Who has faith like the Roman Centurion? Who is an enthusiast like John the Baptist? Who dares to do new things like St Paul? Who is faithful like Mary Magdalen? I advise the Pope and the Bishops to seek out twelve people who seem out of line for administration roles. Men close to the poor, surrounded by the young, ready to do something new. We need people who

³⁰² Cf. Rocco D'AMBROSIO, *Istituzioni, persone e potere*, Soveria Mannelli (CZ), Rubbettino, 2004, 98.

are on fire with zeal so the Spirit can spread everywhere.³⁰³ Often the more consistent and innovative types need to be sought out, because they have not sought posts of honour; aware of the temptations of power they avoid these.

Authority must learn the art of attentive listening, as suggested by *The Service of Authority and Obedience* where it says:

Whoever presides must remember that the one who does not listen to his brother or sister does not know how to listen to God either, that an attentive listening allows one to better coordinate the energy and gifts that the Spirit gives to the community and also, when making decisions, to keep in mind the limits and the difficulties of some members. Time spent in listening is never time wasted, and listening can often prevent crises and difficult times both on the individual and community levels.³⁰⁴ Procedures of involvement from the bottom up need more time and often do not seem to lead to efficient solutions, but it is well to remember that the construction of a community process is more important than the outcome, because it is a guarantee of further progress.

When a Congregation experience justice within its own operation, it tells us that common life does not empty a person but fulfils him; it does not dry up the heart, but fills it with joy because "living and working together" achieves greater things than we can achieve alone. Experiencing the joy of sharing, despite the inevitable effort resulting from the fact that we are all different, is the best antidote to individualism.

Our communities can be paradises or hells and we know the secret as congenially described in the following tale:

One day some missionaries brought a crowd of children into the parish church in the countryside for their daily couple of minutes before going off to school. They told them a nice little story on a strange topic: "Who lives in hell and who lives in heaven?"

They pointed out a paradox: both the first and the latter group were forced to feed each other, given the significant amount of food available to them, using only long two metre forks. Only with great difficulty could one grasp a fork with one hand and

³⁰³ Cf. Rocco D'AMBROSIO, *Istituzioni, persone e potere*, Soveria Mannelli (CZ), Rubbettino, 2004, 98.

³⁰⁴ CONGREGAZIONE PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA, *Istruzione, Il servizio dell'autorità e l'obbedienza. Faciem tuam, Domine, requiram*, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccsrlife/documents/rc_con_ccsrlife_doc_20080511_autorita-obbedienza_it.html, (26.07.2009), n.20 a, 14-15.

skewer the food. The biggest problem was to get the skewered food into their mouths. Their arms were much shorter than the long fork, and they couldn't turn the fork back into their mouths. So they couldn't eat.

Given that both heaven and hell had the same situation, there were some notable difference however: the first group looked thin and emaciated, all withered and pale; the second group though was well fed, happy and chatting among themselves, and in good health.

"Why the big difference between these two groups of souls?" This was the tough question the missionaries put to the children. The kids had followed the story attentively and with interest, but none of them could give a good answer to the question. Silence and consternation reigned supreme, with a mixture of curiosity and impatience. At the end one of the missionaries supplied this answer: "The inhabitants of hell were trying in vain to get the skewered food into their own mouths with the long fork. Unfortunately they couldn't do it like they would have done back on earth. So, unable to eat, they got thin and pale. On the contrary, the inhabitants of heaven still skewered their food with the long fork, but rather than the futile efforts to try to get it into their own mouths, they offered it to someone on the other side of the table. Those ones did the same. So ... one fed the other. "

This is how they overcame the problem. The solution lay in collaboration, helping one another. Everyone got enough to eat, even though the situation was exactly the same as for the poor unfortunates in hell.³⁰⁵ Young people are looking for others with whom they can live a meaningful and happy life. The best visiting card we can give them is a happy community that works together. Difficulties, challenges and even tragedies are not insurmountable if tackled together. Our view of the future, planning, renewal of the charism on today's context, excellence in authority and management of justice are conducive to aspects of daily life of individuals and the community.

3.2 MODEST LIFESTYLE AND COLLABORATION

The Gospel indicates the spirit and style with which Christians must live their lives. The stakes are high and require a strong personal and group asceticism.

³⁰⁵ Paolo COLUCCIA, *La cultura della reciprocità. I sistemi di scambio locale non monetari*, Casalecchio (BO), Arianna, 2002, 5.

That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing!(Mt. 6:25).

Imagine for a moment the dancers preparing for a dance. They cannot wear clothes that are too heavy or bulky, and in fact, professional dancers often wear leotards, which are like a second skin. If these dancers were to put on shirts, jackets, pants, shoes, jewelry, hats, furs and if you added in bags, boxes, chairs and so on, after a while the dance, as well as being awkward, would lose momentum. In the long run, the dancers would be dancing out of time and have to stop altogether.

It is similar in our consecrated lives. We begin with enthusiasm in early formation and with the idea that God and the young are the only things that matter, but along the way we get sucked into many things that provide immediate satisfaction and get caught up with them to the point that this is all we can do. This may happen in many different ways. So those who remain free or in other words 'continue to dance', are labelled as idealists; others who remain seated and attached to things, blame the music, saying it's changed and not like the music there was once upon a time. That's a shame because the commitment was to dancing, not becoming... music critics. So, there are a number of those we work for who want to learn to dance, but they run the risk in our houses of finding people who don't listen to the music any more, re tired or dissatisfied or even if they take an occasional dance step, are out of time. It is not about age, but about spirit.

There is another interesting aspect tied up with this dance metaphor. To dance in a group you need to develop harmony of rhythm, harmony of mind and heart and finally you need to live the symphony of life. Everyone has a basic role in a choreograph, and it doesn't matter if you are in the first or second row: success is determined by the harmony of the whole. All metaphors are limited, but the dance image helps us understand the originality and validity of common life as a proposal. In a cultural context like today's, promoting the individual's liberation from family and community ties in the name of self-realisation, self-determination and the absolute freedom to decide who to be and what to do, giving witness to the fact that common life is not inhibiting but frees the heart and makes our activity effective, would be one of the most prophetic and significant things to offer young people today.

Bauman identified very well the critical nature of the individual/community relationship in modern society. The insecurity that modern man feels is the price he pays for claiming absolute freedom. Community offers services and security, but in exchange requires limits to autonomy and to personal self-assertiveness.³⁰⁵ The substantial difference between the cultural problem analysed by Bauman and our community life lies in this: ours is a free and freeing choice, not of renunciation but of service. For the vocation to consecrated life being a gift, it adds nothing to our lack of humanity, humility, service, sharing, acceptance, generosity. Whatever we have not nurtured as virtues in our human existence cannot be bought in another shop. Nor consecration, vows, priestly ordination can supply for the lack of humanity we bear within, as indeed they cannot fill the void of ignorance.

For the reasons indicated in the analysis of credibility, integrity between being and acting must be demonstrated in all sectors. Deep humanity, competence and reliability are not an option for the dedicated, but are a necessary basis for being credible.

3.3 **BUILDING CREDIBILITY AD EXTRA: RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES FROM THE YOUNG**

the radical nature of our vocational choice along with community life committed to service, are the basis on which the charism is grafted and grows, seeking to respond faithfully to the demands of the times. The changes today that we looked at earlier require: good cultural preparation, ability to dialogue with culture and judge changes wisely; a strong spiritual personality that does not get lost in the whirlpool of changes, a sense of universal belonging because the future will call us to be citizens of the world.

The Salesian Constitutions clearly indicate who we work for. Article 26 says:

The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer.³⁰⁷ The great flow of migrants from the world's south and new forms of poverty of young people challenge us as to our ability to give a response to these emerging realities which are becoming chronic. They are the result of predatory and unjust economic policies which require a twofold stance on our part: the first, of a practical nature, regards young people and consists in

³⁰⁵ Cf. Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Voglia di comunità*, Bari, Laterza, 2001, 6.

³⁰⁶ To the Young to whom we are sent, in the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, in http://www.sdb.org/it/Documenti/Costituzioni/Costituzioni/Costituzioni_parte_seconda#C1, (27.02.2013).

asking ourselves “what can we do for them”; the second, is of a cultural and political nature, and is a commitment to promote a society that guarantees justice and dignity for everyone.

Between schools, institutes, oratories, youth centres and parishes we are a formidable educational force in our local areas, so we have to ask ourselves if our Christian and educational proposal in contemporary culture and especially in the daily choices we prepare young people for is really what it needs to be.

The 'net' metaphor in computers today can help us understand what we are experiencing. Like when navigating we often go from one place to the other, one content to another without too many problems, of either logic or coherence, so it can be a bit like this in life. E are no longer in those years of strong protestation regarding Church and God: many young people today happily combine a moment of prayer , smoking a joint, keeping study and work to a minimum, have premarital sexual but superficial relationships, and then go off and do volunteer work in a developing country. Life is a bit like a browser, opening and closing windows or better, so as not to be betrayed by an old metaphor, using an “app” that we download according to need and use until we find a better one. We seem to experience an ongoing emergency, without strategies or plan of action which can help us glimpse a healthy and robust existential response which can interpret life beyond a context of constant change.

offer young people today”. From a communication point of view it is important to recall that the educational relationship brings our whole being into play. Therefore more than the strategies and techniques to choose and apply, it is a question of asking ourselves how to be credible and how to live our vocation today. In this regard it is useful to re-read what Fr Lorenzo Milani said to someone asking him what he thought of school and our way of handling it:

... austere and severe and without ulterior motives, in other words a secular schooling even if the teacher is a priest. Without any pious or edifying speeches, because when we are anxious to infiltrate faith into our speeches, we show we have little of it. Thinking that faith is something artificial that we add to life instead of being a way of living and thinking. A class-bound school, aiming not so much to fill the void of ignorance as the abyss of difference separating the poor from the rich. Do the rich accept our soup kitchens? Class in this sense is not a novelty for the Church. A school of formation and civil elevation, then, that re-establishes an honest hierarchy of values. A school, finally which is the opposite of

so many schools reduced to hospitals for the healthy and rejecting the sick only good for seeing the differences in culture and language their pupils leave with. Indeed make them more radical and strengthen them, instead of reducing them to where they disappear. But how do we get a school like this? Friends often ask me how I run a school and keep it full. They insist that I write down the method and programmes, subjects, the way I teach. It is the wrong question. They should not be worried about how to run a school, but how they have to be in order to run a school. In fact they need clear ideas about social and political problems. You need to burn with anxiety about how to raise the poor to a higher level, not at a level equal to the current ruling class, but higher, more human, spiritual, Christian, everything.³⁰⁸ In Fr Milani's response there are some things that seem to be valid for us today as Salesians. Our Christian faith has to emerge from what we do more than from what we say; the Christian message is a discriminating one and demands a preferential option for the poor; culture does not come about without a political and social conscience. The challenge to education is not resolved simply in school, because if school becomes a school of life and not just professional qualification, perhaps the possibility of a grater impact on social life opens up. Our oratories have the potential to be schools of life. Music, theatre, dance, singing, sports, culture, education and religious practice, social involvement, service of the needy: these are the educational languages and practices that are part of our Salesian DNA, and that we need to reinterpret for today's cultural context. These are the responses we need to give to social and political problems and that identify our educational work.

3.4 SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES

A first of these challenges is the overwhelming power of the economy and finance over the policies and choices of states, a power that often has devastating results on people's social lives, as we see in the current crisis. In *Caritas in Veritate* Benedict XVI, in his third chapter on *Fraternity, economic development and civil society*, gives us a powerful reminder of important points in the Church's social teaching:

Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of *commercial logic*. This needs to be *directed towards the pursuit of the common good*, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that grave imbalances are produced

³⁰⁸ Tullio DE MAURO - Giorgio PECORINI - Brunetta TOSCANI, Don Lorenzo Milani e la sua scuola, DVD, Documentario, Emivideo, Svizzera, 1979.

when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution.³⁰⁹ It would be a serious error to think that these statements do not also concern our way of living. Otherwise the way dioceses, parishes and religious communities handle their finances becomes secondary or insignificant. Complex works increasingly use outside consultation as a guide, people who belong to institutions whose reasoning follows the parameters of an economy tied to the marketplace. These agencies introduce approaches and business procedures that distort the very mission of the work, setting it on the path of business standards. What seems to be just a question of financial accountability, eventually becomes a way of thinking about managing finances and their investment that is no longer consistent with the spirit of the work. There are alternative approaches, and some Congregations are following them. Such initiatives not only operate within a framework of economic transparency, but also according to a code of ethics of service which takes account of the weak, the least. Economy is too important an issue to be simply delegated to those in charge of the community or the work. A greater knowledge and awareness in this field is required of everyone today.

A second challenge comes from the world of communication. We are ever more a networked society, and every aspect of life is ever more based on information technology. The structure of the web forces us towards a communication and management of society which is more participative. But it is also a technology of control, and this must educate us to be more aware in our way of speaking and acting, because the web is unforgiving. Manuel Castells has the following to say about this:

If citizens can catch their governments out in the act of lying, and can organise resistance in communities that arise spontaneously, governments throughout the world have to be on their guard and be attentive to the principles of democracy that have mostly been ignored over time. The powerful have spied on their subject since the beginning of history but now the subjects can watch those in power, at least much more than they could in the past. We have all become potential *citizen reporters* who, although only with a cellphone, record and immediately send any illicit deed done by anyone anywhere, through the networks.³¹⁰ This warning goes not only for governments but for the Church

³⁰⁹ BENEDETTO XVI, Encyclical Letter: *Caritas in veritate*, in http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_it.html, (21.02.2013) n.36, 17.

³¹⁰ Manuel CASTELLS, *Comunicazione e potere*, Milano, UBE, 2009, 527.

and Religious Congregations. We have to gain our authority through credibility and accept the challenge of reciprocity. The stress felt by institutions like the Church and Congregations in this context of communication is due partly to the fact that we are bodies habituated to communication from above to below, mostly immediate and rarely discussed except in the corridors.

The web is not only about control, but there is also the chance to share resources, keep up relationships, cooperate in creating culture and community, all aspects that can help in the process of human and spiritual growth of individuals. This potential can be integrated within the framework of a community lifestyle that has to learn to be collaborative; no technology improves us automatically, otherwise it would be sufficient just to get hold of the right equipment. Indeed it is always important to adopt an attitude of healthy criticism of technology not just at the cognitive level, but also at the existential level, and being able to be without technology for a time to better understand how we depend on it, while at the same time reaffirming that the importance of the individual lies not in the technology he or she has but in who she or he is.

There is one side of the technology challenge that is markedly ideological, and this concerns believing in the philosophy of open source *software or free software*.³¹¹ The Church and Religious Congregations often speak of this at the level of documents, but then in practice in their management policies adopt proprietary software. A Congregation that truly believes in a philosophy of *open source or free software* should invest in preparing its personnel and in a production centre made up of team programmers who are able to offer the entire Congregation the software it needs for its activities. Technology is a combination of techniques, languages, power and culture. One cannot be naive, one must know the implications of these factors in our life as religious. We often criticise media consumption, but there is little reflection on the cultural nourishment with which we form ourselves. It is not enough to study philosophy and theology to be able to dialogue with contemporary culture. We need a preparation capable of grasping the positive aspects of contemporary culture, but at the same time

³¹¹ Be careful of the terms open source and free software, both are often used indiscriminately as if the two terms have the same meaning. In fact they are two distinct perspectives. In simpler terms: those who support the open source include the value of collaboration in the development of the software, so the fact that the code is open is a benefit to all. For those who support the position of the free software, it is an ethical issue comparable to free speech, that must satisfy a number of conditions so that we can speak of a free software. Further reading: <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.it.html>

we must be able to offer alternatives rooted in the revolutionary power of the gospel.

There is a lot of hype at the moment about evangelisation on the Web. We understand that the network is seen as an expansion integrated with everyday life and social networks are platforms of social relations. It is important to be there, but the real challenge today is local, in Christian communities that are breaking down, because they cannot find in the Church - the real people who represent it - the guidance and concrete support to address the issues of family, work, unemployment, poverty, social inequality, justice, politics, and consequently struggle to live Christian values in our society and culture. Orders and Religious Congregations have been, in the past, models of Christian rebirth, because they are able to propose models of Christian life that are livable, credible and transferable, while remaining concerned about the essential and the values that matter most. It does not seem that communities of consecrated persons today are perceived and experienced this way.

Another challenge comes from ecology that covers various areas: energy consumption, recycling, consumption of plastic, the choice of equipment, the criteria for construction or renovation of the rooms, water consumption, paper consumption, the choice of fair trade products. In the management of our works we cannot say we are in the vanguard of progress in this area nor that the renewal of our works makes clear choices for sustainable structures with strategies for saving energy and reducing waste, or by installing clean energy systems. Credibility also depends on sound management of real estate.

In conclusion, the challenges I have mentioned should be studied and discussed in the community and at congregational level. Here I have limited myself to clarifying some things in the hope that this reflection becomes a catalyst for other reflections. I believe that we must have a vision of ourselves for the future. As educators we are increasingly engaged in a cosmopolitan social context. Knowledge of languages should be part of our regular baggage as citizens of the world. Mobility will be an increasing feature of our lives, and the ability to adapt to change will require personalities that are strong in spirit, modest in lifestyle, more profound in what we know, but down-to-earth, with hearts full of dreams and minds bent on interpreting the signs of the times.

COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

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THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

1. The Church's interest in communication in social networks demonstrates its ability to accompany human, cultural and scientific development in communication, its ability to dialogue with human beings. The Church and its Magisterium have reflected on *"the significant cultural and social developments"*³¹² that is part of a profound transformation of society.

Social Networks are environments that offer us new possibilities and challenges for evangelization. These new ways of communicating through social networks have as their subjects, countries, young people, children, professional people, people of every culture, race and religion. In looking at social networks in the world of media, the Church contemplates, above all, the human individual who is communicating. These new digital spaces of the social networks are environments that also need to be populated by Christians \ Christians who populate these networks are the same ones who inhabit our traditional environments and, furthermore, they are new environments that offer many possibilities for relationship and evangelization.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND DIGITAL REALITY

2. Communication in social networks has its roots in the profound and complex cultural changes and rapid transformations brought about by information and communication technologies. That these developments influence individual's ways of social interaction can affect economic and socio-political organization, which the Church describes as 'new times'. Social networks are part of the digital era which in itself brings about a cultural and anthropological shift the human phenomenon of broad and extensive communication in the world of cyberspace and internet, and the tip of the iceberg for a new digital logic and new virtual grammars. In this sense, the networks are an environment, a space which is being ever more integrated within daily existence and catalyzing people through a network of interactive convergence in relationships. This means a new

³¹² Message of Pope Benedict XVI for the 45th World Communications Day, June 2011.

existential and pluralist context. We move and live in this environment. Social networks are not merely technological tools but relational environments. Where the human being is, there is also human seeking, longing, and ways of living and working as a group or in society.

PEOPLE AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

3. Historically, human beings form their webs and communication networks through language, symbols, artistic efforts like music, dance, rituals. Art in its multiple aspects is open to the possibility of expressing human feelings, values and beliefs. The human being is naturally a social being, and therefore forms a network of relationships. The newspaper, radio, TV, or cinema, music, form a web of relationships between producers and receivers. The Church itself, since the beginning, has been made up of a network of communities. The network of human relationships and information built up and communicated has the human being as its anthropological base. His chief vocation is to communicate himself and relate with others. From this anthropological perspective, today's social networks present their own features which need to be understood from the digital reality of these new times.

SOCIAL NETWORKS TODAY

4. The nature of social networks consists in aggregating people who, in an individual and local context, transpose to a broader context involving groups and a larger collectivity. Social networks make up a grand web of relationships of people of various social and economic classes which consolidate and strengthen social cohesion through new technologies. Social networks are formed from individual interests associated with other individuals and groups with a specific goal, whether entertainment, professional, political, social or religious interests. The networks need to be understood from the point of view of what we call digital culture or cyber-culture, names that mark out contemporary culture, especially from 1970 onwards, such as the rise of micro-information. Social networks have led to transformations of a communication, political, social, cultural and religious nature, once we were able to pass on information of a symbolic rather than material kind in a way previously unknown in human history³¹³.

HUMAN MEDIATION THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKS

5. From a sociological and psychological point of view, social networks reveal new aspects of behaviour and attitude that need to be better understood. For example, the use of the new digital logic for building another idea

³¹³ Benedict XVI. "New technologies. New relationships" (2009).

of the world and reinterpreting reality and social relationships. Digital logic breaks the linearity of thought, even modifying the concept of time and space in human relationships. Social networks shorten distances and concepts of synchrony and diachrony are modified. Through a computer connected to the network (Internet) anyone can communicate with hundreds and thousands of others near and far, of different social and cultural classes. Through language and virtual technology, and cyberspace, the individual constructs a new universe of meanings, representations, and is immersed in them: this environment of presence and absence is characteristic of the media world. Through the social mediation of the virtual world we can inhabit many social space at the same time (ubiquity). These mediations become ways of constructing personal social identity. These relationships are often experienced at a determined moment, and feature a strong but fleeting emotional involvement. The same individual may have several identities for relationship. The hierarchy of relationships is different. Communication in the network is between equals. Ways of associating and belonging change. The networks are both provisional and ambiguous places. In this new virtual space and time, a person experiences psychological situations that require new studies and insights for future directions for education and formation.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC POLICIES

6. Social networks, aligned with economic development, political and social organizations at global level, involve individuals and groups depending on their organizations and structures at both private and state level. The global nature of the Internet and networks is tied up with the internationalization of production, business groups, multinationals, networks of production and entertainment at a global level. These are associated with the expansion of groups and huge global investments that affect the whole of society. In this regard, it relates to the way people and business work, produce, do business and expand their business. This new interactive and interconnected society has an ethical responsibility to social inclusion as well as being at the service of promoting life, justice and solidarity. This relationship of the networks with the basic structures of society on which everything depends, such as work, information, education, health, requires an ethical stance to ensure respect for the freedom of the individual, cultural values, the common good, economic growth in society. The logic of the network in information systems and political and economic systems impacts on human relationships, the form of production, questions of power, health, ad personal privacy and security.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. Social networks are embedded within a context of human relationships in which there are rights and duties of citizens. The policy of the individual and his/her right to communicate is directly related to democracy of societies and nations. Given an open space without confines, the people who inhabit social networks should follow ethical criteria and values described in the Charter of Human Rights of nations that respect the freedom and integrity of people, cultures, races and religions. Every citizen is responsible for his or her conduct in social networks, what is posted what message is conveyed, and the message should respect family values, the dignity of the elderly, respect for children and the good of society. Each person who participates in social networks should be aware of the exposure of personal data, privacy and safety.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES

8. Social networks foster the so-called virtual communities. These communities work together so that people and interest groups can interact, facilitating communication by means of an elastic, fluid, rapid and flexible communication. There are various kinds of social networks: networks for relationships, professional networks, community and interest group networks which open up a new way of relating between groups on line. With new technologies, social networks are expanding, maturing and growing stronger, and in many situations, create or give rise to virtual communities where the ties between people become as real as traditional relationships. It is worth pointing out that the new network communities can also complement and strengthen traditional communities. This new view of community requires a capacity for dialogue between people, understanding their new concept of time and social space, their way of cooperating and getting involved in social media. This new attitude has a significant impact on how we organize catechetics, meetings of young people, formation encounters, communication channels between communities, our way of educating and evangelizing.

PRIVACY AND SECURITY IN THE NETWORKS

9. The challenges of privacy and security in the cyber world are challenges that show up in our new media times. Personal data, interests, families, groups, public and private institutions, private information of the Church become increasingly vulnerable. Education and investment will be needed to see that the rights to privacy and safety of people are guaranteed and to solve the problem of digital exclusion of various groups.

EVANGELIZATION IN THESE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS

10. Where the human being is so must the Church be. This new anthropological space of the networks is an invitation for the Church to enter, dialogue and evangelize. The new digital logic has an impact on theological and pastoral logic. The words of Benedict XVI inviting Christians “confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life”³¹⁴ demonstrate the up-to-date Magisterium of the Church in developing dialogue between faith and culture in the world of new technologies and new digital media. Evangelizing in social networks means seeing the networks as a “place for evangelization”, a place where people feel at home in this new environment and then can evangelize. The Church is called to live in the Net as a place for experience.

THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE NEW DIGITAL LOGIC

11. The starting point for evangelization in the networks is to understand that the biggest changes today are not only of a technological kind, but of a human and relational kind. Connected society is a society greedy for human relationships. It is an attitude of constantly seeking the other, people, community, culture and one's own history and sense of belonging. We are part of networks of relationships whether at private or public level. It is a new state of relationship, a rapid and continuous one, in which we expand our network of relationships in the world of work, education, leisure, culture, art and also religion. In this new habitat, we accompany information, we expand and share knowledge, we engage in the movement of the political, economic, social and religious world. Evangelizing in social networks requires an ability to engage with people who know the new virtual languages and a special way of bringing the Church to people, by understanding them and walking with them in the search of knowledge about the person of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.

EVANGELIZATION IN THE NEW

DIGITAL LOGIC AND THE NEW MEDIA SPACE

12. Evangelizing from the point of view of digital logic and educating in the media spaces require new methods and attitudes. The need for communicators and evangelizers, for example, is important: people who know the new digital languages and grammars and can establish a dialogue that leads to mutual understanding and the ability to approach people.

³¹⁴ Benedict XVI. Message of the 45th World Communications Day - 2011

Evangelizing in media spaces is not simply inserting religious content into different media platforms, but rather being there, testifying truthfully and consistently to the capacity to love, accept, establish trust, and thereafter make lead people to the discovery of Jesus Christ, a deeper faith and Christian life. Educating and catechizing from the perspective of the new digital logic requires understanding and knowledge of new interactive skills and competencies of people, especially children and young people, interpreting reality with virtual logic, processing information from images, sound, immersion in the virtual environment, and having a mode of engagement and involvement with sociopolitical, cultural and religious issues in the style of the digital natives.

THE PEDAGOGY OF NEW EVANGELIZATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

13. The pedagogy of evangelizing and educating in media environments needs to consider other aspects of digital logic. Due to the fragmentation of discourse in the language of network users, narrative and storytelling have a power to attract and engage people in discussing a particular topic. Each person has his or her network profile and a bit of history recorded in photographs and images that make up his or her vocabulary. The topics of conversation are developed from the images, the clips, the sites with shared information and their interests. The pedagogy of encounter and evangelization in the networks must take into account the need for the language of images and narratives. The Gospel is an encyclopedia of images with stories told through parables with beauty and appeal to the imagination and hearts of people.

THE RELIGIOUS JOURNEY IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

14. Living in social networks is like experiencing a journey. Characterized by ubiquity (a person who is in several places at once), social networks have no boundaries. Besides ubiquity, another important aspect of evangelization in networks is understanding the immediacy of relations, due to the speed and excess information that leads people to tend not to go deep into the content of this information, or even deepen their relationships. It is important here to consider the three levels of communication: rapid contact and information, contact involving a relationship, contact leading to engagement. People who surf the networks have interests and expectations that determine the levels of relationships in general by passing through these three levels.

SOLIDARITY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

15. In social networks, socio-political engagement has its appeal when linked to perceived values, i.e. when experienced and witnessed to, generating credibility and visibility. For example, people feel safer in a humanitarian campaign donating or supporting someone who is dedicated to the poor or the defense of human rights. In general, these commitments are of a provisional nature. Social networks have become a way of organizing groups to meet and articulate service of a cause, but this dynamic is more fluid, rapid and temporary. Many young volunteers, students, and Christians are organized through networks to share their experiences, groups and ministry through social networks.

THE PEDAGOGY OF SILENCE AND BEAUTY IN SOCIAL NETWORKING

16. The aspect of beauty, art and silence are important in evangelization from a digital point of view. Art is a language very close to the digital language for its visual aspects, the appeal of color, sounds, the art itself. Art has the power to touch the human heart and imagination beyond rational discourse. Silence is a language that favors both the encounter with the mystery of life and God and the encounter with creative and imaginative power.

THE PEDAGOGY OF MONITORING SOCIAL NETWORKS

17. The new psychological dynamics of the human individual always connected through the internet and social networks requires a new way of looking at things and new approaches on the part of educators and evangelizers in the Church. Virtual communication in networks is changing interpersonal relationships. Being connected is a new mode of human relationship. This new way of relating requires study and analysis of the anthropological and psycho-social aspects involved. The Church must be open to accompanying this new dynamic of human behavior and the impact of these new relationships at the social, political and economic level. The approach of new evangelization by the Church in social networks and media environments requires a change of mindset in evangelizers and educators, to understand and walk with men and women in these new times. The Church must always be a master in the art of moving with the times and introducing Jesus Christ, who is always new and always relevant and necessary. The Church's mission is to get into these new environments for education and evangelization, to bring people to Jesus Christ. It is part of the Church's commitment to its vocation and mission in this world, with wisdom and responsibility.

SOME GUIDELINES FOR FORMATION TO COMMUNICATION

DONATO LACEDONIO, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN ANDRIA NEAR BARLETTA, ITALY. FOR SEVERAL YEARS, HE WAS DELEGATE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS IN HIS PROVINCE. HE WAS INCHARGE OF ANS FROM 2005-2013 AND CURRENTLY IN UPS.

INTRODUCTION

Formation of Salesians is one of the hot topics in the Congregation. Proposed once again by the Rector Major as “an absolutely vital priority”³¹⁵, formation challenges us to reflection and action on more than one front.

This contribution aims at being an aid to understanding how attention paid to communication, and social communication in particular, cannot be ignored in Salesian religious formation, either in initial or ongoing formation.

Focused mainly as it does on the authenticity of Salesian religious identity and vocational fidelity, formation has to take account of intrinsically dynamic situations and circumstances. On the one hand there is the young Salesian and the formator, and on the other, the socio-cultural (and pastoral) context they both find themselves in, plus elements of Church and Salesian tradition brought to life by the developing understanding we have of them.

In the pages to follow we will give particular attention to two roles: formators, called on to offer a model of Salesian life (consecrated and apostolic) and guide the formation curriculum; confreres in the first stages of formation, who are children of their times and play an active part in their own formation.

As already indicated, however, these pages are written for all Salesians, responsible for their own formation, so what we say here is not limited to certain initial stages of formation and just requiring qualities on the part of others. Each Salesian needs to be involved in a dynamic interplay between his consecration and the mission and living out, day by day, the dedication that Don Bosco showed for his boys: “For you I study, for you I work, for you I live and for you I am also ready to give my life”.

The issue is certainly a broad and complex one, and this is why it is good to note that the arguments presented are but some of the ones that explore the issue as a whole; they are also just brief hints.

³¹⁵ FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, Vocation and formation: gift and task, AGC 416.

A DYNAMIC TRINITY: THE PEOPLE AND CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVED

The actual context

The "Ratio"³¹⁶, in its first chapter, considers the actual context as its initial point of reference for Salesian formation. "If we wish to set up an adequate formation experience we must give due consideration to our context"³¹⁷. The scheme the document offers regarding stimuli and challenges coming from our particular context needs consideration, bearing in mind that this is a universal, somewhat generic document; we need an appropriate analysis of the local, geo-cultural context. If, in fact, the complex phenomenon of globalisation can lead to a certain uniformity worldwide, at local level – or as we would say in Salesian terms, at regional level - the details of specific contexts stand out more according to traditions, values, particular details.

It follows, then, that there is a need to understand what are the real stimuli and challenges in the context where formation takes place and, in the case of international formation communities, the real stimuli and challenges of the context from whence the young Salesian in formation actually comes.

There is another factor to be considered and which finds its motivation in what we will say later: the third edition of the Ratio was published in 2000! In a little over 10 years the "actual context" has been altered by a range of phenomena. The undeniable rapid³¹⁸ socio-cultural evolution that humankind has gone through and experiences at worldwide level thanks to communications technology, has led to the "actual context" being modified in its rhythms and modes in various parts of the world.

A major factor in this evolution is the importance that social communication has acquired since becoming such a technological, social and cultural phenomenon. As a term which is intended as a summary description, social communication is recognised by now as a complex and dynamic agent of culture and cultures. It is capable of creating points of reference, values, patterns of life, new attitudes³¹⁹; in other words it can generate a true and proper anthropological and social effect that conditions/characterises existence, mentality and personal relationships.

³¹⁶ *Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Principles and Norms, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis et Studiorum*, third edition, Rome 2000. (Henceforth, FSDB)

³¹⁷ FSDB cf 1.3.1

³¹⁸ JOHN PAUL II, *Rapid Development, Apostolic Letter to those responsible for social communication* 24 January 2005.

³¹⁹ "Industrial production of images and their extraordinary diffusion through mass-media make an unprecedented quantity of culturally significant symbols available for use in the dimension of social drama". FABIO DELI, *Beethoven e le mondine. Ripensare la cultura popolare*, Roma, Meltemi Editore srl, 2007, pp. 126-127.

*The role that the means of social communication have acquired in society must now be considered an integral part of the “anthropological” question that is emerging as the key challenge of the third millennium. Just as we see happening in areas such as human life, marriage and the family, and in the great contemporary issues of peace, justice and protection of creation, so too in the sector of social communications there are essential dimensions of the human person and the truth concerning the human person coming into play*³²⁰

In this chapter we are adopting the term “communication” in its global sense — that broad phenomenon encompassing the mutually involved human and relational dimensions, mass media traditionally understood (press, cinema, radio, television, new media of the social kind and their influence at a personal, societal and cultural level.

From a practical point of view it would be reductionist to consider communication as something merely instrumental, accidental, functional or simply tied just to the human and relational dimensions. Taking up a unilateral position, other than for theoretical purposes, reduces our understanding of the “actual context”, its mechanisms, values and, on the pastoral front, the definition of the processes of education and evangelisation.

A complete view of communication is fitting for someone who is called, by charismatic commitment, to be involved with the young.

For they are, in fact, the main players in our “actual contexts”. Called “digital natives”, “the digital generation” or “net-generation” they inhabit the “digital continent”. This image or category, introduced by Benedict XVI³²¹, speaks clearly of a phenomenon that is not only technological but, as described above, is also profoundly anthropological.

The cultural context that the Salesian and the formator are part of, is the place of origin and the solution for problems that, regarded under the heading of “challenge”, contribute to the understanding of “being” and “presence” of the Salesian religious in the world, and what he thinks of and how he accepts his own doubts and difficulties and those of others.

The Salesian in formation

Being a “Salesian in formation”, it would be good to repeat, is not a simple transitory stage referring more or less to the first ten years after first profession, but an ongoing attitude. Diminishing this aspect means running

³²⁰ BENEDICT XVI, *media: at the crossroads between self-promotion and service. Searching for the truth in order to share it with others, Messgae for the 42nd World Communications Day*, 24 January 2008.

³²¹ BENEDICT XVI, *New technologies, new relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship. Message for the 43rd World Communications Day*, 24 January 2009.

the risk of diminishing one's identity as a religious, of impoverishing one's educational and evangelising "professionalism".

We focus attention principally on young Salesians in formation for two reasons: because of their status as "neophytes" in Salesian religious life, thus on the way to defining their vocational identity. But also because our current times, and certainly it will be more so in the future, are intrinsically characterised by communication.

What has been said about the world of the young is valid, obviously, for the young Salesian in formation too, both for the generation he belongs to and for his experience prior to his 'vocation'³²² but also for the pastoral activity he is called to carry out in his apostolate as a practical trainee, and his daily activity in education and evangelisation.

On the one hand his daily, social and cultural experience is characterised by the influence of the media because he is a child of his times; on the other he is called, by constitutional mandate, to work in the field of social communication for the education and evangelisation of the ordinary people³²³ and, by obedience to the Universal Church itself, in new evangelisation which cannot take place without full consideration being given to communication³²⁴.

Since "the Salesian vocation appears as an identity in constant evolution: while remaining the same, it renews itself in creative fidelity and incarnates itself continually"³²⁵, the Salesian in initial formation - and the same can be said for someone in ongoing formation - must be aware of the need to renew his vocational identity card accepting that he must update it through a correct understanding of himself while developing through various age stages and the context in which he is called to be a witness and an educator and evangeliser.

The formator and the formation community

The formator, the formation team and the formation community make up an inseparable trinity.

The formator, like the young, is a child of his times. He has to be aware of this both to understand the generational distance which evolves ever more

³²² FSDB no.8

³²³ Cf Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales ed. 2002 Art. 43. Henceforth denoted by C.

³²⁴ "Evangelisation requires that we give due attention to the world of social communication, the path on which, especially in the new media, so many lives meet, and there are so many questions and expectations. It is a place where consciences are often formed and the moments and contents of lives are measured. A new opportunity for reaching the human heart", *Messgae to the people of God from the 13th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on New Evangelisation*, 7-28 October 2012.

³²⁵ FSDB no.7.

rapidly today between him and the young Salesians entrusted to him and also to actively manage his rapport with the context and culture in which he lives.

Limiting our attention just to the formator is also reductionist.

The individual's mission, in Salesian tradition, finds its basis in a project undertaken by a community³²⁶ that carries it out through different tasks and roles. This is why it is good to consider the formator as part of the formation team. The formation community, besides, in a broader fashion includes the young Salesians because they are canonically part of it and actively engaged in the dynamics which are developed within it.

For this specific issue, then, it would be correct to note that the Salesian religious community, by its charismatic connotation, is called to live in a family style and this makes it a true and proper workshop of communication.

The formator and formation team too must see the value of a right approach to communication and to social communication from a dual perspective: personal and in terms of formation.

Personal, because the formator and formation team, inasmuch as they are part of the "actual context", are called, like others, to ask themselves how they perceive and relate to the culture and society around them, marked by the influence of communication; how internal and external relationships are being managed, and how they seek out and use information and their relationship with traditional and new instruments of communication,...; from the point of view of formation because they are called to help young Salesians define their own vocational identity in the actual context and their role as pastors for an effective involvement in new evangelisation.

The risk of a lack of attention to communication finds its correct description in an address that Fr Amedeo Cencini gave on the 50th half yearly Assembly of the Union of Superiors General (November 1996) on the topic of "mass media in formation: instructions for use or passion for proclamation to today's world?"³²⁷. Commenting on data from a survey carried out in Italian seminaries he noted certain risks:

Above all there is the danger that the young person in formation lives in a world apart from the life of the common people; use of abstract language which today's people can no longer understand. Lack of feed-back: he rarely seeks it or rarely has the occasion to check how what he has said has been accepted. Awkward gestures, verbal laziness or the clumsy muddling and mocking of the world of mass media.

³²⁶ Cf C. Art 44 and 49.

³²⁷ CENCINI ALBERTO, *I mass media nella formazione: istruzioni per l'uso o passione per l'annuncio al mondo d'oggi?*, in AAVV, *La sfida della comunicazione, Mass media e evangelizzazione*, Roma, Ancora, 1996.

Some considerations

In concluding this first part it would be right to offer some considerations.

Communication can be a richness for identity and professional activity of the Salesian. If one of the aims of formation is that the Salesian becomes a "good communicator"³²⁸ this is even more true for the choice and preparation of the formators, called to "communicate" Salesian experience. This is why, I believe, it would be correct to consider, as part of the preparation of formators, a course in understanding something of communication.

The formator and the formation team, if rightly attentive to communication, can be helped to improve and "professionalise" their task in the warp and woof of healthy and clear human relationships and incarnate themselves in the context in which the religious community lives. In what way does the formation team analyse and reflect on the managing of ways qualities of relationships internally and with the young Salesians in formation entrusted to them?

In the end formation is about passing on a model of Salesian religious life. Just as on the pastoral front the young person 'chooses' his or her educator, so the young Salesian in initial formation designs his model of Salesian life. To what extent are confreres set aside for the service of formation capable as communicators of Salesian life?

WHAT TO KNOW: TEXTS TO BE CONSIDERED

It would be right to plumb these ideas a little further with appropriate reading in order to define possible personal or community courses in formation communication.

There is abundant literature specifically on communication, be it secular or within the understanding of the Church. The Church's magisterium in this area is rich and needs rediscovering since many of its texts and statements have a strongly prophetic connotation. It is no less the case in the Salesian magisterium.

A complete list of documents and interventions by the Salesian Congregation on social communication is available in the appendices to the *Salesian Social Communication System* (SSCS 2011): articles of the Constitutions and Regulations, pronouncements of General Chapters from the 20th to the 26th, Letters of the Rector Majors and guidelines and directives published in the acts of the General Council.

³²⁸ FSDB no. 252.

As well as these we could suggest others.

- *Guidelines for the Formation of the Salesians in Social Communication.*

This document is signed by both the General Councillors for Formation and for Communication; it was published in digital form in May 2006 and then added into the appendices to the SSCS in 2011.

Coming out of the response to immediate needs³²⁹, the document focuses on formation to critical reception and a correct application of the instruments of communication in the pastoral setting. This is why the document, although but a few years old, needs updating and additions. This is due to the steps already achieved by way of reflection in the Congregation (e.g. the new edition of the SSCS); the development taking place over the first two decades of the 3rd millennium has put digital technology at the top of the agenda; and the request coming from many places regarding possession and use of digital devices³²⁰ both in initial formation communities and in other communities directed involved on the front line of pastoral activity.

Salesian Social Communication System

Published by the Department for Social Communication in the early months of 2005, the *Salesian Social Communication System* takes its starting point from reflection and experience in the Congregation and offers guidelines from the point of view of an integrated “system” of communication.

In 2011 it was republished in the light of major changes in the communications world. Considered to be an updating rather than a revolution, the work involved very many people working at various levels in reflection on and practice of social communication.

Papal messages for World Communications Day

A mirror for our times and their doubts are the messages that the Pontiffs have provided for the World Communications Days. It is an interesting legacy to be appreciated in virtue of what it says in Article 6 of the Constitutions

³²⁹ “The impetus for these Guidelines results from a range of factors coming together: the promulgation of the new Ratio in 2000, GC25’s practical choice in 2002 to have a General Councillor exclusively for the Social Communications Department, indications in the Rector Major and Council’s Plan, that a formation curriculum for social communication be drawn up, the request by the World Advisory Council for Social Communication in 2004, the publication of the “Salesian Social Communication System” guidelines at the beginning of 2005, and finally the Rector Major’s Letter published in AGC 390”.

³²⁰ There is no lack of requests that come to the Department and its members regarding this: is it the right time to begin using a tablet or smartphone for the Liturgy of the Hours, or having a facebook profile, how to use it, ...

introducing the areas of the Salesian mission: "The Salesian vocation situates us at the heart of the Church and places us entirely at the service of its mission"³³¹.

Benedict XVI's messages, recognising the signs of the times, have shifted attention from traditional media to the new media developed in the neo-digital era and offer concrete pointers and personal attitudes to adopt. At the same time he has highlighted certain topics such as the search for Truth and authenticity of life and has involved young people themselves by recovering dimensions and attitudes of communication and relationships which are proper to human circumstances.

Of particular interest to us is the message for 2010 – "The priest and ministry in the digital world: new media at the service of the Word" – where the Pope urges:

...The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more Saint Paul's exclamation: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). The increased availability of the new technologies demands greater responsibility on the part of those called to proclaim the Word, but it also requires them to become more focused, efficient and compelling in their efforts. Priests stand at the threshold of a new era: as new technologies create deeper forms of relationship across greater distances, they are called to respond pastorally by putting the media ever more effectively at the service of the Word.

And further on, in opposition to the risk of adopting the attitude of just being on the Web because everyone else is, he adds:

Yet priests can rightly be expected to be present in the world of digital communications as faithful witnesses to the Gospel, exercising their proper role as leaders of communities which increasingly express themselves with the different "voices" provided by the digital marketplace. Priests are thus challenged to proclaim the Gospel by employing the latest generation of audiovisual resources (images, videos, animated features, blogs, websites) which, alongside traditional means, can open up broad new vistas for dialogue, evangelization and catechesis.

Naturally, given the double identity of the Salesian vocation, what the Pope says about the priest also applies to the Salesian Brother, who is also called to be an educator and evangeliser of the young.

³³¹ The same article of the Constitutions indicates, then, that amongst the priorities of the Salesian mission is also social communications: "we are educators to the faith in popular settings, especially through social communication".

Some considerations

At the conclusion of this second part, I believe it would be right to ask ourselves simply which and how many texts and documents indicated above have been read and understood and translated into practice.

WHAT TO DO: COURSES

In various communities and formation centers there is also a consolidated experience of more or less structured courses in social communication. At the moment we lack a precise picture and analysis of what is on offer, but it would seem that the way things are done, where they are done and their content are varied and that for the most part they would form part of what we call media education.

Offering already well-structured themes is useful, essential one could say, for a systematic presentation of the subject and its cultural, social, anthropological and pastoral implications. The stages of formation and Salesian pastoral activity already offer, by their very nature, some frameworks and particular to tackle communications courses from a particular point of view. Media – traditional and recent – are a feature of the environment in which we live, and they define new anthropological situations (with their questions about the meaning of human existence), theological ones (with questions on how we understand man and God) and pastoral ones (with the many questions that arise on a day-to-day basis). These questions demand updated and relevant responses!

The formation curriculum on communication can complement awareness-raising courses that can be worked out on the basis of the ordinary and overall planning that goes on in formation houses or, for Salesians in ongoing formation, having regard to their personal choices.

These courses could have a theoretical introduction which helps people understand the internal dynamics and practices. What is interesting to note is that formation to communication – and social communication – is not something that intrudes like a foreign body into already well-established processes, but finds its proper place and understanding in genuine Salesian tradition, re-read in the light of theoretical reflections. It would be especially good to note that media, especially new media, insinuate themselves into our daily existence, and so our way of understanding and managing them can also be identified in our ordinary daily practice.

In what follows we indicate some courses that could be used for gaining the skills indicated in the 2006 guidelines³³².

³³² *Guidelines for Formation of Salesians in Social Communication*, Rome 24 May 2006.

It is appropriate to offer some clarifications so these courses can be more effective:

- These “experiences³³²” need to fit in neatly with the overall formation plan drawn up by the formation community in coordination with other initiatives, in some cases by developing special areas in the curriculum;
- It is important to identify, where possible, connections with all the other courses so as to throw mutual light on their activities and whatever else is being learned across the range of systematic study;
- The young Salesians need to play an active part in the planning and evaluation so they can grasp the whole content more systematically; in other words these courses can become workshops for an organised pastoral approach.

Education to aesthetics

Speaking to artists in the Sistine Chapel on 21 November 2009 Benedict XVI said:

an essential function of genuine beauty, as emphasized by Plato, is that it gives man a healthy “shock”, it draws him out of himself, wrenches him away from resignation and from being content with the humdrum – it even makes him suffer, piercing him like a dart, but in so doing it “reawakens” him, opening afresh the eyes of his heart and mind, giving him wings, carrying him aloft. ...

One may speak of a via pulchritudinis, a path of beauty which is at the same time an artistic and aesthetic journey, a journey of faith, of theological enquiry.

Benedict XVI's words, addressed in this case to those who “give shape” to art, are just as applicable to those who benefit from it and can, with appropriate strategies, be used also for evangelisation. Knowing how to look at, admire, understand a work of art helps in developing a critical sense, cultural baggage and, above all, a communicational, pastoral and spiritual sensitivity of soul.

Art history, pre-Christian and Christian, speaks to us of how man over different epochs has understood and spoken of the mystery, his own story between himself and God, seeking symbols and forms in the various contexts and creating icons and images which can overcome the limits of time. These works can become an object of study, spiritual sharing, a point of departure for pastoral creativity. A seminar on sacred art can help the young Salesians to develop a theological and spiritual sensitivity as well as a pastoral one. Painting,

³³² The term is used in the 2006 guidelines and indicates, in fact, objectives and attitudes.

sculpture, architecture and sacred music speak of the meaning and religious understanding of those who have created them, and of the time this was done.

Examples could come from the kind of understanding that Henri Nouwen offers for the Return of the *Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt³³⁴ or contemplation of the vault in the Sistine Chapel which presents the creation of Adam, in the light of the first chapters of Genesis and the entire history of salvation. A seminar on Christian iconography would help in providing good interpretative tools which could also be helpful for catechetics, liturgy, evangelisation of young people and particularly for personal spirituality.

Visits to museums, churches and exhibitions should be considered not just as recreational or cultural activities, but as complementing studies, a specific course in themselves, complementing a broader formation plan which involves ways of communicating the sacred, man's human face, Google Art³³⁵, for example, which offers the possibility of visiting some museums and important collections, can be a good tool in the classroom for those who do not have art centres closeby.

Along these lines one suggestion might be to consider and broaden the study of revelation and theology through a semantic approach. This would help discover from an historical perspective how man has perceived the presence and awareness of God and how he has communicated this.

Modern art included as well as traditional art.

The cinema, now recognised as the seventh art, offers films with religious themes, as well as anthropological and sociological ones...; these can be masterpieces concerning the mystery of humanity and religious meaning presented through complex cinematographic language. Concerning the experience of those who write the scripts, the cineforum can easily be offered to certain groups (formation houses) as well as the broader public (pastoral activities). A well-run cineforum educates through various kinds of cinematographic analysis, not only on the main theme, but also in understanding how it has been expressed. Some topics that could be chosen could be human nature, the youth situation, Christ³³⁶ or some film directors - Truffaut, Fellini, Kieślowski, Bergman,... – seem to have known how to present, like Michelangelo or Giotto, both God and man.

³³⁴ NOUWEN HENRI J., *L'abbraccio benedicente. Meditazione sul ritorno del figlio prodigo*, Queriniana Edizioni, 2009.

³³⁵ <http://www.googleartproject.com>

³³⁶ During a course in Christology one could offer a range of films on the topic: *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Pasolini 1964), *Jesus of Nazareth* (Zeffirelli 1977), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jewison 1973), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (Scorsese 1988), ...

Personal communication and communication in community

We have already indicated how the community – especially formation communities – can be a real workshop for communication to the point where one might even consider a *scrutinium communicationis* which can recognise and use the dynamics of interpersonal communication to their best, and how to use both traditional and new media likewise.

The idea here is formation to personal dialogue as a starting point, then moving to the community level. Poor communication – in reference to correct ways of relating - might be considered under the heading of “sin” for a religious community. Then there is what is called 'meta-communication', used mostly to resolve conflict situations, but this should be aimed at developing communications potential within and beyond the community. A religious community in fact should also look carefully at the image it presents in the local area, which is the first condition for effective witness; a formation community needs to ask itself also what kind of image of religious life it is giving to young Salesians.

It is important to explain that when we speak of “personal communication” we are not only referring to the spoken word, but also to the manner of speech, gestures, the quality of relationship established between people.

The whole area of gestures, then, opens up an interesting topic. It is expressed through everyday gestures as well as more developed forms like dance. Asian and African approaches to this issue are to be safeguarded and promoted. The western world has relegated this area to cultural and artistic expression for some people, but for Asians and Africans it is a very real form of expression and personal communication, as well as in community, including for prayer and liturgical celebration. Salesian formation in contexts like this, reinterpreting tradition, must help to present this kind of expression from a Salesian point of view, both as personal and as pastoral communication.

Creativity

Expertise in communication, including social communication, is gained through putting it into practice. Practice, taking part in projects and exercises, helps develop a sense of research, finding responses aimed at needs and aims for particular contexts, experimenting with courses that could be best adapted to the circumstances, especially as regards pastoral creativity.

From experience in Valdocco onwards, Salesian tradition has seen:

- Don Bosco's involvement in publishing as a passionate evangeliser and educator, and this involved many publications which were cornerstones of spiritual and human formation;

- theatre and music as workshops of expression and communication, and let's not forget that Cagliero himself was considered an excellent musician and composer and that some theatre scripts were written precisely as educational and catechetical aids;
- the way Don Bosco set up an educational environment using biblical and other sayings around the walls at the Oratory which responded to the idea of reminding the boys of inspiring values for their daily lives.
- Creativity in communication and developing expressive qualities, providing specific personal and community opportunities, is one kind of fidelity to our tradition and an opportunity for growth and formation to communication.

The postnovitiate at Nave, in Italy, for example, involves all young Salesians and formators every year in preparing a dramatic presentation on some theme. every aspect of this – text, lyrics, music, scenes, lighting, publicity – becomes an chance for a technical and educational workshop. Thanks to assistance from some professionals in various fields, preparation for the show becomes an opportunity for the actors to get to know one another better, develop relationships and gain skills. Recitals like this become a message also to other young people educating them through the content and artistic forms chosen.

Rediscovering and promoting the so-called academies, not only in formation houses, is not just about restoring tradition, but a chance for our young men in formation to be involved and educated to expression and to beauty.

Social Networks: new areas for evangelisation

On the media side, be they traditional or new, the opportunity to be creative today is much more accessible. Just with a computer, or tablet, and the right software or application (including free open source) it is possible to make videos, present messages through music, audio-visuals, hypertext...

Processes employed in preparing products like this can educate to synthesis, critical approach - in the original meaning of this term - to texts, models and the overall idea, to choice of appropriate images and sounds for whatever we want to present.

Social networks, which formators are often in doubt about, can be managed not just in terms of personal choice, but also as a community strategy. The opinions and involvement that result from such networks helps put forward ideas and create opinion... Imagine the impact, for example, of a group of *facebook* profiles of theology students for creating opinion, working in with

their formators and lecturers. Studying the implicit and explicit questions of young people, current issues, what is being said on the Web about the Church, Pope, sacraments, spirituality ...

Benedict XVI in his World Communications Day Message for 2012 writes:

Attention should be paid to the various types of websites, applications and social networks which can help people today to find time for reflection and authentic questioning, as well as making space for silence and occasions for prayer, meditation or sharing of the word of God. In concise phrases, often no longer than a verse from the Bible, profound thoughts can be communicated, as long as those taking part in the conversation do not neglect to cultivate their own inner lives³³⁷.

Social networks are not to be avoided but understood and used for both ministry and formation; they are something we need to be educated to.

Some considerations

It demands considerable creative ability to draw up and put these kinds of courses into practice. Devising new ways is not just following the trends, but a quality to be cultivated so that educational and evangelising activity becomes increasingly more effective and is motivated by two things:

“Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16)

“for you I study, for you I work, for you I live, and for you I am also ready to give my life”.

³³⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Silence and the Word: Path of evangelisation, Message for the 46th World Communications Day*, 24 January 2012.

SOCIAL NETWORKS AND SALESIAN ASSISTANCE

Seen from the point of view of the Preventive System

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1.- A WORLD IN THE SOCIAL....NETWORKS

More and more of the planet's inhabitants use the Internet in their daily lives. Any kind of statistics we might provide on the use of social networks will be out of date in a short time. However, if we were to note the tendencies over recent years we would see that they are likely to continue for the next few years. More than 2,000 million Web users have met in the applications that we call social networks or social media; new channels and ways of communicating. The main social networks have gathered around them an increasingly larger number of users. The largest, Facebook, will have a thousand million users in 2013.

Image 1 (Social network map presented at the 3rd Spanish American Congress on Social Networks, February 2013), offers a view of the most used social networks in the world with numbers in the millions, classified by type. It is important to note the extensiveness, depth and features of this phenomenon, especially with regard to the socialisation of users, as indicated by the message of Benedict XVI for World Communications Day in 2013, where he says it is necessary to have "a careful understanding of this environment" as a presupposition for a significant presence in these new settings.

The metaphors we use to refer to social networks are significant in themselves. Technically they are computer programs, applications and technological developments which make use of the internet and electronic gadgets in order to work, linking nodes and terminals. However, we refer to these things as environments, settings, new territories, spaces, new continent³³⁸, etc. We suggest that these metaphors are significant because they try to express what these applications are for people. Basically, they are one more place where people can live, especially the young. Part of their lives are already reflected in these 'populated' areas where people interact and share what they also share in the physical world.

³²⁸ John Paul II and Benedict XVI, in their World Communications Day messages, have referred to them as the new forum, the new agora, existential space, new world.

When we speak of social networks we mean those social structures made up of groups of people connected by various kinds of relationships such as kinship, friendship, work relationships, common interests, involvement in common tasks. Social networks overlap and we can belong to different networks. The characteristic feature is that there are people in each of them who are connected and who share (relationships, interests, knowledge...).

This phenomenon of social networks is not something new; human beings have always created communication networks. Development of civilisation has gone hand in hand with these networks that have been extending and taking over our world. Technologies and media of communication have made it possible to establish these networks generating communication networks through media and channels belonging to each era. We need to bear in mind, as Manuel Castells points out, that the networks "are created not only to communicate but to take positions, to control communication"³³⁹. This is one aspect, the power of the networks, that we should not let pass unnoticed.

However, what has been happening in recent years? We found ourselves in a time of cultural and anthropological change with the arrival of the internet, but, especially since 2004, the communication world at every level has seen itself shaken by the development of digital applications which suppose a qualitative leap in how we use the internet and in the place that the Web now occupies in our lives. With the development of the internet and the evolution into the so-called Web 2.0, or the next step already on the way in Web 3.0, there has been a veritable explosion of social media applications. General social networks (Facebook, twitter, Google+), professional ones (Linkedin, Viadeo), closed or open, vertical or horizontal, are becoming part of our lives and users are increasingly using them to relate, be informed, share knowledge, and drag across into the virtual world the networks that already have existed in the physical world. But virtual does not, in this context, mean unreal, false or illusory. It is not a substitute for the really real, but a way of making it happen, like a possibility that is more than real³⁴⁰ through the technology employed (computer, network connection and social media applications) that allow for a different kind of socialisation "but not, for this inferior to previous forms of social interaction"³⁴¹.

This is one kind of socialisation that young people, digital natives, often use and for them the world of social networks is just one further part of their world. What does seem certain is that this way of relating "is becoming more and more important for those who navigate the

³³⁹ Castells, 2009, 52.

³⁴⁰ Cf. Lévy, 2001, 88.

³⁴¹ -Castells, 2001, 146.

Web”³⁴², parallel worlds of relationships that “from a psychological point of view do not feature inferiority or limits”³⁴³ compared with offline relationships. And it is usually assumed that relationships through digital gadgets have less clout or influence in individuals' lives than those in the *offline* or analogue world, face to face relationships. The Web is one more possibility for the same people to interact, not an isolated thing, but users bring “their gender, this moment in their life cycle, their cultural baggage, their status”³⁴⁴ to this type of interaction; their dreams and desires, doubts, their whole world, and even their faith or lack of it.

2. A COMMUNICATIONS TSUNAMI

The Internet revolution and, especially, the development of social networks is changing our way of communicating, our models of communication. They are changes that influence particular individuals and organisations. Today the 'addressee' of communication is more and more pro-active. We are shifting from mass media to a mass of communicators. The public are transceivers, senders and receivers of information, or “prosumers³⁴⁵”, who consume content but who also produce content.

As a Congregation we are aware of the changes happening in communication through digital technologies. Our life is affected today. Mass communication is changing, interpersonal communication is changing, along with our way of knowing, participating, collaborating, our way of seeing the world. And this requires an important change of mentality in our educative and pastoral activity which is a very prominent task of communication. There is a change also in the way we manage structures, the rules of the game are changing and people are looking for more involvement, two-way messaging, more transparent communication.

The social media or social networks are generating new forms of aggregation amongst people, and they force us to reconsider what community we belong to, what are the social agents to be found on the Web. At any rate we need to note that this “existential space³⁴⁶”, these new spaces for socialisation, and in these social networks, it is possible to pass on emotions, that means it is possible to connect with other people at deeper levels. Not all the contacts established are ephemeral, light and superficial, but they can involve people and touch them inwardly. However they can also generate weak socialisation or superficial kinds of relationships that lead one to think of the other as a mere link.

³⁴² Nardone – Cagnoni, 2003, 31.

³⁴³ Nardone – Cagnoni, 2003, 30.

³⁴⁴ Cited by Gómez, 2007, 83.

³⁴⁵ An acronym from producer and consumer.

³⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, World Communication Day Message 2013.

However the experts tell us that "the presence of a technological medium does not mean the elimination of the emotional and cognitive aspects of a situation"³⁴⁷, and it is possible to experience emotions online. For educators this is significant. Nardone and Cagnoni have looked at a range of psychological and sociological studies which suggest that the person interacting in a virtual environment through the Web, "can experience the same emotions and reactions that he would experience in a real situation"³⁴⁸, such that these kinds of experiences influence the offline lives of people. The possibility of experiencing emotions is, precisely, one of the attractions of this kind of socialisation. It is curious that in 2013, the advertising campaign for the vehicle producer Audi has this question as its slogan: "What's the use of technology if you don't feel emotional about it?". Besides, this kind of communication is informal and uninhibited. These things are both good and bad. On the one hand communication is fluent, avoiding some of the restrictions that social topics can have. On the other hand this absolute freedom of expression is not always well used, one can end up saying whatever one pleases without worrying about the consequences.

There are things that young people and those in our formation stages need to be educated to, such as the way people relate to these applications, the use made of them and the meaning and place they occupy in each person's life. There is a need to avoid a certain fragmentation of identity, dependence on applications and considering others as mere satisfaction of one's own needs.

Always bearing in mind the better and the darker side of human circumstances, the social networks dynamic of having more and more 'friends', followers, to reach out to more could lead to selfishness in people, especially in their profiles, so that everything seems to revolve around 'me' (my ideas, interests, life), excessive self-presentation. An active presence which comes from an individual's authenticity and coherence, which promotes dialogue and seeks to share with others, will help convert these social spaces, as Benedict XVI indicated in 2013, into places of exchange not only of opinion but they become places of communion, contacts in friendship, and shifting from the idea of connection to communion.

3. GOOD CHRISTIANS AND UPRIGHT CITIZENS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Our increasingly frequent presence in cyberspace requires us to give some thought to our digital citizenship. Whether in our life offline or online, we always have to preserve respect for the individual, safeguard human dignity. We should insist on this in formation: being aware of our

³⁴⁷ Nardone - Cagnoni, 2003, 27.

³⁴⁸ Nardone – Cagnoni, 2003, 29.

behaviour on the Web reflects who we are, and we need to bring our ethics, moral principles, our vision of the world and people here too. In the Salesian tradition, we are committed to the prevention of certain behaviors that may harm the integrity of individuals. That is why we consider education and formation of users to be one of the important aspects our Salesian education and ministry. This formation should begin with a technical understanding of new technologies and social media applications that are changing along with technological development, but we also and especially have to focus on the deeper aspects of behaviour and attitudes, how we are on the Web, why we are there, how we present ourselves and how we treat others.

Salesians, educators, our co-workers, leaders – we are all aware that a fantastic world of possibilities opens up before us for communicating at all levels. Education, ministry, catechesis, evangelisation also change as the people we are dealing with change, and we change, along with the changes in communications media. We are faced with an important anthropological change, a cultural change that offers challenges and urges us to be in these new spaces aware as we are of their importance in the lives of the young.

Digital technologies are a pastoral opportunity. The Church is highlighting the need to be present in cyberspace to evangelize this new territory and help create a culture of participation and collaboration, respect, deep communication. At the same time, like all human realities, we need to reflect on the implications and the positive and negative aspects that revolve around them.

Throughout Salesian formation but especially in initial formation, it will be necessary to tackle these issues, seen from the users' perspective and how educators of the young should help those whom we need to educate in these things. It would also be interesting in formation to develop communication habits and skills in digital environments so our presence can be more effective. At the same time it would be appropriate to encourage use of social networks in the Congregation to promote teamwork, exchange and knowledge management and best practices, and a more collegial approach to decision-making. We would then be more aware of the potential these applications have, besides entertainment or personal relationship. We would think of the influence they are gaining not just in personal relationships, but in political processes, mobilising society, consciousness raising. As a Congregation we still have some important progress to make in this regard.

As for aspects to consider, we can think of cyberspace as an ecology. That is, making the world of social media a habitable space,

one which now calls on everyone's responsibility for building up this new territory in a human way. It is this ethical behaviour that translates into a way of acting, and which should take account of at least the following:

Personal communication, good manners, being pleasant, courteous, correct expression.

Rediscovering the value of the word. Communication on the Web is, mostly, through written words. The word is an expression of who the person is. The value of truth.

Ethical reciprocity. There is a human being on the other side of the screen. Treating others as we would like to be treated.

Communicating and sharing knowledge. Personal responsibility for the veracity of what we share and contribute and building up knowledge by taking advantage of technology.

Faced with a wide range of opinions, respect for the opinion of others, but in a critical spirit and the courage to express it.

Concern for privacy and digital identity

We leave traces on the Web. The Internet is learning more about us, our trail on the Web is forever more clear, there is more information about us, more data on our lives, photos... each one's digital identity on social networks builds up as we pour in so much information about ourselves, our contacts, the people around us. And most of the time this information does not belong to us. At a time of Web presence, we need to take account of all this. Today the individual is the "portal", and we are part of a flow of information that we cannot always control. This is certainly redefining our idea of privacy.

In fact, except for reckless behaviour, we translate into social networks what we do in the analogue world. We share comments, photos, impressions, what we do, and think with friends and acquaintances. The networks multiply this practice. There is talk of an environmental intimacy, since, according to what we share with others, and these others with us, it becomes less problematic for others to see what we are doing or where we are. It is certainly true, and this is one aspect to educate people to, as it is the users who decide what to share and with who.

This is why we need to be concerned about privacy. We should ask ourselves what data we should put on the Web, what information there is about each of us flowing through the Web. If we have blogs, profiles, take part in discussion forums, comments in our profiles, photo albums, videos on YouTube... On the other hand, there are control technologies (cookies, passwords...) that collect information on the steps we take on the Web without our realising it.

And at the same time, be concerned for the privacy of others. At times we write messages or comments providing data on third persons without any authorisation for this. We need to be very careful with images, especially if they involve children. We need to be aware that we do not control what is sent or published on the Internet. Once a message has been sent or published or a comment made on a profile, we have no idea where it will eventually end up. We have to consider well what is published.

Another general principle relating to privacy is that the Web never forgets. Until there are laws controlling the power of users over content which speaks about us, whatever we put on the Internet (posts, news, comments, photos, videos) will remain there for years. We also need to be aware that the enterprises which offer us social media applications also feed off the information left by users for the purposes of advertising. This is information that is increasingly passed on, shared between applications and is part of the huge amount of information that moves around on the Internet, and which is archived and indexed for those who search for it. These businesses are very interested in the tastes, interests, behaviours that they get from users.

Internet users need to change two ways of thinking. One is the feeling of impunity, that what we do on the Web has no consequences, anything goes, we can say what we like about others... laws are now changing so that we can protect our right to a good image, reputation... especially where children are concerned. And the other is that everything is gratis. Other than paid services, when we download material or acquire new applications, what we pay is our personal information without even being fully aware that this is what we are doing, so we can "freely" use social media applications or search engines.

Pay attention to content

Internet allows any kind of content. It is somewhere where, much more than before, we need a mature and responsible exercise of personal freedom. For whatever we do in initial and ongoing formation in this direction, it would be helpful to give our confreres the up-to-date tools for being in this digital scene.

One issue not without controversy within communities may be the application of content filters on computers or servers. These could be helpful on public computers with open access but much more problematic for personal computers. And we need to bear in mind that now it is much more the case that people gain access through gadgets like smartphones, tablets and not through a common server; open wi-fi is much more common now. It would seem more helpful to insist on personal formation to responsible Web use, etc.

We need to strengthen critical thinking with regard to content, information... The ease with which we can use the Web can lead us to a shift from specialized knowledge (*episteme*) to opinion-based knowledge (*doxa*). Knowing how to discern, judge what we read, is even more necessary than before when information sources were more under control. Critical sense has to be applied to the major nodes in social networks, the most popular profiles and remember, here, what Benedict XVI indicated, that "truth does not equal popularity"³⁴⁹.

Especially in the early stages of initial formation, it may be interesting to teach how to find relevant content, what to look for, how to find it, how to evaluate the information found, and how to use the information found. Laws may vary from country to country on what can be downloaded. This practice may be against the laws that protect intellectual property and give rise to complaints. The same applies to the use of non-legal software.

Attention to time spent on Internet and with technology

Another thing to look at is how we consume internet and digital technologies. We dedicate a lot of time to study, pastoral work, community life, free time, etc. But an increasing amount of our time is given over to digital existence. Clearly digital technologies are becoming a greater part of our lives, and a part of our formation, leisure, ministry, free time etc., actually requires internet support, so we end up living and being on the Web.

One danger we can fall into is Internet dependency. This is why it is important to analyse the time we spend on the Internet, its quantity and quality. In extreme cases the Internet can cause addiction and paradoxically become an obstacle to social relationships and ministry....

We should also give thought to how we are consuming technology. The gadgets we are using, the applications, etc. This has a financial component that affects our community and personal choices. So we need to have some understanding of the business and sales strategies of technology firms and study how these affect our tendencies, the gadgets, hardware and software we use.

Technology use in community life

There are many gadgets we use both personally and as a community in our communities. The personal computer and mobile phone are already common things for each of us. They need appropriate use and we also need to be aware of the extent to which they isolate us. There could be a paradox in that we are using these things to communicate with people outside but we isolate ourselves from those nearest us, for example the community.

³⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, World Communications Day 2011.

One of the problems of our time is the anxiety of not being connected. It seems that we cannot exist without being connected always, everywhere. It would be good for communities to establish a few rules for use of gadgets during community moments and in community areas, aimed at facilitating community life; indicating areas and times when and where they are not to be used (e.g. turning off mobile phones in the chapel, leaving them outside during community meetings...).

4. A STYLE OF PRESENCE IN SOCIAL NETWORKS: SALESIAN ASSISTANCE

Don Bosco's educational system, the preventive system, which sees the educator working for the salvation of souls, in Don Bosco's language; a special kind of relationship between educator and pupil—family spirit; a typical place where the educational relationship can take place – the playground; and the basic pillars on which it rests – reason religion and loving kindness. All Salesian activity and mission operates from this perspective, the same regarding our institutional and personal, in social networks.

There is a typical and original Salesian contribution in the analysis and use of social networks: a positive evaluation though also critical, of the entire phenomenon especially where young people are concerned. In the Salesian educational tradition of getting close to the world of the young, sharing their languages, and places where they meet - like the playground or street or free time - it is fundamental that we construct an educational and evangelising approach where the educator becomes a companion on the journey for the young person. Salesian pedagogy places special store in things that are typical expression of young people like music, theatre or sport. Places and languages close to the young, when valued by educators and pastoral workers, have great potential for education and ministry. Social networks are one such place, with a language of their own which educators need to know how to profit by if they wish to remain with the young.

We need to be in these spaces because they are part of our society, our experience and that of people around us. Not to be part of them would be to stay outside of where people gain knowledge, relate with one another, interact, create culture and influence the progress of society. To stay outside would also mean not being part of the construction of a new culture, this new world. Like Don Bosco, as we will see in the last part of this article, we need to stay in the vanguard in the use of communication media, and do so courageously. Here is not the place to explain all the possibilities that open up before us, all the uses already employed – but we need to indicate the good number of initiatives in social networks around the world have been developing, the many functions that can be realised through these applications in our works, the service they

can offer for information and advertising, the exchange of resources or projecting our image.

Yes it is important to see that the criteria of the preventive system can enlighten, give some impulse to our presence in these settings. Here too what should be driving us is the effort to seek what is good for those for whom we work, their all-round education, in Don Bosco's language the salvation of the young and so they can be "good Christians and upright citizens". What drives the educator to launch forth and meet young people in these places is the desire to be the good shepherd, to accompany them where they are and this is precisely where we find them now. Rector major urged the Congregation to be in these "new playgrounds" where the young are. The playground is a Salesian place because it is where we meet up with young people and can share their life, their doubts, where the educator is at the level of young people, shows that he or she loves what young people love; and it is where meaningful suggestions for their lives can arise. And they happen to live inside social networks. When an educator and a young person shares friendship through a profile, they are both sharing that part of their lives that takes place in and around these networks.

We need to be aware of the increasing importance of sing life in social networks as they intertwine with the analogue world. Digital immigrants typically find it difficult dealing with these applications considering the nature and language proper to social networks, made up of brief messages, multimedia, their own kind of language, since they seem superficial, and don't seem to arrive at the person as such. However, in these networks we do what we do in our lives every day: share a link, suggest something to be read, talk of personal experience, offer a reflection on something or an opinion of a film or song, show interest in others' lives, etc. It means creating deeper ties with people in the networks and preparing other occasions for face to face encounter.

And our way of being there, of establishing a relationship, is the family spirit, *loving kindness*, which means valuing the other, creating an atmosphere of confidence where the young person knows that he or she is loved and that translates into a style of dealing with someone, the kind of relationship, interest in a young person's life. It is precisely in social networks that this aspect becomes most important, where one values an ability to relate and empathy between people. The new model of communication is based on participation, and collaboration. Marketing tells us, that success for companies that use social media is in the ability to listen and generate conversation with the users; knowing what their interests are, how they are and what drives them. These are also fundamental things for us. The Salesian who wants to be in a social

network with young people has to adopt the features of that game, which is an important change of mindset, and it requires a significant presence, since he has to understand that participation, sharing, collaboration, interactivity, listening are all important activities.

It is the attitude of the good shepherd who extends care to others. We do this in our style, our language, our way of being in these networks, the way we engage in debates or discussions with people that at times we do not know, but with whom we come into contact through a post, a comment...Benedict XVI spoke of a Christian style, and we would also say Salesian, of communication that is frank, open, respectful, responsible³⁵⁰; a way of being there which shows courtesy and has a lot to do with the God who speaks not through fire, or tempest, but through a gentle breeze³⁵¹, but caring for the other, which is also shown through attention to the other's online reputation, privacy and other technical aspects. There are two basic principles to bear in mind for this in our institutional or personal presence: honesty and transparency, which will result in authenticity. It is curious to see how this attitude, that the documents of the Church's Magisterium emphasise so much, matches what analysis of effective communication in social networks marks as being successful: the importance of generating confidence. This is why they have established the KLT rule: know, like, trust. According to this principle, knowledge of a brand, institution or person, works towards harmony between the user and this person, or brand etc., and generates confidence, and that opens the door to influence, sharing ideas, ways of seeing things, accepting principles of others, etc.

“Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel!”

We speak of a Salesian presence that is also evidenced by the content we offer in social networks. A good part of this refers to our activity, what we offer by way of education or information to make our services or products known according to the level or structure that our profile on the social network represents. However a good number of our interventions (messages, posts, commentaries, photos, videos), both personal and institutional, depend on who we are and what we do, how we see the world, people, what is important for us. Through all this we are giving witness to our faith, and this is the religious aspect that impregnates all our activity. In his World Communication Day Message for 2013, Benedict XVI called on young people to be missionaries in the world and pointed to two priority areas where they could do this: the world of the Internet, to evangelise the digital continent, and the world of the mobile.

³⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, World Communications Day Message 2011.

³⁵¹ Benedict XVI, World Communications Day Message 2013.

It is this invitation to evangelise this sixth continent that Salesians must accept as part of our pastoral task and that is to be reflected in the content to put in social networks. Through dialogue, speaking of the "truth and values"³⁵², our opinions, the way we present ourselves, we are evangelising. We do it when we show interest in the lives of people in the network³⁵³, when we are receptive to, proactive concerning what they share with us. We evangelise, obviously, when we make an explicit profession of our faith, or when we speak of the novelty of the Gospel and show the God of Jesus Christ alive in His Church.

We often ask how we can use social networks for evangelisation, what kind of content to share, what use to make of the networks. But from my perspective the prior question would be when we can evangelise, what I make evangelisation consist of. We need to be clear that when we present the Gospel in the networks, offer a prayer, clarify a doubt on what we believe, talk about the life of the Church or the Congregation... we are evangelising. But when I show interest in another's life, or ask how a certain activity went, or share a person's disappointment, success or problems, propose some social initiative or promote certain values: am I evangelising?

As well as these things which go to the root of our understanding how and why we would be in the networks, other more technical aspects to keep in mind in our Internet presence, and in social networks, might be:

Institutional sites and profiles

Portals, blogs, web sites or profiles in social networks belonging to the Congregation, Provinces, houses... They should present themselves as such and make their identity clear, who stands behind them, and the aims they are pursuing through this presence on the Web. It might seem obvious, but we have to insist that an institutional site is not the same as a personal site.

We need to think of our presence on the Web (in the many ways that technology allows for today) as an **educative and pastoral presence**. This criterion should guide content, our target group, the basis and shape of our presence. They are pastoral presences, though with a diversity of approaches.

If it is a case of profiles on social networks, or forums that allow users to make comments, it is recommended that they be "**moderated**", meaning that comments need authorisation before appearing.

³⁵² Benedict XVI, World Communications Day Message 2013.

³⁵³ Always bearing in mind the distinct types of relationship according to the kind of network we are in. It is not the same between friends on Facebook, as for followers of Twitter, or the different groups we can establish in Google+, or relationships of a more professional kind in something like LinkedIn.

We need to add contacts in social networks and assign them to different groups. Not everyone should be in the 'friend' category. **We need to differentiate by group**, and only give access to certain information accordingly. There is a broader category, (fans, followers) that establishes a looser relationship with users.

Personal sites and profiles

The Church insistently asks priests and religious to be **on the Web through** web pages and especially blogs and social network profiles. It is one kind of evangelisation, of contact with people, creating new playgrounds where we can meet young people. But it is recommended that we present ourselves as **religious**, explaining why we are there. There could be contexts that demand a certain reserve in this.

Those who are involved in youth ministry, education, etc., will often receive requests from friends to be included in their profile. It is appropriate to create groups to discriminate the information that each has access to.

One must be careful with the people accepted in one's circle. We must also say "no" at times to adding more contacts. Some time in the future we may want to eliminate ("unfriend") some contacts and this might be interpreted as a lack of courtesy ("you are no longer my friend"). Especially when dealing with children, we have to be very careful about the topics we deal with, comments written, photos and captions...

5. WITH THE EXAMPLE OF DON BOSCO, IN THE VANGUARD OF COMMUNICATION

In the Salesian tradition we contemplate Don Bosco as someone who knew how to use the communication media, technologies he had within his reach to accomplish his mission amongst the young; a writer whose style, content and formats were always marked by the target group for his mission: young people and the ordinary classes of people. It was the young and the need for education that he discovered in them, who were the reason for his taking on a huge publishing enterprise that marked his entire existence. He felt the need to set up publishing houses so he could provide young people with appropriate content. They were the characters in his books; the lives of the young and the urge to educate and evangelise them were the recurring elements in the thousands of pages the saint wrote; it was his awareness that he had been set to them that marked a style that could be "understood by everyone both for the

way he wrote, and his use of simple words and understandings"³⁵⁴. This was behind Don Bosco practice of reading what he had written to young people or his own mother to ensure that they understood what he had written.

This is a norm and way of acting for Salesians and educators in social networks. When we refer to these as "new playgrounds" we are saying they are places where young people are, our target group. And this is the place where the Salesian or educator needs to be to share his life with them. In Don Bosco's day there was no Facebook or Twitter, but he used books especially written correspondence, to be at their side. If we look at his letters we see there are three thousand or more and the collection is not yet complete.³⁵⁵ We discover that personal, very direct style of Don Bosco's in his correspondence with so many young people at the Oratory and others who wrote and whom he did not know personally. It is in these letters where we can trace the principles that drive Don Bosco in his mission, the type of relationship he wanted to establish with young people, and the basis of his education system³⁵⁶.

Today, at a time of posts short messages on Twitter, massive exchange of personal messages in social networks, Don Bosco could serve as an example of what to look for and how to use social networks for an educational and evangelising purpose. Many of the letters he wrote to young people were brief, a handful of lines, but written from the heart of someone who was looking to what was good for them and desired what was best for them as young people³⁵⁷. Today we might say they were almost tweets, a short text in a profile on Facebook of one of his boys which allowed him to be close and involved, a practical word for each one that allowed him to extend his educational passion well beyond the time that the boys were actually physically with him. This time, this relationship generated through a letter, was important for Don Bosco because it allowed him to continue that relationship with the boy. And, as if he had a Facebook profile or was answering in a blog, he would never fail to answer the ones who wrote to him because they had heard of him. An important and significant virtual relationship, if you wish, for sender and recipient, exchanging things in a communication that was also interactive in the sense that it generated a conversation, these responses

³⁵⁴ Graciliano, 2012, p. 149.

³⁵⁵ Motto, 1994, p. 5.

³⁵⁶ An excellent collection of letters especially educational content can be read in MOTTO F., Juan Bosco, cartas a jóvenes y educadores, Madrid, CCS, 1994.

³⁵⁷ On 20 January 1874, he wrote to the young working boys at the Oratory: "My affection is based on the desire I have to save your souls, redeemed by the precious blood of O.L.J.C. You love me because I try to lead you on the path to eternal salvation. Therefore the good of your souls is the foundation for our affection". In Motto, 1994, p. 204.

of Don Bosco's to letters from young people and viceversa. John Bosco esteemed this kind of letter-communication because it helped him get to know a young person more deeply, as he wrote to young John Turchi on 23 July 1856, "you did well to write to me; intimate things of the heart are best expressed in writing"³⁵⁸.

The use of communication media was, for Don Bosco, one of the priority areas of his mission and the Congregation's mission, and he even says it explicitly: "spreading good books is one of the principal aims of the Congregation. I beg and implore you then never to overlook this most important part of our mission"³⁵⁹. Don Bosco as a writer was responding to a vocation - "one of the main tasks the Lord has given me", he would say - with the desire to remain close to his boys through books and letters, the communication technologies he had at his disposal. In today's information society when technology is revolutionising the ways we have of communicating we are led to ask ourselves what Don Bosco might do with the powerful communication technologies at our disposal today; how he might use them to stay in contact with young people in order to save them; the type of content - messages - he might promote today in the various channels and what style of relationship he might maintain with his interlocutors. In my opinion he would launch into these new areopagi without fear with a view to being in contact with young people today, who are not all that different from young people at Valdocco, to make his wish come true: "that you may be truly happy now and in eternity"³⁶⁰.

³⁵⁸ Motto, 1994, p. 70.

³⁵⁹ Don Bosco, 318-321.

³⁶⁰ Letter written by Don Bosco to young people at the Oratory in Valdocco on 10 May 1884, in Motto, 1994, p. 242.

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MARKETING AND SALESIAN MINISTRY: IMPORTANCE, POSSIBILITIES AND RISKS

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HE WAS BORN IN TURIN, ITALY. HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE SALESIAN TECHNICAL SCHOOLS OF VERONA AND VENICE AND NOW WITH THE SALESIAN UNIVERSITY (IUSVE). HE IS ALSO THE PROVINCIAL DELEGATE FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS.

Linking marketing and youth ministry might seem to be a chancy thing to do, but in reality it is not. In this brief essay we will try to demonstrate the importance and evolution of marketing and its strict correlation with Salesian ministry, the various possibilities for evaluating and publicising the many activities run by the Salesian Congregation.

1. MARKETING AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Marketing is a complex science which in recent decades has developed and transformed drastically. When we usually think of marketing we connect it with how Philip Kotler historically defined it: *"marketing is a branch of the economy concerned with a descriptive study of the market and the interaction of the market with business"*. This definition has been surpassed now for some time, but it is what people think it is, and even more so within the Church arena.

Historically marketing has a negative connotation inasmuch as it is seen as a branch of knowledge that has to do with sales, so strictly tied to the commercial or economic world and as a consequence far from ministry and education typical of the Salesian Congregation. All that is overcome however for the fact that the same writer Philip Kotler when he re-edited his most famous work entitled *"Marketing management"* in 2007 defined marketing as *"identifying and satisfying human and social needs"*³⁶¹.

The American Marketing Association³⁶² defines marketing as *"an organisational function and a set of processes aimed at creating, communicating and offering value to clients, as well as managing the relationship with the client that generates a benefit for the organisation and all its members"*.³⁶³ Here a new relationship is introduced between the historical side of marketing, more tied to the financial aspect, and management, more tied to the anthropological, social, psychological and ethical aspects.

³⁶¹ PHILIP KOTLER – KEVIN L. KELLER, *Marketing management*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2007, 5

³⁶² <http://www.marketingpower.com/>

³⁶³ PHILIP KOTLER – KEVIN L. KELLER, *Marketing management*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2007, 5

So there is a new definition of marketing we believe is more correct for our field of analysis: **marketing management**. We could describe it as *"the art and science of choice of market objectives, as well as acquisition, and maintaining growth in clientele through creation, distribution and communication of a superior value for the client"*.³⁶⁴ This becomes a more social definition where marketing is part of a process in which individuals and groups get what they need through creation, offering, free exchange of products or services of value.

Peter Drucker, the famous American economist, maintains the act of selling in marketing is but the tip of the iceberg inasmuch as the purpose would be *"to make superfluous the sale of a product or service because the real purpose is to get to know and understand the client so thoroughly that the product-service is adapted to his needs in such a way that it sells itself"*³⁶⁵.

Trying to broadly adapt all this to a Salesian setting we could define marketing this way: ***"an action by which the work of education and passing on values of a Christian kind becomes so significant for the identity of a young person that it is the young person himself who asks for it"***.

Companies in recent decades have reinvented themselves as the market, the public, the target audience, the media, the social and psycho-anthropological have changed. So we have a new form of internal organization of marketing and therefore it is no longer a simple office in which the duties of economic organization are carried out, but it has become the focal point, we might say "the mind", where they strategic decisions are made to allow the company to remain significant in the reference market.

Marketing guides the business's mindset, its mission and strategic plan, and can function exclusively if all the other organisational aspects of the business work together to the same end. That should also be happening in a Salesian ambit where all the different settings should be working to the one end: administration, education, ministry.

Reflecting on the significance of marketing, defining it, finding a way to put it into action could seem to run up against terminology and language that is far from the sensitivities in the Salesian Congregation. The communicative choice of this intervention has been to remain faithful to a scientific language and epistemology typical of the science itself. But in the pages that follow we have to combine this with our pastoral experience Salesian world.

³⁶⁴ PHILIP KOTLER – KEVIN L. KELLER, *Marketing management*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2007, 5

³⁶⁵ PETER DRUCKER, *Il management, l'individuo, la società*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2001

1.1. THE FIELD OF ACTIVITY SEEN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Marketing management categorizes its areas of intervention into ten: goods, services, events, experiences, people, places, properties, organizations, information and ideas. Obviously not all companies develop or reflect on all ten classes for their commercial activity, and likewise the Salesian Congregation will focus on only a few of them, as we will endeavor to define and classify them.

Services are the principal activities of a religious, spiritual, educational kind which are typical of Salesian presence in the local area. This is what our founder Don Bosco asked of the Salesians and what the Church requires of the Congregation for our fidelity to the charism of the founder. It is expressed for example in the ecclesial service of management of parishes and oratories, through spiritual accompaniment of young people, or in the management of schools or universities where people are given the knowledge of a cultural and / or professional kind combined with human and spiritual growth ("upright citizens and good Christians"), or in the management of childrens' homes or places where they can recover from various addictions by rediscovering values young people have not had the chance to experience in their lives.

Events: all the "promotional activities" which happen regularly so that our target group (the young) know about the services we offer. Under this category we could list: our large gatherings (Youth festivals, meetings, vocation weeks, Face to face, ...). Each of these events, involving varying numbers of the target group, should be structured in such a way as to allow the service to be understood and significant for their lives.

Experiences: all the typical aspects of emotional marketing that come into play when the service is made more explicit. In the last decade emotional marketing has taken over as the experience that the target group has when it comes into contact with the 'business' or something which is strongly impressed on the individual and conditions future choices.

People: in the commercial area this is one of the major investments of marketing and concerns all activities, management or celebratory, that help create a "character". Today all these famous characters have an agent or *personal manager* with them that deals with their relationship with media and the target group. Each character should become a "brando" and so be easily

identified, recognised and acquired over time. At the level of the Church these days we can see how Pope Francis is, though maybe not consciously, working on this aspect of communicating himself as a consequence, the Church. Also Don Bosco invested much effort in identifying himself with the Oratory, to the point where even today society and secular individuals or even non-believers usually connect activity of young people in an oratory with the "character Don Bosco". The Rector Major too has a role which has changed over the years and today's successor of Don Bosco, Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, expresses this aspect of marketing in an exemplary manner inasmuch as he has seen how to construct his very own way of guiding the Salesian Congregation.

This celebratory and managerial aspect of building up a character can be found in any Salesian house which remembers Salesians who lived and worked in that house or perfectly incarnated this ability to identify themselves.

Places are strategic and fundamental for any business disseminating a service; its success very often depends on them.

The spread of the Salesian Congregation seen from this point of view of marketing (also here maybe unconsciously) has been wisely cared for over the centuries. It is no accident that today the Salesians can be found in many of the most significant States in the world, either for their population, their relevance or their economic difficulties. Places also become a fundamental communicative element for consolidating, or seeing further spread of the brand; here, religious orders have always been very successful if you just think of cities where tourism revolves around churches, monasteries, museums and ancient libraries.

Properties and organizations: unquestionably the property element of establishments where production activities take place is fundamental to guaranteeing autonomy. Every business over time tends to become part of an area by creating its own infrastructure which allows it to be recognised. Globalization in recent decades, however, has undermined this fundamental basis for marketing leading entrepreneurs and companies to lessen the relevance of this by focusing on cost savings (for example businesses which have closed some of their historical foundations to set up new ones in countries where labour costs and easier real estate arrangements make things much better for them at decidedly lower prices). Similarly the organizational aspect is closely tied to the question of property.

Salesians have always followed this entrepreneurial line so that in most places around the world Salesian works are the property of the Congregation. As we know this also brings certain difficulties with it, such as when we feel we are no longer able to offer a significant level of service in a determined area and there is a problem with selling the estate to reposition ourselves in more significant areas for educating the young.

Ideas and information: these are the heart of marketing activity for any business. Ideas are the cultural baggage of the business and need to be implemented and modified over time. An idea that turned out to be successful ten years ago might be decidedly obsolete today. This means an inseparable link between the idea that lies behind the service offered and the activity of communicating it, also known as information. It often happens today that winning ideas communicated badly produce a negative effect, while barely creative or innovative ideas, but well communicated ones produce positive effects. Is unquestionably an area where the Salesian Congregation has to work most of all to remain significant in its mission of offering an educational, pastoral and religious service through new ideas.

1.2 REFERENCE TARGET: YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH

These ten areas of activity in the Salesian world are necessarily aimed at a target of reference that can be divided into: **a primary target which is the young;** and a secondary **target which is the Church** (noty in order of importance but of a well-consolidated tradition).

Necessarily, in marketing activity one supposes that to obtain a service an element of exchange is needed. So the potential for exchange can exist five conditions need to be met:

1. two parties have to be involved;
2. each of the two needs to represent value for the other;
3. each party has to communicate and transfer the exchange value;
4. each has to be free to accept or refuse the exchange value;
5. both parties must see it as desirable or appropriate to exchange in the exchange.

These five things might seem trivial and obvious but in reality they are often not taken into consideration. If we were take the example of the service of faith accompaniment as offered by the Congregation then we might see these points as follows:

1. there has to be at least one young person interested in accompaniment of his faith;
2. Salesians believe the young person is a person and as such needs to be helped to discover and value his faith but at the same time the young person has to see that the faith is a value and that he can undertake this discernment with the Salesians;
3. both parties have to communicate and transfer this desire to accompany and be accompanied in discernment of faith;
4. after this communication has been set up both must be free to continue or refuse the accompaniment (this condition is usually viewed poorly by the religious since he often sees himself as being the expression of this faith or belief in God and the young person who falls out with the religious, decides to change spiritual director or even parish);
5. both the Salesian and the young person has to want and understand that this accompaniment should help both to grow.

The element of exchange in the context of the Church is not well appreciated and often creates frustration or pastoral disappointment. Young people live in a more natural way and might be led to think: "if I don't like it, why should I continue?"

But since exchange is integral to marketing we need to reflect more on our ability to carry out these five points as best as we can.

Where exchange does not bring the desired results for a business and the public is not buying the business sets up a survey to understand the reasons for lack of success and plan new marketing activity. This rarely happens for the Church. The planning takes place, but review and re-planning becomes difficult because things are understood as a judgement on individuals and not just as a failed service.

This can all be taken up again for the secondary target, which is the Church: what does the Church expect of the Salesian Congregation? How does the Salesian Congregation respond to instances of faith and morals proposed by the Church?

1.3. FROM CULTURAL MARKETING TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

One of the aspects of marketing to be borne in mind when planning something is the cultural aspect. **By culture we mean the capacity of the individual to understand the differences in perceptions or values and needs of society.** This step seems increasingly more difficult since it implies, anthropological, psychological and social understanding on the part of the one creating marketing management strategies.

The cultural market is of itself a “place of exchange” where the expectations and needs of whoever is offering a cultural service encounter those of the one who is seeking, as already shown above. The cultural offer for young people today includes education, information (libraries, archives), cultural events (congresses, festivals, meetings), published products (books, magazines audiovisals), radio and television products, multimedia, cultural production on the Web.

It may seem risky, but I believe it is very relevant, to connect this cultural aspects with the typical Salesian aspect: the educational, ethical, religious aspect obviously broadens the typical boundaries where culture is normally understood to operate within.

The facts speak clearly enough: there is a range of products and services of an educational, ethical and religious kind coming from people or places in competition with one another in the market place. It is a real market with a financial side of supply and demand, consumption and investment on the part of many individuals (for example anticlerical or pseudo-religious publications that earn revenue for a number of publishers; there are humanitarian and charitable organizations collecting donations; there are many sects and religious movements offering easily won happiness; there are so many non-profit groups working towards a more stable and healthy society). So the Salesian Congregation has seen the cultural market filled with many competitors who are financially, ideologically and strategically strong. So marketing techniques are needed to stay in the market and eventually bring about growth on behalf of one's situation. Relationship with the market becomes a basic element in the ability to find a place and productivity: this means bringing into play artistic, creative, commercial and distributive capacities to support marketing activity.

Since there are so many people in the market offering the same services why should young people choose what the Salesian

Congregation is offering? Can we compete with others who are more significant financially or more advanced in communication terms?

Traditionally in the Salesian Congregation we have considered a kind of standard intervention for every market, drawing on the results of consolidated experience over time and their effectiveness. In fact this has led to greater impact in places still working in terms of traditional communication, but we see a loss of significance where social, anthropological and communications elements are more advanced or technologically developed.

The challenge lies in diversifying what we do country by country since marketing is based on satisfying the different needs or desires of the client, and since they are typically cultural elements, an international marketing operator (like the Salesian Congregation) should seek close contact with local traditions and customs.

Just by way of example we should mention some of the human interactions to be kept in mind: language, non-verbal communication, body language, time, use of space, use and understanding of colours and forms, aesthetics, social status... If any of these is not kept in mind there is a risk of a potential pitfall for a successful communication.

So it will be necessary:

1. to have empathy with the culture we want to intervene in trying to understand what is allowed and what is not; it means fitting in with the communications *mood of the place*;
2. to know and understand what are things to accept, respect, improve, get rid of;
3. to not assume that elements are interchangeable because a superficial resemblance may hide huge differences (think of black and white in different cultures or that young people today do not so much see things in terms of black or white but white and blue).

It all requires a long and careful research that cannot be left to a single effort by someone with good will alone.

It is a case of linking standardization of a service offered with adaptation.

Globalization, postulated by the American economist Theodore Levitt in 1983, has led us to think that it is inevitable that

people will perceive things in a univocal, universal and standard way. This is not true. Large firms, while maintaining certain features of their products and services, know how to differentiate them in the various markets to the point where a new concept has developed known as **"glocalization"** which means common strategy at the level of positioning but tactical approaches are defined locally.

It is a case of carrying out global planning but strategic differentiation locally. This is also true for the Church. If the Congregation at strategic level outlines common planning elements for its services, individual provinces then need to define action plans aimed at their own target. This is what is commonly now called **international marketing**.

It is not all so simple and efforts to respond to the questions above are only possible approaches.

1.4. **FROM INTERNATIONAL MARKETING TO EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING**

A further development is need since it is essential to improve what has already been important in international marketing with what, since 2000 onwards, has been called experiential marketing. Joseph P. Pine and James Gillmore maintain that in today's market "experiencing services" is important beyond concrete activities which help a client benefit from a product or service, it will be necessary to involve them in experiences.

The *new global economy* at the beginning 2000 was in increasing crisis since there was an overabundance of supply and a lessening or stagnation of demand. Thus he need arose to stimulate demand through what became known as experiential marketing with the task of revitalising a product or service: *"The new supply, experience, happens every time a business intentionally uses services as a stage. If goods are interchangeable, tangible goods, intangible services are memorable experiences"*³⁶⁶.

Bernd Schmitt³⁶⁷, a lecturer in international business at the Marketing Department at Columbia University in New York, defines emotional marketing as *"The memorable experience the client needs to feel, to overcome his expectations, by anticipating unconscious desires and at the same time satisfying them"*³⁶⁸. He

³⁶⁶ JOSEPH P. PINE E JAMES GILLMORE, *The experience economy. Works is theatre and every business a stage*, Hup, Boston 1999

³⁶⁷ <http://www.meetschmitt.com/>

³⁶⁸ BERND SCHMITT, *Customer Experience Management: A Revolutionary Approach to Connecting with Your Customers*, John Wiley & Sons Inc, Hoboken – New Jersey, 2003

maintains that there are five kinds of experiences he calls SEMs or *Strategic Experiential modules*.³⁶⁹

These experiential modules are called "irrational purchase levers" and are:

- ***Sense experience:*** experiences tied to the five senses. Sight is stimulated through graphics and unusual colours; hearing through pleasant sounds; stimulate the tactile and olfactory senses. This happens when a young person during an event is involved not only at an intellectual and rational level but also emotionally. Sensory experience is the one usually not taken into account because it is considered of lesser value than the rational. This is not the case. At the time when a young person is involved through colours adapted to him or her and graphics close to the world of reference of a young person (e.g. the info-graphics in Salesian works that try to mediate content for the service in a graphical way, or school or oratory logos), or by using sounds that have an affective element to them (think of the difference in communication resulting from an amplified voice that always has a 'metallic' sound compared to the warmer sounds that result from simply working with higher or lower tones), or by creating welcoming places using natural rather than artificial materials (try sitting in a wooden seat rather than a plastic one, and the sense of warmth and welcome is certainly different).
- ***Feel experience:*** experiences involving the emotions and feelings of the target that result in someone feeling proud to be involved. Here we can recall the emotional and narrative style that Don Bosco made explicit in his oratories through the "good nights" for his own boys. In these older forms of storytelling³⁷⁰ the emotional elements come from body language, tone of voice, careful choice of words.
- ***Think experience:*** Cognitive and creative types of experiences. These work on targets that are well-equipped culturally. It is predominant in the Salesian setting given the theological, philosophical formation of Salesians which leads inevitably to a more rational approach to the emotional, but losing out on the very feature that should characterise the emotional aspect. We tend to find this more in Salesians who have some kind of administrative role (rector, economist, councillor) since it seems to be the best way of passing on

³⁶⁹ Bernd Schmitt, *Experiential marketing: how to grow customers to sense, feel, think, act and relate to your company and brands*, The Free Press, New York, 2006

³⁷⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling>

information, but it also happens to be precisely what alienates the sender (Salesian) from the receiver (young people) in that exchange.

- **Act experience:** experiences of a physical kind involving the target. These are historically typical of Salesian activity if we think of the playground where everything happens along these lines.
- **Relate Experience:** experiences that put the target (young people) in relationship with traditional groups of reference or social status. This kind of experience is on the wane in the Salesian setting where more attention is now given to the individual element of experience and losing out instead on what used be the characteristic element of Salesian spirituality: the group. In the Biographical Memoirs we often read that the boys at the Oratory even while having a group experience felt loved individually by Don Bosco. This aspect of the relationship is fundamental for young people for affirming their identity not only by putting them into relationship with the institutions (family, school, political) but especially with their peers in their many ways of communicating (like social networks for example).

After this brief analysis it becomes easier to understand how the experiential side of things is so fundamental for the target of reference of the Salesian Congregation: young people. The important thing is that these elements are implemented and then monitored since they are tied to the one who is proposing the activity and his human and social upbringing. We need to reflect more on this emotional part of experience.

May Salesians highlight the sentimental and emotional (think of the wind-up sessions at camp where this emotional side rides high), others prefer the intellectual (teachers for instance in school classrooms), others the physical (sports in school, oratory etc), and then there are those who work well with the group aspect.

The kind of experience usually less employed is the sensory kind since it is more difficult to plan for. But there is no doubt that giving young people sense experience is very important as it speaks a more direct kind of language without the need for cultural or intellectual mediation, and is therefore more memorable and has greater impact.

This experience can be achieved by using more colors, shapes, sounds and music, and tactile elements. Try to imagine an

activity that relates to the emotional relationships that can develop between young people when it is presented using the above elements: for example, you could use colors to describe the various forms of affection or love or a soft or rough texture to try out other sensations. Certainly, the experience is more memorable than using words of a cerebral kind because it is an experience of emotions.

It is well established that the level of communication in sensory communication can take advantage of synaesthesia. By synesthesia we mean when sense stimulation induces the subject to automatically perceive a second experiential mode without needing precise stimulation for that. An example would be what psychologists call "color hearing". In fact, every language has a metaphorical use of terms referring to the universe of perception that matches colors to emotions: red with anger, green with jealousy, yellow with envy. These synaesthetic metaphors allow the construction of linguistic expressions that use terms referring to a sensory modality to describe another sensation. In fact in linguistics and rhetoric when it comes to synesthesia for describing or characterizing perceptual experience typical of a certain sensory channel, we use terms that refer to another channel: *a sweet feeling, a painful vision, a high noise*.

Aristotle had already ordered the senses in order of decreasing cognitive levels: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch. This order is still the most widely used even in the experiences that famous brands offer to their youthful public, where the senses are mixed in different ways (here we could easily make reference to Abercrombie and Fitch clothing stores where a general darkness allows one to focus on the clothes displayed on shelves that are subjected to very strong light, and where the store is filled with sweet and poignant odours that almost intoxicate those who enter, and with rather warm temperatures to stimulate the aspect of physicality). This is well-established practice in concept stores of the big names at international level; you can enter a Nike Store anywhere in the world and always experience the same emotions and feelings.

We find something of this in Salesian houses (perhaps more so in Europe) where there is often a similar positioning of buildings: the church at the centre, and then off to both sides and usually in a rectangular scheme where there are the other buildings for various other activities, and a courtyard in the centre. Other than this, which we might term the *structural format of the real estate*

it would be necessary to develop other elements that use all the senses (for example in many Salesian houses with an amplification system outside there might be music and other sounds offering a particular rhythm to the day). The sensory experience when a young person comes into the house should make his arrival memorable and help him to think back on the impact it made on him.

1.5. FROM EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING TO SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

The experiences of young people today take place not only through presence or in face-to-face contact but many are mediated by the media. To achieve today's kind of sensory experience it is important to contact the target audience through social networks. These new media allow quick and immediate contact with the target and result in a new branch of marketing called: social media marketing.

Social media marketing has spread quickly since it costs much less than traditional marketing. It is the kind of activity using blogs, social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter), instruments for sharing photos or videos (Youtube, Pinterest, Instagram). The ease of entry into these new means of communication for companies and the target audience has resulted in a further element of success because they allow a direct relationship between company and customer that was not possible before. But while it can be a very successful form of communication, it can also result in errors with serious consequences which are amplified beyond the extent that might be the case normally.

2. POSSIBLE ACTION PLANS FOR MARKETING AND MINISTRY

After explaining marketing elements in their historical development and highlighting the various features, it is now important to establish and identify possible plans of action. As the Salesian Congregation has spread across the continents with their different customs, traditions, cultures and languages it would be almost impossible to outline everything that can be applied tout court. Here we will only attempt to give indications of possible implementations and methods which then need to be taken up wisely and prudently according to the situation.

2.1. ELEMENTS OF MARKETING TO INTRODUCE

Cultural, educational and religious offerings since the nineties have developed in different kinds of ways across the world. But all cultures have seen new economic or even non-profit factors

introduced which compete with the educational and pastoral services of the Church or religious Congregations.

This has created a segmentation (or even fragmentation) of the culture market and also the target audience (here we take greater account of our primary target: young people) has significantly altered in terms of tastes, habits, underlying ways of thinking. It is thus now necessary to reposition what we Salesians have to offer in the various markets.

Here we can introduce some minimal elements of understanding of marketing mix. By **marketing mix** we mean the range of combinations and controllable variables in marketing that business employ to achieve their objectives. They are traditionally listed as the 4Ps: *product, price, place or sales point, promotion* (communication).³⁷¹ These would be, for the Salesians: the product, which is education to faith and work; the prices is what we ask for this service (free or paid for); the sales point is the Salesian house; communication or promotion is all the activities has for promoting its services (often happens by word of mouth).

In addition to these four elements, positioning within the market is of decisive importance, as there are many cultural offers in competition with each other and which our target group finds it hard to distinguish.

Positioning is the concrete expression of the mission of the institution and is developed through implementing a plan that supports how things are set in motion, maintained in the market, and implemented. This creates a distinct identity for both the target audience and the entity itself. The positioning takes different environmental, social, economic, political and cultural contexts into account and assessing the potential and limits of human and financial resources that are available. These planning details must then be translated into short-term, intermediate and final objectives.

It is therefore important that the mission of the institution is clear and well-defined within the "specialization" that characterizes it. Thus we see more and more the need for planning and organization that is dynamic and flexible, priced appropriately, with high professionalism and capacity for renewal.

The challenge is to identify the correct positioning of the services that the Salesians offer in the cultural market. Though the mission might be very clear, there is not always planning and professionalism linked to continuous renewal. Here we highlight

³⁷¹ PHILIP KOTLER – KEVIN L. KELLER, Marketing management, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2007

some of the deficiencies in formation of Salesians that is aimed more at acquiring philosophical, theological and pastoral skills and neglects the professional and communications side which involves our target audience. It is metallurgy company which trains its employees recognise all the all possible materials existing in nature and their use, but not showing them how they have potential for the company and how they can be best used.

The positioning of the organization is also linked to the positioning of the product-service culture. To be well established in the market the organization should see to the following:

1. choosing factors that differentiate its service from others already in the market;
2. creating a product and service which responds to the target's needs;
3. supporting positioning with a correct marketing mix by focusing on the four key elements creatively and energetically;
4. identifying precise and effective marketing strategies;
5. finding consensus which involves other operators in the market and also the target group.

The marketing mix combination is usually what creates the most problems since the Congregation has usually worked more on its product (we can think of oratories, schools, primary right up to university, and which have responded so well to their circumstances), or on the price (taking into account what families can pay, or various activities in the oratory, and one interesting side of marketing analysis could be *fundraising*). We have also looked at our sales point (funds put aside to improve our buildings, for example), but it is the communications aspect that has been given less attention, especially given the overall *reputation we have built up* over 150 years since the Congregation was founded.

Given the significant change of circumstances, it is therefore necessary to work more clearly and effectively on the fourth element of the marketing mix: communication.

2.2. **MARKETING PLAN**

To achieve effective and successful communication one needs a plan that takes into account what has already been described above, both the positive and the negative.

The marketing plan is a written document that foresees a first step as the identification of market (our market) needs and our properly Salesian elements which can respond to these.

It should include

objectives: desired results listed realistically, synthetically, precisely and in hierarchical fashion (e.g.: making sure the Salesian work is well known locally for its outstanding features);

analysis of the competition: who are the competitors where we are operating who are offering the same services;

*SWOT analysis*³⁷²: finding the strengths and weaknesses, and evaluating risks and opportunities;

targeting: is necessary to identify the precise target reference that allows one to stay in a specific intended market segment (for example, young people might be too generic a designation because they are too large a target in terms of lifestyle and psycho-sociological features, so it needs to be broken down into age, studies, social status, tastes and habits);

positioning: is the process of defining supply for a service already shown above, and its main aim is to place its services in the public mind in a manner distinct from the competition's;

strategy: is the set of actions required to achieve the objectives and is made up of the marketing mix already explained above. The strategy must be very detailed and precise as to manner, time, budget and how it will be evaluated.

The marketing plan should be connected with what we already know as the EPP in Salesian communities (Salesian educational and pastoral plan).

2.3. NAMING

To effectively communicate a service in modern society, a determining factor seems to lie in the choice of a name to determine potential success. The choice of name is a communication factor.

Naming has the function of providing the target with a cognitive and emotive 'shorthand' for identifying the service which will satisfy desires, needs, requests. *Naming* (in our case it might be correct to say *re-naming* since we would be modifying already existing services) is primarily managing the brand, maybe resulting

³⁷² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SWOT_analysis

from a process whereby the strategy is to be creative and this creativity takes the shape of the chosen name.

This aspect of communication becomes important because it broadens what is already there. Let us consider the idea of the typical Salesian school in Italy, which might get called the "Salesian campus." This simple name change, however, brings with it an ability to communicate and introduces a different connotation because it draws on more international language which the target audience might prefer. Every Salesian educational community might have a school, playing fields, a bar or recreation area, which are the elements that make up the campus, but by calling it a 'campus' it takes on a different value than just calling it a 'school'.

It is not about just wildly changing the name of an activity or place that already carries great historical value but rethinking and refreshing the image of something that no longer works, or needs relaunching, or repositioning in the marketplace.

In fact, every name chosen for a service must be a clearly defined image which contains in itself, a story, a destiny and a meaning. For this reason, the choice of a name is the result of strategic marketing that takes into account both the quality of the service and its use in the established context. A wrong or inappropriate choice can lead to ambiguity, and adversely affect the Salesian image locally, so it is a task to be carried out with care and to be entrusted to professionals.

The choice of name also implies a graphical element to introduce to the market, that speaks about it and make it recognizable. The choice of color, shape, movement can produce significant impact that can increase the strategic value of the chosen name.

Naming thus helps to establish identity and helps in a cultural through linguistic or iconic symbols.

2.4. **WEB AND SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Undoubtedly, the advent of the internet and the emergence of social networks has changed the communication and understanding or placement of an entity extending it well beyond its physical presence.

Although much has been done in this area, the Salesian Congregation is largely in what is called Web 1.0. Almost all Salesian communities have a website, but for the majority of them it is static, not updated daily, graphically incorrect and with very poor

usability. Very few are looking to their web reputation, which is the image of the Salesian world that emerges in the Web and from its presence in social networks.

Usually this lack of interest is attributed to technological difficulty. I believe that the Salesians (rectors of houses, those in charge of the oratory, catechists, principals or bursars) need not necessarily be experts in communication. Their role is the thinking part; but they may be surrounded by young people to whom they can entrust "creative and communicative" activities, since these young people are digital natives.³⁷³

There is a lot of do-it-yourself activity going on in this area which is not the best choice given the competition, creating a coordinated image of the organization: here too there is need for a strategic plan in order to position ourselves in this market.

I list here some of the things that need to be kept in mind in this area: web site, web reputation, social network.

a) **Web site**

The Web site is the organization's external image (and a much broader one than it has externally locally). If we paint the walls of the oratory because they are dirty or old we also have to "repaint" the website and not leave it untouched since the day it was first constructed.

The site:

1. must have an attractive graphic design, with colors and shapes related to the target we want to achieve (the institutional website of a Salesian house will be simple and elegant, while the oratorio will be colored and moving)
2. needs to be updated daily or weekly;
3. provides information on the activities carried out by the organization;
4. tells the story through photos, short articles or interviews, brief sentences;
5. the "book" where the history of the place is told (not enough just to put "who are we" or "our story", but needs updating);
6. the target group needs a place to interact (blog, newsletter, mail), where the institution dialogues with the outside world.

So the site becomes a kind of digital chronicle of the house and needs to be entrusted to a confrere just as the paper chronicle would be.

b) **Web reputation**

The reputation of a person or institution develops more on the web than in print or through "rumors." Everything that seems to be ignored by the Salesian world. Large companies are investing huge amounts of capital to monitor and improve their image in the web. Most of the time we do not know it, but the image of an institution can be destroyed on the web because the latter applies the "law of the jungle" and not that of the truth, so also untrue facts or actions can become real in the web and tarnish the institution.

There is a simple tool offered free by Google, called 'Alert' can send you a message each day or weekly, by email on any content whose key words you have indicated. A Salesian could have it for his name or surname, the school, official roles. So if false items appear it is at least possible to be aware of them and intervene.

c) **Social networks**

Undoubtedly the advent of social networks has led to a significant change in the modes of communication for young people. Being digital natives they have an innate ability to handle the grammar of new media. For adults instead these skills appear to be difficult to gain and understand as they combine these new media with the virtual and 'non-real'. This idea is largely overcome because the virtual is "very real" for young people (think also of cases of bullying perpetrated in social networks that now are being punished both in terms of law, but also by school administrators in schools). It has changed the way people interact and how the information is conveyed.³⁷⁴

The spread of social networks has led businesses to abandon an approach based only on service to concentrate more on interaction with the client. That has determined adopting communication strategies which take account of the evolution of new media. This is how social media marketing has come about, an approach focused more on the consumer than just on service. Thanks to the spread of

³⁷⁴ HENRY JENKIS, *Culture partecipative e competenze digitali. Media education del il XXI secolo*, Guerini e Associati, Milano, 2010

social media every individual can be an influence factor for others, but we also have to avoid committing the opposite error, that of focusing over much on a single aspect. This kind of marketing marketing along with the 4 Ps traditional approach already discribed, is the 4Cs: *content*, *connection*, *communications* and *community*.

Content: in social networks as well as constant presence it is important to create a constant flow of attratctive content strictly tied to the needs and interests of the target group. This is the first aspect to be working on because it is what creates trust and credibility regarding the information provided.

Connection: the way of connecting with the public in question. Not all social networks are equal and not all are used in the same way. Each organization has to create a network of contacts which takes into consideration the people who "influence", those with an important following who influence others through their behaviour, and enter into contact with these.

Communications: this is the most difficult area to do something about since it is not just about transmitting messages but monitoring feelings, impressions, and other considerations concerning the target group, differentiating information to bring to their attention. It is important to succeed in interacting in the shortest time possible since the connection is more emotional than rational and intellectual.

Community: there are groups or individuals who engage in discussion on various topics online. They can be groups that have already been set up or they can be created ex novo. Tolday a lot of information is gained by being part of a group or community who can help understand what's going on in the discussion (for example teachers discussing school or students who discuss the good and the bad of their education).

In the social network era an organization's success cannot ignore the 4Cs of social media marketing: creating the best possible content, seeking to connect with the target group, maintaining a model of communication which is appropriate and starting from the online community to which one belongs.

Social media marketing is different from other types of marketing because it allows organizations and clients to interact and comment on any kind of item; it is a substantially new system for getting advice or feedback.

This is a novelty compared with traditional marketing which often relegates the consumer to a mere spectator, but it requires a great ability to interpret the data collected. Reactions of the target group to this innovation in marketing is still an object of study and is a challenge when compared to more traditional relationships, but it certainly reproduces on the Web, at an anthropological and social level, what was already happening a few years ago prior to the advent of Web 2.0.

Social networks cost almost nothing and can largely be used by the Salesian Congregation. I will try to hypothesize some strategies to apply in the most important social networks: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, Fousquare.

Facebook

Unquestionably the most widespread social network in the world which can allow one to reach a massive target. Some uses could be:

For the Salesian: Facebook personal profile can be a place for evangelizing, but also for education. It is necessary to pay particular attention to its use so that "what is posted tells a story". What the educator pays attention to in his usual setting needs to be the same in the social networks and what is written can be memorized and saved, even though he might cancel it. So special attention needs to be given to photos and state legislation in this regard, for example permissions where photos of minors are concerned.

For the Salesian work: it is possible to create a place in Facebook where people can register when they come. It might have already been created by someone so it will be necessary to add information regarding the most important data. It is also important to create a group or fan page so different targets can be reached in smaller groups that can all be reached at the same time (for example the kids divided into groups by age, interest etc...).

In both cases, the platform makes it possible to receive a notification every time someone writes something and distinguish different news items to be made visible. The place and the fan page can be have work appointments, or allow sharing articles published in the official website, posting interesting articles, launching surveys or requests. The purpose of using Facebook for the Salesian should not be to replace face to face encounter but as a way to reach the target.

Twitter

Twitter is a social network created in 2006. The name "Twitter" is derived from the verb to tweet (meaning "chirp") but it is also the technical term for any updates in the service.

The peculiarity of this service is that the tweet can only contain 140 characters. This has led to a capacity to synthesize what you have to communicate, something that earlier social networks had not been able to do.

Short messages from Twitter can be labeled with the use of one or more hashtags that are concatenated words or combinations of words preceded by the pound sign (#). Tagging a message with a hashtag creates a hyperlink to all the recent posts mentioning the same hashtag. This allows you to build a set of views and ideas on a given topic.

Twitter is already widely used in high schools where students guided by the teachers can explain a viewpoint on a topic using a summary hashtag. On the pastoral level Twitter gives you the ability to create discussion topics, and be able to interact immediately. Many oratories and Salesian houses have their own profile officer and a hashtag that allows interaction with the target group. The possibility of using more than one hashtag means that you can simultaneously reach increasingly specific groups.

Youtube

Youtube is a web platform that allows the sharing and viewing of videos. Its rapid development in partnership with major television companies has allowed a massive spread which little by little is supplanting the use of television itself. On Youtube you can find a lot of material that can be used

in ministry since, we remind ourselves once again, the use of images, video or music is much more communicative than just spoken language.

Many Salesian houses have already opened their own channel on Youtube. The channel is a place where you can upload as many videos or animations as are created or produced. It is important that every Salesian work has its own video presentation that tells briefly (maximum five minutes) who the Salesians are, the life they lead, the peculiarity of their mission and the 'extra' education they offer.

Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr

Another winning element of communication is the use of photographs that tell of different experiences. In communication, what is visual can communicate more than spoken language since the semiotic level allows a more connotative identification with the product, more emotional and sentimental too, where meanings usually go beyond the object itself (in this case the photo).

The advent of the mobile device (mobile phones, smartphones, tablets) has put into the hands of young people a much greater chance of capturing the important moments of their lives, something that before could only be saved by a camera.

Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr are applications or sites that permit sharing of photos and categorizing them by TAGs or hashtags. The narrative that can be achieved through the use of photographs has a very big potential and is still not well exploited.

Foursquare

In addition to telling a story through images, or words, young people also feel a need to come together and the social networks meet this need. Then there is also the aspect of gaming that is spreading more and more, and geolocation. In 2009 a social network came into existence with these features: Foursquare. Through the game mode users who own a mobile device may indicate their position and possibly write comments and post photos of the place. It would be important for every Salesian Community to enter their

oratory and their school and then monitor what is published. As managers of the 'place' they can also offer promotions or facilitate entry for those who register through a checkin. The checkin is possible only when someone is within 50 meters from the place but it could lead young people who do not know the Salesians to at least see the place, where it is, and maybe eventually attend.

3. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this essay on the importance of the Salesian Congregation focusing on marketing to improve and diversify its educational and pastoral activity some explanations are needed:

- entering into marketing and the thinking that lies behind it is not so simple and rather than make mistakes it might be better not to do so; the damage caused could be worse than other communications options;
- marketing strategies suggested and presented for use here are not just for a single channel but should be tried in as many places as possible;
- it takes time and effort to succeed;
- especially in the beginning it is advisable to rely on professionals with the intent to learn and then later move independently, but update yourself constantly.

Some Salesian works are still tied to traditional marketing while others have already moved into social media marketing. This is not to follow the fashion of the moment but to reflect on what is most needed by the individual situation in order to be of greater witness to the faith and the spirit of education which Don Bosco asked of his members and the Congregation itself, so they could have much greater impact on their local area for the benefit of young people

I would like to propose, as a final key for reading all the above, what John Maeda, a video & graphic designer from MIT in Boston, says in his *"The Laws of Simplicity"*³⁷⁵: reduce, organize, time, learn, differences, context, emotion, trust, failure...

These simple words can guide the Salesian Congregation on its way over the next few years and inspire Salesians to try to put into practice what has been illustrated in this essay.

³⁷⁵ JOHN MAEDA, *The laws of simplicity. Design, technology, business, life*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2006

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THEOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION

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INTRODUCTION

We are just 50 years from the singular ecclesial event of the 20th century, Vatican II, and are by now firmly part of the 21st century. Avery Cardinal Dulles, prominent theologian and commentator of that earlier era, was of the mind that 20th century theology was largely a reaction to the influences of print culture on the Church's faith and held that the church "cannot wall itself up in a cultural ghetto at a time when humanity as a whole is passing into the electronic age".³⁷⁶ In *Models of the Church*, possibly still today the work for which he is best known to the ordinary student of theology, Dulles included a step back to the 19th century and recalled Vatican I's implicit theory of communications as being concerned foremost with institutional relations inside the Church where the hierarchy teaches authoritatively as *ecclesia docens* and the faithful accept, and learn, as *ecclesia discens*.³⁷⁷

Today we need little convincing that it is no longer print culture but digital culture that is influencing faith, and that despite all the shenanigans that at times go on as part of internal Church relations, the real challenge today is that we are all situated in a context of global communications and face formidable challenges from pervasive all-encompassing communications, inside and outside the Church. We are undergoing a change at anthropological level affecting our way of perceiving reality, our relationships, and this is tied quite directly to technological change in the realm of communications.

That is one way that theology and communications can be seen in relationship to one another. But do we want theology simply to be a reaction to communications, even if we make that sound nicer by calling it reflection on communications? There is enough evidence in the Church's reflection over 50 years (where the dominant figure constantly calling us to this reflection was Blessed John Paul II) that, as Dulles once put it, "the Church is

³⁷⁶ Avery Dulles, "The Church and the Media," *Catholic Mind*, 69/1256 (October 1971): 6-16

³⁷⁷ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1987)

communications",³⁷⁸ and he was making a theological statement here rather than suggesting that the Church has adopted communications technologies in significant ways. Nearly fifty years of papal messages on communications, which now include Pope Benedict XVI, himself no slouch in theological reflection in the field, also leave us in no doubt that theology and communications have more than passing importance for faith and life today.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communication (henceforth PCCS, initials following the Italian translation of its title and used as such in their web address) has promoted and encouraged theological reflection on communication since the Second Vatican Council's call in *Inter Mirifica* for such thinking, an effort first systematically undertaken in *Comunio et Progressio* in 1971 and subsequently continued with *Aetatis Novae*, though this latter was a pastorally oriented document. We are anxiously awaiting a promised new reflection which must be at least in advanced draft stage by now.

In 2011 the PCCS conducted a symposium in the United States (Santa Clara University, California) on how theologians might reflect on communication and information technologies and the new culture that they create. They focused on ecclesiology, historical theology, and a theological understanding of digital culture. This symposium delved into a range of issues that have already been part of exploration by Salesians in various parts of the world, and by the Social Communications Department in Rome. Topics such as 'media ecology approach', seeing value in 'hacker ethics', the 'virtue approach' which we can find back as far as Aristotle and subsequently Thomas Aquinas, are not unfamiliar to us as we help our Social Communications Delegates to understand and fulfil their ministry.³⁷⁹ So we can see that the Church, and the Salesian Congregation with it, really does want to come to grips with the issues involved. The Santa Clara Symposium, incidentally, had a Salesian presence in Fr Frank Lever, at the time Dean of the Communications Faculty at the UPS, Rome.

The *Salesian Social Communication System*, in its second edition (henceforth SSCS), opens with a preface by the current General Councillor for Social Communications, Fr Filiberto González, who makes a theological claim for communication: speaking of the 'digital continent' he says "This 'continent' needs the manifestation of God's love... a Salesian communicator with spiritual depth who can bear witness to God amongst young people in today's digital age".³⁸⁰ That Salesian communication is to be an occasion for divine encounter is the particular import of this statement in its context of

³⁷⁸ Avery Dulles, "The Church Is Communications," *Catholic Mind* 69 (1971): p. 13

³⁷⁹ In this respect we could mention Julian Fox, *Digital Virtues*, (Lulu, 2007) and *Hacking the Way to Heaven* (Lulu, 2009) both published in English and Spanish and subsequently serialised in *Divyadaan*, Journal of Philosophy and Education, 2009-2011. There is also an unpublished paper of his relevant to the issues: "Trekking the Digital Continent".

³⁸⁰ Filiberto González, preface, *Salesian Social Communication System* 2nd edition (Rome, 2011)

evangelisation and education. The SSCS then adds an important new section called simply 'Communication', which states explicitly that it is "Jesus the Perfect Communicator", the principle of Incarnation, who is the basis of our theological understanding of communication.

Questions remain, nevertheless. Can we so simply assert an intimate link between theology and communications? Could the Salesian 'gift of the Spirit' exist without this dimension? Is communications yet another subject that has to be taught in our Salesian context, and at what level or levels, specifically? And assuming it has a place in theological studies, where does it fit most appropriately — under Moral theology? Fundamental? Christology? Of course we can point to our Ratio, to the SSCS and other documents for responses to these questions, but they are questions, or at least some of them are, that go much wider than our Salesian context, and we cannot be so sure we have the right answers anyway! What follows is an attempt to clarify the issue for ourselves and, if not to answer the questions raised here and others we may have, at least to provide some direction for dialogue.

THEOLOGY, COMMUNICATION

Language matters. There is a difference between 'theology of communication' and 'communication theology'. A prominent commentator in this area of communication and its relation to theology (or vice versa) is Franz-Josef Eilers SVD. He is decidedly against the term 'theology of communication', which he says sounds like "an initiative to 'baptize' the Mass Media and Mass communication to bring them into the flock of Christian Faith".³⁸¹ We need to clear the ground a little and at least know what it is we are talking about.

By way of a summary of writings on communication and theology over recent years commissioned by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACCS), Paul Soukup SJ explores the various ways in which 'theology' and 'communication' can come together:³⁸²

- 'theology of communications': theological reflection on communication
- 'communicative theology': encounter with God from a human communications perspective
- 'communication theology': communications as a hermeneutical principle for theology
- 'theological communication': communicating theological content, perhaps as in evangelisation.

³⁸¹ Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission* 3rd edition (Logos Publications, Manila, 2009)

³⁸² This and other commentators referred to here can be found at <http://www.pccs.va/index.php/en/news2/contributi/item/735-theology-and-communication-in-dialogue>

He goes on to say that it might be best, in the end, to just use a simple conjunctive 'theology and communication'. He adds that whereas in the past, theology was the queen of sciences (and we know that philosophy was regarded as the handmaid to that), today's academic world would not take that view. Instead communications and media play the role of mediation in general, including between our life experience and our act of believing; they are better known and appreciated in academic terms today, so it is at least timely and sensible to see communications as a mediator in our *Fides quaerens intellectum* (theological) efforts today.

Soukup belongs to the 'media ecology' approach, an approach that accepts that we live in two contexts that are constantly interwoven and interweaving: one is the context of media and today especially, digital culture; the other, for the believer, is the context of faith. Rather than begin from a perspective that there may be a clash between these, media ecology sees that they are bound up with one another, and we can move more easily between the two contexts if we accept this ecological approach. You will see that our own SSCS 2.0 takes the same point of view, making no fewer than twelve references to a 'communications ecosystem', at one point taking the term 'system' dear to Don Bosco himself, and saying "Today we have no hesitation in describing this as an ecosystem".³⁸³

Of the theology and communications approaches listed above, only 'communication theology' seems to suggest that communication may have intrinsic theological import. It is one thing to recommend various communications processes as useful for theological reflection, or to reflect in theological terms on these processes, but it is quite another to see these processes or some of them at least, as providing insight into our understanding of God. Lucio Ruiz, writing in the same collection commissioned by WACCS, makes a statement of fundamental importance when he says:

It is not technology that creates this communicational dynamics, as communication belongs to the deepest human reality. Therefore, our reflection must start off from an understanding of the personal being's ontology as a 'communicative being', because God made us in His own image and likeness, and as such, we are human creatures that are capable of having dialogue with one another (Cf. Gen. 1:26), capable of establishing relationships and thus capable of communicating with God and with others.³⁸⁴

The original reality of communication, then, is theological because, in the first instance, it is an action that can be applied to God, which is what we do. Eilers, in his already cited *Communicating in ministry and Mission* demonstrates

³⁸³ SSCS, no. 33

³⁸⁴ Lucio Adrian Ruiz, "Finding a theological base for communications", *Media Development* 3/2011 (Cf web reference in Fn 7 to view content)

the difference between Vatican II's *Inter Mirifica* (1963), asserting the right of the Church to use contemporary media, and *Communio et Progressio*'s (1971) approach which is already beginning to look at the role of social communication in human society. Then, from a 'theology looking down on communications' perspective, he arrives at a 'communication as a theological principle', one where all of theology is considered from the perspective of communication.³⁸⁵

SEEKING HELP FROM COMMUNICATIONS SCHOLARSHIP

If we are prepared to assert the theological import of communications *per se*, then it makes sense to seek out appropriate guides who are both knowledgeable and perceptive about communications, and open to its intrinsic *fides querens intellectum* possibilities. One need go no further than Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian, convert to Catholicism (after coming into contact with the writings of people like Chesterton, Lewis...) and an extraordinary communications guru of the 20th century. He knew his Aristotle and Aquinas better than many of the clerical scholars of his time, and applied this thinking to his own novel perceptions of what was really going on with contemporary communications processes. McLuhan's communication scholarship cannot be fully appreciated without first appreciating his Catholic Faith. He had a Catholic sacramental imagination — baptism and communion first, but he believed that God uses the tangible things of this world as a means of grace. Of course, the implication of this for him was that 'electronic communication', as he called it, was anti-sacramental. We become disincarnate bodies on the telephone — an idea now very much more reinforced by all of our 'virtual' experience online. McLuhan's importance for the 21st century lies in this kind of insight. It suggests we reaffirm our belief in an incarnate personal God in Jesus Christ as the only real way forward for true communication. McLuhan's best known dictum is "the medium is the message". What commentators often fail to quote is what he has said of that very dictum on at least two occasions: (1) "*In Christ, Medium becomes message. Christ came to demonstrate God's love for man and to call all men to Him through himself as Mediator, as Medium. And in so doing he became the proclamation of his Church, the message of God to man. God's medium became God's message.*" (2) "*In Jesus Christ, there is no distance or separation between the medium and the message.*"³⁸⁶

In other words, without going to the theologians first, we already have indications from good communications scholarship that communication theology might well be located with those tracts of theology where we primarily study Jesus Christ: Fundamental theology and/or Christology.

³⁸⁵ *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, pp. 19-21

³⁸⁶ The former was recorded in a footnote of W. Terrence Gordon's *Marshall McLuhan: Escape into Understanding*. It comes from Raymer B. Matson's "The Christian and McLuhan", an article published in a 1968 issue of *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*. The latter was what McLuhan told Pierre Babin, a French Catholic media analyst in 1977, which was included in *The Medium and the Light: Reflections on Religion* published in 1999.

There is something attractive about McLuhan's insights, once we understand the place his religious convictions have for them. and we Salesians have much we can learn from him as we try to tease out the exhortation of the Councillor General's about being adequate manifestations of God's love. That is a truly Christ-like competence! But it must also be obvious by now that if we are to gain some understanding of McLuhan and for that matter of other scholars in the communications area, and if we want Salesians in formation to begin to appreciate the importance of communication for their work of evangelisation and education (both of which McLuhan was vitally interested in), then we need to find room for that to happen and more, we need direction from our own governing and animation entities (be they departments or whatever) as to how to best achieve that.

Communications is too central to the Salesian enterprise — it is charismatically so, we already know from the Constitutions — to allow it to be subsumed under some general notion, be it youth ministry, theological formation, general services, or other. It might be at the heart of theological formation today, but it is also at the heart of just about everything we do as Salesians, especially our catechising ventures, since our Society began "as a simple catechism lesson".³⁸⁷

Establishing some directions for ourselves

If there has been the equivalent of a Copernican revolution in progress (we are too close to it all to be able to discern much further or to say that the revolution is already over!) which has profound anthropological consequences, it must be accepted that much of our Salesian documentation possibly represents an earlier viewpoint -that the kind of new thinking, new positions, new realisations that emerge from such a revolution are yet to find their way substantially into these documents. That's just reality — not a lament. It all takes time. But it does help us be more aware of what might need to change.

Print is no longer the exclusive or normative medium in which knowledge is produced. Theology should have no difficulty with that, despite being strongly tied to print for six hundred years! But if our theological teaching today is, in fact tied mainly to print, then that is problematic.

The Congregation's Ratio will of its very nature draw on time-worn traditional principles and largely leave to supplementary documentation its application to rapidly changing circumstances and different cultural situations. But that does not mean we should not take a very close look at even the 'time-worn' principles in the light of more recent insights (e.g. of people like McLuhan who reinforce, for example, the importance of training the senses — an idea already found in the Ratio but maybe in need of greater insistence).

³⁸⁷ Biographical Memoirs IX, 35

There is almost certainly a need to look at the possibility of some bridging set of disciplines in our formation curriculum, certainly at an earlier stage, before specific formation (theology or further study for Brothers). These can be fully-fledged courses or at least units involving approaches taken from digital humanities, an emerging discipline which is an array of convergent practices linking, or capable of linking history, philosophy, linguistics, theology... They look at integrating technology, study, research, teaching. They also have a preference for open standards, shared knowledge and are not radically print-based approaches. If Salesians can be formed in a digital humanities way they are likely to be concerned about preservation of born-digital materials (which by and large our confreres are not too concerned about at the moment, in practice), will be interested in peer collaboration (which fits in nicely with the increasing rhetoric about 'family', 'networking' in our recent documents), will be more alert to popular culture as expressed in multimedia, interactive games, other visual media, none of which they will see as mere entertainment. They will see a variety of theological disciplines coming to bear on digital technologies, and vice versa.

If digital culture is a new, created culture, the result of technological advances, then it becomes a way of life. Our consecrated religious, Salesian existence is also a way of life. There are potential clashes between the two. The key is integration. In *Vita Consecrata* John Paul II stated that formation "must include every aspect of Christian life. It must therefore provide a human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation which pays special attention to the harmonious integration of all its various aspects".³⁸⁸ Personal, convergent media, various other communications process need personal and integrative formation strategies.

Finally, the whole area is so complex, continuing to rapidly evolve as part of the very nature of technological advance today (therefore the culture it creates continues to evolve rapidly), that it would seem impossible for us to tackle things without specific and regular guidance from our Congregational Centre. What form this takes is an open question, but it is a *sine qua non* of our continued effective presence to today's world.

³⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 65, (Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996)

ORGANIZING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE PROVINCE USING THE SSCS³⁸⁹

FILIBERTO GONZÁLEZ, SDB

HE WAS BORN IN TEPATITLÁN MEXICO. AFTER HIS STUDIES IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, HE WAS ACTIVE IN YOUTH MINISTRY OF THE PROVINCE, BECOMING NOVICE MASTER AND THEN PROVINCIAL. HE IS NOW COUNCILLOR FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN ROME.

In one of my visits to a formation house in South America, on the office door a young Salesian priest there was a large red poster with white letters: "the world has changed.... so must we". The poster struck me for its simplicity and forcefulness. Having had an experience of social communication in a formation context, it encouraged me to take a photo of it which I still have. I asked its owner "why did you choose this poster and why have you stuck it up on your door?

The young Salesian responded: "for what it says – exactly that". He then explained that it was an advertising campaign for the most important newspaper in the country that had recently gone Web 2.0. Amongst other things he also told me that Salesians have to change and follow the rhythm of young people today much more decisively. We have to walk with them, be renewed by them, seek God together with them, dialogue with them in the languages they use. We have to live where they live, learn new ways of relating to them and use the same technologies. This recently ordained salesian was not yet 30 years old. He was right.

This fact inspired the introduction to the new edition of the SSCS: "Everything changes, only God remains forever. "Today, in the new era of communication, this is more apparent than ever. Not only have new technologies evolved, but they have influenced culture: how we relate to God, other people, and with nature, how we sort out our values, produce, distribute and acquire assets; how we make sense of life and make it fulfilling"³⁹⁰. A year after the SSCS was published, disseminated and studied, a postnovice in a country in Africa, after being part of a communications course offered by a member of our Department, wrote in his final writeup: "we cannot deny this invitation, only God is absolute, His love for us never alters. It is equally certain that if everything changes, we too have to change in order to be communicators of His Love for the young in every era".

³⁸⁹ DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO, SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT, Salesian Social Communication System, Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation, Second edition, SDB publishers, Rome, 2011.

³⁹⁰ IBID. p, 9.

This is why, in the Congregation and in each of the confrere, I can say that there is a need for a change of mentality in personal, pastoral and institutional communication. This is not just a strategic exercise; it is an all-embracing change that enables us to continue being faithful to the vocation God has called us to and to the mission he has entrusted to us. The General Chapter 26 (GC26), after offering a brief analysis of circumstances in the new frontiers, observed: "The sensitivity and commitment of the Congregation regarding social communication has grown. Signs of this for example are the setting up of the Faculty of Social Communication at the UPS, the various projects of education to critical use of the *media*, the growing presence of institutional sites on the internet, the greater familiarity with computer networks both for personal exchange and for distance learning, the new arrangements for the Social Communication Department. However, we are aware that there are still many virtual worlds inhabited by young people which we are not able to share with them and those animate them, through lack of formation, time and sensitivity."³⁹¹ This is why it appealed for a change of attitude: "to confront the needs of our call and the challenges coming from the situation and to carry out the following guidelines: it is necessary to change mentality and modify structures, moving from a timid approach and sporadic presence in the media, to one of more responsible use and a more incisive educational and evangelizing animation".³⁹²

When we speak of a change of mentality, we are referring to a transformed and unified way of thinking, feeling, and an energetic, consistent and faithful way of acting with regard to the charism God has entrusted to us in the Church. Given that our vocation and mission is not just an individual, but also communal and institutional, this change of mentality is an ongoing need for everyone beginning with initial formation. Therefore, to be faithful, we don't just keep on doing the same things forever, nor do we just uncritically rush into whatever happens to be new. We need to walk with Don Bosco and the young and know how to interpret our times through the Gospel. After the Special General Chapter one phrase came into regular use: "with Don Bosco and with the times, and not with Don Bosco and the young people of his time".

The principles, criteria, ideas need organization, structure to bring them down to earth, without which the urgent change of mentality will never happen in real terms. This is why we are fostering study and application of the SSCS in the Congregation on the basis of shared criteria which then become real through four equally important areas of convergence: animation/formation, information, production-enterprise, Artistic and Cultural Heritage. The simple image of a table could help understand and apply this creatively and professionally in each Province. The upper part unifies the four areas of activity, without them being separated or going in different directions. For their

³⁹¹ Salesian General Chapter, *Daha nihi animas*, cetera tolle, no. 102

³⁹² Salesian General Chapter 24, no. 104

part the four areas of thought and action sustain and keep the 'platform' part balanced and harmonious, so it can achieve its objective.

PLATFORM AND BASIC CRITERIA OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE PROVINCE

My five year experience in the Congregation as Councilor for Communication has encouraged me to present, before talking about organization, some of the fundamental criteria which we often forget due to the accelerated apostolic activity we are caught up in which then gets separated from its most important basic roots. For us, in the social communication area, without a deep spiritual experience and proven vocational solid foundations, our field tends to head in the direction of individual effort, appearances, relativism and superficiality. This is why I see it as urgent that every Salesian, as evangeliser – educator - communicator, feels, knows, and manifests himself always and everywhere to be a man of God, a disciple of Jesus Christ, as Don Bosco was.

Following the SSCS, the person is the point of departure for communication, a person ever more open to dialogue and able to overcome mere level of information and using things. For us the media is not the center, however necessary it is.³⁹³ We know that people are more than machines in what identifies us as persons, especially in the ability to establish relationships expressing ideas, emotions, convictions, decisions, actions, and symbols. All this is show and is perceived, not only through words but also through other kinds of language like body, space, choice and movement. Our personal communication with God and with others is at the basis of our warmth as human beings, and this is essential for our consecrated life, our fellowship in community, and our apostolate. It is here that we can be prophets of God and of fraternity in a world often closed-in oneself, fragmented, individualist and selfish.

When we speak of the centrality of the person in Salesian communication, we fix our gaze on Jesus Christ, communicator of God and man, the perfect communicator³⁹⁴. Our calling to life, to be sons with the Son, to live the Gospel radically, changes us into his disciples, imitators and communicators. He is the beginning middle and end of our communication. This is why the Eucharist is indispensable for the Salesian communicator, for the core of his spirituality, an experience of a vital and meaningful space. We are nourished by the Eucharist and recover our strength there, proclaim the Word and listen, strengthen our fellowship and renew our sense of mandate as communicators of Jesus and his Good News. The Salesian is witness and communicator to what he has seen and heard, what he has touched and felt as renewed through the Eucharist

³⁹³ DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, *Salesian Social Communication System, Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation*, Second edition, Editorial SDB, Rome, 2011, p. 12.

³⁹⁴ DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO, SSCS., p. 13.

shared with the Son of the Father, his brothers: "Something which has existed from the beginning, that we have heard and we have seen with our own eyes, that we have watched and touched with our hands, the Word who is life – this is our subject"³⁹⁵.

Entering the specific field of Salesian communication, we confirm that it springs from the mission, passion for God and passion for the salvation of the young, the "da mihi animas, cetera tolle". This is how Don Bosco experienced it and described it from the mother house when he was catechizing and preaching sermons. Later he organized theater, music, told his dreams, wrote letters and books, all in popular, simple language and consistent with his priestly life. Salesians, like Don Bosco, seek God and Jesus whom sent so they may be known and loved by the young; and young people must still feel they are loved by God in Jesus Christ, that they are important for the Church and in the Church³⁹⁶. This is why Social Communication is not something external to the Salesian mission, but comes from that mission together with other sectors, all necessary and all complementary. According to the Letter on Good Books³⁹⁷ and in the spirit of Article 43 of the Constitutions, it is more accurate to say that the mission that God entrusted to Don Bosco carried the communication sector within it. It is not something foreign, coming from without or chosen as an appropriate strategy, but belongs to it and cannot be excluded. It is from here that the Salesian, like Don Bosco, is an evangelist, educator, and communicator by nature³⁹⁸. This is reaffirmed in this new era of communication where the digital continent is the one teenagers and young people inhabit most; they are the ones we are sent to. In most Salesian of continents we must walk with the young and be where they are. It is there we have to communicate God's love: if we don't do it, who will? Surely God will see that it is done, but our Salesian identity and vocation may well be compromised.

In recent years we have been more aware and have spoken with greater conviction of the need for coordination and teamwork between sectors of the mission. The relevance of this approach was highlighted and proposed for study in the GC26 document:

*Having considered the complexity of the Salesian mission; seeing the need for greater coordination between the Departments for Youth Ministry, Social Communication and the Missions, especially for animating sectors of shared activities; asks the Rector Major with his Council to promote interdepartmental animation teams for these sectors and entrusts the coordination to one Councilor or another, in each case safeguarding the unique and organic nature of the Salesian pastoral ministry*³⁹⁹.

³⁹⁵ Jn. 1, 1-3

³⁹⁶ Cfr., Jn. 17, 3; Const. 34.

³⁹⁷ DON BOSCO, Circular Letter on spreading good books, 19 March 1885, Epistolario, vol. 4, pp. 318-321

³⁹⁸ Cfr., Const. 43.

³⁹⁹ GC24., no. 108

The unity and coordination of sectors on behalf of the Mission is a charismatic need that, far from impoverishing it, enriches and increases its identity since they all flow from the same charism as their source and walk in the same direction as their goal. This also demands a new mentality, a new way of living and organizing and forming ourselves in communion with other Salesians and laity of different ages and cultural provenance. As we can see, it is not an indistinct mixing together of sectors to make a single new one, but bringing them together to express the unity for the same Salesian mission in every age, while respecting the content, methods and contributions specific to each sector.

Another essential criterion in this platform is the personal attitude of the Salesian communicator. We are aware of the fact that "we communicate who we are" and "we cannot but communicate." These communication principles are a strong call to the authenticity of life of the Salesian communicator, his clarity of purpose, vocational identity, in all areas and at all times. Pope Benedict XVI, in his message for the 45th World Communications Day, entitled: "Truth, proclamation and authenticity of life in the digital age", June 5, 2011, states:

Also in the digital age, everyone feels the need to be a genuine and thoughtful person. In addition, social networks show that one is always involved in what communicates. When exchanging information, people share themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, their ideals. So, we can say that there is a Christian style of presence also in the digital world, characterized by a frank and open communication, responsible and respectful of others. To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content in different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one's own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgments that are fully in accord with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically. Nor can we post a message in the digital world without a consistent witness of the one who proclaims it. In new contexts and new forms of expression, the Christian is called to answer whoever asks the reason for their hope (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

GC24 made it clear that the "Salesian religious and lay people share the same spirit and the same mission." This is really enriching in the field of communication. Our presence and contribution is more than technical, but has always been of an ecclesiological and charismatic in character, thereby continuing the momentum that began in Valdocco for *channelization* and education of young people in need. Religious and lay people have much to offer and much to learn from each other, but always for the evangelization and education of young people living in a new reality and therefore requiring new witnesses and new apostles to accompany them in the world of communication. The Salesian mission and institution, given what has been said earlier and

especially in reference to the SC dimensions, needs the presence and support of lay people who are aware of their baptism and identify with Don Bosco, the Congregation and the Salesian mission.

The final and no less important criteria of this platform: professional quality, identity and significance of our communication. Don Bosco was already very demanding about this. Once he saw that it was part of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission he could not afford to be left behind, or on the margins, since he needed to defend and sustain the faith of the people, and felt the need to evangelize and educate young people. His pastoral passion turned him into a great entrepreneur to win souls for the Lord. He bought a paper-manufacturing factory, competed with large businesses in Turin, was a publisher and writer, creator of renowned bands, promoted theater, founded the Salesian Bulletin, involved the clergy, politicians and business, many people of good will who sympathized with his plan. Quality, identity and significance as the Salesian brand is its greatest guarantee for the future, and will allow it to inhabit the same cultural and technological areas that young people and ordinary folk do.

AREAS OF ACTION FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE PROVINCE

The platform mentioned above rests on four pillars that constitute the organization and the basic structure of SC in each province: animation/formation, information, production/coordination of our enterprises and the care /promotion of artistic and cultural good.

1. SC ANIMATION/FORMATION IN THE PROVINCE

The Provincial Delegate for SC

If in our criteria we affirm the centrality of people, it is in the way we organist things that this is confirmed. It is almost impossible for life in the province and energy in a sector without choosing someone to animate it. It is up to the Provincial to delegate a Salesian, or lay man or woman to work in the sector. The Delegate has to be given the time, training and resources to enable him or her to encourage individuals, communities and works with the help of a team and a plan. If a layperson has been appointed as Delegate (AGC 411, orientations and guidelines), they, salesian must recognize and respect his/her position and professional service. The mere appointment of Delegates without real possibility to exercise his task leads to frustration, loss of interest and damages the image of the sector which they are delegated for. The delegate must

be full time. The fact is to be seen as an investment and not as a loss, since our recipients live, just like us, in a world of communication that is becoming increasingly important in all fields of society.

The SC Provincial Team

The Provincial also officially appoints a team made up of Salesians and lay people specifying their roles and functions, and letting both them and the confreres in the Province know this, as well as other co-workers in the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) in each work. The team's work is one of reflection, animation, support, planning and evaluation. People need to be chosen on the basis of experience, preparation, their ability to relate and work in a team.

Coordinating sectors of the mission

At the beginning of the (school, pastoral, whatever) year it is essential for there to be a meeting between delegates for sectors of the mission so that, using the OPP (Overall Province Plan or strategic plan), they can agree on objectives, processes joint activities and opportunities for collaboration through the year. There they can set up a calendar of meetings in small or larger groups and agree on the nature and aims of such meetings. From this first meeting they can then draw up specific programmes in each sector so they can act together towards the same end with the entire province and supported by the Provincial who has delegated a sector of the mission to them. There are already good examples in the Congregation where delegates for youth ministry, social communication and the missions live and work in the same community, plan and evaluate together, and share activities and processes, without falling into the temptation of either being uniform or being independent.

Province Social Communication Plan (PSCP)

The delegate and his or her team should draw up and periodically review the PSCP (Provincial Social Communication Plan) according to the priorities of the General Chapters and the needs of the locality so that they are clear about the aims, processes, activities and indicators for results. They agree on a programmed set of meetings to reflect, plan, evaluate, to ensure there are visits to communities and works. The PSCP is presented to the Provincial for his approval and he himself establishes the dates for it to be presented to the Provincial Council to inform them and receive direction.

Overall formation: priority of SC

Initial and ongoing formation remains a priority for SC, and is its future, because it is not just about having businesses or generating information, but above all to be a communicator -regardless of the media at hand or the media to be used- and to create meaning and opinion. The delegate and team have to devote their best energies and much effort to formation, always working in coordination with the Formation delegate and his team. It is not just occasional workshops, but issues concerning everyone and raised systematically in initial and ongoing formation in each of the provinces or centers where our young Salesians come from different provinces and countries.

The Provincial Formation to SC Plan (PFCP)

The PSCP is drawn from, amongst other things, the PFCP. The basic content for formation to SC can be found in the SSCS. The book contains what was drawn up jointly by the SC Department and Formation Department. It is a simple but essential item that requires constant reflection and needs to be put into practice by teams from both sectors, and that is why it is good that there is an official document at the province level which both departments draw up and have approved even by the General Council, and that demands formal and official application in the province or formation centers. The document and its application need to be tackled by both sectors in timely manner and should not be overlooked by either group. In its elaboration and putting it into practice, this Plan should bear in mind the strict relationship of the essential Salesian dimensions: evangelist – educator – communicator.

Levels of formation in SC

Formation, following what the SSCS says, must have three levels: a basic level given during initial formation, the next practical level of those working in and promoting the Salesian mission, and the level of specialization. Needless to say, formation to communication involves formators and those in formation together. In the SC field everyone learns. It is necessary that at least two Salesians are specialized in SC so there can be quality, continuity and balance with the other sectors of the province.

2. INFORMATION

In the area of information we are working to show the relevance of the mission and its specific public face as well as its being the *raison d'être* of the Salesians as an institution, both internally and externally.

This is why we need organization and official coordination of trustworthy and well-prepared people holding this responsibility, people able to work systematically and in a network, wanting to communicate and able to inform, open to human relationships, capable to work as a team, and able to overcome the pressures of that office.

Official information

Institutional information in the Province demands an efficient and clear flow of official information. Starting from within, it opens out becoming visible externally through information from the Provincial and the Delegates of sectors - towards the religious communities and works, and from these to the provincial and between the works themselves. It is also necessary to identify, and to inform everybody, who are the local correspondents and who at the provincial Center, handles the press office and public relations, and who has been appointed as the official spokesperson for the Provincial to interact with the Church, with the local media, as well as with the Congregation. These roles can be well-prepared Salesians or lay people on contract. It is very important to be aware that we live in a world where everyone, through whatever kind of media, can create and share information.

We opt for quality and security of information

New technologies have facilitated an increase in information but not always its quality, content or depth, nor complete truthfulness. As a Congregation we choose to offer information which has depth, truth and beauty, which can compete with and overcome mere informal, shallow, cultural consumption with little basis in truth. Hence the importance of selection and development of our staff. Formation for us is not just a matter of good management and knowledge of new technologies and new languages, but includes being professionals committed to evangelistic and human growth.

Information following between Province and Generalate

The Congregation is an evangelizing and educational organization working in 130 countries of the world. It is a global reality not always known for the beauty of its unity and communion in diversity. It is up to the Provincial Delegate to get local information which is of international interest to ANS. The political will to share what there is, what is done and experienced in every Province, fosters a sense of belonging, participation and communion for those who make up the institution. With regular quality information about the province offered and received, we can set

up a Salesian network of communication that reinforces the identity and vitality of the charism. There are three media we need to make known in particular and see to their improved dissemination: the Salesian Bulletin, the annual Salesians Magazine, and Web sites. These three means of information and institutional image depend on the involvement, promotion, organisation and for their distribution on the team. It is one of its priorities.

Province information for the Church and the world

Any institution needs a dynamic press office. Being part of the Church and sharing its mission, being part of society and contributing to its humanity, we are open and interact with other Church and civil elements like newspapers, magazines, radio, TV programs, not just when we are called upon, but anticipating our offer of information and making ourselves known. It is up to us to construct our image and create public opinion without waiting for others to do it for us or to destroy it for us. We do much good, and we cannot stay confined within the walls of our works. Nowadays an institution like ours has no public value unless it creates opinion on youth, education and human rights. We are not to be satisfied with creating good internal environments, but want to influence the quality of society because this is the climate we all breathe: young people, their families, our co-workers and we Salesians. That is the basis for fostering or if necessary defending the image of the Congregation, the Province and our local works.

3. PRODUCTION AND COORDINATION OF OUR ENTERPRISES

Production as a consequence of our Salesian criteria

This fourth point usually comes first in the minds of the confreres and the organization of the provinces, but it should be the result of the whole platform and the first three areas of activity. These are clearly the Salesian charism and vocation, good provincial leadership, continuous formation in SC, ability to communicate and report. It is these that decide what media or means we need to have and use, what we need to produce and how we should coordinate the enterprises, and media productions the province has chosen, not just someone's brilliant idea! Individual production without provincial or national coordination leads to fragmentation of strengths and objectives.

In this fourth area, again we need team work at the province or national level urged on by the common mission and the local situation. We are talking about production enterprises and traditional media and new technologies. When we say production we mean not only offering

a service for internal consumption (Province or Salesian Family), but for external apostolate and consumption. Thinking only and especially of reduced levels will lead to the death of SC enterprises. Today the only ones that can survive and compete are the ones that work professionally and are up to date, that work with others and produce for a broader public. Without this new mentality even the good that we do internally will cease to happen.

We speak of enterprises and production both in terms of traditional means of communication and the new technologies. Provinces can produce according to their circumstances, possibilities and interests: different types of books and magazines, poetry, musicals and songs, theatre, mass events, radio and TV programs, photography, video, infinite content in the social network, etc.

Coordination of enterprises

It would be a good time to begin by saying that the criteria established in AGC 390 (2005) on “Guidelines and indications for Salesian publishing”, are still in force. We continue to speak of communication “enterprises” understanding them to be “works” with an educational and pastoral aim in mind. These “works” do unimaginable good when their educational and evangelising products reach thousands of people both within and beyond traditional Salesian works. Thinking of them only in financial terms means reducing them to a profit factor, and with this logic the moment they run into difficulty “we have to close them”. This was not Don Bosco’s idea about these enterprises or works; it is enough to read his letter on “Spreading good books” and article 43 of the Constitutions to enter into another concept of work which benefits the faith of the people and the education of youth.

Recent General Chapters have spoken of the need for new, flexible presences which can allow us to reach out to our beneficiaries in a variety of ways. Given what has been said, the various communication enterprises, a province might have, need to be professionally coordinated bearing in mind the ultimate objective, Christian culture, evangelist of the People of God and education of the young. Overall coordination is up to the Communications Delegate, Bursar and the Youth Ministry Delegate in agreement with the Provincial and his Council. What is important is a joint and balanced effort among cultural and Christian communicative perspective, financial administration and Salesian ministry, with clear statues, not aiming at financial gain but nevertheless professional and self-sustainable, and with clear Christian and charismatic identity. These enterprises need to be part of the OPP inasmuch as they belong to all the confreres, and need to be under a healthy and necessary control.

The transition from analogue to digital, with all that implies for a change of attitude, technology, financial arrangements and media laws in various countries, poses serious challenges to our media enterprises. This reality requires continuous updating of staff, the cooperation of competent lay collaborators, professional creativity and the unification of the communication and educational enterprises within a province or country and even among different provinces and countries.

Our communication enterprises need to open up in order to conquer new markets of the education ministry. This is about taking our products and values outside the walls of our traditional works and present them to those who do not know us or have never visited our works. But this presupposes that the Institution is the first to accept and use the products of our province, and that our institutions are partly responsible for the promotion of our enterprises. The identity, the unity and the quality will keep us in existence and relevant at the service of the Church and society.

The nature of our enterprises and its production involves dialogue and information among the Sectors of Social Communication and Economy and all the more, the government of the Provincial and his council.

4. CARE AND PROMOTION OF ART AND CULTURE

After the GC27, the care and the promotion of art and culture has been integrated to the SSCS. The integration of this area to the SSCS does not require explanation because it speaks for itself. This does not only involve the artistic patrimony and cultural heritage of the Congregation in each of the provinces, communities and local works, but also involves the development of art and culture of the present and future areas where the youth are present, and therefore where the Salesians and our collaborators will be present also. This legacy must be cared for, cataloged, studied and promoted because it belongs to the Institution and not to the individuals who are changed after a determined period of being in charge of a particular work. Included in this heritage are the works of sculpture, painting, music, theater, photography, video, museums and buildings among others. The services of the sectors of the secretary, history, social communication and economy will collaborate in the compilation, organization, promotion and the cataloging of this heritage.

We speak not only of material objects or documents, but also digital, as they are most at risk of disappearing or of being given less importance.

The SC Delegate, in coordination with other Sectors mentioned above, will dedicate time to cataloguing and classifying material systematically and scientifically. This leads to priority in restoration and investing in what is needed to maintain historical and artistic works that belong to the Province and not just to a community or a Rector. This sort of work needs professional staff.

In the area of documentation it is imperative to save paper archives and see that they are converted to digital, acquiring a new mindset for a new way of preserving provincial archives as well as local ones. Preservation of and care for chronicles and various books that testify to the development and life of works and communities is a duty of conscience for anyone appointed as secretary or chronicle writer. The Provincials through their secretaries and delegates need to save all kinds of digital information (in its various media: paper, Photography, video recording, digital) in external memories (disks, whatever) one for the public, and another that perhaps only they know but need to be passed on to their successors; they have to be careful to catalog documents and scan works and the old printed photographs and give them appropriate meta data (place, event, date and persons); our elderly confreres can have an important role in doing this task. New digital photographs must reach the secretary with such meta data as: date, event, place and people concerned as a minimum. This is a work of SC together with the secretary and/or those responsible for preserving Salesian history.

As a conclusion

In principle, 0a Salesian is a communicator — just like Don Bosco and we always talk about a Salesian who is, as Don Bosco, a communicator. With this conviction we want to overcome the temptation to reduce the practice of Salesian communication in having enterprises or in the use of media to provide immediate information on what is happening or in being omnipresent in the social networks. Instead, the practice of Salesian communication involves the whole person in relationship with the community, born from the vocational identity and authenticity of life, is seen in the visible witness in various media and in the sharing of content and symbols that have quality.

With the development of new technologies, new cultural art forms appear, new languages and modes of communication, some are ephemeral and fashionable, others have solid foundations and with the possibility of continuation and deepening. The new vocations and the young Salesians come from this continent, and have been using these media; they have the knowledge and mastery of these new languages

and communication tools. Some of these Salesians possess a particular artistic, cultural and communicative sensitivity must be supported and formed. These are not to be considered as hobbies of personal interest, as distractions from the mission, as was believed at one time. Instead, these are the new cultural, social and pastoral fields where we will live and mature in our vocation and mission along with other Salesians and collaborators and with the young people who inhabit this new continent. It is impossible to live outside these areas, and the vocation and mission are conditioned by them, as they have also conditioned our ways of relating with others and with God, our concepts of space and time, our work habits and consumption, our ability to know and learn, our moments of fun and meeting our way of feeling and value.

There is an irreversible movement, everything is changing: culture, technology, society, people, the young and so ourselves too. This is the context and people requiring from us a new mentality, a new formation and a new Salesian, a new way to assess, organize and structure communication -unified and in accordance to the SSCS and the frames of reference of the Youth Ministry and Missions. All the sectors are born from the same charism and in function to the same mission.

In our Congregation, independent of the enterprises, the media, the languages and the communication tools in use and its updating, there must be the Salesian, with a passion for God and for the salvation of youth, always and equally an evangelist, educator, communicator.