



DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

Via della Pisana 1111 - 00163 Roma

Il Rettor Maggiore

**FOR THE ATTENTION
OF PROVINCIALS AND THEIR COUNCILS,
SUPERIORS OF VICE-PROVINCES AND THEIR COUNCILS,
AT THEIR RESPECTIVE ADDRESSES**

My dear Provincials and Superiors of Vice-Provinces,

To all of you who have the responsibility of animation and government of the Provinces and Vice-Provinces, I extend my greetings and brotherly affection through this message, which is official in nature but informal in style. As Rector Major, I wish to communicate with my brothers - the Provincials and their Councils - through this letter and not through the official organs we have, such as the Acts of the General Council. That means will be used for another kind of letter.

The reason for my writing at this time when we have concluded the meetings of the General Council, is to inform the entire Congregation, through you, about some matters concerning our family, animation and government. I am convinced - and this is what I shared with the members of the General Council - that this manner of communicating among ourselves, every once in a while, does good to everyone, and in the first place, to myself.

It is for this reason, since I want my message to reach as many confreres as possible through your kind service, that I asked for help in translating it in as many languages as possible (and left it to each Regional Councillor to see that the translations arrive in the languages proper to his Region). The languages are: Italian, Spanish, Latin American Spanish, English, Portuguese, French, German, Korean, Vietnamese, Polish, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Russian, Guaraní, Catalan, Galician and Basque.

At the same time, I wish to inform you that the circular letters of the Rector Major will continue to have their usual purpose in mind. As for their frequency, I have been considering the reflection offered me at a certain moment by Fr. Pascual Chávez when he said that he had been thinking for some time about the appropriateness of issuing only two circular letters a year, that is, one every six months. One would appear in the middle of the year and the other on the occasion of the Strenna. I am personally of this opinion since the experience of our life in the Provinces shows us that our daily rhythm of life does not always allow us to assimilate the letters and documents that arrive.

Therefore, the frequency will be as follows: there will be a letter of the Rector Major in mid-year, and a second one at the end of the year (which is traditionally known as the “Strenna”). For the rest, the Acts of the General Council will continue to have their content and structure similar to those at present.

Focusing now on the topics I wish to deal with in this letter, here is the list:

- Some echoes of the 27th General Chapter.
- The service to be rendered by the Rector Major Emeritus, Fr. Pascual, by the Vicar Emeritus, and by the members of the previous General Council who have completed their service.
- The meetings of the General Council, its coordination and the coordination of the various Sectors (Deliberation No. 11 of the GC27).
- Appointment of the Coordinator of the Juridical Office of the Congregation.
- Appointment of a new Procurator for the Mission Office in Turin.
- Personnel for the Salesian places (Deliberation No. 17 of the GC27).
- Aid to the Provinces – Request for aid to the General Administration and the Generalate.

1. SOME ECHOES OF THE GC27

Dear confreres, I want to make use of the first part of this letter to allow the feelings of my heart to convey to you what our General Chapter has meant, and will undoubtedly continue to mean, for the Congregation, for each of our Provinces and for our confreres. We lived it as a time of grace, as an experience of fellowship and communion that touched all of us deeply. I believe that we are not people who are easily carried away; in fact, I would go so far as to say that in a way the demanding duties of our everyday routine make us all, shall I say, less naive and even a little “tougher” perhaps; yet we were deeply touched in our hearts by this experience of faith, fellowship and communion which confirmed once again that, when we live our religious lives authentically, it becomes prophecy.

Most of you are now back in your Provinces or Vice-Provinces. A few of us have remained here to take up the service you have asked of us; but I am sure that all of us have a deep desire to give of ourselves and to get all our confreres, or those more open to what is new, to give of themselves.

Dear confreres, I am convinced that as a Congregation we want to continue being a part of God’s plan: each of us is willing to be a thread of that fabric on which God is embroidering his design of history with the contribution of our activities, our endeavours, our whole life.

I have already spoken of the prophetic value of our fellowship that can make our witness irresistible.

And all this in order to arrive at our Tabor. Many times has it been said that we are afraid of “documents”, and that General Chapters are not intended to produce “documents”. That is true, because their purpose is to permanently revitalize our efforts to be faithful to the Salesian charism and the mission entrusted to us by God’s Spirit through Don Bosco (what we call “the Salesian charism”). On the other hand, dear confreres, we do come across such powerful expressions in our texts and writings that, even if we really wanted them to, they would not leave us indifferent.

Several of these expressions are also found in our last GC27. I make mention here of only one that completes the desire and the need to be a part of God's plan and a prophecy of fellowship. Let us read this powerful reminder:

“Aware of the new ecclesial moment we are living through, we are convinced that our consecrated life is a cry against selfishness and self-reference: it is about meeting the needs of others and beginning from our poor and supportive lifestyle. Our cloister is the world of the young who are in difficulty and our prayer is our hands raised up and our action in giving dignity back to those who are most excluded. This is why we cannot spare our energy, nor do we have any more time for ‘our things’, or to close ourselves within our personal interests. We are faced with an exodus which will help us reach another land, one promised a thousand times over: the land of the most abandoned and poorest. As Salesians we will find our Tabor there” (Chapter Documents of the GC27, Appendix 5: Refocused).

What power there is in this expression! Dear confreres, we find our Tabor among the young! This is our conversion and this is what it means, today as always, to “return to Don Bosco”.

In the nearly three months that have passed since the Chapter concluded, journalists from various newspapers have asked me several times if I am afraid for our Congregation. I have always replied, in total sincerity, that I am not afraid, that I have no fear whatsoever! And not because our Congregation is permeated by an attitude of arrogance or a lack of humility... Far from it. I truly believe that simplicity and humility should be our calling card, along with what I've taken to calling the constitutive element of our Salesian DNA, viz. what makes us genetically Salesians and the Salesian Family, that is, our pastoral passion for young people, especially the poorest among them. For this reason, I do not entertain any fear for our Congregation, because to the extent young people are our pastoral passion and our Tabor, to that extent is our faithfulness guaranteed; and if we are faithful, the Spirit of the Lord will undoubtedly continue to want our Salesian Congregation and our Family for the sake of the young and, among them, for the poorest in the world.

2. OBEDIENCES

The three months that have elapsed since the close of our 27th General Chapter have enabled us, among other things, to see some of the needs that have been emerging and to engage in conversation with our confreres who have completed their service – be it at the helm of the Congregation and the Salesian Family in the person of our dear Rector Major Emeritus, or as the Vicar or as all the other confreres of the previous General Council. I must say that these have really been some beautiful moments of truly fraternal dialogue inspired by an attitude of total availability and service. An authentic witness!

And so, the obediences are as follows:

- The Rector Major Emeritus, Fr Pascual Chávez, is assigned to the Community of “San Tarcisio” in Rome, charged first of all with the task of taking good care of his health and continuing the excellent recovery he is making, and at the same time making himself available for ongoing formation in the Congregation, for animating days of recollection, retreats and conferences, for writing, and for rendering an important service also to the Salesian Family and to Consecrated Life.

- The Vicar of the Rector Major Emeritus, Fr. Adrian Bregolin, has been incardinated in the Circumscription of Central Italy (ICC) and appointed by the Provincial (with the consent of his Council) as Rector of the House of Florence. His appointment was approved by the General Council two weeks ago.
- The Regional Councillor for Interamerica, Fr. Esteban Ortiz, has been incardinated in his Province of origin, Ecuador.
- The Regional Councillor for Western Europe, Fr. José Miguel Núñez, has been incardinated in the new Spanish Province of “Mary Help of Christians” which has its headquarters in Seville.
- The Regional Councillor for East Asia and Oceania, Fr. Andrew Wong, has been appointed Rector of the Community of the International Theological Studentate, “Ratisbonne”, in Jerusalem.
- The Regional Councillor for North Europe, Fr. Marek Chrzan, has been appointed Rector of the Community of “Gesù Maestro” at the UPS.

3. SESSIONS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL AND COORDINATION OF THE SECTORS (Deliberation No. 11 of the GC27)

On this point, the information I can give you is short and simple. It can be summarized by saying that the Vicar of the Rector Major coordinates the meetings of the General Council and the topics for each day. The meeting of the Council is held every day, from Monday until Friday, and each day the agenda for the following day is agreed upon. Together with the Rector Major, the Vicar specifies the points to be taken up and the time needed to study them, the reports to be studied in connection with various discernments, consultations, and corresponding appointments, etc.

At the same time, I would like to point out that the Vicar has met with the Councillors for the Sectors several times to ensure the coordination needed for drafting the six-year plan and each Sector’s activities, both for the short and the long term. Likewise, to implement Deliberation No. 11 of the GC27, this coordination is being undertaken with the Regional Councillors and with all the Councillors together (viz. the Councillors for the Sectors and for the Regions).

Moreover, the Rector Major has already given advance information to all the members of the Council of his visits to the Provinces across the five continents during this year 2014 and throughout 2015; this enables him to coordinate with the Councillors for the Sectors to the extent necessary, and with the Regional Councillors so that he can rely on their presence during his visits to the various Provinces.

4. APPOINTMENT OF THE COORDINATOR OF THE JURIDICAL OFFICE

I wish to inform you that in the first session of the General Council in the three days following the close of the GC27, Fr. Pier Fausto Frisoli was appointed Coordinator of the Juridical Office of our Congregation. Since then, he has taken

charge, relying on the valuable work and experience of Fr. Francis Maraccani through an orderly process of a transfer of information and documentation.

5. APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PROCURATOR FOR THE MISSIONARY PROCURE IN TURIN

I also want to inform you that our confrere, Stephen Vanoli, has asked me to be relieved of his office as Procurator at the Mission Office in Turin.

Considering the circumstances, I have accepted his request, and we have looked for another confrere who, we thought, could render us the same excellent service. And so, Br. Giampietro Pettenon has been appointed as the new Procurator. He will begin this service as soon as the changes in his Province take place, since he is at present the Provincial Economist of the North-Eastern Province of Italy (INE). From the start, I wish to express to Giampietro, to his Provincial and the confreres my thanks for their generosity, not without sacrifice on their part, in accepting this new office that has been entrusted to a confrere of their Province.

6. PERSONNEL FOR THE SALESIAN PLACES (Deliberation No. 17 of the GC27)

In compliance with the requirements of this deliberation of our GC27, we took the first steps towards something which, with careful thinking and assessment, and starting with a project, ought to develop over time. In a word, we have asked three confreres, one from Italy and two from Spain (Fr. Henry Lupano, Fr. Félix Urra and Fr. Rafael Gasol), to form part of the community of Valdocco and in 2015 to render a service of warmly welcoming (both on the physical and on the pastoral and spiritual levels) the thousands of pilgrims who will visit our “Holy Places” of Valdocco during the Bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, and later, on the basis of their lived experience, to formulate a plan for a highly-desired pastoral and spiritual service of good quality. We shall seek to achieve much the same thing at Colle Don Bosco, relying on the confreres who are there and on others who may be added in the future. We thought it appropriate to begin implementing this Chapter deliberation at Valdocco because it is not always easy or possible to find people who are suitable and available for such an activity. We thank them in advance for this valuable service.

7. CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude this fraternal letter with a reference to our Mother, the Help of Christians, and for this allow me to quote some words that are more authoritative than mine. They are of Pope Francis, and he pronounced them at the end of his message on the day of his audience with the GC27:

“Dear brothers, the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco is almost upon us. It will be a propitious moment to propose your Founder’s charism anew. Mary Help of Christians has never failed to help the Congregation, and certainly she will never let it be lacking in the future. May her maternal intercession obtain for you from God the desired and longed for results. I bless you and pray for you and, please, pray for me, too! Thank you!”

With the same confidence that Pope Francis speaks of, let us entrust ourselves to the protection of our Mother, the Help of Christians.

With warm fraternal affection,

Rome, 15th July 2014

P. Ángel Fernández A.,SDB
Rector Mayor