



DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

Via della Pisana 1111 - 00163 Roma

*Il Rettor Maggiore*

## **TO THE ATTENTION OF MY SALESIAN CONFRERES SDB TO THE ATTENTION OF OUR SALESIAN FAMILY**

### **MINOR LETTER**

Protocol 15/0207

### **GREETINGS**

My dear Salesian brothers SDB: receive my personal greetings, each one of you in your communities, with all my affection.

My dear brothers and sisters of our Salesian Family in the world: receive with much affection my greetings and my desire to communicate with all of you.

I am writing to you all from Valdocco, just before the beginning of the encounter with our Salesian Brother Bishops, who have returned from a long and beautiful trip visiting some parts of our Salesian world, where we have been able to encounter many brothers and sisters, giving expression in their lives to what we so often say by word, when referring to our Salesian Family reality.

In this letter, which on my own initiative I call MINOR LETTER, as I did in a previous one, in order to distinguish it from the Letters published in the Acts of the General Council, I intend quite simply, to send to you some news and thoughts that will help communication in different ways, as I will mention here:

### **1. THE DESIRE TO REMAIN CLOSELY COMMUNICATED**

1. There is an official communication that is made through the ACTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL. Two of these are sent every year, the second is always the Yearly Strenna at the end of the year presented, as prescribed by our tradition, first of all to our sisters the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

As I already mentioned on another occasion, speaking with my predecessor, Fr. Pascual Chávez, he had shared with me his idea that even if the letters of the Acts had been thus far three letters per year, possibly two letters would also be acceptable. I agree fully with Fr. Pascual's conviction, given the fact that has been mentioned so many times in the various Provinces, that receiving the letters so close one after the other, it was not easy to assimilate the contents of that rich magisterium.

2. I have thought it opportune to send in between the two letters of the Acts, two additional ones which, by format and content are different and which I call MINOR LETTER. I think of them as simple family letters in order to share news, simple thoughts about life, dreams and shared experiences. These letters would come out, ordinarily during the months of April-May, and October.

3. Finally, taking advantage of the technologies, the greater ease in filmmaking and the means of making the news reach quickly into all parts of the world, we have thought, together with the Secretariat of Social Communications of the Congregation, that it would be timely on my part to get close to each one of you by means of filmed greetings and a message, of a duration of some five minutes, which we have started to call "Cari Confratelli" (Dear Confreres), and that given its brevity it can be downloaded from the social networks and permits a rapid encounter and a direct message which are proper at given moment

**Summing it up.** The basic intention is the desire of communicating and to be up to the minute in our ENCOUNTERS, during the course of the year using the means just mentioned.

I also wish to give my thanks to the effort made by the Secretariat of Social Communication and by the Regional Councilors in order that –while the Acts of the General Council which are published in six languages- all the rest, be they MINOR LETTERS and the Videos ('Cari confratelli'), as well as the video of the Strenna, should be edited in 20 languages.

It is also a conscious option intended to make the message reach to a greater number of people in their proper mother languages, which should make easier the knowledge and mutual communication.

## **2. A TRULY UNPRECEDENTED HISTORIC EVENT: THE WHOLE WORLD SALESIAN FAMILY AT VALDOCCO.**

The General Superiors of male and female Congregations of our Salesian Family, the persons responsible for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, the World Presidents and Coordinators of all the members of our male and female Salesian Family, have lived together an unprecedented historic moment.

The information was offered in simultaneous communication in those days (January 31 and February 1 of the present year). Here I only wish to underline the SINGULAR and HISTORIC value of this encounter. Called together were the 'responsible generals' of the 30 groups of the Salesian Family to which we all belong juridically, in order to live together, with Don Bosco in the Salesian sites of Valdocco and Becchi, our being the sons and daughters of the same charismatic Father. We wanted to be united and in communion, to pray together and to express in many ways, our belonging to this great tree that is our Salesian Family, with a common trunk: Don Bosco and the Salesian Charism.

Our sharing was very beautiful. We were able to visit together our 'Salesian holy places' at Becchi, Colle Don Bosco, Chieri, Valdocco. We renewed our commitment and mission on behalf of the young, the young of the world, especially of the poorest, abandoned and neglected; it was a "Christian-Salesian profession of Faith" before the Lord, before our Mother Help of Christians, before Don Bosco (and Mother Mazzarello and Dominic Savio in the Basilica), and all the Blessed of our Salesian Family in Heaven.

Among all those present, the presence of the Rector Major Emeritus, Fr. Pacual Chávez, who accepted pleasantly my invitation as he always does, was a beautiful and meaningful expression of communion and continuity in the task of animation in our Salesian Family.

Undoubtedly those of us who lived these moments have returned happy to our homes, but especially our COMMUNION AS A SALESIAN FAMILY has had a lively expression of its very reality. We thank God for it.

## **3. NEWS THAT SPEAKS OF LIFE ON BEHALF OF THOSE IN GREATEST NEED**

I would like to finish this brief letter sharing some good news of all that the Lord allows us to do as the Salesian Family in the world on behalf of those in greatest need.

You will have to excuse me because I am limited in the space allowed and neither do I know everything that we do together. What I present is only a flash, but I invite all the groups to see themselves reflected herein, being aware of their own accomplishments.

They are, quite simply, good news that fill the heart with joy and contentment because, even if I am convinced that simplicity and humility have to be our distinctive mode of being and doing in favor of the others, and in our way to show ourselves in public, I am also convinced, as Don Bosco used to do himself that we have to let know the good that is being done.

And just for the record I highlight, as an example:

1. The marvelous service of acceptance of refugees and safeguarding of life and health which between the SDB's, FMA's, and another congregation of our Salesian Family, we are offering to more than two thousand refugees in the area of our mentioned communities at JUBA – South Sudan.

2. Our 15 Salesian Brothers at Sierra Leone did not doubt one minute to remain with their people from December 8<sup>th</sup>, day of the Immaculate, after a conference via Skype I had with them, with the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, they set in motion the reality of receiving sites for orphans who have lost their parents to Ebola. In a short few weeks we have transformed two schools into receiving-homes for youngsters who will be with us for many years.

3. In the Philippines with the help of everyone, of the Rector Major in his day, the missionary procures and other groups, has been possible to rebuild more than 3000 simple houses and 11 educational centers all devastated by typhoon Haiyan.

4. In Odessa our FMA sisters and our SDB brothers work generously to attend to the needs of so many families of refugees that have urgent need of sustainment, initiative and service in which many Christian families are involved within the same city of Odessa.

5. At Colombia the program for formation for work and human development in Salesian Family works has received recognition from the whole country.

6. Syria is a continuous concern for us. It has become a very hard war reality for our brothers, sisters and houses of the Near East. In concrete at Aleppo (Syria) young men from our houses risk permanently the danger of the bullets in order to give, as it may be possible, a semblance of normality to the oratories and youth centers of our houses, wishing that life will continue normally.

7. Nepal.

The consoling and effectively solidary presence of the Salesians, SDB's and FMA's, in the middle of our brothers who suffered the devastating earthquake at Nepal is a reason for a heartfelt thanksgiving to God, in spite of the drama and suffering. One more time Don Bosco gave tangible proof that globalized charity and solidarity are truly possible. And this is accomplished because we do not abandon our people, nor our young people, counting on the good work of the Salesian international networks.

8. Yemen

The courage and strong motivation of our four confreres from the province of Bangalore, who live and work there, brought relief in the midst of that very dramatic war situation. They did everything to remain there with their people.

9. Pakistan

We have received news about the witness of our 19-year-old young alumnus martyr, Akash Bashir, who sacrificed his life at the entrance of the Saint John of Lahore, protecting his community from a suicide-bomber.

10. Significant media attention has captured the campaign undertaken by the "Misiones Salesianas" in the Madrid-Spain missionary procure, against the sale of minors. The documentary: "I am not up for sale", has brought up to the public attention a complex reality, invisible and alarming, which has received great public attention.

11. Finally a very beautiful reality, which I keep coming up against again and again in the world is the many presences in which, as brothers and sisters we have always united our strength on behalf of our charges: may this serve as an example, Papua-New Guinea, where FMA's and SDB's work on behalf of the boys and girls with two houses the take in boys and girls who would not be able to study without the opportunity we offer them, because they live in far away places in the interior of the country.

**And I conclude** with a profound sense of gratitude to the Lord for all I have communicated so far. Much good is done in each one of our Institutions and as the Salesian Family, and this should be a deep cause of joy and encourage us to attend always MORE in fidelity to the mission and in fidelity to those we serve, who are the object of our mission.

Thanks, on this occasion for the beautiful reality of the Salesian Family referred to above.

Thanks, lastly, for the gift of our respective vocations. A first duty we all have is precisely, to help each other to be "vocationally in shape" (using a sports metaphor). That is to say, full of motivation and desire to live with authentic passion for Jesus the Lord and for the Kingdom.

On this day of Pentecost and before Mary Help of Christians, I promise you my prayers my dear brothers and sisters. May the Holy Spirit fill you with his gifts.

At Valdocco, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Solemnity of Pentecost.

**P. Ángel Fernández A.,SDB**  
Rector Mayor

