

25th GENERAL CHAPTER
OF THE SOCIETY OF St. FRANCIS DE SALES
THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY TODAY
Documents of 25th General Chapter

GC25

Rome, 24 February – 22 April 2002

acts

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of the Salesian Society

of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN
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THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY TODAY

DOCUMENTS OF THE 25th GENERAL CHAPTER

OF THE SOCIETY OF St FRANCIS DE SALES

Rome, 14 February – 22 April 2002

CONTENTS		
	number	page
Signs and abbreviations		00
PRESENTATION		00
FIRST PART		
THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY TODAY		

Introduction	1-6	
I. FRATERNAL LIFE, GIFT AND PROPHECY OF COMMUNION	7-16	
A. God's call and the appeal from the young	7-10	
B. Situation	11-12	
C. Challenges	13	
D. Guidelines	14-16	
II. EVANGELICAL WITNESS	17-36	
A. The call of God	17-25	
B. Situation	26-29	
C. Challenges	30	
D. Guidelines	31-36	
III. ANIMATING PRESENCE AMONG THE YOUNG	37-48	
A. The call of God	37	
B. Situation	38-41	
C. Challenges	42-45	
D. Guidelines	46-48	
IV. THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY, PRIVILEGED SETTING FOR FORMATION AND ANIMATION	49-65	
A. The call of God	49-52	
B. Situation	53-54	
C. Challenges and guidelines	55-65	
1. THE COMMUNITY: THE SETTING FOR FORMATION AND ANIMATION	55-62	
Challenges	55	
Guidelines	56-62	
2. THE RECTOR: ANIMATOR OF THE COMMUNITY	63-65	
Challenges	63	
Guidelines	64-65	
V ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS FOR LIVING AND WORKING TOGETHER	66-84	
A. The call of God	66-67	
B. Situation	68-70	
C. Challenges	71	
D. Guidelines	72-84	
CONCLUSION	85-86	
SECOND PART		
VERIFICATION OF THE STRUCTURES OF ANIMATION AND OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	87-130	

Introduction	87	
1. Relationship and links between the Rector Major with his Council and the Provinces and Regions, and forms of animation and government	88-107	
Expectations	88-92	
Problem areas	93-97	
Criteria and lines of action	98-107	
2. The Departmental Councillors	108-117	
Expectations	108-110	
Problem areas	111-113	
Criteria and lines of action	114-117	
3. The Regional Councillors and the groups of Provinces	118-130	
Expectations	118-120	
Problem areas	121-124	
Criteria and lines of action	125-130	
DELIBERATIONS AND GUIDELINES CONCERNING THE CONSTITUTIONS AND REGULATIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIETY		
1. LIMIT TO THE DURATION OF THE TERM IN OFFICE OF THE RECTOR MAJOR (C 128)	131	
2. LIMIT TO THE DURATION OF THE TERM IN OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL (C 142)	132	
3. ASSIGNMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY TO THE VICAR OF THE RECTOR MAJOR, AND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCILLOR FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATION (C 133, 134, 137)	133	
4. MODIFICATION OF ART. 24 OF THE GENERAL REGULATIONS (Mission Offices at Congregational level)	134	
5. DIVISION OF THE AUSTRALIA-ASIA GROUP OF PROVINCES	135	
6. REQUEST REGARDING THE METHOD TO BE FOLLOWED IN CELEBRATING THE GENERAL CHAPTERS	136	
MESSAGES		
1. THE GC25 TO THE SALESIAN CONFRERES	137	

2. MESSAGE OF THE GC25 TO THE SALESIAN FAMILY	138	
3. MESSAGE TO YOUNG PEOPLE	139	
4. AN APPEAL TO SAVE THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE WORLD	140	
APPENDICES		
1. Message of His Holiness JOHN PAUL II for the beginning of the GC25	141-146	
2. Address of Card. Eduardo Martínez Somalo Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life	147-153	
3. Address of the Vicar General Fr Luc Van Looy at the opening of the GC25	154-164	
4. Address of homage to the Holy Father by the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez at the Pontifical Audience	165-168	
5. Address of His Holiness John Paul II in the Audience to the Capitulars, 12 April 2002	169-171	
6. “Good-night” of Fr Pascual Chávez in the evening of his election as Rector Major	172-181	
7. Address of the Rector Major Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva at the closing of the GC25	182-198	
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE GC25		
CHRONICLE OF THE GC25		
ANALYTICAL INDEX		

SIGNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SIGNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	Acts of the General Council
ASC	Acts of the Superior Council
BM	Biographical Memoirs
C	Constitutions
can.	canon
EPC	Educative and Pastoral Community

FSDB	Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco
GC22	22 nd General Chapter
GC23	23 rd General Chapter
GC24	24 th General Chapter
GC25	25 th General Chapter
MB	Memorie Biografiche
NMI	<i>Novo Millennio Ineunte</i>
OPP	Organic Provincial Plan
PFC	Provincial Formation Commission
R	Regulations
Ratio	Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco
SEPP	Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan
SGC	Special (20 th) General Chapter
VC	<i>Vita Consecrata</i>

PRESENTATION

My dear Confreres,

We are beginning a new six-year period which coincides with the first years of the third millennium, and we do so in the conviction that the 25th General Chapter has been for us a grace of God and motivated by his invitation to plunge into the vast ocean of the world of today. The bidding to “*launch out into the deep*” is a program of action, not a simple slogan without content. This is how it was understood by Fr Vecchi himself in leaving it to us as a legacy in his last Strenna. This is not a time for nostalgic memories, but rather a time of hope for the future – one that calls upon us to face up boldly to the challenges of the education and evangelization of the young.

We are not unaware of the dangers hidden in the open sea, but in this venture we are enlivened and encouraged by God’s word, who calls us to “cast our nets” where the catch can be greatest. And so with his Word as food for our journey, we prepare to look ahead and launch out into the deep with spiritual and apostolic zeal renewed.

1. The Acts of the GC25.

I present to you the “Acts” of the GC25. They provide us with valuable material for the renewal of our life and of our educative and pastoral activity. In the first part you will find the introduction, the five practical sections and the conclusion of what was the main theme of the Chapter; the

second part contains the evaluation of the structures of animation and central government. These are then followed by the deliberations and guidelines referring to the Constitutions and Regulations and to the Government of the Congregation, with the practical interpretation of the texts of our Rule of life. You will also find the Messages sent by the members of the Chapter to the confreres on the vocation of the salesian brother, to the Salesian Family, and to Young People, together with an appeal to save the world's youngsters.

By way of Appendices have been added the various addresses and messages of greeting, some of which are particularly significant, such as those of the Holy Father at the beginning of the Chapter and during the audience, that of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, the opening address of the Vicar General, the first "Good-night" of the Rector Major and his concluding address.

All these form a collection of documents that gather together the results of the reflections of the provincial chapters and of the GC25.

2. The capitular text

The Chapter Assembly resolutely took up the task outlined by the Rector Major in his letter convoking the Chapter, in which he asked it not to repeat the already well known doctrine on the community but rather "to find effective ways of giving a new motivation to the communities to manifest in a simple and clear manner the religious elements of the new situations; to identify the essential conditions or criteria which allow, or rather encourage, a joyful and humanly significant way of living the fraternity we have professed as followers of Christ".[\[1\]](#)

Under the guidance of the Presidency and the Moderator, the work of the commissions and of the assembly went smoothly ahead with ever greater clarity towards the elaboration of what was not so much a well organized document as a number of independent *schemes of work* after the manner of *practical handbooks*. In this way the literary style of the "capitular text" is already an indication of how it should be received: as something essentially practical. This is not to say that the text is devoid of theological foundation. The latter, in fact, appears in strongly concentrated form at the beginning of each section, while the sections themselves concentrate largely on challenges and practical guidelines.

It may be opportune at this point to emphasize some points that can be of help in the reading, assimilation and application of the capitular text.

2.1 As distinct from the GC23 and GC24 which had spoken of the local community as the centre of animation and the strategic setting for the education of young people to the faith and for the involvement and formation of the laity, the GC25 decided to *centre its reflections on the community itself* with all its dynamic characteristics. In fact the community model emerging from the GC25 has as its reference point our apostolic consecration as expressed in art. 3 of the Constitutions. It is a matter of a community called to realize, through the grace of unity, the vital synthesis between fraternal life, the radical following of Christ and our dedication to the mission to the young.

And so the community itself is the real subject of this Chapter. Not only because it is its theme, but also as being its primary agent and protagonist. Consequently every community is invited to welcome the capitular text as a valuable treasure to be exploited.

2.2 *The scheme* of each section is identical throughout. It opens with a text from the Acts of the Apostles which is meant to be a true source of inspiration for every community with which to

reproduce the experience of the Jerusalem community in accepting the Holy Spirit as the guide of its own life. Therefore we should avoid thinking of these quotations from Scripture as so much icing on the cake. On the contrary they should prompt us to make use of the *lectio divina* so as to learn always to begin from the Word of God. This in turn means that we must make our own the attitude of Our Blessed Lady in its regard: listen to it, obey it, make ourselves its disciples, and become believers.

It is the same dynamic Word that prompts the community to interpret social and ecclesiastical history and to recognize in it the *call of God* and of our Rule of life, the expectations of the young, and the needs of the laity and of the Salesian Family.

Hence the community is led to evaluate its own *situation*, to discover its strengths and weaknesses, its openness and resistance, its possibilities and limitations. What it amounts to is a revision of community life.

In this way the community learns to discover the fundamental *challenges* and to face them with hope and courage. It also learns to ask itself the necessary questions and look for suitable replies. This is the purpose of the *practical guidelines*.

2.3 As far as the fundamental *contents* are concerned, these refer to fraternal life, evangelical witness and animating presence among the young.

The fraternal life of the community aims at fostering the processes of the human and vocational growth of the confreres, promoting deep interpersonal relationships, strengthening the feeling of belonging and the family spirit, and helping to build up a community vision that is more widely shared. For this purpose may be found useful the personal life-plan, the practice of community discernment, the good use of occasions of meeting together, and the salesian community project.

Evangelical witness calls on us to make outwardly visible the primacy of God in the life of the community, to live the “grace of unity” in its community expressions, to make the following of Christ radical, prophetic and attractive, and to share with each other vocational motivations and the experience of God. The central place given to the Word of God, fostered by the practice of the “lectio divina”, the quality of community prayer and the daily Eucharist will help to deepen the spiritual experience and the manifestation of the central place of God in our life. In the same way the following of Christ, lived in total availability to a joyful obedience, through a practical and austere poverty and the splendour of a vigilant and serene chastity, will make the witness of the community more transparent.

Wherever there is a salesian community there is also present an experience of faith, a network of relationships is built up, and many different kinds of service are offered to the young. The community makes visible its *salesian presence among the young*, animating them and fostering their growth. It is necessary, first of all, to return to the young and be not only a community *for* the young but also a community *with* the young. This is why the salesian community builds up a presence of communion and participation involving the laity and the Salesian Family, and takes its place in the neighbourhood and the local Church. In this way it is transformed into a presence that “educates and evangelizes”, creating settings of a strongly spiritual character, fully aware of the situations of poverty of young people and reacting to them with a pastoral mind and heart, and giving effect to projects and processes that help the young to mature. Finally the community promotes a true vocational culture, in which every young person is helped to discover a plan of life; it explicitly proposes the salesian vocation to those more suitable, by inviting them to have a vocational experience, and following up those who accept.

To be a community that lives fraternity, that gives strong and clear evangelical witness and that becomes an animating presence among young people, it must itself be animated, motivated, directed and followed up. *Animation of the community* takes place mainly through ongoing formation. The community can provide specific moments of spiritual renewal and opportunities for the educative and pastoral updating of the confreres but, without any doubt, the first and most important source of formation is the quality of daily life. The *Rector* has a fundamental role in the animation of the community, involving all the confreres in shared responsibility. His attention must be directed primarily to charismatic identity, the community mission, and fraternity.

Finally, the GC25 sets out some *conditions* which make it possible for a salesian community to be effective at the present day. It is a matter of helping each community to work according to a common project, of ensuring that it has the right number of confreres with the proper qualifications, of deepening the relationship between the community and the work, of putting into effect the provincial organic project. Some of these conditions apply at local level, but the greater number demand responsibility and decisions by the provincial community.

The capitular text is evidently directed primarily to the community itself, to which it offers five programs to be studied, examined more deeply and put into effect.

3. The Event of the 25th General Chapter

Clearly the GC25 is not merely a document. Above all it is an intense experience of the Congregation and it is a spirit whose witnesses are the Chapter members who have taken part in this great event. They are the best spokesmen for what they have seen and heard!

Among the features that marked the Chapter there stands out the atmosphere of brotherhood that was created from the very beginning and that everyone greatly appreciated. It was wonderful to experience “the Congregation’s unity in diversity” that article 146 of the Constitutions mentions. This was the result of the desire on the part of the Chapter members to make the Assembly itself an experience of community.

A second aspect was the growing awareness of the worldwide nature of the Congregation, which is reflected in its cultural diversity. The “Good-nights” by the Provincials, the celebrations and ceremonies led by the different Regions, the contributions in the Hall are proof that the charism of Don Bosco our Founder and Father has become ever more inculturated in the most diverse contexts and that the General Chapters themselves have assisted in bringing about a rich synthesis between unity and diversity.

The third extraordinary element was the Beatification – in St Peter’s Square - of three members of the Salesian Family, Brother Artemide Zatti, Sister Maria Romero and Fr Luigi Variara, which highlighted once again that the salesian vocation is really “a way that leads to Love” (C 196), to holiness, and that this ought to be our natural way of living, the best gift we can offer to the young (cf. C 25), our most significant educational project.

In a special way the beatification of the first salesian Brother – not a martyr – evoked in the Chapter the desire to re-launch this vocation that was so fundamental for Don Bosco.

The fourth significant aspect was the presence of the Holy Father through his opening Message, and the Audience he granted in which he invited us to take holiness as our primary task.

A fifth interesting element was the full media coverage provided by ANS with the collaboration of the Don Bosco Missions in Turin, of the whole event which made possible the immediate communication to the Salesian Family and all the friends of Don Bosco of what was happening in the Chapter.

Finally there should be mentioned the presence of our confrere Mgr Alois Kothgasser who gave the retreat taking as his theme the Strenna of the Rector Major for 2002 – “*Duc in altum!*” – and also that of our confreres Cardinals and Bishops who came to visit us during the Chapter underlining the ecclesial character of our vocation and mission.

I pray that the spirit of the GC25 may spread through all the communities of the Congregation and may help us to respond with generosity to the Lord’s will, which is expressed through this Pentecostal event.

4. The task for the six year period

As I said in my closing address, after the preparatory stage and the celebration of the 25th General Chapter there now comes the time to pass from reflection to real life. This presentation has the particular scope of handing over to the Congregation the Chapter Document, with the invitation to each confrere and to each community to study it and put it into practice.

We must make of the community a personal life plan. Let us believe in it and build it up! It is the task of everyone, young and old, sick and healthy. Let us put to one side tiredness and disappointment as did the Apostles who had laboured all night without catching anything. Our future vitality depends on our ability to create communities that are significantly charismatic today. The essential basis for this is a renewed commitment to holiness. At the Word of the Lord we cast our nets, confident that the Lord will see to it that our efforts bear fruit.

Let us ask Mary Help of Christians the *Star of the Sea* to whom I entrusted the Congregation from the beginning of my period as Rector Major to help us to overcome our fears, to encourage us to “launch into the deep” and to accompany us as we set out on the immense ocean of this world with the enthusiasm and the zeal of Don Bosco, looking on the face of Christ and seeking the salvation of the young.

Fr. Pascual Chávez Villanueva

Rector Major

Rome, 24 May 2002

Feast of Mary Help of Christians

[\[1\]](#) Vecchi Juan E., *Towards the 25th General Charter*, AGC 372

FIRST PART

THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY TODAY

INTRODUCTION

[1]

With our gaze fixed on Jesus Christ Our Lord, gathered in prayer around Mary the Mother of Jesus we, the members of the 25th General Chapter, open to the Holy Spirit and to the gift of communion, want to build our life according to the model of the first apostolic community.

We recognize that we are brought together by listening to the Word of God, by prayer in common, by the Eucharist and by having things in common.[\[1\]](#) We are trying to be a community with “one heart and one soul”, with a meaning for all people, that with its life and words bears witness to the Risen Lord;[\[2\]](#) a community filled with joy and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit.[\[3\]](#)

As a fruit of the Jubilee, which celebrated two thousand years of the incarnation of the Son of God, the Pope, in his Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*, invites us to turn our gaze to the person of Christ, to become aware of our vocation to holiness, to be “a house and a school of communion” and to commit ourselves to the new evangelization[\[4\]](#).

[2]

Prompted by the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, we are invited as religious to place ourselves in the forefront of this way of renewal and re-foundation, returning with creative fidelity to the evangelical and charismatic roots that express the real meaning of our vocation in the Church.

In the midst of a pluralistic world, searching for new models for life and meaning, yet marked by dramatic situations of poverty and oppression, consecrated life today can be significant if, like the “house built on the rock”,[\[5\]](#) it is founded on the unconditional commitment to Jesus Christ, anchored in the evangelical call to holiness, and placed on the frontiers of the Church’s mission.

[3]

In today’s society and culture important new phenomena have arisen which, while they appear to open up new possibilities for human and social development, raise issues about the present models for human and Christian fulfilment. Secularism, which finds room for the sacred in a great variety of religious expressions but pays little heed to the proposal of faith, is constantly gaining ground in many places. Globalization is spreading from the field of economy into other areas in society creating interdependence, but also profound and unjust inequalities, which give rise to new forms of poverty. The birth of multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious societies and the rise of an exclusive nationalism, and of religious integralism are challenges to the capacity for living side by side, for tolerance and dialogue. While science and technology continue to cause amazement by their new conquests, they raise serious questions about respect for life, human dignity and conservation of the environment. Together with pluralism, universally valued so highly today, there is spreading a relativism, an individualism, a variety of points of reference which are disconcerting, especially for the young. Mass communication and the development of information technology are vehicles for new models and new ways of thinking that require careful attention in the field of education.

In such a complex world, in some ways heedless and in others so disturbed, we feel called upon to accept willingly the invitation of the Holy Father to proclaim Christ, especially to the young, as the perennial model for a new humanity.[\[6\]](#)

[4]

The Congregation, prompted by the recent General Chapters is living and experiencing a strong call to renewal in order to manifest its vocation in a clearer and more striking way: to be a school of faith and centre of communion for the education of the young,^[7] and to take up its special task of the animation of the lay people who share the spirit and the mission of Don Bosco, giving life to a new pastoral model.^[8]

The quality of the consecrated life in community, the depth of its spirituality, the effectiveness of its witness, its ability to challenge, are the determining factors that give evangelical force to the realization of the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP), to the presence of the SDB in the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) and to the growth of the Salesian Family.

[5]

The GC25 concentrates its attention on three fundamental aspects: *fraternal life, evangelical witness, and animating presence among the young*. It also considers some conditions: *the animation of the salesian community, ongoing formation and the important role of the Rector, and the organization of its life and work*. These elements are inseparable and characterize our religious community life.^[9]

In looking at each one of these focal points and conditions we have started from “God’s call” that allows us to read the situations in which we find ourselves working, discovering and taking up the principal challenges present in them, so as to be able to propose some lines of action and suggest some appropriate strategies to our provincial and local communities.

[6]

The need for renewal has urged us to draw on the sources of the Gospel and our charism.

We are convinced, in fact, that the Preventive System of Don Bosco still retains its validity today not only as an educative and pastoral method, but also as a source of spirituality and hence as the criterion for our “living and working together”^[10]. Don Bosco has given it to us as an experience of life that “permeates our approach to God, our personal relationships, and our manner of living in community through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved.”^[11] This is and becomes for us a school of holiness and fraternity.

The theme of this Chapter is in this way part of the process begun in the previous Chapters: making clearer and more challenging the power of the salesian religious community in educative and pastoral activity among the young and the poor, becoming centres of animation and of communion in the Salesian Family and the vast Movement that draws inspiration from Don Bosco, deepening the roots of our vocation and renewing the dynamism of fraternal life.

I. FRATERNAL LIFE, GIFT AND PROPHECY OF COMMUNION

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship,

to the breaking of bread and the prayers...

the company of those who believed

were of one heart and soul” (Acts 2, 42; 4,32)

A. GOD’S CALL AND THE APPEAL FROM THE YOUNG

[7]

Don Bosco, moved by the Spirit and through the motherly intervention of Mary^[12], in communion of life and action with young people, collaborators and the first Salesians, began a powerful experience of family, rich in human and spiritual values, strongly marked by service to the young. We recognize that the first educative service that the young need from us is the witness of a fraternal life that becomes: a response to their profound need for communication, a proposal for a truly human life, a prophecy of the kingdom, an invitation to welcome the gift of God.

[8]

We are also aware that fraternal communion is above all a gift from God in Jesus Christ, as well as a task and the commitment of each one. We make communion visible and we build it up by sharing our life, by fraternal love, and by our participation in the common mission.

[9]

For this reason we commit ourselves to grow in a spirituality of relationships conscious that “God calls us to live in community and entrusts us with brothers to love.”^[13]

The family spirit, lived according to the preventive system, involves: cultivating a genuine spirit of faith, living deep interpersonal relationships, growing in mutual esteem and openness, and in the ability to be reconciled and to share with each other.

[10]

Each confrere develops his capacity for relationships, convinced of the close connection between the maturing of the individual and the community. We all feel committed therefore not to neglect whatever helps in the process of individual and community growth.

B. SITUATION

[11]

Reflecting on fraternal life we highlight some positive aspects:

- greater respect for the dignity of the individual, esteem for each other and for the quality of our interpersonal relationships;
- communication is deeper and the sharing of life is appreciated and fostered by the confreres;
- the need for a personal contact with the Word of God and the desire to share the fruits with other confreres;
- enrichment resulting from the sharing of fraternal life with young people and the laity;
- greater contact with the sources of the charism and a clearer knowledge of salesian spirituality which nourish the commitment to building fraternity;
- the “community day” is appreciated and lived with creativity;
- social communication at local, provincial and world level for growing in the feeling of belonging.

[12]

But we are also aware of difficulties:

- some kinds of conflict that are not handled positively, cases of extreme activity that keep confreres away from the community and instances of a weak sense of belonging;
- the situation of confreres who take refuge in compensatory relationships or who search for alternative community or spiritual experiences;
- the existence of communities which in numbers or quality are not consistent, as a result of which fraternal life is difficult to organize;
- discouragement or lack of motivation of some confreres who are discouraged or lacking in motivation, through negative experiences in the past, through difficulties in adapting to their present situation, a falling off in their sense of faith or through personal failings;
- the problems of confreres who differ in age, formation, culture and ethnic origin in living together;
- the situation of elderly or sick confreres who in some cases find it difficult to join in the community life and mission;
- the intrusion of the means of social communication which take time from fraternal community relationships.

C. CHALLENGES

[13]

The difficulties met with can be reduced to three areas that sometimes exert their influence simultaneously:

- individual choices and ways of life that gradually lead one away from the community;
- an organization of community life that does not encourage the human and vocational development of the confreres, undermining the possibility of “living and working together”;
- interpersonal communication in which an insufficient sharing of the life and mission gradually weakens the sense of belonging and identification with the project of salesian life.

And so we ask:

q *How can we foster the processes of the human and vocational development of the confreres in cultural contexts marked by fragmentation, dispersion, relativism and individualism?*

q *How can we overcome the inertia produced by inadequate relationships that weaken the sense of belonging and undermine the fraternal atmosphere of the community?*

q *How can we organize community life and activity so as to improve communication and foster personal relationships ?*

q *What procedures should be introduced to promote the learning and the practice of discernment at both individual and community level, so as to foster fraternal dialogue and sharing?*

D. GUIDELINES

In the face of these challenges we propose the following **guidelines**:

[14]

The Confrere, as the one primarily responsible for his own formation, is invited to give due importance to the “*Personal Plan of Salesian life*”, bearing in mind the following elements

- a continual evaluation of the human, spiritual, and salesian maturing process, by means of self-assessment procedures, openness to the Word of God and acceptance of fraternal correction;
- knowledge and practice of the spirituality of the preventive system as the source of new relationships in fraternal life;
- the progressive growth in maturity in salesian charismatic identity;
- an active and wholehearted presence at the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the community ;
- cultivation of openness to others and availability for sharing.

[15]

The Local Community, as the setting for human and vocational growth.

a) It promotes the practice of community discernment in the light of the Word of God and of the Constitutions. To this end it fosters the development of attitudes that encourage its use:

- an openness to the real situation, to living in a spirit of faith and ready to listen;
- a readiness for fraternal dialogue, facilitating and promoting participation by everyone;
- a patient search for convergence of unity and communion.

b) It encourages specific occasions of community life, such as prayer together, meetings, retreats, revision of life, council meetings, times of recreation, community day. In these through suitable arrangements the confreres are helped to:

- express the riches of their own interior lived experience;
- share their own worries and problems, plans and educative and pastoral activities;
- practise listening, dialogue, the acceptance of different opinions and fraternal correction.

c) It draws up the Plan of salesian community life bearing in mind the actual situation of the confreres and emphasizing the aspects of personal formation, communication and communion and of the commitments implied by the Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan.

[16]

The Provincial and his Council, through the provincial formation commission (PFC), will suggest methods and provide helps to draw up the *Personal plan of salesian life* and the *Plan of salesian community life*.

II. EVANGELICAL WITNESS

“With great power the apostles gave their testimony

to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus,

and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4,33)

A. THE CALL OF GOD

[17]

Called by the Father, we follow the Lord Jesus[14] our living rule,[15] by the strength of the Holy Spirit. Enlightened by the mystery of God who is a community of love, we live the following of Christ in communities in which we find the response to the deep aspirations of the heart, we are signs of love and unity for the young[16] and our community life becomes a daily experience of spirituality.

[18]

The first apostolic community, taking its first steps sometimes with difficulty, remains the fundamental point of reference for all our communities. Its joyful witness to the Risen Lord is

expressed in the seeking of the Kingdom realized in fraternal service, lived in sharing and communion, announced in the saving proclamation of the Gospel, and celebrated in prayer in common and in the breaking of bread.

[19]

In the same way our communities become a prophecy for the young in generous service, in fellowship, in proclamation and in festivity. Their *experience of Church* founded on the Word and the Eucharist, becomes the leaven of communion and of new communities, through daily witness to the fullness of life and happiness that stems from the Risen Lord.

[20]

The community of Valdocco, led and guided by Don Bosco, strove to live this witness in a complete and harmonious manner. In the dream of the ten diamonds Don Bosco himself, presenting the salesian identity, outlined its fundamental characteristics and the dangers to which it is exposed. Every community is made up of men, living in society, who express the gospel ardour of “*da mihi animas coetera tolle*” with the optimism of faith, the dynamic creativity of hope and the kindness and total self-giving of charity. This commitment is sustained by a strong and essential spiritual support characterized in particular by the ascetical practice of the evangelical counsels and by a hard-working and temperate life-style.

[21]

Following Don Bosco’s example, the community testifies to all the educative and pastoral force of consecration by living with joyful enthusiasm its *total donation to God and to the young*. We find by experience that fidelity to our consecration is a process in constant growth and is expressed in the continual seeking of the gospel ideal, following Mary’s path of faith.

[22]

The context of the present day is marked among other things by secularism, individualism, consumerism and hedonism, but also by a greater sensitivity to what is sacred, by a clearer openness to the transcendent, and a commitment to practical solidarity.

For this reason our communities are called today more than ever in the past to make visible to young people, especially those poorest and most in need, the *primacy of God*, who has entered our life, won us over and placed us at the service of his Kingdom, as signs and bearers of his love.[\[17\]](#)

[23]

Following the obedient, poor and chaste Christ in the radical consequences of Baptism, the community gives free reign to the best energies of its freedom; it contests the idolatry of power, of possession and pleasure, and thus makes itself completely available for the mission to the young. In obedience it seeks the will of God through dialogue and fidelity to the community project and lives and welcomes in a family spirit the service of authority. In poverty it puts all its trust in God, is open to the communion of goods and to solidarity, promoting projects for the benefit of the poor and sharing their condition. In chastity it expresses its love for God and total dedication to the young, with the purity of heart which is the badge characterizing its educative and pastoral mission.

[24]

Sustained by the experience of God and by total dedication to the salvation of the young, the community lives the ***grace of unity*** which is a gift of the Holy Spirit and a vital synthesis of union with God and dedication to one's neighbour, of an interior evangelical life and apostolic activity, of a praying heart and working hands, [\[18\]](#) of personal needs and community commitments. In this way is achieved, in the covenant with God, a harmonious integration of the apostolic mission, the fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels.

[25]

We live this option in the certainty that it contributes to the building of an ***alternative model*** for humanity and the human family, in the perspective of Christian hope.

In this way we respond to God's gift with a ***personal and community process of holiness*** towards full maturity in Christ, by means of which we become a sign and prophecy of the ultimate values of the Kingdom of God in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

B. SITUATION

[26]

As a result of recent General Chapters, the communities in general strive to live an ever more authentic salesian spirituality. We may note in fact a growth in:

- § the charismatic identity,
- § the knowledge and application of the preventive system also among the laity,
- § the appreciation of community life,
- § assiduous work among young people, especially those at risk,
- § the care given to liturgical celebrations and forms of prayer,
- § the effort made by many to live the grace of unity by harmonizing fraternal life, prayer and apostolic work.

[27]

Alongside these positive signs of growth, we note also some negative phenomena. These include:

- § lack of the community sense of the spiritual life;
- § absence at times of community prayer;
- § a merely formal observance of the practices of piety;
- § reluctance to share spiritual experiences;
- § over-efficiency and individualism;

§ an unbalanced arrangement of times for work, community life and prayer;

§ weariness and discouragement in facing a world in continual change.

[28]

In the practice of the evangelical counsels there are examples of radical and joyful testimony by individuals and communities even to the point of martyrdom.

§ Obedience is lived in a spirit of faith and humility by listening to each other's views and in an effort to put together the community project.

§ The seeking for a simpler and more austere lifestyle is made visible in welcoming the poor, in living in contexts of poverty, in solidarity and in transparency in the administration of goods.

§ Chastity is manifested in serene self-acceptance, in cordial relationships, in generous availability for service, and in fidelity to a life spent completely for the young.

[29]

At the same time we find that the communities do not always succeed in making their witness perceptible, and we note:

§ difficulties in teamwork among Salesians themselves and between Salesians and laity, with authoritarian attitudes;

§ the difficulty of some Salesians in changing their work or house;

§ disparity of lifestyle between the religious community and the local people, and between one house and another, sometimes with the waste of the goods we have available, through the bad management of the resources at the service of our mission;

§ situations of coldness in relationships, the inability to establish authentic relationships, seeking compensations outside the community, and ambiguities of life which compromise the credibility of the choices we have professed.

C. CHALLENGES

[30]

At the root of the situation just described there appear to be the following causes among others::

§ *weakness in recognizing the primacy of God* which leads the community and individual confreres to lose sight of motivations of faith and of the awareness of being consecrated Salesians.

§ *fragmentation of personal and community life* which is seen in the sacrificing of what is important to what is urgent, and the inability to harmonize being and doing, work and prayer, evangelization and education, individual initiative and community planning.

§ *lack of the prophetic force* of our salesian consecration, which obscures its visibility and makes the communities less attractive and appealing in a vocational sense.

To these causes correspond the following challenges:

§ *How can we keep on reviving and expressing the primacy of God in the communities, and how can we share this spiritual experience with lay people and with the young?*

§ *How can we realize today new personal and community forms of balance between the different aspects of our work so as to live them in the grace of unity and in a complete and harmonious way ?*

§ *How can we make our community witness to the following of Christ something radical, prophetic and attractive?*

D. GUIDELINES

To the above-mentioned challenges we want to respond in particular by the application of the following guidelines.

[31]

Primacy of God and the sharing of spiritual experience

The community, following Mary's example, undertakes to place God as the unifying centre of its being and to develop the community dimension of the spiritual life by:

§ fostering the centrality of the word of God in personal and community life through the *lectio divina*, daily meditation, the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrations of the Word, and community preparation for the Sunday Eucharist;

§ celebrating the daily Eucharist with joy, creativity and enthusiasm, and fostering its celebration by all the confreres together at least once a week;

§ improving the quality of community prayer to the point where it becomes a school of prayer for the community itself, our young people, the members of the Salesian Family and our lay collaborators;

§ promoting revisions of life based on the Constitutions and the essential elements of salesian spirituality;

§ encouraging spiritual follow-up by good use of the opportunities dear to our traditions: the Sacrament of Reconciliation, spiritual direction and the fraternal talk;

§ creating among the confreres an atmosphere conducive to the exchange of their own experiences of faith;

§ encouraging integration between personal and community projects by cultivating their interrelationship and sharing. [\[19\]](#)

[32]

Fostering *the grace of unity*

The community undertakes to ensure the necessary conditions so that every confrere can give a sense of deep unity to his being and working:

§ by the practice of evangelical discernment as an attitude of searching for the will of God through community dialogue and coherent decisional and executive processes;[\[20\]](#)

§ by periodically reviewing the balance between work commitments, demands of community life, and times for prayer, study and rest.

[33]

Community witness to the radical following of Christ

The community undertakes to ensure that the evangelical counsels make crystal clear the gratuitous and unconditional offering of life, and measureless and unrestricted love, especially for the very poor:

§ by specifying the humanizing values of the evangelical counsels so as to live them with joy and coherence;[\[21\]](#)

§ by verifying their community practice by periodic scrutinies; for this purpose the Formations Department will prepare practical guidelines;

§ by educating 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.

[34]

Central place of obedience

The community encourages a deep life in the Spirit, the sense of the mission and the effective involvement of every confrere in the community pastoral and educative project by:

§ promoting dialogue among its members through community assemblies, the community-day and meetings of the local council, and by availing itself when necessary of the help of external consultants;

§ involving all the confreres more effectively in the animating nucleus of the EPC and in the elaboration and application of the SEPP;

§ helping the confreres, in choosing their sphere of professional qualification, to respond to the needs of the Province, in dialogue with the Provincial;

§ relaunching the practice of the fraternal colloquy with the Rector, the centre of unity and pastoral orientation for all the confreres.

[35]

The concrete nature of poverty

The community undertakes to give witness to a lifestyle inspired by the poverty of Christ and his Gospel by:

§ manifesting prophetic austerity through a simple, sober and modest way of living, taking account of the local neighbourhood,^[22] in assiduous and self-sacrificing work with a readiness to carry out even the most humble tasks;^[23]

§ living a spirit of detachment and of trust in Providence, with transparency in availability and the use of money, and drawing up a budget with frugal criteria;

§ making solidarity a regulating principle of its life and activity, with a genuine sharing within the local and provincial communities, and also meeting the needs of other provinces;

§ being open to the needs of the young, especially the very poor, putting our life, our time and our structures at their service, and collaborating with persons and organizations committed to social advancement and the struggle for justice.

[36]

The splendour of chastity

The community radiates its witness to chastity and offers it to today's young people as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom of God and a proclamation of the dignity of every individual by:

§ creating a serene, joyful and fraternal environment which encourages the growth of true friendship among the confreres and becomes a sign of the happiness in giving oneself for the Kingdom;^[24]

§ aiming at a temperate and laborious lifestyle, nourished by asceticism and willing service, as a practical expression of the boundless love for God and for the young;

§ proposing to young people programs of education to love and giving proper value to chastity;^[25]

§ laying down at both congregational and provincial level, norms of behaviour to which all confreres must conform, so as to prevent the scandals connected with sexual abuse, taking advantage also of opportune legal and scientific advice;

§ offering to the confreres, and especially to those in difficulties, accompaniment, understanding, space for recovery and those steps that may be necessary, even at provincial level;

§ committing ourselves to the protection of juveniles, collaborating also with persons and organizations working for the rights of children and of young people who are victims of sexual exploitation.

III. ANIMATING PRESENCE AMONG THE YOUNG

"And now I commend you to God

and to the word of his grace,

*which is able to build you up
and to give you the inheritance
among all those who are sanctified”.*

(Acts 20, 32)

A. THE CALL OF GOD

[37]

“Whether I am at home or away I am always thinking of you. I have only one wish, to see you happy both in this world and in the next... Being away from you, my dear sons, and not being able to see or hear you, upsets me more than you can imagine... You are always and exclusively in my thoughts”.[\[26\]](#) When we Salesians of the Third Millennium read these sentiments of the fatherly heart of Don Bosco once again, we find in them an authentic appeal from God to envisage and bring about, with hope and in fidelity to the “oratorian criterion”[\[27\]](#), *our presence among the young, a presence that consists in being effectively close to them in participation and follow-up, in animation and witness, and in vocational suggestion in the style of salesian assistance.*[\[28\]](#)

Following in Don Bosco’s footsteps, we want to respond to the call of Jesus to be, in the Church of the present day, a prophetic sign and joyful bearers of the love of the Father for the young.[\[29\]](#) God calls us not only to be a community *for the young* but also *with the young*, especially “those who are poor, abandoned and in danger”.[\[30\]](#) The young people to whom we open our Salesian heart ask us to listen to their requests; they want us in all simplicity and familiarity to throw our doors open and go out to meet them, to share their life by living with them, perceive their values, understand their preoccupations, and offer them opportunities to get involved.

For this reason we strive to prompt and respond to young people’s search for meaning: we aim to become a school of life that raises questions and gives reasons for hope, that lives and celebrates the presence of the Risen Christ, that communicates its own experience of faith and forms disciples, and that accompanies them as they grow to the point where they “*develop their own human and baptismal vocation by a daily life progressively inspired and unified by the Gospel*”.[\[31\]](#)

Animated by the charity of the Good Shepherd,[\[32\]](#) and with Mary as our Mother and Teacher, we seek with confidence a common educative and pastoral project and a methodology that can instill education with Gospel values and pay more attention to the processes of education than to activities, to persons rather than to structures, to fraternity rather than to functions.

Our zeal for God and for the young moves us to become a “*home and school of communion*”.[\[33\]](#) We live a vocation that radiates joy and fosters participation and is able to muster numerous apostolic forces with which to share Don Bosco’s spirit and mission in the local Church and neighbourhood: the lay collaborators of the EPC, the groups of the Salesian Family, and our more committed young people.

B. SITUATION

[38]

Wherever there is a salesian community, there is a gift of God: an experience of faith, a network of relationships and multiple forms of service to the young.

The community gives visibility to the **salesian presence**, animates it and promotes its growth. Even though it is not possible to identify the mission with the work, the salesian presence among the young gives shape to a work and can be expressed in it.

The presence expresses a progressive capacity for welcoming acceptance and communion, a commitment to education and evangelization, and a method for follow-up and vocational discernment.

[39]

A presence that welcomes and builds communion

The need is recognized of being present among young people in the style typical of the preventive system, even in those communities where the number of confreres is small and which are marked by aging or illness. Often however organizational and management concerns cause some confreres, in fact, to remain remote from the young. Moreover there are some who through their personal projects or convenience are drawing apart from the youth situation.

In the communities positive attention is given to the new and old forms of poverty affecting young people, but there are also signs of an attachment to the past, defensive attitudes in facing present and future, insufficient sensitivity to the new forms of poverty, and a lack of proper training to deal with marginalization – though in this field we are present to a greater extent today than in the preceding six years.

The salesian community, more convinced of its charismatic task in the animating nucleus, has given rise to new forms of lay involvement, especially through the formation and animation of the EPC, collaboration with volunteers and the elaboration of the SEPP. There is also an improved sensitivity as regards the Salesian Family, but the need is recognized for a greater sharing in responsibility for a more effective sharing of the mission.

[40]

A presence that educates and evangelizes

The effort to evangelize meets with a favourable response today because of the resources possessed by young people, and especially because of their quest for inner depth, their particular openness to new values, and the many different forms of service in the volunteer movement. At times, however, the effect of our work is weakened by the community failing to live a deep spiritual experience with clear reference to evangelical motivations and genuine pastoral charity.

Furthermore, it is observed that relationships today tend to be fleeting and lacking in depth. The number of possibilities of communication does not always correspond to the quality of relationships: this also affects the relationships between the salesian community and the young.

There is also the danger that the mission may be identified with the works, and the latter with structures and services. The young then find it difficult to perceive the community as an alternative form of life, a challenge to what society offers and a concrete prophetic statement of the future.

In many places our presence has a positive social, political and cultural impact, even if sometimes our educational and social work does not attain the hoped for results. There are communities that find it difficult to harmonize community life with an open understanding of mission that could lead to responses to new problems and the planning of new forms of service.

[41]

A presence that accompanies and broaches the subject of vocation

In recent years action and reflection have given rise to vocational planning at both local and provincial levels; greater attention has been given to methods of formation; there has been a greater involvement of young people in groups and in the Salesian Youth Movement. We have not always known how to involve the family as the primary setting for vocational growth.

There is a greater attentiveness to all vocations in the Church and in the Salesian Family in particular, and the conviction that a true youth pastoral work always has a vocational aspect.

We realize that our settings abound in vocation potential and resources, but there is still the difficulty of presenting and conveying the meaning of life as a vocation and mission, and the fatigue of personal guidance for the young. We Salesians always have the priority obligation of bearing witness to the vocation of consecrated apostles in its double and complementary lay and priestly form[34].

The social and cultural situations, the present structure of some of our works, and a certain spiritual weariness on the part of some SDBs and communities account for a weakening of the life of faith and of the processes connected with the formation and the vocation of the young, and also for the fall in numbers referred to by many provincial chapters.

C. CHALLENGES

[42]

The salesian presence is a dynamic reality, a network of relationships, an ensemble of projects and processes, activated by pastoral charity and carried out together with young people, the laity and the Salesian Family. The subject of this presence, therefore, is not exclusively the salesian community.

Starting from this consideration, the following challenges seem fundamental.

[43]

A presence that welcomes and builds communion

The salesian community is called to renew the quality of its presence in the midst of the young, to build communion and foster the participation of the laity, and to insert itself actively in its neighbourhood.

- *Which community model facilitates our presence among the young?*
- *What kind of presence should we have in the EPC and in the Salesian Family as a charismatic community? When should we be present? With what forms of involvement and tasks?*

- *What kind of presence do we have in institutions where decisions are made concerning the problems of young people?*

[44]

A presence that educates and evangelizes

The Salesian community is called to be a presence that educates and evangelizes, and becomes a prophetic proclamation among the young living in a secularized, globalized and fragmented world.

In a secularized, multi-cultural and multi-religious world which seeks new spiritual experiences and feels the irrelevance of the faith:

- *How can the community contribute to creating environments that have a powerful influence for the experience of Gospel values, that provide opportunities for interreligious dialogue and the sharing of intercultural experiences, so as to help young people to arrive gradually at a synthesis of faith, culture and life?*
- *How can the community share rich and meaningful experiences with young people, expressing them in the languages used by the young and in the new forms of communication?*

In the movement towards a globalized world which produces alarming situations of poverty and glaring economic and social inequalities, and offers new opportunities for solidarity:

- *How can the community make its structures and resources effective in its service to the poorest of young people, so as to speak to them of God's love and contribute to their development?*
- *How can the community transmit to the young who live in a context of affluence the value of evangelical poverty and simplicity of life, and help them to investigate the causes of poverty and to grow in their commitment to solidarity with those most affected?*

In the complex and fragmented culture of our day which can cause disunity and gives importance to what is singular and diverse:

- *How can the community carry out processes of discernment and pastoral conversion, and pass from a pastoral approach built around activities and needs to an approach centred on processes?*
- *How can the community overcome the fragmentation of its activities and operate according to a unified and structured plan?*

[45]

A presence which accompanies and broaches the subject of vocation

The salesian community is called to become an invitation to young people to consider the subject of vocation and to develop educational and pastoral activities which make possible a personal encounter with them.

- *How can the salesian community become a vocational sign so as to help the young person see life as a gift and a task which consists in the following of Christ?*

- *How is the subject of vocation to be broached with a young person so as to bring him to discover and accept God's designs in his regard?*
- *How can the community realize an educative presence that encourages personal meetings and provides ongoing personal guidance?*

D. GUIDELINES

We have selected a number of **practical guidelines** that will help the community to respond to the challenges and build up a salesian presence in line with the call of God.

[46]

A presence that welcomes and builds communion

The salesian community is a fraternal and apostolic community which draws its inspiration from the oratorian criterion of Don Bosco.^[35] Through our animating presence among the young and lay people, we build communion and promote our mission, which all must consider a single mission belonging to all.

The community rethinks its presence among the young with a view to making it direct, welcoming and gratuitous by:

- organizing the life and the structures of the community around the presence of young people, re-examining the timetable of daily life and prayer, so as to create a setting that attracts and facilitates direct contact with them;
- recovering the value of salesian assistance so that not only are we *for* the young but *with* the young, giving priority to the tasks that are in line with our responsibility for the charism;
- making the salesian community visible among the young and open to them as a place of welcome for those who wish to stay with us to get to know our life at close quarters;
- setting up appropriate initiatives to respond especially to the needs of the young who are marginalized.

The salesian community becomes the leaven of communion among the young and lay people by:

- planning and reviewing the essential lines of educative and pastoral activity in the community project, to ensure unity of action, convergence of criteria, and harmony among people;
- programming and evaluating the SEPP, according to a method that encourages co-responsibility of all those who for various reasons share in the educative mission;
- deepening the commitment to formation together, among Salesians and lay people, through appropriate procedures that foster the sharing of criteria and objectives, and the organic structure of our activities;
- living the salesian spirituality with the young and lay people more deeply and ensuring time and opportunities for personal relationships and sharing of the salesian spirit;

- giving particular attention to environmental pedagogy.

The community becomes the animating presence in the locality by:

- paying more attention to new settings for meeting young people;

promoting collaboration with the various groups of the Salesian Family as a way to adopt a mentality of shared responsibility in the youth mission;

- collaborating with ecclesial and civil institutions in the fields of education, youth pastoral ministry and social communication;
- developing a greater involvement in multicultural and plurireligious settings, through the knowledge of languages, dialogue, and the experience of international communities;
- contacting and dialoguing with the youth culture in the area where one is working.

[47]

A presence that educates and evangelizes

In a variety of contexts the salesian community becomes a prophetic proclamation through its own life and activity and develops a presence that educates and evangelizes; it creates places with a strong spiritual ethos, takes account of the actual situation of poverty and promotes projects and processes for the growth of the young.

In a secularized context the salesian community fosters the creation of settings with a strong spiritual character by:

- proposing and living occasions of deep spiritual experience with young people: Eucharist, Reconciliation, “lectio divina”, prayer, meetings, retreats;
- involving the EPC in the planning, running and evaluation of the processes of education and evangelization in view of a consistent way of life and of commitment for the Kingdom;
- fostering in the EPC the formation of young people involved in civil and ecclesial activity, so as to promote a more just and supportive society with a Christian inspiration;
- participating in occasions of meetings of the SYM and recognizing the groups as the special setting for spiritual development and youth missionary activity;
- fostering active participation by the more mature young people so as to make them protagonists in the evangelization of their peers.

In a globalized world the salesian community is aware of the reality of poverty and injustice and commits itself to education and evangelization with techniques appropriate to the young people who are living in conditions both of poverty and of affluence by:

- embracing a lifestyle of poverty and of sharing with the poor;
- practising financial transparency and justice in working relations within the EPC;

- studying with the young essential elements of the social teaching of the Church to help them enter society in a responsible manner;
- creating high standards in education in justice and in solidarity for all young people, those living in contexts of poverty and those in more affluent situations through an examination of the causes of injustice and with a view to making practical commitments.

In a complex and fragmented culture the salesian community sets out to work according to a project and to progress from pastoral activities to a pastoral process by:

- overcoming a view of pastoral action that reduces it to an area of our activity or to a specific activity of religious formation;
- maturing a concept of pastoral action that includes the comprehensive view of contents, interventions and methods, respecting the rhythms of growth of young people, giving attention to the different areas of growth;
- embracing an approach to working in teams to overcome a compartmentalized outlook in carrying out roles and responsibilities.
- verifying the assimilation of the GC23 regarding the integral education of the young and the planning and implementation of educational processes;
- being open to forms of education and evangelization that make good use of social communication as a new vital setting for young people to come together.

[48]

A presence that accompanies and becomes a vocational proposal

The salesian community promotes the vocational choice of the young through the witness of its life; it animates the educative pastoral community so that it becomes the setting for vocational growth in the young; it implements a method of accompaniment and of vocational proposal.

The salesian community takes to heart its role in the process of vocational development and of follow up of the young by:

- bearing witness in community to the vocation of the salesian priest and salesian brother, in a visible, joyful and attractive manner;
- sharing with the young some aspects of our life: celebrations, friendship, meals, prayer, our history, plans, missionary interests;
- encouraging experiences of voluntary work as a valid opportunity for guidance and vocational discernment;
- offering an explicit plan of accompaniment and vocational guidance at local level, that harmonizes experiences in a structured way, involving and training the confreres in spiritual guidance and utilizing the presence of young confreres;
- giving special attention to the figure of the salesian brother.

The salesian community animates the EPC as the special setting for the accompaniment and vocational choice of the young by:

- making the EPC a real faith community, that promotes communion between the different vocations and develops a religious formation of quality;
- creating a welcoming family atmosphere;
- participating in the SYM, by having care for the leaders, the provision of suitable faith programs, and the suggestion of apostolic experiences and of missionary service;
- organizing a team of leaders within the EPC, open to the Salesian Family, that motivates, stimulates and guides experiences to arouse interest and involvement according to the many different vocations;
- starting from the EPC developing an appropriate pastoral care of the family, especially those parents whose children are in the process of being formed in the faith and in the phase of discerning their vocation.

The salesian community gives effect to a methodology of guidance and vocation follow-up by:

- animating a vocational process that harmonizes the various elements: witness to gospel values within the EPC, presence among the young, the explicit proposal of follow-up, the formation process, the experience of God lived in service, and the vocational decision;
- promoting initiatives that ensure the continuity of the process: dialogue with the educators; age-groups for vocational discernment; vocational guidance for young adults; formation of animators in their process of vocational discernment;
- re-evaluating some aspects of traditional salesian pedagogy: group life, personal dialogue, spiritual direction, vocational discernment;
- proposing for the vocational development of the young some typically salesian spiritual experiences: involvement in Church activities; personal prayer, frequent reception of the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Reconciliation, love for Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

IV. THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY

PRIVILEGED SETTING FOR FORMATION AND ANIMATION

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;

and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem

and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1, 8)

“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock,

in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” (Acts 20, 28)

A. THE CALL OF GOD

[49]

We are convinced that God calls us to live in fraternal communities, following the model of discipleship lived by the Twelve and animated by Jesus.

Don Bosco is for us our father, model and teacher. Through study, prayer and practical experience he learned to face reality, assess it and find appropriate answers to new trends and situations. With his human and spiritual gifts he gathered around him a fraternal and apostolic community in continual vocational growth.

The salesian communities of today want to continue the spirit of the community of Don Bosco and the first Salesians. For us the community is a real home where in a fraternal atmosphere we support each other in the process of personal and vocational growth at the different stages of life. Community life is formative in itself.

[50]

Challenged by the young and urged on by the dynamics of a world in constant change, we keep up-to-date and deepen our vocational commitment. In this context, dialogue with lay people and commitment to the development of the EPC become for us a way of formation and of fostering our charism

[51]

Urged on by the vast movement of the re-founding of consecrated life, and open to the signs of the times, our communities recognize the need for a continual change of mentality regarding lifestyles, educative and pastoral criteria

and methods, and also of structures, in constant fidelity to the original charism; for this reason they feel called to a determined effort of reflection and dialogue, of experimentation and analysis, of decisions and evaluation to ensure a continuing formation.

[52]

The Rector – father, teacher, brother and friend – is recognized and supported by the confreres as the principal point of reference in everyday life, and animator of their fidelity and vocational growth. He unites, guides and encourages the whole community to live to the full their own vocation to holiness in the spirit of Don Bosco.[\[36\]](#)

B. SITUATION

[53]

The situation manifests the following *positive aspects*:

In many communities the confreres show themselves to be open to formation and to change. The desire for vocational growth is fulfilled:

§ in mutual brotherly love, in understanding and acceptance of one another; in community prayer, in collaboration in the drawing up and carrying out of the common project, in dialogue;

§ in special occasions such as the provincial and community assemblies, community day, the monthly and quarterly days of recollection, retreats.

Some particular sensitivities that contribute to formation are:

§ responsibility for one's own human and spiritual development;

§ the ability to share with the confreres one's own personal life;

§ attention to the human and affective dimension of the individual;

§ the desire not only to educate young people, but also to learn from them;

§ a planning mentality that leads to ever greater involvement;

§ commitment to inculturation and insertion in the social and ecclesial context.

In different parts of the Congregation there is a positive assessment of the ministry of the Rector and some conditions that help him to exercise it:

§ his role as a *man of unity and fraternity*;

§ his ability to lead the community along the lines of renewal and of response to the problems in the world today in accordance with the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the Congregation;

§ care by the Provincials and their councils and the participation of the confreres in the selection of Rectors;

§ the preparation of the Rector for his ministry;

§ personal guidance offered to the Rector by the Provincial.

[54]

Some communities complain about *difficulties and uncertainties* due to:

§ the effects of modern culture also marked by aspects of secularism, relativism, hedonism and individualism;

§ a weakening in faith reflected in the abandonment of prayer, of the daily celebration of the Eucharist and of the sacrament of reconciliation, in the interpretation of the events of life and history on the basis of non-evangelical criteria, in a falling off in zeal for evangelization;

§ human immaturity and psychological weakness; superficiality in relationships, insufficient communication and dialogue;

§ little collaboration between confreres and their insufficiency in number and quality, lack of coordination between the different roles in the community and in the mission; inadequate distribution of tasks; lack of balance between work, study and prayer;

§ the inability of the confreres to help each other in their development and in their difficulties, and the lack of mutual help through fraternal correction;

§ the crisis of the “friendly chat” with the Rector;

§ insufficient attention given to young confreres and to those in initial formation;

§ lack of continuity between initial and ongoing formation;

§ the multiplicity of the tasks of the Rector and the failure to prioritize them that limit his ability to devote time and energy to the service of the confreres; the absences, sometimes frequent, of the Rector from the community;

- § the tendency for the Rector to do things himself rather than get others to do them;
- § in some cases his inadequate preparation.

C. CHALLENGES AND GUIDELINES

1. THE COMMUNITY: THE SETTING FOR FORMATION AND ANIMATION

Challenges

[55]

An analysis of the situation indicates many challenges among which the following seem to be the main ones:

- Ø *What attitudes need to be fostered to bring about an effective change of mentality and openness to renewal?*
- Ø *Under what conditions is it possible to ensure and improve the commitment of all the confreres to ongoing formation ?*
- Ø *What are the salesian experiences that should be given a special place and fostered in order to enrich formation in community?*
- Ø *How can sufficient importance be given to everyday living in its formation aspect?*

guidelines

The following are suggested as a response particularly to the present challenges and future perspectives.

[56]

Improve the commitment of the whole community to formation by:

- enabling the confreres in initial formation to acquire the necessary convictions and attitudes for ongoing formation;
- involving all the confreres in those processes that foster analysis, dialogue, research. community planning, systematic evaluation of the life and activity of the community;
- encouraging and guiding each confrere in the commitment to his own formation through a personal project of life.

[57]

Give greater emphasis to some areas of formation:

- human maturity, especially affective maturity;
- Christian and salesian vocational identity;[\[37\]](#)
- understanding and appreciation of the preventive system as the way to salesian holiness;
- the ability to work in a team, also with lay people, and to draw up projects and identify procedures;
- a sound knowledge of the cultural context and of the youth situation for the inculturation of evangelical values and of the salesian charism.

[58]

Give due importance to everyday life by:

- animating the community to a spirituality of communion[\[38\]](#) as a prerequisite for all collaboration and sharing;
- involving all the resources of the community in view of the common mission;
- fostering the development of religious identity through community occasions, and in particular the planning and evaluation meetings, community assemblies, community days;
- helping the confreres to find the right time and rhythms to overcome excessive activity and superficiality, and carefully planning times for study, for personal reading, community reflection, sharing, prayer, recreation and rest.

[59]

To achieve all this it is proposed that:

At world level

The General Councillor for Formation and his team:

- continue to present in an appropriate manner and to give due weight to the new *Ratio*;
- coordinate and strengthen the national and international centres of ongoing formation;
- promote the appreciation of the salesian places for opportunities for formation, also for the different cultural and language groups.

[60]

At provincial level

- The provincial commission for formation draws up an annual program for ongoing formation, giving special attention to the affective area and to the ability to form interpersonal relationships;

- The delegate for formation coordinates the specific programs to respond to the needs of the different groups of confreres, not neglecting the sick and the elderly, to help them to live their condition with serenity and a spirit of faith;
- The Provincial with his council draws up the provincial plan for the qualification of personnel, in harmony with the formation commission and in dialogue with the confreres. The necessary weight should be given to studies of philosophy, pedagogy, theology, salesianity, and to professional and academic studies;
- Each Province should make arrangements for and encourage the possibility of drawing on the sources of our spirituality;
- Where it is judged appropriate, houses for initial formation can be available for and support the ongoing formation of other confreres and members of the Salesian Family, and lay collaborators;
- Confreres in practical training, Brothers who have just finished initial formation and priests in the first years of their pastoral ministry should be sent to communities where there are confreres in sufficient number and of the right quality who are capable of guiding them in their development;
- To the confreres should be offered suitable periods of time for renewal and spiritual experiences that will sustain them at different stages of life;
- From the beginning of formation the confreres should be trained in different forms of cooperative learning.

[61]

At community level

- As the basis of formation are still to be found: daily celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation, the Liturgy of the Hours, meditation, devotion to Mary Help of Christians and the saints of the Salesian Family, and other forms of prayer;
- The *lectio divina*, personal and in community, is to be fostered as a means of growth in the life of the community; and a “school of prayer” for the confreres, the lay people and the youngsters, particularly during the special periods of the liturgical year;
- Great value should be attached to the community day, and the various community meetings. These occasions are to be well prepared and planned, so as to be effective means for spiritual growth and for the sharing of personal experiences;
- Community planning flows from the involvement of all the confreres so that it is truly shared and regularly evaluated;
- Because of its formative value, individual communities will put into practice everything that they consider useful in order to safeguard, reorganize and furnish their libraries and documentary archives.

[62]

At personal level

- The confrere will give priority to times for prayer, personal reflection and retreat, to the community day and to meetings for planning and evaluation.
- He will give due value to both personal and community spiritual direction.
- With the help of the human sciences he will develop the capacity for self-knowledge and self-esteem.
- His personal plan of life[\[39\]](#) can become part of his friendly chat with the Rector.

2. THE RECTOR: ANIMATOR OF THE COMMUNITY

Challenges

[63]

In the current situation the challenges for an adequate exercise of the ministry of the Rector are varied and among them the following seem the most relevant:

Ø *How to help the Rector so that in the community he can be not only a man of government and the one ultimately responsible for the activities but above all a father, guide, brother and friend ?*

Ø *How to assess that the necessary conditions exist for the Rector to be able to carry out his mission in an appropriate manner?*

Ø *How to prepare a confrere adequately to assume the role of Rector ?*

Ø *How to help the confreres to recognize in faith the role of the Rector and to support him in his service ?*

guidelines

[64]

- **The Rector, following the model of Don Bosco “is a paternal figure, at the same time both affectionate and authoritative...Deeply marked by the priestly character, he expresses it daily in the ministry of the word, of sanctification and of animation.”[\[40\]](#)**

- The first task of the Rector is to animate the community in love (“*study how to make yourself loved*”), giving attention to the confreres especially the more frail ones and those in initial formation. The exercise of his ministry, in the situation of today, requires that he take into account the relative importance of his different tasks: at the service of salesian unity and identity; teacher and pastoral guide, organizer of educative commitments, manager of the work.[\[41\]](#)
- The Rector “lives in a vision of faith, expressed in the certitude of having received from the Lord whatever can be of help to the community. Consequently he lives in the joyful offering of whatever he can possibly do, and in tranquility in the face of his own limitations of temperament or ability.”[\[42\]](#) He enjoys the trust of the confreres of the house and of the province and is accepted not only for what he does, but especially for what he represents.
- Given the complexity and the sensitivity of his duties, it is of fundamental importance that the Rector receives good initial and ongoing preparation in the content and skills necessary for his ministry.

[65]

Proposals:

At provincial level:

- The Provincial should ensure that there are regular meetings of the Rectors for their formation, exchange of information and an understanding about the activities and the animation of the province. [\[43\]](#)
- At interprovincial or regional level courses of preparation and updating for the Rectors are to be organized.

At local level:

§ The community, at the beginning of the year, under the leadership of the Rector, draws up its *annual plan for community action* in which Rector and confreres express their own aims, identify and set out their objectives and criteria for activity, and program their meetings together.[\[44\]](#)

- The Rector, as well as having the support of the Provincial, should be helped and assisted by a well chosen Vice-Rector and the constant cooperation of his council.
- Sensitive to the needs of the confreres and in dialogue with them, the Rector does all he can to foster and promote the best way of having the “friendly chat”, and is himself willing to make the first approach.
- With the help of the Provincial the Rector tries to ensure his own suitable preparation, making use also of the human sciences.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

FOR LIVING AND WORKING TOGETHER

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people

by the hands of the apostles.

And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. (...)

And more than ever believers were added to the Lord,

multitudes both of men and women

(Acts 5, 12, 14)

A. THE CALL OF GOD

[66]

God calls us to live and work together in the various social, cultural and religious situations in which our young people live and to be in them, as a salesian community, prophetic signs of his love and witnesses to the values of the Kingdom of heaven..

We recognize that God is calling us to accept and give effect to our mission in the first place as provincial and local communities.[\[45\]](#)

[67]

Different forms of salesian community life have developed in the Congregation. While they oblige us to rethink and renew the practice and organization of the salesian religious community, they invite us to continually verify the fundamental conditions which make possible a meaningful community life in the fulfilment of our mission.

B. SITUATION

[68]

Salesian communities find themselves in varied and partly new situations as regards living and working together. The new experiences of salesian community life can be described as having the following characteristics:

- Communities with a reduced number of confreres with the task of the animation of a plurality of works, in mission territories or through the reality of a lack of personnel.
- Communities inserted in complex works, in which the disproportion between work and resources leads to fragmentation of the rhythms of community life.
- Communities fully inserted into the social scene to the extent of sharing the lifestyle of the people; that are working in close collaboration with the local Church; that are collaborating with members of other religions.
- Communities with lay and young people present in the community life.

Many communities have positive experiences which manifest a fraternal life of a typically evangelical flavour, community sharing and sense of responsibility, and participation in the mission.

[69]

There are some structural and organizational aspects that have a negative influence on the effectiveness of our living and working together. In some cases the community is still working to a model that calls for a serious rethinking of the relationship between Community and Mission:

- structural elements that affect community rapport, such as the prevalence of functional over fraternal relations; little concern for the common project and the moments set aside for fraternal encounters; lack of organization of work, and its division into sectors;
- timetables, customs and schemes linked rigidly with kinds of pastoral action and traditional responses which are a long way from the reality and youth culture of today;
- works that raise no questions and give rise to no communion and collaboration with those who share the same salesian spirit and mission.

The above-mentioned conditions constitute real and concrete risks for some confreres and lead to physical and spiritual weariness, situations of psychological and relational unease, independence in initiatives, fragmentation in the fulfilment of the mission, difficulties between generations, and the accumulation of roles and functions.

[70]

The process towards a community of salesian religious with the task of the internal animation of a broader reality – the Educative and Pastoral Community – is irreversible.[\[46\]](#)

The animating nucleus of the EPC is becoming composed ever more of other subjects (young and lay people, members of the Salesian Family, representatives of the local Church and neighbourhood), who share our spirituality and mission committing themselves to animation..

Within it the salesian community plays the role of the charismatic point of reference from which all take their inspiration.

C. CHALLENGES

[71]

In response to God's call and to the situation described above, there are four challenges which demand a new way of organizing our apostolic work and the life itself of the salesian community:

§ *How can we overcome the tendency to individualism and sectorialism and the little ability for sharing, which compromise our living and working together?*

§ *How can we ensure that the salesian community be made up of the right number of confreres and those of the necessary quality, as an essential condition for fraternal life, evangelical witness and presence among young people?*

§ *How can we rethink the relationship between the works and the salesian community, so that it has the role of guaranteeing the charism, of animation and involvement of all who share Don Bosco's mission and spirit?*

§ *How can we rationalize all the salesian work in a specific area so as to ensure the conditions needed for a fraternal and community life and the animation of the EPC?.*

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D. GUIDELINES

1. Working in line with a community project

[72]

Every community shares and draws up its own community project and reviews it annually.

In this way consistency is given to living and working together, overcoming the progressive separation caused by individual work, with the risk of fragmentation. It is a matter of leading the confreres to the conviction of the need for working together according to the same project, which does not necessarily mean that they all have to do the same things.

[73]

The community becomes accustomed to working according to a planning mentality:

§ developing among the confreres a common and shared vision of the community project and helping each one to discover and give due value to his own talents and qualities. The community accepts each member with his strong points and limitations, and decides on roles of shared responsibility for each one.[\[47\]](#)

§ living the project as a community process that starts from the daily experience of the confreres. The objective is not only the final design of the project, but especially the giving of effect to continued assessments of aims, values and expectations which lead the confreres to a practical living and working together

§ encouraging moments of dialogue (assembly of confreres, local council), of discernment of God's will (times of prayer, listening to God's Word through the *lectio divina*, reference to the magisterium of the Church and the Congregation), in harmony with the Organic Provincial Plan each community agrees on, draws up, and revises each year the progress of its own project.

§ questioning itself in particular on the following aspects: Who do we want to be at the present day as a local community? How can we, as a local community, be present in a religious and salesian manner, animate the EPC and give evangelical witness? What practical consequences follow for the community? What choices must we make right now? What kind of personal and community formation do we need?

[74]

The drawing up of the community project involves all the different parts of the community:

§ involving every confrere independently of his own particular role, and appealing to his sense of shared responsibility. Fraternal dialogue will facilitate the participation of all, and harmonize personal life projects with that of the community.

§ identifying through the annual programming process the objectives, goals and interventions that the community itself undertakes to carry out and verify.

§ organizing the rhythm of community life in a suitable way, by restructuring the activities and timetables of religious life and of our pastoral and educative service while safeguarding its salesian style.

§ ensuring that the Rector, to whom it belongs to animate this process with the help of his council, receives the necessary support from the Provincial and the organisms of provincial animation, making use also of the contributions of the human sciences.

§ inviting the Provincial and his council to verify the process of realization of the projects of the individual communities, and check that they are consistent with that of the province.

2. Ensuring that the salesian community is made up of the right number of confreres and those of the necessary quality

[75]

The qualitative and quantitative consistency of the salesian community is a fundamental condition for making possible in each community the experience of fraternal life, of evangelical witness, of animating presence among the young, of ongoing formation, and for achieving in a significant manner its animating role in the EPC as described by the GC24 itself. [\[48\]](#)

[76]

This is achieved by:

§ fostering a balance between new salesian missionary frontiers and the consolidation or reshaping of present ones at world and provincial level.

§ promoting in the provincial and local community the awareness of a common mission, and ensuring its spiritual, educative and pastoral quality through ongoing formation and the functioning of the community organisms (house council, assembly of confreres, regular fraternal meetings).

[77]

To attain this objective:

§ The Provincial and his council will evaluate the situation of the existing communities as regards the number and quality of confreres:

- in the light of the criteria of the General Regulations 20 and 150;
- by verifying the concrete opportunities for development that would allow for the attainment in a reasonable time of an effective community life;
- by defining, in dialogue with communities that live in unusual situations with regard to number of members, particular ways for the exercise of authority and for the organisms of community life.

§ In beginning new works and forming new communities, the Provincial and his council will ensure an adequate number and quality of confreres for the purpose of realizing:

- a fraternal life of quality, in the style of the family spirit;
- the communal programming and verification of the mission entrusted to the community;
- the animation of the works and the respective EPCs.

§ In the course of the coming six years the Rector Major and his Council will promote a process of evaluation in the Provinces and Regions which, because of the changed situations, need to set up salesian work in a new way.

3. Redefining the relationship between the community and the work

[78]

The relationship between the community and the work ought to enable the salesian community to live and work together and be a point of charismatic reference in the animating nucleus of the EPC. This presupposes that the community's project is in line with that of the Organic Provincial Plan, and with that of each EPC.

[79]

The salesian community fulfils its task of animation of the EPC by maturing in the conviction:

§ That all the salesian religious, according to their possibilities, be members of the animating nucleus, but in the awareness that the latter is not to be reduced to the SDB community alone. In line with the interpretation of art. 5 of the General Regulations and in the spirit of the GC24 and of subsequent guidelines,[\[49\]](#) the SDB community must become ever more aware that the responsibility for the animation of the EPC is to be shared with the laity, overcoming any resistance and in the perspective of shared charismatic and pastoral responsibility.

§ That the whole community, even if represented by a single confrere, feels itself part of the animating nucleus of the work.

§ That the living and working together of the community find a broader perspective at the level of rapport and shared responsibility, in the context of the EPC.

§ That the relationship of the structures of government of the religious community be harmonized with those of the Work, so as to avoid overlapping.

[80]

. The salesian community lives its vocation to be the point of reference for the charismatic identity of the animating nucleus of the EPC by accepting the working model described by the GC24. For this purpose the salesian community grows by:

§ forming the young and lay people in the salesian charism;

§ sharing its own mission with the laity;

§ living the family spirit;

§ fostering real co-responsibility in animation and in government;

§ ensuring fidelity to the pastoral implications of all aspects of the community life;

§ becoming a promoter of peace and justice, and in the ability to provide a practical response to the needs of the poor.

[81]

The local salesian community fosters its relationship with the EPC by:

- § living a dialogue with the young people of the neighbourhood with faith and confidence;
- § facilitating participation of the Salesians, youngsters and laity in a working network, through involvement in local and provincial structures;
- § carrying out a discernment of the signs of the times;
- § developing professional competence in youth pastoral work, and in the dimensions of evangelization, education, social behaviour and pastoral work for vocations;
- § organizing pastoral work in such a way as to coordinate among themselves the EPC and its council with the local community and its council. [\[50\]](#)

4. Drawing up and evaluating the Organic Provincial Plan

[82]

In the next three years the provincial community, through its various organisms will study, draw up or evaluate the Organic Provincial Plan.

The Organic Provincial Plan will set out the fundamental options guiding the development of the province, ensuring continuity and coherence in decisions. It covers the priority fields of action for the years ahead, practical criteria for the different plans and projects, the works to which attention must be given, the general lines for the preparation of personnel and for economic and structural development, responding to today's urgent requirements and future prospects emerging from analysis of the locality. [\[51\]](#)

[83]

The Organic Provincial Plan must pursue the following objectives:

- § The strengthening in every confrere and in every community of the sense of the common mission and shared responsibility for it;
- § The reshaping and restructuring of the areas of commitment and development in the province;
- § The overcoming of situations of community fragmentation, dispersion and numerical inadequacy;
- § the real priority of the more effective and prophetic works and a more authentic expression of the salesian mission in the area.

[84]

In the elaboration and revision of the Organic Provincial Plan, the Provincial and his council, with the help of a working team, will evaluate the effectiveness of the mission of the individual works with reference to the following points:

§ the adequate number of confreres and the necessary qualities in the salesian community;

§ the possibility of a fraternal religious life in salesian style, perceptible and significant for the young and for lay collaborators;

§ work/presence among the young, especially the very poor and those most in need, through an intense living of the preventive system;

§ the ability to provide responses of educative and evangelizing quality to the challenges arising from the world of youth and from the social context;

§ the ability to combine with other forces (laity, youngsters, Salesian Family, other provinces and organizations), and give rise to ecclesial vocations with particular attention to the Salesian Family;

§ the promotion of light and easily managed works that allow for a dynamic adaptation to a change of circumstances;

§ the ability to collaborate and have an effective and prophetic impact on the evangelical transformation of the locality.

CONCLUSION

[85]

At the conclusion of the work of the Chapter we find ourselves with the riches not so much of a written text as of a lived experience: that of a fraternal community that has known how to welcome and appreciate diversity, to renew and to deepen further the reasons for our living and working, to be open to listening to the world especially that of the young, to assume the joys and the concerns of so many confreres, working together, praying together, breaking bread together. It is the Easter gift of the community that we want to share with everyone, renewing our faith:

We believe that our community

is brought to birth by the gratuitous initiative of the Father

sinks its roots in the Lord's Passover

is a gift ever new of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that we are called to live in community

following Christ, obedient chaste and poor

according to the charism of Don Bosco,

in the service of the young, especially the poorest
to walk together towards the full maturity of Christ.

We believe that the Salesian community,
guided and sustained by the motherly presence of Mary Help of Christians,
is built up around the Word, the Bread and Forgiveness,
and that, through the practice of charity and of fraternal correction
becomes the place of mercy and reconciliation.

We believe that the practice of the preventive system,
as an inspiration and a way of living and of working together,
deepens our relationship with God, helps our fraternal relationships to mature
and unites Salesians, the young and lay people in a single experience,
in an atmosphere of family, trust and dialogue.

We believe that the Salesian mission is entrusted to the community,
in which we all share and are co-responsible,
with the richness of personal gifts
in the complementary nature of the lay and priestly vocations,
in the appreciation of talents, roles and services.

We believe that each of our communities,
living the family spirit,
and attentive to the needs of the locality,
in union with the whole Salesian Family,
becomes for the young people and our brothers
an example of life rich in humanity and grace,
a luminous sign of love,
a school of spirituality,
a vocational call

and a prophecy of communion.

[86]

Now, like the disciples of Emmaus, we are returning to the places where we live and work, knowing that we shall meet communities of brothers with whom to share this faith. Strengthened by the gift of the Spirit, together we shall respond to the invitation “Duc in altum!” for an even more courageous mission, certain that the first and fundamental call is that to holiness. “Dear Salesians, be saints! Your essential task is to be holy, as indeed it is for all Christians!”^[52] Convinced that the most urgent task is to live and to communicate a spirituality of communion: “to make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings.”^[53]

Holiness and communion: these are the gifts we want to share with young people.

^[1] cf. Acts 2, 42. 46-47

^[2] cf. Acts 4, 32-33

^[3] cf. Acts 13, 52

^[4] NMI 16 and 43

^[5] Mt 7, 24

^[6] cf. NMI 23 (GS 22

^[7] cf. GC23

^[8] cf. GC24

^[9] cf. C 3

^[10] C 49

^[11] C 20

^[12] C 1

^[13] C 50

^[14] Mk. 3,14

^[15] C 196

^[16] C 49

^[17] cf. C 2

^[18] cf. GC23, 332

[19] cf. Ratio 90, 277

[20] C 66

[21] cf. VC 88-92

[22] cf. C 77

[23] cf. C 78

[24] cf. C 83

[25] cf. GC23 192-202

[26] *Due lettere da Roma, 10 maggio 1884*, in P. BRAIDO (ed.), *Don Bosco educatore. Scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Roma 1997³, p. 377.

[27] cf. C 40

[28] cf. AGC 372 , p. 25 – 27.

[29] cf. C 2.

[30] C 26

[31] Cf. C 37.

[32] cf. C 11.

[33] NMI 43

[34] cf. GC24, 253.

[35] cf. C 40

[36] cf. C 55

[37] cf. FSDB 26-37

[38] This spirituality of communion “indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us... It also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as ‘those who are a part of me’. This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. Spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God. ... not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a "gift for me". Spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to ‘make room’ for our brothers and sisters, bearing ‘each other's burdens’ (*Gal* 6,2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy” (NMI 43).

[39] Ratio, 277

[40] cf. Fr J. Vecchi, *Spiritualità salesiana*, ed SDB IVE-IVO, pp. 129-131

[41] cf. GC21, 52

[42] cf. Fr J. Vecchi, *Spiritualità salesiana*, ed SDB IVE-IVO, p.25

[43] cf. R 145

[44] cf. C 181

[45] (cf. C 44 and 49).

[46] cf. Report of the Vicar of the RM to the GC25, n.321

[47] cf. C 52

[48] cf. GC24, 173, 174

[49] “What do we mean by “animating nucleus”? It is a group of people who identify themselves with the salesian mission, educational system and spirituality, and together take up the task of assembling, motivating, and involving all those who are concerned with a work, so as to form with them the educative community and to carry out a plan for the evangelization and education of the young. The reference point for this group is the **salesian community**. That means that the Salesians, all of them, are a permanent part of the animating nucleus. Each one, young or old, directly engaged in a working role or retired, makes the contribution which his preparation or his situation permits. (...) It even means that the local nucleus could be formed principally by lay people, always having behind them adequate support, on the spot or within the province, from the Salesians” (Fr Vecchi in AGC 363, p.9).

[50] cf. GC24, n.161

[51] cf. *Salesian Youth Ministry. Fundamental framework of reference.*

[52] John Paul II, Address to the members of the General Chapter... in “L’Osservatore Romano” 13.04.2002, p.5

[53] NMI 43