

25th GENERAL CHAPTER

List of participants

General Council

1RMG	P	VAN LOOY	Luc	Vicar General	Belgium
2RMG	P	NICOLUSSI	Giuseppe	Coun.	Italy
3RMG	P	DOMENECH	Antonio	Formation.	
4RMG	P	MARTINELLI	Antonio	Coun. Youth	Spain
5RMG	P	ODORICO	Luciano	Min..	
6RMG	P	MAZZALI	Giovanni	Coun. SF and	Italy
7RMG	P	BARUFFI	Helvécio	CS	
8RMG	P	CHAVEZ V.	Pascual	Coun. Missions	Italy
9RMG	P	D'SOUZA	Joaquim	Economer	Italy
10RMG	P	FEDRIGOTTI	Giovanni	General	
11RMG	P	RODRIGUEZ T.	Antonio	Regional Coun.	Brazil
12RMG	P	RODRIGUEZ M.	Filiberto	Regional Coun.	Mexico
13RMG	P	VAN HECKE	Albert	Regional Coun.	India
14RMG	P	MARACCANI	Francesco	Regional Coun.	Italy
				Regional Coun.	Spain
				Regional Coun.	Spain
				Regional Coun.	Belgium
				Secretary Gen.	Italy

Salesian Region: AFRICA – MADAGASCAR

15AET	P	ROCA	Alfredo	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Spain
16 AET	P	BARAKI	Weldegabriel	Delegate	Ethiopia
17AFC	P	SWertvagher	Camiel	Provincial	Belgium
18AFC	P	TSHIBANGU	Joachim	Delegate	Dem.
19AFC	P	RUVEZI	Gaston	Delegate	R.Congo
					Dem.
					R.Congo
20AFE	P	CHALISSERY	George	Provincial	India
21AFE	P	LOWE	Glenford	Delegate	India
22AFM	P	GORE	Robert	Sup. Vice-Prov.	South Africa
23AFM	L	Thusi	John Butana	Delegate	Svaziland
24AFO	P	OLIVERAS	Lluis Maria	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Spain
25AFO	P	FERNANDEZ	Antonio César	Delegate	Spain
26ANG	P	PICCOLI	Luiz Gonzaga	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Brazil
27ANG	P	FAVARO	Gino	Delegate	Italy
28ATE	P	OLAVERRI	Miguel Angel	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Spain
29ATE	P	ASSIENE	Grégoire	Delegate	Cameroon
30MDG	P	MIELE	Giuseppe	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Italy
31MDG	P	SALVO	Bartolomeo	Delegate	Italy
32ZMB	P	SOCHA	Kazimierz	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Poland
33ZMB	P	LEWANDOWSKI	Grzegorz	Delegate	Poland

Salesian Region: LATIN AMERICA – SOUTH CONE

34ABA	P	REPOVZ	José	Provincial	Argentina
35 ABA	P	Lapadula	Enrique	Delegate	Argentina
36ABB	P	LOPEZ	Joaquín	Provincial	Spain
37ABB	P	LAXAGUE	Esteban	Delegate	Argentina
38ACO	P	JARA	Walter	Provincial	Argentina
39ACO	P	BARBIERI	Horacio	Delegate	Argentina
40ALP	P	FIERENS	Antonio	Provincial	Argentina
41ALP	P	PERERA	Ramón Darío	Delegate	Argentina
42ARO	P	BOSIO	Carlos Alberto	Provincial	Argentina
43ARO	L	DEVIT	Eduardo	Delegate	Argentina
44BBH	P	SCARAMUSSA	Tarcísio	Provincial	Brazil
45BBH	P	CARRARA DE MELO	Alfredo	Delegate	Brazil
46BCG	P	WINKLER	Josef	Provincial	Czech Rep.
47BCG	P	VENDRAME	Paulo Fernando	Delegate	Brazil
48BMA	P	SUCARRATS FONT	João	Provincial	Spain
49BMA	L	LOBATO	Antonio	Delegate	Brazil
50BPA	P	SANDRINI	Marcos	Provincial	Brazil
51BPA	P	Moser	Assis	Delegate	Brazil
52BRE	P	SOBRINHO	Raimundo Ricardo	Provincial	Brazil
53BRE	P	VANZETTA	Diego	Delegate	Italy
54BSP	P	PESSINATTI	Nivaldo Luiz	Provincial	Brazil
55BSP	P	SPINOSA	Benedito	Delegate	Brazil
56CIL	P	BASTRES	Bernardo	Provincial	Chile
57CIL	P	Strahsburger	Hugo	Delegate	Chile
58PAR	P	CARDOZO	Miguel Angel	Provincial	Paraguay
59PAR	P	AQUINO	Severo	Delegate	Paraguay
60URU	P	BISIO	Enrique	Provincial	Uruguay
61URU	P	STURLA	Daniel	Delegate	Uruguay

Salesian Region: AUSTRALIA-ASIA (AUSTRALASIA)

62AUL	P	MURDOCH	Ian	Provincial	Australia
63AUL	P	PAPWORTH	John	Delegate	Australia
64CIN	P	Hon Tai-Fai	Savio	Provincial	China
65CIN	P	LAM	Simon	Delegate	China
66FIN	P	GUSTILO	Francis	Provincial	Philippines
67FIN	L	FERRER	Jose Maria	Delegate	Philippines
68FIS	P	BUZON	Patricio	Provincial	Philippines
69FIS	P	BACLIG	Mario	Delegate	Philippines
70GIA	P	FUJIKAWA	Nagaki Stefano	Provincial	Japan
71GIA	P	PUPPO	Orlando Lorenzo	Delegate	Argentina
72INB	P	COELHO	Ivo	Provincial	India
73INB	P	FURTADO	Adolf	Delegate	India
74INB	P	NORONHA	Romulo	Delegate	India
75INC	P	ALENCERRY	Francis	Provincial	India
76INC	P	Berger	John	Delegate	India
77INC	P	Ye Maung	Joachim	Delegate	Burma
78IND	P	MULAYINKAL	Thomas	Provincial	India
79IND	P	PULIMOOTTIL	Alex	Delegate	India
80ING	P	BARJO	Philip	Provincial	India
81ING	P	VARICKASSERIL	Jose	Delegate	India
82ING	P	MALIECKAL	Francis	Delegate	India

83INH	P	MEDABALIMI	Balaswamy	Provincial	India
84INH	P	Arimpoor	Jose	Delegate	India
85INK	P	MARUVATHRAIL	Matthew	Provincial	India
86INK	P	Fernandez	Joseph	Delegate	India
87INK	P	Kollashan Y	George	Delegate	India
88INM	P	FERNANDO	Bellarmino	Provincial	India
89INM	P	KANAGA	Maria Arokiam	Delegate	India
90INM	P	PUTHOTA	Benjamin	Delegate	India
91INN	P	KEZHAKKEKARA	Joseph	Provincial	India
92INN	P	PEEDIKAYIL	Michael	Delegate	India
93INT	P	THEOPHILUS	James	Provincial	India
94INT	P	SUSAI	Amalraj	Delegate	India
95ITM	P	WONG	Andrew	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Philippines
96ITM	P	CARBONELL	José	Delegate	Spain
97KOR	P	KLEMENT	Václav	Provincial	Czech Rep.
98KOR	P	KIM	Benjamin	Delegate	Korea
99THA	P	KITNICH SOMCHAI	Philip	Provincial	Thailand
100THA	P	SARACHIT	Niphon Peter	Delegate	Thailand
101VIE	P	NGUYEN VAN TY	Giovanni	Provincial	Vietnam
102VIE	P	NGUYEN VAN THEM	Giovanni Battista	Delegate	Vietnam

Salesian Region: NORTHERN EUROPE

103AUS	P	VöSL	Josef	Provincial	Austria
104AUS	P	OBERMÜLLER	Petrus	Delegate	Austria
105BEN	P	PALMANS	Piet	Provincial	Belgium
106BEN	P	LOOTS	Carlo	Delegate	Belgium
107CEP	P	KOMÁREK	Jan	Provincial	Czech Rep.
108CEP	P	KAŠNÝ	Jiří	Delegate	Czech Rep.
109CRO	P	MATUŠIĆ	Ambrozije	Provincial	Croatia
110CRO	P	KRPIĆ	Josip	Delegate	Croatia
111EST	P	BOGUSZEWSKI	Henryk	Sup. Circumscr.	Poland
112EST	P	Baczyński	Andrzej	Delegate	Ukraine
113GEK	P	VON SPEE	Meinolf	Provincial	Germany
114GEK	P	VON HATZFELD	Ulrich Hatto	Delegate	Germany
115GEM	P	BIHLMAYER	Herbert	Provincial	Germany
116GEM	P	GRÜNNER	Josef	Delegate	Germany
117GEM	P	MENZ	Heinz	Delegate	Germany
118GBR	P	PRESTON	Francis Joseph	Provincial	Gr Britain
119GBR	P	DICKSON	William John	Delegate	Scotland
120IRL	P	SMYTH	Michael	Provincial	Ireland
121IRL	P	MANGION	Victor	Delegate	Malta
122OLA	P	SPRONCK	Herman	Provincial	Holland
123OLA	P	FLAPPER	Wim	Delegate	Holland
124PLE	P	STRUŚ	Józef	Provincial	Poland
125PLE	P	KOWALIK	Krzysztof	Delegate	Poland
126PLE	P	NIEWĘGŁOWSKI	Jan	Delegate	Poland
127PLN	P	WOREK	Jerzy	Provincial	Poland
128PLN	P	BALCERZAK	Antoni	Delegate	Poland
129PLN	P	CHMIELEWSKI	Marek	Delegate	Poland
130PLO	P	KRASOŃ	Franciszek	Provincial	Poland
131PLO	P	KEMPIAK	Ryszard	Delegate	Poland
132PLS	P	ROZMUS	Tadeusz	Provincial	Poland

133PLS	P	KRAWCZYK	Wojciech	Delegate	Poland
134PLS	P	CHRZAN	Marek	Delegate	Poland
135SLK	P	FEKETE	Vladimir	Provincial	Slovakia
136SLK	P	turanský	Stefan	Delegate	Slovakia
137SLK	P	GRACH	Pavol	Delegate	Slovakia
138SLO	P	DOBRAVEC	Alojzij	Provincial	Slovenia
139SLO	P	ŠTUMPF	Peter	Delegate	Slovenia
140UNG	P	HAVASI	József	Provincial	Hungary
141UNG	P	Mészáros	György	Delegate	Hungary

Salesian Region: WESTERN EUROPE

142BES	P	Jeanmart	José	Provincial	Belgium
143BES	P	VAN der SLOOT	André	Delegate	Belgium
144FRA	P	INISAN	Job	Provincial	France
145FRA	P	FEDERSPIEL	Daniel	Delegate	France
146FRA	P	CHARMOILLE	Jean-Noël	Delegate	France
147POR	P	MENDES	Joaquim	Provincial	Portugal
148POR	P	PEREIRA	Artur	Delegate	Portugal
149SBA	P	VALLS I FERRER	Domènec	Provincial	Spain
150SBA	P	CODINA	Joan	Delegate	Spain
151SBI	P	LETE	Ignacio	Provincial	Spain
152SBI	P	GUTIERREZ	Luis Fernando	Delegate	Spain
153SCO	P	ACOSTA RODRÍGUEZ	Felipe	Provincial	Spain
154SCO	P	MUÑOZ	Eusebio	Delegate	Spain
155SLE	P	FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME	Ángel	Provincial	Spain
156SLE	P	GuzÓN NESTAR	José Luis	Delegate	Spain
157SMA	P	GUERRA IBANEZ	Jesús	Provincial	Spain
158SMA	P	APARICIO SÁNCHEZ	Manuel	Delegate	Spain
159SMA	P	DÍEZ ANDRÉS	Julio	Delegate	Spain
160SSE	P	PEREZ GODOY	Juan Carlos	Provincial	Spain
161SSE	P	VIGUERA FRANCO	Valentín	Delegate	Spain
162SVA	P	SANCHO	Juan Bosco	Vice Provincial	Spain
163SVA	P	ORDUNA ABADÍA	Cándido	Delegate	Spain

Salesian Region: INTERAMERICA

164ANT	P	SOTO	Angel	Provincial	Dominican Rep.
165ANT	P	ROSARIO Peña	Luis Emilio	Delegate	Dominican Rep.
166BOL	P	HERRERO	Miguel Angel	Provincial	Spain
167BOL	P	ZABALA TÓRREZ	Juan Pablo	Delegate	Bolivia
168CAM	P	GUIJO GONZÁLEZ	José Manuel	Provincial	Spain
169CAM	P	Echeverría	Rolando	Delegate	Costa Rica
170CAN	P	LANTAGNE	Luc	Sup. Vice- Prov.	Canada
171CAN	D	Harkins	George	Delegate	Canada
172COB	P	RIVERA	Nicolàs	Provincial	Colombia
173COB	P	REYES ZAMBRANO	Mario	Delegate	Colombia
174COM	P	ALVAREZ	Armando	Provincial	Colombia
175COM	P	Angel CampuZano	Alvaro de Jesús	Delegate	Colombia
176ECU	P	ORTIZ	Esteban	Provincial	Ecuador
177ECU	P	Farfán	Marcelo	Delegate	Ecuador

178HAI	P NAU	Jean-Baptiste	Sup. Vice- Prov.	Haiti
179HAI	P FLORIVAL	Elan	Delegate	Haiti
180MEG	P Guerrero Cordova	Héctor	Provincial	Mexico
181MEG	P PLASCENCIA	José Luis	Delegate	Mexico
182MEM	P Valerdi Sánchez	Luis Rolando	Provincial	Mexico
183MEM	P OCAMPO URIBE	Ignacio	Delegate	Mexico
184PER	P DAL BEN LAVA	Santo	Provincial	Italy
185PER	P Zegarra PINTO	José	Delegate	Peru
186SUE	P ANGELUCCI	Patrick	Provincial	U.S.A.
187SUE	P DUNNE	Thomas	Delegate	U.S.A.
188SUO	P REINA	Nicholas	Provincial	U.S.A.
189SUO	P ITZAINA	John	Delegate	U.S.A.
190VEN	P MASIERO	Bruno	Provincial	Italy
191VEN	P REYES SEQUERA	Johnny	Delegate	Venezuela

Salesian Region: ITALY – MIDDLE EAST

192IAD	P SCAGLIONI	Arnaldo	Provincial	Italy
193IAD	P DILETTI	Pietro	Delegate	Italy
194ICP	P TESTA	Luigi	Sup. Circumscr.	Italy
195ICP	P MARTOGLIO	Stefano	Delegate	Italy
196ICP	L MARANGIO	Claudio	Delegate	Italy
197ICP	P BOSCO	Giovanni Battista	Delegate	Italy
198ICP	L BOMBARDA	Guido	Delegate	Italy
199ILE	P RIVA	Eugenio	Provincial	Italy
200ILE	P CACIOLI	Claudio	Delegate	Italy
201ILE	P VANOLI	Stefano	Delegate	Italy
202ILT	P COLAJACOMO	Giorgio	Provincial	Italy
203ILT	P D'Alessandro	Giovanni	Delegate	Italy
204IME	P GALLONE	Francesco	Provincial	Italy
205IME	P COMITE	Gennaro	Delegate	Italy
206IME	P SAMMARRO	Pasquale Italo	Delegate	Italy
207IRO	P CARNEVALE	Mario	Provincial	Italy
208IRO	P Pussino	Gian Luigi	Delegate	Italy
209IRO	L Magagna	Giuseppe	Delegate	Italy
210ISA	P LILLIU	Giovanni	Sup. Vice-Prov.	Italy
211ISA	P GALIA	Gaetano	Delegate	Italy
212ISI	P LA PIANA	Calogero	Provincial	Italy
213ISI	P DI NATALE	Francesco	Delegate	Italy
214ISI	P RUTA	Giuseppe	Delegate	Italy
215IVE	P FILIPPIN	Claudio	Provincial	Italy
216IVE	L Pettenon	Giampietro	Delegate	Italy
217IVE	P Trevisan	Alberto	Delegate	Italy
218IVO	P BREGOLIN	Adriano	Provincial	Italy
219IVO	P BONATO	Giannantonio	Delegate	Italy
220MOR	P MURRU	Mario	Provincial	Italy
221MOR	P CAPUTA	Gianni	Delegate	Italy

Generalate community

222 **RMG** P MOTTO Francesco Delegate Italy

Salesian Pontifical University

223 **UPS** P CEREDA Francesco Sup. Vice-Prov. Italy

224 UPS P PELLEREY Michele Delegate Italy

Observers

225 AFC P VANDECANDELAERE Frans Invited Belgium

226 ANG L FONTAINE Gastón Invited Argentina

227 CAM L GRANADOS Wilfredo Invited Guatemala

228 FIN P BARBERO Valeriano Invited Italy

229 ICP P CASTELLINO Riccardo Invited Italy

230 INM L DAS Joseph Invited India

231 POR P DE PABLO Valentin Invited Spain

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Fr George WILLIAMS

Fr Rocco RAGONE

Fr Chrya SALDANHA

Portuguese Fr Ervino MARTINUZ

Fr Hilario PASSERO

Spanish Fr Oswaldo GORZEGNO

Fr Gabriel LARRETA

Fr Angelo BOTTA

Fr Ambrosio BOEM

Fr Francesco BALAUDER

German

Bro. Johannes BORCHARDT

Fr Josef PRIVOZNIK

Chronicle of the 25th General Chapter

(24 February – 20 April 2002)

The Chapter begins

On 24 February 2002 the 231 members of the GC25 arrived at the Generalate to begin the 25th General Chapter, with the central topic “The salesian community today” and the complementary theme “The verification of the structures of central government.”

They represented the 16,805 Salesians who are working in 128 countries in the world. For over 160 of them it was the first time that they were taking part in a General Chapter. They came from all five continents: 6 from Africa, 55 from America, 40 from Asia, 2 from Australia and 128 from Europe. The average age was 52 with the eldest 74 and the youngest 27.

At 7.30 a.m. on Monday 25 February the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Luc Van Looy presided at the solemn concelebrated Mass to invoke the Holy Spirit. The words of the homily set the scene for the task of analysis and reflection facing the Chapter: “It is not us who will be guiding this part of salesian history. Following Don Bosco’s experience throughout his life we want to put the tiller in the hands of God, of the Spirit, and of Mary Help of Christians.”

At 10.30 a.m. in the Aula Magna of the “Salesianum”, renovated and furnished with the latest technology, the opening session of the GC25 took place. Some salesian cardinals and bishops were present together with those responsible for some of the groups of the Salesian Family. Among the former we may mention: Cardinal Antonio M. Javierre Ortas, Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, Mgr. Vincenzo Savio, Bishop of Belluno, Mgr. Alois Kothgasser, Bishop of Innsbruck, Mgr. Vartan Boghossian, Eparch of S. Gregory of Narek for the Armenian faithful in Argentina, Mgr. Gennaro Prata, Archbishop emeritus of Cochabamba.

After the Moderator, Fr Antonio Domenech, had declared the Chapter open, Fr Luc Van Looy read the Message of the Holy Father. In it the Pope, after recalling the memory of the late Fr Juan Vecchi, invited the chapter members to follow in his footsteps, asking them and all the Salesian Congregation to be “attentive educators” and “competent spiritual guides.” John Paul II expressed the hope that in addition to *Duc in altum* becoming the thematic motto of the Chapter, it would also become the same for all the apostolic work of the Congregation in the future.

The Message of the Pope was followed by the address of Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and by the greetings of some representatives of the Salesian Family: Mother Antonia Colombo, Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Mr Rosario Maiorano, General Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators Miss Anita Meertens, the Superior of the Volunteers of Don Bosco – on behalf also of the Volunteers with Don Bosco – and finally Mr Antonio Guilhermino Pires, World President of the Past Pupils. The opening address of the Vicar General followed.

The Chapter Assembly takes its first steps.

At 4.00 p.m. the same day, Monday 25 February, the first ordinary working session was held. The Moderator began by presenting the outline timetable for the chapter members and explained the mechanics of the work of the Assembly and of the Commissions, according to the Regulations of the Chapter.

The following day, Tuesday 26 February, the Vicar General presented the Report on the State of the Congregation for the six year period 1996-2002. Fr Luc Van Looy briefly described the aims, the contents, those addressed and the nature of the report, that contained among other things the relevant statistics regarding Salesians, works, collaborators, and those to whom the apostolic mission is addressed.

Starting from a consideration of the facts, he then underlined some particular aspects and the more important problems regarding the situations in which salesian communities are living and working. He indicated also some of the issues that the present General Chapter would need to consider in its work of reflection and analysis: the community as the place for the ordinary ongoing formation of the confreres; the key role of the Rector in the religious community and in the work confided to it; the significance of the work as evidenced in its chosen priorities, and in those for whom it works by preference. He concluded offering the slogan “We shall exist as mystics, or we shall not exist at all!”

The Moderator invited the chapter members to read the Report carefully and to prepare for the discussion which would be held with the Vicar General in the following week

In the afternoon the two working documents prepared by the Precapitular Commission were presented: the one on “The salesian community today” by Fr Francesco Cereda, Superior of the UPS Vice Province, and the other: “Verification of the structures of central government” by Fr John Dickson of the Great Britain Province

The Retreat

At 7.20 p.m. on 26 February the retreat began in preparation for the work of reflection and analysis that awaited the chapter members. It was preached and led by the salesian, Mgr Alois Kothgasser, Bishop of Innsbruck (Austria), who offered meditations on the theme *Duc in altum*, in reference to the Apostolic Letter of the Pope *Novo Millenium Ineunte* and the Strenna that the late Fr Vecchi left the Salesian Family for 2002.

At the end of this first day the chapter members gathered together for the “Good-night” which was given by Fr Camillo Maccise of the Discalced Carmelites, former President of the Union of Superiors General. In his short reflection Fr Maccise concentrated on the challenges – of which he mentioned seven – which are found facing consecrated life in the Church and in the world of today at the beginning of the third millennium.

On Thursday 28 February, after the first reflection by Mgr Kothgasser, the chapter members made a pilgrimage to the Catacombs of St Callistus where are buried, in addition to Fr Vecchi, his two predecessors as Rector Major, Fr Egidio Viganò and Fr Luigi Ricceri. After a moment of prayer led by Fr Van Looy, in the chapel of the San Tarcisio salesian community, the chapter members went in

procession to the tomb of the late Rector Major and spent some moments there in personal prayer for the repose of his soul.

The second day ended with the “Good-night” of Mother Antonia Colombo the Superior of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who, referring to the approaching 125th anniversary of the first FMA missionary expedition to America, expressed her gratitude, saying that as on that occasion, “also today without the Salesians we would not be in many parts of the world” and concluded with the remark: “without you we would not be ourselves”. Mother Antonia then mentioned the theme for their own 21st General Chapter to be held in September: “*In a renewed covenant, the commitment to active citizenship*”

The following day began with a Mass at which Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga presided. Starting from the scriptural readings for the day he encouraged the Salesians to be always promoters of a culture of life in face of the culture of death so evident in contemporary society.

The retreat finished on Saturday 2nd March with the Mass at which Mgr Alois Kothgasser presided. In the evening a group of the chapter members took part in the recitation of the rosary with the Holy Father on the occasion of a meeting organized by the diocese of Rome with young university students from the city.

The Chapter gets down to work.

The second week of the chapter began with the appointment by the Vicar General of Fr Antonio Martinelli as his substitute as President of the Chapter during his own absence following a road accident in which he had been involved the previous Saturday.

The Moderator of the Chapter, Fr Antonio Domenech, then read the message of thanks sent to the Holy Father on behalf of the members of the GC25. In it Fr Van Looy wrote: “We shall be studying the topic of “The salesian community today” following the lines that Your Holiness traced out for us, with the desire to make the mission of Don Bosco in the new millennium a prophetic one,” with the promise of the fidelity of the Congregation “to Your Magisterium and the desire to collaborate always with the universal and local Church”.

Subsequently the Assembly moved on to the vote on the Regulations of the Chapter which were approved with a large majority.

In the afternoon the full Presidency of the Chapter was constituted with the election of three Chairmen from the list of names presented by the President of the Chapter. The following confreres were elected Fr Savio Hon Tai-Fai, provincial of Hong Kong, Fr William John Dickson, from the Great Britain province and Brother Claudio Marangio, from the Special Circumscription of Piedmont and the Valle d’Aosta.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, 5–6 March, the Chapter members divided into 15 language groups and began the consideration of the Report of the Vicar General on the state of the Congregation and the two working documents on the topics of the salesian community and the verification of the structures of government.

Each group, according to its own interests and experience, chose three priorities starting from those mentioned in the report of the Vicar General; a small group made a summary which the Moderator presented to the Assembly as a help for the reflection to be carried out on the topics of the chapter.

After a lengthy discussion on the two working documents in the afternoon of Wednesday 6 March, both were approved as the basis for the initial work of the Commissions and of the Assembly. The document on the salesian community was accepted almost unanimously and the one on the verification of the structures of central government by slightly more than two thirds.

From the very beginning the work of the Assembly was characterized by numerous interventions and requests for clarification, demonstrating that every day the GC25 was getting up steam and the topics dealt with were closely followed. Many Chapter members were speaking for the first time, while some of the contributions showed the speakers to be much more at home. Among the most frequent requests was for a final document that would be simple and practical, something for the life of the community directed more at a practical than at a theoretical level.

The Chapter Commissions

In the afternoon of Tuesday 6 March the Vicar General, Fr Luc Van Looy, underwent an operation at the Pius XI hospital in Rome. After assuring the Assembly of its successful outcome the Moderator of the Chapter went on to present a proposal for the setting up of the Chapter Commissions. There were six of them which were to deal with the following subjects: the first, the theme of fraternal life; the second, evangelical witness; the third, animating presence among the young; the fourth, the theme of the Rector and ongoing formation; the fifth, new situations and kinds of salesian community. To the sixth commission was assigned the topic of the verification of the structures of central government and the various proposals for changes to the Constitutions and Regulations. To these working commissions of the Chapter should be added a commission for communications, composed of one representative from each region.

Once the commissions were set up the program envisaged the consideration of the proposal regarding the date of the election of the Rector Major and his Council, and the presentation of the process of discernment. After discussion the Assembly approved the proposed calendar with the elections to take place during the week 2 to 8 April.

During this time the chapter members would be assisted in the discernment process by Fr Anthony McSweeney, of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, former Superior General of his Institute and former President of the Union of Superiors General (USG).

In the meantime the six commissions began work and proceeded at once to the election of their presidents, spokesmen and secretaries. The six presidents together with the President of the Chapter, the Moderator and the three Chairmen constitute the Central Commission, which met for the first time at 9.30 p.m. on Thursday 7 March.

A first hand experience of community

The Chapter members not only talked about community – they lived it intensely during the two months of the Chapter. This first hand experience created close relationships of communion, helped in the sharing of experiences and ways of thinking, expressed especially through prayer and eucharistic celebration which are the roots and the source of life in community and make of each one not only a teacher but also a witness.

The daily timetable of the Chapter provided for the celebration of Morning Prayer and Mass in the morning, usually in language groups except on Wednesdays, when all came together and the celebration was led by each region in turn. There were two working sessions during the morning: from 9.00 until 10.30 and from 11.00 until 12.45. The time immediately after lunch was recreation

time for the Chapter members, spent in different ways: some walked along the paths of the Generalate, some played basketball, some football, on the pitches specially prepared at the Salesianum, while some played the traditional salesian game of “*bocce*”. Every so often a chapter member would be found on roller skates or cycling around the grounds. Work resumed in the afternoon at 3.30 p.m. and usually finished at 7.00 with a break for half an hour at 5.00. Then Vespers were said together followed by a “good-night” given in turn by provincials from the different regions; these were particularly appreciated as they encouraged a spirit of family and communion. Afterwards there was supper.

Each working week concluded with a proposed outing organized by a group responsible for animating the life of the community. These were occasions for getting together and sometimes opportunities for meeting different salesian communities (for example in the Naples Province or that of Liguria-Tuscany).

At the beginning of each week the chapter members could watch a short summary of the previous week’s work on a video prepared by the *Eurofilm* centre of the Don Bosco Missions Office in Turin.

The work of the Commissions

Returning to an account of the work of the Chapter, the efforts of the commissions took up the third week. The first five, to which the study of the various aspects of the topic on the salesian community was assigned, examined at some depth the reports from the provincial chapters and identified the more important elements of the situation; they then selected the most pressing challenges and sought the most suitable guidelines to respond to them. In this work, time for personal study and in small groups alternated with discussion and the sharing of ideas in the commission.

For its part, the sixth commission concentrated its attention on the examination of the proposals to modify the Constitutions which could have reference to the elections. On Wednesday 13 March it presented in the Assembly some alternative proposals regarding the duration of the time in office of the Rector Major and of the members of the General Council, the procedure for the election of the Economer General, and the subdivision of the Australasian region into two separate areas, with the consequent increase in the number of regional councillors.

Discussion of these proposals began in the Assembly and there were many interventions regarding all the various options. At the end of the debate the commission proposed a series of straw votes on the various proposals to ascertain the mind of the Assembly. This expressed an opinion favourable to the subdivision of the Australasia region, confirmed the form of direct election of the Economer General, supported the proposal to limit the term in office of the Rector Major to two consecutive six-year periods, and finally invited the commission to find a different formulation of the two proposals on the term in office of the members of the General Council and on the possibility of their being eligible for election to another department or region after the completion of two terms of six years in the same office.

In the meantime the other commissions presented the results of their work to the Assembly for discussion. In this way the third week of the Chapter came to an end.

Visit to the new library of the UPS

In the afternoon of Saturday 16 March the members of the GC25 went to see the new premises built to house the Don Bosco Library of the Salesian Pontifical University. A tour of the new buildings in language groups was led by the Vicar General, just released from hospital.

In a brief address Fr Van Looy recalled that the Library was born in the mind of Fr Egidio Viganò during the centenary year of the death of Don Bosco and its construction was begun by Fr Juan Vecchi; it is to be considered the Library not only of the UPS but of the whole Congregation.

Following that of the Vicar General there were speeches by the Rector of the University, Fr Michele Pellerey, who gave a brief outline of the Library's history and highlighted its capacity and functionality; by Fr Francesco Cereda, Superior of the UPS Vice-province, who recalled and thanked all who had taken part in the construction of the new building; by the Economist General, Fr Gianni Mazzali, who illustrated the financial story behind the enterprise; and by Fr Juan Picca, Prefect of the Library, who emphasized the particular innovations and value of the new structure.

Fr Van Looy remained at the UPS infirmary until Monday 18 March for a brief period of convalescence, and then returned to take his place in the General Chapter.

Discussions in the Assembly

On Monday 18 March discussion began on the various nuclei of the theme on the salesian community prepared by the first five commissions. A host of interventions insisted on the need to focus more on the challenges arising from the situations described, and especially to choose guidelines that could help communities to become more significant and prophetic. These suggestions and those made in writing were collected by the commissions concerned for a reexamination and redrafting of their document.

Meanwhile the sixth commission had reformulated their proposals and brought them back to the Assembly. Discussion centered particularly on the separation of the Departments of the Salesian Family and Social Communication, with the possibility of the assignment of responsibility for the animation of the Salesian Family to the Vicar General.

After the discussion on the modifications to the articles of the Constitutions, the sixth commission prepared a first draft which it submitted for voting with the possibility of further changes (*iuxta modum*), and subsequently for definitive approval just before the Easter Triduum.

In addition to these first deliberations, Holy Week was characterized by the presentation in the Assembly by all the other commissions of the second draft of their own documents. The sixth commission too presented the first draft of the document on the verification of the structures of central government which it had been compelled to delay so as to give priority to the constitutional questions which concerned the coming elections of the Rector Major and members of the Council.

During these same weeks the Chapter community lived also some other fraternal occasions. On 18 March news was received of the assassination of Bishop Isaias Duarte Cancino in Colombia two days earlier. In the name of the Assembly the Vicar General, as President of the GC25, expressed the solidarity of the capitulars to Bishop Alberto Giraldo Jaramillo, President of the Colombian Bishops Conference, in a letter signed by all the members of the GC25.

In the evening of the same day after supper, the assembly hall became a theatre for a performance by the salesian magician, Fr Silvio Mantelli, of a fascinating display of illusions and conjuring tricks which kept the capitulars entranced and amused for the best part of an hour. Some of the

capitulars were directly involved in the performance, willingly responding to invitations of the “magician”.

After supper on Wednesday 27 March, Fr Vecchi was commemorated by the presentation of a book published by the SEI and put together by the Salesian Fr Vittorio Chiari, entitled “*Globalizzazione, crocevia della carità educativa*”. It is a text that synthesizes the thought of Fr Vecchi about the exploitation of juveniles from various aspects. At the end of the evening, after a brief sketch by a clown of the group of Fr Chiari, Fr Vecchi’s obituary letter was distributed.

The Easter break

The intensive work of the past weeks had made a pause desirable in the rhythm of the Chapter’s work, not least to allow for a deeper participation in the Easter Triduum. But before the break, on the Wednesday evening, Fr Anthony McSweeney presented to the Assembly the process of discernment that would be followed during the elections and replied to some questions submitted in advance by the capitulars.

In the second part of the morning of Holy Thursday the Vicar General, Fr Luc Van Looy, replied in the Assembly to questions on the Report on the state of the Congregation, which had been sent in much earlier by the capitulars but to which he had not been able to reply because of his accident and subsequent surgery.

At the end of the work, the Assembly met in church at 6.00 p.m. for the solemn celebration *In Coena Domini*, at which Fr Joaquim D’Souza, Regional Councillor for Australia-Asia presided.

In the days that followed more than a hundred capitulars left for the Mother House in Turin, where they spent the Easter weekend visiting the salesian places of Valdocco, Colle Don Bosco and Mornese.

Election of the Rector Major and General Council

After the Easter break work was resumed on Tuesday 2 April at 9.00 a.m. with the launching of the discernment process by Fr Anthony McSweeney that would lead to the election of the Rector Major and the members of the General Council.

On Tuesday evening, after a day spent in language groups reflecting on the challenges and strong points of the Congregation and on the qualities required in the new Rector Major, the capitulars gathered in church to invoke the Holy Spirit together and so prepare for the elections. On Wednesday morning, 3 April, at the invitation of Fr McSweeney, each capitular sent in a sheet with a single name proposed as Rector Major. At 11.00 a.m. the list of names proposed was distributed for the personal reflection of each member.

The election itself took place in the afternoon at 4.00 p.m. and resulted in the election by a large majority on the first ballot of Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva.

The solemn celebration of Vespers, with the singing of the *Te Deum* for the new Rector Major and his first “Good-night”, followed by supper, concluded the first day of the elections. In the refectory after supper there was a simple but sincere family function during which the various regions expressed their joy in different languages at the election of the new Rector Major.

Thursday 4 April began with a eucharistic concelebration at which Fr Chávez presided, and continued with the process of discernment for the election of the Vicar General.

The election took place at 5.30 p.m., and on the second ballot Fr Luc Van Looy was confirmed in office by a large majority.

On the following days the Councillors for the various Departments were elected, with the following results. On Friday, 5 April: Fr Francesco Cereda for the Formation Department and Fr Antonio Domenech for that of Youth Pastoral Work; and on Saturday, 6 April: Fr Tarcisio Scaramussa for Social Communication, Fr Francis Alencherry for the Missions, and Fr Gianni Mazzali as Economer General.

At this point the capitulars suspended the work and took it up again on the Sunday afternoon with the discernment for the election of the Regional Councillors; the list of the candidates – prepared by each Region – was presented to the Assembly on the Sunday evening.

On Monday 8 April, the Assembly confirmed in office Fr Albert Van Hecke for Northern Europe, Fr Joaquim D'Souza for South Asia, Fr Helvécio Baruffi for Latin America – Southern Cone, and Fr Filiberto Rodríguez Martín for Western Europe. Then were elected the four new Regional Councillors: Fr Adriano Bregolin, provincial of West Venice for Italy and the Middle East; Fr Esteban Ortiz González, provincial of Ecuador, for Interamerica; Fr Václav Klement, provincial of Korea, for East Asia–Oceania and Fr Valentín de Pablo, of the Mozambique Delegation for Africa-Madagascar.

An intense week of work and experiences

With the ending of the week of the elections which gave the Congregation the new Rector Major and General Council, the Chapter returned to its work of reflection, re-drafting and presentation of the various themes.

From Tuesday 9 to the afternoon of Friday 12 April there was discussion of the second drafts of the documents of the first five commissions which had in the meantime rewritten the definitive version of their texts on the basis of the observations received. The sixth commission presented the second draft of its own document, suitably revised after the contributions received from the Assembly.

On Friday morning, 12 April, the capitulars were received in audience by Pope John Paul II. About 11.15 a.m. they entered by the Bronze Gate to reach the Clementine Hall of the Vatican. At 11.40 the Holy Father joined them and paused to greet personally the new Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez. A warm and lengthy applause was evidence of the joy of the capitulars at being received in the Pope's house. The meeting lasted 25 minutes in all. The Pope urged the Salesians to be saints: "Dear Salesians", he said, "be holy – holiness is your essential task, as indeed it is for all Christians!".

Strengthened by the Holy Father's words, the capitulars returned in the afternoon to the work of the Chapter which was approaching its end. A small group of three capitulars was formed to work on the texts of the individual commissions, in order to give unity of style to the document on the salesian community today.

The gift of the Beatifications

Almost at the end of the Chapter, on Sunday 14 April the Church offered the Salesian Family the gift of the beatification of three of its members: Fr Luigi Variara, Founder of the Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; Sister Maria Romero Meneses, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians; and the Salesian Brother Artemide Zatti.

In preparation for this event, the Chapter reflected on the figure of the Salesian Brother, following the indications and prompting of Fr Juan Vecchi in his letter "*Beatification of Bro. Artemide Zatti: a sensational precedent*". In language groups the capitulars sought for suggestions and experiences to stimulate the Congregation and the Salesian Family to a better knowledge of this concrete form of the salesian vocation and to propose it with greater conviction.

In the afternoon of Saturday 13 April the capitulars went to the Don Bosco Church at Cinecittà to join in a prayer vigil with the Salesian Family of Lazio and those who had come to Rome to take part in the celebration the following day.

The Beatification ceremony on the Sunday morning brought together in St Peter's Square large numbers of pilgrims from all parts of the world. Participating with them were the Rector Major, the General Council and the members of the GC25. Also present were numerous civil and religious personalities, including the Presidents of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, representatives of Argentina and Colombia, the Mayors of the Italian cities where the Beati had been born, the Salesian Cardinals Miguel Obando Bravo and Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, with many other salesian Bishops. The crowd in St Peter's Square was estimated at more than 15,000 faithful. During the celebration the relics of the Beati were carried to the altar by those who had received the graces presented for the beatification.

In the afternoon the Rector Major and the capitulars took part in the commemoration of the new Beati in the Paul VI Hall of the Vatican.

The final activities of the Chapter

The Chapter was moving towards its close; during the final week the different commissions presented the texts for the voting "*iuxta modum*" with the possibility of further modifications, followed by the final vote on the definitive text.

On Monday afternoon, 15 April, at the Don Bosco Theatre of Cinecittà, took place the official commemoration of the centenary of the erection of the Roman Salesian Province. Taking part in the event were the Rector Major and the members of the GC25, with a large number of civil and religious personalities, amongst whom were Cardinal Javierre Ortas, Abps. Tarcisio Bertone and Gennaro Prata, with other salesian bishops present in Rome for the beatification of the three members of the Salesian Family.

In these final days the texts were presented in the Assembly of the Messages addressed to the Salesian Family, to international organisms concerned with youth problems, to young people, and also a message from the Chapter on the figure of the Salesian Brother, the result of the reflection made in the Assembly in the previous week. After the members had been given the opportunity to express their observations and make suggestions, the Messages were approved by the Assembly.

The Chapter ended on Saturday 20 April with the closing session. When the final requirements of the Regulations had been complied with, the Rector Major gave his concluding address in which he summed up what had been done and offered some indications for the application of the Chapter's guidelines.

The final act was the Eucharistic Concelebration, in which each Region committed itself to pass on to the confreres and communities the experience and message of the Chapter; all entrusted themselves and the results of their efforts to Mary Help of Christians.

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