

CONSTITUTIONS
of the Society
of St Francis de Sales

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PRESENTATION

Here at last, dear confreres, is our renewed and approved Rule of Life.

It is offered to you in a manual which every salesian should keep with him as his identity card.

It contains the Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, our "basic code", revised and re-written in accordance with the requirements of Vatican II (cf. "Ecclesiae Sanctae" II, 1,12-14).

In addition, it contains the updated version of the General Regulations, which form an integral part of the particular law of our Society.

In the manual you will also find some of the writings of our father, St. John Bosco, which are enriched with his spiritual experience.

The serious and wide-ranging revision of the text was carried out by the whole Congregation over a period of many years and is the fruit of the work of no fewer than three general chapters (20th, 21st and 22nd); it ensures continuity with our origins, the ecclesial character of the salesian apostolic consecration and the natural tendency of Don Bosco's mission to reach out to the whole world.

On 25 November 1984, Solemnity of Christ the King, the Apostolic See approved the present Constitutions, once again declaring authoritatively "the authenticity of the gospel way of life traced out by the founder."

They set out the spiritual riches of our salesian tradition; they define its apostolic project; they trace out our path of holiness

and invite us to witness to it as the most precious gift we can offer the young.

On 8 December 1984, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the date "on which all our greatest enterprises and events began and reached fulfillment", the Rector Major promulgated this precious rewritten text. We welcome our rule of life with gratitude and trust as being the "living testament of Don Bosco" coming from the hands of the Virgin Help of Christians herself, and we open our hearts in thanksgiving as we pray:

We thank you father,
because you have called us individually by name
from every continent
to be in the Church signs and bearers of your love.

For us too, Father, you have made to rise up
from the very heart of Christ, your apostle,
that pastoral love
which marks our ecclesial fervour
with the gift of predilection for young people.

We adore you with filial gratitude
because your Paraclete, the Spirit of the Lord,
is always with us by the grace of his consecration
as we live day by day the fullness of our gift,
renewing the mystery of the baptismal Covenant
through its more intimate and complete expression.

Grant, merciful Father,
that with Mary's guidance,
we may persevere to the end
on this way that leads to love.
In our religious profession

You have made to blossom in us a new and exhilarating reality
which is the offering of ourselves
in the work of salvation and the liturgy of life.
Teach us to see and contemplate
through the indications of this Rule,
the undivided heart of your only Son;
permeate our freedom with the power of your Spirit,
so that all of us who adhere to Don Bosco
may faithfully fulfil with your help
all that by your gift we have promised.

Fr. Egidio Viganò

Rector Major

Rome, 8 December 1984

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

PRESENTATION OF THE THIRD EDITION

My dear confreres,

31 years have passed since the promulgation of the renewed and approved text of our Rule of Life, the fruit of the work of no fewer than three General Chapters in accordance with the requirements of Vatican II.

As the then Rector Major, Fr. Egidio Viganò said in presenting the Constitutions and Regulations these “set out the spiritual riches of our salesian tradition; they define its apostolic project; they trace out our path of holiness and invite us to witness to it as the most precious gift we can offer the young.”

As such, the text retains all its validity and its richness, and therefore should be known, reflected on, prayed about and brought to life. Nevertheless, seeking to bring the Rule of Life into harmony with the new requirements of the Congregation, during the last General Chapters (23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th) some modifications considered appropriate were made and later approved by the Holy See.

In relation to our Rule of Life renewed in 1984, in this third edition changes have been introduced in the Constitutions in articles 5, 95, 128, 132(14), 133, 134, 137, 142, 151(8), in the General Regulations in articles 3, 13, 24, 38, 76, 107, 114, 127 and 128 and consequently in the Analytical Index in the words Centre(s), Directory, Past Pupils, Salesian Family, Salesian Cooperators, Vicar of the Rector Major.

I think it would be therefore appropriate to publish a third edition containing these modifications. I hope that it will provide the opportunity once again for us to welcome the text of the Constitutions “as a precious treasure” entrusted to us by Don Bosco. Again he is saying to us: “If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions.”

May Mary Help of Christians make us docile to the transforming action of the Holy Spirit so that following the example of the first Salesians, we may model our lives on that of Don Bosco especially in this bicentenary year of his birth.

Fr Ángel Fernández Artime
Rector Major

Rome, 16 August 2015
The Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth

SIGNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Sacred Scripture

Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Col	Letter of St Paul to the Colossians
1 Cor	First letter of St Paul to the Corinthians
2 Cor	Second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians
Eph	Letter of St Paul to the Ephesians
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gal	Letter of St Paul to the Galatians
Gen	Genesis
Heb	Letter to the Hebrews
Is	Isaiah
Jn	Gospel of St John
1 Jn	First letter of St John
Lk	Gospel of St Luke
Mk	Gospel of St Mark
Mt	Gospel of St Matthew
1 Pet	First letter of St Peter
Phil	Letter of St Paul to the Philippians
Prov	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
Qo	Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes)
Rev	Revelation (Apocalypse)
Rom	Letter of St Paul to the Romans
1 Sam	First book of Samuel
Sir	Sirach
1 Thess	First letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians
1 Tim	First letter of St Paul to Timothy
Wis	Wisdom

Documents of the Church

AA	Apostolicam actuositatem, Decree of Vatican II
AG	Ad gentes, Decree of Vatican II
CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici
EN	Evangelii nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, 1975
ET	Evangelica testificatio, Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, 1971
GS	Gaudium et spes, Constitution of Vatican II
IGLH	Institutio generalis de liturgia horarum
IM	Inter mirifica, Decree of Vatican II
LG	Lumen gentium, Constitution of Vatican II
MR	Mutuae relationes, Directives, SCRIS – S. Congn. for Bishops, 1978
PC	Perfectae caritatis, Decree of Vatican II
PO	Presbyterorum ordinis, Decree of Vatican II
RD	Redemptionis donum, Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, 1984
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium, Constitution of Vatican II

Salesian sources

ASC	Salesian central archives
BM	Biographical Memoirs (English translation)
C	Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales
C 1875	Rules of Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales, Turin 1875 (OE XXVII, 10-99)
DB	Don Bosco
MB	Memorie biografiche (19 volumes)
MO	Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales
OE	Opere edite (published works)
R	General Regulations
DON RUA	Circular letters of Don Rua

Note: The *Scriptural texts* in English are from the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition), with the exception of the Psalms which are from the Grail translation.



FOREWORD

For us Salesians, our Rule Book is Don Bosco's living testament. "If you have loved me in the past," he tells us, "continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions."¹

Fr. Michael Rua, Don Bosco's first successor, reminds us: "When Don Bosco sent this first sons to America he had himself photographed in the act of handing to Fr John Cagliero, who headed the expedition, the book of the Constitutions as though to say: 'I would like to go with you myself, but since I cannot do so these Constitutions will take my place. Keep them as you would a precious treasure!'"²

¹ MB XVII, 258.

² cf. Don Rua, 1 Dec. 1909.



First Part

**The Salesians of Don Bosco
in the Church**



I. THE SOCIETY OF ST FRANCIS DE SALES

"I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out ... I will set up over them one shepherd ... He shall feed them and be their shepherd." (Ezek 34, 11.23)

**God's action
in the foundation
and life
of our Society**

1. With a feeling of humble gratitude we believe that the Society of St Francis de Sales came into being not as a merely human venture but by the initiative of God.¹ Through the motherly intervention of Mary, the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to contribute to the salvation of youth, "that part of human society which is so exposed and yet so rich in promise."²

The Spirit formed within him the heart of a father and teacher, capable of total self-giving: "I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys."³

To ensure the continuation of this mission, the Spirit inspired him to initiate various apostolic projects, first among them our Society.

The Church has acknowledged God's hand in this, especially by approving our Constitutions and by proclaiming our Founder a saint.

From this active presence of the Holy Spirit we draw strength for our fidelity and support for our hope.

¹ cf. MO, 16.

² MB II, 45. BM II, 35.

³ MB XVIII, 258.

**Nature
and mission
of our Society**

2. We, the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), form a community of the baptized. Submissive to the bidding of the Spirit we are resolved to carry out the Founder's apostolic plan in a specific form of religious life: to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor.

By carrying out this mission we find our own way to holiness.

**Our
apostolic
consecration**

3. We live as disciples of the Lord by the grace of the Father, who consecrated us¹ through the gift of his Spirit and sends us out to be apostles of the young.

Through our religious profession we offer ourselves to God in order to follow CHRIST and work with him in building up the Kingdom. Our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers.

Our mission sets the tenor of our whole life; it specifies the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families.

¹ cf. LG 44.

**Form
of our Society**

4. Our society is made up of clerics and laymen who complement each other as brothers in living out the same vocation.

We are recognized in the Church as a clerical religious institute of pontifical right, "dedicated to apostolic works."¹

Inspired by the goodness and zeal of St Francis de Sales, Don Bosco called us Salesians² and gave us a programme of life in the motto: "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle."³

¹ cf. PC 8; CIC, can 675,1.

² cf. MB V, 9; BM V, 8.

³ cf. MB XVII, 365, 366, 280.

**Our Society
in the Salesian
Family**

5. Don Bosco inspired the start of a vast movement of persons who in different ways work for the salvation of the young.

He himself founded not only the Society of St Francis de Sales but also the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Association of Salesian Cooperators. These live in communion with each other, share the same spirit and, with specifically distinct vocations, continue the mission he began. Together with these groups and with others born later we make up the Salesian Family.¹

Within this family, by the will of the Founder, we have particular responsibilities: to preserve unity of spirit and to foster dialogue and fraternal collaboration for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness.

Our past pupils are also members by reason of the education they have received, and the bonds are closer when they commit themselves to take an active part in the salesian mission in the world.

R 36-41.147

¹ cf. ASC, *Progetto CG1*, ms DB; MB XVII, 25.

**Our Society
in the Church**

6. The Salesian vocation places us at the heart of the Church and puts us entirely at the service of her mission.

Faithful to the commitments Don Bosco has passed on to us, we are evangelizers of the young, and the more so if they are poor; we pay special attention to apostolic vocations; we are educators of the faith for the working classes, particularly by means of social communication; we proclaim the Gospel to those who have not yet received it.

In this way we contribute to building up the Church as the body of Christ, so that also through us she may appear to the world as the “universal sacrament of salvation.”¹

¹ LG 48; GS 45.

**Our Society
in the
contemporary
world**

7. Our vocation calls us to be deeply united with the world and its history.¹ Open to the cultural values of the lands in which we work, we try to understand them and make them our own, so as to incarnate in them the message of the Gospel.

The needs of the young and of working-class areas, the desire to work with the Church and in her name, inspire and shape our concrete pastoral activity so as to bring about a more just world and one of greater brotherhood in Christ.

¹ cf. GS 1.

**The presence
of Mary
in our Society**

8. The Virgin Mary showed Don Bosco his field of labour among the young and was the constant guide and support of his work,¹ especially in the foundation of our Society.

We believe that Mary is present among us and continues her "mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians."²

We entrust ourselves to her, the humble servant in whom the Lord has done great things,³ that we may become witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love.

¹ cf. MB VII, 334; XVII, 258; XVIII, 439; BM VII, 197.

² DB, *Meraviglie della Madre di Dio*, Turin 1868, p. 45; (OE XX, 237).

³ cf. Lk 1, 48-49.

**Patrons
and Protectors
of our Society**

9. As members of the pilgrim Church, we are conscious of our fellowship with our brothers

in the heavenly kingdom and feel the need of their help.¹

Don Bosco entrusted our Society in a special way to Mary, whom he made its principal patroness,² as well as to St Joseph and to St Francis de Sales, the zealous pastor and doctor of charity.

We hold in veneration as special protectors St Dominic Savio, a sign of the wonders that grace can achieve in adolescents and the other glorified members of our family.

¹ cf. LG 49.

² cf. C 1875, V, 6.

II. THE SALESIAN SPIRIT

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil 4, 9)

**Pastoral
charity
the centre
of our spirit**

10. Under the inspiration of God, Don Bosco lived and handed on to us an original style of life and action: the salesian spirit.

It is summed up and centred in pastoral charity, characterized by that youthful dynamism which was revealed so strongly in our Founder and at the beginnings of our Society. It is an apostolic impetus that makes us seek souls and serve God alone.

**Christ
of the Gospel
the source
of our spirit**

11. The salesian spirit finds its model and source in the heart of Christ, apostle of the Father.¹

Reading the Gospel we become more aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord: gratitude to the Father for the gift of a divine vocation offered to all men; predilection for the little ones and the poor; zeal in preaching, healing and saving because of the urgency of the coming of the Kingdom; the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness

and self-giving; the desire to gather his disciples into the unity of brotherly communion.

¹ cf. LG 3; AG 3

**Union
with God**

12. As he works for the salvation of the young, the salesian experiences the fatherhood of God and continually reminds himself of the divine dimension of his work: "Apart from me you can do nothing."¹

He cultivates union with God, aware of the need to pray without ceasing in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ and with the Father, whom he feels close at hand. Attentive to the presence of the Spirit and doing everything for God's love he becomes like Don Bosco a contemplative in action.

¹ Jn 15,5.

**Sense
of the Church**

13. Our love for Christ necessarily gives rise to our love for his Church, the People of God, the centre of unity and communion of all the forces working for the Kingdom.

We feel ourselves a living part of her, and we cultivate in ourselves and in our communities a renewed ecclesial awareness. This we express in an attitude of filial loyalty to Peter's successor and to his teaching, and in our

efforts to live in communion and collaboration with the bishops, clergy, religious and laity.

We educate young Christians to an authentic understanding of the Church and we work assiduously for its growth. Don Bosco tells us: "No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake."¹

¹ MB V, 577; BM V, 383.

**Predilection
for the young**

14. Our vocation is graced by a special gift of God: predilection for the young: "That you are young is enough to make me love you very much."¹ This love is an expression of pastoral charity and gives meaning to our whole life.

For their welfare we give generously of our time, talents and health: "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life."²

¹ DB, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1847, p. 7; (OE II, 187).

² Don Ruffino, *Cronaca dell'Oratorio*, ASC 110, quaderno 5, p. 10.

**Salesian
loving-
kindness**

15. Sent to young people by the God who is 'all charity',¹ the salesian is open and cordial, ready to make the first approach and to welcome others with unfailing kindness, respect and patience.

His love is that of a father, brother and friend, able to draw out friendship in return; this is

the loving kindness so much recommended by Don Bosco.

His chastity and well-balanced attitude open his heart to spiritual fatherhood and give transparent witness to God's anticipating love.

¹ DB, *Esercizio di divozione alla misericordia di Dio*, Turin 1847, p. 81; (OE II, 151)

**Family
spirit**

16. Don Bosco wanted everyone to feel at home in his establishments. The salesian house becomes a family when affection is mutual and when all, both confreres and young people, feel welcome and responsible for the common good.

In an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness, the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced, and relationships are governed not so much by recourse to rules as by faith and the promptings of the heart.¹

This is a witness that enkindles in the young the desire to get to know and to follow the salesian vocation.

¹ cf. MB XVII, 110.

**Optimism
and joy**

17. The salesian does not give way to discouragement in face of difficulties, because he has complete trust in the father. "Let nothing upset you", Don Bosco used to say.¹

Inspired by the optimistic humanism of St Francis de Sales, he believes in man's natural and supernatural resources without losing sight of his weakness.

He is able to make his own what is good in the world and does not bewail his own times; he accepts all that is good,² especially if it appeals to the young.

Because he is a herald of the Good News he is always cheerful.³ He radiates this joy and is able to educate to a Christian and festive way of life: "Let us serve the Lord in holy joy."⁴

¹ MB VII, 524; BM VII, 317.

² cf. 1 Thess 5,21.

³ cf. Phil 3,1.

⁴ DB, *Il Giovane Provveduto*, Turin 1847, p. 6; (OE II, 186).

**Work
and temperance**

18. "Work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish",¹ whereas the seeking of an easy and comfortable life will instead bring about its death.²

The salesian gives himself to his mission with tireless energy, taking care to do everything with simplicity and moderation. He knows that by his work he is participating in the creative action of God and cooperating with Christ in building the Kingdom.

Temperance gives him the strength to control his heart, to master himself and remain even-tempered.

He does not look for unusual penances but accepts the daily demands and renunciations of the apostolic life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it.³

¹ MB XII, 466; BM XII, 338.

² cf. MB XVII, 272.

³ cf. C 1875, XIII, 13.

Initiative and flexibility

19. The salesian is called to be a realist and to be attentive to the signs of the times, convinced that the Lord manifests his will also through the demands of time and place.

Hence his spirit of initiative and apostolic creativity: "In those things which are for the benefit of young people in danger or which serve to win souls for God, I push ahead even to the extent of recklessness."¹

Timely response to these needs requires him to keep abreast of new trends and meet them with the well-balanced creativity of the Founder; periodically he evaluates his work.

¹ MB XIV, 662.

The preventive system and salesian spirit

20. Under the guidance of Mary his teacher, Don Bosco lived with the boys of the first Oratory a spiritual and educational experience which he called the "Preventive System". For him this was a spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of a God who provides in

advance for all his creatures, is ever present at their side, and freely gives his life to save them.

Don Bosco passes this on to us as a way of living and handing on the gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. It 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.

**Don Bosco
our model**

21. The Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher.

We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace. He was deeply human, rich in the qualities of his people, open to the realities of this earth; and he was just as deeply the man of God, filled with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and living "as seeing him who is invisible."¹

These two aspects combined to create a closely-knit life project, the service of the young. He realized his aim with firmness, constancy and the sensitivity of a generous heart, in the midst of difficulties and fatigue. "He took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young... Truly the only concern of his heart was for souls."²

¹ Heb 11,27.

² DON RUA, 24 Aug. 1894.

III. THE PROFESSION OF THE SALESIAN

"Jesus said to them: 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men. And immediately they left their nets and followed him.'" (Mk 1, 17-18)

Personal vocation of the salesian

22. Each one of us is called by God to form part of the Salesian Society. Because of this God gives him personal gifts and by faithful correspondence he finds his way to complete fulfilment in Christ.

The Society recognizes his vocation and helps him to develop it; and he, as a responsible member, puts himself and his gifts at the service of the community and of its common tasks.

Every call is an indication that the Lord loves the Congregation, wants to see it vibrant for the good of the Church and never ceases to enrich it with new apostolic energy.

Meaning of our profession

23. Religious profession is a sign of a loving encounter between the Lord who calls and the disciple who responds by giving himself totally to God and to his brothers and sisters.

It is one of the most lofty choices a believer can consciously make, an act which recalls

and endorses the mystery of his baptismal covenant by giving it a deeper and fuller expression.

By publicly binding himself in the eyes of the Church, through whose ministry he is more intimately consecrated to the service of God,¹ the salesian begins a new life, which is lived out in a service of permanent dedication to the young.

Profession is also the expression of a mutual commitment between the professed member who enters the Society and the Society which receives him with joy.²

¹ cf. MR 8; LG 44.

² cf. LG 44; PC 5; CIC, can. 654.

**Formula
of profession**

24. Our formula of profession is the following:

“God my Father, you consecrated me to yourself on the day of my baptism.

In response to the love of the Lord Jesus your Son, who calls me to follow him more closely,

and led by the Holy Spirit who is light and strength,

with complete freedom I, N.N., offer myself totally to you.

I pledge myself

to devote all my strength to those to whom you will send me,

especially to young people who are poorer;
to live in the Salesian Society in communion
of spirit and action with my brothers;
and in this way to share in the life and mission
of your Church.

And so, in the presence of my brothers and
before Fr N.N., who takes the place of the
Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de
Sales,

I make the vow for ever to live obedient, poor
and chaste

according to the way of the Gospel set out in
the salesian Constitutions.

Father, may your grace, the intercession of
Mary Help of Christians, of St Joseph, of St
Francis de Sales and of St John Bosco, to-
gether with the assistance of my brother sale-
sians keep me faithful day by day."

(for those making temporary profession)

"And so, in the presence of my brothers, and
before Fr N.N., who takes the place of the
Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de
Sales,

although it is my intention to offer myself to
you for all my life, in accordance with the
Church's dispositions

I make the vow for... year(s) to live obedient,
poor and chaste according to the way of the
Gospel set out in the salesian Constitutions.

Father, may your grace, the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, of St Joseph, of St Francis de Sales and of St John Bosco, together with the assistance of my brother salesians keep me faithful day by day."

The Superior responds:

"In the name of the Church
and of the Society

I welcome you among the Salesians of Don Bosco as a confrere committed by perpetual (temporary) vows.

**Profession
a source
of sanctification**

25. The action of the Spirit is for the professed member a lasting source of grace and a support for his daily efforts to grow towards the perfect love¹ of God and men.

The confreres who are living or have lived to the full the gospel project of the Constitutions are for us a stimulus and help on the path to holiness.

The witness of such holiness, achieved within the salesian mission, reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young.

¹ cf. PC 1.



Second Part

**Sent to the young
in communities
following Christ**



IV. SENT TO THE YOUNG

THOSE TO WHOM OUR MISSION IS DIRECTED

"He saw a great throng, and had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things." (Mk 6,34).

**The young
to whom
we are sent**

26. The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer.

We are called to the same mission and are aware of its supreme importance: young people are at the age when they must make basic life-choices which affect the future of society and of the Church.

With Don Bosco we reaffirm our preference for the young who are "poor, abandoned and in danger",¹ those who have greater need of love and evangelization, and we work especially in areas of greatest poverty.

R 1.3.11.15.26

¹ cf. MB XIV, 662.

**Young
workers**

27. Young people from poor areas who are looking for work, and young workers in general, often encounter difficulties and easily become victims of injustice.

Making the concern of Don Bosco our own, we go to them to prepare them to take their place with dignity in society and in the Church and to alert them to the role they must play in the Christian transformation of social life.

R 2

**Young people
called
to serve
the Church**

28. To meet the needs of his people the Lord continually calls some to follow him and enriches them with a variety of gifts in the service of the Kingdom.

We are convinced that many young people are rich in spiritual potential and give indications of an apostolic vocation.

We help them to discover, accept and develop the gift of a lay, consecrated or priestly vocation, for the benefit of the whole Church and of the Salesian Family.

R 9.16.17

With equal zeal we nurture adult vocations.

**In
working-class
areas**

29. Our priority commitment to young people who are poor fits in well with pastoral involvement among poor people in general.

We recognize the gospel values which they stand for, and the need they have of support in their efforts at human advancement and growth in the faith. Hence we support them by "all the means that Christian charity suggests."¹

R 14.25.26

We also give our attention to the lay people responsible for evangelization of their local area, and to the family where different generations come together² and build the future of mankind.

¹ C 1875, 1,7.

² cf. GS 52.

**People
not yet
evangelized**

30. People still awaiting the gospel message were the special object of Don Bosco's concern and apostolic effort. They continue to stimulate our zeal and keep it alive. We look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our Congregation.

Through our missionary activity we carry out a patient work of evangelization by founding the Church within a group of people.¹ This work mobilizes all the educational and pastoral means proper to our charism.

R 18-24

Following the example of the Son of God, who made himself in all things like his fellow men, the salesian missionary makes his own the values of these people and shares their hopes and anxieties.²

¹ cf. AG 6.

² cf. AG 3,12,26.

OUR PASTORAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Lk 4, 18-19).

Total development

31. Our mission is a sharing in that of the Church, which brings about the saving design of God, the coming of His Kingdom, by bringing to men the message of the Gospel, which is closely tied in with the development of the temporal order.¹

We educate and evangelize according to a plan for the total well-being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man.² Faithful to the intentions of our Founder, our purpose is to form "upright citizens and good Christians."³

R 4.5.22

¹ cf. EN 31.

² cf. GS 41.

³ *Plan of Regulations of the Oratory*, 1854 (MB II, 46; BM II, 36).

Personal development

32. As educators we work together with our young people to bring all their talents and aptitudes to full maturity.

According to circumstances we share our food with them and further their trade skills and cultural advancement.

Always and in every case we help them to be open to truth and to develop in themselves a responsible freedom. To this end we commit ourselves to inculcating in them a convinced appreciation of true values which will lead them to a life of dialogue and service.

R 4.6

**Social
and collective
development**

33. Don Bosco saw clearly the social implications of his work.

We labour in economically depressed areas and for poor youth. We collaborate with them, educating them to a sense of moral, professional and social responsibility. In this way we contribute to the development of both people and environment.

We share in a way appropriate to religious in the witness and commitment of the Church to justice and peace. While not getting involved in ideologies or party politics, we reject everything that encourages deprivation, injustice and violence. We cooperate with all who are trying to build a society more worthy of man's dignity.

The advancement to which we dedicate ourselves in the spirit of the Gospel makes tangible the love of Christ which makes men free, and is a sign that the Kingdom of God is among us.

R 6.26

**Evangelization
and
catechesis**

34. "This Society had its beginning in a simple catechism lesson."¹ For us too evangelizing and catechizing are the fundamental characteristics of our mission.

Like Don Bosco, we are all called to be educators to the faith at every opportunity. Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of his mystery.²

We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the risen Lord, and so discover in him and in his Gospel the deepest meaning of their own existence, and thus grow into new men.

The Virgin Mary is present in this process as a mother. We make her known and loved as the one who believed,³ who helps and who infuses hope.

R 7

¹ MB IX, 61; BM IX, 35.

² cf. Eph 3, 8-19.

³ cf. Lk 1,45.

**Introduction
to ecclesial
life**

35. We introduce the young to the experience of ecclesial life by bringing them into a faith community and helping them to take part in it.

To this end we promote and animate groups and movements for formation and apostolic and social action. In these the young people grow in the awareness of their own

R 8

responsibilities and learn to give their irreplaceable contribution to the transformation of the world and to the life of the Church and so become themselves the “first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them.”¹

¹ AA 12.

**Introduction
to liturgical
life**

36. We introduce the young to a conscious and active participation in the Church’s liturgy, the summit and source of all christian life.¹

With them we celebrate the encounter with Christ in word, prayer and sacraments.

The Eucharist and the sacrament of Reconciliation, celebrated with care are means of exceptional value for education to Christian liberty, to conversion of heart and to a spirit of sharing and service in the ecclesial community.

R 7

¹ cf. SC 10.

**Vocational
guidance**

37. We educate the young to develop their own human and baptismal vocation by a daily life progressively inspired and unified by the Gospel.

The family atmosphere of welcome and of faith, created by the witness of a community which gives of itself with joy is the most efficacious setting for the discovery and guidance of vocations.

This work of collaboration with God's design, the crown of all our educational and pastoral activity, is sustained by prayer and personal contact, above all in spiritual direction.

R 9.16.17

The preventive system in our mission

38. Don Bosco has handed on to us his Preventive System as a means for carrying out our educational or pastoral service.

"This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness."¹ Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelligence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being.

It brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue.

Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith.

R 4.5.13.15

¹ MB XIII, 919.

Assistance as an attitude and method

39. The practice of the preventive system demands a fundamental disposition on our part: an empathy with the young and a willingness to be with them: "Here in your midst I feel

completely at home; for me, living means being here with you.”¹

We are actively present among youth in brotherly friendship, helping them in their efforts to grow in what is good and encouraging them to cast off every form of slavery, so that their weakness may not be overcome by evil.

This presence affords us a true understanding of the world of the young and unites us with them in all the healthy aspects of their restless energy.

¹ MB IV, 654; BM IV, 455.

CRITERIA FOR SALESIAN ACTIVITY

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more ... To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor 9, 19.22).

**Don Bosco's
Oratory
a permanent
criterion**

40. Don Bosco lived a pastoral experience in his first Oratory which serves as a model; it was for the youngsters a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelized, a school that prepared them for life and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves.

As we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works.

**Inspirational
criteria
for our activity
and works**

41. Our apostolic activity is carried out in a variety of ways, which depend in the first place upon the actual needs of those for whom we are working.

We give practical expression to the redeeming love of Christ by organizing activities and works of an educational and pastoral nature designed to meet the needs of the neighbourhood and of the Church. Sensitive to the signs of the times and with initiative and continual flexibility we evaluate these activities, renew them and create new ones.

The education and evangelization of many young people, especially among the very poor, means that we have to go to them where they are to be found, and provide adequate forms of service in the context of their own life-style.

R 1

**Activities
and works**

42. We carry out our mission chiefly in such works and activities as make possible the human and Christian education of the young, such as oratories and youth centres, schools and technical institutes, boarding establish-

ments and houses for young people in difficulties.

In parishes and mission residences we contribute to the spreading of the Gospel and to the advancement of the people. We collaborate in the pastoral programme of the particular Church out of the riches of our specific vocation.

In specialized centres we make available our pedagogical and catechetical expertise in the service of the young.

In retreat houses we provide for the Christian formation of groups, especially of young people.

We dedicate ourselves also to every other kind of work which has as its scope the salvation of the young.

R 11-30.35

**Social
communication**

43. We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity¹ which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the salesian mission.

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

R 31-34.41

Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization.

¹ cf. IM 1.

THOSE WHO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MISSION

"He who plants and he who waters are equal, and each shall receive his wages according to his labour. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building." (1 Cor 3, 8-9)

**The mission
is given
to the
community**

44. The apostolic mandate which the Church entrusts to us is taken up and put into effect in the first place by the provincial and local communities. The members have complementary functions and each one of their tasks is important. They are aware that pastoral objectives are achieved through unity and joint brotherly responsibility.

The provincial and the rector, as promoters of dialogue and team work, guide the community in pastoral discernment, so that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity.

**Common
and
complementary
responsibilities**

45. Each of us is responsible for the common mission, and participates in it with the richness of his own personal gifts and with the lay and priestly characteristics of the one salesian vocation.

The salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness of God's Kingdom in the world, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.

The salesian priest or deacon brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry, which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

The significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay salesians in the community constitutes an essential element of its make-up and of its apostolic completeness.

**Young
salesians**

46. The family spirit and the dynamic drive which is characteristic of our mission among young people make particularly important the contribution of young salesians in the apostolate.

They are closer to the rising generations; they can provide inspiration and enthusiasm; they are ready to try new solutions.

The community by encouraging and guiding this generosity, helps them to mature as religious and apostles.

**The educative
community
and lay people
associated
with our work**

47. We bring about in our works the educative and pastoral community which involves young people and adults, parents and educators, in a family atmosphere, so that it can become a living experience of Church and a revelation of God's plan for us.

In this community lay people associated with our work make a contribution all their own, because of their experience and pattern of life.

We welcome and encourage their collaboration, and we give them the opportunity to get a deeper knowledge of the salesian spirit and the practice of the preventive system.

We foster the spiritual growth of each of them, and to those who may be so inclined we suggest a closer sharing of our mission in the Salesian Family.

R 4.5.148

**Solidarity
with the
particular
Church**

48. The community lives and expresses its apostolic commitment within the particular Church. We become part of its pastoral action which has the Bishop at its head¹ and

the directives of the Bishops' Conference as a springboard for action on a wider scale.

We offer the particular Church the contribution of our work and salesian pedagogy, and we receive from it direction and support.

To forge more systematic links we share initiatives with other groups belonging to the Salesian Family and with other religious institutes.

We are ready to cooperate with civil organizations working in the fields of education and social development.

R 2.13.25.35

¹ cf. CIC, can. 678,1.

V. IN FRATERNAL AND APOSTOLIC COMMUNITIES

*"Let love be genuine... love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honour... Contribute to the needs of the saints, practise hospitality... Live in harmony with one another."
(Rom 12,9.10.13.16)*

Importance of life in community

49. To live and work together is for us salesians a fundamental requirement and a sure way of fulfilling our vocation.

This is why we come together in communities,¹ where our love for each other leads us to share all we have in a family spirit, and so create communion between person and person.

The community is a reflection of the mystery of the Trinity: there we find a response to the deep aspirations of the heart and we become for the young signs of love and unity.

R 20

¹ cf. CIC, can. 608.

The bonds of unity

50. God calls us to live in community and entrusts us with brothers to love.

Brotherly love, our apostolic mission and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the bonds which form us into one and constantly reinforce our communion.

R 42

We thus become one heart and one soul to love and serve God,¹ and to help one another.

¹ cf. C 1875, II, 1.

**Relationships
of fraternal
friendship**

51. St Paul exhorts us: “Put on, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.”¹

Family spirit is the hallmark of the salesian community and inspires every moment of its life: work and prayer, meals and recreation, meetings and other encounters.

In an atmosphere of brotherly friendship we share our joys and sorrows, and we are partners in our apostolic plans and experiences.

¹ Col 3, 12-13.

**The confrere
in the
community**

52. The community receives each confrere with an open heart. It accepts him as he is and fosters his growth to maturity. It offers him the opportunity to use and develop his gifts of nature and of grace. It provides for his needs and sustains him in moments of doubt and difficulty, weariness and ill health.

Don Bosco used to say to those who asked to remain with him: “Bread, work and heaven:

I can offer you these three things in the Lord's name."¹

The confrere pledges himself to build up the community in which he lives. He loves it, despite its imperfections, and knows that in it he finds the presence of Christ.

He accepts fraternal correction, fights whatever he discovers in himself which militates against the community and gives his own generous contribution to the community life and work. He thanks God that he is among brothers who encourage him and help him.

R 43

¹ MB XVIII, 420.

**Sick
and aging
confreres**

53. The community surrounds its sick and aged confreres with care and affection.

They in their turn, accepting their condition and serving the community in whatever way they can, are a source of blessing for it; they enrich its family spirit and deepen its unity.

Their life takes on a new apostolic significance: for as they offer their limitations and sufferings in a spirit of faith for their brothers and for the young, they are united with the redeeming passion of the Lord, and continue to share in the salesian mission.

**Death
of the
confrere**

54. The community supports with greater love and prayer the confrere who is gravely ill. When the hour comes for him to bring his

consecrated life to its highest fulfilment, his brothers help him to enter fully into Christ's paschal mystery.

Death for the salesian is made bright by the hope of entering into the joy of his Lord,¹ and when it happens that a salesian dies working for souls, the Congregation has won a great triumph.²

The memory of departed confreres unites, "in a love that will not pass away",³ those who are still pilgrims with those who are already resting in Christ.

R 47

¹ cf. Mt 25,21.

² cf. MB XVII, 273.

³ 1 Cor 13,8.

**The rector
in the
community**

55. The rector represents Christ who unites his followers in the service of the Father. He is at the centre of the community, a brother among brothers, who recognize his responsibilities and authority.

His first task is to animate the community so that it may live faithful to the Constitutions and grow in unity. He coordinates the efforts of all, bearing in mind the rights, duties and capabilities of every member.

He also has a direct responsibility toward each confrere; he helps him realize his own personal vocation and carry out the work entrusted to him.

He extends his solicitude to the young for whom we work and to our collaborators, so that they may share in the community's mission with increasing responsibility.

In his words, frequent contacts and opportune decisions he is a father, teacher and spiritual guide.

R 42.48

A welcoming community

56. With simplicity the confreres lead a life of self-giving and sharing, by welcoming others and offering them hospitality. By their kindness and cheerfulness they are able to draw everyone into the salesian family spirit.

Nevertheless, to foster mutual respect and expressions of brotherly communion, every community should reserve for the confreres alone certain parts of the religious house.¹

R 21.45

¹ cf. CIC, can. 667,1.

An open community

57. The salesian community works in communion with the particular Church.

It is open to the world's values and attentive to the cultural milieu in which it carries out its apostolic work. At one with those among whom it lives, it cultivates good relations with all.

Thus it becomes a sign revealing Christ and his saving presence among men, and becomes a leaven giving rise to new

vocations after the example of the first community of Valdocco.

The provincial community

58. Local communities are a living part of the provincial community. The latter fosters fraternal communion among them and supports them in their mission.

It shows a loving concern for new confreres; it is solicitous for the formation of every member, rejoices in their success and the happy occasions in their lives, grieves over their loss and keeps alive their memory.

Attentive to the youth situation, it co-ordinates and evaluates our apostolic work through its various services; it encourages collaboration, stimulates pastoral work for vocations, provides for the continuity of our works, and is open to new activities.

It cultivates the spirit of brotherhood and expresses it concretely through solidarity with other provinces, with the Congregation and with the Salesian Family.

The world community

59. Religious profession incorporates the salesian in the Society, making him a participant in the communion of spirit, witness and service that is its life within the Universal Church.

Union with the Rector Major and his council, solidarity in apostolic initiatives,

- R 103 communication and exchange of information about the work of the confreres, all increase this communion, deepen the sense of belonging and dispose us to give our service to the world community.

VI. FOLLOWING CHRIST, OBEDIENT, POOR AND CHASTE

"I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Phil 3,8.12).

Following Christ

60. By religious profession we mean to live the grace of our baptism radically and more fully.

We follow Jesus Christ, who "virginal and poor, redeemed and sanctified mankind by his obedience",¹ and share more closely in his paschal mystery, in his self-emptying and in his life in the Spirit.

Surrendering ourselves totally to God whom we love above all else, we commit ourselves to a form of life based entirely on gospel values.

¹ PC 1.

Fraternal and apostolic love

61. Don Bosco frequently points out how the sincere practice of the vows strengthens the bonds of brotherly love and makes our apostolic work coherent.

The profession of the counsels helps us to live a life of fellowship with our brothers in the re-

ligious community as in a family which enjoys the presence of the Lord.¹

The evangelical counsels, by fostering purification of the heart and spiritual freedom,² render our pastoral charity more concerned and productive: the obedient, poor and chaste salesian is quick to love and serve those to whom the Lord sends him, especially poor youth.

¹ cf. PC 15.

² cf. LG 46.

**A particular
sign
of God's
presence**

62. The practice of the counsels, lived in the spirit of the beatitudes, makes our proclamation of the Gospel more convincing.

In a world tempted by atheism and the idolatry of pleasure, possessions and power, our way of life bears witness, especially to the young, that God exists, that his love can fill a life completely, and that the need to love, the urge to possess, and the freedom to control one's whole existence, find their fullest meaning in Christ the Saviour.

Our way of life also affects our manner of dressing, which is meant to be an external sign of this witness and service. The clerics follow the dispositions of the particular Churches in the countries in which they reside,¹ and the lay members adopt the

simple style which Don Bosco recommended.²

¹ cf. CIC, can 669.

² cf. C 1875, XV, 1-3.

**Witness
of the world
to come**

63. The offering of his own freedom through obedience, the spirit of evangelical poverty and the love which becomes a gift in chastity, make the salesian a sign of the power of the resurrection.

The evangelical counsels, fashioning his heart entirely for the Kingdom, help him to discern and welcome God's action in history; in the simplicity and hard work of daily life they transform him into an educator who proclaims to the young "new heavens and a new earth,"¹ awakening in them hope and the dedication and joy to which it gives rise.²

¹ cf. Rev. 21, 1.

² cf. Rom 12, 12.

OUR OBEDIENCE

"Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him." (Heb 5,8-9).

**Gospel
significance
of our obedience**

64. Our Saviour assured us that he came on earth to do not his own will but that of his Father in heaven.¹

By professing obedience we offer our will to God and by carrying out the mission entrusted to us we relive in the Church and in the Congregation Christ's own obedience.

Docile to the Spirit and attentive to the signs he gives us in the events of each day, we take the gospel as our supreme rule of life,² the Constitutions as a sure path to follow, and the superiors and the community as day by day interpreters of God's will.

¹ cf. C 1875, III, 1.

² cf. PC 2.

**Salesian style
of obedience
and authority**

65. In the salesian tradition obedience and authority are practised in a family spirit of love which inspires relationships of mutual esteem and trust.

The superior directs, guides and encourages making discreet use of his authority. All the confreres collaborate by obeying readily and sincerely, "with cheerfulness and humility."¹

The service of authority and the willingness to obey are the principles of cohesion in the Congregation, and guarantee its permanence; for the salesian they are the path to holiness and the source of energy in his work, of joy and of peace.

R 50

¹ cf. 1875, III, 2.

**Shared
responsibility
in obedience**

66. In the community, in view of the mission entrusted to us, we all obey even though we have different tasks to perform.

In listening to the Word of God and celebrating the Eucharist, we express and renew our common dedication to the divine will.

In matters of importance we seek the will of the Lord together in patient brotherly dialogue, with a deep awareness of shared responsibility.

The superior exercises his authority by listening to the confreres, encouraging all to make their contribution and promoting a union of wills in faith and charity. He concludes this phase of searching in common by making appropriate decisions. These will normally emerge from a convergence of the views expressed.

We all then set to work to carry out these decisions by our sincere collaboration, even when our own views have not prevailed.

**Personal
obedience
and freedom**

67. The salesian is expected to obey in freedom of spirit and with an awareness of his personal responsibility, pledging his "powers of intellect and will, and his gifts of nature and grace."¹

He obeys with faith and sees in the superior an aid and a sign which God uses to manifest his will.

Obedience like this “leads to maturity by extending the freedom of the sons of God.”²

¹ PC 14.

² PC 14.

**Requirements
of the vow
of obedience**

68. By vowing obedience the salesian pledges himself to obey lawful superiors in matters concerning the observance of the Constitutions.¹

When an order is given expressly by force of the vow of obedience, the obligation to obey is a grave one. Only major superiors and rectors can command in this way, but they should do so rarely, in writing or before two witnesses, and only when some serious reason requires it.²

¹ cf. CIC, can. 601.

² cf. CIC, can. 49 ff.

**Personal
gifts
and obedience**

69. Each one places his abilities and talents at the service of the common mission.

The superior, with the help of the community, has a special responsibility for the discernment of these gifts and for promoting their development and right use.

If the concrete demands of charity and of the apostolate require the sacrifice of personal wishes or plans which are in themselves lawful, the confrere accepts with faith whatever

obedience asks of him, while still retaining the right of recourse to a higher authority.

Before taking on tasks or offices other than those assigned to him in the community, he seeks authorization from the lawful superior.¹

¹ cf. CIC, can. 671.

**The talk with
the superior**

70. Faithful to Don Bosco's recommendation each confrere meets frequently with his superior for a friendly talk.

This is one of the best opportunities for dialogue, both for his own personal advantage and for promoting the good running of the community.

In it he speaks with confidence of his own life and work and, if he so wishes, also of the state of his conscience.

R 49

**Obedience and
the mystery of
the cross**

71. "Substitute acts of penance," Don Bosco tells us, "with acts of obedience."¹

Sometimes obedience will clash with our own selfish attitudes and desires for independence, or may really test our love. This is the moment to look to Christ, who was obedient even unto death:² "Father, if this chalice cannot pass from me unless I drink it, thy will be done."³

The mystery of his death and resurrection teaches us how fruitful it is for us to obey:

the grain of wheat which dies in the obscurity of the earth bears much fruit.⁴

¹ MB XIII, 89; BM XIII, 68.

² cf. Phil 2,8; cf. MB IV, 233; BM IV, 163.

³ Mt 26,42.

⁴ cf. Jn 12,24.

OUR POVERTY

Jesus said to him: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Mt 19, 21)

**Gospel
significance
of our poverty**

72. We are aware of the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ: though he was rich he made himself poor so that through his poverty we might become rich.¹

We are called to a life closely modelled on the Gospel. We choose to follow "the Saviour who was born in poverty, lived deprived of everything and died stripped on the cross."²

Like the apostles at our Lord's invitation we free ourselves from concern and worry about earthly goods³ and, trusting in the providence of the Father, we dedicate ourselves to the service of the Gospel.

¹ cf. 2 Cor 8,9.

² C 1875 (Introduction), p. xxiv.

³ cf. Mt 6,25 ss.

**Poverty
and the salesian
mission**

73. Don Bosco lived his poverty in detachment of heart and generous service of others; his manner was marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative.

Following his example we too live detached from all earthly goods;¹ we participate with a spirit of enterprise in the mission of the Church and in her struggle for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need.

The witness of our poverty, lived in a common sharing of our goods, helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing.

¹ cf. C 1875, IV, 7.

**Requirements
of the vow
of poverty**

74. By the vow of poverty we undertake not to use and not to dispose of material goods without the consent of the lawful superior.

Each confrere retains the ownership of his patrimony and the right to acquire other goods, but before his profession he freely disposes of their use and enjoyment and cedes their administration to others.

Before perpetual profession he draws up his will in conformity with the norms of civil law. After serious reflection, and an expression of his complete abandonment to Divine Providence, he may also renounce definitively the

goods of which he has retained the ownership in accordance with universal law and that of the Society.

R 51-53

**Personal
commitment
to poverty**

75. Each one of us bears primary responsibility for his own poverty, daily living out by the frugality of his life the detachment he has promised.

He accepts his dependence on the superior and community in the use of temporal goods, but he knows too that permission does not dispense him from being poor in spirit and in fact.¹

He is careful not to give way gradually to a desire for a comfortable and easy life, which poses a direct threat to fidelity and to apostolic generosity.

When his state of poverty causes him some inconvenience or suffering,² he is glad to be able to share in the blessings promised by the Lord to the poor in spirit.³

R 55

¹ cf. PC 13.

¹ cf. C 1875 (Introduction), p. xxvi.

¹ cf. Mt 5,3.

**Christian
sharing
of goods**

76. After the example of the first Christians, we share together our material goods,¹ the fruits of our work, the gifts we receive and whatever comes to us from pensions, subsidies and insurance policies. We do the same with our talents, our energies and our experience.

In the community the good of each individual becomes the good of all.

R 56-58.63.
197.201.

As brothers we share what we have with the other communities of the province, and we show solidarity with the needs of the entire Congregation, of the Church and of the world.

¹ cf. Acts 4,32.

**Witness
of poverty in the
community
and in our works**

77. Every community is sensitive to the conditions of its neighbourhood and bears witness to its poverty by a simple and frugal way of life in unpretentious dwellings.

Following the example and spirit of our Founder we accept ownership of the means we need for our work, and we administer them in such a way that all may realize they are being used for the service of others.

R 1. 58-65

Our choice of works and of their location is made in response to the needs of those in want; the criterion for our buildings is that they be simple and functional.

Work

78. Unremitting and self-sacrificing work is a characteristic left us by Don Bosco, and is a concrete expression of our poverty.

In our daily labours we are at one with the poor who live by the sweat of their brow,

R 64 and we bear witness to the human and Christian value of work.¹

¹ cf. ET 20.

**Solidarity
with the poor**

79. The spirit of poverty leads us to be one with the poor and to love them in Christ.¹

For this reason we make every effort to stay close to them, to alleviate their needs, making our own their lawful aspirations for a more human society.

In seeking and accepting help for the service of the needy, we imitate Don Bosco in his zeal and gratitude, and like him we retain the freedom the Gospel gives us. "Remember well," he tells us, "that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well."²

¹ cf. PC 13.

² MB V, 682; BM V, 450.

OUR CHASTITY

"I am sure that neither death nor life nor things present, nor things to come,nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8, 38-39).

**Gospel
significance
of our chastity**

80. Consecrated chastity because of the Kingdom is a "precious gift given to some by the Father."¹ Responding in faith we accept it with gratitude and we pledge ourselves by vow to live perfect continence in celibacy.²

We follow Jesus Christ closely choosing an intensely evangelical way of loving God and our neighbour with an undivided heart.³

Thus with a specific vocation we take our place in the Mystery of the Church, which is totally united to Christ, and sharing in its fruitfulness we dedicate ourselves to our mission.⁴

¹ LG 42.

² cf. CIC, can. 599.

³ cf. LG 42.

⁴ cf. ET 13-14; RD 11.

**Chastity
and the salesian
mission**

81. Don Bosco lived chastity as a love for God and for the young which had no limits. He wanted it to be a distinctive mark of the Salesian Society: "Anyone devoting his life to destitute youth should certainly strive

to enrich himself with every virtue, but the virtue he should specially cultivate is chastity.”¹

Our tradition has always considered chastity a resplendent virtue, bearing a special message for the education of youth. Through it we bear witness to the predilection of Christ for the young; it allows us to love them in an open and uncomplicated way, so that they “know they are loved”,² and it enables us to educate them to love and to purity.

¹ cf. C 1875, V, 1.

² DB, *Letter from Rome* 1884, MB XVII, 110.

**Chastity
and human
maturity**

82. The educational and pastoral demands of our mission and the fact that the observance of perfect continence touches some of the deepest drives of human nature,¹ require of the salesian psychological balance and affective maturity.

Don Bosco used to warn: Whoever has not a well-grounded hope of being able, with divine help, to preserve the virtue of chastity in word, in deed and in thought, should not make profession in this Society, for he would often find himself in danger.²

R 68

¹ cf. PC 12.

² cf. C 1875, V, 2.

**Chastity
and community
life**

83. Consecrated chastity, a “sign and stimulus of love”,¹ frees and enables us to become all things to all men. It develops in us

a Christian sense of personal relationships, encourages true friendships, and helps to make the community a family.

In its turn the community's fraternal atmosphere helps us to live our celibacy because of the Kingdom with joy, and sustained by its love and understanding to come safely through difficult times.

¹ LG 42.

**Attitudes
and means
for growing
in chastity**

84. Our chastity is not a conquest made once for all time. It has its moments of peace and moments of trial. It is a gift which because of human weakness demands a daily pledge of fidelity.

For this reason the salesian, faithful to the Constitutions, lives a life of work and temperance, practices mortification and the custody of the senses, makes discreet and prudent use of the means of social communication, and does not neglect the natural means which contribute to physical and mental health.

Above all, he implores God's help and lives in his presence; he nourishes his love for Christ at the table of the Word and the Eucharist, and humbly purifies it in the Sacrament of Reconciliation; he entrusts himself with simplicity to a spiritual director.

R 44.66-68 He turns with filial trust to Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians, who helps him to love as Don Bosco did.

VII. IN DIALOGUE WITH THE LORD

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col 3, 16-17).

The gift of prayer

85. The community expresses in a visible manner the mystery of the Church, which is not born of any human will but is the fruit of the Lord's death and resurrection. In the same way God brings our community together and keeps it united by his call, his Word, his love.

In praying, the salesian community responds to this call; it deepens its awareness of its intimate and living relationship with God, and of its saving mission, making its own Don Bosco's prayer: "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle."

R 69

Salesian prayer

86. Docile to the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco lived an experience of humble, trusting and apostolic prayer in which praying and living were spontaneously united.

We learn from him to recognize the action of grace in the lives of the young; we pray for them so that the design of the Father

may be fulfilled in each of them, and we pray with them that we may witness to our own faith and share the same hope of salvation.

Salesian prayer is joyful and creative, simple and profound. It lends itself to community participation, is drawn from life experience and flows back into it.

R 77

**The community
attentive
to the Word**

87. The people of God are gathered together before all else by the Word of the living God.¹

For us the Word, listened to with faith, is a source of spiritual life, food for prayer, light to see God's will in the events of life, and strength to live out our vocation faithfully.

With the Sacred Scriptures daily in hand,² we welcome the Word as Mary did and ponder it in our heart,³ so that it will bear fruit and we may proclaim it with zeal.

¹ cf. PO 4.

² cf. PC 6.

³ cf. Lk 2, 19.51.

**The community
made one by
the Eucharist**

88. The hearing of the Word finds its privileged place in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is the central act of every salesian community; it is a daily festive celebration in a living liturgy.

There the community celebrates the paschal mystery and unites itself to the immolated

body of Christ, which it receives so as to build itself in him into a fraternal communion and renew its apostolic commitment.

Concelebration stresses the richness of this mystery; it expresses the triple unity of sacrifice, priesthood and community, a community whose members are all at the service of the same mission.

For us sons of Don Bosco the Eucharistic presence in our houses is a reason for frequent encounters with Christ. From him we draw energy and endurance in our work for the young.

R 70

**The mystery
of Christ
in time**

89. The Liturgy of the Hours extends the grace of the eucharistic mystery throughout the day.¹

The community, united to Christ and to the Church, praises and makes supplication to the Father, nourishes its union with him² and maintains an attentive attitude to the divine will. Without prejudice to the obligations assumed by clerics at their ordination³, the community celebrates Lauds as morning prayer and Vespers as evening prayer with the dignity and fervour that Don Bosco recommended.

Sunday is the day of Easter joy. Lived in apostolic activity, piety and cheerfulness, it reinvigorates the salesian's confidence and optimism.

R 70 The commemoration of the mysteries of the Lord, as they occur in the liturgical year, makes of our life a time of salvation in hope.⁴

¹ cf. IGLH 10,12.

² cf. LG 3.

³ cf. CIC, can 1174,1.

⁴ cf. SC 102.

**The community
in continual
conversion**

90. The Word of God calls us to continual conversion.

Aware of our weakness, we respond by vigilance and sincere repentance, brotherly correction, mutual forgiveness and the calm acceptance of our daily cross.

This commitment to conversion on the part of each member and of the whole community is brought to its fulfilment by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Prepared by the daily examination of conscience and received frequently according to the Church's directives, this sacrament gives us the joy of the Father's pardon, rebuilds brotherly communion and purifies our apostolic intentions.

R 73

**Opportune
times
for renewal**

91. Our will for conversion is strengthened in the monthly recollection and in the annual retreat. These are occasions of spiritual renewal which Don Bosco considered the fundamental part and the synthesis of all the practices of piety.¹

For the community and for every salesian these are privileged moments for listening to the Word of God, discerning his will and purifying our hearts.

These times of grace restore to our spirit a deep unity in the Lord Jesus and keep alive in us the expectation of his return.

R 72

¹ cf. C 1875, (Introduction), p. xxxiv.

**Mary
in the life
and prayer
of the salesian**

92. Mary, Mother of God, holds a unique place in the history of salvation.

She is a model of prayer and pastoral love, the teacher of wisdom and the guide of our Family.

We contemplate and imitate her faith, her concern for the needy, her fidelity at the hour of the cross and her joy at the wonders wrought by the Father.

Mary Immaculate, Help of Christians, leads us to the fullness of our offering to the Lord and gives us courage for the service of our brethren.

We develop a strong filial devotion to her. We recite the rosary each day and celebrate her feasts to encourage a more convinced and personal imitation.

R 74

**Personal
prayer**

93. We can form praying communities only if individually we become men of prayer. Each

one needs to express his own personal and heartfelt way of being a son of God, expressing his gratitude, telling him about his yearnings and his concerns in the apostolate.

For us mental prayer is essential. It strengthens our intimate union with God, saves us from routine, keeps our heart free and fosters our dedication to others. For Don Bosco it is a guarantee of joyous perseverance in our vocation.

R 71

**The memory
of our dead
confreres**

94. Faith in the risen Christ sustains our hope and keeps alive our communion with our brothers who rest in Christ's peace. They have spent their lives in the Congregation and not a few have suffered even to the point of martyrdom for love of the Lord.

United with them in an exchange of spiritual benefits, we gratefully offer for them the prescribed suffrages.

R 47.76

**Life
as prayer**

Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission.

95. Immersed in the world and in the cares of the pastoral life, the salesian learns to meet God through those to whom he is sent.

Discovering the fruits of the spirit¹ in the lives of men, especially the young, he gives thanks for everything;² as he shares their problems

and sufferings, he invokes upon them the light and strength of God's presence.

He draws on the love of the Good Shepherd, whose witness he wants to be, and shares in the spiritual riches offered him by the community.

His need of God, keenly felt in his apostolic commitment, leads him to celebrate the liturgy of life, attaining that "tireless industry made holy by prayer and union with God that should be the characteristics of the sons of Don Bosco."³

¹ cf. Gal 5,22.

² cf. Eph 5,20.

³ R 1924, art. 291.



Third Part

**Formed for the mission
of pastors and educators**



VIII. GENERAL ASPECTS OF OUR FORMATION

SALESIAN FORMATION

"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." (Eph 4,15)

Vocation and formation

96. Jesus called his Apostles individually to be with him, and to be sent forth to preach the Gospel.¹ Patiently and lovingly he prepared them and gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them into the fullness of Truth.²

He calls us too to live out in the Church our Founder's project as apostles of the young.

We respond to this call by committing ourselves to an adequate ongoing formation for which the Lord daily gives us his grace.

¹ cf. Mk 3,14.

² cf. Jn 16,13.

Salesian orientation of formation

97. The first salesians found their sure guide in Don Bosco. Living at the very heart of his community in action, they learned to model their own lives on his.

We too find in him our model. The religious and apostolic nature of the salesian calling

dictates the specific direction our formation must take, a direction necessary for the life and unity of the Congregation.

**The formation
experience**

98. Enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco's spirit, the salesian commits himself to a formation process which will last all his life and will keep pace with his maturing in other ways. He learns by experience the meaning of the salesian vocation at the various moments of his life and accepts the ascetical demands it makes on him.

With the help of Mary, his Mother and Teacher, he gradually becomes a pastor and educator of the young in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced.

**Personal
and community
commitment**

99. Each salesian accepts responsibility for his own formation. Docile to the Holy Spirit he develops his talents and his gifts of grace in a constant effort of conversion and renewal, as he lives and works for the common mission.

The natural environment for vocational growth is the community which the confrere joins with trust and in which he gives his responsible collaboration. The very life of the community, united in Christ and open to the needs of the times, is itself a factor in

R 85

**Unity
of formation
and different
cultures**

formation, and hence must continually move forward and be renewed.

100. The principle of unity in the Congregation is the charism of our Founder, which of its richness gives rise to different ways of living the one salesian vocation. Formation is therefore one in its essential content and diversified in its concrete expressions; it accepts and develops whatever is true, noble and just in the various cultures.¹

¹ cf. Phil 4,8.

**The provincial
community
and formation**

101. The provincial community welcomes and follows up the vocation of every confrere, sees to the preparation of formation personnel, provides formation structures, and makes each local community aware of its obligations in the formation sector.

It is the duty of the provincial community, through the various organs of animation and government, to lay down the method of formation according to the needs of its own cultural context and in conformity with the directives of the Church and of the Congregation.

In the exercise of this common responsibility, every salesian, through prayer and personal witness, contributes to the sustaining and renewal of the vocation of his brothers.

R 84

INITIAL FORMATION

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." (1 Sam 3,9)

**Complexity
and unity
of the initial
formation
period**

102. The aim of initial formation is the human maturing of the young confrere, his intellectual preparation and the deepening of his consecrated life, as he is gradually introduced to educational and pastoral work.

In the formative experience these elements must be harmonized into a living unity.

**Formation
communities**

103. Initial formation is ordinarily carried out in communities specifically designed for the purpose.

In accordance with Don Bosco's style of education these communities are open and keep in mind the aspirations of the young for a more personal and fraternal life style.

In them our spirit is lived in a more intense manner; together the members form a family founded on faith and enthusiasm for Christ, united in mutual esteem and common endeavour.

Those in formation and their guides contribute according to their different roles to the creation of an atmosphere of shared responsibility, and work with the aims of formation clearly in view.

**Role
of formation
personnel**

104. The guides in formation communities have a specific and necessary role.

They ensure that those in formation have the opportunities for a valid experience and for serious doctrinal reflection in an appropriate setting.

Aware of being instruments through whom the Lord is working, they make every effort to constitute with the rector, who is the leader of the community and its spiritual guide, a group that is convinced of its common responsibility.

Chosen for this task are men of faith and sufficient pastoral experience, capable of a living communication of the salesian ideal and of genuine dialogue with the young confreres.

R 78

**The salesian
in initial
formation**

105. For the salesian the time of initial formation is not so much a period of marking time as already one of work and holiness. It is a time of dialogue between God, whose initiative calls him and leads him forward, and his own freedom as he gradually assumes responsibility for his own formation.

In this process of growing responsibility he is sustained by prayer, spiritual direction, personal reflection, study and brotherly relationships.

R 79

**Formation
curriculum**

106. Lay salesians, future priests and permanent deacons normally have the same initial formation and follow curricula of equivalent level, with the same phases and similar content and objectives.

The necessary differences are determined by the specific vocation of each one, by his personal gifts and inclinations and the duties of our apostolate.

R 95.97.98.

**Incorporation
in the Society
and stages
of formation**

107. Before being definitively incorporated into the Society, each one passes through the following stages of formation: preparation for the novitiate, the novitiate itself and the period of temporary profession.

These steps are necessary for both the candidate and the community, so that they may work together to discern God's will and correspond with it.

The candidate gradually gets to know the Society, and the Society in turn can evaluate his suitability for salesian life.

Admissions

108. After the candidate has freely presented his application, admission to the novitiate, to temporary or perpetual profession, to the ministries and to sacred orders, is made by the provincial with the consent of his council after hearing the opinion of the rector of the community with his council.

R 81.93.94

The superiors base their judgement on positive indications of the candidate's suitability and keep in mind first of all the canonical requirements.¹

¹ cf. CIC, can. 642-645; 1019-1054.

IX. THE FORMATIVE PROCESS

*"He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."
(Phil. 1,6)*

Preparation for the novitiate

109. To anyone who is thinking of becoming a salesian, an environment and suitable conditions are offered to enable him to discern his own vocation and to mature as a man and a Christian. In this way, and with the help of a spiritual guide, he is able to make a choice with greater awareness of what he is doing, and without any external or internal pressures.

A period of special preparation is required immediately prior to the novitiate to deepen the candidate's vocational choice and verify his suitability for beginning the novitiate. This preparation is made through an experience of salesian community and apostolic life.

R 88

The novitiate

110. The novitiate offers the candidate the possibility of beginning the salesian religious experience.

For this reason the novitiate community must always provide an example of life founded on faith and nourished by prayer, in which evangelical simplicity, joy, friendship and

mutual respect create a climate of trust and docility.

With the help of the director the novice examines carefully the motives for his choice, makes certain of his suitability for the salesian calling, and prepares himself to give his all to God for the service of the young in the spirit of Don Bosco.

R 89.92

**Duration
of the novitiate**

111. In accordance with canon law,¹ the novitiate lasts twelve months; it begins when the candidate after being admitted by the provincial, enters the canonically erected novitiate house and places himself under the guidance of the director of novices.

The novitiate is invalidated by an absence of more than three months, continuous or broken. An absence of more than fifteen days must be made good.

R 93

¹ cf. CIC, can. 647,3; 648; 649,1.

**The director
of novices**

112. The director of novices is the spiritual guide who coordinates and animates all the work of formation of the novitiate.

He must be a man of prudence with spiritual and salesian experience and an up-to-date knowledge of practical psychology and youth problems. He should be able to relate easily to other people, to engage in dialogue, and to

inspire confidence in the novices by his kindness.

He must be perpetually professed and is appointed by the provincial with the consent of his council and the approval of the Rector Major. He remains in office for three years and may be reappointed.

**Period
of temporary
profession**

113. The first profession marks the beginning of a period of consecrated life. In this period the confrere with the help of the community and of a spiritual guide, completes his maturing process with perpetual profession in view, and develops the different aspects of his vocation as a lay salesian or as a candidate for the priesthood.

During the first three years of this period, profession may be either triennial or annual; in the next three years it will ordinarily be triennial.

R 95.96

**The immediate
postnovitiate**

114. The first profession is followed by a period of religious maturing which continues the formative experience of the novitiate and serves as a preparation for the practical training phase.

The deepening of the life of faith and of the spirit of Don Bosco, together with an adequate philosophical, pedagogical and catechetical preparation that interacts with the

prevailing culture, disposes the young confrere to a progressive integration of faith, culture and life.

**Practical
training**

115. Throughout the whole period of initial formation, importance is given not only to study but also to the pastoral activities of our mission.

The practical training period provides opportunity for a deeper living experience of salesian educative and pastoral action. During this time the young confrere gets practice in the preventive system, particularly in salesian assistance.

With the support of the rector and the community, he is able to integrate his activity and the fundamental values of his vocation.

R 86.96

**Specific
formation of the
salesian priest
and the
salesian brother**

116. After practical training the salesian goes on to complete his initial formation.

The specific formation of a candidate for the priestly ministry follows the norms and directives laid down by the Church and the Congregation, and has for its scope the preparation of a priest who will be genuinely a salesian pastor and educator.

The specific formation of the lay salesian offers him the opportunity to deepen his knowledge of the spiritual heritage of the Congregation. He receives an adequate

R 97.98 theological preparation appropriate to his consecrated lay status, and completes his formation with a view to his subsequent apostolic work of education.

**Perpetual
profession**

117. A member makes his perpetual profession when he has reached the level of salesian spiritual maturity commensurate with the importance of such a step.

The celebration of this act is preceded by an appropriate period of immediate preparation, and is marked by the fraternal recognition of the provincial community.

R 94 Perpetual profession takes place ordinarily six years after the first profession; if he considers it opportune the provincial can prolong this period, but not beyond nine years.

**Need
for ongoing
formation**

118. In the context of a society characterized by pluralism and rapid changes, the evolving nature of each individual and the quality and fruitfulness of our apostolic religious life call for a continuation of our formation after the initial phases. We try to grow in our human qualities, to conform ourselves more closely to Christ, and to renew our fidelity to Don Bosco, so that we can respond to the ever new demands arising from the situation of the young and the poor.

R 99-102

**Ongoing
formation
as a permanent
personal
frame of mind**

Through personal and community initiatives we nurture our salesian spiritual life, ensure our theological and pastoral updating, and develop our professional competence and our apostolic inventiveness.

119. Living in the midst of the young and in constant contact with working-class surroundings, the salesian tries to discern the voice of the Spirit in the events of each day, and so acquires the ability to learn from life's experiences. He sees his ordinary activities as effective means of formation, and he also makes use of any other means of formation that may be offered him.

Even when he is fully occupied he finds opportunities for renewing the religious and pastoral meaning of his life and of learning to carry out his work with greater competence.

R 10.19.99-102

He also feels it his task to make the best formative use of any situation, and to see it as a favourable opportunity for growing in his vocation.



Fourth Part

**The service of authority
in our Society**



X. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA

"Whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. For the son of man also came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mk 10, 43-45)

Basic structure of our Society

120. Our Society is made up of provincial communities, and these in turn are divided into local communities.

Government at the world level ensures unity of life and action in differing environments and situations.

Central, provincial and local government is exercised with ordinary authority by a superior assisted by his council.

Supreme authority over the whole Congregation belongs to the General Chapter. Provincial chapters are granted specific powers within the domain of the province.

Nature of the service of authority

121. In imitation of Christ and in his name, authority in the congregation is exercised according to the spirit of Don Bosco as a service to brothers for discerning and fulfilling the Father's will.

This service is directed to fostering charity, coordinating the efforts of all, animating,

orientating, making decisions, giving corrections, so that our mission may be accomplished.

According to our tradition, communities are guided by a member who is a priest and who by the grace of his priestly ministry and pastoral experience sustains and directs the spirit and activity of his brothers.

He is obliged to make the profession of faith prescribed by canon law.¹

¹ cf. CIC, can. 833,8°

**Unity in the
government
of the Society**

122. Superiors at every level of government share in one and the same authority, and exercise it in communion with the Rector Major for the benefit of the whole society. In this way, while fostering the good of each individual community, they are solicitous for the unity, growth and perfecting of the whole congregation.

**Participation
and shared
responsibility**

123. Our common vocation requires the responsible and effective participation of all the members in the life and action of the local, provincial and world communities, not only in terms of implementation but also of planning, organizing and evaluating, according to their respective roles and competence.

This shared responsibility requires also the participation of the confreres, in the most suitable way, in the choice of those responsible for government at the different levels, and in the working out of their more important decisions.

It is the duty of those who exercise authority to promote and guide this contribution by means of adequate information, personal dialogue and community study and reflection.

R 169

**Subsidiarity
and
decentralization**

124. Authority of any kind and at every level leaves to the initiative of lower levels and of individuals whatever can be decided and done by them, according to their respective competence. In this way the worth of individuals and communities is recognized, and more real involvement is encouraged.

The principle of subsidiarity implies decentralization which, while safeguarding unity, recognizes a proper autonomy and consequently a right distribution of powers between the different organs of government.

XI. SERVICE OF AUTHORITY IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY

"Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock." (1 Pt. 5, 2-3)

The Supreme Pontiff

125. The Salesian Society has as its highest superior the Supreme Pontiff. Even by reason of the vow of obedience, the members are filially submissive to his authority, and available for the good of the universal Church. They welcome his magisterium with docility and help the faithful, especially the young to accept his teachings.

The Rector Major

126. The Rector Major, the Superior of the Salesian Society, is the successor of Don Bosco, the father and the centre of unity of the Salesian Family.

His main concern is to promote in communion with the general council, the constant fidelity of the members to the salesian charism, so as to fulfil the mission confided by God to our Society.

R 103

127. The Rector Major has ordinary power of government which he exercises according to law over all the provinces, houses and members in both spiritual and temporal mat-

ters. He visits personally or through others all the provinces and local communities.

He convokes and presides over meetings of the general council. He is the official representative of the Society.

R 104.105

128. The Rector Major is elected by the General Chapter for a term of six years and may be re-elected only for a second successive six-year period. He may not resign his office without the consent of the Apostolic See.

129. To be elected as Rector Major, a member must be a priest, perpetually professed for at least ten years, and distinguished for love of the Church and the Congregation, for exemplary life, pastoral zeal, ability and prudence in governing.

**The general
council**

130. The general council cooperates with the Rector Major in animating and governing the Congregation.

It is the task of the council to identify and study the problems which concern the common welfare of the Society, to promote fraternal union among the different provinces, and to develop an ever more efficient organization for the fulfilment of the salesian mission in the world.

131. The members of the council collaborate with the Rector Major by expressing their opinion and by voting. In union with him they fulfil the responsibilities assigned to them by the general chapter and those which the Rector Major judges opportune to entrust to them. For this reason they have their domicile in the same house in which the Rector Major resides.

R 106

132. §1. The Rector Major must have the consent of his council for:

1. the erection or suppression of provinces, vice-provinces or other circumscriptions [C. 156];
2. the opening and closing of houses or the modification of the scope of works already in existence in accordance with canon law¹ [C. 165];¹
3. the erection of novitiates [C. 110];
4. the convoking of the general chapter in accordance with article 149 of the Constitutions;
5. the approval of deliberations of provincial chapters [C. 170];
6. the constitution of provincial conferences [C. 155];
7. the appointment of the substitute for a member of the general council, in case of death or impediment [C. 142];
8. the appointment of the secretary general [C. 144];

9. the appointment of the procurator and postulator general [C. 145];

10. the appointment of provincials, superiors of vice-provinces or other circumscriptions [C. 158, 162];

11. the termination of the office of provincials in conformity with article 163 of the Constitutions, and of superiors of vice-provinces and other circumscriptions [C. 158];

12. the alienation of movable and immovable goods belonging to the stable patrimony of the Congregation [C. 188];

13. the determination of the limits in terms of value within which the provincial and his council may act in respect of all the operations referred to in article 188 of the Constitutions [C. 189];

§2. The Rector Major must have the consent of those councillors present at the Generalate, who must be not less than three in number in the following cases:

1. dispensation from temporary religious profession;

2. the appointment of provincial councillors [C. 167];

3. the granting of authorization for financial operations referred to in article 188 of the Constitutions, except for what is provided for in art. 132, §1, 12.

§3. In the case of dismissal of members, the Rector Major and his council proceed in collegial fashion in accordance with canon law.

§4. In addition the Rector Major will consult his council in other important matters whenever he considers it opportune to do so.

¹ cf. CIC, can. 609-612.

133. The general council is made up of the vicar general, the councillors in charge of special departments, and the regional councillors in charge of groups of provinces.

The councillors in charge of special departments are: the councillor for formation, the councillor for the youth apostolate, the councillor for social communication, the councillor for the missions and the economer general.

R 107

**The vicar
of the
Rector Major**

134. The vicar general is the first collaborator of the Rector Major in the government of the Society and has ordinary vicarious power.

He takes the Rector Major's place whenever he is absent or impeded. To him is entrusted particularly the care of religious life and discipline.

**The councillor
for formation**

135. The councillor for formation has the duty of furthering the integral and ongoing formation of the members.

He follows with particular care the phases of the period of initial formation to ensure that in them the content, arrangement of studies, formation methods and structures provide the conditions necessary for growth in the salesian vocation.

**The councillor
for the youth
apostolate**

136. The councillor for the youth apostolate animates and gives direction to salesian educative and apostolic activity in its different expressions. He ensures that the priority of our commitment to youth and the influence of the preventive system are achieved in them. He assists the provinces in the development of their pastoral plans and undertakings, so that they may be faithful to the spirit of Don Bosco and respond adequately to the needs of the times and of different places.

**The councillor
for social
communication**

137. The councillor for social communication has the duty of animating the Congregation in this sector. He promotes salesian activity in the social communication sector, and in particular coordinates at the world level the structures and centres for which the Congregation has responsibility in this field.

**The councillor
for the
missions**

138. The councillor for the missions fosters the missionary spirit and commitment throughout the whole Society. He coordinates initiatives and directs activity in the missions so that it may respond in a salesian way to the urgent needs of the peoples to be evangelized.

It is also his duty to see that provision is made for the specific preparation and updating of the missionaries.

R 24

**The economer
general**

139. The economer general administers those goods which do not belong to any particular province or house but to the whole Society.

He coordinates and controls the administration of the provinces, so as to ensure that their management accords with the requirements of religious poverty and is at the service of the salesian mission.

He is watchful to make sure that the norms necessary for sound administration are observed.

R 192

**The regional
councillors**

140. The regional councillors promote a more direct liaison between the provinces and the Rector Major and his council. They look after the interests of the provinces assigned to them. They foster in the general

R 135 - 137 council a knowledge of the local situations in which our mission is carried out.

141. §1. The members of the general council are elected by the general chapter in separate ballots for each one. Each regional councillor is elected and chosen by preference from a list presented by the Chapter members of the respective group of provinces concerned.

R 126-128 §2. To be elected to the general council a member must have been perpetually professed for at least ten years. For the vicar general it is also necessary that he be a priest.

142. The Vicar General, the Departmental Councillors and the Regional Councillors remain in office for six years and may be re-elected only for a second successive six-year period in the office of Vicar General, Departmental Councillor or Regional Councillor respectively, except for the case referred to in art. 143 of the Constitutions.

Should a member of the General Council die or be permanently unable to attend to his duties, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council shall entrust his office to whomsoever he judges most suitable in the Lord, but only until the expiry of the six-year period.

143. On the death or cessation from office of the Rector Major, the Vicar General assumes *ad interim* the government of the Society and, in agreement with the other members of the general council, proceeds to the convocation of the general chapter for the election of the Rector Major and of the new council.

The election must take place not more than nine months from the death or cessation from office of the Rector Major.

R 111

**The secretary
general**

144. The secretary general is at the service of the Rector Major and his council in the role of a notary. He is present, without the right to vote at the meetings of the council, of which he draws up the minutes.

He is responsible for the offices of the general secretariat and for the central archives of the Society. He is appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his council, and remains in office *ad nutum*.

R 110

**The procurator
general**

145. The task of dealing with the Apostolic See is ordinarily entrusted to a procurator general who is appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his council and remains in office *ad nutum*.

Causes of beatification and canonization promoted by the Congregation are entrusted to the postulator general, chosen in the same way as the procurator.

**The general
chapter**

146. The general chapter is the principal sign of the Congregation's unity in diversity. It is the fraternal meeting in which salesians carry out a communal reflection to keep themselves faithful to the Gospel and to their founder's charism, and sensitive to the needs of time and place.

Through the general chapter the entire Society, opening itself to the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, seeks to discern God's will at a specific moment in history for the purpose of rendering the Church better service.¹

¹ cf. CIC, can. 631.

147. The general chapter has supreme authority over the Society and exercises it in accordance with law.

In particular it belongs to the general chapter to lay down laws for the whole Society, to treat of matters of greater importance and to elect the Rector Major and the members of the general council.

148. The deliberations of the general chapter must always be based upon the Constitutions approved by the Apostolic See and must contain nothing contrary to their spirit. They are binding on all the members as soon as they have been promulgated by the Rector Major.

Nevertheless, for the promulgation of deliberations which modify the Constitutions the previous approval of the Apostolic See must be obtained.

149. The general chapter will meet ordinarily every six years and in the case referred to in article 143 of the Constitutions; and extraordinarily whenever it is required by a grave reason recognized as such by the Rector Major with the consent of his council.

R 111-113.116.
117.120-123.
125.134

150. The general chapter is convoked by the Rector Major, or in the circumstances referred to in article 143 by the vicar general. It is presided over by the Rector Major or in his absence by the vicar general.

151. The following attend the general chapter with the right to vote:

1. the Rector Major;
2. the Rectors Major emeriti;
3. the members of the general council, those not confirmed in office as well as the new members from the time of their election;
4. the secretary general;
5. the procurator general;
6. the moderator of the general chapter;
7. the provincials and superiors of vice-provinces, or if they are seriously impeded their vicars, with the prior approval of the Rector Major;

8. the delegates of the juridical circumscriptions referred to in art. 156 of the Constitutions, all perpetually professed, elected in accordance with art. 171,5 of the Constitutions and the General Regulations.

R 114.115.118

152. For the validity of the acts of the general chapter at least two-thirds of the members must be present.

In dealing with matters indicated in article 148 of the Constitutions, whatever is approved by an absolute majority of those present shall have the force of law.

For modification to the text of the Constitutions a two-thirds majority of those present is required.

153. In the elections of the Rector Major and of the members of the general council whoever receives the vote of an absolute majority of those present will be considered elected.

If the first scrutiny should be ineffective, there shall be a second and a third. If the third also should be inconclusive there shall be a fourth in which the only candidates shall be the two members who have obtained the highest number of votes in the third scrutiny. If again there should be an equal number of votes, the senior by profession shall prevail

R 126-133 and in the case of equality of profession the senior in age.

**Regional
structure**

154. In order to facilitate contact with the Rector Major and the general council and to foster bonds of union among themselves, provinces are gathered in groups, each group being entrusted to a regional councillor.

R 135-138 The constitution of the groups of provinces is made by the general chapter.

155. When parallel situations or similarity of problems allow for a closer union between certain provinces, one or more provincial conferences may be set up within the group.

R 139-142 It belongs to the Rector Major with the consent of his council to constitute provincial conferences after consulting the provinces concerned.

XII. SERVICE OF AUTHORITY IN THE PROVINCIAL COMMUNITY

"Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood." (Acts 20,28)

Juridical circumscriptions

156. It belongs to the Rector Major with the consent of his council and after adequate consultation with the confreres concerned to divide the Society into juridical circumscriptions, erect new ones, combine those already constituted, define them in a different way or suppress them.

Normally the circumscriptions of our Society are provinces and vice-provinces.

As regards other eventual juridical circumscriptions, their internal structure and representation at the general chapter will be defined in the decree of erection, in line with salesian spirit and tradition.

The province

157. The province unites the different local communities in one large community. It is canonically erected when the necessary and sufficient conditions exist for promoting in a specific juridical circumscription the life and mission of the Congregation with the autonomy that belongs to it according to the Constitutions.

Through its structures the province strengthens the bonds of communion between the members and the local communities and offers a specific service to the particular Church.

**The
vice-province**

158. The vice-province is similar to the province. It is established when distance, number or other circumstances require that some houses be detached from one or more provinces, but the lack of personnel, of financial resources or some other reason does not warrant the establishment of a new province.

Its superior is appointed in the same way and with the same conditions as a provincial. He remains in office for six years and governs with ordinary vicarious power with the help of his council.

R 143-149

**Provincial
delegation**

159. If within the confines of a province, distance or other reasons prevent the provincial from taking proper care of some local communities which, although having a certain unity among them do not have the requisites necessary for erection as a vice-province, the provincial with the consent of his council and the approval of the Rector Major, can set up a delegation.

Its superior is appointed by the provincial with the consent of his council and the approval of the Rector Major after due consultation among the confreres of the delegation. He exercises those powers the provincial sees fit to delegate to him.

**Enrolment
of members in a
circumscription**

160. By first profession a member is enrolled in the juridical circumscription for whose service he asked to be admitted.

R 151-157

He can be enrolled in another juridical circumscription by permanent or temporary transfer on the part of the competent authorities.

The provincial

161. Each province is headed by a provincial. In union with the Rector Major and with love and pastoral zeal he carries out his service of building up a fraternal provincial community.

R 144-148.153.
160

With the help of his council he animates the religious life and apostolic action of the provincial community, cares for the formation of the members, especially the novices and young confreres, and directs and controls the administration of the goods of the province and of each house.

162. The provincial is appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his council

after wide consultation in the province concerned.

He must be a priest and perpetually professed for at least ten years.

He exercises ordinary power over all the houses and members of the province in both the internal and external forum, according to the norms of the Constitution and of canon law.

R 143.149.152.
153.160

He is the competent superior for granting permission to the confreres to publish writings of religious or moral content¹ and to preach to the confreres in their churches or oratories.²

¹ cf. CIC, can. 832.

² cf. CIC, can. 765.

163. The provincial remains in office for six years. During this period, the Rector Major with the consent of his council may transfer him elsewhere or appoint him to another office, if he judges such action necessary for the good of the Congregation. When he has completed his term of six years he will ordinarily not hold the office of provincial again for at least one year.

**The provincial
council**

164. The council assists the provincial in everything that concerns the animation and government of the province.

R 155.159.160

It is convoked and presided over by the provincial and is made up of the vice-provincial, economer and ordinarily three or five other councillors.

165. The provincial promotes the active and responsible collaboration of his councillors.

In matters of greater importance he should always listen to his council.

The provincial must have the consent of his council in the following cases:

1. admissions to the novitiate, to profession, to ministries and to sacred ordinations [C. 108];
2. appointment or transfer of a rector [C. 177];
3. appointment of the director of novices [C. 112];
4. setting up of provincial delegations and appointment of the delegates [C. 159];
5. seeking from the Rector Major and his council authorization to open and close houses, to modify the scope of existing works, and to undertake works out of the ordinary [C. 132];
6. convoking an extraordinary provincial chapter [C. 172];
7. financial operations referred to in article 188 of the Constitutions;

8. deciding which sectors of the educative and pastoral activity of the communities are to be represented in local councils [C. 180];
9. modifying the normal roles and structures within a community [C. 182];
10. authorizing confreres to live outside a house of the Congregation [CIC. can. 665, 1].
- R 156-158

166. For a member to be a provincial councillor he must be perpetually professed for at least five years and no longer in the period of initial formation.

For the vice-provincial it is also required that he be a priest.

167. Provincial councillors are appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his council on the proposal of the provincial, following a wide consultation among the confreres of the province.

- They remain in office for three years and may be reappointed, or even relieved from office during that period.
- R 154

168. The vice-provincial is the first collaborator of the provincial in everything that concerns the ordinary government of the province, as also in those matters specially entrusted to him.

He takes the place of the provincial whenever the latter is absent or impeded.

On the death of the provincial and until the Rector Major provides otherwise, the vice-provincial assumes and exercises the whole government of the province.

169. It is the duty of the provincial economist to administer the goods of the province, and to control and coordinate the economy of the individual houses, in agreement with the provincial and according to the established norms.

R 193-196

The provincial chapter

170. The provincial chapter is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems.

It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities.

It deliberates about matters which regard the province, with the exception of whatever is entrusted by the Constitutions and Regulations to other organs of government.

The deliberations of the provincial chapter have binding force after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council, with the exception of what is prescribed by article 171,5 of the Constitutions.

171. It is the task of the provincial chapter:

1. to decide on what pertains to the good running of the province;
2. to inquire into suitable means for promoting the religious and pastoral life of the provincial community;
3. to study how the deliberations of the general chapter may be put into practice;
4. to formulate and revise the provincial directory in matters left to be decided at the provincial level;
5. to elect one or two delegates to the general chapter and their substitutes in accordance with the Regulations.

R 167.190

172. The provincial chapter shall ordinarily be called together by the provincial every three years and each time the general chapter is convoked; extraordinarily, whenever the provincial with the consent of his council and after consulting the Rector Major shall judge it to be for the benefit of the province.

R 168

173. The following take part in the provincial chapter with the right to vote:

1. the provincial who presides;
2. the provincial councillors;
3. the superior of each provincial delegation;
4. the moderator of the provincial chapter;

5. the rector of each canonically erected house or if he is seriously impeded, the vice-rector with the previous approval of the provincial;

6. the director of novices;

7. the delegates of the local communities and of the provincial community, elected from those perpetually professed according to the norms of the Regulations.

R 161-165.168

174. All the perpetually and temporarily professed confreres take part in the election of the delegates of the local and provincial communities.

R 165

XIII. SERVICE OF AUTHORITY IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

"As each one has received a gift, employ it for one another as good stewards of God's varied grace; ... whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." (1 Pet 4, 10-11)

The local community

175. The local community is made up of confreres who reside in a lawfully erected house and in it live a common life in unity of spirit under the authority of the superior,¹ sharing responsibility as they carry out their apostolic mission.

¹ cf. CIC, can. 608.

The rector

176. The superior of each local community is called the rector.

He is first in order of responsibility for its religious life, its apostolic activities and the administration of its goods.

With the collaboration of his council he animates and governs the community according to the Constitutions and General Regulations.

R 29.172-179.199

177. The rector must be a priest, perpetually professed for at least five years; he is

appointed by the provincial with the consent of his council and the approval of the Rector Major, due regard being paid to the results of a consultation carried out among the members of the province.

The Rector is appointed for a period of three years and can be confirmed for a second term of three years in the same community.

During his period of service he may be appointed to some other office if the provincial, with the consent of his council, deems it necessary.

R 170.171

The local council

178. In every local community there shall be a council composed of confreres in perpetual vows and no longer in initial formation, in number proportional to the number of confreres and to the requirements of their activities.

The council is convoked and presided over by the rector, and has the task of collaborating with him in animating and governing the community.

R 180

179. The following are members of the council:

1. the vice-rector and the economer;
2. the confreres responsible for the principal sectors of the community's activity, as laid down in article 180;

- R 183 3. one or more members elected annually by the assembly of the confreres when the latter are numerous, in accordance with articles 180 and 186 of the Constitutions.

- R 183 **180.** It belongs to the provincial with the consent of his council, after hearing the opinion of the local community to decide which sectors of the community's activity shall be represented in the council. He will also decide whether any councillors are to be elected by the assembly of the confreres, and how many they will be.

181. The rector must have the consent of his council for:

1. the approval of the annual programme of the community's life and activities, to be submitted to the provincial for endorsement;
2. proposing to the provincial new experiments and substantial changes in the nature of the work;
3. the approval of the annual financial budget and balance sheet of the community and of the works for which we are responsible;
4. the financial operations envisaged by article 188 of the Constitutions;
5. deciding on the normal frequency of the council's meetings.

R 180 In other matters of importance the rector should always listen to his council.

182. Whenever circumstances suggest that some exception should be made, the provincial, with the consent of his council and after hearing the opinion of the local community concerned, can modify the ordinary roles and structures within the community, especially when it is small in number of confreres, provided always that the figure of the rector is safeguarded.

R 181

183. The vice-rector is the first collaborator of the rector. He takes his place in matters which have been especially entrusted to him and, if the rector is absent or impeded, in everything concerning the ordinary government. He must therefore be a priest.

On the death of the rector and until the provincial provides otherwise, the vice-rector takes up and exercises the government of the house.

R 182

184. The economer is the one immediately responsible for the administration of the temporal goods of the religious house, in dependence on the rector with his council. He carries out his service in a spirit of charity and poverty.

R 198-202

185. The role and duties of those responsible for the principal sectors of the community's activities will be laid down by the provincial chapter.

**Assembly
of the confreres**

186. The assembly of the confreres, which is a gathering of all the salesians of the local community, is convoked and presided over by the rector for consultation on the principal questions which concern the community's religious life and activities.

It is also its duty to elect the delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute, and also to elect those members, if any, to the local council in accordance with article 180 of the Constitutions.

R 173.184

XIV. ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPORAL GOODS

"Be content with what you have; for God has said, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you' ... Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." (Heb 13, 5.16)

187. The Salesian Society may acquire, possess, administer and alienate temporal goods. This is true for the Congregation as a whole, for individual provinces and for each house. Such goods should not be held in the name of an individual person and should be retained only to the extent that they are directly useful for our works.

Acquiring and holding real estate with the sole object of producing income and every other kind of permanent interest-bearing investment is forbidden except in the cases referred to in article 188 of the Constitutions.

R 187

188. The authorization of the Rector Major with the consent of his council is needed for:

1. acquiring, alienating, exchanging, mortgaging or renting real estate;
2. contracting loans with or without mortgage;
3. accepting inheritances, bequests or donations to which obligations are attached; (when

no obligation is attached it is sufficient merely to notify the Rector Major);

4. establishing annuities, student burses, Mass obligations, special or charitable foundations;

5. constructing new buildings, demolishing existing ones or making major alterations.

When such authorization is applied for either at the provincial or local level, adequate documentation must be submitted together with the opinion of the provincial and his council, and also that of the rector and his council when a local house is concerned.

189. With regard to all the operations referred to in article 188, it belongs to the Rector Major with the consent of his council, after hearing the opinion of the provincials with their respective councils and in the light of relevant decisions of the Apostolic See, to determine the financial limits within which each provincial with the consent of his council, is competent to grant authorizations by an analogous procedure.

In the case of operations which exceed the amount laid down by the Apostolic See, or of things donated to the Church as the result of a vow, or objects which are precious by reason of their artistic or historical value,¹

the permission of the Apostolic See itself is required.

¹ cf. CIC, can. 638,3.

190. All temporal goods are administered respectively by the economer general and by provincial and local economers, under the direction and control of the appropriate superiors and councils, in conformity with canonical dispositions, in accordance with the Constitutions and General Regulations, and in compliance with the laws of each country.

R 30.190.192.202

CONCLUSION

"I will run the way of your commands; you will give freedom to my heart." (Ps 119,32)

The particular law of our Society

191. The life and activity of communities and confreres are regulated by the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Society.

The latter is expressed in the Constitutions, which represent our basic code, the General Regulations, the deliberations of the general chapter, the general and provincial directories, and in other decisions made by competent authorities.

Meaning and interpretation of the Constitutions

192. The present Constitutions enshrine the spiritual riches of the traditions of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and define the apostolic project of our Society.

The Church, in approving them, assures us of the authenticity of the Gospel way of life traced out by our Founder, and recognizes in it "a special benefit for the whole People of God."¹

The Apostolic See alone is their authentic interpreter, but for the practical direction of the Society and the good of the confreres

the Rector Major with his council, as well as the general chapter, can give interpretations.

¹ RD 14; cf. PC 1.

**Binding
quality
of the
Constitutions**

193. The Constitutions are binding on every member in virtue of the obligations he has freely assumed before the Church by religious profession.

Without prejudice to what is laid down by universal law,¹ major superiors can dispense temporarily from individual disciplinary articles.

¹ cf. CIC, can. 85-87; 90; 92; 93; 1245.

**Separation from
the Society**

194. Should it happen that a member believes in conscience that he should withdraw from the Society, he shall do so before God after he has taken the advice of prudent persons, and with the support of the understanding and charity of his confreres.

He may not however leave the Society until his temporary profession has expired or he has not been admitted to further profession, or until he has been lawfully freed from the vows and obligations he assumed at the profession itself by passing to another institute, by dispensation or by dismissal in conformity with the universal law.¹

R 173.184

¹ cf. CIC, can. 685; 688; 689; 691-704.

**Fidelity
and
perseverance**

195. Fidelity to the commitment made at our religious profession is a response which we continually renew to the special Covenant that the Lord has made with us.

Our perseverance is founded entirely on the fidelity of God who loved us first, and is nourished by the grace of his consecration. It is sustained too by love for the young to whom we are sent, and is expressed in gratitude to the Lord for the gifts that salesian life offers us.

**A way
that leads
to love**

196. Our living Rule is Jesus Christ, the Saviour announced in the Gospel, who is alive today in the Church and in the world, and whom we find present in Don Bosco who devoted his life to the young.

In response to the predilection of the Lord Jesus who has called us by name, and led by Mary, we willingly accept the Constitutions as Don Bosco's will and testament, for us our book of life and for the poor and the little ones a pledge of hope.

We meditate on them with faith and pledge ourselves to put them into practice; they are for us, the Lord's disciples, a way that leads to Love.



WRITINGS OF DON BOSCO

The following pages contain some writings of our Father and Founder which the 20th, 21st and 22nd General Chapters considered to be of special significance for the faithful living out of our vocation.



I.

TO THE SALESIAN CONFRERES*

The constitutions of our Society were definitely approved by the Holy See on April 3rd 1874.

We should welcome this fact as among the most glorious in the annals of our Society, since through it we have the assurance that, in observing our rules, we rest upon a firm, secure and, I may add, infallible basis, since, the judgement of the supreme Head of the Church, sanctioning them, is infallible.

Yet no matter what its inherent value may be, this approbation would be of little avail, if the rules were not known, and faithfully observed; and it is precisely that they may be easily known, read, meditated upon, and then put into practice by everyone, that I think it well to present them to you translated from the original text. [...].

Moreover, I think it useful to bring to your notice some things of a practical nature which will make it easier to understand the spirit that inspires the rules, and will help you to observe them faithfully and with love. It is from my heart that I speak, whilst briefly placing before you what experience leads me to judge to be conducive to your spiritual good and to the benefit of the whole Congregation.

* Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales, Torino 1885, (Introduzione), pp. 3-46 passim.

The vows

The first time the supreme Pontiff, Pius IX, spoke of the Salesian Society, he said: "In a religious congregation or society vows are necessary, so that all its members may be united by a tie of conscience to their superior, and the superior holds himself united with the Head of the Church, and as a consequence with God himself."

Our vows therefore may be called so many spiritual cords by which we consecrate ourselves to God, and place our will, our goods, and our spiritual and moral faculties in the power of the superior, so that we may all form but one heart and one soul, in order to promote, according to our constitutions, the greater glory of God: precisely as the Church invites us when in prayer she says: *"That the faith in their minds and the piety of their actions may be one."*

The vows are a generous offering by which the merit of our works is greatly increased. St Anselm teaches that a good work without vow is like the fruit of a tree. He who does it by vow offers up to God the fruit and the plant itself. St Bonaventure likens the work done without vow to the offering up of the interest without the capital, but with a vow both interest and capital are offered to God. The holy Fathers of the Church unanimously teach that every act performed by vow has a twofold merit, that of the good work itself, and that of carrying out the vow which has been made.

Furthermore, the act of pronouncing the vows restores to us once again, according to the teaching of St Thomas, our baptismal innocence, that is to say, puts us in the state as though we had just received baptism. The Doctors of the Church compare the religious vows to martyrdom, saying that the merit of one who takes his vows is that of one who receives martyrdom, because what the vows fall short of in intensity, is made up for in duration.

If the religious vows so greatly increase the merit of our works and make them so acceptable to God, then we ought to strive with earnestness to fulfil them. He who feels that he is not able to keep them should not make them, or should defer his profession until he feels in his heart that he is firmly resolved to abide by it. Otherwise, he makes to God a faithless and foolish promise, which cannot but displease him: "... *for he will have no light and rash promises*,"¹ says the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore prepare ourselves well for this heroic consecration. Once we have made it, let us be prepared to keep it even at the cost of long and burdensome sacrifice: "... *pay your vows to the Most High*,"² this is what he himself commands.

Obedience

"In true obedience," says St Jerome, "*lies the perfection of every virtue*." "All religious perfection," says St Bonaventure, "*consists in suppressing one's own will, in other words, in the practice of obedience*." "... *The speech of the obedient will always be heard*,"³ says the Holy Spirit. St Gregory concludes that "*obedience leads to the possession of all other virtues and likewise preserves them all*."⁴

This obedience moreover ought to be after the example of our divine Saviour, who practised it even in things most difficult, even to the death on the cross⁵, and should the glory of God demand as much from us, we ought also to be obedient to the sacrifice of our own lives.

¹ Qo 5,3.

² Ps 49,14.

³ Prov 21,28. (JB.)

⁴ Moral. 1,35.

⁵ Phil 2,8.

The express orders therefore of the superior, and the rules of the congregation and also the customs of each house, ought to be carefully observed; and should anyone at times be guilty of failing in them, let him readily ask pardon of the one whom he has disobeyed. This act of humility helps immensely towards obtaining forgiveness for the fault committed, and obtains grace from God for the future, and also keeps us on our guard against falling into the same fault again.

The apostle St Paul, in recommending the practice of this virtue says: "*Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.*"⁶

It should be noted that doing only those things which are pleasing to us, and which turn to our own gratification, is not true obedience, but is merely following our own will. True obedience, which makes us dear to God and to our superiors, consists in doing cheerfully whatever is commanded by the constitutions or by our superiors themselves; for as St Paul affirms: "*God loves a cheerful giver.*"⁷ It consists too in showing ourselves docile, even in things which are most difficult and contrary to self-love, and performing them courageously even at the cost of pain and sacrifice. In these cases obedience is more difficult, but it is also more meritorious, and leads us to possession of the kingdom of heaven, according to the words of our divine Redeemer: "*... the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.*"⁸

If you practise obedience in this way, I guarantee, in the name of God, that you will lead a peaceful and happy life in our Society. But this also I must tell you, from the day you choose

⁶ Heb 13,17.

⁷ 2 Cor 9,7.

⁸ Mt 11,12.

to do your own will and not act obediently, you will begin to feel disconnected with your life; and if in religious orders some are found to be discontented or to whom community life is a burden, it will be seen on close observation that this springs from the want of obedience and of submission of their own wills. If you become discontented reflect on this and know how to remedy it.

Poverty

If we do not leave the world for the sake of God, one day we shall have to leave it of necessity. Those, on the other hand, who leave it spontaneously, will receive a hundredfold of grace in the present life and an eternal reward in the life to come. He who cannot make this sacrifice voluntarily, will have to make it at the point of death, yet without recompense for it, and with the obligation of rendering to God strict account of all the things he has possessed.

It is true that our constitutions admit the possession and use of all civil rights; but after entering the Society one cannot any longer administer and dispose of things that are his own without the consent of the superior, and then only within the limits prescribed by him, so that in the Society one is considered as literally possessing nothing, having made oneself poor to become rich with Jesus Christ. He is following the example of our Saviour, who was born in poverty, lived deprived of all things, and died stripped of his clothes on the cross.

Let us then listen to what our divine Master says: "*So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*"⁹

⁹ Lk 14,33.

To another who desired to be numbered among his followers, he said: *"Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."*¹⁰

To his disciple he used to say that they should not have more than one garment, nor give thought to what they might need in their preaching. In fact, we do not read that Jesus Christ himself, or his apostles, or any of his disciples possessed land, houses, furniture, clothes, meat or drink, or the like. And St Paul says clearly that the followers of Christ, wherever they go and whatever they do, ought to be content with the food which is strictly necessary for life and with clothing to cover them: *"But if we have food and clothing with these we shall be content."*¹¹

All that is beyond food and clothing is superfluous for us, and contrary to a religious vocation. It is true that at times we shall have to suffer some inconvenience on our journeys, in our work, in time of health and of sickness; we shall sometimes have food, clothing and other things not to our liking, but it is precisely then that we ought to bear in mind that we have made profession of poverty, and that if we wish to have its merit and reward, we ought to bear with its consequences. Let us be on our guard against the sort of poverty censured by St Bernard, who says: *"There are some who glory in being called poor, but who will not bear the consequences of poverty; there are those too, who are content to be poor, provided they want for nothing."*

Should our state of poverty however cause us any inconvenience or suffering, let us rejoice with St Paul, who declares that he is overjoyed with all his affliction.¹² Or again let us do as did the apostles, who were filled with happiness when they returned from the Sanhedrin, because they had been counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.¹³ It is precisely to this sort

¹⁰ Mt 19,21.

¹¹ 1 Tim 6,8.

¹² 2 Cor 7,4.

¹³ Acts 5,41.

of poverty that heaven is not only promised but assured by our divine Redeemer when he said: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"¹⁴ Moreover to live in such a state, to dwell willingly in a room that is uncomfortable, or poorly furnished, to wear plain apparel, to eat coarse and common food, greatly honours him who has made the vow of poverty, because it makes him like Jesus Christ.

It is also part of poverty not to damage anything, to take care of books, clothes, shoes etc., and also not be ashamed of using things or of wearing garments that are old, or mended, or getting somewhat threadbare.

Chastity

The virtue that is supremely necessary, the great virtue, the angelic virtue, the one to crown all others, is chastity. He who has this virtue, can apply to himself the words of the Holy Spirit: "*All good things came to me along with her.*"¹⁵ Our Saviour assures us that those who gain this priceless treasure become, even in this life like the angels of God.¹⁶

But this spotless lily, this precious rose, this pearl beyond price is everywhere beset by the enemy of souls, because he well knows that, if he succeeds in snatching it from us, the whole affair of our sanctification may be said to be ruined. Light is changed into darkness, flame into black coal, and the angel of heaven into Satan, so that every virtue is lost. Here, my dear sons, I believe it will be spiritually useful, if I single out things, which if put into practice, will be to your great advantage; indeed I feel

¹⁴ Mt 5,3.

¹⁵ Wis 7,11.

¹⁶ Mt 22,30.

that I can assure you they will preserve this virtue for you, and all others as well. Bear well in mind then what follows.

1. Do not enter into the Society before you have consulted some prudent person, who will judge if you are likely to be able to keep this virtue.

2. Avoid familiarity with persons of the other sex, and never indulge in a special friendship with any of the boys divine providence entrusts to our care. Charity and good manners to all but sentimental attachment to none. On this point St Jerome says: *"Either love none, or love all equally well."*

3. After night prayers go straight to rest, and hold no further conversation with anyone until after holy Mass the next day.

4. Keep the senses under control. The Holy Spirit clearly says that a perishable body weighs down the soul.¹⁷ St Paul therefore, although worn out by his labours, subdued his body by severe self-discipline, and wrote: *"I pommel my body and subdue it."*¹⁸

I recommend to you special moderation in eating and drinking; wine and chastity cannot go together.

5. The haunts, the persons and things of the world present grave dangers for chastity. Keep away from them with all care, and not only in body but also in mind and heart. I do not remember to have read, or to have heard it said that a religious had visited his native place and brought back any spiritual advantage. Thousands and thousands on the contrary there are who, showing themselves unconvinced of this, have tried the experiment, but were bitterly deceived; while not a few found themselves the unhappy victims of their own imprudence and temerity.

6. The exact observance of our holy rules, and especially of the vows and the practices of piety, triumphs over every vice, and is

¹⁷ Wis 9,15.

¹⁸ 1 Cor 9,27.

the faithful guardian of chastity. The Christian religion may justly be compared to a strong and fortified city. Isaiah says: "*We have a strong city: he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks.*"¹⁹ The vows and rules of a religious community may well be regarded as so many lesser strong points in advance. The walls and the ramparts of religion are the commandments of God and of his Church. To cause their violation the Devil makes use of every stratagem and deception. But in order to induce religious to transgress, he contrives in the first place to level to the ground the outposts and forts in advance, the rules and constitutions of their order. When the great enemy of souls seduces a religious, and makes him violate the divine commandments, he first causes him to be careless in things of less importance, and then in those of greater moment; afterwards he leads him readily enough to break the law of God, so proving the truth the Holy Spirit proclaims: "*He who despises small things will fail little by little.*"²⁰

Let us then, dear sons, be faithful to the exact observance of our rules, if we are to be faithful to the divine precepts, especially to the sixth and ninth. Let us also with constancy and diligence be solicitous for the exact observance of the practices of piety, which are the foundation and support of all religious orders, and then we shall live chaste, almost angelic lives.

Brotherly Charity

We cannot love God without also loving our fellow man. The same precept which commands us to love God commands us also to love our neighbour. In the first epistle of St John the evangelist we read in fact these words: "... *And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.*"

¹⁹ Is 26,1.

²⁰ Sir 19,1.

In the same verses the apostle warns us that "*if one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar.*"²¹

When this brotherly love reigns in a community towards one another and all rejoice in another's good just as though it were their own, then that house becomes heaven itself, and justifies the words of the Prophet David: "*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live in unity.*"²² But as soon as self-love gains dominion there, and disagreements and dislikes arise among the members, then that house quickly resembles hell. Our Lord takes great pleasure in seeing brethren dwelling in his house *in unum*, that is, united in heart and mind, serving God and helping one another in charity. This is the praise given to the early Christians by St Luke, that they so loved one another that it seemed that they had but one heart and soul.²³

A great deal of harm is done in religious communities by fault-finding which is directly opposed to charity. "*A whisperer defiles his own soul and is hated in his neighbourhood.*"²⁴ On the contrary, what edification that religious gives, who always speaks well of his fellow religious, and when occasion arises seeks to excuse his failings. Be careful therefore to avoid all that savours of fault-finding, especially against your companions, and still more against your superiors. It is also a form of fault-finding and rather worse, to put a bad interpretation on virtuous actions or to say they were done with a bad intention.

Be on your guard against telling a companion the evil another may have said of him, for such trouble and rancour arise that may last for months and even for years. What an account these tale-bearers in communities will have to render to God. "*A man who*

²¹ 1 Jn 4,20,21.

²² Ps 132,1.

²³ Acts 4,32.

²⁴ Sir 21,28.

sows discord among brothers ... is an abomination to him."²⁵ If you hear anything against another do what the Holy Spirit enjoins: "*Have you heard a word? Let it die with you.*"²⁶

Be careful not to vex anyone of your brethren even though it be in jest; jokes which cause displeasure to our brother and give him offence are contrary to charity. Would you like to be derided and laughed at by others as you hold up your brother to be?

Be on your guard too against disputes. About trifles which are mere nothings, disagreements will sometimes arise, from which it is easy to pass to insults and wrangling which destroy unity and offend deplorably against charity.

If you love charity, strive to be affable and gentle in manner to everyone. Meekness is a virtue well loved by Jesus Christ: "*Learn from me,*" he said, "*for I am gentle and lowly in heart.*"²⁷ Whatever you do or say, show well-mannered kindness, not only towards superiors but towards all, especially towards those who have offended you in the past, or who look upon you now with an unkindly eye. "*Love bears all things.*"²⁸ So that he who will not bear another's defects will never have true charity. There is no man on earth who has not his faults however good he may be. If therefore he wishes others to bear his defects he should begin by bearing those of others, and thus as St Paul enjoins, fulfil the law of Christ. "*Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.*"²⁹

We now come to the practice: in the very first place, control of one's temper, so easily lost when there is disagreement; then be careful not to use words which displease; and still more

²⁵ Prov 6,16,19.

²⁶ Sir 19,10.

²⁷ Mt 11,29.

²⁸ 1 Cor 13,7.

²⁹ Gal 6,2.

guard against crude and harsh ways of dealing with people, for a rude manner can often be more offensive than insulting words.

Whenever a brother who has offended you comes to ask your pardon receive him well, do not treat him curtly and give a harsh reply; quite otherwise, show true kindness, affection and goodwill.

If it should happen that it is you who offended another, put things right at once and try to remove from the heart of the other all feeling against you, mindful of the teaching of St Paul: "*Do not let the sun go down on your anger*,"³⁰ and do this as soon as you can, overcoming the repugnance that you have in your heart.

Do not be satisfied with just loving your companions with words only, but go out to help them. St John, the apostle of charity, advises: "*Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth*."³¹

Charity also requires the compliance with the reasonable requests of others. But the best of all acts of charity is to have zeal for our brother's spiritual good. Whenever an occasion arises for doing good, never say: 'This is not my business, I shall not meddle with it.' This is the answer made by Cain, who dared to give answer to God: "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"³² Everyone is bound when he can do so to save his brother from ruin. God himself commands that we take due care of our fellowman.³³ Endeavour therefore to help all, both by word and deed and especially by prayer.

It is a great stimulus to charity to see Jesus Christ in the person of our neighbour, and to recall that the good we do to him is regarded by our Lord as done to himself: "*Truly I say to you, as you*

³⁰ Eph 4,26.

³¹ 1 Jn 3,18.

³² Gen 4,9.

³³ Sir 17,14.

did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.”³⁴

From what has been said you see how necessary, and how desirable is this virtue of charity. Practise it and you will receive blessings in abundance from heaven.

Practices of piety

Just as food nourishes and preserves the body, so do the practices of piety nourish the soul and make it strong in time of temptation; as long as we observe our practices of piety, we shall live in harmony with everyone and we shall see the salesian cheerful in spirit and happy in his vocation. If on the other hand he neglects them, he will begin to have doubts about his vocation and will undergo strong temptations. Church history shows us that religious orders and congregations have all flourished and promoted the good of religion, as long as piety was maintained in vigour among them; on the other hand, we have seen not a few fall into decay, and others cease to exist – and when? Only when the spirit of piety grew lax and their members began to seek the things that were their own, and not the things which are of Jesus Christ,³⁵ as St Paul lamented concerning certain Christians.

If therefore, my sons, we value highly the glory of our Society, if we want it to spread and keep its prosperity for the good of our own and for our neighbours' souls, let us be really solicitous never to omit our meditation or spiritual reading, our daily visit to the most holy Sacrament, our weekly confession, our frequent and devout holy communion, the rosary of Our Lady, the little mortification of Friday and similar things. Although each one of these practices, taken by itself, does not seem to be a thing of

³⁴ Mt 25,40.

³⁵ Phil 2,21.

any great necessity, nevertheless it contributes efficaciously to the building up of our Christian perfection and salvation. "If," says St Augustine, "*you would increase and grow great in the sight of God, begin with things that are the least.*"

The fundamental practice of piety which in some way embraces them all, consists in making the spiritual retreat each year, and the *Exercise for a Happy Death*, every month.

He who cannot make this latter exercise in common, should with the permission of his superior make it by himself, and he whose occupations will not allow him to employ a whole day upon it, should employ at least a part, putting off such work as is not strictly necessary to another day. But let all, more or less, follow these rules:

1. Besides the usual morning meditation, let there be made as well a half-hour's meditation, or conference be given in the evening, and this should deal with one of the four last things.
2. The Confession which all should make on that day should be more than ordinarily exact, having in mind that it may indeed be the last, and holy communion should be received as though it were Viaticum.
3. Let each one reflect for at least half an hour on the progress or otherwise in virtue achieved during the month, and this especially with regard to the observance of rule; and let firm resolutions be made.
4. Let all the rules of the Society, or at least part of them, be read through on the day.
5. It would be well to choose on that day some saint as a protector for the coming month.

It is my belief that the salvation of a religious may justly be said to be assured, if he approaches the sacraments every month and puts his conscience in order as if he were really about to leave this life for eternity.

If therefore we hold the honour of our Society dear, if we really desire the salvation of our soul, let us be observant of our rule and let us also be exact in the most ordinary things, for he who fears God neglects nothing which contributes to his greater glory.³⁶

The “Rendiconto” and its importance

Confidence in superiors is one of the things which contribute in a special way to the well-being of a religious society, and to the peace and happiness of each member.

By this confidence the members open their hearts to their superior to find relief for the troubles they may have, anxieties connected with their duties cease, and the superiors are able to make provision to avoid unpleasantness and discontent. They get to know the moral and physical strength of the confreres and in consequence can give them those tasks for which they seem best suited. Should any disorder creep in, it is at once discovered and a remedy applied. For this reason it has been laid down that each one should meet with his superior at least once a month. In this connection our Constitutions say that each member should make known with simplicity and readiness his external faults against the rule, progress made in virtue, difficulties met with, and whatever else he feels the need to reveal to receive counsel and comfort.

The chief points with which such a *rendiconto* ought to deal are:

1. health;
2. study or occupation;
3. whether he is able to fulfil his obligations and what diligence he shows;
4. whether he has sufficient time to perform his religious duties and what diligence he shows in fulfilling them;

³⁶ Qo 7,19.

5. how he manages at prayer and meditation;
6. with what frequency, devotion and fruit he approaches the sacraments;
7. how he observes his vows, and whether he has any doubts about his vocation. But, it should be noted well, that the *rendiconto* concerns external matters only and not matters for confession;
8. whether he has any vexations or troubles, or feels any coolness towards anyone;
9. whether he knows of any disorder to which a remedy can be applied, and especially if it is a case of preventing some offence against God.

Here now, are some words of St Francis de Sales on this subject:

"Every month let each one, in a brief and concise manner, open his heart to his superior, and in all simplicity and faithful confidence lay before him all his secrets, with the same simplicity and candour that a child has, when it shows its mother the scratches, bruises, wasp stings it may have received. In this way each one shall give an account, not so much of his acquisitions and progress, as of his losses and failings in the exercise of prayer, virtue and the spiritual life, indicating also his temptations and interior troubles not only for his consolation, but for his humiliation too. Happy are those who sincerely and devoutly practise this rule, which contains a portion of that holy infancy, which is so much recommended by our Lord from which proceeds and by which is preserved all true tranquillity of mind."

Rectors are earnestly recommended never to omit receiving the *rendiconto* of the members, and let all be persuaded that if they make it well, with perfect openness and humility, they will find in it great relief of soul, and a powerful aid to progress in virtue, and the whole Congregation will greatly profit by it.

One point in which I recommend the greatest clearness is that of vocation. Let no mystery be made about this with superiors.

This is the most important point of all, because on it depends the thread of the life we have to lead. Unhappy he who hides doubts he has about his vocation and determines to leave without seeking good advice and without the opinion of his spiritual director. Such a one might endanger his eternal salvation.

The first reason why it is important and necessary to deal with superiors in all sincerity is because it enables them the better to govern and direct the members. The superior is obliged both to rule and direct; this is his office. To be a Rector and superior is precisely this. But if he does not know them because they are not open with him, he cannot possibly direct and help them with counsel and suggestions.

The second reason which makes what has gone before the more obvious, is that the greater the knowledge the superiors have of the confreres, the greater will be their care and concern to guard and guide them in times of danger and in difficulties of all kinds arising from time and place.

There is a third reason why sincerity and confidence with superiors is important: they are thus the better enabled to arrange for and provide what is best for the whole Congregation of whose wellbeing and honour, together with the honour of each member, by their office they have the duty to take care. When anyone therefore deals frankly with them and gives a full account of himself, the superior while safeguarding the member's honour and never compromising him, can then have regard for the general good of the whole Congregation. But if the member does not so open his heart, he could perhaps expose to danger both his own honour and his own soul, and also the honour of the community itself which depends in some measure on his own.

Very great indeed is the happiness and the satisfaction of a religious who is as an open book to his superior to whom all that disturbs him is well known; if he is charged with office, then he can put his whole trust in God who will come to his

aid and keep him free from trouble. "Lord," he will be able to say, "I did not put myself here; I made known my lack of qualities, my too small spiritual worth: you, Lord, it is who have sent me; you have commanded it. Do you therefore supply for my own shortcomings." With this trust he can say with St Augustine: "Lord, give me what you command and command what you will." God is placed, as it were, under an obligation of giving what he asks. But he who is not open, who does not reveal his weaknesses, what consolation can he expect? It is neither God nor obedience that sends him, but his own will to put himself forward; he is an intruder, neither called nor bidden and he will not succeed.

Five faults to be avoided

Experience shows us five faults, which like woodworm destroy religious observance and ruin religious Congregations. They are: an itching for reform; personal selfishness; complaining; neglect of duty; forgetfulness that we work for God.

1. Let us fight shy of all itching for reform. Let us instead apply ourselves to the observance of the rule without being pre-occupied with its improvement or reform. "If the Salesians," said our great benefactor Pius IX, "without pretending to make their constitutions better, take care to observe them exactly, their Congregation will flourish ever more and more."

2. We renounce our own self-interest. Therefore, let us not seek our own personal good, but rather let us work with zeal for the common good of the Congregation. We have to love one another, help one another by counsel and prayer; we have to advance the honour of our confreres not as if it concerned just one alone, but as a noble and essential heritage in which we all share.

3. Let us not complain about superiors nor disapprove of the arrangements they make. Whenever we become aware of some-

thing materially or morally wrong, with humility let us point it out to the superiors. They have the duty before God to watch over both persons and things, so that they, and they alone, have to give an account of their government and administration.

4. Let no one neglect his own duty. The Salesians considered together form one single body – the Congregation. If all members do what is expected of them, then things will proceed with order, and give satisfaction; otherwise there will be disorder, disunion, rupture and the final undoing of the body itself. Let everyone do his duty well, with zeal and humility, with confidence in God; let him not yield in defeat if he is called to some sacrifice which costs much. Let him take heart that his endurance and fatigue benefits the Congregation to which we are all consecrated.

5. In all we do, our duty, work, troubles or sufferings, we must never forget that we are consecrated to God; it is for love of him alone we work and from him alone we hope for the reward. The least thing done for his name's sake is not left forgotten; it is of faith that in his own good time he will give us rich recompense. At the end of our lives as we stand before his judgement seat, he will say, radiant with love: *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master."*³⁷

³⁷ Mt 25,21.

II.

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM IN THE EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG*

On several occasions I have been asked to express verbally or in writing some thoughts about the so-called *preventive system*, which is in general use in our houses. Through lack of time I have so far been unable to meet these wishes; but as I now intend to print the rules of the houses, which until now have nearly always been used traditionally, I think it opportune to give a brief sketch, which may perhaps serve as an outline to a small book which I am preparing and hope to finish, if God gives me life enough, my sole purpose being to help in the difficult art of the education of the young. Wherefore I shall explain: in what the *preventive system* consists; why it ought to be preferred; and its practical application and its advantages.

1. In what the preventive system consists and why it should be preferred

There are two systems which have been in use through all ages in the education of youth: the *preventive* and the *repressive*. The *repressive system* consists in making the law known to the subjects, and afterwards watching to discover the transgressors of these laws, and inflicting, when necessary, the punishment deserved. According to this system, the words and looks of the superior must always be severe and even threatening, and he must avoid all familiarity with his dependents.

* Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales, Torino, Tipografia Salesiana, 1877 p. 3-13; [OE XXIX, 99-109].

In order to give weight to his authority the Rector must rarely be found among his subjects, and as a rule only when it is a question of punishing or threatening. This system is easy, less troublesome, and especially suitable in the army and in general among adults and the judicious, who ought of themselves to know and remember what the law and its regulations demand.

Quite different from this and I might even say opposed to it, is the *preventive system*. It consists in making the laws and regulations of an institute known, and then watching carefully so that the pupils may at all times be under the vigilant eye of the Rector or the assistants, who like loving fathers can converse with them, take the lead in every movement and in a kindly way give advice and correction; in other words, this system places the pupils in the impossibility of committing faults.

This system is based entirely on reason and religion, and above all on kindness; therefore it excludes all violent punishment, and tries to do without even, the slightest chastisement. This system seems preferable for the following reasons:

1. Being forewarned the pupil does not lose courage on account of the faults he has committed, as is the case when they are brought to the notice of the superior. Nor does he resent the correction he receives or the punishment threatened or inflicted, because it is always accompanied by a friendly preventive warning, which appeals to his reason, and generally enlists his accord, so that he sees the necessity of the chastisement and almost desires it.
2. The primary reason for this system is the thoughtlessness of the young, who in one moment forget the rules of discipline and the penalties for their infringement. Consequently, a child often becomes culpable and deserving of punishment, which he has not even thought about, and which he had quite forgotten when

heedlessly committing the fault he would certainly have avoided, had a friendly voice warned him.

3. The *repressive system* may stop a disorder, but can hardly make the offenders better. Experience teaches that the young do not easily forget the punishments they have received, and for the most part foster bitter feelings, along with the desire to throw off the yoke and even to seek revenge. They may sometimes appear to be quite unaffected but anyone who follows them as they grow up knows that the reminiscences of youth are terrible; they easily forget punishments by their parents but only with great difficulty those inflicted by their teachers, and some have even been known in later years to have had recourse to brutal vengeance for chastisements they had justly deserved during the course of their education. In the *preventive system*, on the contrary, the pupil becomes a friend, and the assistant, a benefactor who advises him, has his good at heart, and wishes to spare him vexation, punishment, and perhaps dishonour.

4. By the *preventive system* pupils acquire a better understanding, so that an educator can always speak to them in the language of the heart, not only during the time of their education but even afterwards. Having once succeeded in gaining the confidence of his pupils he can subsequently exercise a great influence over them, and counsel them, advise and even correct them, whatever position they may occupy in the world later on.

2. Application of the preventive system

The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St Paul who says: *Caritas patiens est, benigna est. Omnia suffert, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet.*¹ "Love is patient and kind. ... Love bears

¹ 1 Cor 13,4,7.

all things... hopes all things, endures all things." Hence only a Christian can apply the *preventive system* with success. Reason and religion are the means an educator must constantly apply; he must teach them and himself practise them, if he wishes to be obeyed and to attain his end.

1. It follows that the Rector must devote himself entirely to the boys; he should therefore never accept engagements which might keep him from his duties, and he should always be with his pupils whenever they are not engaged in some occupation, unless they are already being properly supervised by others.

2. Teachers, craftmasters and assistants must be of acknowledged morality. They should strive to avoid as they would the plague every kind of affection or sentimental friendship for their pupils, and they should also remember that the wrongdoing of one alone is sufficient to compromise an educational institute. Care should be taken that the pupils are never alone. As far as possible the assistants ought to precede the boys to the place where they assemble; they should remain with them until others come to take their place, and never leave the pupils unoccupied.

3. Let the boys have full liberty to jump, run and make as much noise as they please. Gymnastics, music, theatricals and outings are most efficacious means of obtaining discipline and of benefiting spiritual and bodily health. Let care be taken however that the games, the persons playing them as well as the conversation are not reprehensible. "*Do anything you like,*" the great friend of youth, St Philip, used to say, "*as long as you do not sin.*"

4. Frequent confession and communion and daily Mass are the pillars which must support the edifice of education, from which we propose to banish the use of threats and the cane. Never force the boys to frequent the sacraments, but encourage them to do so, and give them every opportunity. On occasions of retreats, triduums, novenas, sermons and catechism classes let the beauty, grandeur and holiness of the Catholic religion be

dwelt on, for in the sacraments it offers to all of us a very easy and useful means to attain our salvation and peace of heart. In this way children take readily to these practices of piety and will adopt them willingly with joy and benefit.

5. Let the greatest vigilance be exercised so as to prevent bad books, bad companions or persons who indulge in improper conversations from entering the college. A good door-keeper is a treasure for a house of education.

6. Every evening after night prayers before the boys go to rest, the Rector or someone in his stead shall address them briefly, giving them advice or counsel concerning what is to be done or what is to be avoided. Let him try to draw some moral reflection from events that have happened during the day in the house or outside; but his words should never take more than two or three minutes. This is the key to good behaviour, to the smooth running of the school and to success in education.

7. Avoid as a plague the opinion that the first communion should be deferred to a late age, when generally the Devil has already gained possession of a boy's heart, with incalculable prejudice to his innocence. According to the discipline of the early Church, it was the custom to give little children the consecrated hosts that remained over after the Easter communion. This serves to show us how much the Church desires children to be admitted to holy communion at an early age. When a child can distinguish between *Bread* and bread, and shows sufficient knowledge, give no further thought to his age, but let the heavenly King come and reign in that happy soul.

8. Catechisms invariably recommend frequent communion. St Philip Neri counselled weekly and even more frequent communion. The Council of Trent clearly states that it greatly desires that every faithful Christian should receive holy communion whenever he hears Mass, and that this communion should not only be spiritual but also sacramental, so that greater

fruit may be reaped from this august and divine sacrifice (*Conc. Trid.*, Sess. XXII, Chap. VI).

3. Advantages of the preventive system

Some may say that this system is difficult in practice. I reply that for the pupils it is easier, more satisfactory and more advantageous. To the teacher it certainly does present some difficulties, which however can be diminished if he applies himself to his task with zeal. An educator is one who is consecrated to the welfare of his pupils, and therefore he should be ready to face every difficulty and fatigue in order to attain his object, which is the civic, moral and intellectual education of his pupils.

In addition to the advantages already mentioned, the following may be added:

1. The pupil will always be respectful towards his educators, and will ever remember their care with pleasure. He will look upon them as fathers and brothers. Wherever they may go, Salesian pupils are generally the consolation of their families, useful citizens and good Christians.

2. Whatever may be the character, disposition and moral state of a boy at the time of his admittance, parents can rest assured that their son will not become worse; indeed, it can be held as certain that he will always make some improvement. In fact, certain boys who for a long time had been the scourge of their parents, and had even been refused admittance to houses of correction, have changed their ways and habits when trained according to these principles, and begun to live upright lives, and are now filling honourable positions in society, and are the support of their families and a credit to the country they live in.

3. If it should happen that any boys who have already contracted bad habits enter the institute, they could not have a bad influence on their companions, nor would the good boys suffer any harm

from association with them, since there is neither time, place nor opportunity, because the assistant, whom we suppose to be present, would speedily intervene.

A word on punishments

What rules should be followed in inflicting punishments? First of all never have recourse to punishments if possible, but whenever necessity demands stern measures, let the following be borne in mind:

1. An educator should seek to win the love of his pupils if he wishes to inspire fear in them. When he succeeds in doing this, the withholding of some token of kindness is a punishment which stimulates emulation, gives courage and never degrades.
2. With the young, punishment is whatever is meant as a punishment. It has been noticed that in the case of some boys a reproachful look is more effective than a slap in the face would be. Praise of work well done and blame in the case of carelessness are already a reward or punishment.
3. Except in very rare cases, corrections and punishments should never be given publicly, but always privately and in the absence of companions; and the greatest prudence and patience should be used to bring the pupil to see his fault, with the aid of reason and religion.
4. To strike a boy in any way, to make him kneel in a painful position, to pull his ears, and other similar punishments, must be absolutely avoided, because the law forbids them, and because they greatly irritate the boys and degrade the educator.
5. The Rector shall make sure that the disciplinary measures, including rules and punishments, are known to the pupils, so that no one can make the excuse that he did not know what was commanded or forbidden.

If this system is carried out in our houses, I believe that we shall be able to obtain good results, without having recourse to the use of the cane and other corporal punishments. Though I have been dealing with boys for forty years, I do not recall having used punishments of any kind; and yet by the help of God I have always obtained not only what duty required, but also what was simply a wish on my part, and that from the very boys in regard to whom all hope of success seemed lost.

III.

LETTER FROM ROME*

Rome, 10 May 1884

My dear sons in Jesus Christ,

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. It was this idea, this wish of mine, that made me write this letter. Being away from you, and not being able to see or hear you, upsets me more than you can imagine. For that reason I would have liked to write these few lines to you a week ago, but constant work prevented me. And so, although I shall be back very soon, I want to send you this letter in advance, since I cannot yet be with you in person. These words come from someone who loves you very dearly in Christ Jesus, someone who has the duty of speaking to you with the freedom of a father. You'll let me do that, won't you? And you will pay attention to what I am going to say to you and put it into practice.

I have said that you are always and exclusively in my thoughts. Well, a couple of evenings ago I had gone to my room, and while I was preparing for bed I began to say the prayers my good mother taught me, and whether I simply fell asleep or became distracted I don't know, but it seemed that two of the former pupils of the Oratory in its early days were standing there before me. One of them came up to me, greeted me warmly, and said: "Do you recognize me, Don Bosco?"

* Atti del Capitolo della Pia Società Salesiana 1 (1920) N. 1, 24 June, pp. 40-48.

"Of course I do", I answered.

"And do you still remember me?", the man went on.

"I remember you and all the others. You're Valfré, and you were at the Oratory before 1870."

"Tell me", went on Valfré, "would you like to see the youngsters who were at the Oratory in my time?"

"Yes, let me see them", I answered, "I would like that very much."

Valfré then showed me the boys just as they had been at that time, with the same age, build and looks. I seemed to be in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping. In one place they were playing leap-frog, in another tig, and in another a ball-game was in progress. In one corner a group of youngsters were gathered round a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a cleric was playing with a number of lads at "chase the donkey" and "trades". There was singing and laughing on all sides, there were priests and clerics everywhere and the boys were yelling and shouting all round them. You could see that the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors. I was overjoyed at the sight, and Valfré said to me: "You see, closeness leads to affection, and affection brings confidence. It is this that opens hearts and the young people express everything without fear to the teachers, to the assistants and to the superiors. They become frank both in the confessional and out of it, and they will do everything they are asked by one who they know loves them."

At that moment the other past pupil, who had a white beard, came up to me and said: "Don Bosco, would you like to see and know the boys who are at the Oratory at the present time?" This man was Joseph Buzzetti.

"Yes", I replied, "It is a month since I last saw them." And he showed them to me.

I saw the Oratory and all of you in recreation. But no more could I hear the joyful shouts and singing, no longer was there the lively activity of the previous scene. In the faces and actions of many boys there was evident a weary boredom, a surliness, a suspicion, that pained me. I saw many, it is true, who ran about and played in light-hearted joy. But I saw quite a number of others on their own, leaning against the pillars, a prey to depressing thoughts. Others were on the steps or in the corridors, or up on the terraces near the garden so as to be away from the common recreation. Others were strolling about in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction. Sometimes they would laugh, but with looks and smirks that would make you not only suspect but feel quite certain that St Aloysius would have blushed to find himself in their company. Even among those who were playing, there were some so listless that it was clear they were not enjoying their games.

"Do you see your boys?", asked my former pupil.

"I can see them", I replied with a sigh.

"How different they are from what we used to be", went on the past pupil.

"Too true! What an apathetic recreation!"

"This is what gives rise to the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments, to neglect of the prayers in church and elsewhere; to their reluctance to be in a place where Divine Providence heaps every possible blessing on their bodies, their souls and their minds. This is why so many do not follow their vocation, why they are ungrateful to their superiors, why they are secretive and grumble, with all the other regrettable consequences."

"I see, I understand", I said. "But how can we bring these youngsters to life again, so that we can get back to the liveliness, the happiness, the warmth of the old days?"

"With charity!"

"With charity? But don't my boys get enough love? You know how I love them. You know how much I have suffered and put up with for them these forty years, and how much I endure and suffer even now. How many hardships, how many humiliations, how much opposition, how many persecutions to give them bread, a home, teachers, and especially to provide for the salvation of their souls. I have done everything I possibly could for them; they are the object of all my affections."

"I'm not referring to you."

"Then to whom are you referring? To those who take my place? To the rectors, the prefects, the teachers, the assistants? Don't you see that they are martyrs to study and work, and how they burn out their young lives for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them?"

"I can see all that and I am well aware of it, but is not enough; the best thing is missing."

"All right then. What is it that is missing?"

"That the youngsters should not only be loved, but that they themselves should know that they are loved."

"But have they not got eyes in their heads? Have they no intelligence? Don't they see how much is done for them and all of it out of love?"

"No, I repeat: it is not enough."

"Well, what else is needed?"

"By being loved in the things they like, through taking part in their youthful interests, they are led to see love in those things too which they find less attractive, such as discipline, study and self-denial, and so learn to do these things too with love."

"I'm afraid you'll have to explain that more clearly."

"Look at the youngsters in recreation."

I looked, and then asked: "Well, what is special about it?"

"You've been educating young people for so many years and you don't understand! Look harder! Where are our Salesians?"

I looked, and I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. The superiors were no longer the heart and soul of the recreation. Most of them were walking up and down, chatting among themselves without taking any notice of what the pupils were doing. Others looked on at the recreation but paid little heed to the boys. Others supervised from afar, not noticing whether anyone was doing something wrong. Some did take notice but only rarely, and then in a threatening manner. Here and there a Salesian did try to mix with a group of boys, but I saw that the latter were bent on keeping their distance from teachers and superiors.

Then my friend continued: "In the old days at the Oratory, were you not always among the boys, especially during recreation? Do you remember those wonderful years? They were a foretaste of heaven, a period of which we have fond memories, because then love was the rule and we had no secrets from you."

"Yes, indeed! Everything was a joy for me then, and the boys used to rush to get near me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my advice and put it into practice. But don't you see that now with these never-ending interviews, business matters, and my poor health I cannot do it any more."

"Well and good; but if you cannot do it, why don't your Salesians follow the example you gave? Why don't you insist, why don't you demand, that they treat the boys as you used to do?"

"I do. I talk till I'm blue in the face, but unfortunately not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as we used to."

"And so by neglecting the lesser part they waste the greater, meaning all the work they put in. Let them like what pleases the youngsters and the youngsters will come to like what pleases the superiors. In this way their work will be made easy. The reason for the present change in the Oratory is that many of the

boys no longer have confidence in their superiors. There was a time when all hearts were wide open to their superiors, when the boys loved them and gave them prompt obedience. But now the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers and friends; they are feared and little loved. And so if you want everyone to be of one heart and soul again for the love of Jesus you must break down this fatal barrier of mistrust, and replace it with a happy spirit of confidence. Then obedience will guide the pupil as a mother guides her baby; and the old peace and happiness will reign once again in the Oratory."

"How then are we to set about breaking down this barrier?"

"By a friendly informal relationship with the boys, especially in recreation. You cannot have affection without this familiarity, and where affection is not evident there can be no confidence. If you want to be loved, you must make it clear that you love. Jesus Christ made himself little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses. He is our master in the matter of the friendly approach. The teacher who is seen only in the classroom is a teacher and nothing more; but if he joins in the pupils' recreation he becomes their brother. If someone is only seen preaching from the pulpit it will be said that he is doing no more and no less than his duty, whereas if he says a good word in recreation it is heard as the word of one who loves. How many conversions have been brought about by a few words whispered in the ear of a youngster while he is playing. One who knows he is loved loves in return, and one who loves can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence creates an electric current between youngsters and their superiors. Hearts are opened, needs and weaknesses made known. This love enables superiors to put up with the weariness, the annoyance, the ingratitude, the troubles that youngsters cause. Jesus Christ did not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smouldering flax. He is your model. Then you will no longer see anyone working for his own glory; you will no longer see anyone punishing out of wounded self-love; you will not see anyone neglecting the

work of supervision through jealousy of another's popularity; you won't hear people running others down so as to be looked up to by the boys: those who exclude all other superiors and earn for themselves nothing but contempt and hypocritical flattery; people who let their hearts be stolen by one individual and neglect all the other boys to cultivate that particular one. No one will neglect his strict duty of supervision for the sake of his own ease and comfort; no one will fail through human respect to reprimand those, who need reprimanding. If we have this true love, we shall not seek anything other than the glory of God and the good of souls. When this love languishes, things no longer go well. Why do people want to replace love with cold rules? Why do the superiors move away from the observance of the rules Don Bosco has given them? Why the replacement little by little of loving and watchful prevention by a system which consists in framing laws? Such laws either have to be sustained through punishment and so create hatred and cause unhappiness or, if they are not enforced, cause the superiors to be despised and bring about serious disorders. This is sure to happen if there is no friendly relationship. So if you want the Oratory to return to the happiness of old, then bring back the old system: let the superior be all things to all, always ready to listen to any boy's complaints or doubts, always alert to keep a paternal eye on their conduct, all heart to seek the spiritual and temporal good of those Divine Providence has entrusted to him. Then hearts will no longer be closed and deadly subterfuge will no longer hold sway. The superiors should be unbending only in the case of immoral conduct. It is better to run the risk of expelling someone who is innocent than to keep someone who causes others to sin. Assistants should make it a strict duty in conscience to refer to the superiors whatever they know to be an offence against God."

Then I asked a question: "And what is the best way of achieving this friendly relationship, this kind of love and confidence?"

"The exact observance of the rules of the house."

"Nothing else?"

"At a dinner the best dish is a hearty welcome."

"With that my past pupil finished speaking, and I went on looking at that recreation with great displeasure. Little by little I felt oppressed by a great weariness that became worse at every moment. Eventually it got so bad that I could resist no longer, and I shook myself and woke up. I found myself standing beside my bed. My legs were so swollen and hurt so much that I could not stand up any longer. It was very late and I went to bed, resolved to write these lines to my sons.

I wish I did not have these dreams, they tire me so much. The following day I was dead tired, and I could hardly wait for the hour to come to go to bed that evening. But I was hardly in bed when the dream began again. Before me once again was the playground, with the boys at present at the Oratory and the same past pupil as before. I began to question him.

"I'll let my Salesians know what you have told me, but what should I say to the boys of the Oratory?"

"Tell them", he said, "to realize how much the superiors, the teachers, the assistants, plan and wear themselves out for love of them, since they would not sacrifice themselves so much if they didn't love them. Let them never forget that humility is the source of all peace of mind; let them be able to put up with each other's shortcomings, because there is no perfection in this world, only in heaven. Tell them not to grumble because it freezes the heart. But especially, tell them to live in the holy grace of God. If you are not at peace with God, you cannot be at peace with yourself, nor with others."

"Are you telling me then that among my boys there are some who are not at peace with God?"

"Among other reasons you already know, this is the principal cause of bad spirit. There is no need for me to tell you that you must do

something about it. The one without trust is the one with secrets to guard, the one who is afraid the secrets will become known and bring him shame and trouble. At the same time, if his heart is not at peace with God he will be a prey to restless anxiety, intolerant of obedience, and get upset over nothing. Everything seems to go wrong for him, and because he has no love for himself he thinks the superiors do not love him."

"But see here, my friend; look how many go to confession and communion here at the Oratory."

"It is true that many go to confession, but what is *radically* lacking in the confessions of so many youngsters is a firm resolution. They tell their sin but they are always the same, always the same occasions, the same bad habits, the same acts of disobedience, the same neglect of duty. This goes on, month in, month out, even for years and some even continue in this way till they leave school. These confessions are worth little or nothing, and so they do not restore peace, and if a youngster in that state were to be called before God's judgement seat, it would be a serious matter indeed. But in comparison with the whole group in the house they are only a few. Look." And he pointed them out to me.

I looked, and I saw those boys one by one. There were not many, but in them I saw things that brought profound bitterness to my soul. I do not want to put such things in writing, but when I come back I want to have a word with each one about what I saw. For the moment I limit myself to saying that it is time to pray and make firm resolutions, with facts and not just words, so as to show that the Comollos, the Dominic Savios, the Besuccos and the Saccardis are still among us.

I put a final question to my friend: "Have you anything else to tell me?"

"Preach to all, young and old alike, that they must remember they are children of Mary Help of Christians. Tell them she has gathered them here to take them away from the dangers of the world,

so that they may love one another as brothers and give glory to God and to her by their good behaviour. Tell them that it is Our Lady who provides them with bread and the means to study, by endless graces and wonders. Remind them that they are at the vigil of the feast of their holy Mother, so that with her help that barrier of mistrust will fall which has been raised between boys and superiors by the devil, who knows how to use it to ruin certain souls."

"And will we be successful in breaking down this barrier?"

"Certainly you will, as long as young and old are ready to put up with some small mortifications for love of Mary and do what I have told you."

Meanwhile I continued to watch my youngsters, but at the sight of those I had seen heading for eternal damnation I experienced such heartache that I awoke. I still have to tell you many important things that I saw, but I have neither time nor opportunity at present.

And now I must finish. Do you know what this poor old man who has spent his whole life for his dear boys wants from you? Nothing else than, due allowances being made, we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old: the days of affection and Christian confidence between boys and superiors; the days when we accepted and put up with difficulties for the love of Jesus Christ; the days when hearts were open with a simple candour; days of love and real joy for everyone. I want the consolation and hope that you will promise to do everything I desire for the good of your souls.

You do not realize how lucky you are in having come to the Oratory. I declare before God: it is enough for a young person to enter a salesian house for Our Lady to take him under her special care. Let us all agree on this then: may the charity of those who command and the charity of those who must obey cause the spirit of St. Francis de Sales to reign among us. My

dear children, the time is coming when I will have to tear myself away from you and leave for eternity. (*Secretary's note:* at this point Don Bosco broke off the dictation; his eyes filled with tears, not of sorrow but because of the inexpressible affection that was evident from his face and voice; after a few moments he went on.) And so I want to leave you, my dear priests and brothers and my dearest boys, on the road the Lord himself wants you to follow. For this purpose the Holy Father, whom I saw on Friday, 9 May, sends you his blessing from the bottom of his heart.

I will be with you on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, before the statue of our loving Mother. I want this feast to be celebrated with full solemnity, and that Fr. Lazzero and Fr. Marchisio see to it that you have a good time in the dining-room as well. The feast of Mary Help of Christians should be a prelude to the eternal feast that we will all celebrate one day together in heaven.

With much love, your friend in Christ Jesus.

Father JOHN BOSCO

IV.

SOUVENIR OF ST JOHN BOSCO TO THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

Recommendations given as a souvenir to the salesian religious, 11 November 1875, on their departure from the Church of Mary Help of Christians to travel to the Argentine Republic.*

1. Seek souls and not money, honours or dignities.
2. Be charitable and most courteous towards all, but avoid conversations and familiarity with persons of the other sex or with persons whose conduct is open to suspicion.
3. Do not go visiting, except for motives of charity or necessity.
4. Do not accept invitations to dinner, except for very grave reasons. In such cases arrange for a confrère to accompany you.
5. Take special care of the sick, of the young, of the old and of the poor; and you will win the blessing of God and the goodwill of men.
6. Show respect towards all persons in authority whether civil or religious.
7. On meeting a person in authority, take care to salute him with due respect.
8. Do the same towards ecclesiastics and persons belonging to religious institutes.
9. Shun idleness and disputes, and observe great moderation in eating, drinking and sleeping.

* DB, Ricordi ai primi missionari, ASC 132, quaderni-taccuini 5.

10. Love, reverence and respect other religious orders, and always speak well of them. In this way you will be esteemed by all, and will promote the good of our congregation.

11. Take care of your health. Work well, but only do as much as your strength will allow.

12. Let the world know that you are poor in clothing, food and abode, and you will be rich in the sight of God, and will win the hearts of men.

13. Love one another, advise one another, correct one another and do not be carried away by either envy or rancour. Let the good of one become the good of all, and let the troubles and sufferings of one be regarded as the troubles and sufferings of all, and let each one strive to banish or at least to mitigate the sorrows of others.

14. Observe your rules, and never forget the monthly *Exercise for a Happy Death*.

15. Every morning commend to God the occupations of the day, especially confessions, lessons, religious instructions and sermons.

16. Constantly promote devotion to Mary Help of Christians, and to the Blessed Sacrament.

17. Recommend to the boys frequent confession and communion.

18. In order to cultivate ecclesiastical vocations, constantly inculcate: (a) love of chastity; (b) horror of the opposite vice; (c) avoidance of bad companions; and (d) frequent communion. Always be charitable, gentle and kind.

19. Hear both sides before making up your mind regarding reports and matters in dispute.

20. In time of fatigue and suffering do not forget that we have a great reward prepared for us in heaven. *Amen*.

V.

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TESTAMENT OF SAINT JOHN BOSCO*

My dear and beloved Sons in Jesus Christ,

Before leaving this world for eternity, I wish to fulfil a duty towards you and so satisfy an ardent desire of my heart. First of all, I thank you with the most ardent affection of my soul for the obedience you have given me, and for all you have done to sustain and propagate our Congregation.

I leave you here on earth, but only for a short time. I hope the infinite mercy of God will enable us all to meet one day in Heaven. There I await you.

Do not grieve over my death. This is a debt we must all pay; but afterwards, every fatigue sustained for the love of our Master, the good Jesus, will be greatly rewarded.

Instead of weeping, make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain staunch in your vocation until death. Watch, so that neither the love of the world, nor the affection of parents, nor the desire of a more agreeable life induce you to make the great mistake of profaning the sacred vows, and so transgressing the religious profession by which you are consecrated to God. Let none of us take back that which we have given to God.

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions.

* DB, Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6, ASC 132, quaderni-taccuini 6.

Your first Rector is dead. But our true Superior, Jesus Christ, will never die. He will always be our Master, our guide, our model. But remember that he, in his own time, will also be our judge and the rewarder of our faithfulness in His service.

Your Rector is dead. But there will be another elected, who will have care of you and of your eternal salvation. Listen to him, love him, obey him, pray for him as you have done for me.

Adieu, dear children, adieu. I wait for you in Heaven. There we shall speak of God, of Mary, the Mother and support of our Congregation; there we shall bless eternally this our Congregation, the observance of whose rules will have powerfully and efficaciously contributed to our salvation.

*Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.
In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum.*

... The God of mercy and his holy Mother came to our help in our needs. This was especially true whenever it was a case of providing for our poor and abandoned boys, and even more so when their souls were in danger.

... The blessed Virgin will certainly continue to protect our Congregation and our salesian works if we maintain our trust in her and promote devotion to her.

... Our work, the good and austere behaviour of our confrères will draw and almost compel their pupils to follow their example. Let the preventive system be practised even at the cost of personal and financial sacrifice and we shall have vocations in abundance.

... All salesians living in the same house must be one in heart and soul with the rector.

But let them keep well in mind that grumbling is a plague to be avoided at all costs. Let every possible sacrifice be made, but never tolerate criticism of superiors.

... I do not recommend any special penances or mortifications to you; you will gain great merit and give glory to the Congregation if you are able to bear the sufferings and annoyances of life with christian resignation.

... Rather than make remarks about what others do, let each one take the greatest care to fulfil the duties entrusted to him.

... All are enjoined and recommended before God to pay particular attention to morality amongst salesians themselves and amongst those who for any reason at all have been confided by divine providence to our care.

... Let no one be able to say: These furnishings do not suggest poverty; the poor do not eat or dress or have rooms like this. Whoever gives cause for remarks of this kind brings disaster upon our Congregation which must be able to pride itself on its vow of poverty.

Woe to us if those from whom we seek alms are able to say that we live an easier life than they do.

... Remember that it will always be a red-letter day when you are able to win over an enemy or make a friend by charity.

... Divine Providence has prepared a happy future for our Congregation and its glory will endure as long as the rules are faithfully observed.

When the desire for ease and comfort grows up amongst us, our pious Society will have run its course.

The world will always welcome us as long as all our concern is for the under-developed peoples, for poor children, for those members of society most in danger. This is our real wealth which no one will envy and no one will take from us.

... Let us never forget that we exist for poor and abandoned boys. Amongst those who know little or nothing of the true God you will see taking place wonders formerly thought incredible but which almighty God will make manifest to the world.

Let us not keep any property other than the dwelling places we need.

When it happens that a salesian yields up his life whilst working for souls, you can say that our Congregation has registered a great triumph and that on it will descend in abundance the blessings of heaven.

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