

## RECTOR MAJOR - SPEECHES, MESSAGES

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22/3/2013 - RMG - **The Rector Major and his Vicar with the Pope**

(ANS – Rome) – Yesterday afternoon, 21 March, the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, and his Vicar, Fr Adrian Bregolin, were received by Pope Francis at the Vatican, in an encounter with all the hallmarks of great familiarity. The Pope spontaneously accepted Fr Chávez' letter of homage, indicating that he would be ready to visit Turin in 2015.

“It was a brief meeting: 15 minutes but very intense, in which we handed the Holy Father the letter I had written for the inauguration of his Pontificate, and the statue of Mary Help of Christians, which he immediately kissed”, the Rector Major tells us.

“Everything we have seen and felt since that first presentation in St Peter's Square, on that unforgettable evening of his election, we re-lived and experienced in person this evening: his attractive congeniality, great simplicity, warmth and ability to listen and relate. He recognised me and the embrace with which he welcomed me made me feel his great sense of fatherliness.

The Pope's humanity is also shown in his particular attention to Fr Chávez in person. “He asked me about my health, because he had heard I was not well. He also asked me when I would be finishing my mandate as Rector Major. I told him that, thanks be to God, I had recovered in health to the point where I could continue my service and that I would finish as Superior within a year”.

The conversation did not lack reference to Pope Francis' fellow-feeling for Salesian spirituality and work: “Together”, Fr Chávez continued, “we recalled a number of events: when asked at Aparecida if the Beatification of Ceferino Namuncurà could take place not in Buenos Aires but Chimpay, he gave his reason thus: ‘in Patagonia the Salesians have done everything’; his time as a past pupil at the Salesian College in Ramos Mejía; his devotion to Mary Help of Christians expressed by going to the Shrine at Almagro every 24th of the month to celebrate Mass; he himself reminded me that he had been baptised there by a Salesian, Fr Enrico Pozzoli; we also spoke of his attachment to the San Lorenzo football club, where he holds membership”.

The Rector Major and Fr Bregolin also presented Pope Francis with a number of invitations, which he accepted most readily: “presenting the Rector of the Vatican community to him, Fr Sergio Pellini, we invited him to visit the Press and the community and he said he would do so. I then renewed the invitation to come to Turin for 24 May 2015 for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, on the occasion of the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth. His answer left room for hope ‘Why not?’. Finally, Fr Adrian Bregolin asked him to keep the statue of Mary Help of Christians in his study as the Help and Mother of the Church, and again he said ‘That I will do’”.

The Rector major and his Vicar then took leave of the Pope and they thanked him for granting this opportunity to greet him personally. They renewed their offer of prayer and closeness on the part of the whole Salesian Family and especially of the Congregation.