

## **PRESENTATION**

Dear Confreres,

In the summer session of the Council we drew up the “project of animation and government of the Rector Major and the General Council for the six-year period 2014-2020”. I now offer you some points to help you understand and interpret the project when you read it.

### **Listening**

The project originated from our listening to a number of people. First of all, it took into account the Report of the Rector Major Fr. Pascual Chavez to the GC27, in which he presented an assessment of the Congregation, the sectors of the General Council and the regions. Only by starting out from the evaluation of the progress made were we able to develop a well-focused project.

For the six-year project we also listened to the General Chapter, the most authoritative expression of the life and guidelines of the Congregation. It conveyed, particularly through the Acts of the GC27, how the Congregation perceives itself at the present time, together with its expectations, challenges and problems, and its prospects for the way ahead.

Finally, the project was the result of careful listening to the different positions and perspectives shared within the General Council. Indeed, the first task of coordinating the General Council, asked by the GC27, took place in our listening to each other. This enabled us to arrive at a shared and convergent view of the choices we had to make. It could be said that in the Council we achieved a good and solid convergence, even if in this area there still remains some room for improvement.

### **Subject of the project**

This is the fourth time in the history of the Congregation that the Rector Major and the General Council have drawn up a project for the six-year period. In this project for 2014-2020 one can see more clearly that the subject of the project is the Rector Major and his Council. The project describes the contribution that the Rector Major and the Councillors intend to make, as individuals and as a team, to the onward journey of the Congregation, the growth of the sectors and the development of the regions.

The regions therefore are not the subject, nor even the provinces; they will have their own project for the six-year period, which will have as reference points the GC27 and the conclusions of their respective team visits and extraordinary visitations. The regions and provinces may draw inspiration from the project of the Rector Major and the General Council by considering how they reflected and operated; but they will have to find their most appropriate courses of action in the light of their own situations and contexts.

The six-year project has brought the Rector Major and his Council to function more and more as a subject acting in synodal and collegial fashion. In harmony with the life of the Congregation, the Rector Major and the General Council offer their specific contribution to the path to be pursued by all the confreres, provinces and regions; at the same time, by reflecting together, they learn to share responsibility and make agreed convergent choices. And so, the way ahead together with the Congregation and the convergence within the General Council become expressions of its collegiality and resemblance to a synod.

### **Structure of the project**

The priorities of the project are the same as those of the GC27, from which we have taken the single goal subdivided in the three parts about our being mystics in the Spirit, prophets of fraternity, and servants of the young. The four processes too which the project has chosen were drawn from the twelve processes pointed out by the 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (GC27, 64, 66, 68, 70, 72, 74). Finally, we identified the steps to be taken from among those indicated by the GC27 which we saw as a "map" from which to select the most appropriate and fundamental ones for the work of animation and government of the Rector Major and the General Council; these priorities pertain to the entire Council, the Rector Major and the Councillors.

The General Council indicated to the Vicar and the Councillors for the sectors the priority areas for their intervention. These priorities took into account the path followed by the Congregation till now, the requirements of the GC27 itself, my closing speech at the Chapter, and the new interventions called for in the report of the Rector Major to the GC27 when he spoke of the objectives that had not been fulfilled and the challenges that needed to be met. What refers to the Central Delegate for the Secretariat of the Salesian Family was taken into consideration not only by the General Council but also by the Advisory Body of the Salesian Family itself. Likewise, the General Council identified the priorities for the work of the General Councillors in their animation of the regions and provinces.

### **Focus on essentials in the project**

I think I can say that the project for this six-year period has a peculiarity: it chose to concentrate on what is essential. In fact, not everything that the Rector Major and the Council will carry out over the six-year period needed to be spelt out. What is normal practice was not written down; in point of fact, attention was paid only to the priorities.

From this focus on essentials, there followed also a simplification of the project in its formulation; in this way it is easier to understand what is important in respect of what is secondary, and at the same time it is possible to concentrate on what is strategic and not get lost. Lack of focus, in fact, is a risk that derives also from the complexity of situations and is overcome precisely through convergence on a few key aspects that are priorities and generally accepted.

Finally, it should also be noted that at the beginning of a six-year period it is not possible to foresee the needs that might arise in the life of the Congregation, the Church and society; a project therefore has to leave space for the unpredictable, and especially for what the Spirit and the situations will suggest to us. For this reason too the project for the six-year period chose to concentrate on essentials.

On reading the project you will notice that what pertains to youth ministry is longer than the other parts; in particular, the third area concerning "settings and sectors" is the most extensive. We considered the possibility of reducing this part; but the Councillor for youth ministry thought it was important to keep it in its enlarged form, in spite of its being clearly different from the rest of the project; it would help, he suggested, in making known and rendering more explicit the "Frame of reference for youth ministry," particularly with regard to settings and sectors. With this in mind, we chose to accept his proposal in the hope that the various regions and provinces too will benefit from what they find useful.

### **Novelty of the process**

In our view, the process of drawing up the project for the six-year period which, as I said, is now being repeated for the fourth time, is not a repetitive experience; it is always new: new are the Rector Major and the Councillors, new are the context and the challenges, new must also be the answers. Agreement on intentions and choices is never achieved once and for all; convergence is always something to be attained. The work of drawing up the project helped us to know and understand each other better, to express our feelings, carry out a discernment process and grow in fraternity, understanding and communion.

The wish I extend to all of you is that you may grow in sharing, convergence and communion in your planning endeavours, accompanied by the animating presence of the Holy Spirit and the support of Mary Help of Christians. In this way we shall "walk together" in this bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco.

With affection,

Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime  
Rector Major