

Overall summary, 8 March 2014

Summary of priorities

ABBREVIATIONS USED

C 1-2-3-4	= Commission 1-2-3-4
Cg	= <i>Commissione giuridica</i> (Juridical Commission)

The powerful testimony of Pope Francis and the key directions of his magisterium contained in his Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, commit **Salesian consecrated life** to a serious and courageous **conversion and a revolution with clear implications for our educational and pastoral mission** (Cg). We consider it would be advantageous to put *Evangelii gaudium* into practice according to our charism, taking up its refreshing language as well as its content (C 3), and establishing it as a “prophetic sign” for the renewal of the Congregation (C 1; C 3).

In general, our observation is that the documents of earlier General Chapters (in particular 23-24-25) have not been adequately plumbed in terms of their content nor carried out in terms of their practical directions, according to the Constitutions and Regulations; we ask ourselves how we can salvage such a deficiency, by accompanying confreres to help them assimilate [these documents] and translate them into fitting educational and pastoral processes (C 4, Cg).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 3

1. FOR AN EVANGELICAL FRATERNAL LIFE WHICH IS VISIBLE, CREDIBLE AND FRUITFUL

1.1. The danger of our easily being thought of as “social workers” instead of pastors capable of spiritual accompaniment, requires that we safeguard our vocation and witness to the **primacy of God** (C 4): this primacy gives meaning to our consecrated and community life (C 3), helps us avoid the risk of letting ourselves get too caught up in our activities and forgetting that we are essentially “seekers of God” and witnesses to his love amongst the young and the poor. In a post-modern world, in fact, and given that we are dealing with young people growing up in this secularised environment, we confreres are called on to tackle the challenge of suitable inculturation by considering the human being's openness to transcendence and deepest needs. The key challenge consists in finding creative ways to state the importance of spiritual values, and of witnessing to personal encounter with the God of life, love, tenderness and compassion. This requires that we encourage the experience of faith and encounter with Jesus Christ, given that the post-modern young person demands of us a down-to-earth, coherent, and credible lifestyle (C 1).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 2; Cg

1.2.

1.3. The **vocation of the coadjutor (brother)** needs to be valued and courageously presented: his identity, specific nature, complementarity are the key coordinates for this (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 3; C 4; Cg

1.4.

1.5. In a post-modern culture which glorifies the importance of the individual, we must seriously rethink our understanding of community and as a consequence, restructure it (C 1). The **spirit of the *Da mihi animas*** at times remains just a slogan which does not

inspire our personal and community lifestyle and projects. We share the need for a further series of steps if we are to fully take up the programme guidelines of GC25. Indeed, in some communities we find it difficult to have robust experiences of spirituality, debate and sharing our work, and of fraternal correction. Our commitment to educating the young to faith (GC23) and the pastoral model of GC24 have also not been taken up at equal depth across the Congregation (Cg). The **witness of fraternal life** amongst confreres in the same community has not always allowed us to be the animating core of the EPC, as “*experts and architects of communion*” (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 3

1.6.

1.7. Given the statistical data concerning the Congregation, we need above all to take another look at our activities, showing **preference for fraternal life in significant communities who agree on the way they live the mission, and which have time to listen to God's Word together** (C 2, C 4), **giving testimony by the witness of our life rather than of our words**.

PRIORITY: C 2; C 3; C 4

1.8.

1.9. **In order to adequately carry out his leadership and animating role, the Rector (Director), needs to be subject to ongoing formation, including formation to leadership and spiritual accompaniment**. He should also not have too many things to do (C 1).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 2; C 3

1.10.

1.11. We need to take account, in reflecting on our SDB identity, of the many **elderly confreres**; they are in the majority in some of our communities. Shared **reflection is needed to form and help all SDBs to live their Salesian consecrated vocation in all its fullness even when they can no longer be “physically” amongst the young, or age hinders them from direct educative and pastoral involvement** (Cg; C 4).

PRIORITY: C 4

1.12. Management and maintenance of structures is demanding too many resources of personnel and finance (Cg). **We need to rethink the settings we work in and our choices of what to do as SDBs (Cg), nurturing a planning mentality** (C 4).

PRIORITY: Cg

2. FORMATION OF SDBs & LAY PEOPLE

2.1. In the light of the emerging challenges, and from the point of view of ongoing formation understood as an attitude accompanying all stages of Salesian consecrated life, **a substantial review of our formation processes is becoming** (Cg) necessary, with particular attention given to our emotional life and relationships (C 3), avoiding proposals that treat people as if they were all the same, **personalising the formation process** (Cg, C 4), making it **more consistent with reality** (C 4). Salesian formation to fraternal life in community becomes a challenge, as well as to spiritual depth and to a simple and poor life shared with those to whom we are sent (C 2), ensuring a formative

atmosphere in both the local and provincial community (C 1).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 3; C 4; Cg

2.2. Unfortunately sensitivity to vocations has not yet entered into the common thinking of Salesian confreres (C 1, 2). We need to give importance to the “vocation culture”, and make our work with families (C 3) and vocational accompaniment of all young people a part of that (C 2). Vocation ministry should increasingly be seen within the context of youth ministry and working in with initial formation (especially the prenovitiate) (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 3; Cg (suggest moving this to area 3)

2.3.

2.4.

2.5.

2.5.1.

2.5.2.

2.5.3. As they are now, ongoing formation processes understood as a constant commitment to self-renewal (C1) that need to be at a high level of Christian life to help the SDB throughout his life and prevent fragility, failure, abuse... (Cg) are weak or non-existent (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 2; Cg

2.5.4.

2.5.5.

2.5.6.

2.6. The challenges like multiculturalism, complexity, psychological fragility, vocational inconsistency, moral relativism, inadequate roots of faith experience, often find us unprepared (C 3, C 4). In the light of the RM's letter *Vocation and formation* (cf. AGC 416), the following choices are important: a) understanding the preventive system as Salesian spirituality, b) not only academic but pastoral formation of formators, c) attention to the anthropological side of formation, shifting from an objectives-based model to one understood as a maturing process both for those in formation and for formators, d) formation to leadership, e) specific formation of Rectors/Directors, f) spiritual direction of Salesians as ongoing vocational accompaniment, g) personalised formation and accompaniment of young confreres, involving the community (C 2).

PRIORITY: C 4

2.7. The fundamental question to formation is how we can help candidates and young confreres have an experience of God, live in fraternal communities and go out to the young (C 1) with a missionary spirit (C 4). The early stages of SDB formation should all be oriented to building up a well-integrated Salesian consecrated identity as a human being, a religious, an educator and evangeliser of the young, especially the poorest and most needy of them. So-called initial formation can deeply impact on the identity of the consecrated Salesian only if it fully takes up the current situation of young people as its point of departure, in all its rich potential but also with all its fragility. We need to avoid reducing the aims of initial formation to the intellectual sphere alone while overlooking emotional and relational aspects (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 2; C 4

2.8. Formation is a priority: therefore the quality of formators needs to be seen to (C G, C 1, C 4) as a guarantee of fidelity and proper discernment in the light of God's Word and the simplicity of our formation settings, respecting and valuing cultural differences. Thus our testimony will also be a source of vocations (C 3).

PRIORITY: C 3

2.9. .

2.10. Good work is being done with in some Provinces with formation of lay people and with lay people. In others, instead, we see a failure to give due attention to them, their work, the considerable shared responsibility they show in carrying out the educative and pastoral mission with SDBs. A persistent clerical mentality is not absent from our relationship with lay people (Cg). In particular:

2.10.1. Too often are lay people only thought of as collaborators, and a serious formation process for and with them, not only from the point of view of their professional skills (Cg, C3) but with regard to the Salesian charism and mission, is lacking. Let us pursue genuine charismatic shared responsibility with lay people who work closely with us, fully accepting GC24 and developing common formation processes involving SDBs and lay people (C 4). In order to realise this we must strengthen in formation "to democracy" in the Congregation meaning participation, dialogue, seeking consensus as indicated in the Constitutions and Regulations (C 1).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 3; Cg

2.10.2. We need to entrust the task of seeing to formation of lay people who share our educational mission to a Department. We would hope this dimension could be nurtured thanks to close and effective collaboration between the Departments of Formation and the Salesian Mission. for the future of the charism, and not only in Europe, it will be more and more necessary to consider SDB and lay formation as a unique dimension of animation and government (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 2; Cg

3. THE MISSION: OUR PRESENCE AMONGST THE YOUNG

Greater commitment is needed to a **renewed understanding of the practice of the Preventive System** in the altered circumstances of society and church both in and beyond our Educative and Pastoral Communities. It is also urgent to develop a serious theological and pedagogical reflection on the relationship between education and evangelisation, giving greater impetus to our explicit evangelising proposal, planning new and prophetic experiences of presence amongst young people (Salesian assistance: C 1) not allowing ourselves to be too conditioned by the structures we need to run and administer (Cg). Salesians are **much less amongst the young** wasting the opportunities to be Gospel witnesses (C 2). We risk being distant from the young and the poor in our thinking and planning even before being physically distant (Cg, C3). Nor is it rare to discover a clerical mentality amongst us (C 2). Let the young and not the maintenance of our works be at the centre of our attention and concerns. Let the

mission be lived by a community that welcomes the young and whose life is essential and simple (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 2; C 3; C 4; Cg

3.2. We need to rethink ministry in an “extroverted” and “missionary” way, beginning not with structures but with the young and their deepest needs, in dialogue with the culture of our time (C 4) and reaching out to the existential peripheries (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 4

3.3. We need to also find appropriate forms of expression for practising the preventive system in relation to new sensitivities in today's world (C 2), making ourselves courageously and competently (C 4) available for the accompaniment of the young in our works (C 3).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 2; C 3; Cg

3.4. We need to reach out to young people beginning with their implicit **desire for spirituality** and ending up with an explicit proposal of the Christian message. Let ministry offer a catechesis leading to an encounter with God, going beyond simply transmitting the contents of faith (C 2).

PRIORITY C 2

3.5. Our ministry does not sufficiently ensure **vocational maturing processes**; in conformity with GC23 we need to first of all see to faith journeys for young people that open up to the idea of them giving their life to the Lord (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 3

3.6. In **shared responsibility between SDBs and lay people** the critical issue is often the SDBs themselves: it is not enough to open up to lay people simply because of a lack of SDBs; we need to develop lay identity and vocation in the life and action of the Church. It is from this point of view that our commitment to really being concerned about our shared presence with lay people amidst the young is strategic today and will be so for the future of the Salesian charism. Shared responsibility for our unique educative and pastoral mission will lead us to clear, strong and shared formation processes (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 1; C 3; C 4

4. ANIMATION AND GOVERNMENT

4.1.

4.1.1.

4.1.2.

4.1.3.

4.1.4. For this, we need to redefine the role of the Rector/Director within the new dynamics of the context for Salesian works (C 3, C 4).

PRIORITY C 2

4.2. We need to rethink the way the General Council works, with a view to encouraging greater collegiality and collaboration and interaction between the three Departments of the Mission and between these and the Formation Department, between the

General Council and Provincials, between Provincials and local communities (Cg, C 2). A greater impulse in this sense would also ease at the desired integration between youth ministry, vocation ministry and formation at province level (C 4). There is also a need for central, provincial and local government to pay particular attention to the process of inculturation of the charism and its consequences for formation processes of the confreres (C 2).

PRIORITY: C 2; Cg

4.3.

4.4.

4.5. We ask for a review of the tasks of the Vicar of the RM, especially with regard to his role in religious discipline. Problem situations involving SDBs need to be tackled promptly, charitably and clearly (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 3

4.6. It is urgent that we rethink the tasks of the Regional. He is too taken up with extraordinary visitations and plays a minor role in coordinating processes and bodies amongst Provinces. He is not close to the Provincials themselves (Cg). We think he could have more authority in certain areas (for example in formation) (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 3

4.7. Provinces and Communities are receiving too much and not always well-coordinated *input* from the Centre. We would hope for a notable simplification of the objectives of animation and government coming out of GC27 and from the planning for the six year period to avoid scattered and fragmented animation interventions at the various world, provincial and local levels (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 3; Cg (we suggest putting this at the head of the fourth area)

4.8. There is need for a Central Juridical Office able to provide help for a growing number of local requests (C 4).

PRIORITY: C 3

4.9. As regards the **Economy Sector** we appreciate the report from the Economist General; at the same time there is a need to set in motion a radical rethinking of the ways in which the General House and the General Administration are organised. Let the financial contribution of Provinces be determined by criteria established by GC27 and involving the Regions, to determine the quota for individual Provinces (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 2; C 3

4.10.

4.11. One cannot work in this area in an individual way but as a team involving competent lay people and with control systems at every level (combining poverty, witness, professionalism, transparency: amongst houses in a Province, between the General Administration and Provinces and vice versa) (Cg).

PRIORITY: C 1

4.12.

4.13. We have noted inadequate practices in the Congregation in the management and financial area, for want of professionalism, control, and due to too much individual management and lack of transparency, communication and solidarity (C 4). We need to set up ongoing and professional working groups at various levels, envisaging standard procedures and encouraging greater control (auditing) over the administrative process. We need to encourage greater simplicity and moderation in our life, right from the early stages of formation (Cg), constantly seeking a lifestyle which is simpler, poorer and more supportive (C 3).

PRIORITY: C 3; Cg