

acts

of the general council

year XCVIII january-july 2017

N. 424

official organ
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Direzione Generale
Opere don Bosco
Roma

acts

of the General Council of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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WE ARE FAMILY!
EVERY HOME, A SCHOOL OF LIFE AND LOVE

Strenna 2017

PRESENTATION. – 1. THE THEME OF THE STRENNA. – 2. AN INVITATION TO A CALM AND QUIET READING OF THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *AMORIS LAETITIA*, WITH A HEART OPEN TO DIALOGUE AND TO AN ENCOUNTER. – 3. EVERY HOME A SCHOOL OF LIFE AND LOVE. OUR EDUCATIVE-PASTORAL CONTRIBUTION. - 3.1. *The family, the choice of the incarnate God.* - 3.2. *Don Bosco, in a family but without a father.* - 3.3. *Close by helping to build up and restore.* - 3.4. *In the school of Life and Love that is the family.* - 3.5. *Decisive Salesian Pastoral Mission: ACCOMPANY AND CREATE PROCEDURES.*

PRESENTATION

On 1st January 2006, my predecessor Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva, the Rector Major at that time introduced the yearly Strenna with a letter entitled: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in favour with God and man" (Lk 2,52)[1]. It was an invitation by the Rector Major to renew our commitment to the family, taking up the challenge issued by John Paul II to defend life through the family and also on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the death of Mamma Margaret, mamma of Don Bosco and a true mamma to the boys of the Oratory of Valdocco.

Ten years later I offer the whole Salesian Family around the world this new Strenna, which is meant to focus our attention on families in the most diverse situations in which we find ourselves. The subject has been suggested, and it could not be otherwise, by the priority that the Church wants to give to the need for ever greater and more appropriate pastoral care for families.

Pope Francis decided to devote two Synods to reflection on the «Family», following on from some of the pastoral ideas that he had proposed in the Apostolic Exhortation «Evangelii Gaudium»

[1] Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, Letter of the Rector Major: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years and in favour with God and man" (Lk 2,52), AGC 392, 3-46.

in 2013. There was the Extraordinary Synod in 2014 and the Ordinary one in 2015. After these Synods came the Apostolic Exhortation «Amoris Laetitia», signed by the Pope on 19 March this year 2016.

I think that this stage in the life of the Church that we are now living through demands that we the Salesian Family of Don Bosco give priority to the educative pastoral care that we need to devote to families around the Salesian world.

As is the case every year, the Strenna is addressed to each and every one of the members and of the groups of the Salesian Family, with the aim of making us more aware of our task and of our duty towards families, so that we may find practical ways of carrying out that service of accompaniment that is expected of us.

1. THE TOPIC OF THE STRENNA

When we say: «**We are Family! Every home a school of Life and Love**», we want to declare from the start that all of us, each one of us has had the experience of being born into a family, with the good things and the limitations of every single family. We are born into the bosom of a family and are essentially part of a family, where, ideally we find a school of life and of love. We are convinced that the family is the human experience in which we learn the art of life and of love.

The family, all families throughout the world – while being different – are made up of individuals who love, speak to and communicate with each other, who share and make sacrifices for each other; people who look out for each other and protect each other's lives.

We grew up as people living normally in a family enjoying the warmth of our home in which from our parents or from one of them we received our name and the dignity this brings. In the family we experienced affection for the first time and enjoyed the

sense of «feeling at home». In the family we learned to say thank you, to ask for forgiveness and to ask for permission.

We are well aware that not all babies who are born have the good fortune of experiencing this, but while taking account of the diversity of contexts and cultures, I think it can be said that most of us have experienced this kind of family life.

Someone might say: What does this have to do with us as the Salesian Family? It is relevant because we ourselves, as the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, are the first to whom this message is addressed, since we are well aware of the links that bind us together as a religious family. It is a family within which, while taking into account the diversity of our 31 groups (Congregations, Institutes of Consecrated Life, Societies of Apostolic life, Associations of the Faithful, etc.), the respective Constitutions, Regulations or Statutes present the *family spirit* and the family atmosphere as the constitutive element of our being, of our identity, and they make explicit reference to pastoral activity in the family and with families.

This helps us realise our responsibiity as the Salesian Family, a responsibility that in practical terms means that we cannot turn our gaze in a different direction to that which the Universal Church under the guidance of Pope Francis is strongly committed. It is a responsibility that demands that we as educators of boys and girls, teenagers and young people look through «Salesian eyes» at the real situation of families nowadays and in all humility offer our contribution.

2. AN INVITATION TO A CALM AND QUIET READING OF THE EXHORTATION *AMORIS LAETITIA*, WITH A HEART OPEN TO DIALOGUE AND TO AN ENCOUNTER

I now invite everyone of you to read carefuly and calmly with a heart open to dialogue and personal involvement to what the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) is saying to us, in

order to discover what the document is offering us and requesting from us. Anyone who is a believer and loves the Church will realise that this Apostolic Exhortation is indeed a service to the human race and a true spiritual and pastoral treasure. It is from our awareness of being the «Salesian Family» that we want to become involved.

The Exhortation of Pope Francis is based on the Magisterium of the recent Popes, Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, and on the two Synods of 2014 and 2015, the final reports of which are quoted in abundance. It therefore sums up the Church's reflection over many years, but at the same time it introduces a change of tone, of language and of perspective which moves from the canonical level to a more pastoral one. The Supreme Pontiff himself declares: «We also need to be humble and realistic, acknowledging that at times... we have proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families. This excessive idealization, especially when we have failed to inspire trust in God's grace, has not helped to make marriage more desirable and attractive, but quite the opposite»[2].

Introduction (*AL* nn. 1-7)

The Exhortation speaks about the joy of Love as it is lived in the family and of the rejoicing of the Church in this regard. As we have said, it brings together the contributions of **two Synods**[3] and points out that the family has very many complex and varied features in which religious, political, cultural, economic and legal aspects all come together. In such a varied and diverse situation, we are all called to safeguard family life with love. Rather than a problem families are an opportunity. In fact we can say that in

[2] *Amoris Laetitia* (AL), 36.

[3] The first Synod on the family: between 5 and 19 October 2014 (in the Vatican), with the Theme: "The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization"; the second Synod, between 4 and 25 October 2015 (in the Vatican), with the Theme: "The vocation and the mission of the family in the Church and contemporary world." Taking part in these Synods were bishops, priests, religious men and women and married people.

spite of the crises with which the family nowadays is faced the new generations still see it as the safest place for them in which they can find unconditional acceptance.

Chapter I.
The family in the light of the Word of God (*AL* nn. 8-30)

The family appears frequently in the Scriptures, from the opening pages until the book of Revelation; they speak about generations, about love stories, of family crises, of violence in the family. «The idyllic picture presented in Psalm 128[4] is not at odds with a bitter truth found throughout sacred Scripture, that is the presence of pain, evil and violence that break up families and their communion of life and love»[5].

At the centre of this Psalm 128 is a couple, a man and a woman and their love story. «So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them» (Gen 1,27). This couple who love and generate life is an image of God the Creator and Saviour. This fruitful love is a sign of the intimate reality of God, because God in the depth of his mystery is not solitude but family.

The experience of suffering and bloodshed in the family

Suffering, evil and violence are a reality present in the family from its very beginning, as sacred Scripture describes it. In the first family there is Cain's murder of his brother Abel; there are great disputes in the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Tobias and Job... In his sickness Job bitterly complains about his family in these words:

[4] We read in psalm 128: "Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways. By the labour of your hands you shall eat. You will be happy and prosper; your wife like a fruitful vine in the heart of your house; your children like the shoots of the olive, around your table. Indeed thus shall be blessed the man who fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you from Sion all the days of your life. May you see your children's children in a happy Jerusalem! On Israel peace!" (Psalm 128/127,1-6).

[5] AL, 19.

*«He has put my **brothers** far from me, My **kinsfolk** and my close friends have failed me... The guests **in my house** have forgotten me... I am repulsive to my wife, loathsome to the sons of my own mother. **Those I loved** best have turned against me...»* (Job 19,13-19)[6].

The Gospels too report many family tragedies and sad situations at which Jesus was present: the illness of Peter's mother-in-law, the death of Lazarus, the death of the daughter of Jairus, the widow of Naim's tragic loss, the lack of wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee... This makes us understand that the family as presented in the Bible is not an abstract reality: there are crises, sufferings, tribulations, weakness, sorrow, cries of anguish... The same thing can be said about the lights and shadows that illuminate or obscure family situations, or work which is the means of sustenance and something that can be a source of happiness or sorrow and anziety.

CHAPTER II.
THE EXPERIENCES AND THE CHALLENGES OF FAMILIES (*AL* nn. 31-57)

In this chapter Pope Francis offers a vast panorama of the problems and the challenges that affect families nowdays, without presuming to present an exhaustive analysis of a complex social institution that the family has become at the present time.

In a context marked by profound changes, cultural, structural and in life styles which deeply affect the family, the Pope identifies the following situations:

- *Individualism, internal tensions, stress, a reduction in the number of marriages, civil unions;*
- *Loneliness, self-centredness, sexuality commercialized, the commercialization of the body, separation, divorce, fall in the birthrate, a mentality against having children;*

[6] Bold type has been used to highlight references to family relationships.

- *New models of families, the development of biotechnologies, the sexual revolution, sterilization (female and male), abortion, the weakening of religious practice;*
- *Poverty, the lack of decent or affordable housing, the absence of an adequate policy for the family, insecurity at work;*
- *Domestic violence, terrorism, drug abuse, economic insecurity, the breakdown of family relationships, resentment and hatred, disfunctional families, the weakening of family ties;*
- *Polygamy, genital mutilation, verbal, physical and sexual violence, sexual abuse, discrimination, feminism, male chauvinism, the lack of the affective education of children, the ideology of 'gender'...*

In the face of these difficult situations, it is however necessary to reaffirm that the welfare of the family is fundamental to the well-being of the world and of the Church. For this reason the family ought to be the focus of attention in the Church's mission while at the same time it should be recognised that practice of the mission has not always been what was required. «We have often been on the defensive, wasting pastoral energy on denouncing a decadent world without being proactive in proposing ways of finding true happiness»[7].

CHAPTER III.
LOOKING TO JESUS: THE VOCATION OF THE FAMILY (*AL* nn. 58-88)

Jesus gazed at the women and the men of his time; he went to meet them with love and tenderness, accompanying their steps with truth, patience and mercy while he proclaimed the demands of the Kingdom of God, and he accompanies us too today in our commitment to live and to hand on the Gospel.

In and among the families of today the Gospel message should always resound, that which is «most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary... because

[7] AL, 38.

nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wise than that message»[8].

Our teaching on marriage and the family, the Pope affirms, must necessarily be inspired and transformed in the light of the first message, the message of tenderness and love that comes from the Gospel; it is not simply the defence of a dry and lifeless doctrine.

In the Gospel Jesus takes up and brings to fulfilment the Father's plan for marriage: he restores marriage as a gift and proposes its indissolubility, restoring the original plan of God for the family and for marriage (Mt 19,3-8).

Christian marriage is seen by the Church as an expression of the covenant of the Son of God with human nature. But it should not be forgotten that, faced with the difficult situations in which wounded families find themselves, it is always necessary to bear in mind the criterion of discernment. The degree of responsibility is not the same in all cases; judgements should be avoided that do not take into account the complexity of the various situations, and it is necessary to be attentive to the way in which people are living and suffering because of their circumstances.

A fundamental point in this chapter is that of the **family as the transmitter of life.** Marriage is considered as a community of life in which conjugal love between a man and a woman is ordered also to fruitfulness. The spouses to whom God not grants the gift of having children can have a life full of meaning from a human and a Christian point of view as they strive not to close in on themselves. For this reason the family is the sanctuary of life, the human place where life at its various stages is generated, cared for and protected.

This essential dimension is accompanied by the challenge of the education of children. **Parents are responsible for the all-round development and education of their children;** this is a very important duty and a primary right of parents. States and the govenments of nations have the obligation to provide an educational service by way of assistance, but according to their own convictions parents have the right to freely choose the type of accessible and good quality education that they want for their children. The school cannot take the place of parents but rather complements them.

[8] AL, 58.

Unfortunately nowadays a wide gap has opened up between the family and society. There is a crisis in the partnership between society and the family, and in such a situation the Church is concerned more than ever to collaborate through its specialized pastoral activity in helping parents in their mission of education.

In a special way the **Christian family** as the domestic Church, living according to the teachings of the Gospel, is called upon to help to bring to maturity the ecclesial experience of communion among people: communion, forgiveness, tenderness, fraternal love, prayer...

CHAPTER IV.
LOVE IN MARRIAGE (*AL* nn. 89-164)

In this chapter the Pope presents a theological vision of love in marriage and in the family commenting on several expressions in the hymn of love from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, highlighting some essential attitudes:

> «Love is patient, love is kind: love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way, it is not it irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things» (1 Cor 13,4-7).

Patience is not simply a matter of putting up with everything; it does not mean letting others ill-treat us, or accepting physical aggression or allowing others to treat us as objects.

Patience is a characteristic of the God of the Covenant. He shows his patience through Mercy. Therefore for us patience ought to be an experience of *compassion* and of self-control in not reacting with anger in the face of the weaknesses of others, and so not allowing ourselves to be overcome by evil, or to be discouraged in doing what is right.

The Pope also speaks about an **attitude of service** as a dynamic and creative approach in the face of other peoples' needs, as that kindly love that seeks what is best for others; a generous love that does good things because love is not only a question of feelings but the ability to do what is good.

It is being **happy about what is best for others** because where there is love there cannot be displeasure with regard to the well-being of others. True love appreciates the success of others not seeing it as a personal threat; it sincerely values every human person recognising their right to happiness. Envy on the other hand means being sad about another person's good fortune, which shows that their happiness is of no concern to us.

In this list of Gospel attitudes in life there is also reference to **pride,** which certainly is not compatible with love, because pride is a desire for glory by someone who considers themselves superior to others. Love, on the other hand does not exaggerate its own importance before others; on the contrary it is attentive, positive, understanding, takes care, protects and helps the weak; arrogant people the Pope goes so far as to say are unbearable.

So that there can be a real encounter with the other person **a kind look** is necesssary; looking at the other with a kindly eye. Loving kindness builds bonds, makes new links, creates new networks of integration, knits together a firm social fabric. Someone who loves is able to say words of encouragement, build up trust and strength, console and energize.

Jesus was like that. He loved people... He said: "Take heart my son, yout sins are forgiven" (Mt 9,2); "Great is your faith!" (Mt 15,28); "Arise!" (Mk 5,41); "Go in peace" (Lk 7,50); "Be not afraid" (Mt 14,27). His were words that infused courage and hope. In our families we can learn much from the words and especially from the friendly attitude of Jesus.

Detachment is another component of love. To love others we must first love ourselves but not with a love that seeks its own interests. "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2,4).

Being ready to forgive means not taking account of evil; it is a question of adopting a positive attitude, trying to understand other people's weaknesses and finding excuses for them, as Jesus did: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk 23,34). To be able to forgive we need to have an experience that is liberating; we need to feel the embrace of the unconditional love of God... who loves without limit.

Love rejoices with others, rejoices in the truth, is pleased at the good of others, recognising their dignity, their good works. Love gives of itself, is able to take a risk... because "God loves a cheerful giver" ("2 Cor 9,7) and "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20, 35).

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things...; this brings out very strongly how countercultural love is in being able to face up to everything. Love does not damage the reputation of others and does not unload its feelings of resentment. Love also welcomes someone who causes them inconvenience, knowing how to live with imperfection, excuses and remains silent in the face of the limitations of the one loved.

Spouses, the Pope writes, need to learn to speak well of each other, highlighting the good points of their partner and not making so much of the weaknesses. This means watching what they say because sometimes the tongue "is full of deadly poison" (James 3,8).

Love is motivated by trust. There is no need to keep a check on the other person, to follow every step they take to prevent them escaping from us. Love leaves others free, has no wish to keep a check on everything, to possess, to control the other. Love leaves room for autonomy, for openness, for freedom since where there is no love there is no freedom.

Love hopes all things. It is important to believe that the other person can change and become better; to believe that a growth in maturity is possible and that hidden potential can bear fruit.

Love, sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony or "conjugal love", is dynamic and continues to grow under the inspiration of Grace (since it is God who sanctifies); and if this love does not grow it can be dangerous. It is said that growth in Conjugal Love is possible through divine Grace, but it also grows with the help of human effort, of inner silence, of a listening heart, of detachment, of dialogue, of prayer, of the education of the emotions (overcoming a lack of self-control and obsessiveness), of the attitude of someone who knows how to give importance to the other person and not under-rate the requests and the wishes of the other.

Towards the end of the chapter the Pope refers to **celibacy and virginity for the sake of the Kingdom.** Love – the Pope says – shows itself in different ways and in different styles of life in accordance with the different vocations. Celibacy and virginity for the sake of the Kingdom are forms of love, they are a gift of God (1 Cor 7,7). There is neither superiority not inferiority among the different vocations. Matrimony and celibacy are two complementary vocations.

CHAPTER V.
LOVE MADE FRUITFUL (*AL* nn. 165-198)

Love ia always open to welcome new life; love always gives life, and the family is the place where life is generated, where life

is welcomed and grows. Every new life comes as a gift from God as a sign of his selfless love.

The Pope states that every woman shares in "the mystery of creation, which is renewed with each birth;"[9] for this reason motherhood is a collaboration with God in the miracle of every new life.

As we read in sacred Scripture:

> «You knit me together in my mother's womb» (Psalm 139,13).
> «Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
> and before you were born I consecrated you» (Jer 1,5).

The Pope with the heart of a real Father and Shepherd writes: «With great affection I urge all future mothers: keep happy and let nothing rob you of the interior joy of motherhood. Your child deserves your happiness. Don't let fears, worries, other people's comments or problems lessen your joy at being God's means of bringing a new life to the world»[10].

Every child has the right to receive **the love of a mother and of a father,** each of them necessary for its harmonious and complete growth to maturity. Respecting the dignity of a child means affirming its need and its natural right to have a mother and a father, collaborators with the love of God. Father and mother together teach the value of complementarity, the coming together of different people where each one brings their own identity, paternity and maternity, masculine and feminine, for the harmonious development of the child.

We are aware – the Pope says – that nowadays many children and young people suffer from the absence of their parents; there is a lack of a maternal presence and a crisis of paternity. And particularly in the face of these difficult situations such as the crisis of paternity he says: «Mothers are the strongest antidote to

[9] JOHN PAUL II, *Catechesis* (12 March 1980), 3: *Teachings* III, 1 (1980), 543, quoted in *Amoris Laetitia*, 168.
[10] AL, 171.

the spread of self-centred individualism... It is they who testify to the beauty of life»[11]. Certainly, a society without mothers would be dehumanized, for mothers are always, even in the worst of times, witnesses to tenderness, dedication, moral strength.

Finally there is the idea of the **enlarged family**. Motherhood is not a solely biological reality, but is expressed in diverse ways, for example in adoption. Adopting is an act of love; through adoption the fruitfulness of love is extended and enlarged.

CHAPTER VI.
SOME PASTORAL PERSPECTIVES (*AL* nn. 199-258)

It is not a question here of presenting a set of rules but of being attentive to the deepest yearnings of human beings and of proposing values. What is needed is an evangelization that denounces the cultural, social, political and economic conditioning factors of the present time. A pastoral ministry is needed that opens up a dialogue and collaboration with social structures, that encourages and supports lay people in the cultural and socio-political fields.

The contribution of the Church to the family requires an appropriate family ministry and better training for priests, male and female religious and lay workers.

In this pastoral ministry it is necessary to help young peeople to discover the **value and the richness of marriage** through the process of **preparation** for engaged couples which helps them in their genuine growth in love for each other. They need to be accompanied in the process of preparation so as to be able to enter into marriage as a vocation, as a process of growing to maturity in love.

It is also essential to ensure a good preparation of the celebration of the marriage and **accompaniment in the first years of married life.** In the same way, **becoming fathers and**

[11] AL, 174.

mothers, which need to be decisions taken responsibly, presupposes the formation of the consciences of the spouses.

CHAPTER VII.
STRENGTHENING THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN (*AL* nn. 259-290)

Parents always have an influence for good or ill on the moral development of their children. This educational mission of the family is important and complex. The family cannot withdraw from being the **best place for the support, accompaniment and guidance of children.** Giving this up is never a solution. On the contrary, educating means creating processes leading to the mature living of freedom; educating is the fostering of all-round development and the cultivating of real and genuine autonomy.

The education of children includes the task of fostering responsible freedom so that they may be able to cope with critical moments in life wisely, safely and intelligently.

It is also the task of parents to promote **the ethical formation of their children,** a formation that cannot be delegated or entrusted to others. It always needs to be undertaken in a positive manner, speaking in a way that recognises the sensitivities of children and is intended to show them what is best for them in particular situations. Education encourages the formation of good habits and develops the responsible freedom that ensures a mature autonomy.

One educational dimension not to be neglected is **sex education,** which ought to given when appropriate. This is an education that includes respect for and appreciation of the differences, that help young people to accept their own body in its individuality.

In the way of being female or male not only biological or genetic factors come into play, since sexual difference involves many elements... Sexual difference (being male or female) is the work of God.

Finally we should not forget that **responsibility for the handing on of the faith** to their children is also that of the parents. The family still ought to be the place in which the depth and the beauty of the faith are taught and appreciated. This presupposes that the parents really have trust in God, whom they seek and have need of, and that they recognise that children are sensitive to symbols, gestures and stories. It is essential that children can see the faith experience and prayer in their parents in practical ways.

CHAPTER VIII.
ACCOMPANYING, DISCERNING AND INTEGRATING WEAKNESS (*AL* nn. 291-312)

The Church needs to accompany families giving them confidence and hope. There are however, wounded families; and so the work of the Church is often like that of a "field hospital". In our pastoral activity is it necessary to make use of the law of gradual progression since nowadays the absence of a real understanding of marriage and of the value of commitment is very widespread... It follows that in order to promote Christian marriage what is needed is a pastoral approach of mercy, encouragement, dialogue and discernment...

Pope Francis points out that many young people and adults, under the influence of a now widespread mentality, prefer simply living together. It is a sad situation that needs to be faced up to in a constructive way by being aware of it, and by offering patient and sensitive guidance as Jesus used with the Samaritan woman.

At this point in the Apostolic Exhortation the Pope deals with the important and sensitive issue of the **discernment of the circumstances,** that requires careful examination and deep reflection.

During the Synod, the Synod Fathers looked into various situations of weakness and of imperfection, experienced by a large number of families. The approach of the Church must not be that

of condemning people. It is essential to consider the complexity of the situations. No one can be condemned... We are called to exercise the divine pedagogy, avoiding any occasion of scandal.

In ordinary circumstances it is for the priests and pastoral workers to accompany and to promote discernment, seeking to understand the degree of responsibility, which is not the same for everyone. The thinking behind the mission ought to be that of pastoral mercy. It is necessary to accompany the various stages of growth of individuals with mercy and patience.

CHAPER IX.
THE SPIRITUALITY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY (*AL* nn. 313-325)

Love takes on different forms according to the state of life to which each one has been called. The spirituality of Marriage is a spirituality of the bond, nourished by divine love and by communion in the family, which is lived as a path of holiness in ordinary life: «If we love one another, God abides in us» (1 Jn 4,12).

When the family succeeds in centreing itself in Christ, **He unifies and illuminates the whole of family life** with its problems and sufferings. In this way any split is avoided and family prayer is the best way of expressing and consolidating Paschal faith.

The Spirituality of exclusive love. In marriage the spouses live with that sense of belonging completely to one other person taking up the challenge and the yearning of growing old together; for this reason everyday they renew before God the decision to be faithful whatever the passing of the days may bring. In this partnership each spouse is for the other a sign and an instrument of the closeness of the Lord: "I am with you always to the close of the age" (Mt 28,20).

The Spirituality of availability and of consolation. Christian spouses are cooperators in grace and in the witness of

faith for each other. God invites them to create and to care for the whole life of the family, where the person loved deserves their total attention. Jesus is the model for us because whenever someone approached him to speak with him he gazed on them and looked at them with love (cf Mk 10,21); he awakened in the other person the joy of feeling themselves loved.

We are well aware that no family is perfect, but needs to develop its ability to love gradually. Every family needs positive encouragement.

Families, let us move on. Let us continue to move on. What is proposed to us urges us to go further. Let us not be discouraged as we look at our limitations, but neither let us give up from seeking that fulness of love and of communion that we have been promised.

3. EVERY HOME A SCHOOL OF LIFE AND OF LOVE. OUR EDUCATIVE-PASTORAL CONTRIBUTION

3.1. The family the choice of the incarnate God[12]

«God chose a mother in order to become man and a family in order to grow and mature as such. It is a truth of faith that a Christian cannot ignore when he wants to reflect on the family». This is how the article I want to refer to begins. In fact belief in the incarnation of God is a distinctive element of the Christian faith as the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms. Certainly if the reason for our salvation was the love that God has for us then the incarnation was the way of bringing it about. But in this fact there is something else that really draws our attention. The decision of God to assume in the Son the human condition leads to two very significant facts: that of being born of a woman,

[12] This is the title of a piece of work by Prof. Juan José Bartolomé, a talk prepared for the Salesian Family Days on the Family in January 2006. It was not published. The content of what I am writing here is largely inspired by that work.

becoming the son of the Virgin Mary, and that of *being born into a family,* that is to say the fact of having sought a family in which to be born and to grow as a human being.

One thing we know very well and which deeply moves us is the fact that God became son and he himself told his parents about his birth and convinced them to give their consent – to say yes.

Mary is full of grace before being mother; the son has already been thought about by God before being wished for by the mother. Mary does not ask for a sign in order to believe. God proposes a plan to her of which she does not feel capable. The virgin will conceive a son, who is not the fruit of a previous married life (Lk 1,35).

As far as Joseph is concerned, and different from what happened to Mary, God reveals his plan not in a conversation (Lk 1, 28), but in a dream (Mt 1,18.24). Joseph 'dreams' what God wants of him after the shock he exeriences at the forced entry of God into his marriage: that which is conceived in Mary is the work of the Spirit (Mt 1,18.20). And God, who "has usurped" his paternity without him knowing about it and without his consent now asks him to accept the *fait accompli*.

Both Mary and Joseph, although in different ways since their responsibiitites and roles within the family were different, had to *pay a price for being the family of God* both during the infancy and the boyhood of Jesus and also during his public ministry following a path that was not without its many difficulties. This experience makes the family of Nazareth and the families of yesterday, of today and of all times closer together.

The salvific will of God, that is the fact that God wanted to save us, "obliged" him to make himself like us. Once he was made man he wanted to learn how to be like us, learning to grow up as a man within the bosom of a family, "the cradle of life and of love in which a person is born and grows"[13].

[13] *Christifideles Laici*, 40

We can say with certainty that it was a family that "humanized the Son of God" and this undeniable fact gives to the family an exeptional sacred value.

3.2. Don Bosco, in a family but without a father

«I was not yet two years old when the merciful Lord hit us with a sad bereavement. My dearly loved Father, strong and healthy still young and and actively interested in promoting a good Christian upbringing for his offspring, one day came home from work covered in sweat and imprudently went down into a cold cellar. That night he developed a high temperature the first sign of a serious illness. Every effort to cure him proved vain. Within a few days he was at death's door, Stengthened by all the comforts of religion, he recommended to my mother confidence in God, then died aged only 34 on 12 May 1817[14]. I do not know how I reacted on that sad occasion. One thing only do I remember and it is my earliest memory. We were all going out of the room where he had died and I insisted on staying behind. My grieving Mother addressed me – 'Come John, come with me.' – 'If papa is not coming I don't want to come', I answered. – 'My poor son' my mother replied. 'Come with me, you no longer have a father.'»[15]

In this way Don Bosco himself 56 years later described that moment in his life. Don Bosco was very sparing when he spoke about himself, particularly in expressing his feelings, but with these few lines he displayed his tears, his inability as a little child to understand what was happening, realsing that his father was not moving and did not reply to him, and the weeping of his mother now a widow, who on that day saw her life change completely.

Whether the memory of that moment remained so vivid in Don Bosco or whether, that being hardly credible as one writer

[14] Critical studies state that he died in fact on 11 March 1817.

[15] ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Fonti Salesiane. Don Bosco e la sua opera*, LAS-Roma, 2014, 1173-1174./ Don Bosco Publications New Rochelle "Memoirs of the Oratory" pp. 7-8.

believes[16], according to whom it is more likely that it is a memory of what the grownups had told him while he was still a child, in any case Don Bosco tells us about the new circumstances his family found themselves in, which now were no longer what many other "normal" families were in, and they had to learn to grow up and develop without the person of the father and with the person of a mother who certainly had shown exceptional gifts. We can come to understand this from everything that Don Bosco decribes in a very under-stated manner. The great human and Christian qualities of that peasant woman, a widow and a mother with a family of five to care for can be seen. A woman who rejects a proposal for a second marrriage that would have been very helpful for her. Her three sons would have been entrusted to a good guardian who would have taken great care of them. But the generous woman replied: «The guardian could only be their friend, but I am a mother to these sons of mine. All the gold in the world could never make me abandon them»[17]. Don Bosco tells how his mother's greatest care was given «to instructing her sons in their religion, making them value obedience, and keeping them busy with tasks suited to their age.

From this we can see that the family of little John suffering from being an orphan could enjoy the deep love of a mother who consecrated her whole life to her sons, a mother who was for them the first and most important religious teacher; a woman taught them to be responsible, to work hard and be diligent, and to show loving care for those poorer than themselves. A mother who in the midst of so many difficulties and straightened circumstances did everything possible so that her son might follow his vocation and the call to the priesthood.

[16] "Don Bosco used to say his earliest memory was the death of his father; this is hardly credible since it happened when little John was only two years old. It is probable that he remembered what the adults in the family circle told him about it later". In Giacomo Dacquino, *Psicologia di Don Bosco,* SEI, Torino, 1988, 19.

[17] ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, o.c. 1175. Don Bosco Publications New Rochelle Memoirs of the Oratory p. 9.

Having considered Don Bosco's experience, it seems to me a good idea to refer to another great woman and saint in the Salesian Family, Mary Domenica Mazzarello, who in her turn was "marked" by her family situation, even though it is a matter of a family from several points of view different from that of Don Bosco. The state of poverty was similar, common to simple peasants, but the childhood and the family of Mary Domenica Mazzarello were very different. Mary Domenica did not grow up without a father and she was the first of a numerous group of siblings. She did not have to leave the place of her birth, Mornese, during her childhood and youth. She certainly shared the same amosphere of piety. In fact it was a different family model that profoundy marked the personality of Mary Mazzarello.

3.3. Close by helping to build up and restore

So far I have referred to the family of Jesus of Nazareth (the Lord), to the family of Don Bosco and that of Mother Mazzarello, in order to highlight the importance and the trascendence of the family in their lives. I am sure that in reading these pages many of us will recall one way or another our own personal experience of living in a family.

– A situation always more complex

It is a fact that the family, no matter how contradictory and controversial nowadays it is seen to be, continues to be the *structure of origin of human culture*[18]. It goes back to the beginnings of the human race and is found in all the known cultures, even if in a great variety of forms and models. In general, also today the majority of babies and children grow up in a family and it is there that they are marked in a way that will affect their whole lives. However, one cannot ignore and still less deny the fact that the

[18] Walter KASPER, *El futuro de la familia desde la perspectiva cristiana,* in George AUGUSTIN (ed). *El matrimonio y la familia.* Sal Terrae, Cantabria, 2014, 146.

family, as the structure of origin to which reference has already been made, is going through a profound transformation and a crisis. The causes of these changes and of this crisis are complex and very diverse.

We have seen the long list of situations and challenges that Pope Francis mentions between numbers 31 and 57 in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*. Other authors refer to others, even though all have much in common[19]: situations of poverty unworthy of human beings that make a normal family life impossible; migrations that break up and divide so many families; the long absences of parents because of work commitments. Often it is the economic conditions that make it difficult for them to live together as a family. Very often it is the economic factors that determine family values, the family's plans, a precondition to fatherhood and motherhood being financial well-being; social structures which have a great impact and the influence of which affect everyone in one way or another.

To all of these can be added the anthropological crisis of models of liberation, that cannot be ignored. Facts such as: the promotion of a culture at odds with the family, that leads to a diminution in its social value/estimation and to the "normalization" and at times to the championing of marital infidelity; the rejection of motherhood and fatherhood in the name of personal freedom; the acceptance of the idea of a child as being in competition with or even as an obstacle to greater economic well-being. It is a climate ever more widespread and propagated suggesting the social irrelevance of the family.

[19] Cf. Walter KASPER, o.c. 146-147.
Cf. Reinhard MARX, *No te despreocupes de tus parientes,* in Georges AUGUSTIN, o.c. 164-174.
Cf. Christoph SCHÔNBORN, *Cinco recordatorios...* in Georges AUGUSTIN, o.c. 216-218.
Cf. Pascual CHÁVEZ, "And Jesus increased in wisdom, age and favour with God" (Lk 2,52) AGC nº 392, Rome, 2006, 8-13.
Cf. David LE BRETON - Daniel MARCELLI (de), *Dizionario dell'adolescenza e della giovinezza,* LAS, Roma, 289-292

Finally one could mention the complex geography of so-called types of family: new family units, restructured families[20] as an emerging phenomenon due to the increase of "natural" children, an increase in the number of divorces, changing partners for cohabitation...; all phenomena that give rise to not only many different kinds of families (one-parent, reorganised, homo-parents), but also various kinds of cohabitation according to different criteria: marriage, free unions, civil contract unions (PACS), etc. To have a more precise idea of the complexity of this situation, as it exists in some parts of the world, it should be said that a reorganised family is one that is made up of one of two parents, the child or children of the first union and the partner of this parent. This is only one possible example because there can be a variety of similar models. The sociologist Irène Théry was able to indentify (already in 1993) 25 different kinds of reorganised families[21].

All of this leads us to think that the institution of the family is something that is becoming ever more complex, without forgetting that the cultural differences in the five continents add many other elements to the complexity we are talking about.

Faced with this situation, we ask ourselves whether, starting from our position as educators, pastors and evangelisers there is anything we can do for families.

- ***Empathy* as the first human response**

Precisely in these contexts what is expected from us is the *ability to empathise* in the face of pain and weakness. It is an empathy that is very much connected to something that is characteristically our own: *the family spirit.*

By *empathy* we mean that thoughtful ability, that makes people able to understand the inner world of others. It makes it possible to be aware of their feelings, to understand their actions better, and the way they respond to particular situations. *Empathy* makes it possible in a certain sense to put oneself in another person's shoes. It helps the educators and the evangelizers of boys and girls and young people to understand the often complicated world of their families and become bridges and mediators in sensitive and important situations.

In these difficult circumstances what is expected from us is *empathy* in the face of broken or *patchwork* families, or families that are deeply wounded in which selfish personal interests caused a breakdown. There are families in which it is the children above all who suffer deeply, or in which they become "hostages against the other spouse", as Pope Francis puts it[22].

Empathy is needed from us in those life situations in which we have to help to build up relationships, to treat or heal the wounds; situations in which we can help to ovecome fears, remembering as in the text from the bible, "not to quench the smouldering wick"[23].

Empathy when families, as will have happened also in our own, have to learn to be families by their mistakes. This needs humility and understanding, forgiveness and mercy, since in the family all have the right to forgiveness and all have the ability to forgive in order to build and to rebuild the family.

Empathy when we are called to accept our limitations and those of others. This gives every member of the family an opportunity to become enriched by the love that is being offered and to make others rich with their own gift, aware that gratuitousness is the starting point for buildng the family.

Empathy, finally in helping to build and to re-build lived situations.

[20] Cf. David LE BRETON - Daniel MARCELLI, o.c. 290-291.
[21] Cf. *Ibid.* 291.
[22] Cf. AL, 245.
[23] Mt 12,20; Is 42,3.

– **Attitude proper to our family spirit**

In the different situations in which it plays a part the Salesian Family around the world finds itself in a great variety of complex circumstances. Our boys and girls, together with their families, have the right to experience our ability to understand, to empathise, to appreciate their feelings, since having a deep and attractive ***family spirit*** is – and needs to continue to be – a special characteristic of ours.

This family spirit was fundamenal and a guiding principle for Don Bosco and it inspired him while he was beginning his work, dreaming about it, planning and sustaining it[24], so that love might always reign in it in an atmosphere of openness and familiarity. A feature of this family spirit should also be "the qualities of genuine brotherhood, affection, open-hearted friendiness, accompanied by a simple, cordial and welcomimg human approach»[25].

Our young people and their families need to be able to have the experience that the Salesian houses in our Family throughout the world are *places were life is cared for, their lives*; places where one can expect that the doors are always open and that awaiting them there is a civilised atmosphere of welcome (full of human feeling) on the most important and often most difficult occasions in life. They ought to feel, as Don Bosco would have ensured, that they are always well received and never judged or condemned. And this by the fact that even when it has to be said that something is not possible or cannot be allowed, the point is made with the greatest respect for the dignity of the individuals, and with a sense of fairness and justice. In this way we shall not fall short in what should be our distinguishing features as the Salesian Family in the world.

[24] SALESIAN GENERAL CHAPTER XX (SGC), n° 649.
[25] *Ibid*, 427; GCXXIV, n° 91-93; Pascual Chávez, Letter of the Rector Major, o.c. 41.

3.4. In the school of Life and Love that is the family

This is one of the fundamental keys of the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* and is something of the utmost importance for the contribution that we as the Salesian Family ought to be offering in response to the call that the Church is making on behalf of families: awareness of the great mission that families have, from their different standpoints, as *schools of Life and of Love.*

With other people, groups and institutions we shall be at the side of families, we shall walk together with them, but we can never substitute what is irreplaceable in families, that is their essential vocation to be "communities of love and of life"[26].

➢ A first contribution to be offered to families will be that of helping them to become aware that they really are the "patrimony of Humanity"[27] and **the first and the shared school of humanity** in which the vocation to love grows and is cultivated, since it is in families, at least as long as they have not been too deeply damaged, that things are considered not so much in terms of the advantage to the individual but as being to the benefit of all. Every member is recognised as being something good in themselves and, in general, preferential treatment is given to the weakest: the little ones, the sick, the handicapped and the elderly.

➢ Another special characteristic of the family is its being a school of life and of love because **the family is the home,** it is the hearth. This expression «hearth and home» in some of our cultures is full of affection and of human warmth – 'making oneself at home' – because it involves something much richer than the physical space of the house. «The hearth and home is the nest, the cradle of life. It is the special place for life, where it is welcomed responsibly, educated with generous dedication, celebrated joyfully, fed with the bread of work and tears, healed when

[26] VATICAN COUNCIL II, GS 48
[27] Document of the Latin American Assembly of Bishops at Aparecida, n° 302 and 402.

injured, and mourned when it is no more»[28]. For this reason when the family is missing it is very difficult to replace it. The social services of the State as far as is possible, can only compensate for or mitigate its absence. In fact «for the infant the family is a primary unlimited 'resource', and it continues to be so also for the adult»[29].

➢ Families are accompanied in the concrete circumstances of their lives when parents are given the help they need – in some situations fathers or mothers who are struggling on alone – to understand the fundamental value of the **affective suppport they are providing for their children.** This means doing everything humanly possible to ensure that their children feel deeply loved, which helps them to grow up in a well-balanced and harmonious way, because love is like the fire that is kept burning in the hearth. «We love our children because they are children; not because they are beautiful, or for this or that reason. Not because they look or think as we do. We love them because they are children! A child is a child»[30], Pope Francis declares. It means accepting children as they are and devoting oneself to them, giving them time and attention. It is not enough for a father or mother to think that though they spend little time with them it is quality time. It is necessary that the amount of time is proportionate to the needs of the children, since someone who is unable to share their tiny interests and the smallest things in their lives, without noticing it runs the risk of slowly distancing themselves from being part of their experience.

➢ In the more stable families **the life of the parents is characterized by their dedication,** by that giving of themselves to

[28] Card. Jorge Mario BERGOGLIO, *La familia a la luz del documento de Aparecida,* An article published in *Familia e Vita* XIII n° 2-3/2008, 64-72 and quoted in *Papa Francisco y la Familia* LEV Romana, 2015, Madrid, 51.

[29] Walter KASPER, *El futuro de la familia desde la perspectiva cristiana,* in Goerge Augustin (de), o.c. 169.

[30] AL, 170.

each other in love and that giving of themselves together to their children. In the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis strongly affirms that «every child has the right to receive love from a mother and a father: both are necessary for a child's integral and harmonious development[31]. He continues «We are speaking not simply of the love of father and mother as individiuals, but also of their mutual love, perceived as the source of one's life and the solid foundation of the family»[32].

We know that it is not always possible to enjoy the presence of both parents. In the world there are millions of families in which the children are living with just the father or the mother, but that does not mean that we have to refrain from saying what a great benefit the witness of both parents is for the sons and daughters. At the same time whatever the make-up of the family may be it should never be forgotten that the dedication and selfless devotion of the parents shape the values that the children assimilate and prepare them in the best way possible to face up to the difficulties they will meet in life.

➢ The family becomes a school that prepares for life when within it **dialogue, communication and mutual understanding are taught and learned**. When these values are beng lived in the family the children learn to listen, to converse, to share and to take an interest in whatever concerns their life together, the house and individuals. And we all know that being able to live together, to understand each other, to excuse and to forgive are attitudes that go together.

When such an atmosphere is fostered, the family becomes a place to live in which people look out for each other and think about what is best for the others who they respect and for whose ways they make allowances. They learn different attitudes that may seem contradictory but which prepare them for life when they are adopted in harmony:

[31] Cf. AL, 172.

[32] *Ibid.*

- dialogue and personal responsibility;
- autonomy and solidarity;
- taking care of oneself and seeking what is best for everyone;
- being assertive about one's proper place in the family and being able to forgive;
- a readiness to express one's own opinion and at the same time capable of listening and a respectful silence.

➢ In the family one also learns **to recognise and to experience limitations.** Nothing that happens within the family can be outside the concern of its members, even more so when the children are involved. It follows that the parents or the father or the mother when only one of them is head of the family wherever thay may be or whatever happens have to keep everything in their thoughts and in their hearts. Parents are called to be attentive observers, capable of following their children with a caring heart, but also capable of setting limits to their children's freedom for their own good. «Vigilance is always needed and neglect is never beneficial... Obsession, however, is not education»[33]. It is for this reason that the Pope tells us «What is most important is the ability lovingly to help them grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy»[34].

➢ **The most precious and essential virtues** (love, faith, freedom, justice, respect, being hardworking, integrity...) **put down roots in family life,** and this apprenticeship undertaken in life with affection, is decisive and fundamental for the children. Consequently, it ought to be the constant concern of parents and educators to act with educational sensitivity to put down the roots of what is essential. It is in this context that efforts are made to educate[35] to freedom, to responsibility, to ethical and moral development, to affectivity, to empathy, to openness, to the care of others and of nature, as well as to love and to a responsible sexuality. All of this is a huge task in the formation of individuals and the family has a fundamental role; to carry it out it can rely on the help of other institutions and in particular from our convinced point of view on the help of the Church.

[33] AL, 260 and 261.
[34] AL, 261.
[35] Cf. AL, 262, 263, 264, 268, 282 and 283.

➢ Faced with the actual situation in many societies in which the most hoped for aspiration is for a comfortable and easy life so that comfort and well-being become the first and final goal and people are convinced that with money everything is possible, it is vitally important to **educate families to a life of temperance and moderation** to the consumption of what is necessary and not totally superfluous, to the value of simplicity of life. Parents who shower their children with an abundance of superfluities run the risk of neglecting what for them is more necessary, that is their guidance and principles, their affection and their love. In this regard Pope Benedict XVI declares: «Suffering is also part of the truth of our life. So, by seeking to shield the youngest from every difficulty and experience of suffering, we risk raising brittle and ungenerous people, despite our good intentions: indeed, the capacity for loving corresponds to the capacity for suffering and for suffering together»[36].

It is unfortunately true that there are many more families who are living in a «forced poverty» who cannot aspire even to what is necessary. We are aware that the distribution of wealth is not just. But it is opportune to point out that our help to families is demonstrated in our offering them guidance in the education of the their children in this regard, *without ignoring the fact that this way of thinking could be even more important for some parents.*

➢ **The ability to commit oneself is vital in peoples lives,** and it will be in the lives of the children . The family prepares for life when it teaches that being responsible individuals means

[36] BENEDICT XVI, *To the Diocese and the City of Rome on the urgent task of education* (January 21 2008).

making the right use of freedom and keeping one's word; making clear that exercising one's freedom is much more than deciding between what I like and what I don't like. It means being aware of the value of *responsibility* and of a *spirit of hard work*; from this point of view it is very important that in the family they learn that you can be free when you put your heart into what you are doing.

➢ Following our consideration of life and from the perspective of the values that motivate us, **the great gift that parents can offer to their children is the process of handing on the faith,** a committed and active faith. «The home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and the beauty of the faith, to pray and to serve our neighbour»[37]. We know very well that the faith is a gift of God and not the result of our actions «yet parents are the means that God uses for it to grow and develop»[38]. Certainly as the Pope says in the same place this «handing on the faith presumes that parents themselves genuinely trust God, seek him and sense their need for him, for only in this way does 'one generation laud your works to another and declare yout mighty acts' (Psalm 144,4)»[39].

➢ The challenges and the tasks so far considered speak to us about the «**art of guidance and government**» of parents or of the mother or father who in an heroic way are guiding the family. With the expression «the art of guidance and government» we are referring in this context, to the fact that every son and every daughter represents a unique task very similar to the production of a work of art which even though it may never be completely finished is considered finished to the extent that every child is capable of safely making their own way in life.

[37] AL, 287.
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] *Ibid.*

3.5. Decisive Salesian Pastoral Mission: ACCOMPANYING and CREATING PROCEDURES

What we have said so far with plenty of proposals and suggestions, allows us to offer to the Salesian Family faced with this exciting and relevant challenge, some pastoral and pedagogical guidelines *starting with some questions*:

- How do you accompany parents, married couples and those at the head of their own family?
- How do you accompany the children especially those in our own Salesian circles, so many boys and girls throughout the world?
- How do you accompany through our youth ministry, our family and parish ministry those young people who are already making plans to get married and raise a family?

The answers to these questions demand our pastoral initiatives, actions and decisions:

1. To take up in a determined manner the challenge of **considering as our educative-pastoral priority that of giving attention to Families** It has been said many times in so many assemblies, in Provincial Chapters and also in General Chapters. The time has come to declare in every Salesian centre in the world that it is not possible to think of a single educational and pastoral work with boys and girls and young people in which the need is not clear of how to be in close connection and communication with their familes and how to involve them. «Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for an effort at evangelization and catechesis inside the family».[40] We have to convince ourselves that it is not enough that the priority of the young as those to whom our mission is directed is clear to us.Today more than ever this task of education and evangelization is *inseparable from the family*.

[40] AL, 200.

2. To take decisive and appropriate steps to undertake **accompaniment** as a priority by means of practical concrete initiatives according to the various contexts:
   - Accompaniment of parents and married couples who are willing to accept it.
   - Accompaniment of boys and girls and young people in Salesian centres around the world that is real, especially in regard to difficult family and personal situations.
   - Vocational accompaniment of all the young people and in particular of those who are planning their way of life in marriage.
   - Accompaniment which in practical terms becomes a project of spirituality and of faith as giving meaning to life in the most diverse family situations with which we come into contact.

3. **Helping families to educate and to grow with affection and the heart,** with all that this implies in our educational system (Preventive). We know how slow the process of growth to human maturity is. After first being born comes the second initiation into life that consists in the transmission of values. For this reason «the children need that protected space and that affective security that they find in the love of their parents; and in their turn they strengthen and enrich the bond of love in the relationship between the parents»[41] In our role as educators and evangelizers we have to give priority to this aspect. Along these lines we have to *build up permanent bridges with parents* in order to discover together how to cultivate in the families and in our centres for the benefit of their children, a welcoming, listening attitude, dialogue that avoids being authoritative without providing reasons, close relationships, giving people the time they need, personal contact, the affection that overcomes barriers and distances.
   In the letter we have mentioned, Pope Benedict XVI, referring

[41] Walter KASPER, *El futuro de la familia desde la perspectiva cristiana,* in Goerge AUGUSTIN (de), o.c. 150.

to the «educational emergency» underlines the need to educate on the basis of love: «It needs first of all that closeness and trust which are born from love: I am thinking of the first and fundamental experience of love which children have, or at least should have, from their parents. Yet every true teacher knows that if he is to educate he must give a part of himself, and that it is only in this way that he can help his pupils overcome selfishness and become in their turn capable of authentic love»[42]. We know very well what he is talking about if we think about Don Bosco, who asks of us that we not only love the young but that they know that they are loved. We need to be able to pass on to parents this message in a very convincing manner.

4. **Accompanying and supporting parents in their mission of education, involving them as much as possible;** sometimes parents themselves, even though they may very much want to take on the responsibilty of being the primary educators, do not know how to do so. «Collaboration with youngsters' families should be intensified, since parents are the primary educators of their sons and daughters. To this end they should be offered in our works an educative climate rich in family values» the GC24 declared addressing itself to Salesians[43]. We need to be creative; some initiatives have been successful in some periods but then have become less so. It is not always easy to motivate parents but this problem should urge us on to reflect even more, together with them, on what they really need. «In this regard, dialogue with parents at a deeper level is required in order to identify the ways in which it is possible to profit from the potential of the families themselves»[44].

[42] BENEDICT XVI, *To the Diocese and the City of Rome on the urgent task of education* (January 21 2008).

[43] GENERAL CHAPTER XXIV of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, Rome 1996, 177; Pascual Chávez, o.c. 41.

[44] Walter KASPER, o.c. 175.

5. Seriously taking up the task of **helping parents in the education to love and in the sex education of their sons and daughters.** Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation referring to what Vatican II requested in the Declaration *Gravissimum Educationis*, exclaims: «We may well ask ourselves if our educational institutions have taken up this challenge»[45]. Many indicators seem to suggest that as regards this responsibiity in Salesian centres around the world there has been instead a retreat. It seems that the inherent difficulties have restricted us not a little. However, as educators (male and female) we feel the obligation to educate to love those to whom we are sent, and we are convinced that fostering in our houses an educational setting that is fully open to communication and affection is itself a great lesson about love. We are convinced of the need for suitable affective and sex education and for a careful catechesis that helps young people to understand the nature and the expression of love[46].

6. **Offering in a Salesian manner our services and our help to parents and to families when they are dealing with difficult and critical personal situations.** And while we may advise them in their personal problems as couples to seek help by having recourse to other professionals, we, as educators and pastors, can provide a very important bridge for the benefit of their chidren. One can easily understand that they may make mistakes in their married life and in their families. Our help as far as possible will consist in helping them to try to work on their relationship with each other, to find ways to maintain communication and recommend forgiving each other as an effective way forward and of believing in the possibility of a fresh start. Finally helping in the process of growth and maturity through the relationship with the other person.

[45] AL, 280

[46] GENERAL CHAPTER XXIII of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales, *Educating young people to the faith.* Rome, 1990, 195-202,

7. **Being an open house for everyone[47] in domestic churches within the one Church.** In many parts of the world domestic churches have been the support and defence of the faith in times of persecution, of the lack of religious freedom, etc. Often parents and their children are far from any religious experience or unfamiliar with it. In situations like these the Salesian centres with their groups and associations, our religious communities, the various apostolic groups, prayer groups, Bible study or adult catechetical groups, voluntary service, etc., can all provide the opening and the spiritual setting favourable to the welcoming and integration of groups of parents and of families.

8. **Accompanying young people in their planned way of married life.** Is Christian marriage celebrated and lived as a sacrament perhaps a model that is obsolete and a thing of the past? It was Pope Benedict XVI, during the VII World Meeting of Families, held in Milan in 2012, who raised this issue, this challenge about marriage to young people declaring that «it is possible and a joyfilled experience, even though it takes an effort to live a faithful love, for always, open to life». It is of the greatest importance to help young people to discover the richness and the value of marriage. Young people «should be helped to perceive the attraction of a complete union that elevates and perfects the social dimension of existence, gives sexuality its deepest meaning and benefits children by offering them the best context for their growth and development»[48]. From the faith perspective the Christian ideal is given support by the conviction that it is beneficial for people to commit themselves by means of their free choice and together to set themelves an elevated and ambitious goal which is very different from a too idealistic view of marriage. For this reason:

[47] Walter KASPER, o.c. 159-160,

[48] AL, 205.

- We ought to help young people to discover that it is a good thing to want what marriage and the family have to offer when they are lived in a positive way.
- Help them to believe confidently that from the perspective of love, this way of life, if this is their vocation and God's call, is possible for them.
- Let us walk beside them helping them to become aware in a realistic manner of the dangers of a starry-eyed approach that can lead to disappointment when all their dreams are not realised.
- Help them to discover that in Christian marriage there is something of extraordinary beauty based on the fact that *love falls within the realm of God.* This is the meaning of the sacrament as an effective sign of the Love of God within them.

9. Helping parents and families understand, especially in times of difficulty, that, **from the spiritual point of view, the life of every marriage and of every family unfolds on the basis of the law of progression and gradualness**[49], and likewise on a development that is continuously renewed and deepened in the Mystery of Christ. There are many values that can be shared with parents and children, for example: the value of constantly exercising tolerance and patience; spending time with each other; giving expression to signs of love, affection, tenderness and respect; gratitude and love for one another. Part also of this experience are family prayers and the celebration of faith. «It is a beautiful thing to be with adult couples who in spite of their advanced age, show in a mature way that they are in love. It is an expression of a human experience preserved and made a success from the human and spiritual points of view»[50].

10. Taking part in the long process of **reflection and discernment** beng carried out by the Churc**h, paying more attention to families, and emphasising the** priority of mercy as the essential value of the Gospel. All of this ought to have an influence on our educative and pastoral practice. We need to be fully convinced of the need to follow the **criterion of gradualness, which is a characteristic of pastoral activity with families,** and use it in our vision, our planning and our educative and pastoral practice.

[49] Walter KASPER, o.c. 156.
[50] *Ibid.*

11. To all of this can be added many other initiatives and criteria, which in the light of what I have suggested to you, I invite you to think about at local level and in your different situations. The following may serve as examples:
    - Let us not to be afraid of *proposing human and spiritual values to our young people and to their families*. The families often need this and are grateful for it.
    - As far as is possible let us contribute to ensuring and promoting in families *the sense of the joy of Loving*.
    - Let us ensure that in our houses, as an expression of our availability, there is hospitality and a welcome especially for those to whom we are sent and their families.
    - In our centres let us provide opportunities for married couples to become front-line animators, guides and companions, educators and apostles among other married people who feel the need for them.
    - We are convinced that our commitment to the accompaniment of families can provide an extraordinary opportunity to contribute to *the eradication of every form of discrimination against girls and women*.
    - Let us profit from the examples of "good practice" regarding families that there are in many of our houses, sharing them among ourselves and making them known to others.
    - With honesty let us assess our attitude of *empathy* with mothers and fathers who are often living in situations of sorrow and anxiety.
    - Let us harness ever more effectively the pastoral energies of our Educative Pastoral Communities, taking full advantage

of the fact that our educative and evangelizing activity is community based.
- Let us so act that Salesian houses throughout the world will present a face and a model of the Church that will help parents and families to discover the faith or rediscover it should it have become weak or been abandoned.
- *Finally let us tirelessly and decisively return to the atmosphere of Valdocco.*

I conclude this appeal which I address to the whole Salesian Family, for greater attention to be given to families, to their sons and daughters in the different places where we find ourselves, making my own a special passage from the Apostolic Exhortation and taking from it the final prayer to the Holy Family of Nazareth.

«Our teaching on marriage and the family cannot fail to be inspired and transformed by this message of love and tenderness; otherwise, it becomes nothing more than the defence of a dry and lifeless doctrine. The mystery of the Christian family can be fully understood only in the light of the Father's infinite love revealed in Christ, who gave himself up for our sake and who continues to dwell in our midst. *I now wish to turn my gaze to the living Christ, who is at the heart of so many love stories, and to invoke the fire of the Spirit upon all the world's families*»[51].

[51] AL, 59 (the italics which are not in the original have been introduced by the writer).

PRAYER TO THE HOLY FAMILY

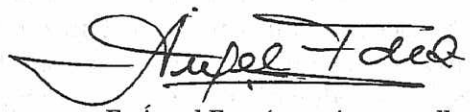
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendour of true love;
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalized
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Graciously hear our prayer.
Amen



Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

2.1 YOUTH MINISTRY AND FAMILY

Fr Angel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME
Rector Major

It contains a "guidance - directive" of the Rector Major expressed through a letter addressed to the Provincials on the theme of the family, in the work of Salesian Youth Ministry.

Dear Father Provincial,

in his final address concluding the works of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis affirms: "We have seen, also by the richness of our diversity, that the same challenge is ever before us: that of proclaiming the Gospel to the men and women of today, and defending the family from all ideological and individualistic assaults. [...] In effect, for the Church *to conclude* the Synod means *to return* to our true "journeying together" in bringing to every part of the world, to every diocese, to every community and every situation, the light of the Gospel, the embrace of the Church and the support of God's mercy!"

With the same feeling I'm addressing you because I would like that Pope Francis' wish may become for our Congregation a further "journeying together" on the roads of the education of young people, especially the poorest and those most in need. A "journeying together" always more prone to consider the family as a protagonist of the Salesian educative and pastoral experience.

The Department for Youth Ministry, starting by the special attention that the Congregation has given to the family in our GC27 together with the Synodal process promoted by Pope Francis, is leading a process of reflection by involving all the Provinces in view of the *International Congress on Youth Ministry and Family* which will take place from the 27th of November to the 1st of December 2017.

At this point, I would like to ask each you, my dear Provincial Fathers, to dedicate a moment of reflection together with your Provincial Council around the theme of the family according to the guidelines and questions proposed in the following pages.

Your contribution will represent a precious assistance to the Department for Youth Ministry in preparing the *International Congress on Youth Ministry and Family*. Your reflection will also light up the way to the process of animation that together with the General Council, we are carrying on around the theme of the family, which, as Congregation and as Church, are called to discover always more as a privileged field for the proclamation of the Good News.

With deepest gratitude for your collaboration,

1. Reflection

In the Final document of GC27 we, Salesians of Don Bosco, acknowledge that "an emerging apostolic front that we have begun to take better care of is family ministry." We want this ministry "to be seen in strict connection with youth ministry." (CG27, 20).

Such pastoral urgency is also present in Pope Francis' analysis in *Evangelii Gaudium*: "The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children." (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 66).

As for the Synod of Bishops, in its Final report it reaffirms that for us "the family is the primary and fundamental "school of humanity" (cf. *GS*, 52). [...] The Church, expert in humanity and true to her mission, announces with deep conviction the "Gospel

of the Family" (Synod of Bishops, *The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world*, Final report, 2).

QUESTION 1:
WHICH CHALLENGES DOES THE FAMILY PRESENT TO YOUTH MINISTRY IN YOUR PROVINCE?

2. REFLECTION

The *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry describes the Educational and Pastoral Community as "a centre that welcomes the greatest possible number of people interested in the human and religious aspects of the area." Then it states that "one clearly identified pastoral challenge is to achieve a fuller sharing with the family, which is the primary and indispensable educational community." (*Salesian Youth Ministry, Frame of Reference*, Chap. V, 1.D).

In *Evangelii Gaudium* Pope Francis presents this challenge as "a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young" for "growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray", and that there is also "a certain exodus towards other faith communities". (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 70).

The Synod of Bishops has chosen a pastoral approach that recalls us in a special way: "we note the importance of connecting youth ministry with family ministry" (Synod of Bishops, *The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world*, Final report, 90).

As Salesians of Don Bosco, at the GC26 we had already proposed the commitment to integrate the family ministry into the provincial and local pastoral and educative project, by fostering the formation and the involvement of lay people as collaborators (GC 26, 99, 102, 104). (GC 27, 71.5).

QUESTION 2:
IN YOUR PROVINCE'S PROJECTS, SUCH AS THE OPP, THE SEPP AND OTHER PASTORAL DOCUMENTS, WHICH DECISIONS HAS THE PROVINCE TAKEN OR IS GOING TO TAKE IN THE AREA OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND THE FAMILY?

3. REFLECTION

We are glad to notice that in many Provinces there are several pastoral initiatives in favour of the family, both as protagonist and object of our pastoral action. Such initiatives enable us to meet the challenge of "a spiritual 'desertification', as the result of attempts by some societies to build without God or to eliminate their Christian roots." The family is becoming for us "a parched place where faith nonetheless has to be preserved and communicated" (Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 86).

Among other initiatives, the Synod of Bishops affirms that family catechesis is of great assistance as "an effective method in training young people and parents to be aware of their mission as evangelizers of their own family" (Synod of Bishops, *The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world*, Final report, 89).

Within our Salesian pastoral experience, several proposals are already at work in this area:

- "the emergence of counselling centres in support of education to help with family problems, run by both lay people and religious, is an interesting and promising development;
- the same can be said of groups that help parents in educating their children to the faith;
- EPCs are committed to making parents aware of their educational responsibility, in the face of new emerging patterns of education;

- EPCs are paying particular attention to accompanying young couples and actively involving them in the EPC."

Thus, the importance of making "a careful community discernment, in order to identify and respond to the most urgent problems of the family, making use of all the resources available."

All of this invites us to foster "a greater involvement of the family in the SEPP" (*Salesian Youth Ministry, Frame of Reference*, Chap. V, 1.D).

QUESTION 3:
WHICH PROPOSALS IN YOUR PROVINCE CAN BE QUALIFIED AS GOOD PRACTICES, WHICH ARE INNOVATIVE AND ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY MEET THE NEW CHALLENGES CONCERNING YM AND THE FAMILY?

2.2 MISSIONARY APPEAL OF THE RECTOR MAJOR TO THE SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

Fr Angel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME
Rector Major

It contains a letter of the Rector Major, addressed to all the Confreres of the Congregation, which the Rector Major defines as "a missionary appeal 'ad gentes' to all the provinces all over the world and to all those confreres who feel called by the Lord to live the Salesian vocation in this particular form: to be available to be Salesian missionaries 'to all peoples, to externs, for life'".

Dear Confrères,

I am writing this letter today, December 8th, 2016, on the 175th year since the commencement of the Salesian Oratory, when, as Don Bosco himself tells us, he recited that *Hail Mary* with Bartolomeo Garelli. I do it with a precise intention. This is a favourable day to launch a missionary appeal *"ad gentes"* to all the Provinces of the world and to all those confrères who feel called by the Lord to live their Salesian vocation in this particular form: being available to be Salesian missionaries *"ad gentes, ad exteros, ad vitam"* ("to the peoples", "abroad", "for life"). My appeal is a voice that must resound in all the Provinces and Salesian presences in the world in order to favour generous responses.

The fundamental reason for this appeal is threefold:

- The **Evangelizing mission** in the world requires from us, Salesians of Don Bosco, that we go beyond, that we open up even more to give a response to so many requests that continually come to us from the Church, for a mission of evangelization in diverse places and among many peoples.

- There are some presences of the Congregation we can no longer sustain because in some nations of the five continents **there are no Salesians** who can offer their service, whereas in other places the apostolic strengths are more numerous. I think in particular of the youth that are waiting for us in the context of Project Europe, in the Middle East, in countries with a Muslim majority, in the islands of Oceania, in South Sudan, in Mongolia, in Siberia, Cambodia and Malaysia, as well as among the young migrants of the American continent... and in many other places!
- The third motivation is intimately linked to the missionary passion of Don Bosco. After the great missionary challenge of Argentina, in 1875, to arrive, in due time, in Patagonia, it was – as some of his successors stated – as if he lived only for that project. Fr Albera writes: "Missions were always the heart of his heart and it was as if he lived only for them... He spoke about them with such an enthusiasm, that we were amazed and strongly edified by his inflamed love for souls"[1].

Don Bosco himself, in the note he sent in 1880 to Pope Leo XIII, explicitly says: "Foreign Missions were always a subject cherished by the Salesian Congregation"[2].

On the occasion of the journeys I made in these years and that allowed me to visit 44 Provinces, I often said that we have to reflect on this fact: if Don Bosco had decided to limit the field of the pastoral educative activity of the Salesians only to the needy youth of Italy – which would have been a legitimate priority, considering that Italy was very much in need of his Salesians – and if he had not had the great passion and the great missionary vision that spurred him at every moment, today the Salesian Congregation would be a small congregation, limited to one nation. It was the missionary spur of our Father that made the Congregation universal in the Church and in the world.

[1] Paolo ALBERA, *Circular Letters*, 134.
[2] MB XIV, 624.

Dear Confrères, for the above reasons, I now address to you this strong appeal and invite you all to generosity. First of all I ask the generosity of those confrères who hear this explicit call from the Lord. Then I ask the generosity of the Provinces, Rectors and, in particular, of Provincials, that they do not stifle in any way the missionary unrest of young confrères and of no other confrère, confining their view and their interest only to their own Province. We cannot forget our origins and our charismatic identity.

You know well how we proceed in these cases. As soon as the Rector Major receives a call, a letter or an email from a confrère who expresses this wish, the Dicastery for the Missions begins a serene, serious and profound discernment with the Confrère and with his Provincial. Everything is then brought to the knowledge of the Rector Major. Discemment often highlights the suitability of the candidate; but sometimes it is not so. In any case, we only look for the good of the persons and of the mission.

This is my appeal, my dear Confrères.

I invite you to pray for this intention in the entire Congregation. Many are the persons who have not yet been reached by the announcement of the Gospel. Many young people need a friend, a brother, a father whom they will be able to find in the Salesians they will meet.

May Mary Help of Christians bless this generosity of yours and may Don Bosco continue to accompany us in our commitment to being true missionary disciples of Jesus.

Yours affectionately

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

2.3 RENEWED COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE

Fr Francesco CEREDA
Vicar of the Rector Major

Constitutions assert that the Vicar of the Rector Major "is particularly entrusted" with "the care of religious life and discipline"[1]. Starting from this constitutional statement, I was wondering what is to be understood today as religious discipline and what commitment is to be promoted in this regard in the Congregation. This is required, among other things, by the project of the Rector Major and of the General Council for the 2014-2020 period; in fact it requests to "make Provincials and Provinces responsible for the care of religious discipline by fostering a culture of *vocational fidelity* and of prevention of lapses in religious discipline".

Religious life and discipline are not separated from one another; rather, they are realities that recall and integrate one another. Religious life is the hidden treasure and the pearl of priceless value; in its turn, religious discipline is the investment to make so as to obtain them, selling whatever one has[2]. Religious life does not subsist without religious discipline; neither does the latter have any meaning without the first. In fact, the witness of consecrated life requires a constant commitment to discipline, and vice versa discipline aims at showing the charm of consecrated life.

The awareness of the identity of Salesian consecrated life has grown during these past years. It is "a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting"[3] in the footsteps of Don Bosco. In our General Chapter 27, this identity is seen in its testimonial relevance and is deepened in its threefold mystical, prophetic and diaconal dimension. Salesian consecrated life is more and more

[1] Const. 134.
[2] Cf. Mt 13: 44-45.
[3] JOHN PAUL II, *Consecrated Life*, Vatican City, 1996, n. 22.

understood and lived in the totality of its aspects as *"confessio Trinitatis" (confession of the Trinity)*, *"signum fraternitatis" (sign of fraternity)* and *"servitium caritatis" (service of charity)*[4]; and the Salesian is more aware to commit himself to be mystic in the Spirit, prophet of fraternity and servant of the young.

Nevertheless, the sense and practice of religious discipline must still grow. At present, Provinces are committed to living vocational fidelity and to preventing lapses in religious discipline; they pay more attention in accompanying the confrères who are experiencing difficulties in living their Salesian vocation; they try to solve irregular situations. Because of this there is a greater responsibility today with regard to an authentically lived consecrated life, and therefore the need is felt for a renewed commitment to religious discipline[5].

1. Discipleship and Discipline

The word "discipline", from the Latin verb "*discere*", means learning, drill, instruction, training. "Discipline" is necessary in all sectors and walks of life: at school and at work, in the family and in the office, in sports and in social relationships. In order to learn music, a craft or a foreign language, the "disciple" must obey certain rules, follow the advice and corrections of their instructor, do an exercise that implies repetition, fatigue, sacrifice, patience and perseverance. At the beginning, discipline is mainly an exterior practice, but it is gradually interiorized until it becomes self-discipline and a life-style.

Also in the life of faith there is a journey of learning and a discipline that accompanies it. In the Gospel, the disciple of Jesus is

[4] Cf. *Ibid.*
[5] It is important to resume what Rector Major Fr Egidio Viganò had already proposed in a letter of his; Cf. E. VIGANÒ, *New Commitment in Religious Discipline*, in "Acts of the General Council" n. 293, Rome 1979. See also these other letters of his: *Saint John Bosco*, in "Acts of the General Council" n. 310. Rome 1983; *Be on the Watch, With Your Robes Hitched up and Your Lamps Alight*, in "Acts of the General Council" n. 348, Rome 1994.

presented as the one who sits at the feet of the Teacher and listens to his teaching, so as to walk later after him faithfully following in his footsteps. However, at the school of Jesus one does not learn only a world vision or a religious wisdom. In fact, He is a particular Teacher because the contents of his teaching coincide with His person. He himself is the Word to welcome, a Word that is the way, the truth and the life.The "discipline" we learn from Jesus is therefore an initiation to the mystery of God, to Whom he gives us access, allowing the disciple to live not only *like* Him, but *in* Him.

Jesus, who to those who listen to him speaks with authority and acts with power, lives in his conscience in an attitude of profound obedience to the Father and of full docility to the Holy Spirit. While he tells us "Learn from me", he lets himself be led in the way of a demanding handing over of himself even unto the cross. Because of this, the letter to the Hebrews daringly asserts that,"though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered"[6]. Jesus invites those who follow him to enter into this filial obedience; those who do not assume the demands of this call cannot be his disciples[7]. Therefore there cannot be any discipleship without discipline.

In the light of these considerations, we can understand that the most authentic nature of Christian discipline, of which religious discipline is a particular expression, is to be found in the Trinitarian dynamism of obedience and glorification that Jesus lived in his Passover of death and resurrection. By calling us to follow him and proposing the paradoxical discipline of life that it implies, Jesus initiates us into living as children who gratefully and humbly accept the sovereignty of God and who do not walk any longer under the burden of the flesh, but rather in the vivifying strength of the Spirit. The profound core of religious discipline is therefore becoming *docibilis a Spiritu Sancto (capable of*

[6] Heb 5:8.
[7] Lk 14: 26-27, 33.

being taught by the Holy Spirit), as was understood so well by venerable Fr Giuseppe Quadrio, who made of this motto his programme of life.

Religious discipline is, therefore, an essential part of our "discipleship" in the following of Jesus. Nevertheless, this "discipleship" does not aim solely at our sanctification. The Church reminds us that "to some [...] *for the sake of all*, God gives the gift of a closer following of Christ in his poverty, chastity, and obedience"[8]. And it re-affirms this in the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, stating: "Thus, while those who follow the evangelical counsels seek holiness for themselves, they propose, so to speak, a spiritual 'therapy' for humanity, because they reject the idolatry of anything created and in a certain way they make visible the living God. The consecrated life, especially in difficult times, is a blessing for human life and for the life of the Church"[9]. In fact, it is religious discipline inherent in consecrated life that demolishes the idols of pleasure, of possession and power, and gives witness to the world that God is the sole Absolute that suffices of his own.

2. Formative Commitment to Religious Discipline

It is difficult to accept the consequences that derive both at personal and community level from this evangelical vision of discipleship and discipline. The following of Christ, in fact, is always realised within well defined historical contexts, in which other styles of life are widespread, models in competition with the Gospel, different priorities by which to "discipline" one's own existence. For example, in consumer society, the culture of liking prevails, and so does the culture of what gratifies in the moment and offers immediate satisfaction; those who grow in this context, find it difficult to understand the sense of sacrifice, renunciation,

[8] CIVCSVA, *Essential Elements in the Church's Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to the Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate*, Rome 1983, 7.
[9] JOHN PAUL II, *Consecrated Life*, 87.

perseverance. On the contrary, in other cultures the burden of social conventions and the paternalistic use of authority may lead to a formal observance and to a formative style unable to foster personal responsibility.

The assimilation of religious discipline consolidates with the passing of time and requires a constant care for formation. In fact the loss of the sense of one's own identity as a consecrated person, the shallowness of spiritual life and the weakening of apostolic passion often lead to an irregular life and to an exterior observance. Religious discipline is the sign of the vitality of a Congregation. Without religious discipline great things are at stake: prayer becomes sporadic, the practice of the evangelical councils minimalist, community life weak, and apostolate among the young loses momentum. In particular, the lack of fraternal life fosters individualism: the confrère takes distance from the community, lives in his own world, gradually shifts towards mediocrity and bourgeoisification, avoids ascesis and is in search of an easy life.

In formation work, it is not enough to transmit enthusiasm for the ideals of apostolate or generically to appeal to the sense of responsibility of the individual. Adhesion to the Lord Jesus requires the *concrete assumption of a consistent style of life*, of which it is important to understand the profound motivations and for which it is necessary to be trained with commitment. What St. Paul affirms in the first letter to the Corinthians, when he compares Christian life to a race in the stadium, concerns us too, like athletes who train for the race, so as to win the prize, we too are in need of a formation and a discipline that enable us to the mission: "Everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*"[10].

Among the most spread attitudes in present society that today mostly challenge religious discipline and lead to that logic of

[10] Cf. 1Cor. 9: 24-27.

spiritual worldliness often denounced by pope Francis, we can indicate in particular three aspects, which require particular attention in initial and ongoing formation: the search for self-fulfilment, individualism and spontaneism. Obviously it is not possible here to give an adequate talk on each of them. It is however easy to understand that they respectively concern the way in which to understand personal freedom in the relationships with God, with the others and with oneself.

The narcissistic quest for *self-realization* is opposed to the evangelical logic of handing oneself over and of the free gift of oneself; it does not accept the paschal dynamics according to which life is found only by losing and donating it. It leads to self-referentiality, to verify the validity of the choices on the basis of immediate gratification, of personal results and success, and not on faith and the fecundity of the sacrifice done with love and out of love. It weakens the availability to let oneself be guided by God, the sense of renunciation motivated by love, the commitment to those aspects of the mission that are not gratifying, but require a humble, hidden and unselfish work.

Individualism, in its turn, favours retreating into oneself and a scarce knowledge of the dynamics of the community. Community life is understood in an instrumental way, as a context or background of personal protagonism, and not as the place of the experience of God and the condition for pastoral fruitfulness. This attitude, which regretfully is widespread also among us, constitutes a distortion of the right esteem for autonomy and personal initiative that find their vital space in communion with the brethren and not in an alleged self-sufficiency.

Spontaneism, finally, is a feature of contemporary culture that, in its thirst for genuineness and the refusal of conventions, tends to confound freedom and spontaneity, considering as authentic only the choices that are done without any effort and with immediacy. In this way one forgets that true freedom is the fruit of a long journey of liberation from one's selfishness and of

a patient learning the capability to choose the true good. For example, spontaneism leads to the illusion of being able to do a true journey of prayer without a serious commitment of fidelity to the times of prayer, without constancy in following a method for meditation, without respecting the moments of silence. In the apostolic field, one has the illusion of being an educator without patiently learning the Salesian art of assistance; it confounds creativity and flexibility with a shallow style of action, that does not reflect and does not plan nor verify; it lets one live under a constant improvisation, mindless of educative journeys and processes.

3. Spiritual Sense of the Norms

The discipleship of Jesus and the very structure of human freedom require, as was already said, a discipline that rules the existence, delivering it from the risks of improvisation. It must help to turn the divine gift of vocation into a coherent practical behaviour that is shared in the Congregation to which one belongs and that can be recognised and witnessed to in front of all. Religious discipline has a fundamental *pedagogical function*.

For this form of life to be possible, it is necessary that, besides inspirational documents and texts, the Congregation also have rules that translate into a normative way the demands of the common vocation. Feeling bound to their observance is a component of religious profession that cannot be underestimated, nor be reduced to simply organizational motivations. The law is not the foundation of faith, but it recalls and realizes the way to accept the gift of divine grace.

The observance of rules in consecrated life is a spiritual matter. In fact, only love can grasp the spirit of the law that no letter alone will be able to transmit. Love and law do not exclude one another and are not confounded, but they reciprocally call one another. No one who loves despises the law of God, neither in its

highest expressions, like the ones contained in the Scripture, nor in its manifold historical translations, like the teachings of the Church, the rules of a Founder, the Constitutions of one's own religious Congregation.

Besides its pedagogical value, the law also has a second function that, though subordinate to the first, is not less important. This is the *function of protecting the community from abuses and deviations*. If no norm can ever fully transmit the charm of the grace that is to be found in the event of the call and of the testimony of those who live it, its task is in any case that of indicating with clarity the borders out of which one is no more in the path of the charism and on the way to sanctity. The law must warn against deviations, point out dangers, indicate behaviours that are incompatible with the identity of a spiritual family and betray its spirit. Precisely in this time when the ecclesial community greatly suffered from the grave scandals of some of its members, it is again possible to recognize that a disciplinary norm constitutes, even in its most severe and sanctioning aspects, a gift that cannot be underestimated.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his homily on the Feast of the Sacred Heart at the closing of the year for priests, proposed a courageous reflection on this point. He affirmed: "Today we can see that it has nothing to do with love when conduct unworthy of the priestly life is tolerated"[11]. Discipline is important also in its dimension of control and sanction: as long as forms of concupiscence exist in us, it is providential that there be commandments that help recognize them and fight them off, even if it were also for some grave transgressions for which there is the threat of sanctions.

The rules of religious life, therefore, from the most severe and solemn to the most simple and wise ones, cannot be underestimated nor ignored.Even though they are not the foundation of consecrated life, yet they are the fruit of a consolidated wisdom.

[11] BENEDICT XVI, *Homily on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart*, Vatican City, 11 June 2010.

Those who truly love the Lord Jesus and the charism of the founder, know how to value them for what they are: a precious aid for liberty. However, those who follow them perfectly but without that interior disposition of the heart that is given by love, actually would only pretend to observe them.

Diverse are the *contents* of religious discipline and the sources from which it draws[12]. The first one of these is in the Magisterium of the Church; as part of our discipline we follow the indications that are given us in various forms: the Code of Canon Law, the guidelines of Vatican II, the teachings and decisions of the Pope, the documents of the Holy See, ... The Constitutions and Regulations are a second point of reference; in them we find ourselves in front of an original ascetical programme made of behaviours and attitudes, sensitivities and aspirations, moral qualities and virtues, that make it possible for a consecrated person to be recognised as belonging to a definite Congregation. General Chapters are another source of religious discipline; they are an exercise of discernment to discover what the Spirit indicates in a precise historical moment. Eventually, the Superiors help the confrère and the communities to know the will of God; the fraternal colloquy is also part of religious discipline, and requires openness and trust from the individual confrère and availability and welcoming from the rector; likewise, obedience to the decisions and dispositions of the superiors, active participation of the confrères in the meetings at community and provincial level are also part of religious discipline.

4. Salesian Charism and Religious Discipline

Each founder left to his spiritual children, together with the charm of his sanctity and the enthusiasm of his mission, also a peculiar vision of religious discipline that is consistent with the

[12] Fr Gaetano SCRIVO, Vicar of the Rector Major, explained in an operational guideline the contents of religious discipline; Cf. G. SCRIVO, *Contents of Religious Discipline*, in "Acts of the General Council" n. 293, Rome 1979.

characteristics of his own charism. Don Bosco too, under the inspiration of the Spirit, elaborated his own concept of religious discipline; this however, before finding it in his teachings, is to be found in the example of his life. He was always concerned, for himself and for the others, with a strong pedagogy of self-control; in this way one can become an ascetic of daily life.

Even though the public image of don Bosco is characterized by his driving joy, there also is in his personal experience a consistent presence of that element of struggle and sacrifice that is a constitutive part of paschal dynamics. This is clearly testified to by those who had a close knowledge of him. Don Bosco expressed this vision, for example, in the dream of the pergola of roses: his life seems beautiful to the eyes of all, but the roses inevitably present hidden thorns, which can be trod on only with the spiritual combat of obedience and mortification. To those who have chosen Salesian life, he tells in this dream: "If you are out for a nice time, you had better go back. If not, follow me"[13].

The diverse testimonies of the first Salesians converge in showing that don Bosco had a very rigorous discipline of life and that the heroic renunciations to which he submitted himself were born from his zeal for the apostolic mission. Austerity to him was not a dimension added to his pastoral dedication from outside, but it was the internal condition to live it. In this sense, he identified the core of Salesian discipline in the motto "*work and temperance*", considering both work and temperance in a strongly apostolic logic: work is the service of God and of the young in the forms required by obedience; temperance is renunciation to all that opposes it.

This is the logic of "*da mihi animas, cetera tolle*", that our Constitutions reflect in article 18: the Salesian "does not look for unusual penances, but accepts the daily demands and renunciations of apostolic life: he is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain wherever God's glory and the

[13] MB III, 34.

salvation of souls require it"[14]. Likewise in article 71 they recall the statement of don Bosco who tells us: "Substitute acts of penance with acts of obedience"[15]. The Salesian lives the mystics of work and of *"da mihi animas"* and the ascesis of temperance and of *"cetera tolle"*; there cannot be one without the other.

Religious discipline for don Bosco consists in the observance of the rule. Because of this he insists on the concrete adhesion to the Constitutions: "The observance of our Rule is burdensome. [...] And then, my dear sons, do we wish to go to Heaven in a carriage? We became religious not to enjoy ourselves but to suffer and to earn merit for the next life. We consecrated ourselves to God not to command but to obey; not to attach ourselves to creatures but to practise charity towards our neighbour, moved solely by the love of God; not to live a comfortable life but to be poor with Jesus Christ, to suffer with Jesus Christ on earth, to be made worthy of his glory in Heaven"[16].

Already in his first circular letter he stated clearly: "The first object of our Society is the sanctification of its members. Therefore each one on entering will strip himself of every other thought, every other concern. Whoever enters to enjoy a calm untroubled life, have comfort [...], would have a twisted purpose and his would no longer be that *Sequere me (follow me)* of the Saviour's, since he would be following his own temporal interests and not the good of souls. [...] Our basis for this are the words of the Saviour who says: "[...] Whoever wants to be my disciple, [...], let him follow me in prayer, penance, and especially by denying himself, accepting the cross of daily tribulations and following me. [...] But how far does he follow him? Until death, and if necessary, even death on a cross"[17].

As can be seen, religious discipline as outlined by don Bosco is a faithful echo of the Gospel, with the charm and scandal of its

[14] Const. 18.
[15] Const. 71. Cf. MB XIII, 89.
[16] MB XVII, 15-17.
[17] MB VIII, 828-829.

paradoxical demands. Don Bosco proposes it with the sweetness of him who made of the preventive system a true spirituality and intends to facilitate in the confrères the practice of good with loving kindness, rather than confining himself to repressing abuses. This paternal and respectful loving kindness however is not shallow or lax; it rather expresses the conviction that people have to be drawn on the way of good with goodness and with the strength of the example, rather than with coercion and imposition; with the medicine of mercy, rather that with the arms of rigour[18].

Conclusion

As a Congregation today, we find favourable conditions to assume a positive vision of and a renewed commitment to religious discipline. The promotion of the culture of vocational fidelity, the prevention of lapses in religious discipline and the solution of irregular situations certainly favour this assumption; on the other hand this remains a challenge.

However, due to frailty and weaknesses, we may sometimes find ourselves in front of lapses in religious discipline regarding prayer, the evangelical councils, community life, the apostolic commitment or economy. In such cases all of us, and especially those who exert in the community the service of authority, must keep vigil on the behaviour and style of life of the confrères and the communities through accompaniment and fraternal correction. In the case of grave faults against discipline, as for instance the *"delicta graviora" (more grave crimes)*, these require to be sanctioned and to intervene promptly; in such situations, the responsibility is serious and we must pay greater attention to guarantee the personal and spiritual good of the confrères, to avoid the harm these behaviours may cause to other people, and to avoid discredit on the Congregation and its action.

[18] JOHN XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Speech for the Opening of Vatican Council II, 11 October 1962, 2.

Let us therefore together, as a Congregation, assume the commitment to religious discipline with a renewed spirit and with full awareness: we will thus be able to overcome the risks that even today threaten our vocation so as to live our Salesian consecrated life to the full.

2.4 RENEWED ATTENTION TO THE SALESIAN BROTHER

Fr Ivo COELHO
General Councillor for Formation

The publication of *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church* by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life at the end of the Year of Consecrated Life is a good occasion to give renewed attention to the vocation of the Salesian Brother. GC27 asks us to "continue to reflect both on the aspect of consecrated life and on the specific nature of the Brothers with regard to fraternal life and the mision."[1] Interestingly, as we will see below, reflection on the Salesian Brother opens up, in fact.

1. The journey made so far

While almost all our general chapters have taken up the theme of the vocation of the Salesian Brother, let us begin with the significant document of GC21 (1978), "The Salesian Brother: A lay religious vocation at the service of the Salesian mission." Fr Viganò's famous letter, "The lay dimension of the Salesian community" (AGC 298, 1980) was an authoritative comment on this document of GC21. In 1984 GC22 gave us the definitive text of the Constitutions, and in 1986 there followed *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*. In 1989 we have another fruit of the decisions of GC22: *The Salesian Brother: History, Identity, Vocation Ministry and Formation*[2]. In 2001, Fr Vecchi wrote "The Beatification of Salesian Brother Artemide Zatti: A Startling Precedent" (AGC 376), and accompanying this was a letter of Frs Nicolussi and Domenech, "A renewed and extraordinary

[1] GC27 69.7, and also 28.

[2] Dicastero per la Formazione, *The Salesian Brother. History, Identity, Vocational Apostolate and Formation* (Rome: Editrice SDB, 1989).

commitment to the vocation of the Salesian Brother." In 2003, Fr Cereda published "Care and Promotion of the Vocation of the Salesian Brother: A concrete commitment for the whole Sexennium" (AGC 382). GC26 presented a vision of our same consecrated vocation in its two forms, ministerial and lay, highlighting what is common along with the specificity and the reciprocity of the two forms. Finally, in 2013, the Rector Major with his council approved the revision of certain parts of the Ratio referring to the formation of the Salesian Brother[3]. From this journey of reflection on the Salesian Brother, certain themes can be seen to emerge: community, mission, consecrated identity.

1.1 Community

GC21 situated the Salesian Brother and the Salesian Priest squarely within the Salesian **community**: "it will not be so much the individuals who will perpetuate his [Don Bosco's] ideals as his communities, 'formed of priests and laymen,' closely united to each other by deep brotherly ties." For this reason, the chapter went on, "the clear precise dimension of each Salesian can only be studied and evaluated adequately in the context of a brotherly and apostolic community." (GC21, 171) The chapter speaks, in fact, of the "Essential mutual relationship between the Salesian brother and the Salesian priest." (GC21, 194-196)

This great intuition of GC21 was corroborated and deepened by subsequent developments in the ecclesiastical magisterium. Thus *Christifideles Laici* places the different states of life within "the Church that is Communion," and notes that they "are linked among themselves in such a way that they are ordered to one another," different yet complementary, each with its unmistakable character and yet related to one another and placed at each other's service (CL 55). In the three documents on the states of life within the church – *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, *Christifideles Laici*, and *Vita Consecrata* – we have an emergent "theology of sign." What is specific to each state really belongs to all, but is embodied in that state so as to serve as a sign and a prophecy to the other states. Thus, for example, service is not the mark of the deacon in an exclusive way. The whole church is called to serve; the deacon is an icon of service, a reminder to all in the church of our common vocation. In like manner, the lay state bears witness to the sacredness of created realities, and the religious state is a sign of the eschatological character of the whole church, reminding us all of our vocation to be so united one day with God that there will be neither marrying nor giving in marriage. (CL 55)

[3] Available at *www.sdb.org*.

Thus when GC21 tells us the **lay dimension** is the specific characteristic of the Salesian Brother[4], it is clear that this must be understood in relation to the community and to the Salesian priest. Fr Viganò understood this very well: in his letter soon after the chapter, he pointed out that the Salesian Brother is an embodiment of the lay dimension and "secular slant" that characterizes the congregation as a whole, and that the clarification of the vocation of the Brother is a test for the clarification of the lay element in our Society[5]. The Salesian Brother, we might say, is an icon of the lay dimension of the congregation. In the words of GC24: "To his consecrated brethren he recalls the values of creation and of secular realities," inviting them to collaborate with the laity and reminding them that the apostolate goes beyond strictly priestly and catechetical activity; "to the laity he recalls the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity to the world of work, attention to the local environment, and the demands of the professional approach associated with his educative and pas-

[4] "The lay dimension is the concrete form in which the Brother lives and operates as a Salesian Religious." (GC21, 178)

[5] Egidio VIGANÒ, "The Lay Element in the Salesian Community," AGC 298 (1980), section 5. See also section 4 where Viganò distinguishes three meanings of "laicità" and notes that the Salesian Brother is not "secular" in the sense in which laypeople within the church are, but that his vocation has nonetheless a real connection and a certain congruence of thought and activity with the first two levels of "laicità."

toral activity."[6] To the religions of the world, we might add, he is a prophecy of the beauty and sacredness of created realities.

But the Salesian Brother is an icon also of **communion** and fraternity, as suggested by *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*. This document has occasioned surprise because of the way it focuses rather exclusively on the religious brother as a sign of communion and fraternity. Fraternity, however, cannot be a marginal point for us who believe that God is a mystery of communion and of love. For Pope Francis, the central question before the church today is communion. The consecrated life is *confessio trinitatis*, and in his letter introducing the Year of Consecrated Life the pope reminded us that consecrated life is not meant to be shut up within itself: its vocation is to expand communion in ever-widening circles, in an expansion that knows no limits.

So the Salesian Brother has a very special place within the Salesian community, the educative and pastoral community, the ecclesial community, and the human community: always and everywhere he is an icon of fraternity. As GC21 had said: "He [the Brother] lives in constant fidelity to his specific vocation and becomes, together with his confreres, a sign of that new and permanent brotherhood established by Christ" (GC21, 176).

1.2 Mission

A second point that emerges in the reflection of the congregation is the charismatic centrality of **mission.** GC22 (1984), in its elaboration of the definitive text of our Constitutions, chose to centre all the elements of Salesian life and work explicitly around mission. This may be seen not only in the contents of the articles but also in the structure: "Sent to the young in communities following Christ." So it is in the light of mission that we

[6] See GC24 154, and Pascual CHÀVEZ, "Il Salesiano Coadiutore," San Benigno Canavese, 19 March 2005 (unpublished) (http://www.Coadiutoresalesiano.net/index.php/2002-14-chavez).

have to ask about the identity of the Salesian Brother and the Salesian priest.

A study of the Index of our Constitutions reveals that we have only two articles on the specific identity of the Brother and the Priest: C 45 and C 116 (and, interestingly, 6 articles on the priest that regard authority). Unfortunately, the Index does not mention an article of great importance, one that indicates to us, clearly and synthetically, the identity of the Salesian, whether Brother or Priest: C 98, *the formation experience*:

> 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.

Pastor and educator of the young: this is our fundamental identity, the supreme genus, that which is common to every Salesian vocation. Only after this comes distinction: "in the lay or priestly state which he has embraced," and this identity-in-difference becomes concrete, in the initial stages of Salesian life, through a formation that is basically equivalent (C 106), and always through the effort to learn by experience the meaning of the Salesian vocation (C 98), to discern the voice of the Spirit in the events of daily life (C 119). It is within the educative pastoral community that we manifest our common identity as educators and pastors, along with the specificity and reciprocity of the two forms of our vocation. Within this community, it is important today to ensure greater visibility to the Salesian Brother.

Mission is not, of course, simply work. Our mission as pastors and educators consists in revealing God. We are called to be epiphany, as was Jesus: signs and bearers of the love of God for the young, *vultus misericordiae*.

1.3 Consecrated identity

But the Salesian mission belongs to all the members of the Salesian Family. We Salesians share in it **as religious.** As Fr Cereda notes in his letter of 2003, there is need to talk also about the dimension of consecrated life. Especially in the light of the insistence on the sharing of our mission with the laity, the clarification and appropriation of our consecrated identity is of vital importance.

Uncertainties in the understanding of consecrated life have had serious consequences for the living out of our Salesian vocation in its two forms. On the one hand there is the temptation to reduce the vocation of the Salesian priest to its priestly dimension alone, and that too very often to a merely functional understanding of the priesthood, when not to a clericalist hankering for power, money and status. On the other hand there is the inability to understand and value the vocation of the Salesian Brother, with tendencies to either a clericalist compensation or else a secularist reduction[7].

Vita Consecrata (1996) was a great clarification of the place of consecrated life within the church. But what does it mean to be a "living memorial" of Jesus (VC 22)? What difference do the vows make to the way we share in the Salesian mission? What, we might ask, is the meaning of Jesus' celibacy? As always, nothing that Jesus does is exhausted on the plane of the functional. Jesus is always revealing to us the Father. He celebrated the value of marriage and yet chose to be celibate. He proclaimed in word and deed the good news that our supreme vocation is communion with God. The celibacy of Jesus is a powerful anticipation and revelation of the "life of the resurrection," where there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Consecrated persons are called to be precisely living memorials of Jesus, eschatological signs, in their poverty, chastity and obedience. In an age that has discovered the beauty of body and sexuality, the created world and freedom, and that yet blights all by exaggeration and overkill and an absolutizing of what is fragile and relative, consecrated persons are spiritual therapy, sign, prophecy. And it is our life that is a sign. The ministry of the priest remains valid even if the priest is unworthy, but the consecrated person is a sign only through the limpidity of his life. There is no chastity in a religious who is not chaste[8].

[7] Abraham M. ANTONY, "On the Sublime Vocation of the Religious Brother," *Consecrated Life Today*, ed. Paul Vadakumpadan and Jose Varickasseril (Shillong, 2015) 107; and Andrea BOZZOLO, "Salesiano prete e salesiano coadiutore. Spunti per un'interpretazione teologica," *Sapientiam dedit illi. Studi su don Bosco e sul carisma salesiano* (Rome, 2015) 318.

In a church that is not only Petrine but also Marian, and Marian before being Petrine, consecrated life takes its place at the Marian heart of the church. For the Petrine ministry is destined to pass, but the Marian is the ultimate vocation of the whole church[9]. Consecrated persons are a sign and a reminder to the whole church of its final vocation and destiny. And also here the Brother is a sign to his priest confreres in the community. His vocation is the Salesian life in pure form[10], *in statu nascendi*[11], a permanent reminder to his priest confreres of their consecration.

2. The path ahead

Reflection on the figure of the Salesian Brother thus leads us to a new appreciation of the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms. In the present guidelines, however, as we have said, we would like to give renewed attention to the lay form of our

[8] See BOZZOLO 335.

[9] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 773.

[10] Philip RINALDI in ASC 4, cited by Viganò, "The Lay Element in the Salesian Community," AGC 298 (1980) section 5.

[11] "In statu nascendi" (in the state of being born, or just emerging; nascent state) refers to the state of certain elements at the moment of liberation in a chemical or electrolytic reaction, characterized by a high reactivity. The term is now used analogously in other fields to indicate the great potentiality of certain experiences/situations at their origin, with the capacity to influence future developments. See, for example, Francesco ALBERONI, who uses it of the period in which a group of persons, united by common hopes, come together to create a new force (e.g., a movement), seeing in these beginnings dynamics which are very similar to those that we find when two persons fall in love.

Initial formation as of 31 December 2015[12]

	Post-novitiate		Practical training		Specialization before Specific formation		Specific formation		Total initial formation				All Confreres	
	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	S	L	Totale	% L	Totale	% L
Africa-Madagascar	265	19	123	10	31	4	146	4	565	37	602	6.15	1479	12.51
East Asia-Oceania	55	16	55	9	9	12	105	10	224	47	271	15.47	1408	14.48
South Asia	310	13	201	11	206	15	217	4	934	43	977	4.40	2682	5.59
Europe Centre North	52	4	46	7	2	1	81	8	181	20	201	9.95	2416	8.73
Mediterranean	36	6	40	5	24	3	62	7	162	21	183	11.48	3117	17.97
America-South Cone	53	17	42	1	3	4	69	7	167	29	196	14.80	1337	13.24
Interamerica	90	11	57	2	0	0	108	4	255	17	272	6.25	1817	10.89
UPS + RMG[13]	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	0	4	0	204	9.75
Total	862	86	565	45	275	39	790	40	2492	214	2706	7.90	14460	11.92

[12] Initial formation here includes Salesians after first profession until diaconate (included) or first five years after final profession for Salesian Brothers.
[13] Includes Eritrea.

vocation. The statistics reveal that the number of Brothers in initial formation is going down: only 7.90% as compared to 11.92% in the congregation as a whole, and even lower in regions with greater growth in vocations (5.06% as of 31 December 2015). This cannot be taken to mean that all is well with the large number of aspirants to the priesthood. The question of the Salesian religious identity is urgent for both forms of our vocation.

In the last few years, the congregation has exerted itself to take care of the vocation of the Salesian Brother, as for example through the revision of the Ratio concerning the initial formation of the Brother, and the setting up of centres for the specific formation of Brothers (CRESCO, Guatemala City; Sunyani, Ghana; Yaoundé, Cameroon; Shillong, India; Parañaque, Philippines; and Turin – though of these, Sunyani and Turin are not functioning any more, while Shillong is temporarily suspended). In the present letter we would like to propose some more strategies and lines of action at various levels of the congregation.

Strategies and lines of action

Study and reflection on the Salesian consecrated identity in its two forms	Guidelines in the AGC	Formation Sector
	Notes on the Salesian consecrated identity and the specific identity of the Salesian Priest and Salesian Brother	Formation Sector
	Clarification of criteria for discernment of the two forms of our vocation.	Formation Sector
	Plans for the animation of the provinces in the area of Salesian consecrated identity in its two forms	Provincial and Formation delegate of each province
Vocation animation	Taking advantage of two iconic figures of the Salesian Brother and the Salesian Priest (Bl. Stefan Sandor and Fr Titus Zeman, to be proclaimed blessed in 2017) to promote the Salesian vocation in its two forms	Provincial Formation Delegate with Provincial Youth Ministry Delegate
Initial formation	Regional courses for those in charge of prenovices in 2017	Regional Formation Coordinators with Formation Sector

Initial formation of Salesian Brothers	Personalized plan of formation in line with the 2013 revision of the Ratio on the Salesian Brother	Provincial in dialogue with the Brother concerned
	Presence and adequate preparation of Brothers within formation teams	Provincial
Specific formation of Salesian Brothers	Strengthening the existing centres (CRESCO, Yaoundé, Parañaque) and studying ways of making other centres available (Europe; South Asia; English speaking Africa-Madagascar)	Formation Sector with Regional Councillors and provincials concerned
	Study of curriculum and methodology for the specific formation of Brothers by means of a worldwide Consultation	Formation Sector
Salesian studies	Online course to facilitate the formation of formators in Salesian studies	Formation Sector

3. Conclusion

In a church that is communion, the vocation of the Brother can be understood only in relation to the Salesian Priest, the community, the mission, and the consecrated life. As Salesian consecrated persons we are signs and bearers of God's love to the young, living memorials of Jesus. In his letter at the beginning of the year of consecrated life, Pope Francis insisted precisely on this:

> I am counting on you 'to wake up the world', since the distinctive sign of consecrated life is prophecy. As I told the Superiors General: 'Radical evangelical living is not only for religious: it is demanded of everyone. But religious follow the Lord in a special way, in a prophetic way.' This is the priority that is needed right now: 'to be prophets who witness to how Jesus lived on this earth....'[14]

And again:

> What in particular do I expect from this Year of grace for consecrated life? That what I once said might always be true: 'Wherever there are religious, there is joy.'[15]

Through the intercession of Bl. Artemide Zatti, Bl. Stefan Sandor and Ven. Simaan Srugi, let us pray for a Salesian consecrated life that is transparent, visible and above all joyful. Joy is contagious, and happy Salesians are the best publicity for our vocation. Let us not forget the *via pulchritudinis*! (EG 167)

[14] FRANCIS, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, 21 November 2014, II.2.

[15] FRANCIS, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated People on the Occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life* II.1.

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

Below are some of the main activities of the Rector Major from August to November 2016.

– *August 2016*

After the conclusion of the summer plenary session of the General Council, the Rector Major participated in the Word Youth Days (WYD) celebrated in Cracow. He left for Poland on July 26th together with his secretary, participated in the first day of the Salesian Youth Movement 'Forum' at world level, and later took part in various events of the WYD.

After his return to Rome, on August 4th he went to Mornese to participate in the ceremony for the perpetual profession of several sisters and the celebration of various anniversaries of the FMAs, since on that day they celebrated the 'day of the Institute'. He returned to Rome after a short visit to Valdocco, and on August 9th he went to Spain, to his hometown to meet his family and at the same time have some rest.

On the 25th, accompanied by his secretary, he went to the city of Panama to begin his *visit to the Province of Central America* where, till September 6th, he could visit five of the six countries of the Province: Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador.

In the city of *Panama*, in the morning of the 26th he received the visit of the Archbishop, Msgr. José Domingo Ulloa, and afterwards he encountered the students and the educative community of the Don Bosco Technical Institute and a delegation of the FMAs and the Daughters of the Divine Saviour, as well as representatives of a public school with the presence of Salesian Cooperators. Towards noon, accompanied by his secretary and by the Salesian Rector, he was welcomed in the government palace by the President of the Republic of Panama, Juan Carlos Varela, with whom he had lunch, and also shared some projects for a future development of the Salesian presence in that country. In the evening the Rector Major met the Salesians present in that nation.

On the 27th in the morning he met the groups of the Salesian Family and in the afternoon he visited and presided over the Eucharist in the Don Bosco Basilica, a

place of pilgrimage for the entire nation, since one of the caskets containing the relics of Don Bosco that traveled around the world, in preparation for the bicentenary of his birth, is being kept there.

On the 28th in the morning, accompanied also by the Provincial, Alejandro Hernández, he arrived in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. After lunch he visited the community in Cartago, where he met with the confreres, the Salesian Family and young people of the SYM.

On the 29th he visits the community of CEDES Don Bosco and the Don Bosco College of Zapote. In the first house he meets representatives of the students and in Zapote he presides over the Eucharist and meets the Salesian Family in Costa Rica. Back in San José, he has a meeting with the Salesians and before dinner he visits the "Casa de la Virgen" where for many years Blessed Sister Maria Romero lived. There he encounters the FMAs of the house, among whom there is also a sister who lived with Sister Maria.

On the 30th, the Rector Major, together with those accompanying him, goes to Managua, in *Nicaragua,* where he has a busy day. He begins with a meeting with the students of the schools of the Salesian Family in Managua, then there is a festive lunch with the Salesians and lay collaborators and members of the Salesian Family, with the presence also of the Cardinal Archbishop of Managua, Leopoldo Brenes, Salesian Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, and the Salesian confrère bishop of Estelí, Msgr. Juan Abelardo Mata Guevara. In the afternoon he visits the house of Masaya where he meets the youth of the SYM in the country and the young people of that house. Later on he leaves for Granada, where on the 31st he spends the morning with the Salesian confrères of Nicaragua and in the afternoon he encounters the Salesian Family.

– *September 2016*

In the morning of September 1st, the Rector Major, accompanied by his secretary, arrives in Tegucigalpa, capital of *Honduras*. Then he has a meeting with Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, SDB, who shares lunch with the community. In the afternoon the Rector Major meets the Salesian Family of Honduras and afterwards the Salesians; then he presides over the Eucharist in the Church dedicated to St. John Bosco. During dinner he also meets Msgr. Luis Santos, SDB, Bishop emeritus of Santa Rosa of Copán.

On September 2nd in the morning the Rector Major meets the young people of the CFP and of the various schools of Tegucigalpa, then he makes a visit to the Basilica of Suyapa, where he is welcomed by the Rector, Fr Carlo Magno Nuñez. After a moment of prayer, he leaves a floral homage to Our Lady Help of Christians and to Don Bosco, a witness of the gratitude of Honduran people to the Salesian presence.

From September 3rd to 6th, the Rector Major is in *Salvador*. After lunch on the first day with the community of the parish of Mary Help of Christians, he meets numerous representatives of the Salesian Family of Salvador. On the next day he meets the young people of SYM. On the 5th, at "Don Bosco Citadel" he meets the youth of the educational houses and in the afternoon the Salesians of the country. The visit to the *Ospedaletto*, where blessed Msgr. Oscar Arnulfo Romero lived and where he was killed during the celebration of the Eucharist, was particularly significant. On the 6th in the morning, the Rector Major has a meeting with the Provincial Council and in the afternoon, together with his secretary, he leaves to return to Rome.

He remains in Rome from September 8th to 13th, doing the usual paperwork and having numerous hearings and meetings, including the one with the new missionaries who are preparing for the 147th missionary expedition.

On the evening of the 14th he goes with his secretary for a *visit to the ZMB Vice Province*, and in particular to the confrères and houses of Zambia and Malawi.

On the 15th in Lilongwe *(Malawi)*, after a time of rest, in the evening he celebrates the Eucharist with the confrères and some collaborators and members of the Salesian Family, and blesses the new building for the Salesian community in this city. On September 16th, in the morning he meets the Provincial Council and in the afternoon the young people of the SYM and of other movements and diocesan groups gathered in the Salesian house.

On the 17th he presides over the Mass in the Salesian parish, receives the promise of 20 new Salesian Cooperators and blesses the new altar dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. In the afternoon, he meets the Salesian Family of the country.

On Sunday 18th in the morning, after having presided over the parish Mass, the Rector Major, together with his secretary and the Superior of the Vice Province, Fr George Chalissery, leaves for Lusaka, Zambia. There he goes to the novitiate, where several Salesians, FMAs, Salesians Cooperators and benefactors have gathered. After the prayer of Vespers, the Rector Major blesses the new novitiate building.

On the 19th, he presides over the Eucharist in the novitiate, and has an encounter with the novices and the formators of the Vice Province. After lunch, he meets the FMAs, the Salesians and the young representatives of the different houses in the "City of Hope", a presence of the FMAs.

On the 20th in the morning, the Rector Major has a meeting with the directors in the provincial house and in the afternoon he goes to Bauleni, where he has a meeting with the Salesian Family and the celebration of the Eucharist. On the next day, the Feast of St. Matthew, in the morning he has a meeting with the SDB confrères present in the country. Then after lunch, along with his secretary, he makes the return trip to Rome.

On September 23rd, the Rector Major goes to Turin for a meeting with the Provincials who have finished or are finishing the third year of their service. The meeting takes place in the Salesian places (Torino-Valdocco, Colle and Mornese) till the 29th. The Rector Major is accompanied by his Vicar, Fr Francesco Cereda. During this encounter-pilgrimage, the Provincials make a personal revision of the experience and the performance of the Province during their first three years.

On Sunday 25th the Rector Major participates also in the 'Harambée' of the young missionaries and volunteers and in the afternoon he presides over the Mass in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians where the missionary crosses of the 147th missionary expedition are distributed.

He returns to Rome in the evening of September 29th, and in the afternoon of the next day, together with his secretary, he goes to Bucharest, to make a visit to *Constanta, in Romania*. He is welcomed at the airport in Bucharest by the Provincial of the INE Province and the director of the community, he then reaches Constanta, where on his arrival he has a meeting with the young participants in a meeting of the SYM of Romania and Moldova.

– *October 2016*

Always in Constanta, the Rector Major takes part in the celebratory moment "Don Bosco yesterday and today in Romania", to celebrate

the first 20 years since the arrival of the Salesians. There is also the Apostolic Nuncio in Romania and Moldova, Msgr. Miguel Maury Buendía, as well as civil authorities of the municipality and the province. In the afternoon the Rector Major meets the Salesians present in Romania and Moldova, along with some others coming from the INE Province, on which depend the Salesian houses in Romania and Moldova.

On Sunday the 2nd, the Rector Major and all the Salesians present take part in the Mass that is presided over by the Archbishop of Bucharest, Msgr. Joan Robu, on the occasion of the anniversary. "You have come to give everything without asking anything in return," says the Archbishop.

On his return to Rome, from September 3rd to 12th, the Rector Major presides over the meetings of the "intermediate session" of the General Council.

In a space of time available (September 7th-10th), he can make a visit to *Moscow, Russia,* to a Salesian presence dependent on the Province of North Poland (PLN). He is welcomed at the airport, along with his secretary, by the Provincial of Piła, Fr Roman Jachimowicz, the Rector of the community and the FMA Provincial, along with other confrères and sisters of the place. Together with the Provincial and several members of the Provincial Council who have come to accompany the visit, he wants to know more in depth the reality of the Salesian presence in Russia. The Rector Major at different times encounters the Salesians, the FMAs, members of the Salesian Family and the youth.

On Sunday, October 9th, in the Cathedral, all participate in the thanksgiving Mass for the 25th anniversary of the Salesian presence that is presided over by the Archbishop of Moscow, Msgr. Paolo Pezzi. The Rector Major concludes the celebration with his greeting. In the afternoon he visits the house of Filii, meeting the boys and girls of the family home and their educators and young people of the SYM of the Salesian parish.

Back in Rome, the Rector Major remains there for about ten days, with the usual rhythm of work (hearings, meetings, etc.). He also takes a few days of rest.

In the morning of the 19th he presides over the official opening of the academic year at UPS.

On the 20th in the afternoon, together with his personal secretary, he leaves for a visit to the Salesians in *Mongolia* and *Myanmar-Burma*.

In this visit, he is also accompanied by the Regional Councillor, Fr Václav Klement.

Making a stopover in Seoul (Korea) in the evening of the 21st, he can greet a good group of confrères of the houses close to the Provincial House, and has dinner with them; the next morning he also meets the FMAs, having with them Mass and breakfast. He continues by plane to Ulaanbaatar, in *Mongolia*, where he is received in a very simple and familiar way by SDB confrères, FMAs, Salesian Cooperators and other lay people of the Salesian houses.

On Sunday 23rd, early in the morning, the Rector Major and a group formed by some SDBs and young communicators and translators, go to Darkhan City (a four-hour trip, with very low temperatures). In Darkhan they are welcomed in the local traditional way (the Rector Major and the Regional Councillor are dressed in the way of tradition and are put on camels...). Then, they take part in the Mass, presided over by the Delegate, Fr Paul Leung Kon Chin; the Rector Major delivers the homily in Italian. Lunch is served in a traditional tent call "ger"; then the Rector Major meets all the confrères (100%) of the two presences of the country.

On his return to Ulaanbaatar, on the 24th the Rector Major blesses the new installations of the "Don Bosco Centre"; he has a meeting with the Council of the Delegation (that depends from the Province of Vietnam), presides over the liturgy and participates in a traditional cultural act with the youth of the Salesians and the FMAs. In the afternoon he visits a centre of evangelization close to the capital and in the evening he meets the Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, Msgr. Wenceslao Selga Padilla, who also remains for supper together with members of the Salesian Family.

In the morning of the 25th, the Rector Major with his secretary and the Regional Councillor leaves for Bangkok, Thailand, where on the next day they meet the confrères who work in Pakistan, to assess together the present and the future prospects of that presence.

On the 27th they depart for Mandalay, *Myanmar-Burma*, and from there they go to the Salesian house in Anisakan, where they meet young people from all the SDB and FMA presences of the country.

On the 28th the Rector Major presides over the Mass with the Salesian Family of the village and numerous young people (more than 700). During the day the Rector Major meets the Salesians, the Pro-

vincial Council, the FMAs and exchanges a dialogue with the youth.

On the 29th, before going to the airport, the Rector Major inaugurates the new chapel of the presence in Mandalay, where he meets the Archbishop, Msgr. Nicholas Mang Thang, who later presides over the Mass with the Salesians and the people. The Rector Major also visits the parish of Lafon that was the first Salesian presence in the country.

After returning to Rome on Sunday, October 30th, the Rector Major leaves for his hometown in Asturias, for a family gathering. He returns to Rome in the morning of November 2nd.

– *November 2016*

On November 4th, the Rector Major, accompanied by his secretary, leaves for Bratislava for a *visit to the Province of Slovakia.* On their arrival at Vienna airport, they are welcomed by the Provincials of Austria and Slovakia. In the afternoon the Rector Major has a meeting with the Provincial Council of Slovakia. After dinner they go to Vajnory, the hometown of the Servant of God Fr Titus Zeman, where he also is buried.

On the 5th, the Rector Major, with the little group that accompanies him, goes to Žilina where he meets the Salesian Family and the young people of the SYM.

On Sunday 6th, after the Mass celebrated with the confrères of the community, he meets a large group of VDBs of Slovakia and of the Czech Republic with their Major Coordinator, Olga Krizova. Then the Rector Major goes to Prešov, where he meets the confrères of the Province who had come from the different houses of the East area. He spends the night in Poprad, where the novitiate is located.

On the 7th, he goes to Nová Dobnica to meet the confrères who had come from the different communities of the West zone; he then goes to Bratislava, where he has dinner with the community of the provincial house of the FMAs. On the following day he returns to Rome.

On November 9th, the Rector Major and his secretary leave for Colombo, *Sri Lanka*, to visit this Vice-Province. He arrives on the following day and reaches the house of Metiyagane and stays there, sharing several moments with the young residents and the community. During the visit, he is also accompanied by the Councillor for the South Asia region, Fr Maria Arokiam Kanaga.

On the 11th the Rector Major has a meeting with the Provincial Council: he later celebrates Mass, with the Councillors, the confrères and the young people of the house, who had been prepared for the occasion. In the afternoon he also meets young people coming from other Salesian houses, including pre-novices and aspirants of the last years. He then has a meeting with the confrères of the Vice Province.

On Saturday 12th, the Rector Major and those accompanying him go to Kotadeniyawa, headquarters of the post-novitiate, where he has Mass with the communities of the post-novitiate and the novitiate; later he visits the aspirantate in Dankotuwa, meeting as well the aspirants of Mankulam. In the afternoon he visits the FMAs in Negombo, where he also meets their aspirants.

On Sunday 13th, early in the morning, the Rector Major, his secretary and the Regional Councillor leave for *Tiruchy, India*, where they are welcomed according to tradition, both at the airport and in the Provincial House at Kallukushy, where the Rector Major meets the Provincial Council. In the afternoon they go to Thanjavur, where the Rector Major meets the aspirants and then the Salesian Family and the young people of the SYM, with several moments of dialogue and the celebration of the Eucharist.

On the 14th, after meeting the pre-novices in the provincial house, the Rector Major leaves for Madurai, where he is received in the city street near the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. The Salesian Bishop Msgr. Jerome Doss Varuval, bishop of Kuzhithurai, and Msgr. George Rajendran Kuttinadar, Bishop of Thuckalay welcome him on his arrival. In the afternoon he meets the confrères of the Province and then he presides over the Eucharist, with a very large attendance that includes members of the Salesian Family and parishioners. The Mass is followed by a cultural program.

On Tuesday 15th, the Rector Major visits the house of Moolakadu, "Don Bosco Care Home", where there are several groups of young people at risk, even from other houses of the Province. Among these children there is a special group of HIV carriers. Then the Rector Major with his companions continues his journey to Yercaud, where he meets young Salesians and novices. After the customary photo session, he leaves for Vellakinar, Coimbatore, where – despite the delay – they are greeted with a friendly welcome by the young people and friends of the house.

On the 16th, after having presided over the Mass and a cultural program of tribute to those who work with youth at risk, the Rector Major, along with his secretary and the Regional Councillor, leaves for *Hyderabad, India*, where he is received by the Provincial and some other confrères. In the afternoon, he has a first meeting with the Provincial Council.

On the 17th, after another meeting with the Provincial Council, the Rector Major reaches the house of Don Bosco Navajeevan, Ramanthapur where he meets the youth and the Salesian Family.

On the 18th, he travels to Guntupalli, Vijayawada where, after the welcome address, he stays with the pre-novices and young confrères. In the afternoon he arrives at Guntur, where he is received with a solemn procession through the streets of the city. He presides over the Eucharist and takes part in a cultural program. Three bishops are also present: Msgr. Bhagyaiah Chinnabathini, Bishop of Guntur, Msgr. Gali Bali, Bishop Emeritus, and Msgr. Joseph Raja Rao Thelegathoti, SMM, Bishop of Vijayawada.

On Saturday 19th, on his return to the Provincial House in Hyderabad, the Rector Major meets the confrères of the Province and greets the relatives of the Salesians. Soon afterwards he presides over the Eucharist and the act of celebration of the *Jubilee of the Province*. In the evening the Rector Major and his secretary leave to return to Rome.

In Rome, on November 21st, the Rector Major takes part in the meeting of the Executive Council of the Union of Superiors General (USG), of which he is a member, and on the following day he meets the English-speaking Novice Masters, who are attending the course organized for them by the Dicastery for Formation.

From November 23rd to 25th he attends the Assembly of the USG held at the Salesianum, but leaves in the morning of the 24th to take part as Chancellor in the opening ceremony of the academic year at the Auxilium Faculty of the FMAs. In the evening he goes to the general house of the FMAs to give the 'Buona Notte' in the encounter of the FMA Provincial Economers.

From November 26th to 30th, the Rector Major, along with his secretary, pays a visit to the *Province of Germany*. In the late afternoon of the 26th, he is met at the airport by the Provincial with some other confrères, and is taken to Benediktbeuern. After dinner he meets

the Salesians and the young volunteers who animate the centre of spirituality.

On Sunday the 27th, he concelebrates the Eucharist that is presided over by Fr Josef Grünner, in German, and delivers the homily in Italian. Then there follows a visit to the imposing structure of the house of Benediktbeuern, a former Benedictine monastery. In the afternoon, along with his secretary, he leaves for Munich, where he meets the confrères and after dinner a group of the Salesian Family and lay collaborators.

In the morning of the 28th, he meets the Provincial Council; in the afternoon he meets the Salesians rectors, together with the lay people who collaborate in various houses and in various projects.

On the 29th, after a visit to the educational house of Munich, he also makes a visit to the provincial house of the FMAs, where he meets the Mother Provincial and several sisters. Later on he leaves for Bonn, at the Salesian house of the Procure.

On Wednesday the 30th, he meets the staff of the Procure in Bonn and later on those of the Procure in Beromünster. Before celebrating the Eucharist and having lunch with everyone present, he stays with the confrères of the western area of the country. In the evening he returns to Rome.

From December 2nd to 4th, the Rector Major presides over the meeting of the Provincials of Europe to share experiences and perspectives of 'Project Europe'. Meanwhile in the morning of the 2nd he meets once more the Novice Masters, at the conclusion of their formation course and in the evening he gives the 'Buona Notte' to the FMAs who are participating in the gathering of the Provincial Councils of Italy that is being held at the Salesianum.

On December 5th the winter plenary session of the General Council commences.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

The Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Francesco Cereda, in the six months from August to December 2016, continued his ordinary engagement in the General House. He worked in contact with Provincials and confrères to find person-

nel for the multiple needs of the Congregation. He followed the progress of ongoing penal and civil processes. Together with the Secretary General, he followed the clarification of the irregular situations of confrères. He maintained, together with the General Procurator, constant relations with the Provinces that interrogated him on issues of lapses in religious discipline.

From August 28th to *September* 6th, he made a visit to the Province of Chile, on the occasion of the centenary of the death of Fr Joseph Fagnano; he met the confrères who gathered in four communities: Iquique and Alto Hospicio, Concepción, Punta Arenas, Santiago "La Gratitud Nacional"; he also visited the communities of Santiago "La Cisterna", Santiago "La Florida" and Puerto Natales; in Punta Arenas he had three days of meetings with the rectors of the Province and attended the civil and religious program in memory of Msgr. Fagnano; he concluded the visit with a meeting with Cardinal Riccardo Ezzati and with the Provincial Council. On September 8th-9th, at Colle Don Bosco he presided over the first profession of the novices in Pinerolo and paid a visit to the community of Colle. From the 23rd to the 29th he took part with the Rector Major in Turin Valdocco in the encounter of the Provincials who are spending their third year of animation and government of the provinces; during the meeting there were the visits to Colle and Mornese and he participated in the Eucharistic celebration for the handing of the crucifix to the new SDB and FMA missionaries and to lay volunteers.

In *October*, from the 3rd to the 12th he took part in the Intermediate General Council; on the 12th he participated in the Board of Directors of the "Gerini" Foundation; on the 14th he convened the Group of UPS personnel; on the 15th he took part in the 'Curatorium' of UPS and on the 19th in the inauguration ceremony of the academic year of UPS. From the 17th to 21st he made the canonical visitation to the Community of Rome "San Callisto". From the 24th to the 29th he visited the Delegation of Belarus, during which he met the Council of the Delegation, the Archbishop and the Auxiliary Bishop of Minsk; he had colloquia with the confrères and pre-novices; he visited the community of Baraulany, Dzyatlava, Minsk, Smarhon and the parishes of Baruny and Zhuprany; on the feast of Don Rua he attended the Assembly of all the confrères of the Delegation with the

celebration of the Eucharist and moments of sharing about our vocational, spiritual and pastoral charismatic identity. On the 30th he presided over the Eucharist and participated in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Salesian presence in the parish of "Our Lady of Hope" in Rome.

In *November*, from the 2nd to the 6th he did the canonical visitation to the community "St. Francis de Sales" in the Vatican and also had meetings with the authorities of the Holy See. From the 9th to the 30th he did the canonical visitation to the community "Blessed Michael Rua" of the General House. On the 10th at UPS he participated in the seminar on the figure and academic activity of Fr Pietro Braido. On the 11th he presided over the Eucharist and participated in the feast of the patron saint of the community of UPS theology students, "Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá" in Rome. On the 15th in Warsaw he took part in the Provincial Council of the Province of Northern Poland. On the 18th he celebrated the Eucharist for the Provincial Economers of FMAs in their General House and on the 19th he convened the Group of the UPS staff. On the 21st together with the Regional Councillor of the Mediterranean Region he met the Provincial of the ICP and the superiors of the communities of the Salesian places of Turin Valdocco "Mary Help of Christians" and of Colle Don Bosco. From the 23rd to the 25th he took part in the Assembly of Superiors General at the "Salesianum" in Rome. On the 26th he held the quarterly retreat in "St. Thomas" community at UPS. On the 30th he participated in the Board of Directors of the "Gerini" Foundation.

In *December*, from the 2nd to the 4th, he attended the Meeting of the Provincials of Centre and North Europe and of the Mediterranean region to discuss on the path of 'Project Europe'.

The Councillor for Formation

In ***August***, the Councillor for Formation, Fr Ivo Coelho, together with Fr Silvio Roggia, made an animation visit to some formation houses of the Province of Hyderabad - India (INH): the novitiate of Manoharabad and the aspirantate of Chandur - before participating in the Regional Commission for Formation of South Asia, held in Hyderabad from August 16th to 19th, 2016. From August 21st to 26th he participated in the conference-

meeting of the Salesian Biblical Association (ABS), held at the *Salesian Monastery* of Ratisbonne, in Jerusalem.

From ***September*** 1st to 9th, again with Fr Silvio Roggia, he visited the formation houses of the Province ITM East Timor (the novitiate in Fatumaca and the post-novitiate in Dili-Comoro) and of the Delegation of ITM-Indonesia (the post-novitiate in Jakarta and the pre-novitiate in Sumba).

After returning to Rome, he went to São Paulo, Brazil, where he participated, together with Fr Cleofas Murguia, in the Regional Commission for Formation of America South Cone, from September 16th to 19th. This was followed by a visit to the formation houses of the Province of Campo Grande, Brazil (BCG): the pre-novitiate in Dourados - Indapolis and the post-novitiate in São Vicente - Campo Grande.

From September 26th to 28th he visited the formation house of Dingli, of the IRL-Malta delegation, meeting the aspirants, pre-novices and post-novices and the only student of theology who resides in that community.

After the intermediate session of the General Council, which was held from ***October*** 3rd to 12th, Fr Ivo Coelho travelled to Bogotá, Colombia, to participate in the meetings of the Provincials of the Interamerica Region, from October 16th to 22nd. He seized this opportunity to visit also the theologate in Bogotá. He then went to Ramon Mejia - Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the encounter with the Provincials of America South Cone Region, which was held from October 24th to 30th.

From ***November*** 3rd to 7th he participated, with Fr Silvio Roggia, in the meeting of the two Regional Commissions for Formation of Europe (Centre and North Europe and Mediterranean), in Skofja Loka, Slovenia. From Slovenia, he went directly to the Philippines, with a brief 12-hours' flight stop in Istanbul, which allowed a short but significant visit to the Salesian community that resides there. In Batulao, an hour away from Manila, there was the meeting of the Regional Commission for Formation of the East Asia - Oceania Region, together with the meeting of the Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry in the same region. It was a very propitious and fruitful opportunity to share perspectives and programs between youth ministry and formation in the East Asia and Oceania Region.

On his return to Rome, he attended the seminar on prayer in the context of spiritual accompaniment of young people, held at the General House from November 16th to 20th, animated by the Dicastery for Youth Ministry. From November 20th to December 2nd there was the seminar for the English-speaking Novice Masters, always at the General House in Rome, led by the Dicastery for Formation. 23 Novice Masters from 5 Regions attended the seminar. This was a moment of great Salesian fraternity and growth for all. Finally, from December 2nd to 4th, he took part in the sixth meeting of the Provincials of Europe, held at the General House in Rome.

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

After the summer session of the General Council, the Councillor Fr Fabio Attard together with the team of the Dicastery for Youth Ministry went to Krakow in view of the celebration of the World Youth Days 2016. Their presence provided assistance for the organization of the Days, especially of the day for the Salesian Youth Movement (SYM) held on Wednesday, July 27th in the halls of EXPO KRAKOW with the presence of more than five thousand young people of the SYM from all over the world.

From ***August*** 20th to 23rd, the Councillor and Fr Angel García Morcuende, who is in charge of the Schools and Vocational Training Centres within the Dicastery, were invited to attend the meeting of the Salesian Biblical Association held in Ratisbonne, in Jerusalem. Their presence was intended to present the *Frame of Reference* of the Salesian Youth Ministry to the participants and also to share with them the pastoral choices focused on the Word of God, which the Dicastery is accompanying in the various national and international meetings.

From August 29th to 31st, the Councillor accompanied the process of reflection on the structures and activities of the Salesian Youth Ministry in the Province of Sicily. In the various meetings with the rectors, lay people and various groups of the Salesian Family, it was possible to study and reflect on the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry.

From ***September*** 1st to 5th, 2016, Fr Fabio was invited in the two Provinces of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in Naples and Milan, for animation and reflection encounters on the theme of Salesian Youth Ministry. In the various meetings with superiors,

groups of animation and also, in Milan, with all the lay collaborators of our facilities, moments of sharing on the strengthening of pastoral processes were offered.

In mid-September, from the 12th to the 15th, the annual regional meeting for the Delegates of Youth Ministry of the Region of Africa and Madagascar was held in Kigali, Rwanda. In this meeting, as well as in the meetings that followed, two major themes were a reflection on the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, the theme of the family in the pastoral processes, and a reflection and analysis on the process of assimilation of the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry.

From ***October*** 13th to 22nd, the Councillor participated in two meetings held in Los Angeles: the one of the group that follows the sector of marginalization and migration, *Opcion Preferencial*, and the one of the Delegates for Youth Ministry of Interamerica Region.

From October 14th to 27th in Buenos Aires, Argentina, there was the meeting for the Delegates for Youth Ministry of the America South Cone Region. At the same time and in the same place, there also was the meeting of the Provincials of the Region. The Regional Councillor, Fr Natale Vitali, invited Fr Fabio Attard to present the path on the theme of the family and the International Congress on Youth and the Family, to be held in Madrid from November 27th to December 1st, 2017.

From October 31st to ***November*** 3rd, it was the turn of the Delegates for Youth Ministry of South Asia Region, in a meeting that was held in Mumbai, India.

On November 4th and 5th, the Councillor attended the meeting of the Deans of the Schools in India, where he also made a conference on educational challenges in the light of the charism of Don Bosco.

On November 6th, in the Provincial House in Kolkata, the Councillor accompanied the rectors and parish priests of the Province in a reflection on the *Frame of Reference* of Salesian Youth Ministry.

From November 8th to 13th, the Councillor attended the meeting of Delegates for Youth Ministry of the East Asia – Oceania Region in Batulao, Philippines. During this meeting, in the same place, there also was the regional meeting of the Provincial Delegates for Formation. The two groups had a day of reflection together on common processes and on how to strengthen them. In the days prior to this meeting, in Manila, the Councillor had a meeting with the team for Youth Ministry of the province, two

conferences with post-novices and theologians in the theologate in Paranaque.

From November 16th to 20th, at the Salesianum in Rome, Fr Fabio Attard presided over the seminar on *Spiritual Direction and Prayer*. The 70 participants from 41 provinces and 32 countries could hear some reports on the issue and offer their reactions, starting from their experience of pastoral accompaniment of young people in prayer.

In preparation for the Synod in 2018, the Councillor was invited by the Secretariat of the Synod, together with two other Salesians and a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, to be part of a study group to help in this preparatory process. From November 21st to 22nd two days of study were organized, where it was possible to make a contribution to this path on behalf of the Salesian Congregation.

Finally, the last two engagements of this period were of a European nature. A first meeting was that of the representatives of various European countries for the annual meeting of the PGS-International. During this meeting there was the election of the Committee for the next three years and there was also the presentation of the upcoming games that will be organized in Seville by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The second meeting was that of the Provincials of Europe on the theme of "Project Europe". The Councillor with the whole team of the Dicastery participated in the work groups where one of the topics dealt with was that of the school and vocational centres. The topic was introduced with a summary of the progress made in recent years on various animation processes in this field.

The Councillor for Social Communication

The Councillor for Social Communication, Fr Filiberto Rodríguez, at the end of the summer plenary session of the General Council, left for the Province of Mexico-Guadalajara (MEG) with the intention of visiting his family and the Salesian confrères.

August 2016. On August 15th, early in the morning, he leaves from Guadalajara to Bogota, Colombia. In the provincial house he officially opens the *Extraordinary Visitation to the COB Province* on 16th, meeting in the morning the Provincial and his Council and in the afternoon the Provincial Dele-

gates of the Sectors; then he continues with all the members of the Provincial House and the staff of services and provincial sectors: Youth Ministry, Missions, Social Communication, Salesian Family and Economy, till the 19th. On the 20th he participates in the priestly ordination of Ramiro Morales Hernández in the house of "Niño Jesús". From the 21st to the 24th he visits the Community of "Nuestra Señora de Las Nieves" and there he celebrates his birthday with the confrères of the community, the students and teachers of the school, the parishioners and the Bishop of the city. From the 24th to 28th he visits the "Sagrado Corazón community", the school and the parish in the city of Duitama. He also visits the community of HHSSCC (Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary) for the sick and the elderly. From August 29th to September 2nd he visits the house of "Niño Jesús".

September 2016. On September 3rd he takes part in Bogotá in the VIII Provincial day of Spirituality of the Salesian Family. On the 4th he participates in the Niño Jesús feast. On the 5th and the 6th he meets the Provincial Council, always in Bogotá. From the 7th to the 9th he participates in the meeting of Rectors at the "Salesianum" Spirituality Centre of Fusagasugá. On the 10th he takes part in the Provincial Feast, celebrated in Agua de Dios, on the 125th anniversary of this house; he also meets the HHSSCC sisters in their Mother House. From the 13th to the 19th in São Paulo-Brazil (Lapa) he chairs the meeting of Delegates for Social Communication of the Interamerica and America-South Cone Regions. With all of them he visits Cachoeira Paulista, the motherhouse of Canção Nova, and the Shrine of Aparecida. From evening 20th to morning 25th he visits the Luis Variara community of Cúcuta - Los Olivos, the Maria Mazzarello Parish and the Don Bosco Oratory, as well as the Domingo Savio school in the town of Tibú. From evening 25th to the 29th he visits the "San Juan Bosco" community of Cúcuta, which is in charge of two schools, three school locations and the Maria Auxiliadora Parish. From September 30th to October 1st he visits the community of the 'Juan Bosco Obrero' house in Bogotá.

October 2016. From October 2nd to 4th he visits the community of San José Mosquera, which comprises parish, school and pre-novitiate, and also animates two other schools run by lay people with the

Salesian style. In Bogota, from the 5th to the 8th, he visits the 'Santa Ana' community that is in charge of three works: the Don Bosco Centre, the Colegio León XIII and the 'Santuario del Carmen'. From the 9th to the 13th he visits the community of the international Theologate "Santo Tomás de Aquino" which also includes a parish. From the 14th to the 18th he participates in the meeting of the Provincials of the Interamerica Region. From the 19th to the 23rd he visits the 'San Lazaro' community in Contratación that is in charge of the Maria Auxiliadora Parish and of a government school. On the 25th-26th he visits the San Alberto Magno community that is in charge of the "Valsalice" Salesian Agricultural Technical Institute in the city of Fusagasugá. On the 27th-28th he visits to the community of Agua de Dios, which includes the Parish of Carmen and the direction of a state school. From October 29th to November 2nd he visits the San Medardo community, which is responsible for a college and a parish.

November 2016. From November 3rd to 5th at the Salesianum in Fusagasuá he participates in the meeting of Rectors, Delegates of the sectors and some lay collaborators to make the assessment of the year 2016, and to plan the year 2017. From the 7th to the 9th, in the city of Granada he visits the community of "Nuestra Señora del Carmen" - Salesian Agricultural Institute "La Holanda". From the 10th to the 13th in the city of Bucaramanga he visits the "Maria Auxiliadora" community, which is in charge of a college and a parish. On the 13th he visits the novitiate of the Rio Negro to talk with the COB staff; on the 14th he goes to the post-novitiate of Copacabana to have colloquia with the post-novices and the formators of COB. On the 15th he is in the provincial house of Medellín and meets the two teams of communication of COB and COM to check and plan the Salesian Bulletin at a national level. On the 20th he meets the COB Council in Bogotá in the provincial house. On the 21st he presents the final report of the Extraordinary Visitation to ninety confrères of the Province. On November 24th he returns to the General House in Rome.

The Councillor for the Missions

After the summer session of the General Council, the Councillor

for the Missions, Fr Guillermo Basañes, left for the Province of Calcutta, where on July 23rd and 24th he took part in the formation meeting and expedition of a group of missionaries of the South Asia Region, assigned to Nepal. Over the next three days he could visit several missions of the INC Province missions.

From July 29th to August 2nd, Fr Basañes did an animation visit in the Province of Madras (INM), with a particular attention to the missionary aspirantate of Perambur, where he spent two full days. Soon afterwards, till August 9th he could visit almost all the houses of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka, devoting enough time to formation houses and aspirantates.

Back in Rome, as usual, the Councillor presided over the Eucharist on the 11th of the month – Missionary memory – in the infirmary of UPS.

His next destination was the Middle East Province (MOR), where from August 19th to 28th he visited almost all of the Salesian houses in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Very significant was his presence in Upper Egypt – where for a long time the Congregation has been studying the possibility of a new missionary work – and in Syria, where despite the delicate situation of war, Fr Basañes could travel together with the Provincial to Damascus and Kafroun.

On his return to the General House, the Councillor has had several periods of work with the whole team of the Missions sector, and could especially accompany the organization of the course of preparation of new missionaries, held in Rome and Turin from September 1st to 25th, and which ended on the last Sunday of the month, as usual, with the 147th Missionary Expedition in Valdocco.

Besides, during this month Fr Guillermo travelled to Krakow to participate, on September 9th, in the Presidential Council of the 'Don Bosco Network'.

From September 27th to 30th, the Councillor visited the Salesian presence in Tunisia, and in particular the just begun new presence in the centre of Tunis.

During the Intermediate Council of October in Rome, Fr Basañez was also engaged in the work of the Missions sector, as well as in accompanying the Salesians taking part in the Course of Ongoing Formation in Missionary Ministry at UPS.

Soon afterwards, the Councillor left again for India, this time to meet in New Delhi, on October 14th and 15th, all the Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation gathered for their annual assembly. After this strategic encounter, Fr Guillermo departed directly for Nigeria, Lagos to participate in the work of the Conference of the Provinces and Vice Provinces of Africa and Madagascar (CIVAM) from October 18th to 22nd. On these days he could also make a short visit of missionary animation to the post-novitiate of Ibadan.

On his return to Rome, from October 24th to 26th, at the Salesianum, Fr Basañes was present in several meetings organized by the 'Don Bosco Network', among which the most important was the General Assembly.

On October 28th, he met again the Salesians of the UPS Missions Course, and soon afterwards, he began his journey to the Province of Hyderabad, where, together with all the members of the Missions sector, he took part, from October 31st to November 5th, in one of the three retreats preached by the Rector Major Emeritus, Fr Pascual Chávez, and organized by the Regional Missionary Animation of South Asia.

After this retreat, Fr Basañes began his first visit to the Province of Vietnam (from November 7th to 13th), particularly focused on two events of missionary animation – in the Provincial House and in the post-novitiate in Dalat – with great participation of SDBs and members of the Salesian Family, on the annual commemoration of the first missionary expedition. During the days of this visit the Councillor for the Missions could greet a considerable number of parents of missionaries 'ad gentes', as well as visit several of their homes.

On November 15th and 16th, in Hong Kong, Fr Guillermo participated in another regional meeting of Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation, those of the East Asia - Oceania Region. And immediately afterwards, he completed his visit to the Province of Vietnam, visiting the Delegation of Mongolia from November 17th to 21st.

Back in Rome, Fr Basañes met again with the SDBs participating in the course at the UPS, and presided over the Eucharist with the English-speaking Novice Masters at the General House on November 24th.

On November 27th and 28th he made a brief visit to the young missionaries in Ireland, and immediately returned to Rome to participate, from December 2nd to 4th, in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe.

The Economer General

In ***July***, the General Economer, Mr Jean Paul Muller, was involved in the hearing of the penal court for the Gerini cause. In the following days the Economer had some meetings with the lawyers in order to take stock of the cause and plan solution strategies of the jurisdictional situation. On the 26th of the same month, he flies to Luxembourg for a meeting with the lawyers who follow the process in this country and have an updated picture of the situation. In the same month he has a meeting with those responsible in Valdocco, in view of a revival of the house as the centre of the Salesian charism. The month ends by taking part in the Board of Directors of the Gerini foundation.

In the month of ***August*** the Economer General visits the ZMB Province (Zambia-Malawi-Namibia-Zimbabwe). In this African Province, Jean Paul Muller holds three conferences: the first with the title *"The figure of the Salesian Brother in the XXI Century"*, the second on *""Divine Providence and Economy: two aspects of the same coin in the Salesian management"* and the last concerning the explanation of chapter 11 of the book *"Legal Elements and Administrative Praxis in the Government of the Province."* From the 10th to the 14th of the same month, the Economer meets European NGOs and discusses the situation of refugees in Europe, in order to achieve a decisive intervention of humanitarian aid. From the 22nd to the 27th he participates in the "Don Bosco Forum" in Benediktbeuern; then he attends the Board of Directors of the Missions Procure in Bonn.

In ***September***, the General Economer goes to New York where he participates, at the Fordham University, in the international conference on the theme of social enterprise. In his report he highlights how, through social enterprise, economy can return to serve man rather than enslave him. In addition, he outlines a parallel between a social enterprise *tout court* and the Salesian social activity. In the US, the Economer meets the people in charge of the SUE Province responsible to prepare a draft to be presented to the General Council on the Salesian presence at the United Nations. On the 26th of the same month, Jean Paul Muller attended the hearing of the penal court. In the last days of September he chairs the 6th session of the Economic Commission at Valdocco, where aspects of the economic situation of the Congregation and the accounting of the Provinces are dealt with; then he meets those in charge of the house, of SEI publishing house and the new rector of Colle Don Bosco.

In the month of ***October*** the Economer was engaged in a meeting with the director of the catacombs of San Callisto, to assess the current situation and possible future strategic plans of intervention. From the 17th to the 28th of this month, he travels to South America, first in Bogotá and later in Buenos Aires, where he lectures on the guidelines and *best practices* in the field of administration and use of funds for the virtuous management of Salesian houses with respect of transparency and cost-effectiveness. Also in this view of spreading new virtuous economic lines, in Latin American countries he discussed a text entitled *"Economy as Part of the Preventive System"*, where typically economic concepts are revised through a key of interpretation and a Salesian style.

The month of ***November*** begins with the speech of the General Economer at the conference of bishops of the Western European region on 'Fundraising' and 'Financial Administration' that was held in Warsaw (Poland). His research, focused on *Fundraising* and on *Crowdfunding* applied to projects with a religious background, allowed not only the knowledge and publicizing of the Salesian work in the world, but it also provided an impulse to the search for new benefactors for Salesian houses. In addition, the commission has a specific workshop on the figure of the Salesian Economer, together with the explanation of the *"Best practices in financial management."* On November 14th, the Economer takes part in a meeting at the Catacombs of San Callisto in relation to the functional reorganization of the work, while on November 18th he is once again engaged in attending the hearing of the penal court. On the 22nd, he chairs the seventh session of the Economic Commission in Rome. Later he takes part in the International Symposium for Religious Economers at the Vatican, entitled *""Rethinking the Economy in Fidelity to the Charism"*. At the end of the month the General Economer, together with the Rector Major, meets the Provincial Council of GER. From December 2nd to 4th, at the Salesianum, he participates in the evaluation of "Project Europe" by the Provincials in Europe.

In the month of ***December***, besides participating in the session of the General Council, the Economer

is engaged in the upper Board of Directors of UPS, in order to assess the budgets of 2017 of the University and of the Vice-Province. He also gives his contribution to the course for new Provincials, held at Pisana, where, besides illustrating the regulations and the management and financial activities, he disserts on the binomial "*ambition and common good*".

The Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar *Region*

After the summer plenary session of the General Council, the Councillor for the Region of Africa and Madagascar, Fr Américo Chaquisse, leaves Rome on July 25th for the Africa Great Lakes Vice Province (AGL) for an animation visit in Uganda. On July 31st he arrives in Nairobi, headquarters of the East Africa Province (AFE), to do the *Extraordinary Visitation* and animate the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial. He does these tasks from August 3rd to November 24th.

On August 1st and 2nd, the Regional Councillor chairs the meeting of DBTA (Don Bosco Tech Africa), then on August 3rd he begins the *Extraordinary Visitation*, meeting the Provincial Council. He then continues the visit in every community in the different countries that are part of the AFE Province: Tanzania, Kenya and South Sudan. He could not visit Sudan (Khartoum), since he did not have the entry visa.

During his stay in the AFE Province, the Regional Councillor has to interrupt the *Extraordinary Visitation* twice. A first time from September 18th to 21st to accompany the Rector Major on a visit to the ZMB Vice Province and from September 22nd to 29th to carry out two consultations in the AFC Province for the appointment of the AFC Provincial and of the Superior of the new ACC Vice-Province (Salesian Vice-Province of "Mary Help of Christians" of Africa Congo Kinshasa and Congo Brazzaville) erected by the Rector Major on July 24th, 2016. The second time the Regional Councillor goes to Lagos-Nigeria for the annual meeting of CIVAM from October 16th to 24th. At the end of the meeting the Regional Councillor blesses the house of the new headquarters of the Delegation of the AFW Province.

During the Extraordinary Visitation the Regional Councillor also participates in the annual meeting of the rectors of the AFE Province, from September 7th to 9th. Exceptionally from November 3rd to 10th, the Visitor is in Arua - Uganda to meet the confrères of the community of Maridi who were in Arua for reasons of insecurity in South Sudan. During his stay he visits some camps of South Sudan refugees.

For the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation, on November 24th, the Visitor gathers the Provincial Council for the presentation of the conclusions; later on, in the evening he has a meeting with all the confrères and finally there is a moment of fraternal sharing.

On the 25th he leaves for Lusaka to attend the first regional meeting of the Past Pupils of Don Bosco of Africa and Madagascar, which was animated by the World Presidency of Salesian past pupils.

On December 1st, Fr Américo returns to the headquarters in Rome for the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Latin America - South Cone *Region*

After participating in the summer plenary session of the General Council, the Councillor for the Latin America - South Cone Region, Fr Natale Vitali, on July 22nd leaves for São Paulo, Brazil.

On July 24th he attends the 'Curatorium' of the Novitiate in Brazil where there are 11 novices. On the 26th he participates in the Provincial Chapter of "St. Pius X" Province in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to deliver the letter of the Rector Major, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation done in the previous semester.

On August 1st, together with the Councillor for Interamerica Region, he participates in the 'Curatorium' of the "Regional Formation Centre for Salesian Brothers" (CRESCO) of Guatemala.

On August 4th he begins the *Extraordinary Visitation in the "Mary Help of Christians" Province of San Paolo, Brazil*, meeting the Rectors and the Provincial Council.

The Province realizes its mission in 19 communities canonically erected and with 135 Salesians (25 clerics, 20 brothers, 90 priests), who carry out the Salesian mission in 12 colleges, 1 University Centre with 6 campuses, 13 parishes, 2 Sanctuaries and 12 public Chapels, 16 Social Works and 27 Oratories.

On September 17, Fr Natale Vitali participates in São Paulo, Lapa, in the meeting of Delegates of Social Communication of the two Regions of America and on the 18th at the Regional Formation

Meeting. From the 27th to the 29th he takes part, in Brasilia, in the National Meeting of Parish Priests in Brazil, with the presence of 53 parish priests.

On October 4th, he participates in the Provincial Council of Argentina North and on the 5th in the one of Argentina South; on the next two days, October 6th and 7th, with the two Provincial Councils gathered, along with other issues, there is an assessment on the reunification of the five Provinces of Argentina in two new Provinces which started their activity on January 31st, 2010, with the presence of the Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chávez, in San Nicolás de los Arroyos, which is the first Salesian community that was created in America.

From October 24th to 28th, Fr Natale Vitali takes part in the meeting of 11 Provincials of America - South Cone, which was held in Buenos Aires, together with the General Economer, the Councillor for Formation and the Delegate of the Rector Major for the Salesian Family. The Director of the CRESCO of Guatemala and Director of the Centre for Ongoing Formation for America in Quito were also present in this meeting.

On November 3rd and 4th, the Regional Councillor participates in the Provincial Council of the Province of Belo Horizonte.

On November 19th, he meets the Mother Provincial of the Province of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in San Paolo and on the 21st he concludes the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of São Paulo, Brazil, meeting the Rectors and the Provincial Council.

On the next day, the 22nd, he participates in the 'Curatorium' of Lapa, Theological Institute, for the six Salesian Provinces of Brazil, where 42 students of theology are being formed.

From November 24th to 27th he attends the meeting of the Provincials of Brazil, in Brasilia, and with the Salesian Schools Network.

Finally, from November 28th to 30th, he takes part in the meeting of the Centre for Ongoing Formation of Quito, and afterwards he returns to Rome to participate in the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Interamerica *Region*

After the summer plenary session of the General Council in 2016, the Regional Councillor for Interamerica, Fr Timothy Plock, leaves Rome on Sunday, July 24th, for Colombia. There, he has a series of *Curatoria* of the formation houses, in which to participate: that of the novitiate at La Ceja, (COM), the post-novitiate in Copacabana (COM), the theologate in Bogotá (COB) and the CRESCO in Guatemala (CAM). From there he travels to Ecuador, arriving there on August 4th.

His main occupation from August 4th till the end of November is to do, on behalf of the Rector Major, the *Extraordinary Visitation in the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" Province in Ecuador* (ECU). The Regional Councillor visits all 23 canonical communities and different presences, has colloquia with all the Confrères, and meets the Provincial and his Council twice, as well as bodies and animation Commissions of the various sectors of the ministry of the Province.

Twice he has to leave the Province: in August for a rest in the family, and in October for the Annual Meeting of the Provincials of the Interamerica Region, which was held in Bogotá, Colombia, and then to coordinate consultations for the nomination of the next Provincial of the Divine Saviour of Central America (CAM).

The Visitor concludes the extraordinary visitation to Ecuador on Friday, November 25th, with a meeting with the Provincial and his Council in the morning and with the rectors in the evening. On Saturday, November 26th, there is an Assembly of Confrères, in which the Visitor shares the conclusions and guidelines of his Final Report.

In the last days of November, the Regional Councillor stops in Quito for the annual meeting of the "Enlarged Team" *(Equipo Ampliado)* of the Salesian Centre for Ongoing Formation in America (CSFPA). The meeting of CSFPA was also attended by the Regional Councillor for America South Cone, Fr Natali Vitali. The two Regional Councillors departed from Quito for Rome on November 30th, for the *winter plenary session* of the General Council.

The Councillor for the East Asia and Oceania *Region*

After the summer session of the General Council, Fr Václav Klement did for one month (from July 24th to August 18th) the *Extraordinary Visitation of the Vice Province of Myanmar (MYM).* Then, for a *second Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Japan (GIA)*, the Regional Councillor was engaged for nearly two months (from August 27th to October 18th). The two

Extraordinary Visitations were carried out according to the discernment in the style of GC27 (listening - interpretation – way forward) and the Visitor shared the biblical icon of the GC27 "Jesus the vine and the brances" as a visible sign of conversion to belong more to God, to the brethren and to the young.

Between the two Extraordinary Visitations, the Regional Councillor was present in Hong Kong (from August 19th to 21st, CIN) and then in Cebu (August 22nd-23rd, FIS) for two short visits of animation and the meeting with the respective Provincial Councils. Before the 'Curatorium' encounter in Parañaque (FIN, August 25th, with the presence of 8 Provincials and 2 Superiors of Delegations) Fr Klement presided with great fruit over the first meeting of the regional Coordinators of the various sectors: Formation, Youth Ministry, Social Communication and Economy in the provincial house of FIN, Manila - Makati.

Starting on October 21st, Fr Klement accompanied the Rector Major during his visit to the Delegation of Mongolia (VIE) from October 22nd to 25th, and to the Vice Province of Myanmar (MYM) from October 27th to 29th. Taking advantage of his arrival in the region, Fr Ángel F. Artime also met the Korean confrères gathered in the Provincial House in Seoul (October 22nd) and the confrères of Thailand gathered in the Provincial House in Bangkok (October 26th, THA).

Thanks to the Secretariat for the Salesian Family, over 120 SDBs and other members of the Salesian Family coming from all the 11 Provinces of the Region participated in the Formation Days of the Delegates of the Salesian Family that were held in three places: a first session in Seoul (KOR, November 15th to 18th), the second session in K'Long (VIE, November 20th-23rd) and the third session in Cebu (FIS, November 25th-27th). Together with the four members of the Secretariat (Fr Eusebio Muñoz, Fr Giuseppe Casti, Fr Joan Lluis Playa and Fr Pier Luigi Cameroni) the World Coordinator of the Salesian Cooperators (SS. CC.) Noemi Bertola and Major Manager of VDBs, Olga Krizova, were also present.

During the last month before the winter plenary session of the General Council, Fr Klement did the consultations for the next Provincial of the THA Province (Thailand-Cambodia-Laos) with 4 discernment meetings that were attended by almost all the confrères (November 4th-9th). Then a few brief visits of animation followed: Dili (ITM, East Timor: November 10th to 12th), Ho Chi Min City (VIE, Vietnam: November 23rd) and finally Cebu (FIS, Philippines South: November 28th-30th). Fr Klement returned to the headquarters in Rome on December 1st.

The Councillor for the South Asia *Region*

After the conclusion of the summer session of the General Council, the Councillor for the South Asia Region, Fr Maria Arokiam, visits some Missions Procures - in Switzerland, Austria and Germany - before traveling to Goa, India, on July 31st, where on August 1st, he presides over the installation of the new Provincial of Panjim-Konkan, Fr Felix Fernandes. In the following two days he is in Chennai to visit the agricultural school in Sagayathottam and to meet the Provincial Council of INM. Later on he travels to New Delhi for a week. There he holds meetings with the Provincial Council of INN, and with all of SPCSA networks in the new house in Dwarka.

On August 11th, the Regional Councillor arrives in Mumbai to start the *Extraordinary Visitation in the INB Province*, with a meeting of all Rectors. In the first phase he visits six houses in the Mumbai area and 4 other houses in the State of Gujarat. After that, he travels to Bangalore for two important meetings, one with the SPCSA Council and the other with the Major Superiors of all the groups of the Salesian Family in South Asia. These meetings were held from August 26th to 30th. In the long period between August 31st and October 21st the Regional Councillor is again in the territory of Mumbai Province and visits most of the communities, including the one in Kuwait.

On October 22nd the Regional Councillor goes to the Provinces of Chennai and Tiruchy till the 30th of the month for the consultations for the appointment of the new Provincials. He holds meetings with the confrères in 8 different locations for the process of discernment. On October 31st he reaches Bangalore and attends the inauguration of the Golden Jubilee of 'Kristu Jyothi College', making the inaugural speech of the academic year. Returning to Mumbai, he continues the visit till November 9th when he concludes it with a meeting of the Provincial Council and the Rectors. On the whole, about 80 days are spent visiting the 40 communities of the Mumbai Province.

From November 11th to 19th, Fr Maria Arokiam accompanies the Rector Major in his visit to the three Provinces of Sri Lanka, Tiruchy and Hyderabad. In the following two days he holds a meeting of the Permanent Committee of SPCSA, and another meeting of a 'think-tank' with various confrères summoned to the Provincial House in Hyderabad. From there, returning to Chennai, the Regional Councillor participates in the meeting of the directors of provincial development offices (PDO) on November 23rd. The following three days are used to visit his family in Varadarajanpet and for travels involved in this visit. On the 27th he attends the "Short Film Salesian Festival" of Chennai, in honour of people with disabilities. He returns to Rome on November 28th.

The Councillor for the Central and North Europe *Region*

During the summer session of the General Council, the Councillor for Centre and North Europe Region, Fr Tadeusz Rozmus, participates in various moments of regional animation, in particular in the installations of the new Provincials of PLO (June 11th) and CEP (June 5th); the installation of the GBR Provincial will be on August 15th. On July 9th-11th he accompanies the Rector Major during his trip of animation in the Delegation of Belarus.

After the conclusion of the Council's summer session, the Regional Councillor on July 23rd goes to Krakow to attend the World Youth Days. During the trip he visits the communities of Benediktbeuern in Germany, Vienna and Linz in Austria and Bratislava in Slovakia. With the Rector Major and other representatives of the Salesian Family, from July 25th to 31st, he participates in Krakow in the various moments of the world meeting of the young with Pope Francis.

He spends the first days of August in Austria, sharing the pastoral service in one of the Austrian parishes with a moment of rest. On August 18th he leaves for Malta to start the *first part of the Extraordinary Visitation in the Province of Ireland (IRL)*, which also includes the Delegation of Malta. He returns for a few days to Poland to participate in the feast for the 85th birthday of his mother and on September 1st he leaves for the *Province of Belgium North (BEN)* to do the *Extraordinary Visitation* (September 1st – October 24th). During his presence in Belgium and the Netherlands he returns to the General House in Rome for the intermediate session of the General Council and to present the results of the study on the situation of Centre and North Europe Region. In this period he also accompanies the Rector Major during his trip to Russia (October 8th-10th) to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the presence and educative and pastoral commitment of the Salesians in Moscow.

Back in Belgium, he continues and concludes the Extraordinary Visitation, doing also the consultation for the new Provincial. Soon afterwards, he leaves for the Province of Germany (GER) to animate the provincial discernment process for the appointment of the new Provincial (October 24th-29th). On October 31st in Brussels he meets the Provincial Council of the Province of France - Belgium South (FRB) and then all the confrères of the Province present in the territory of Belgium South. Shortly afterwards he leaves for Malta for the second part of the Extraordinary Visitation. After the visit in the Maltese Delegation, on November 8th he goes to Dublin to continue the visitation to the Province in Ireland. Here, too, besides his duties as Extraordinary Visitor, he performs the role of animator for the discernment in the appointment of the new Provincial.

On November 26th he is in Dublin together with the whole IRL Province, with the presence of the Rectors and of the Council of the Delegation of Malta, for the conclusion of the Extraordinary Visitation. He first meets the Provincial Council, enlarged with the presence of the Provincial Delegates, then he presides over a thanksgiving Mass and shares the conclusions during the provincial assembly.

On November 28th, after the conclusion of the visit, he returns to Rome to participate in the meeting of the Provincials of the two Regions of Europe in the context of "Project Europe".

The Councillor for the Mediterranean *Region*

The Councillor for the Mediterranean Region, Fr Stefano Martoglio, at the conclusion of the works of the General Council plenary session, in the afternoon of the same day, July 22nd, participates in a meeting of the Provincial Council of ICC, to accompany the life of this large province.

In the following days he goes for a period of rest with his family during the last week of July.

From August 3rd to 7th he takes part in a formation encounter for the new Rectors of Italy and the Middle East in Alassio, Liguria; he then returns to Rome for a week of work in his headquarters.

On August 19th he is present in the Province of Sicily (ISI), where he has a meeting in the Institute St. Thomas of Messina with the young confrères of Italy and the Middle East who are preparing for their perpetual profession. Here, on behalf of the Rector Major, he begins *the Extraordinary Visitation in the ISI Province*, going from house to house. This Extraordinary Visitation in ISI had been convened by the Rector Major in June 2016 and presented to the Province by the Visitor on June 20th in Catania, in a plenary meeting with the confrères of the same province.

After commencing the visits in the houses of Sicily, the Regional Councillor provisionally leaves from August 28th to September 2nd for formation and animation meetings in the Lombard-Emilian Province (ILE). On September 3rd he participates in the ceremony of perpetual professions in the ICC; on September 8th he also presides over the ceremony of the first professions in Genzano di Roma. On September 11th in Milan he presides over the ceremony of perpetual professions of the ILE Province.

From September 12th he continues the visits in the houses of the Sicilian Province till November 20th.

The visit in the ISI is an opportunity to know and meet a rich and varied Salesian reality, strongly engaged in pastoral work with the poor, the young and the working classes, and to be able to know in person the rich and vital presence of the Salesian Family in Sicily.

In the last week of his visit to the ISI PROVINCE, from November 15th to 20th, the Regional Councillor visits the community of Manouba, Tunisia, that is entrusted to the Province of Sicily. In Tunisia he meets a new reality, animated by the confrères, because since a few weeks a second school has been taken over; this school was previously entrusted by the Diocese of Tunis to the Marianists, and is now entrusted to us. Thus the community of Manouba is in charge of the animation of two schools located in different places, though not far from one another.

On November 21st the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region participates in the Pisana in a meeting for the Salesian places of Valdocco and Colle Don Bosco.

From November 22nd he participates in the 'Curatorium' for the formation houses of Nave, Pinerolo Monte Oliveto, Turin Crocetta and San Tarcisio Rome. The 'Curatorium' of the novitiate of Genzano is scheduled for December 4th in the afternoon, after the meeting of the Provincials of Europe, to allow all the Provincials of the 'Curatorium' to be present.

On November 26th Fr Stefano Martoglio is in Parma (ILE) for a day of animation of the CEP of the parishes and oratories of the Lombard-Emilian Province.

On November 27th he begins the consultations for the appointment of the new Provincial of the Southern Province (IME); these consultations continue till December 1st so as to be able to organize meetings with the confrères in the various geographic regions that compose IME. For the same reason on December 7th-10th the Regional Councillor is in Albania\Kosovo, to meet the confrères and continue with them the consultations.

On December 2nd-4th, the Councillor for the Mediterranean, as all other members of the General Council, participates in the meeting of the Provincials of Europe held at the General House.

After this last engagement, on December 5th, 2016, he joins the work of the General Council gathered together for the winter plenary session.

5.1 A significant initiative, The Salesian Biblical Association (ABS)

During the recent seventh world convention of the Salesian Biblical Association (ABS), held at Ratisbonne, Jerusalem, 21-27 August 2016, I was impressed by the biblical competence of the participants, but even more by their clear Salesian identity and desire to collaborate in the mission of don Bosco. This, I think, is something very precious, because it is part of the *raison d'être* of this association, and it made me think that the ABS is an initiative that deserves to be better known, appreciated and promoted within the congregation.

The ABS was born in Cremisan in 1982, in response to the need felt to work out a Salesian response to the observation of *Dei Verbum*, that the goal and result of scientific study of the Bible is pastoral action.[1] The Cremisan meeting itself – the first world convention of Salesian biblists – was convoked at the initiative of Fr Egidio Viganò, Rector Major. Already in this meeting, the statutes of the association were drawn up; they were approved *ad experimentum* by Fr Viganò on 19 March 1983, and definitively on 8 December 1989, with a revision being approved by Fr Pascual Chávez on 6 May 2005.

The objectives of the association are as follows:

a) Updating of and collaboration among the members, whether professors or pastoral agents involved in catechesis and/or biblical apostolate.
b) Promotion of biblical animation in the Congregation and sharing of experiences within the Salesian Family.
c) Biblical service in the Church according to the Salesian charism.

Since 1982, the ABS has met every five years: at Frascati and Turin in 1998, with the participation of Fr Viganò and Cardinal Antonio M. Javierre, SDB; at Tlaquepaque, Mexico in 1993; at Cremisan, 1999; at Krakow in December-January 2005; and at Ratisbonne, Jerusalem in 2011 and in 2016. The conventions are centred around basic aspects of the Salesian charism or else on topics of contemporary interest in the church. Since the fourth convention the ABS has opened its doors to other members of the Salesian Family. Since 1989, the association has also been a member of the Catholic Biblical Federation.

Besides the annual *Bolletino di collegamento* containing information about the biblical activities of the members, new initiatives, and publications, the Acts of the various conventions have also been published: *Parola di Dio e carisma salesiano* (1989);[2] *Parola di Dio e evangelizzazione dei giovani.* (1994);[3] *Parola di Dio e spirito salesiano* (1996);[4] *La tua parola è luce sul mio cammino* (2000);[5] *Ripartire da Cristo, Parola di Dio* (2005);[6] *Atti del VI Convegno Mondiale dell'ABS* (2011).[7]

In addition, the association also offered reflections to the members of GC26 under the title *Passione apostolica. "Da mihi animas"* (2008),[8] and another to GC27, entitled *Testimoni della radicalità evangelica. Una riflessione biblica e salesiana* (2014),[9] also available in Italian and English. In the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, the ABS published another volume of *lectio divina*: *Luz para mis pasos. Lectio divina sobre las citas bíblicas de las Constituciones SDB* (2016), also available in Italian and English.[10]

It is right to acknowledge also the contributions of many members of the ABS in different areas of the congregation and of the church: study trips in the Holy Land organized by the Depart-

[1] *Dei Verbum* chapter 6.
[2] C. BISSOLI (a cura di), *Parola di Dio e Carisma Salesiano.* Atti del II Convegno Mondiale dell'Associazione Biblica Salesiana. Villa Tuscolana (Frascati), 23-26 agosto 1988, Roma, 1989.
[3] F. Perrenchio (a cura di), *Parola di Dio e evangelizzazione dei giovani.* Atti del III Convegno Mondiale dell'Associazione Biblica Salesiana. Guadalajara-Tlaquepaque, Mexico, 29.08 - 08.09.1993, Roma, 1994.
[4] ABS, *Parola di Dio e Spirito Salesiano,* Elledici, Leumann To, 1996.
[5] M. CIMOSA - A. STRUS (a cura di), *La tua Parola è luce sul mio cammino.* Atti del IV Convegno Mondiale ABS su "Parola di Dio e Formazione salesiana". Cremisan, Israel, 23.08 - 2.09.1999, Roma, 2000.
[6] C. PASTORE - R. VICENT (a cura di), *Ripartire da Cristo, Parola di Dio.* Lectio divina e vita salesiana, oggi. Atti del V Convegno Mondiale ABS, Kraków, Polonia, 27.12.2004 -3.01.2005, Roma, 2005.
[7] F. MOSETTO (a cura di), *Atti del VI Convegno Mondiale,* Gerusalemme, 22-31 agosto 2011. Bolletino ABS, nº 24, Roma, 2012.
[8] C. PASTORE - R. VICENT (a cura di), *Passione apostolica. "Da mihi animas"*, Elledici, Torino, 2008.
[9] J. J. BARTOLOMÉ - R. VICENT (a cura di), *Testimoni della radicalità evangelica.* Una riflessione biblica e salesiana, Elledici, Torino, 2014. Edizione in spagnolo, a cura di J. J. BARTOLOMÉ, CCS, Madrid, 2014.
[10] J. J. BARTOLOMÉ - X. MATOSES (a cura di), *Luce sui miei passi.* Lectio divina sulle citazione bibliche delle Costituzioni SDB, Elledici, Torino, 2016. Edizione in spagnolo, a cura di J. J. BARTOLOMÉ, CCS, Madrid, 2016; edizione in inglese, a cura di J. J. BARTOLOMÉ – S. J. PUYKUNNEL, Kristu Jyoti, 2016.

ment of Youth Ministry and Catechetics of the UPS, involving Maria Cimosa, Corrado Pastore, Xavier Matoses and others; archaeological excavations carried out by Andrzej Strus at the tomb of St Stephen at Beitgemal; Jozef Heriban's pioneering efforts to offer biblical resources in the Slovakian language; the work of Carlo Buzzetti in the field of inter-confessional translations of the Bible; the researches of Mario Cimosa on the Septuagint; the contributions of Cesare Bissoli in the area of the Biblical Apostolate of the CEI; Giorgio Zevini's zealous diffusion of *lectio divina*; Frank Moloney's international reputation as an exegete, and his stint as Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Washington; Gianni Barbiero's long years of teaching at the Biblicum in Rome; the work of Francesco Mosetto in the Associazione Biblica Italiana, of which he was president; and the scholarly labours and publications of Juan José Bartolomé.

In the near future, the association would like to offer Salesians a two-week retreat-cum-pilgrimage to the Holy Land in Italian, Spanish and English, as well as a two-week pilgrimage for youth animators from the Italian-speaking area. I hope there will be a good response to these initiatives.

As I write about the ABS, I find it opportune to make a few general considerations about the place of the Word of God in Salesian life.

Let me begin by recalling that the Word of God is "the first source of all Christian spirituality."[11] I feel the need to say this clearly in the light of a temptation with which I am all too familiar, to downplay the importance of the Word in favour of a spiritualty or mysticism that goes "beyond the Word." I have always felt that it was in the light of this pervasive New Age influence that John Paul II invited the whole church to a rediscovery of the ancient practice of *lectio divina*,[12] and that GC25 proposed it as a practice for Salesians and for young people.[13]

[11] *Vita Consecrata* 94.

[12] See *Novo Millennio Ineuente* 39. "Pope JOHN PAUL II has pointed out to the whole Church the example and the doctrine of St. Teresa of Avila who in her life had to reject the temptation of certain methods which proposed a leaving aside of the humanity of Christ in favor of a vague self-immersion in the abyss of the divinity." (Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Cahtolic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation, 15 October 1989. See *http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19891015_meditazione-cristiana_en.html* (01.11.2016).

[13] GC25 47, 61, 73, 185.

It is amazing to see the importance that Don Bosco gave to the Word, in a context that was quite different from our own post-conciliar one. He described the Christian as "one who is guided by the divine Word,"[14] and the *Companion of Youth* as a book of devotions adapted to the times and to young people, providing religious ideas "based on the Bible."[15]

Don Bosco's successors have followed his example. Fr Paolo Albera called the Bible "the *liber sacerdotalis* par excellence," and asked that the study of the Bible "be given precedence over every other study."[16] Fr Egidio Viganò pointed out that the Word of God is not so much a response to our questions as an initiative of God that calls us into question. The educator, he said, must be conscious of and loyal to precisely this characteristic of the Word of God. His pedagogical preoccupation must not lead him to ignore his pastoral commitment as prophet of the gospel.[17] The Rector's manual promulgated by Fr Viganò is incisive on this point: "We who are so active have to be convinced that every action springs from the intimate movement of the heart by which God unites us to himself. In this way our actions are a consequence of the Word, whom we receive and who reveals Himself to us, and of the free interior consent of a loving heart. We are not just responding to stimuli which come from the environment, nor even to some sort of vital impulse or an irresistible 'will to accomplish.' It is rather the fulfillment of His will."[18] Fr Pascual Chávez, in his turn, is passionate: "I yearn for the day when we could dedicate a bit more of our time to welcoming Jesus and hearing his word, 'the only thing necessary' (Lk 10,42)."[19] If it is God who calls us and entrusts young people to us, we must have his Word in our hands each day, so that we might "walk side by side with the young

[14] Giovanni BOSCO, *Il mese di maggio consacrato a Maria Ss. Immacolata* (Torino 1858), in *OE* X (Roma 1976) 356.

[15] Giovanni BOSCO, *Memorie dell Oratorio* 169.

[16] *Lettere circolari di D. Paolo Albera ai Salesiani* (Torino 1922) 394-395.

[17] Egidio VIGANÒ, "Il progetto educativo salesiano," ACS 290 (1978) 35.

[18] *The Salesian Rector: A ministry for the animation and governing of the local community* (Rome, 1986) n. 180.

[19] Pascual CHÀVEZ, *Witnesses of the Living God: Nature and Future of Consecrated Life. A Salesian Vision* (Bengaluru: Kristu Jyoti Publications, 2013) 120 = Pascual CHÀVEZ, "'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' (Jn 6,69). The Word of God and Salesian Life Today," ACG 386 (2004) 5.

so as to lead them to the risen Lord." (C 34) Our recent general chapters have also insisted abundantly on the central place of the Word of God in our lives.[20]

The ABS is one of the expressions of the love of the congregation for the Word of God. It is an organ of collaboration and coordination of all Salesian biblical experts and pastoral agents that is in the process of involving the Salesian Family in an ever more significant way. It is marked by a deep sense of belonging to the congregation, as witnessed by the themes it chooses to study and the contributions it has made to various general chapters and to the promotion of *lectio divina*. *The present letter is a warm acknowledgement of its spirit and activity, and at the same time an invitation and encouragement to all Salesian biblists to form part of the association in some way*. This is not merely a question of "what's in it for me?" – for surely there are larger and more prestigious associations, meetings and conferences, in which we must no doubt be present. It is a question of a celebration of our fraternity, and at the same time also of what we can do together to accompany the congregation and the Family in its response to the Word and in its service to those to whom we are sent.

We will continue to be Salesian educators only if we take the Sacred Scriptures daily into our hands (C 87), allowing ourselves to be transformed by them (DV 25). Only thus will we be able to help our confreres and the members of the Salesian Family, and above all the youth, to discover the hidden treasure that we encounter in the word of God – the person of Jesus Christ

Let us entrust ourselves to the heart of Mary, and let us entrust to her also the work of the ABS. We ask that we might belong to the school of Mary, so as to learn from her to welcome and to contemplate the word, to keep the word in our hearts and to proclaim it with joy and enthusiasm.

Fr Ivo COELHO
General Councillor for Formation

[20] See GC26 10, 11, 32-35, 37, and GC27 5, 34, 52, 64.2, 65.2, 65.3, 67.4.

5.2 Decree of Canonical Erection of the Salesian Vice-Province of "Mary Help of Christians" of Africa Congo Congo

Here below please find the Decree of Canonical Erection of the new Salesian Vice-Province of "Mary help of Christians" in Africa, called Africa Congo Congo (ACC), approved by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council on July 18th, 2016.

The undersigned,
Fr **Ángel Fernández Artime,**
Rector Major of the Salesian Society of St. John Bosco,

- Considering the development of the Salesian mission and the territorial extension of the Salesian province of "Assumption" of Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- Considering the development of the Salesian mission and the territorial extension of the Salesian Vice Province of "Our Lady of Africa" of Yaoundé (Cameroon);
- Taking into account that, for a more effective animation, on January 23rd, 2013, the Provincial Delegation of the Democratic Republic of West Congo, based in Kinshasa-Masina (Democratic Republic of the Congo) was constituted;
- Taking into account that, for a more effective animation, on January 23rd, 2013 the Provincial Delegation of Congo Brazzaville, based in Brazzaville-Don Bosco (Congo) was constituted;
- Having regard to the outcome of the consultations carried out in the Salesian Province of "Assumption" in Lubumbashi (AFC) and the outcome of the consultation carried out in the Salesian Vice Province of "Our Lady of Africa" in Yaoundé (ATE);
- Having regard to the favourable opinion of the AFC Provincial with his Council and the approval of the ATE Superior and his Council;
- After obtaining the consent of the General Council in its meeting on **July 18th, 2016,** according to Articles 132 §1,1 and 156 of the Constitutions:

Hereby DETACHES from the Salesian Province "Assumption" of Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of the Congo) the following houses:

1. Kinshasa - Kingabwa, *"Mary Help of Christians"*
2. Kinshasa - Lukunga, *"St. John Bosco"*
3. Kinshasa - Masina, *"Mary Help of Christians"*

4. Mbuji Mayi, *"St. Tarcisius"*
5. Kananga, community not canonically erected
6. Tshikapa, community not canonically erected
7. Kinshasa Gombe, community not canonically erected

He also DETACHES from the Salesian Vice Province "Our Lady of Africa" of Yaoundé (Cameroon) the following houses:

1. Pointe Noire, *"St. Peter"*
2. Brazzaville, *"St. John Bosco"*
3. Brazzaville, *"St. Charles Lwanga"*

and by means of this Decree,

HE CANONICALLY ERECTS

the new **SALESIAN VICE-PROVINCE OF AFRICA CONGO KINSHASA AND CONGO BRAZZAVILLE (ACC), entitled to "MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS", with its headquarters in KINSASHA-MASINA (DRC), in the house "Mary Help of Christians",** with the above-mentioned houses.

The following is also decreed:

1. The confrères who appear in the list drawn up by the Regional Councillor, the AFC Provincial, the ATE Superior, the appointed ACC Superior belong to the Vice-Province. This list will be approved by the Rector Major and the General Council on April 12th, 2017, and the juridical position of the confrères with permanent or temporary transfer to the new ACC Province will be indicated.
2. The Vice-Province may develop its mission in Congo Brazzaville and in the areas of Kinshasa, East Kasai, West Kasai, Bas-Congo, Bandundu, Equateur of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
3. The relationships of the ACC Vice-Province ACC with AFC Province and the ATE Vice-Province will be defined through possible conventions approved by the Rector Major.

The Vice Province will commence with the induction of the new Superior on June 3rd, 2017.

Rome, July 24th, 2016

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

Fr Stefano VANOLI
General Secretary

5.3 Dispositions for the General House and other communities depending on the Rector Major (RMG)

Here below find some dispositions of the Rector Major and his Council concerning the General House and the other communities directly depending on the Rector Major (altogether identified with the abbreviation RMG).

By official decree No. 16/0426 dated November 24th, 2016, the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, after obtaining the consent of the General Council, delegated to his Vicar, Fr Francesco Cereda, the necessary powers of animation, care and government of the communities directly depending on the Rector Major. In the same decree the Rector Major also formed a council – made up by the General Econome and two other General Councillors, appointed for three years – to help the Vicar of the Rector in carrying out those tasks.

The communities directly depending on the Rector Major, which are thus affected by the decree are: the community "Blessed Michael Rua" of the General House; the community "St. Francis de Sales", with headquarters in Vatican City; the community "San Callisto" in Rome; the two Salesian communities in Eritrea, "San Giovanni Bosco" in Asmara and "St. Justin de Jacobis" in Dekehare.

These are communities for which, over the years and for different reasons, it was considered appropriate that they refer directly to the Rector Major.

Although these communities do not constitute a juridical circumscription, in order to guarantee for them the specific service of the major Superior, the Vicar of the Rector Major is thus delegated, to fulfil the tasks envisaged in art. 161 of the Salesian Constitutions (inherent in the figure of the Provincial).

In exercising these functions Fr Cereda will be joined by the Econome General, Bro. Jean Paul Muller, and two General Councillors, appointed for three years – at present Fr Ivo Coelho, General Councillor for Formation, and Fr Guillermo Basañes, General Councillor for the Missions – in what concerns the implementation of the tasks prescribed by art. 165 of the Constitution and by articles 156 and 157 of the General Regulations (regarding the Provincial Council).

This Decree will be effective as of today, December 1st, 2016, and is valid until further notice. The

representation of these communities at the General Chapter will be defined in a subsequent decree.

5.4 New Provincials

Here below find (in alphabetical order) some biographical details on the Provincials and Superiors of Vice-Provinces appointed by the Rector Major with his Council in December 2016, during the plenary winter session.

1. *ASIRA LIPUKU Simon, Provincial of EAST AFRICA (AFE)*

On December 15th, 2016, Fr *Simon Asira LIPUKU* was appointed to lead the "Saint John Bosco" Province of East Africa (AFE). He succeeds Fr Gianni Rolandi.

Born on January 27th, 1966, in Shikoti, Butsotso (Kenya), he is a Salesian since May 24th, 1988, the date of his first profession he made in Embu (Kenya). He pronounced his perpetual vows on May 24, 1994; he was ordained a priest on March 30th, 1996.

After his priestly ordination, he carried out his educational and pastoral ministry in various houses of the AFE Province: Nzaikoni, Kenya (1997-1999); Moshi, Tanzania (1999-2002); Dar Es Salaam-Upangas, Tanzania (2002-2003); Nairobi - Boys Town (2003-2006); Embu (2006-2011), as Rector; Nairobi - Upper Hill (2011-2015). In July 2015 he was appointed Rector of the house of Nairobi - Utume, a task that was still carrying out.

At a provincial level he had several tasks: Provincial Councillor, Delegate for the sectors of the Salesian Family and of Formation, Provincial Secretary, Vice Provincial for two three-year periods, a task he was fulfilling when he was appointed as Provincial.

2. *GESING Reinhard, Provincial of the Province of GERMANY*

On December 14th, 2016, the Rector Major with his Council appointed Fr *Reinhard GESING* as Provincial of "Saint Boniface" Province of Germany (GER). He succeeds Fr Josef Grünner.

Born on August 13th, 1962, in Südlohn NRW (Germany), Reinhard Gesing made his first religious profession on August 15th, 1983 in the then Province of Germany-North (GEK) and his perpetual profession on August 15th, 1989.

Ordained a priest on June 28th, 1992, he exerted his educational and pastoral ministry in the communities of Velbert (1992-1995); Jünkerath (1995-2005) as Novice Master. Since 2005 he was in the house of Benediktbeuern, of which he was appointed Rector in April 2015. At a provincial level, since March 2011 he held the position of Vice Provincial.

3. *JIMÉNEZ CASTRO Manuel, Superior of the Vice-Province of AFRICA TROPICAL EQUATORIAL*

Fr *Manuel JIMÉNEZ CASTRO* is the Superior of the new Vice-Province of "Mary Help of Christians" of "Africa Congo Kinshasa and Congo Brazzaville" (ACC), appointed for this service by the Rector Major with his Council on December 20th, 2016.

Born on October 23rd, 1959, in Tarifa (Cádiz), Spain, he is a Salesian since August 28th, 1977, when he made his first profession in Cabezo de Torres, in the Province of Seville. He pronounced his perpetual vows on 08.21.1983 and did his theological studies in Seville, where he was ordained a priest on May 17th, 1986.

After a few years' ministry in his Province of origin (in the houses of Seville - Community of Theologians, Cádiz-Aspirantate and Sanlúcar la Mayor, as Novice Master), he left for the African mission to the house of Kara (Togo) of which he was Rector from 1996 to 2002; he then went to the house of Lomé, as Rector and Parish Priest. In 2004 the Rector Major and his Council called him to do the service of Superior of the Vice Province of West Africa Francophone Africa (AFO).

After his six-year period as Superior in AFO, on March 10th, 2010, the Rector Major and his Council entrusted him with the guidance of the Africa Tropical Equatorial (ATE) Vice-Province, a task he held until May 2015. Later on, in September 2015 he was appointed Rector of the General House in Rome.

Now, as mentioned above, he is called to guide the new Vice-Province of "Mary Help of Christians" in Africa.

4. *JOSEPH P. Antony, Provincial of the Province of Tiruchy, INDIA (INT)*

Fr *JOSEPH P. Antony* is the new Provincial of the Province of "Our Lady of Health of Velankanni" in Tiruchy, India (INT); he was appointed by the Rector Major and his Council on December 9th, 2016. He succeeds Fr Albert Johnson.

He was born on July 23rd, 1964, in Thennur, Trichinoly, Tamilnadu (India) and is a Salesian since May

24th, 1983, when he did his first profession. He pronounced his perpetual vows on June 4th, 1990, and was ordained a priest on December 29th, 1996.

After his priestly ordination, he exerted his educational and pastoral ministry in different houses of the Province: Tirupattur-Dominic Savio (1996-1998); Tirupattur-Sacred Heart College (1998-2000); Sivakasi-Vidivelli (2000-2002), as rector; Tiruchirapally-Manikandam (2002-2009), as economer; Tiruchirapally-Kallukuzhy (2009-2011). Since April 2011 he was rector in Pallithammam Bosco Maiyam. At a provincial level he covered the role of provincial economer in the period 2002-2011).

5. *KITUNGWA KABUGÉ Albert, the Province CENTRAL AFRICA Inspector (AFC)*

Fr *Albert KITUNGWA KABUGÉ* succeeds Fr Jean-Claude Ngoy as Provincial of the "Assumption" Province of Central Africa (AFC), appointed to this task by the Rector Major and his Council on December 22nd, 2016.

Born in Kipushi, Katanga (Congo-Brazzaville), he is a Salesian since August 24th, 1998, the date of the first profession, which he did in the Province of West Africa Francophone, to which he belonged. Perpetually professed July 9th, 2005, he was ordained a priest on July 15th, 2006.

After his priestly ordination, he exerted his ministry for two years (2006-2008) in the house of Abidjan-Koumassi (Ivory Coast). He was then for two years (2008-2010) at UPS in Rome. On his return to Africa, from 2010 to 2013 he worked in the house of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), as economer, and in the year 2013 to 2014 in Cotonou (Benin). In 2014 he was transferred to the Central Africa Province (AFC) as Vice-Provincial. At the same time he was Rector of the provincial house in Lubumbashi.

Now he continues in the AFC Province as Provincial.

6. *KOCHAMKUNNEL Jose, Provincial of the Province of MADRAS, INDIA (INM)*

Fr *Jose KOCHAMKUNNEL* is the new Provincial of 'St. Thomas, Apostle" Province in Chennai (Madras), India (INM); he was appointed by the Rector Major and his Council on December 20th, 2016. He succeeds Fr Joseph Devapragasam.

Born on February 22nd, 1956, in Manoor, Kottayam, Kerala (India), he made his first Salesian religious profession on May 24th, 1975, and his perpetual profession on May 22nd, 1982. On December 31st, 1985, he was ordained a priest.

After his priestly ordination, he joined the Province of Madras from the theologate in Bangalore, where he had studied, and spent one year in the house of Madras-Ennore, then he was for three years (1993-1996) in New Rochelle, in the provincial headquarters. Returned to Madras, he worked in various houses of the Province, with positions of responsibility: Madras-Citalel-Provincial House (1998-2003), rector; Madras-Broadway (2003-2005), rector; Madras-Citalel-Provincial House (2005-2008), rector; Tirupattur (2008-2014), rector. From 2005 to 2008 he was Vice-Provincial. In March he was assigned to the "Don Bosco Renewal Centre" in Bangalore, of which he later was rector. Now he is called to the responsibility of Provincial.

7. *MCDONNELL Eunan, Provincial of the Province of IRELAND*

As Provincial of "Saint Patrick" Province in Ireland (IRL), the Rector Major and his Council on December 22nd, 2016, appointed Fr *Eunan McDONNELL*. He succeeds Michael D. Casey.

Eunan McDonnell was born on September 28th, 1961, in Strabane, Co. Tyrone (Ireland) and is a Salesian since September 8th, 1982, the date of first profession. He pronounced his perpetual vows on July 9th, 1988, and was ordained a priest on June 16th, 1990.

After his ordination, he remained for a two-year period in the Studentate of Maynooth; then he spent a year in the Provincial House in Dublin, then in Rome-UPS to continue his studies in the year 1993-1994. On his return to Ireland, from 1995 to 1999 he was Novice Master (and simultaneously Vicar of the Provincial House of Dublin). In September 2000 he leaves to Adigrat (Ethiopia), where he remains till September 2004 as a school Principal. On his return to Ireland, he worked successively in the houses of Celbridge (2004-2005), Maynooth (2005-2015) and from 2016 again in Celbridge, of which he was appointed rector.

8. *PRADO José Ángel Mendoza, Provincial of the Province of CENTRAL AMERICA (CAM)*

Fr *José Ángel Mendoza PRADO* is the new Provincial of the Province of the "Divine Saviour" of Central America (CAM), ap-

pointed by the Rector Major and his Council on December 15th, 2016. He succeeds Fr Alejandro Hernández.

Fr José Ángel Mendoza Prado was born on December 17th, 1957, in San José (Costa Rica) and is a Salesian since January 15th, 1978, the date of his first religious profession. He pronounced his perpetual vows on October 22nd, 1984, and was ordained a priest on May 28th, 1988.

After his ordination, he remained in the theologate in Guatemala till February 1992. After he exerted his educational and pastoral ministry in different houses of the CAM Province. From February 1992 to December 2001 he was in San Isidro-Don Bosco Centre (Costa Rica), from 1995 to 2001 as rector. He spent a year in Cartago (Costa Rica); in December 2002 he was appointed rector of the house of San José-Técnico (Costa Rica), a task he fulfilled for six years. In January 2011 he was appointed Vice-Provincial, a task he fulfilled for two three-year periods (in the first three years he was also rector of the provincial house in Guatemala). In February 2016 he was sent to the house of Panama-Técnico Don Bosco. Now he assumes the task of Provincial.

9. *THEPHARAT PITISANT John Bosco, Provincial of the Province of THAILAND (THA)*

The Rector Major and his Council on December 20th, 2016, appointed Fr *John Bosco THEPHARAT PITISANT* as Provincial of the Province of "Saint Paul" in Thailand (THA). He succeeds Fr Paul Praset Somngam.

Born on November 16th, 1951, in Bangkok (Thailand), John Bosco Thepharat is a Salesian since May 1st, 1971, when he did his first profession in Canlubang. He pronounced his perpetual vows on March 22nd, 1978, and was ordained a priest on June 6th, 1982.

After his priestly ordination, he carried out his Salesian mission in the house of Hua Hin from September 1985 to September 1991, when he was transferred to the house of Banpong-Sarasit, where in 1995 he assumed the role of Rector for six years. In May 2001 he was sent to the house of Ban Saeng Arun, where he stayed for three years. In December 2004 he passed to the house of Bangkok - provincial centre, till July 2011 when he was transferred to the house of Hua Hin as Rector and Parish Priest. He was still there when he was appointed as Provincial.

10. *WAMBEKE Wilfried, Provincial of the Province OF BELGIUM NORTH (BEN)*

Fr *Wilfried WAMBEKE* is the new Provincial of the "St John Berchmans" Province of Belgium North (BEN), appointed by the Rector Major and his Council on December 9th, 2016. He succeeds Fr Mark D. Tips.

He was born on May 25th, 1955, in Tielt, West-Vlaanderen (Belgium) and is a Salesian since September 8th, 1974, when he did his first religious profession. He pronounced his perpetual vows on November 25th, 1979, and was ordained a priest on April 24th, 1982.

After his ordination, he exerted his educational and pastoral ministry in various houses of the Province of Belgium North: Oud-Heverlee from 1985 to 1991; Groot-Bijgaarden from 1991 to 1994; Hechtel from 1994-1999; again in Groot-Bijgaarden from 1999 to 2009. In 2009-2010 he was at UPS in Rome. Upon returning to Belgium in May 2010, he was appointed rector in the house of Hechtel, a task he fulfilled till March 2015, when he was transferred as Rector to the house of Heverlee - S.G.B. (Leuven). Here was reached by his appointment as Provincial. Since March 2011 he was a member of the Provincial Council.

5.5 New Salesian Bishop

SANTOS Canavarros Dos Edmilson Tadeu, Auxiliary Bishop of Manaus (Brazil)

On October 12th, 2016, the Supreme Pontiff Francis appointed Fr *Edmilson Tadeu CANAVVAROS DOS SANTOS, SDB*, as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Manaus, Brazil, assigning him the titular see of lesser Feradi.

Emildson Canavarros Tadeu dos Santos was born on December 5th, 1967 in Corumbá, State of Mato Grosso, Brazil. He made his first religious profession on January 31st, 1988 in Dourados-Indápolis, in the Province of Campo Grande, his perpetual profession on May 22nd, 1994, in Araçatuba, and he was ordained a priest on December 7th, 1996, in Campo Grande.

After his ordination to the priesthood, after two years of educational and pastoral work in the house of Dourados-Indápolis, he served as Rector of the Salesian aspirantate of Campo Grande during the three-year period 1999-2002, then as Rector of the Salesian School of Lins from 2002 to 2004. Later on,

from 2005 to 2008 he was Rector of the Theological Institute "Pio XI" of Sao Paolo. In June 2008 he was appointed Vice Provincial in the Province of Campo Grande, a task he held for six years, till 2014. During this period he also covered the task of Rector of the Paul VI community of Campo Grande (2010-2012) and afterwards of the post-novitiate of Campo Grande - São Vicente (2012-2014). After the six years as Vice Provincial and one year in the College of "Santa Teresa" in Corumbá (2014), he returned to the house of Campo Grande - Paul VI as Rector and Parish Priest. Here he received his appointment as bishop by Pope Francis.

In the Province of Campo Grande, between 2009 and 2015 he also had the tasks of Delegate for the Educative Pastoral Communities, Formation and Vocation Ministry.

5.6 Our dead confreres (2nd list 2016)

"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 the love of the Lord... Their remembrance is an incentive to continue faithfully in our mission" (*Const. 94*).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ABDOU Fathi Milad	Minia (Egypt)	30/11/2016	43	**MOR**
P ALAKULAM George	Gayaganga (India)	13/12/2016	87	**INC**
P ALBA MONTESINOS Pedro	Seville (Spain)	25/12/2016	92	**SMX**
P ARBELAEZ HOYOS Mario	Medellin (Colombia)	20/10/2016	83	**COM**
P ARTUSIO Romolo	Turin (Italy)	12/08/2016	101	**ICP**
E ASURMENDI ARAMANDÍA Miguel	Pamplona (Spain)	09/08/2016	76	—
Was Provincial for 7 years, Bishop of Tarazona (Spain) for 5 years and for 21 years Bishop of Vitoria (Spain)				
P ATZORI Giancarlo	Rome (Italy)	22/11/2016	74	**ICC**
P BALDO Danilo	Nazareth (Israel)	16/01/2016	78	**MOR**
L BAŠA Eugen	Prešov (Slovakia)	04/08/2016	85	**SLK**
P BATTAGLIERI Guido	Mondovì (Italy)	29/08/2016	86	**ICP**
P BERAUD Jean Baptiste	Yaoundé (Cameroun)	14/12/2016	94	**ATE**
P BERTOLINO Aldo	Turin (Italy)	09/09/2016	82	**ICP**
P BETANCOURT RAMÍREZ Homero	Jarabacoa (Dominican Rep.)	27/10/2016	97	**ANT**
P BLEIBTREU Karl	Linz (Austria)	17/09/2016	80	**AUS**
P BOGANTES Fernando	San Salvador (El Salvador)	14/12/2016	91	**CAM**
P BOYD William	Farnborough (England)	28/08/2016	98	**GBR**
P BUSOLIN Battista	Tura (India)	24/12/2016	94	**ING**
P CAPRIOGLIO Dante	Borgo S. Martino (Italy)	27/11/2016	96	**ICP**
P CARRONE Carlos Alfonso	Rosario, Santa Fe (Argentina)	26/08/2016	86	**ARN**
L CHOWRY Jose	Panjim, Goa (India)	10/07/2016	94	**INP**
P CHUDÝ František	Nitra (Slovakia)	04/07/2016	86	**SLK**
P CID GONZÁLEZ Marcial	Seville (Spain)	09/10/2016	88	**SMX**
P CODUTTI Jean-Baptiste	Chambery (France)	27/07/2016	82	**FRB**
P COLOMBI Guillermo	Lima (Peru)	07/07/2016	90	**PER**
P CONTIN Ugo	Loreto (Italy)	10/07/2016	83	**ICC**
P CORTÉS MIRALLES Francisco	Barcelona (Spain)	03/12/2016	94	**SMX**
P CUADRADO BERNARDO Leovigildo	Arévalo (Spain)	28/12/2016	88	**SSM**
L DA SILVA Manoel Vicente	Natal, RN (Brazil)	23/12/2016	83	**BRE**
P DE WULF Willy	Kortrijk (Belgium)	02/07/2016	80	**BEN**
L DIAS Robert	Kampala (Uganda)	04/11/2016	93	**AGL**
P DIIUR André	Lubumbashi (R.D. Congo)	11/12/2016	34	**AFC**
P ELSAKKERS Toon	Zoetermeer (Netherlands)	19/12/2016	95	**BEN**
P FASOLATO Juan Antonio	Córdoba (Argentina)	28/10/2016	80	**ARN**
L FERNÁNDEZ FERNÁNDEZ Julio	Ourense (Spain)	04/09/2016	77	**SSM**
P FERNÁNDEZ MULTILOA Martin	Quito (Ecuador)	12/12/2016	85	**ECU**
P FORLANI Angelo	Vallecrosia (Italy)	16/11/2016	81	**ICC**
P FOSCATO Luciano	Rome (Italy)	12/10/2016	82	**ICC**
P FRANK Pál	Budapest (Hungary)	27/12/2016	88	**UNG**

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P **GABREL Antoni**	Łódź (Poland)	02/11/2016	81	**PLE**
P **GASSER Alfonso Miguel**	Córdoba (Argentina)	04/12/2016	90	**ARN**
L **GEMBOLYS Alojzy**	Warszawa (Poland)	02/10/2016	80	**PLE**
P **GHILARDI Giovanni**	Genova (Italy)	15/09/2016	80	**ICC**
L **GONZÁLEZ CARDIEL H. Cristóbal**	Jalisco (Mexico)	02/08/2016	81	**MEG**
L **GONZÁLEZ MARTIN Alberto**	Arévalo (Spain)	31/12/2016	94	**SSM**
P **GONZÁLEZ MARTÍN del C. Ramón**	Jalisco (Mexico)	19/07/2016	80	**MEG**
P **GROß Julius**	Köln (Germany)	11/12/2016	92	**GER**
P **GUARINO Roberto**	Salerno (Italy)	29/09/2016	64	**IME**
L **GUERRA Giuseppe**	Ivrea (Itaia)	14/12/2016	91	**ICP**
P **GUTIÉRREZ MUÑOZ Miguel**	Seville (Spain)	20/12/2016	84	**SMX**
L **HARASYM Gerard**	Surrey (Canada)	26/08/2016	79	**SUE**
P **HUERTA JAIMES José Antonio**	Mexico City (Mexico)	13/10/2016	84	**MEM**
P **HUERTA PALMA José Hiram**	Mexico City (Mexico)	14/07/2016	78	**MEM**
P **IGNACE-THEOBALDE Pierre**	Nice (France)	08/10/2016	89	**FRB**
L **IHL Jean**	Nice (France)	15/08/2016	87	**FRB**
P **ISHII Yasuto Yohane**	Tokyo (Japan)	16/11/2016	78	**GIA**
P **ISOARDI Giancarlo**	Turin (Italy)	24/12/2016	80	**ICP**
P **JARZĄBEK Kazinierz**	Olsztyn (Poland)	26/08/2016	81	**PLE**
P **JOB Eliseo**	Santiago (Chile)	27/09/2016	95	**CIL**
P **JOUSSET Jacques**	Caen (France)	31/07/2016	95	**FRB**
D **KELNAR Václav**	Brno (Czech Rep.)	21/12/2016	87	**CEP**
P **KOCHAŃSKI Jacek**	Szczecin (Poland)	12/11/2016	97	**PLN**
P **KOU Chih-ming Matthias**	Hong Kong	16/10/2016	90	**CIN**
P **KRÄMER Michael**	Benediktbeuern (Germany)	11/12/2016	93	**GER**
P **LISAUT TOLOZA Walter**	Montevideo (Uruguay)	29/11/2016	91	**URU**
L **LOBO Expedit**	Chennai (India)	06/09/2016	77	**INM**
P **LÓPEZ SEVILLANO Juan**	Oviedo (Spain)	05/08/2016	70	**SSM**
P **LUCIANO Giovanni**	Lanzo torinese (Italy)	03/12/2016	79	**ICP**
P **MACÁK Ernst**	Cerová (Slovakia)	13/10/2016	96	**SLK**
Was Provincial for 6 years				
L **MAMPILLY James**	Calcutta (India)	22/11/2016	89	**INC**
L **MARCACCINI Antonio**	Arese (Italy)	11/11/2016	84	**ILE**
P **MARINONE Giovanni Antonio Natale**	Arese (Italy)	18/12/2016	89	**ILE**
L **MARTÍN HERNÁNDEZ Euniciano**	Barcelona (Spain)	29/07/2016	91	**SMX**
P **MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA Carlos**	Masaya (Nicaragua)	23/08/2016	87	**CAM**
P **MASNÝ Alojz**	Bratislava (Slovakia)	17/12/2016	88	**SLK**
P **MAURO Noël**	Lyon (France)	28/08/2016	92	**FRB**
P **MAZZELLI Piergiorgio**	Brescia (Italy)	28/10/2016	78	**ILE**
P **MEIM Daniel Dennis**	Makati City/Manila (Philippine)	04/09/2016	57	**FIN**
P **MENOR CONDE Delfín**	Seville (Spain)	16/08/2016	79	**SMX**
P **MESSA Giovanni**	Parma (Italy)	03/09/2016	91	**ILE**
P **MOLINA VALCÁRCEL Gabriel**	El Campello (Spain)	06/12/2016	87	**SMX**
P **MONNIER Jean-Pierre**	Caen-Calvados	06/10/2016	77	**FRB**
P **MONTALDO Edgardo**	Rosario (Argentina)	25/12/2016	86	**ARN**
P **MOOLACHERRY Augustine**	Chennai (India)	15/11/2016	90	**INM**
P **MOSKWA Michael**	Moguro (Japan)	09/08/2016	100	**GIA**

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P **NEFFARI Giancarlo**	Castello di Godego (Italy)	21/09/2016	81	**INE**
P **NOLLI Agostino**	Arese (Italy)	18/12/2016	83	**ILE**
P **NONNE Giovanni**	Rome (Italy)	28/10/2016	88	**ICC**
P **NORONHA Romulo**	Panjim, Goa (India)	17/08/2016	72	**INP**
P **OPPER Josef**	Prüm/Eifel (Germany)	01/09/2016	89	**GER**
Was Provincial for 6 years				
P **PADILLA VILLAMIL Gustavo**	Girardot (Colombia)	02/11/2016	61	**COB**
P **PENNISI Antonino**	Catania (Italy)	13/12/2016	90	**ISI**
P **PEPATI Aldo**	Turin (Italy)	08/08/2016	77	**ICP**
P **PERNBRÜNNER Pietro**	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	21/10/2016	91	**ARS**
P **POSADA Oscar de Jesus**	Medellín (Colombia)	17/12/2016	89	**COM**
P **PROU Marcel**	Caen (France)	13/11/2016	95	**FRB**
P **PUTHUVA Joffie**	Tellakam (India)	03/08/2016	50	**INK**
P **RIDELLA Francesco**	Genoa (Italy)	05/08/2016	93	**ICC**
L **RINERO Michele**	Turin (Italy)	25/12/2016	82	**ICP**
L **ROCCATI Carlo**	Rome (Italy)	01/07/2016	83	**ICC**
P **RODRÍGUEZ GONZÁLEZ Carlos F.**	Bogotá (Colombia)	05/12/2016	80	**COB**
P **RODRÍGUEZ IZQUIERDO Andrés**	Caracas (Venezuela)	24/12/2016	76	**VEN**
P **ROSÉS VIA Francisco**	Barcelona (Spain)	25/09/2016	93	**SMX**
P **ROSS Michael**	Dublin (Ireland)	30/10/2016	68	**IRL**
P **RÖTTGERING Joop**	Amsterdam (Netherlands)	09/12/2016	84	**KOR**
P **SALGADO PARDO Manuel**	Seville (Spain)	30/09/2016	87	**SMX**
P **SÁNCHEZ SALDÍAS Roberto**	Punta Arenas (Chile)	06/11/2016	86	**CIL**
P **SERNA del CAMPO Javier**	Fuenlabrada (Spain)	31/12/2016	79	**SSM**
L **SOLÍS ORTIZ Arturo**	Jalisco (Mexico)	30/12/2016	50	**MEG**
P **SOUSA Fernando**	Manique-Estoril (Portugal)	21/12/2016	87	**POR**
P **SUTHERLAND Francis**	Glasgow (Scotland)	24/09/2016	89	**GBR**
P **SYNOWIEC Ludwik**	Kobyla (Poland)	12/11/2016	62	**PLS**
P **SZYMAŃSKI Bronisław**	Cieszysn (Poland)	24/12/2016	95	**PLS**
P **TEPLÝ Václav**	Brandýs nad Labem (Czech Rep.)	27/12/2016	88	**CEP**
L **THERUVIL Mani**	Pandey Sebayan (India)	27/11/2016	83	**INC**
L **TIRKEY Romanus**	Hijuguri (India)	21/12/2016	66	**IND**
L **TOBÓN Octavio**	Medellín (Colombia)	26/09/2016	92	**COM**
L **TRAVASINO Giuseppe**	Rome (Italy)	01/09/2016	85	**ICC**
P **VALDAMBRINI Ivo**	Rome (Italy)	29/12/2016	93	**ICC**
P **VALENCIANO POLACK Antonio**	León (Spain)	15/07/2016	95	**SSM**
P **VALENTE Pasquale**	Rome (Italy)	29/12/2016	81	**ICC**
P **VALLICHERRY Mathew**	Aluva, Kerala (India)	09/07/2016	91	**INK**
P **VAN LUYN Kees**	Assel (Belgium)	15/10/2016	82	**BEN**
P **VATEL Jacques**	Guincamp (France)	06/10/2016	93	**FRB**
P **VELAZCO Juan Andrés**	Bernal (Agentina)	03/08/2016	77	**ARS**
P **VÉLEZ RENDÓN Bernardo**	Medellin (Colombia)	26/07/2016	96	**COM**
P **VIAN Luigi**	Vigo di Fassa (Italy)	30/11/2016	91	**INE**
P **YAMANO Paolo Gentaro**	Beppu (Japan)	02/08/2016	69	**GIA**