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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

A past that throws light on our present **IN DIALOGUE WITH FR PAUL ALBERA**

Rome, 24 June 2021
Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

My dear confreres,

This year 2021 marks the first centenary of the death of Fr Paul Albera (1845-1921), the second successor of Don Bosco at the head of the Pious Society of St Francis de Sales.

The desire to address each one of you in recalling this important anniversary together, has given me the opportunity to study this great Rector Major and get to know him better, since perhaps he has been somewhat neglected because of the fame of his predecessor (Fr Michael Rua) and his successor (Fr Philip Rinaldi).

I allowed myself to be challenged above all by the light from the past in which Fr Albera spent his life, which radiates witness and strength and offers us many challenges for our present: a “today” of the Congregation that we live in the light of General Chapter 28, the first one that did not reach its planned conclusion because of the COVID-19 pandemic that still afflicts our world.

As I have written on a previous occasion, Fr Paul Albera’s term of office was the most difficult and dramatic period experienced by the Congregation. It was the time of the First World War, which caused millions of deaths and saw more than 2,000 Salesians sent to war, 80 of whom lost their lives.¹ This terrible conflict also prevented the General Chapter planned for those years from being held.

I can tell you, dear confreres, that the figure of Fr Paul Albera has enthused me. Above all, I believe I have found many elements that stimulate a dialogue between our time and his,

¹ Certainly, more painful still was the Second World War, which destroyed a large part of Europe and also hit Japan very hard. A war that, according to the most realistic estimates, left behind a trail of some 60,000,000 dead.

allowing that past to challenge us today with what were, at the time, courageous and clear decisions for the Congregation.

The bibliography on Fr Albera is very rich. I wanted to include it at the end of this letter, together with other studies and texts on specific topics which help to deepen our knowledge and the spirit of this great Rector Major.²

1. A SALESIAN WHO BELONGED TO THE “EARLIEST TIMES”

1.1. From a boy who breathed in the “Valdocco atmosphere” to being Don Bosco’s Successor

Fr Paul Albera was one of the “Salesians of the earliest times”, one of those who got to know Don Bosco personally and in depth, live with him, grow with him and mature alongside him, as well as seeing him in action. Fr Albera *breathed the Valdocco atmosphere alongside Don Bosco*, together with Michael Rua, John Cagliero and other Salesians. He then exported this “Valdocco atmosphere” to Mirabello, where he was sent with the first Rector of the house, Fr Rua, as an assistant and student of philosophy and theology.

Later, at a more mature age and after having been Rector in Genoa, he also became a witness to and actively involved in the development of Salesian work beyond the borders of Piedmont, first in Liguria and then in France.

² I refer to the recent book by Fr Aldo GIRAUDO, *Don Paolo Albera maestro di vita spirituale* (LAS, Rome 2021 but now also in English as *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, available on sdb.org and SDL), as well as the doctoral thesis by Bro. Paolo Vaschetto, a Salesian Brother. I also refer to the text by Jesús Graciliano González Miguel GONZÁLEZ, *Los once primeros capítulos generales de la Congregación Salesiana* (CCS, Madrid 2021) and by Stanisław ZIMNIAK, *Don Paolo Albera (1845-1921) secondo successore di don Giovanni Bosco. Cenno biografico*, in *Ricerche storiche salesiane*, Anno XL, 1 (76), 2021, 137-144. Finally, I share the same view of Fr Albera as does Fr Manuel Pérez, a Salesian from the Salesian Centre for Ongoing Formation in Quito, Ecuador.

Fr Albera was entrusted with the responsibility of being “Spiritual Director” of the Congregation and then became Rector Major: second successor of Don Bosco. In this service of responsibility – travelling by ship, horseback, carriage, train and car – he saw the spirit of Don Bosco expand: from Turin to America, the Holy Land, Northern Europe, the first presences in Africa.

Fr Albera was an eyewitness to the transition from the 19th to the 20th century: a very delicate time for the Salesian Congregation, for the Church and for the world. A difficult time, as I have already mentioned, especially because of the First World War, which affected a large part of the world; a tragedy that Fr Albera witnessed from beginning to end.

1.2. What did it mean for Fr Albera to be one of the first Salesians? Some glimpses of his life

It all began with the proposal of admission to Valdocco. It was 1858, and Paul Albera was 13 years old. Fr Abrate, his parish priest, who already knew Don Bosco from the beginnings of the Oratory in the church of St Francis of Assisi, introduced him without further ado: “Take him with you”. The young Michael Rua, Don Bosco’s right-hand man at the age of 21, after talking to Paul, confirmed this: “You can take him in without problems...”.

The serene atmosphere of a lively youthful community still very much marked by the style of holiness left by Dominic Savio, who died on 9 March 1857, reigned at the Oratory in Valdocco. In this environment the young Paul Albera also met Michael Magone, with whom he became a companion and friend.

I was deeply moved to read that a year and a half after his arrival at Valdocco, Paul was admitted, at the explicit wish of Don Bosco himself, into the fledgling Salesian Congregation founded in December 1859. The teenaged Albera was not yet 15 years old and was a student in first rhetoric.

Together with the first manuscript of the Constitutions sent to Archbishop Luigi Fransoni, there was an accompanying letter which gave the names of those who were part of the beginnings of the foundation: Don Bosco, Fr Vittorio Alasonatti, the young priest Angelo Savio and deacon Michael Rua, together with 19 other young “clerics”, two coadjutors and the boy Paul Albera. I personally feel that this “group snapshot”, which we can easily imagine, strikes the heart of each one of us, Salesians of today, because we can “touch” our humble origins “with our own hands”.

In this letter, the first Salesians said: “We, the undersigned, moved solely by the desire to ensure our eternal salvation, have united to undertake community life in order to attend more easily to those things which concern the glory of God and the salvation of souls. In order to preserve unity of spirit and discipline and to put into practice means known to be useful for our intended purpose, we’ve articulated some rules in the manner of a Religious Society, which, excluding any political principle, only sanctifies its members, especially through the exercise of charity towards one’s neighbour.”³ *From this moment onwards, Paul Albera’s life would be inseparably linked to Don Bosco’s life.*

At Mirabello with Fr Rua

Paul Albera continued his formation and studies at Valdocco and on 13 October 1863 he was sent with other young confreres to found the new community at Mirabello.

It is worth pausing to analyse the composition of that young community, which undoubtedly conveys Don Bosco’s full confidence and courage in entrusting a new and delicate mission to the hands of those particular confreres. At the head of the com-

³ Giovanni BOSCO, *Epistolario*, I 406 quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 19 (note that all page references are to the English edition found on sdb.org or SDL).

munity was Michael Rua: a young Salesian, a priest for only two years and the only priest in the group; he was 26 years old at the time. All the others were called, in the usual language of the time, Salesian “clerics”: “The prefect Francis Provera (twenty-six), the spiritual director John Bonetti (twenty-five), the assistants Francis Cerruti (nineteen), Paul Albera and Francis Dalmazzo (both eighteen)”⁴. Finally, there was one other very beautiful fact, desired by Don Bosco: that first and very young community was also accompanied by Michael Rua’s mother, Mrs Giovanna Maria Rua. Shortly afterwards, another four young people from the Valdocco Oratory joined the initial group to help with the mission.

They were five years of intense Salesian life for Paul Albera: while he studied philosophy and theology at the seminary in Casale Monferrato, 14 km from Mirabello, at the same time he took on the tasks and responsibilities of an educator among the boys. As the new education laws required teaching qualifications, Paul took the necessary exams in October 1864 and became a secondary school teacher. In the same year another young Salesian joined the community: Louis Lasagna, a great friend of Paul’s, who would later become a missionary in Uruguay. Appointed bishop for the *Indios* in Brazil, he would die there in 1895 in a railway accident.

The time came when young Albera and others were to be admitted to “minor orders”. At this juncture the age-old rivalry between the diocesan clergy and other forms of service in the Church (in this case, another young Congregation) became sadly evident. The new archbishop of Turin, who succeeded Archbishop Fransoni, was not so convinced that the Don Bosco boys who showed signs of vocation should remain with him. And since there was a shortage of priests, the archbishop demanded that these young men become part of the diocesan clergy. Don Bosco had to point out, among other arguments, that a large number of the diocesan seminarians of the time came from the

⁴ GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 24.

Salesian institutes at Valdocco and Lanzo Torinese. These arguments meant, though not without difficulty, that Paul Albera, Joseph Costamagna and Francis Dalmazzo received minor orders and then the subdiaconate while remaining with Don Bosco.

Back to Valdocco

These were difficult and troubled times. Anti-clerical laws had already been passed in 1855. In the following years, the Piedmontese army occupied almost the entire peninsula until the unification of Italy was proclaimed in 1861. The process of unification of the country would end on 20 September 1870 with the taking of Rome, which marked the end of the Papal States and led to the suspension of the First Vatican Council, which had begun the previous year. The story we are reviewing is set in this complex and moving context.

In 1865 the Valdocco Oratory was a “seminary”, a boarding school and a series of workshops, and the number of young people attending (about seven hundred) grew along with the debts. In that year Fr Alasonatti, the bursar, died. The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians was under construction. The *Letture Cattoliche (Catholic Readings)* had 12,000 subscribers and the work involved was enormous. Don Bosco often went to Rome seeking approval for the Congregation and in some respects the work and responsibility weighing upon him was just too much. Faced with this situation, Fr Rua was recalled from Mirabello to support Don Bosco.

The young Albera was ordained a priest at Casale on 2 August 1868. The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians was consecrated on 9 June of the same year. That year Don Bosco asked Fr Albera to return to Valdocco to be the “prefect for the day students”. So Paul returned to Turin to collaborate with Fr Rua, who was exhausted and ill. Don Bosco entrusted him with the seminarians and matters dealing with outsiders: acceptance of students, relationships with their families and other people, until, on 27 August 1871, Fr Rua received a letter from Rome in which

Don Bosco wrote: “The house in Genoa is finished, get Albera to pack his bags!”

Regarding that time, Fr Albera himself wrote: “The year of the consecration of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, I returned to Turin, and for another four years I was able to enjoy Don Bosco’s intimacy and draw from his great heart those precious teachings that had all the more effect on us the more saw them already put into practice by him in his daily conduct.”⁵

Rector at Sampierdarena (Genoa)

After those four years, Fr Albera became the founder and rector of the house at Marassi (1871–1872), which the Salesians then left to move to Sampierdarena in order to have more space available to them (Marassi and Sampierdarena are districts of Genoa). Let me tell you about these events in a more relaxed way.

Since 1858 the young people at the Valdocco Oratory looked forward every year to the autumn walks organised by Don Bosco. In 1864 they were given a great promise: they would see the sea at Genoa! There, since the end of 1856, Don Bosco had met benefactors and the people disseminating the *Letture Cattoliche*. And now for our Father, warmly welcomed by Archbishop Andrea Charvaz, a dream came true: the Salesians would have a place in Genoa.

The new community consisted of six Salesians: Fr Albera, 26, in the lead, 2 seminarians and 3 workshop teachers. Sending them off on 26 October 1871, Don Bosco asked if they needed anything. Albera had 500 lire to pay the rent. “My dear young Paul, you don’t need so much money. Divine Providence also lives in Genoa... Open a hospice for the poorest and most abandoned young people”, and he gave them what they needed for the journey. When they arrived, there was no one waiting for them... and there was nothing in the house. But Providence did

⁵ Cf. letter XXXV of 18 October 1920 in *Lettere circolari di Don Albera*, Direzione Generale delle Opere Salesiane, Turin 1965, 362-363.

not delay in manifesting itself. At the end of November, tailoring, shoe-making and carpentry workshops were opened for about forty young people. And on 3 December the long-awaited visit arrived: Don Bosco in person.

The Salesians stayed at Marassi for almost a year; Fr Albera was in charge there of an orphanage and at the same time prepared boys to become tailors, shoemakers and carpenters. In November 1872, the presence in Sampierdarena began, and vocational training continued, extending to the specialities of bookbinders, mechanics, typographers and typesetters.

14 November 1875 was a particularly significant and moving day. As many of us surely remember, it was the date of the first missionary expedition prepared by Don Bosco and directed to Argentina, where it would arrive, having called into Uruguay a few days before according to the route established by the shipping company. The farewell liturgical celebration took place three days before the departure, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. The young Rector of the house in Genoa, Fr Albera, accompanied Don Bosco on board ship to give his last farewell to the Salesians who were to be the first missionaries of our Congregation. I would like to recall that from that time until today, as we are preparing for the 152nd missionary expedition, Salesian missionaries (and often our sisters, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) have been pioneers uninterruptedly, even in times of war, taking the Gospel to the most remote places. Some years there were even two missionary expeditions.

One further note: it was in the printing press at Sampierdarena, while Fr Albera was the Rector there, on 10 August 1878 that the very first edition of the *Bollettino Salesiano* was printed. The printing of the magazine continued there until 1882.

Provincial in France (1881-1892): the “le petit Don Bosco”

This lot fell to Fr Albera from October 1881, when Don Bosco sent him to Marseilles as the first Provincial of the Salesian houses in France. There he found a difficult situation, since

the law expelling unauthorised congregations had been passed the year before. However, undeterred, the Salesians found a way not to be expelled and to remain, declaring themselves to be “charitable societies”. When Albera arrived, there were four houses in France. In ten years he founded ten more houses and performed a splendid service, making himself appreciated both by his confreres and by many lay people, all of whom spoke highly of him. His kindness and simplicity of manner, his smile, his open and cordial manner, his profound spirituality won the hearts of the young, as well as the trust and affection of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Throughout all this Don Bosco was very much part of Fr Albera’s life and heart. The affection Don Bosco had for him was well known; in one letter, for example, he confided in him: “For some time now my health has been declining every day, but as I write to you I feel perfectly well. I believe that this is the effect of the great pleasure I take in writing to you.” The letters are not the only evidence of this benevolence. In fact, Don Bosco visited Fr Albera several times to support him in his mission, to encourage the Salesians and young people, to give conferences and seek financial help in various cities and towns.

During his visit in 1884 Don Bosco was sick and suffering. Doctor Combal gave him an in-depth consultation: “His whole body is like a garment worn out by daily use, the only remedy is rest.” In February 1885 an alarming rumour spread in France that Don Bosco was dead. It was only a false alarm; but in January 1888 it was a sure fact that Don Bosco was seriously ill. So on 12 January Fr Albera arrived in Turin. He did not know whether to stay or go... Don Bosco helped him to decide: “You do your duty by going. God be with you! I will pray for you; I bless you with all my heart.” Fr Cerruti promised to keep him informed. Some days after his return to France, Fr Albera received a telegram that said that Don Bosco was dying. In reality, when he read it, Don Bosco was already dead. However, he had time to make his travel arrangements, be present at the funeral and say goodbye to his dear father.

What is certain about the years spent in France is that Don Bosco's presence was extended through Fr Albera: they called him "*le petit don Bosco*". One past pupil of St Leo's Oratory in Marseilles testified: "His modest and humble demeanour, his constant smile, his gentle way of treating us gave us courage." There was no time when he was not among the boys. He visited them in the dining room and in the chapel. He spoke little, but his presence was enough to command respect... He often attended the weekly meetings of the St Aloysius and the Blessed Sacrament Sodality, and his words were a stimulus to piety and virtue.

Spiritual Director of the Salesian Congregation (1892-1910)

On 29 August 1892, during the 6th General Chapter, Fr Paul Albera was unanimously elected "Catechist General", that is to say, spiritual director of the Congregation, to replace Fr John Bonetti, who had died suddenly the year before. He held this position for eighteen years. During this period he took particular care of the formation of young Salesians through personal meetings, retreats and conversations. On 12 October 1893, together with Bishop Cagliari, the Rector Major Fr Rua, and Fr Barberis, he went to London to attend the consecration of the Sacred Heart Church. An interesting anecdote gives a good picture of his personality: after an unforeseen incident on the train, he wrote in his diary: "We need to learn English".

It is also worth mentioning that in 1895 Fr Albera accompanied Fr Rua on his journey to the Holy Land, and in the same year he took part in the First International Congress of Cooperators in Bologna. It is interesting to mention these two facts, because in his diary, in his magnificent and classical handwriting, Fr Albera outlined a self-portrait that moves me personally for its transparency and spiritual finesse in talking about himself, his feelings and his faults. In the manuscript, dated 31 December 1895, we read: "1895 heaves itself into eternity. For me, it was full of joys and sorrows. I was able to see the house in Marseilles

again, where I left most of my heart. From there I went to the Holy Land and was edified by the company of Father Rua. What a spirit of sacrifice and mortification! What zeal for the salvation of souls; and above all, what a balanced personality! I saw Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth: what sweet memories! I was able to take part in the Congress at Bologna. I have an unforgettable memory of it. ... I was able to preach retreats to the sisters in France. This was good for my soul. I was able to take care of the candidates to the priesthood, and I was much more satisfied with the previous years. I wrote a few pages about Bishop Lasagna. 1895 also ends without my most serious weaknesses being corrected. My pride is still of the highest degree. My character is always difficult, even with Father Rua. My piety is always superficial and doesn't significantly influence my conduct or my actions, which are all still human and unworthy of a religious. My charity is unpredictable and full of partiality. I'm not mortified in eyes, taste, words... Illnesses have increased: I could have died at any moment in the state I'm in. This is not an idea, it is reality, and I'm aware of it. In the new year I want to start to live healthier, to die better. I remember having directed two of my confreres who made the vow to be slaves of Mary. They edified me with their zeal, with their devotion. Their blood has sealed their commitment, and I, who have had the air of being their teacher and director in all of this, am nothing. ... Mary, my mother, don't allow me to have the shame of recognising myself as inferior in virtue to my subordinates: give me a great love for you."⁶

I like to think that whoever reads this page will understand much about Fr Paul Albera's spiritual finesse and how demanding he was of himself. In truth, the accounts of others about him are far more eulogistic than what he writes about himself, for his qualities were evident. His finesse and delicacy were recognised by all.

⁶ Cf. ASC B0320101, *Notes confidentielles prises pour le bien de mon âme*, handwritten ms by Fr Albera 1893-1899, 31.12.1895 cited in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 61

America from top to bottom

Don Bosco recounted that in one of his missionary dreams he had crossed America from Valparaiso and arrived in Peking... In the year 1900 the silver jubilee of the first missionary sending was being celebrated and the expectation grew that Fr Rua would visit the American provinces; but it would be Fr Albera, who was then 55 years old, who would be sent in his name.

“In January 1900, Fr Rua announced the jubilee of the arrival of the first Salesian missionaries in America and the great good that had been done in those 25 years by the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the New World. On this occasion, since he himself could not go to America to celebrate the feast with his missionary confreres, he decided to send someone to represent him. Since the first two appointed, Fr Marengo and Fr Barberis, could not accept the commitment for various reasons, Fr Rua asked Fr Albera to replace them. So from 7 August 1900 to 11 April 1903 Fr Albera visited the 215 Salesian presences and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Central America, Mexico and the United States.”⁷

For almost three years, Fr Albera went from house to house: personal and group meetings, liturgical celebrations, joyful receptions and formal acts, exercising his priestly ministry, preaching retreats, giving talks to communities and associations, especially in the formation houses of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He made people enthusiastic about Don Bosco and brought comfort, such as in Ecuador after religious persecution, or following exile, yellow fever and guerrilla warfare in Colombia and Venezuela. Travelling by train, boat, carriage, on horseback, on foot..., he crossed cities and forests, through snow storms, stormy seas and torrential

⁷ Jesús Graciliano GONZÁLEZ, *Los once primeros capítulos generales de la Congregación Salesiana*, CCS, Madrid 2021, 337.

rain, adapting to different climates, cold or hot, at different altitudes, risking his precarious health, even experiencing quarantine on the island of Flores. He went from one republic to another, with or without a cassock (in Mexico), noting that the Oratory at Valdocco was the model reproduced in the fervour of spiritual life, in pedagogical proposal, in evangelising activity... This was his usual agenda, comforted by the cordiality with which he was received.

During those years, Fr Albera encouraged new foundations and accepted several requests from bishops to send Salesians. He presided over events such as the 1st South American Chapter of Salesian Rectors, which was attended by 44 rectors, two bishops and four provincials. He concluded his visit by attending the ordination of 15 priests, who celebrated Midnight Mass between 1900 and 1901 when Fr Rua consecrated the Salesian Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

His personal experience can be summarised by these words from one of his letters: "I feel almost better here, even though the way of life is so different from Europe. I am always travelling and have no time to write... The confreres show me the most delicate attention..."

A lasting characteristic of Fr Albera, evident everywhere – whether in Sampierdarena, in France or during his visit of more than two and a half years in America – was his simple way of "being another Don Bosco". During the long visit we are talking about, Fr Albera went out of his way to enthuse the Salesian Family and, in particular, the Salesian Cooperators.

His concern was that of Don Bosco for his young people: the salvation of each one. There are many testimonies that state how his presence, his words, his serene and unassuming smile left the image of a father who bore the imprint of Don Bosco.

On 18 March 1903 Fr Albera began his return journey to Valdocco, where he arrived on 11 April. The whole Oratory gave thanks with the singing of the *Te Deum*. It can be said that Don Bosco's dream had become reality.

Rector Major (1910-1921)

And the moment arrived that he had never wished for and would gladly have avoided, if only he could have. On 16 August 1910, at the 11th General Chapter, Fr Paul Albera was elected Rector Major on the first ballot and with a large majority: "Amid applause all arose to render homage to the Second Successor of Don Bosco, while the newly elected Superior burst into tears... 'I thank you for the profession of confidence and esteem which you have made towards me, but I fear you'll soon have to hold another election!'"⁸ In fact Fr Albera did not consider himself suitable. That evening he wrote in his notebook: "This is a very unhappy day for me. They elected me Rector Major of the Pious Society of Saint Francis de Sales. What a responsibility on my shoulders! ... I cried a lot especially in front of Don Bosco's tomb."⁹ In his first circular letter to the Salesians he reminded them again: "As soon as I was allowed, I ran to throw myself at the feet of our venerable Father. I complained to him strongly that he had let the helm of the Salesian ship fall into such miserable hands."¹⁰

Fr Eugene Ceria, revealed certain passages from Fr Albera's intimate diary in his *Annali della Società Salesiana*¹¹. A few days after Fr Rua's death, Albera wrote: "I talk a lot with Fr Rinaldi. I wish with all my heart that he be elected Rector Major of our Congregation. I will pray to the Holy Spirit to grant us this grace." Referring to the voting time, Fr Ceria noted how the names of Fr Albera and Fr Rinaldi resounded in the assembly. He added that the former seemed more concerned, while the latter seemed very calm. In the end, the number of votes was 46 in favour of Fr Albera against 19 in favour of Fr Rinaldi. Rinaldi

⁸ GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 96.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁰ *Fr Paul Albera's circular letter to the Salesians*, 98.

¹¹ Eugene CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, vol. IV. *Il rettorato di don Paolo Albera 1910-1921*, 2-3, quoted in GONZÁLEZ, *Los once primeros capítulos generales*, 350.

was calm because he was certain that the “prophecy” of Don Bosco, made on 22 November 1877, would come true. Fr Rinaldi, in fact, was convinced that on that day Don Bosco had prophesied the appointment of Fr Albera as his second successor. For this reason Fr Rinaldi kept that prophecy in a sealed envelope, certain that it would be fulfilled. And, in fact, it had just been fulfilled.¹²

At the end of the General Chapter, Fr Albera began his service of real animation of the Congregation, continuing the model of governance inaugurated by Fr Rua and gradually perfecting it in various aspects.¹³ The first part of his term of office was the most dynamic, characterised by numerous trips, meetings and participation in events. We will discuss many of these in the second part of this letter, referring to various aspects of his animation and their relevance for us today.

Fr Albera ensured missionary expeditions every year, in fidelity to Don Bosco and as Fr Rua also did. He took part in many congresses, such as the First International Congress of Salesian Past Pupils at Valsalice (1911), with more than a thousand participants, or the Fifth Congress of Festive Oratories and Religious Schools (1911). He took great care of the young Salesian Family and was an innovator through choices and decisions made for Salesian houses, especially through the preferential option for orphans during the war period and at least for the following decade. It was precisely at the time of the First World War that the position taken by Fr Albera and the Congregation aroused great interest. He took great fatherly care of the Salesians called to the front, right up to the serene conclusion of his own life.¹⁴ Fr Rinaldi wrote an extensive obituary on Fr Albera

¹² BS 1910, 267-268, quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life* 96-97 and also in Morand WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni*, LAS, Rome 2000, 311.

¹³ Cf. GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 97.

¹⁴ Cf. GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 111-122.

in which, as a review of his term of office, he recalled: “The Lord gave him the consolation of seeing his labours blessed: the number of members increased during his term of office by 705, despite the losses caused by the war; the number of houses increased by 103; new missions opened in Africa (in the Belgian Congo), in Asia (in China and Assam), in Chaco Paraguayo.”¹⁵

2. A PAST THAT THROWS LIGHT ON OUR PRESENT

At the beginning of this second part, which is in dialogue with the life and service of Fr Paul Albera as Rector Major, I would like to share with you, dear confreres, what has prompted me in a special way to write this letter to you.

My intention is obviously not that of an historian: I am not one and, from this point of view, I could not add much to the excellent publications that already exist. My intention is other: in the light of Fr Albera’s life and his circular letters, I have tried to discover those elements – choosing only a few from among the many contributions he made during his eleven years of service as Rector Major – that have great power to enlighten, guide and provoke reflection for our present.

As unimaginable as it may seem, what Fr Albera experienced and decided stimulates a rich dialogue with our present; the reality in which he lived as well as the animation and governance he exercised more than a century ago have rich analogies with our present and with some of the action programme guidelines that we have indicated for the present six-year period following the 28th General Chapter.

¹⁵ ACS 9, 310-311 quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 134.

2.1. At the school of Don Bosco

“Salesian of Don Bosco forever.
Six years for growth in Salesian identity”
(GC28, *Action guideline 1*)

Reading Fr Albera’s writings, one is struck by his great love for Don Bosco: “the only thing necessary to become his worthy son was to imitate him in everything. Therefore, following the example of numerous elder brothers who had already copied in themselves the way of thinking, speaking, and acting of their Father, I tried to do the same. And today, after more than half a century, I repeat also to you that you are sons like me, and that he has entrusted you to me, as the eldest son. Let us imitate Don Bosco in acquiring our religious perfection, educating and sanctifying youth, dealing with others, and doing good to all.”¹⁶

He recalled, in his circular letter *On religious discipline*¹⁷, how he and a small group of boys had been “at the school of Don Bosco”: “So little by little we were being formed in his school, all the more so because his teachings had an irresistible attraction on our souls, which admired the splendour of his virtues.”¹⁸ In this part of the letter Fr Albera tells how that small group felt fortunate to have access to Don Bosco’s confidences, how proud they were to have been chosen by him to follow his ideals, how encouraged they were to see that they were becoming more and more numerous, and how all these sentiments “made our resolve more and more generous, and our will to remain always with him and to follow him wherever he went even firmer.”¹⁹

It is very significant to read in his writing that “More than fifty years have already passed since those fortunate times, but the time that has passed has not been able to erase from our

¹⁶ GIRAUDDO, *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*, 140.

¹⁷ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 57ff.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

hearts the impression left on us by the words of Don Bosco”.²⁰ Many years after those experiences, as Rector Major and now a mature man, Fr Albera continued to express with the love of a child or teenager, his profound gratitude to Don Bosco whom he felt was a father and to whom he believed he owed everything: “When I look back to the day, when as a child of thirteen, I was received by Don Bosco with so much charity at the Oratory, I am filled with emotion, and I seem to realise quite distinctly the almost innumerable graces which were reserved to me by God, under the guidance of our most loving father! And, indeed, how many there are who can assert the same thing – that they owe all they are to the Venerable Don Bosco! Our education, our training, our very vocation – we owe all to the fatherly solicitude of that Man of God, who bore towards his spiritual sons a holy and indefatigable affection.”²¹

We could add many other testimonies about Fr Albera’s fidelity to Don Bosco, but, in order not to dwell too long, I will limit myself to quoting the magnificent portrait that Fr Rinaldi drew of him at his death: “He was trained first and always at Don Bosco’s school, all of whose teachings he eagerly studied... His moral figure was imposing. As rector major of the Salesians, Father Albera was firmly intent on walking faithfully in the footsteps of Don Bosco and Father Rua, without restriction or mental reservation. This is the true glory of the eleven years of his term of office.”²²

These testimonies show how insistently and convincingly Fr Albera spoke of the need to get to know Don Bosco, to study his life and writings with love, to make him known and to talk to young people about him.

In today’s words I would say that in this matter, our charismatic fidelity and our very identity as Salesians of Don Bosco

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ BS 1921, 1, quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 130.

²² Quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 134.

“is at stake”. In the recent 28th General Chapter, referring to the fact that we have before us a very propitious period of six years to grow in the Salesian identity, I wrote some strong words of appeal, saying that “our Galilee for the encounter with the Lord today, as Salesians of Don Bosco, passes through Valdocco, the beginnings at Valdocco, fragile as they were, but with the strength and passion of the words: ‘monk or no monk, I am staying with Don Bosco’, which young John Cagliero expressed with so much ardour and youthful enthusiasm. Valdocco is, in fact, the spiritual and apostolic atmosphere in which each of us breathes the air of the Spirit, where we nurture and strengthen our charismatic identity. And it is the place of ‘transfiguration’ for every Salesian who, by taking care of all the elements of our spirituality, can contribute to making each of our houses an authentic Valdocco, where it is possible to meet our Lord Jesus Christ face to face in daily life.”²³

That is why I say that we are risking a lot in this. Our charismatic identity is at stake. To be either imbued with the spirit of Don Bosco or to be more or less indifferent to him is not something trivial. Turning our gaze to Don Bosco as a guarantee of fidelity to the Lord inspired by the Holy Spirit is decisive, because it is in contemplating Don Bosco that we discover, in Salesian terms, our “genetic code”... And just as the charism developed in him, so it must develop in us if we choose the way of fidelity. Article 21 of our Constitutions presents Don Bosco as our model: “The Lord has given us Don Bosco as father and teacher. We study and imitate him, admiring in him a splendid blending of nature and grace”. I am sure that Fr Paul Albera, who spoke so much to his Salesians about Don Bosco’s fascination and attraction for them, would be in total agreement with these beautiful statements in our Constitutions.

The encounter with Don Bosco, as it was for the young Rua, Francesia, Cagliero, Albera and so many others, has been decisive in our lives to this day; at least for many of us. His figure

²³ CG28, 19.

and personality, his faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as his love for his boys, have been and continue to be a source of inspiration. Our encounter with him, certainly through the most unexpected mediations, has been a grace, and knowing him – sometimes a little, sometimes a little more – to the point of loving him, has marked us deeply. For us, as the article of the Constitutions I have just quoted states, Don Bosco is a “father”: an expression that not only speaks to us of love, affection and admiration, but also directs our gaze to Don Bosco as founder; to Don Bosco who initiated this fascinating spiritual experience that is the Salesian charism, which we carry in our hearts and of which we are a part. He himself said: “Call me father and I will be happy”²⁴. “Wherever you are, remember that here in Turin you have a Father who loves you in the Lord.”²⁵

Let us seek to know and admire this Father, as we live our being Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB) in a vital relationship with him, feeling happy, experiencing a growing sense of fullness in our lives, making our lives, the lives of each one, despite personal limitations and poverty, make us “Don Bosco today” for every young person whom Divine Providence places on the path of our lives.

And let us commit ourselves to studying our Father – something Fr Albera insisted on only twenty-two years after Don Bosco’s death – because we cannot ignore or underestimate the chronological and cultural distance that separates us from him.

Awareness of this need and my knowledge of our Congregation led me to say, in the *action programme* for the six years following GC28, that this six-year period will need to be distinguished “by a profound effort in the Congregation to grow in charismatic depth, in Salesian identity in all phases of life, through a serious commitment in every province and every Salesian community to arrive at saying, as Don Bosco did: ‘I have

²⁴ BM XVII, 150. (Note, English version not the Italian MB).

²⁵ BM XI, 362.

promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys.’”²⁶

2.2. “How Don Bosco loved us”²⁷

The pedagogy of kindness.
“Living the ‘Salesian sacrament’ of presence”
(GC28, *Action guideline 3*)

Fr Albera, in his circular letter on oratories, missions and vocations, reports that Fr Rua said one day to a Salesian whom he was sending to open a festive oratory: “There is nothing there, not even the land and the place to gather the young people, but the festive Oratory is in you: if you are a true son of Don Bosco, you will find a good place to plant it and make it grow into a magnificent tree full of beautiful fruit.” Fr Albera continued: “And so it was, because in just a few months the Oratory was built, beautiful and spacious, and filled with hundreds of young people, the oldest of whom quickly became the apostles of the youngest.”²⁸

I begin with this quotation from Fr Rua not so much to refer to the Salesian Oratory – even though it is a wonderfully charismatic theme in which Don Bosco, Fr Rua, Fr Albera and others, of course, believed so much – but to show the great value of carrying in our hearts all the strength of an educator, all the educational passion of a pastor, all the pedagogy of goodness and gentleness which enables us to live our presence among children and young people as a true “Salesian sacrament”.

There are many pages in which Fr Albera tells how our Father Don Bosco loved his boys. I offer a few “brushstrokes”

²⁶ GC28, 20-21.

²⁷ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani* (letter on ‘Don Bosco our model...’), 373.

²⁸ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani* (letter ‘The Festive Oratories - The Missions - Vocations’), 129.

among the many that could be chosen: “Don Bosco’s love for us was something singularly superior to any other affection: it enveloped us all almost entirely in an atmosphere of contentment and happiness from which sorrow, sadness and melancholy were banished... Oh! It was his love that attracted, conquered and transformed our hearts... Everything about him had a powerful attraction for us: his penetrating gaze, sometimes more effective than a sermon; the simple movement of his head; the smile that flourished perpetually on his lips, always new and varied, and yet always calm; the flexing of his mouth, like when someone wants to speak without pronouncing the words...”²⁹

In the letter I am quoting, Fr Albera points out to the Salesians that *it is necessary to love the youngsters* and, as he does many times and abundantly in his other writings, he recalls his own experience of life alongside Don Bosco. For example, he writes: “Even now I seem to feel all the tenderness of his predilection for me as a young man: I felt as if I were taken prisoner by an emotional power that nourished my thoughts, words and actions, but I could not better describe this state of mind of mine, which was also that of my companions of that time... I felt I was loved in a way I had never felt before, which had nothing to do even with the very keen love that my unforgettable parents bore me...”³⁰

In Letter 27 *On gentleness*, addressed especially to provincials and rectors to encourage them to distinguish themselves in their relationships with others not only by charity but also by gentleness, Fr Albera does not hesitate to say that this has “a capital importance, and is the characteristic note of Don Bosco’s spirit.” He spends quite some time in the opening pages of the Letter, referring both to the effort needed to cultivate and master one’s character, and to the examples of the lives of some saints, up to the one who is our model, Don Bosco. In his dream

²⁹ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani* (letter on ‘Don Bosco our model...’), 373.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

when he was nine, John Bosco is asked to practise gentleness. The Lady of the dream would be close to him and “would teach him the most effective way of correcting and improving the young urchins”. Fr Albera commented: «We all know that this means was none other than gentleness; and Don Bosco was so convinced of this that he immediately began to practise it with ardour and became a true model of it.”³¹ He then concluded: “Let us be convinced of this: according to our Venerable [Don Bosco’s] way of thinking, the real secret of winning hearts, the characteristic quality of the Salesian, consists in the practice of gentleness.”³²

In his written message to those taking part in the 28th General Chapter, the Holy Father – who announced at the last minute that he could not be present as he would have wished because of the local blockade imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic – gave us words and expressions that are typical of those who are well aware of the ones he was writing to, and “provoked” us to always return to our origins in Valdocco. The Pope spoke to us about the “Valdocco option” and the “charism of presence”, that in all humility I allow myself to call the *Salesian sacrament of presence*, because – and I am convinced of this – it is a “theological place” for us for encounter with God through our presence among the young. Well then, the Holy Father told us: “Even before things that need to be done, the Salesian is a living reminder of a presence in which availability, listening, joy and dedication are the essential features which give rise to processes. The gratuitousness of presence saves the Congregation from any activist obsession and from any kind of technical and functional reductionism. The first call is to be a joyful and gratuitous presence among young people”³³.

We are certainly in tune with this sort of language, comprised of words that touch our hearts as apostles and educator,

³¹ *Ibid.*, 316.

³² *Ibid.*, 317.

³³ *GC28*, 25.

but that speak of a reality that is much more than a natural predisposition to be among young people. When I say “Salesian sacrament of presence” I am not just referring to being physically present – something I consider necessary in any case – and not even to having and exercising a natural or cultivated and cultured sympathy (which is also necessary), but above all to living this gentle and sensitive presence as an essential element of our spirituality. Affection, gentleness, kindness, “loving-kindness” – the Italian “*amorevolezza*” that picks all of this up in a single word – is, above all, a sign of God’s love for young people through us as individuals. It is the fruit of pastoral charity, the authentic and true love of the educator who is friend, brother, father, the love that is manifested in presence with a true family atmosphere, in the generosity of service and sacrifice on behalf of our children and young people. It is a presence that takes the form of attentive and patient listening, of self-mastery and also of our efforts never to ruin what we are building with so much effort in just a single moment. It is the expression of a true Salesian *mysticism* and *spirituality*: the content of these two words should not frighten us. It is certainly a magnificent way and means of educating and evangelising young people.

The Salesian presence among young people is not complicated, it is not rigid. We accept that we are interested in what interests them; we are happy that they can express themselves spontaneously, being themselves. Ours is an affective and effective presence (and not only in words), a presence as an educator and as a friend who knows how to be close, knows how to *speak to the heart* in a unique and personal way. The words addressed to us by the young people who participated in the 28th General Chapter continue to resonate in me with a potency that does not leave me unmoved every time I read them. I invite you, dear confreres, to read them over and over again: “Our search for spiritual and personal fulfilment worries us. We want to journey towards spiritual and personal growth and we want to do it with you Salesians... We would like you to guide us, in our situation, with love... Salesians, do not forget us young people because we have not forgot-

ten you and the charism you have taught us... You have our heart in your hands. You must take care of your precious treasure.”³⁴ Certainly, dear confreres, it is a privilege to perceive and listen to the heartbeat of the lives of our young people, and to feel emerging and growing within us, in our hearts, that feeling that makes us say, as Don Bosco did: “Here with you I feel good”.

The oratory, the school, the youth group are in you, in every Salesian heart, when you are inwardly moved by this strong conviction: they are our inheritance; it is they, the young, who save us. And, with the gentleness of Francis de Sales, we have no other way of helping them than to be in their midst, present among them with the true heart of the educator and pastor. In this way the expression: “Education is a matter of the heart and God alone is its master.”³⁵

2.3. The spirit of piety³⁶

“A Congregation where
the ‘Da mihi animas cetera tolle’ is urgent”
(GC28, Action guideline 2)

I find it very significant that Fr Paul Albera’s second circular letter as Rector Major was dedicated to the spirit of piety. He wrote it on 15 May 1911. In those years the Congregation was at a particularly delicate moment in its history. The years of Fr Rua’s term of office had been years of great geographical expansion and numerical growth. These were times when the Salesians were experiencing great enthusiasm, carrying out great initiatives and engaged in overwhelming activity, but also exposed to risks and dangers.

³⁴ GC28, 26.

³⁵ BM XVI, 376. Cf. Pietro BRAIDO, *Don Bosco educatore. Scritti e testimonianze*, LAS, Rome 1992, 340.

³⁶ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, (second letter, ‘On the spirit of piety’), 26ff.

In this letter Fr Albera gives us an overview of what he means by the “spirit of piety”: its nature and its necessity for Christian and religious life, for apostolic fruitfulness, for endurance and forbearance in trials, for perseverance in vocation, for the practice of the preventive system, etc. But in particular, with the great sensitivity of a spiritual guide, Fr Albera warns against uncontrolled activism and its dangers: “Speaking to you with my heart in my hand, I confess that I cannot defend myself from the painful thought and the fear that this vaunted activity of the Salesians, this zeal that has so far seemed inaccessible to any discouragement, this warm enthusiasm that has so far been sustained by continual happy successes, will one day fail if it is not fertilised, purified and sanctified by a true and solid piety.”³⁷

Fr Albera recognises that, together with the grace of God and the protection of Mary Help of Christians, it was the tireless work and admirable energy of Don Bosco, Fr Rua, Bishop Cagliero and “so many others of their sons” that led to the rapid spread of the Salesian works in Europe and America. In addition to this, it shows appreciation and gratitude for the testimony of many confreres – priests, clerics and brothers – who are true models of the spirit of piety and are admired by all; “but unfortunately I need to add, *et flens dico*, that there are also Salesians who leave much to be desired in this respect. There are some who, when they were novices, had edified all their companions with their fervour. Some of them, who consider religious practices as an unbearable burden, would no longer be called sons of Don Bosco; they do everything they can to exempt themselves from them, and they give the sad spectacle of their laxity and indifference everywhere [...]. What a strange contradiction! They live in a religious house, they follow the community in many things, they perhaps even work according to our rules, but in the meantime they are no longer religious.”³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

Cardinal Augustine Richelmy, during the visit he made to GC11 just after Fr Albera's election as Rector Major, warned them: "*The world admires your prodigious industriousness, but the Church and God admire your sanctity*"³⁹. We must not forget that the "*holy fire of piety*" and "*uninterrupted union with God*" were "*the characteristic note of Don Bosco*."⁴⁰

I confess to you, dear confreres, that I was deeply impressed when I read this eighteen-page letter from a Rector Major who, at the beginning of his service, was so deeply concerned about the lack of authenticity in the lives of some Salesians at that time. And I have no doubt that Fr Albera knew very well what he was talking about, having been spiritual director of the Congregation for eighteen years.

I think that throughout the history of our Congregation (and certainly also in most religious congregations) there is a constant insistence on being very attentive to the authenticity of consecrated life – to use today's language. In fact, the loss of this authenticity puts everything at serious risk. In several of our General Chapters⁴¹ and in very many of the writings of the Rectors Major⁴² this has been a great insistence, and sometimes a concern similar to that presented by Fr Albera. It seems important to me to recall that this constant reminder should help

³⁹ Jesús Graciliano GONZÁLEZ, *XI Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana presieduto da don Paolo Albera (1910)*, CCS, Madrid 2020, 25, n. 182.

⁴⁰ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 36.

⁴¹ Cf. *SGC20* (1972). On the "spirit of piety" of the SDBs and in Don Bosco, nos. 103, 134, 521, 532, 546 etc. Cf. *GC23, Educating the young to the faith*, Rome 1990. On piety and God in the life of the Salesian, cf. nos. 7, 139, 176, 219, 220. Cf. *GC26, "Da mihi animas cetera tolle"*, Rome 2008. On charismatic identity and apostolic passion, nos. 3, 6, 19-22.

⁴² Cf. Egidio VIGANÒ, *Interioridad apostólica*, CCS, Madrid 1990, 169 (first edition from Ediciones Don Bosco Argentina, Buenos Aires 1989). Cf. Egidio VIGANÒ, *Non secondo la carne ma nello spirito*, Ed. FMA, Rome 1978. On interiority p. 41; 66; 152. Cf. *L'Esortazione «Vita Consecrata»: stimoli al nostro cammino postcapitolare*, in Juan Edmundo VECCHI, *Educatori appassionati esperti e consacrati per i giovani*. Lettere circolari ai salesiani di don Juan E. Vecchi, LAS, Rome 2013, 114-122. Seeing spirituality as a prior need; cf. Pascual CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, *Lettere circolari ai salesiani*, LAS, Rome 2021, 54.

us to be vigilant so that we can continue to be very authentic in living our lives as pastors consecrated to the good of young people, with the dedication that we also ask for as a fruit of GC28. Speaking of charismatic identity, I pointed out that there is much at stake. No less important is the aspect I am referring to now. We discuss and strive so much to meet young people and be accepted by them with a thousand “tricks of the trade” of recent times; we make all kinds of strategic plans, we talk about 4.0 projects similar to the direction taken by technology companies. I do not take away the slightest value from our efforts to live with great relevance and at the pace of youth. However, I want to say with Fr Albera, who is accompanying me in this reflection: not even the greatest sympathy and the best natural gifts can replace the depth of life, the interiority, the being a man of God that, almost without demanding it, reaches deep into the hearts of young people. Fr Albera says this referring to Don Bosco and the attraction he awakened in him and the first Salesians: “From this singular attraction sprang the work of conquering our hearts. Attraction can sometimes be exercised by simple natural qualities of mind and heart, of features and bearing which make the person who possesses them likeable; but such an attraction fades after a while until it disappears altogether, and might even give way to inexplicable aversions and conflict. This was not how Don Bosco attracted us: his many natural gifts were made supernatural in him by the holiness of his life, and in this holiness lay the whole secret of his attraction which conquered hearts forever and transformed them.”⁴³

The fascination exerted by Don Bosco derives not only from the fact that he was certainly a “man of God”, a great charismatic, raised up by the Spirit for the good of youth in the Church and in the world, but also from the fact that he always lived as a simple priest, founder of a very young and poor Congregation; that he began his work with a small group of young people, always maintaining and nourishing his passion for the

⁴³ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 374.

good of his boys; and that, as he developed his work, he recognised and reaffirmed with increasing certainty that it was Providence that was guiding him.

The same and unique Spirit of God that inspired Don Bosco is present today. From the point of view of faith we have no doubt that it is this presence of the Spirit that is the foundation of our hope and that it is possible to continue to be faithful to the Lord Jesus through fidelity to Don Bosco and his mission. It is the Spirit who unites us with Don Bosco and who, therefore is the basis of *our communion in Salesianity*. It is He who wants to help us, under the same impulse, to be “with Don Bosco and with the times” (Fr Albera) or in other words, be “with Don Bosco today”.

But the Spirit’s presence is not something static, alien to our development. On the contrary, it is a permanent invitation, addressed to our freedom, to pay attention and to collaborate continuously. It is docility to His call that makes His presence effective, because otherwise we could easily “resist the Spirit” or “quench the Spirit”. (cf. *Acts 7:51; 1 Thes 5:19*). Hence we need, as Fr Albera reminds us, to *return to the Spirit*. Our *Da mihi animas cetera tolle* guides us along the path that leads us to be, even today, deeply spiritual men, men of deep faith who resonate in God with what he offers us every day so that each can be *totally and completely for the young*.

“We live in a time that loves the ephemeral,” Fr Egidio Viganò wrote in 1989 in his reflections on the *grace of unity*⁴⁴. Analysing with a careful eye what was happening in those years, in which the stress was on the ephemeral, ideological fashions, the mirage when faced with technological wonders and the dynamism of efficiency, Fr Viganò warns us of the need for depth and interiority in the Spirit. Fr Albera’s language is different, but he warns us of the same risks. And if this was the situation thirty-two years ago, we can see that our present time has accentuated some of these tendencies even more.

⁴⁴ Egidio VIGANÒ, *Interioridad apostólica*, CCS, Madrid 1990, 169.

Our vocation is fascinating if it leads us to truly fall in love with the Lord for the development of the Kingdom. As disciples and consecrated people, we must be “signs and bearers” for others, not only of God’s love for young people (C. 2), but above all of the power of the Lord’s Spirit in our lives, in their lives and in everyone’s lives. And this, Fr Viganò tells us, is only possible if “we daily practise looking deep into the depths”.⁴⁵

I believe that we can recognise, also from personal and community experience, that our spirituality of active life is not easy, in the sense that it is not something that can be acquired once and for all, but requires laborious and demanding growth in *apostolic interiority*, which was, is and will be the guarantee of our spiritual authenticity. The real, daily, almost imperceptible dangers of letting ourselves be carried away by seeing things on the horizontal plane, seeing ourselves submerged in activity that in itself results in stifling activism, wearing ourselves out through work and organisational and managerial efforts, and so many other situations we know of: all this is like an “attack against life in the Spirit”. Remembering Fr Viganò, I would like to reiterate these certainties: *apostolic interiority* is like the quintessence of our being Salesians of Don Bosco for today’s world. Its secret is the *grace of unity*. And only by nourishing this inner unity do we lessen the risk of being prey to *spiritual superficiality*⁴⁶.

I have no doubt that, in substance, Fr Albera’s call to piety and Fr Viganò’s invitation to interiority refer to the same thing. Today it is a question of giving quality to the authenticity of our life as Salesians of Don Bosco, in order to give a concrete response to the urgent question: “What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?”

The *Da mihi animas cetera tolle* which led Dominic Savio as a boy to understand that there, with Don Bosco, there was a “business” dealing with souls, not money. This is the expression

⁴⁵ Egidio VIGANÒ, *Interioridad apostólica*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

that best expresses Don Bosco's pastoral zeal and charity and ours too. Looking at Don Bosco we learn about his deep spirituality, his solid and trusting faith, the certainty that God is present in the midst of the young and the need to cultivate a robust interior life. The deep root of Don Bosco's spirituality was always his union with God, his inner life and his dialogue with the Lord. "There is no doubt that in Don Bosco holiness shines out in his works, but it is certainly true that the works are only an expression of his faith. It is not the deeds that make Don Bosco a saint [...] but it is a faith enlivened by practical charity that makes him a saint."⁴⁷ When it is lived in this way, as it was for Don Bosco and as it must be for us today, then our presence among the young, our going out to meet them, our repeating the promise today that even our last breath will be for them, everything, absolutely everything, will be imbued with that pedagogy of grace, of the soul and of the supernatural that is contained in and that we are called to live in the *Da mihi animas cetera tolle*.

2.4. The drama of the war (1914-1918)

The option for the poorest young people: orphans
"Absolute priority for the young, the poorest and
most abandoned and defenceless"
(GC28, *Action guideline 5*)

During Fr Albera's term as Rector Major, the toughest trial was the Great War. The First World War caused almost half the confreres to leave for the front, with many works requisitioned and turned into barracks and hospitals. In that emergency situation, Fr Albera did his best to welcome war orphans and refugees into Salesian houses, even at the cost of great sacrifices. He was concerned to continue Salesian works at all costs, and indeed to increase some of them, such as the oratories and

⁴⁷ CHÁVEZ, *Lettere circolari ai salesiani*, 1299.

orphanages. He invited his confreres to austerity and to calling on Mary with the title of Help of Christians, according to the Salesian tradition of imploring help from “Our Lady of difficult times”. Don Bosco, in fact, always recognised the inspiration and support of Mary Help of Christians; thus he did not let himself be discouraged by the oppositions and difficulties he encountered.

Italy entered the war on 24 May 1915 and the Congregation became totally involved, since most of the confreres were of Italian nationality. In the monthly letter following this serious event, the Rector Major invited us to pray for those who were under arms and to do “three days of strict fasting”, “to obtain that they may be spared from any misfortune”.⁴⁸ He also asked that the closure of the school year not be brought forward, as many hoped, so as not to add further burdens to families already struggling with the departure of their young men into the ranks of the army. Fr Albera, therefore, strongly urged austerity as a sign of solidarity with the poor and the apostolic zeal to bring in all the children who found themselves abandoned.

When the conflict went on beyond what was expected, Fr Albera maintained as a guideline the invitation to keep our eyes fixed on Don Bosco (“Let us imitate Don Bosco in acquiring our religious perfection, educating and sanctifying the young, dealing with our neighbour, doing good to all”⁴⁹), and encouraged those remaining behind in the works to a spirit of sacrifice and ardent zeal. He hoped that there would be the igniting of “a holy competition to take on the burdens and labours, by no means light, but which are indispensable for filling the gaps left above all in the school and in assistance by those whom the war has removed from our institutions”.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ ASC, E212, no. 117 (24 May 1915), quoted in Leonardo TULLINI, *Esperienza bellica e identità salesiana nella Grande Guerra: tratti di spiritualità nella corrispondenza dei Salesiani militari con D. Paolo Albera e altri superiori (1915-1918)* [dottorato], UPS, Rome 2007, 117.

⁴⁹ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 360.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

He invited provincials to be creative: “Your knowledge of your province will suggest to you some other practical measure; well, study it, according to the spirit of Don Bosco, in relation to the present circumstances and then send it to me no later than 20 August. Your plans, well detailed [...] will be examined in depth by the Superior Chapter, and after making the appropriate observations, they will return them to you for your execution...”⁵¹ As we can see, the governance of the Congregation appears to be increasingly prudent and centralised according to clear lines of conduct and safeguarding of the charism. In my opinion, this “Fr Albera style” is above all an expression of the authority of someone who knows the charismatic priority of the mission and wants everyone to be faithful to it.

Perhaps it is precisely this perfectionist and operational impetus that is the most typical and dynamic feature of the position taken by Fr Albera and his Council in the face of events, the one that most inspires the confreres to heroic actions, both at the front and in the houses. The following words of exhortation are magnificent: “Push the boat out to the high seas, that is, hurl yourselves ardently into the vast field of perfection, do not limit your labours to what is strictly necessary, be grandiose in your aspirations when it is a question of the glory of God and the salvation of souls; move away from the seashore that so narrows your horizons, and you will see how abundant the catch of souls will be [...]. In this the motto of the zealous apostle will be the same as that of the valiant soldier: courage, onwards!”⁵²

During the difficult period of the First World War, Fr Albera’s spiritual fatherliness was expressed in his affectionate concern for his confreres engaged at the front and for the young people still being cared for in Salesian houses. We have evidence of this in the circular letters he sent every month to all his confreres engaged in military service⁵³ and from the prompt replies he sent

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 239.

⁵³ There were 32 circular letters to Salesian soldiers sent by Rector Major Fr Paul Albera between 19 March 1916 and 24 December 1918.

to each confrere who wrote to him.⁵⁴ It was certainly a period of tremendous trial for the Rector Major and the young Salesian Congregation, an experience of anguish and bewilderment without measure, which became a watershed in the history of a group of convinced religious educators, as well as for all of contemporary history.

I think it is particularly necessary to recall some traits of the figure of Fr Albera and his good work in those years, because it expresses a way of acting in a “borderline situation”. In addition to underlining, as I have just done, his particular attention to his confreres who were at the front, there is another aspect that I consider of great strength and charismatic importance. I am referring to the fact that in the most dramatic and extreme situations, Fr Albera did not hesitate for a minute to make the whole Congregation understand that there was a specific priority of the moment in the Salesian mission: attention to children and young orphans who were the poorest of the poor, having lost at least one of their parents, often both.

Fr Albera was not content just continuing with ordinary activities. He did not just wait for the dark clouds of those years to clear, but with exceptional effort he activated the best energies of the poor houses and decimated numbers of Salesians who continued the mission in them. I highlight this fact because it has much to do with the priority option for the poor that we are asking of the whole Congregation throughout the world even today.

A first special intervention was carried out a few months before Italy entered the war, following the terrible earthquake in Abruzzo on 13 January 1915. Fr Albera wrote to his confreres: “Let us bow our heads to God’s will and pray also for the many victims of this cataclysm. But my heart tells me that Don Bosco and Father Rua would not be happy with this alone, and so I am prepared to take in, within the limits of the charity that the

⁵⁴ The Central Salesian Archive contains about 3390 letters and military postcards addressed to Fr Paul Albera or other members of the Superior Chapter by 791 Salesian soldiers.

Lord sends us, some of the surviving orphans...”⁵⁵ After this appeal, the Salesians immediately set to work and took in hundreds of orphans in various houses in Italy.

As I have already mentioned, when Italy also entered the war on 24 May 1915, hundreds of young Salesians were drafted. As was to be expected, the number of civilian deaths multiplied and at the same time the number of orphans caused by the war increased. With firm determination Fr Albera wrote: “relying on the Providence of God and the co-operation of the public I have decided to open an Institute wholly for boys between the ages of eight and twelve who have become homeless through the war”.⁵⁶

Just as we have spoken of the uniqueness of the Oratory, so it is necessary to mention the orphanage as a very Salesian educational space, particularly at that time. One might consider the orphanage an educational institution of another era, but it reveals the Oratorian heart in an extraordinary way. The orphans of every war, especially of defeated nations, are victims twice over: they have lost their parents in violent circumstances and their homeland does not have the means to care for them.

Pope Benedict XV had drawn the attention of everyone to this problem, both the victorious nations and the local Churches and congregations, with a range of responses. Fr Albera, on behalf of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, made a personal commitment to alleviate this plague; welcoming orphanages were opened in war-torn Central Europe. In the last year of the war he told the Salesians called to the front: “I immediately arranged for almost a hundred refugee boys aged 12 to 14 to be housed in the Oratory; at the same time I appealed to all the directors of our houses in Italy to welcome as many boys as possible.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 171 quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 112-113.

⁵⁶ *BS* 1916, 131 quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 119.

⁵⁷ *Lm* no. 22... cf. ASC E444, *Lettere mensili ai salesiani soldati (1916-1918)*, quoted in GIRAUDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 120-121.

I have referred to this aspect of the life of Fr Paul Albera and his service as Rector Major because it directly touches on an essential element of our charism, which is the option for the young and, among them, the poorest and most abandoned (C. 2). As you can imagine, dear confreres, going over our General Chapters and the teachings of the Rectors Major on this subject would require a lot of time and a long letter.⁵⁸ I think that what I have said is sufficient to show that in the Congregation there has always been concern for the poorest and most abandoned young people, and that it coincides with a constant concern to be faithful to the Lord in charismatic fidelity to Don Bosco. However, in my opinion, the decisiveness and firmness with which Fr Albera addressed this priority emerges with singular force.

Well then, the orphans of the First World War are now the orphans of some of today's wars for us, like in Syria, or the victims of guerilla warfare on the African continent and in Latin America. The orphans of that time are the street children for us today in many of the nations where Don Bosco's charism has taken root. They are also the migrant children who arrive alone in unknown lands without any protection. They are all those children and young people who undoubtedly, as Salesians, are in our hearts and whose pain we feel so deeply because of their condition. And I ask, dear confreres, that they continue to wound us in this way. *Let us not get used to the situations orphans face in our 21st century.* That is why, in the fifth action guideline for our Congregation for these six years following GC28, I asked you to give absolute priority to the young, the poor and the most abandoned and defenceless: "I am convinced that assuming this perspective as an indispensable one will be very significant throughout the Congregation and in all contexts, cultures and continents. Today there are many kinds of youth poverty that demand urgent at-

⁵⁸ Fr Pascual Chávez V., in fact, refers several times in his letters to his fondness for the poorest: cf. CHÁVEZ, *Lettere circolari ai salesiani*, 156, 349, 503, 609-613, 614, 735, 987, 1106. See also "He had compassion on them". *New forms of poverty, Salesian mission, effectiveness* in VECCHI, *Educatori appassionati... Lettere circolari ai Salesiani*, 166-192.

tention from the whole human family, and no doubt from us Salesians in a particular way. In fact, the history of our Congregation is characterised by calls to go out to the poorest young people. ‘As sons of Don Bosco, we have taken on an historical commitment to serve poor young people.’⁵⁹ It is precisely for this reason that I appealed to us to look at our young people, the young people of the world and of our own presence, those we know and those we must go and seek out, to very respectfully get to know their life stories, their anguish and their pain, their very lives, so often full of tragedy. These are “our orphans” today, who have so much in common, even if they do not know it, with those of the great wars. We must be there for them.

2.5. All of you be missionaries⁶⁰

Fr Albera’s strong appeal is a “sister”
to the invitation addressed to the whole Congregation
after GC28 and reminds us that:
“It is time for greater generosity in the Congregation.
A universal and missionary Congregation”
(GC28, *Action guideline 7*)

One of the characteristics of Fr Albera’s service as Rector Major was his great concern, animation and commitment to the missions, which he considered essential to the charism of Don Bosco.

What he wrote in his first letter to the Congregation, dated 25 January 1911, is very significant: “I am surprised at the fear that the ardent zeal of our first missionaries is waning among us, and that we are not completely fulfilling God’s plans for our humble Congregation. Unfortunately, I see that every day the number of requests to go to the missions is decreasing, and for

⁵⁹ GC28, p. 36.

⁶⁰ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 135.

this reason the following words echo in my mind like hammer blows: *tene quod habes*.⁶¹ To his great sensitivity, in fidelity to Don Bosco and Fr Rua, we must add the fact that during his visit to the Americas on behalf of the Rector Major, he got to know the beautiful and emerging reality of the missions, especially in Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego, Mato Grosso and at Méndez and Gualaquiza.

During Fr Albera's term of office, more than 450 Salesians left for the missions. Only in one year, 1915, was the missionary expedition suspended because of the war.

In 1913 the 47th expedition was completed. On 31 May of that year Fr Albera sent a circular letter to all Salesians encouraging them to come to the aid of the missions: "Therefore, it will not be difficult for you, dear confreres, to understand the heavy burden that falls on your Rector Major to provide these Missions with reliable and zealous personnel and material means. Indeed, the needs for personnel and resources are becoming more and more sensitive, and I feel the need to appeal to your hearts, good confreres, for help. Yes, please share such a burden with me, taking our Missions very much to heart, first through prayer and then through your work."⁶²

The result was that in that year more than 70 Salesians made up the 47th expedition. Together with the Salesians, 52 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were also sent on mission.

Looking back over Fr Albera's biography, we can see that he was very concerned about the preparations for the annual missionary expedition while he was in Turin or returning from some of his trips. Here is an example of the account of some of his dispatches: "The new missionaries were sent forth on 11 October 1910 from the church of Mary Help of Christians. He embraced each of the hundred missionaries, leaving each one a personal remembrance."⁶³ The same happened in 1911 when,

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ GIRAUDDO, *Fr Paul Albera Master of Spiritual Life*, 99.

“after the farewell service for fifty missionaries destined especially for China and Congo, Fr Albera left for Austria, Poland and Ukraine”.⁶⁴ In October 1912 he greeted and blessed the new missionary expedition. The young Ignatius Canazei, who would later succeed the bishop and martyr Louis Versiglia as Vicar Apostolic of Shiuchow (Shaoguan), was part of it. In 1929 Canazei himself recounted: “Before we left for China, Father Albera invited us to attend the Holy Mass that he would celebrate in Don Bosco’s chapel. Afterwards, he paternally addressed us by saying: ‘You are now leaving for the missions. At the beginning you’ll find many difficulties, but over time you’ll get acquainted with the language and customs, you’ll meet many people, and after about ten years, your new country will become a second home for you; you won’t even want to return to your native country.’”⁶⁵ Something similar could be said about every missionary expedition.

All this shows how, out of *fidelity to Don Bosco*, the missions were for Fr Albera an essential and indispensable charismatic element. So – it is my conclusion – with the same criterion of fidelity to Don Bosco and his charism, they must continue to be for us today.

In the earlier-mentioned circular letter of 31 May 1913 entitled. *The festive oratories – The missions – Vocations*, Fr Albera devotes some splendid pages to reminding the Salesians what the missions meant to Don Bosco, how he carried them in his mind and heart. At the same time he made an appeal to take “our missions very much to heart, first through prayer and then through your work” and he invited them to enrich themselves “with the virtues of the missionary, which must be a deep piety and a great spirit of sacrifice for the whole of our lives and not just for a few years”.⁶⁶ In this letter Fr Albera also declares how the festive Oratory should be the heart and life of the Congre-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁶ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 135.

gation, as it was for Don Bosco: “The missions among the savages were always the most ardent aspiration of Don Bosco’s heart, nor am I afraid to say that Mary Most Holy Help of Christians had given him a clear intuition of them from her first motherly manifestations. He spoke about it continually to us, his first sons, who were full of wonder and felt transported by holy enthusiasm; he described, with the clear precision of an explorer, distant regions, immense forests with mysterious flora and fauna, majestic rivers, warlike tribes... and then new towns and cities, springing up as if by magic where solitude and death had previously reigned...”⁶⁷ For Don Bosco “the missions were the favourite topic of his talks, and he knew how to instil in hearts such a strong desire to become missionaries that it seemed the most natural thing in the world”.⁶⁸

Dear confreres, in the action guidelines of our GC28 I placed strong emphasis on the missionary dimension of our Congregation. It is clear that we are in a time that demands greater generosity from all of us, since “The missionary reality of our Congregation continues to question us and present us with wonderful challenges, the missions urge us onwards and make us dream beautiful dreams that come true.”⁶⁹

I believe I can say that missionary animation in our Congregation is one of the dimensions that every Rector Major in our history to date, has taken up with true love. There has not been a single year – with the exception of 1915, to which I have already referred – in which, as each *missionary expedition* matured, there has not been a great effort to help the various local Churches and provinces with the presence of new Salesians who have offered to give the best of themselves wherever they have been sent. We cannot forget that the Congregation is present today in 134 nations because missionaries from so many parts of the world and for so many decades have taken the first steps so

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶⁹ *GC28*, 47.

that the charism of Don Bosco might take root in every nation and region.

Today as yesterday, as I have done during these seven years and as my predecessors have done, I continue to invite the confreres to be generous, especially those who feel a particular call from the Lord (“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations...”, Mt 28:19) in the vocation that we all live as Salesians of Don Bosco. Fr Paul Albera is a good mirror through which to look at the greatness and value of the missionary dimension and the missions in our Congregation.

I believe I can say, without fear of error, that the Congregation continues to be vigilant, attentive and always ready to proclaim the Gospel to peoples who do not know it (C. 6), convinced that “we look upon missionary work as an essential feature of our Congregation” (C. 30). Precisely for this reason, in total harmony and dialogue with the spirit Fr Albera reminded us of, I proposed at the end of General Chapter 28: “I am proposing to the entire Congregation to make this time for generosity concrete by naturally assuming the availability of confreres from all provinces... for international services, new foundations, new frontiers to we want to reach.”⁷⁰

3. OUR LADY AND DON BOSCO⁷¹

I could not conclude this letter without making a reference, albeit briefly, to Our Lady, the great Love of Don Bosco, and to Fr Albera’s deep devotion and conviction in reference to the great gift that we Salesians and the Salesian Family have for “our powerful Protectress”.⁷² In the circular that took its cue from the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians⁷³, Fr Albera wrote with his usual

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ *Lettere circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai salesiani*, 283.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

humility: “No doubt other pens, better toughened than mine, will sing the praises of Our Lady of Don Bosco in every language and in every metre.” Nevertheless, he knew that “the Rector Major of the Salesians is not allowed to remain silent” when it is a question of joining his own voice to that of so many of Don Bosco’s children in grateful praise of the Mother of God. For this he concludes: “May Mary Help of Christians guide my pen so that I may write things less unworthy of Her.”⁷⁴

The letter is filled with the conviction that Mary Help of Christians is above all *Don Bosco’s Madonna* and that, as Salesians, we have a duty of gratitude “towards our heavenly Queen, for the great and innumerable benefits that she so generously has wanted to bestow on us”.⁷⁵

Fr Albera points out that the unfolding of the life of Don Bosco, “son of a humble peasant of the Becchi”, remains “an inexplicable enigma” if it is not understood and savoured in faith, which knows how to see the omnipotent hand of Divine Providence always at work. And with all certainty he states: “Don Bosco could certainly not have any doubt about the continuous intervention of God and the Most Holy Virgin Help of Christians in the various events of his very laborious life.”⁷⁶ After the dream when he was nine, “It was the Mother of God who guided him in all the most important events of his career, who made him a learned and zealous priest, who prepared him to be the Father of orphans, the Teacher of countless ministers of the altar, one of the greatest educators of youth, and finally the Founder of a new religious Society which was to have the mission of spreading his spirit and devotion to her everywhere under the beautiful title of *Mary Help of Christians*.”⁷⁷

⁷³ *Ibid.* Letter no. XXIV (24) entitled “*Sul Cinquantenario della Consacrazione del Santuario di Maria Ausiliatrice*” (*On the 50th anniversary of the Consecration of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians*), 282-299.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem.*

I think we can say, dear confreres, that the passage I have just quoted is a perfect and complete summary of Don Bosco's life and the place Our Lady had in it. She was his valid support, she guided him throughout his life. At the end, during the Eucharist celebrated in 1887 in the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome the day after it was consecrated, the elderly Don Bosco, much compromised in health and filled with emotion and tears, understood what was the thread that accompanied his whole life: "She has done everything".

As sons of Don Bosco, we express our love and devotion to Our Lady every day in the morning prayer of entrustment to Mary Help of Christians: a prayer desired by Fr Rua already in 1894 and which, as Fr Albera writes, "was very much appreciated by all and was quickly and easily learnt by heart".⁷⁸ And so it has been up until today.

Dear confreres, I conclude this letter, written with reference to Fr Albera and in dialogue with him, by reaffirming with deep conviction that our love and devotion to the Mother of the Lord, to Mary Help of Christians, is not something optional in our charism.

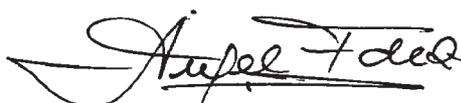
I allow myself to declare with all frankness and awareness: if one of us does not love Our Lady and does not feel anything towards her, if he does not have the desire to live all his days under the protection and the presence of the Mother of Heaven, if he does not have a fire in his heart that leads him to want to show and transmit this love to children, young people and the people of God whom he meets every day, then he will not be a Salesian of Don Bosco.

"We believe that Mary is present among us and continues her 'mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians'. We entrust ourselves to Her, the humble servant in whom the Lord has done great things, that we may become witnesses to the young of her Son's boundless love." (C. 8).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 289-290.

Let us ask the Lord that Our Lady Help of Christians, who always guided and supported Don Bosco, may continue to accompany our Congregation and the beautiful Salesian Family, for the good of the Church and to continue to respond, in fidelity to the call that the Holy Spirit addressed to us in Don Bosco, to the needs of the Church and the whole world. In the knowledge that we came into being not as a merely human venture, but by the initiative of God, who entrusted to us the most precious portion of society: the young and, among them, the poorest and most abandoned.

May our devotion and love for the Mother of the Lord be our guarantee for a beautiful, full and happy life, in fidelity, as disciples of her Beloved Son.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ángel Fernández Artime". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

APPENDIX

Dear Confreres

My letter, as you have seen, is not an academic work of research, like those produced by our universities, but a letter of fraternal animation. It expresses my strong desire that the great figure of Fr Paul Albera, his merits in the Congregation on behalf of the Salesian mission and the education and evangelisation of the young, and all that he passed on to us, also thanks to the current interpretation we can make of his work and his thinking, remain in everyone's memory. For my part I have tried to highlight and offer for your reflection only a few aspects which have more to do with the action guidelines for these six years.

In order to stimulate better knowledge, I am adding this appendix to this letter with a rich bibliography on Fr Paul Albera, drawn by some of our specialists, whom I thank for their collaboration. I am doing this because I consider it an "act of justice" towards the second successor of Don Bosco. I have no doubt that more than one confrere, seeing all that has been written about him, will be encouraged to read something interesting for his own life.

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(by Marco Bay, updated to 24.06.2021. References drawn from contributions by A. Park, A. Giraud, J. Boenzi, S. Zimniak and others)

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2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1 THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RECTOR MAJOR'S MISSIONARY SOLIDARITY

Fr Alfred MARAVILLA
Councillor for the Missions

Bro Jean Paul MULLER
Economer General

The Provincials
Provincial Headquarters

For information

Provincial Economers
Provincial Headquarters

Rome, 31 January 2021
Prot. 21/0022

Dear Fr Provincial

For several years now we have been developing a system for better coordination and greater transparency and accountability regarding requests of Provinces to the Rector Major for financial solidarity.

Primary Criteria

Requests for help to the Rector Major are presented by the Provincial, with the consent of his Council, by submitting a Project together with the properly filled in Project Application Form prepared by the Missions Sector.

It is important to keep in mind that the resources for the missionary solidarity of the Rector Major come mainly from Mission Offices dependent on him for the missionary activity of the whole Congregation (*Reg. 24*). These Mission Offices, in

turn, need to justify the projects to their donors, auditors and governments.

Similarly, donors, auditors and governments now demand detailed information about the use of donated funds. They often require evidence that the guidelines in *Laudato Si'* regarding respect and care for the environment, are reflected not only in our projects, but also in our curriculum of formation, educational programmes and even in our plans for constructions. It is also necessary that every project needs to address the issues raised by GC 27 and GC28 and the priorities of the Rector Major for the six-year period (2020-2026) as well as fit into the strategic plan of the Province (POI).

Priorities

The priorities for the missionary solidarity of the Rector Major are:

- a. Functioning of Provinces, Vice Provinces, Delegations who need help;
- b. Formation of confreres (*AGC* 433, pp. 20, 34);
- c. Evangelisation of poor and needy youth (*AGC* 433, p. 22);
- d. Programmes for our lay mission partners (*AGC* 433, pp. 43-44);
- e. New missionary presences or initiatives (*AGC* 433, p. 48);
- f. Other programmes and projects whose nature no one else will fund.

Financial help for “other” projects like water well, drainage, solar panels, vehicles, etc are to be presented to concerned NGO’s or to other funding organisations. The Mission Offices, Salesian NGO’s as well as the Missions Sector could provide assistance to the PDO’s, when requested, in the formulation of the project to meet their requirements.

Requests for help for the functioning of Provinces, Vice Provinces or Delegations is done only once every 12 months, be

it in June or December Distribution. Requests for the functioning of the Province should include a copy of the annual budget of the Province submitted with the Project Application Form.

The Formation of Salesians

The Rector Major gives greatest priority to fund the formation of Salesians because on it depends the profile of the Salesians that are able to respond to the needs of the youth of today. Requests for formation is done only once every 12 months, be it in June or December Distribution. A letter to the Rector Major with the total number of students is not enough. The official form prepared by the Missions Sector has to be filled in every year, with the name of each student, details of study and institute, etc., This list includes only students belonging to one's own Province. Do not include students belonging to other Provinces, even if they happen to be in the interprovincial studentate in the Province. This will be crossed checked with the help of the Formation Sector. Funds for doctoral studies in Rome are given for three years only. Requests have to be submitted every year.

It will be an important sign of communion with the whole Congregation that the Planning and Development Office of every Province mobilise local resources. Since "we share together our material goods..." (*Const 76*), no Province is only a recipient. Instead, all Provinces – even with a widow's mite (*Lk 21,1-4*) – contribute to this most noble cause which ensures the very growth and vitality of our Congregation.

Deadlines for Submission of Requests

Requests that reach the Sede Centrale are subjected to initial screening by a representative from the Missions Sector and

from the Economy Sector, hence they need to be sent **at least two months** in advance. The **last dates for submission every year** are **31 March** (requests for Distribution in June) and **30 September** (requests for Distribution in December). Requests have to be submitted only to the specific email address for every distribution (e.g. 31 March 2021: *distribuzione168@sdb.org*; 30 Sept 2021: *distribuzione169@sdb.org*; 31 March 2022: *distribuzione170@sdb.org* etc.) Requests that arrive after the cut-off date will not be considered.

A Collaborative Decision

All requests are made available to the concerned Regional Councillor for perusal and comments. Then these are screened by a Committee chaired by the General Councillor for Missions, with the Economist General and a General Councillor at the beginning of the General Council's session. Finally, these are presented to the Rector Major and his Council for discussion and final approval. The Mission Offices are then authorised to distribute the funds in the name of the Rector Major. If a request is not accepted at a Distribution, it is not automatically carried over to the next Distribution. It has to be resubmitted by the Province concerned to the next distribution.

Transparency and Accountability

The practice of the vow poverty demands a transparent and complete accountability of the funds received (cf. *GC26*, n. 81). Since any request is presented to the Rector Major by the Provincial, similarly, it is his moral responsibility to ensure that funds received are used according to the purpose it was given and that these are properly accounted for through acquittal reports according to international accounting standards within an acceptable time.

Important Reminders

Finally, it is important to point out the following:

1. Every Province is asked to set up and develop its own *Planning and Development Office or Provincial Mission Office* and start or strengthen its own resource mobilisation from the public, past pupils, local benefactors, funding agencies, corporations, government, etc. The request for help from the Rector Major ought to be the last resort;
2. The long-term sustainability of any project ought to be an overriding concern (*GC 26, n. 81*);
3. Resources management is crucial through better use of buildings, land, equipment and other resources;
4. Invest on the formation of people rather than in structures. However, should new structures be necessary, it should be ensured that their maintenance over time will be manageable and they could be easily adapted to other use should the need arise in the future;
5. Provinces should have sent the previous year's Statement of Accounts and Financial Disclosure Form to the Economist General's Office in order to receive the resources approved in the Distributions;
6. Regular *Scrutinium Paupertatis* at the Province and institutional level is necessary to eliminate all waste and luxury and ensure that our existence and our work are at the service of the young who are most in need and marginalised. (cf. *AGC 425 - 2.4*).

Proper Use of Resources

Don Bosco reminds us that “what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well” (*Const 79*). Thus, “attentive vigilance is needed in order to ensure that the goods of the Institutes are administered with prudence and transparency, that they are protected and preserved, combining

the primary charismatic-spiritual dimension with the economic dimension and with efficiency, which has its own *humus* in the administrative tradition of the Institutes which does not tolerate waste and which is attentive to using resources properly” (Pope Francis, *Message to the Symposium on Management of Ecclesiastical Goods*, 8 March 2014).

3. DISPOSITIONS AND NORMS

3.1 TRANSFER OF CONFRERES

Fr Stefano MARTOGLIO
Vicar of Rector Major

For the kind attention of
Provincials and Superiors

Per conoscenza ai

Vice-Provincials
Provincial Secretaries
Head Offices

Rome, 12 March 2021
Prot. 21/0089

Dear Father Provincial,

I hope you are well during these difficult times, along with all the confreres and your people.

I am sending you this short letter to help each of you to carry out the service entrusted to you, informing you of a change and asking you to follow the instructions I indicate below regarding the transfer of confreres between one “juridical circumscription” (province or vice-province) and another.

1. Our Salesian law

C. 160: *By first profession a member is enrolled in the juridical circumscription for whose service he asked to be admitted. He can be enrolled in another juridical circumscription by permanent or temporary transfer on the part of the competent authorities.*

The text ***Juridical elements and administrative praxis in the government of the province (2004)*** specifies the matter and makes it concrete with the following points:

a) Enrolment of a Member in a Province.

Article 160 of the Constitutions states that: "By first profession a member is enrolled in the juridical circumscription (Province or Vice-Province) for whose service he asked to be admitted".

The member is therefore incardinated in the Province (or Vice-Province) whose Provincial admitted him to the Novitiate, admitting him from that time for the service of the Province (or Vice-Province); this is also the case even if the first profession is made in another Province (something common in inter-provincial novitiates).

Also, in the case of an inter-provincial prenovitiate it is the Provincial of origin who admits him to the novitiate and then numbers the novice as a member of his own Province.

b) Transfer of a member from one circumscription to another.

The transfer of a member of one circumscription (Province or Vice-Province) to another circumscription (Province or Vice-Province or house directly dependent on the Rector Major) can be definitive or temporary.

b/1) Definitive transfer

The Rector Major decides definitive transfer. It can be brought about:

– by a mandate of obedience of the Rector Major who definitively appoints a confrere to a circumscription for a special assignment, after having heard the opinions of the confrere concerned and the major Superiors of the two circumscriptions (that of origin and that of destination);

– by request of the confrere:

In such a case the following documentation is to be sent to the Rector Major:

- ✓ the personal application of the confrere, addressed to the Rector Major, giving reasons for the requested transfer;
- ✓ the written consent of the Provincial of origin;
- ✓ the written consent of the Provincial who is to receive the confrere.

After study of the documentation and the reasons, the Rector Major can issue a decree of definitive transfer.

b/2) Temporary transfer

It can take place in two ways:

- with the appointment of a confrere to a task in a circumscription other than his own for as long as the task lasts. When the time for the task expires, the member returns to his own Province unless something new arises.
- by agreement between the Superiors (Provincials or Superiors of a Vice-Province) of the two circumscriptions: by the norm of article 151 of the Regulations a Provincial (or Superior of a Vice-Province) having heard the opinion of his Council can send a confrere temporarily to another Province (cf. also Reg. 157,3). In such a case there must be a written agreement certifying the temporary transfer.

For the whole time that a member has been temporarily transferred to another Province (or Vice-Province) he depends completely on the Provincial (or Superior of the Vice-Province) of the new Province (or Vice-Province). He takes part in the voting for the Provincial Chapter in the house in which he resides and in the voting of the provincial list of the Province to which he has been transferred (unless he has been transferred only for reasons of study or health).

c) Confreres who work in non-Salesian structures.

Our own particular law provides for the case of confreres destined to work in institutions or structures which are not Salesian:

- in the service of particular Churches (dioceses and parishes);

- in educational and social institutions at the service of youth or the world of work (cf. Reg. 35).

The Provincial must have the consent of his Council to appoint a confrere to this type of work and he is required to follow up and constantly assess how these confreres are getting on (Reg. 35; 156.4).

In particular it is appropriate that the conditions foreseen for a positive association with the Salesian Community are clearly set out in the written document with which the Provincial gives the appointment to the confrere:

- both in regard to the local religious Superior on whom the confrere will depend;
- and in regard to the contacts to be maintained with the Salesian Community.

Canon 681 of the Code of Canon Law also prescribe that, in appointing a confrere to a non-Salesian structure, the Provincial should draw up a written Agreement with the ecclesial (diocese or parish) or educative-social institution, at whose disposition the confrere(s) is being placed.

This agreement should clearly state the duration of the service, which will always be for a fixed period.

2. Transfer of confreres: repeal of the temporary provision

The Rector Major, with the consent of the General Council, has modified a practice that has remained tacitly in force since GC22, helping to clarify some dubious situations concerning the juridical belonging of the confreres but which has also created some confusion.

This is a rule, expressly given at GC22 for the counting of the confreres in view of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

La provision, published in in *ASC 284* (1976) p. 74, reads as follows: "A transfer from one Province to another, which has

taken place without the prescribed form or of which there is no dear documentary evidence, is to be considered definitive and therefore accompanied by the consequent loss of membership in the original Province after ten full consecutive years of residence in the other Province”.

This provision, which was to be considered temporary, was observed until the 28th General Chapter was convened and held, as indicated in *AGC 427 (2018) p. 68*.

The Rector Major, therefore, with the consent of the General Council, has abrogated this “provision”, ordering that, from now on, all transfers of confreres from one circumscription to another shall follow what is expressly foreseen in Art. 160 of the Constitutions and Art. 151 of the General Regulations and reported in detail in numbers 134 and 135. of *Elementi giuridici e prassi amministrativa del governo dell’Ispettorìa (Juridical Elements...)*.

This repeal implies the need for an explicit request from the confrere concerned requesting the transfer and/or a decision, in writing, by the competent superiors involved in the transfer procedure.

Hence the invitation to verify any situations to be regularised or clarified in your provinces, which referred to the temporary provision published in *ASC 284 (1976) p. 74* and in Acts of the General Council that followed, up until *AGC 427 (2018) p. 68* and now definitively repealed.

3. Communication to the Secretary General

Finally, I ask that any temporary transfers between juridical circumscriptions always be accompanied by a *written agreement* between the two superiors involved and that *it be forwarded to the Secretary General and the General Councillor for the Region (or regions) involved*.

Thanking you for your attention and collaboration, my cordial greetings and let me assure you of my remembrance in prayer for you, for the confreres of your communities and for those who together with you carry out the Salesian mission for the young.

May the Lenten journey we are now on revive our faith and prepares us for the encounter with the Risen Christ.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The Rector Major's main events in the six months from January to June 2021.

After a brief visit to his elderly parents in Spain, the Rector Major opened the new year on 6 January, Solemnity of the Epiphany, celebrating the Eucharist with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians' community at the Auxilium in Rome.

From 7-28 January of the same month he presided over the General Council's plenary session.

On Friday 11 January 2021, accompanied by the Councillor for Formation, Fr Ivo Coelho and other Council members, he went to the Pontifical Salesian University for the traditional conference and goodnight.

Continuing his meetings with the University, on the 15th he received a group representing the University's employees. On the same day, he launched the World Spirituality Days on the theme of the Strenna 2021: "Moved by Hope". This year the traditional Salesian event took place online involving twelve thousand members of the Salesian Family who connected at different times

from various parts of the world. Fr Artime responded to questions and provocations that proved very useful in exploring the theme.

On 24 January, in a letter addressed to the Salesian Provincials of the Congregation he passed on the news that the "Gerini" case had been brought to closure in legal terms.

The last two weeks leading up to the Feast on 31 January were particularly intense and saw a multiplication of requests for videos and connections with the Rector Major granted to the various provinces, resulting in a total of almost thirty video recordings.

Number 5/2021 of the weekly magazine known as *Famiglia Cristiana*, published an extensive interview with the Rector Major on 28 January regarding the relevance of Don Bosco and his charism today. The Rector Major gave other interviews to Vatican Radio, A Turin diocesan weekly paper called *Il tempo e la voce*, the Italian Catholic *Avvenire* and a Spanish magazine called *Religion Digital*.

The 28th saw the closure of the General Council's winter session, and on the following day, 29 Janu-

ary, the Rector Major went to Turin to meet the people responsible for running the Casa-Museo Don Bosco, also presiding at the celebration of Vespers in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

30 January saw the official beginning of celebrations for the first centenary of the death of Fr Paul Albera. This took the form of the opening of a photographic display at the Casa-Museo Don Bosco. Fr Artime returned to Rome that evening.

On Sunday 31st in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome he presided at the Eucharist in honour of St John Bosco. The celebration was broadcast by Rai1 and was followed by almost two and a half million viewers (share 20.1% of Rai morning). The same day, in the early afternoon, he was interviewed by Fabio Marchese Ragona (Mediaset) for the “*Stanze Vaticane*” column. The intense day ended with the celebration of Vespers in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart with the community at Headquarters.

February began with three busy days of routine work but also editing documents resulting from the General Council’s plenary session that had finished earlier.

There was no lack of online connections with Provincials and confreres.

On the afternoon of February 1st, in the chapel at Headquarters, he presided over the celebration consigning the missionary Crucifix to two confreres (representing the twenty-four from the expedition) and eight Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (representing the eleven FMA from the expedition). Mother Reungoat Yvonne, Superior General, was present at the celebration. The day ended with some time for festivities.

In the afternoon of 2 February, the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple and Day of Consecrated Life, Fr Artime was invited by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to concelebrate the solemn Eucharist with cardinals, bishops and other religious, at St Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. Pope Francis was the main celebrant.

On 4 and 5 February, he met with the Provincial, Vice-provincial and Economist of the Central Africa Province (AFC) called to analyse the situation in the province.

He was at St Patrick’s in Sliema (Malta) from 11-22 February to take up the study of English. As usual, he alternated study with meetings with confreres, young people, Past Pupils and religious authorities. Accompanied by Fr Charles Cini, he carried out a brief

visit to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians community in Gozo.

The final weeks of the month were dedicated to preparation for the intermediate Council meeting in March.

From 1 to 3 March the Rector Major held meetings with the Sector councillors and his Vicar.

On 2 March Fr Artime, together with his Vicar and Fr Francesco Pirisi, received the new Catholic Bishop of Iran.

Until 5 March, the Rector Major had meetings with the General Councillors still in Rome.

On 5 March, the Rector Major presided over a meeting with personnel working in the UPS Vice-province and at the University itself.

On 12 March, he presided over a working session of the General Council.

From the 14th to the 16th, the Rector Major visited the post-novitiate community at Nave (BS). He then went on to Turin where he met with the community at the Crocetta, Turin. From 17-20 March he met with confreres at the Mary Help of Christians community in Valdocco and with staff at the Casa-Museo Don Bosco.

He returned to Rome and from 22 to 31 March he presided over the intermediate spring session of the

General Council and had meetings with the provincials who were involved in their residential formation course. The Rector Major had numerous meetings and personal conversations with them, in addition to other audiences granted to visitors and confreres.

From 6 to 14 April, the Rector Major carried out his ordinary duties and, as usual, had contact with provincials and confreres.

On the 15th he had a meeting with Fr Pascual Chávez, Rector Major emeritus.

On the 17th he recorded eleven videos requested by the Provinces celebrating some significant occasions (anniversaries, etc.).

On 20 April, he took part in a meeting of the Union of Superiors General.

In the last days of the month, the Rector Major with his Vicar met with the General Councillors for Formation, Youth Ministry and Missions.

On 4 May, together with his Vicar, he met the Delegate for the Salesian Family, Fr Joan Lluís Playà.

The same day he had two online meetings with the novices at Genzano and Colle Don Bosco.

On the 6th he went to the Gerini Institute in Rome to receive the perpetual profession of eight confreres.

On the 7th he presided over a session of the General Council.

On 18 May he had a private audience with Pope Francis at the Vatican.

On the 19th he took part in a meeting with some Major Superiors involved in the Universities of Rome.

On 20 May he left for Valdocco where from the 21st to the 23rd he presided over the World Council of the Salesian Family.

On the 21st he participated online in the Executive Council of the male and female Superiors General (UISG-USG).

The 24th was entirely dedicated to the Feast of Mary Help of Christians with initiatives transmitted both by streaming and physical presence as per anti-Covid-19 protocols.

On the 26th he returned to Rome where he took part in the General Assembly of the Union of Superiors General until 28 May.

On the 31st he met with Bishop Roberto Bergamaschi, Salesian Bishop of Gambella (Ethiopia).

May was very busy with online communications, meetings with provincials, bishops and civil authorities.

June was entirely dedicated to chairing the meetings of the General Council summer plenary session.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

After the conclusion of the Council's winter session, at the end of January 2021 the Vicar of the Rector Major went to Piedmont where, in the name of the Rector Major, he presided at celebrations for Don Bosco in Valdocco, Colle Don Bosco and Chieri.

These were faith and Salesian Family occasions around our Father Don Bosco to whom he entrusted both joys and concerns, given the still strong pandemic situation.

Remaining in Turin for some days, Fr Stefano visited and met with confreres from the two formation houses at the Crocetta, Turin and the novitiate at Colle Don Bosco. These too were family and fraternal occasions.

Once back in Rome, he remains at headquarters to deal with the ordinary administration, including preparation for the new provincials course, the first to be held "in person", and which took place in March at Sacro Cuore. This formation and accompaniment course for a group of new provincials was supposed to take place in June 2020

but was delayed by almost a year due to Covid-19.

The provincials who took part, all from Europe, expressed their satisfaction with the course, the accompaniment and the closeness of the general councillors present, all the sector councillors around the Rector Major.

During April, the Vicar of the Rector Major continued his accompaniment activity, online and in presence, of different cases and situations and for some provinces. These activities filled both April and May, involving some travel but only within Italy.

In the last part of May, the Vicar of the Rector Major began preparations for the summer session of the General Council and the second formation course for new provincials, to be held in the two central weeks of June during the summer General Council plenary session.

The Councillor for Formation

On 16 January 2021, during the Salesian Spirituality Days held online, the “Albera Year” began with an interview with Bro. Paolo Vaschetto, Salesian Brother and creator of the “Albera Exhibition” at Casa-Museo Don Bosco, Valdoc-

co. On 30 January, the Councillor for Formation accompanied the Rector Major to Valdocco for the official opening of the exhibition.

From 3 to 5 February, the Councillor chaired the Jerusalem *curatorium* meeting, which was also held online. On 9 February, he went to Goa (India) to visit his mother. During this time, he was able to visit the pre-novitiate (INB-INP) in Loutolim (Goa), the novitiate (INB-INP) and the post-novitiate (INB-INP) in Nashik.

On 3 March, the Councillor held an online session with provincials from the East Asia-Oceania region. On 4 March, he returned from Mumbai to Rome. On 10 March, Aldo Giraudo’s new book was published, *Don Paolo Albera. Maestro di vita spirituale* (LAS, Rome). In English (already translated) this is *Fr Paul Albera, Master of Spiritual Life*. Translations into three other languages besides Italian and English are underway, to disseminate the book throughout the Salesian world. On 20 March, after an online meeting with the animators of the School of Accompaniment (English version), the decision was taken to postpone the school to April-May 2022, and to offer online sessions as a gradual preparation. On 25 March, the councillor took part in the Union of Superiors Gen-

eral (USG) commission on the Roman Athenaeums. On 29 March, the Formation sector animated two sessions for the new provincials gathered at Headquarters, Rome. During this month, digital versions of two booklets on Salesian meditation were sent out in five languages to the whole Salesian world. The first contains the Proceedings of the Seminar on Meditation held in Rome (10-12 May 2018).

On 5 April, the Councillor had a meeting with Fr Roger Burggraeve, SDB from BEN Province, an eminent scholar of Emmanuel Levinas. Fr Roger will offer a reflection on Don Bosco's preventive system. On 6 April, after an online meeting of the World Formation Consultative Body, it was decided to cancel the physical meeting in Mumbai (1-5 August 2021) and hold it online between 31 July and 6 August 2021.

From 7 to 24 April, the councillor went to Munich to take part in a German language course in preparation for the Extraordinary Visitation of the GER province in 2022. During these days, he had an online meeting with this province's pre-novices who are in Wurzburg. He also paid a visit to Benediktbeuern and met with the GER Provincial Council.

From 24 to 24 May, the Councillor, together with Fr Silvio Roggia,

visited the St John Bosco province of Croatia-Bosnia (CRO). He met with the provincial council, rectors, priests in their quinquennium years, the practical trainees and visited the pre-novitiate in Podused, where he met the pre-novices and the formation team.

Over these months, videos on Salesian accompaniment have been released every month (Nos. 5-9, January-May). The fourth video on *Animating and governing the community: The ministry of the Salesian Rector* was also disseminated at the beginning of May. In addition, the sector carried on the work of the revision of the Ratio, through the preparation of tools for consultation with Salesians, religious communities and EPCs, plus various "focus groups" on different "open" topics involving the Ratio (formation in mission, joint formation, affectivity, identity and vocation, formation in a digital world).

The Councillor for Youth Ministry

In the first five months of the new year 2021, the monthly meetings of the Sector Team continued regularly (8, 17 and 27 January; 16 March; 21 April; 11 May), as did

the coordination meetings with DBI, Don Bosco-UN and with the representative of the Youth Ministry Sector in ESA. The Councillor chaired the DBI Assembly (18 January) and the “Next Generation Edu” on the occasion of the annual celebration of the feast of Don Bosco.

Coordination, animation and evaluation activities were carried out online with the “Red Social America Salesiana” (23 February and 28 April), the National Youth Ministry Delegate in India (3 March), with the “Red de Centros de Formación Profesional” in the Americas (4 March) and the Secretariat for the Salesian Family (11 March). Fr Miguel Ángel also accompanied the coordination meeting with those responsible for “Don Bosco Africa”, “Don Bosco India”, “Don Bosco Asean” (14 May) and with those responsible for the Museo Casa Don Bosco (6-7 March).

On 9 January the Councillor was asked to offer advice on lay management of Salesian Works (ISS); he also assisted the SMX delegate (1 February), the SUO provincial (11 February) and the new AFC provincial (10 March) in drawing up the OPP and organising the province.

In the area of formation, Fr Miguel Ángel led a session pre-

senting the Province SEPP to the CIL province (25 January), the YM and DIAM coordinators for COM province (19 February) and the rectors of ICP Works (10 January). He led a formation session with the Andean Region-CINAB (5 February), and the EPC Assembly at Borgo Don Bosco in Rome (6 February). He gave a talk at the National Congress of Parishes in Spain (20 February) and at the Diploma in Preventive System at the Salesian University Foundation, COB (15 April). On 25 April, he spoke in an online course on accompaniment promoted by the *Centro Nacional Pastoral Juvenil* (Madrid) and took part in a webinar on catechetical studies on 29 April, promoted by the G. Cravotta Centre for Religious Pedagogy in Messina and the San Tommaso Theological Institute (ITST). He was also asked to give a lecture during the formation days organised by the *Salesian School America* and the University of Chile (12 May). Fr Miguel Ángel also attended a training session with inspectors from the Asia-East Oceania region (2 March).

Along with the Salesian Youth Movement area he organised meetings with SYM Africa (9 January), SYM EAO (16 January and 13 February), SYM America (6

February), SYM South Asia 20 February and 20 March) and with the POR coordination team for the preparations for World Youth Day 2023 (3 February). He produced a video message for the youth of SYM Venezuela.

The Councillor was invited to preach the Retreat for young people of IME (28–30 March) and during the Don Bosco Triduum in the Don Bosco Basilica in Rome (22 January). Also significant was his opening speech at the III ENCO-PAS (*Encontro Nacional de Pastoral da Escolas*) and at the *Seminário Nacional da Pastoral Juvenil de Brasil* (8 April). In March, Fr Miguel Ángel devoted himself to the preparation of a series of materials for the Retreats in BOL province.

There have also been numerous requests for interviews over recent months, which have taken place in written form for the SB (Salesian Bulletin) in Portugal (March) and Italy (June); live on Vatican Radio (January and April), Rome Report (10 April) and in the form of a tutorial-style interview with young people from the Salesian school in Santander, Spain (11 March).

With regard to the production of written documents, the drafting of the document on “Youth Ministry

and the Family” was carried out together with Dr Antonella Sinagoga and presented to the General Council (January and June); an updated reflection on “the Salesian parish” is also being prepared and will be presented to the General Council once completed. In April the Councillor produced two prefaces for two publications: one on the *Social Doctrine of the Church and Youth Ministry*, the other for the *National Youth Ministry Centre* (Madrid). He then produced a reflection for the Salesian Family Consultative Body (May).

In the area of formation and education, the Councillor, together with the Sector team at headquarters, offered three webinars on “education for love” (May and June) which were followed by 580 participants, and two webinars (April) on “schools that inspire” for rectors of institutes in Europe.

In January, he had a meeting with the confreres in formation in BHH. He then gave two talks in March and May during the Don BoscoTech Africa meetings. A video message was then sent to the Italian SYM National Council, which was followed by a formation session (6 March) and a formation morning with the ICC SYM Council (29 May). On 11 April, he encouraged prayer for Myanmar in all the SYM

groups of the various Regions of the Congregation.

He coordinated the second regional online meeting for Youth Ministry delegates from the two Regions in Europe from 9 to 12 February; from 15 to 17 February with the Regions in the Americas and with the Africa-Madagascar Region; on 17 and 18 February with the South Asia delegates and on 22 and 23 February with the East Asia-Oceania delegates.

He scheduled a formation session for new provincials in Rome (18 March), a formation session with provincials from the Mediterranean Region (26 April) and a morning formation session with ICP rectors (30 May). A request was also made to all provincials to collect documentation on the “lay management of Salesian Works” (February and March).

Several preparatory meetings were held with Fr Miguel Ángel on the creation and structuring of the Youth Ministry Sector Digital Library for YM delegates and provincials.

On 4 March, he visited Fr João Chagas, head of the Youth Office of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and on 29 March with Fr Fabio Baggio, undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Sec-

tion of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Among the various meetings scheduled, on 19 March there was one with the Councillor for Formation and his team, in view of preparing regional meetings of delegates, and on 22 April with the Salesian Family Secretariat.

The Councillor for Social Communication

From January to March 2021, the Councillor for Social Communication remained at Headquarters, Sacro Cuore, Rome. He took part in General Council meetings until February.

During this same period, he worked on drawing up an institutional plan and communication programming for the six-year period. He accompanied the Sector’s Communications team, following the order and programming of its various services: Website, ANS, ANSPhoto, Salesian Bulletin. He held several meetings through online communication with Social Communication delegates, national, regional and continental.

Together with the Communication Team for France (FRA), he prepared the presentation of their “DBIEM Project” (software for ed-

ucation in schools). During this period he continued personal online dialogue with Communication Delegates.

In March, together with the the FMA Social Communications Councillor, Sr Maria Helena Moreira, and Fr Fabio Pasqualetti, Dean of the Faculty of Social Communication at UPS, he began preparations for the Communications meeting of confreres and sisters in initial formation, those belonging to SDB and FMA formation houses in Italy.

He also took part in the *Jornada de Comunicación* (Communications Day) organised by the two Provinces of Spain, preached the monthly recollection to confreres of the St Anthony Province, Portugal, and, again in Portugal presented the Strenna 2021 to the Salesian Family.

Online he also held meetings with Communication Coordinators for the South Cone America and Interamerica regions as well as for Coordinators in the other regions; Africa-Madagascar; South Asia together with East Asia-Oceania; Central and North Europe.

From 3 April to 29 May he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Portugal.

On 30 May he returned to Rome to take part in the summer plenary session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the Missions

During the winter session, in addition to participating in the regular sessions of the Council, the Councillor for Missions, Fr Alfred Maravilla, coordinated the working groups on our presences in Pakistan and Malaysia.

On 1 February, he concelebrated with the Rector Major at the Eucharist to bless the missionary crosses in the chapel at the Generalate. The Rector Major then gave the crosses to the 2 missionaries who were in Rome. The other crosses were later sent to the respective Provinces of the new missionaries and will be given to them by the Provincial in the name of the Rector Major, while Mother Yvonne Reungoat gave the missionary crosses, during the Eucharist, to the 11 FMA missionaries who are in Rome.

On 8 February, the Councillor for Missions attended the *Don Bosco Network* online board meeting. From 13-14 February he was in Genoa visiting the missionary project of the ICC Province *Latinos in Don Bosco* for Latin American migrants. On 20 February, he made an online presentation on the urgency of the Initial Proclamation during the Meeting of Provincial

Delegates for Missionary Animation (PDMA) and Delegates for Pastoral Ministry of the COM Province.

Being in Rome, Fr Alfred Maravilla, with the Missions Sector team, visited the VIS headquarters on 11 March. It was an opportunity to learn more about what VIS does especially in favour of the Salesian missions. On 16 March, with the Missions Sector team, he also visited the SEDOS Centre, a forum for institutes of consecrated life to deepen their understanding of global mission. The same centre organised an online seminar on 19 March on “Islam and Mission”, in which the Councillor and other members of his team and other Salesian missionaries in other parts of the world participated.

During the meeting of the new Provincials, on 23 March, Fr Alfred Maravilla and the Missions Sector team presented the work the Sector does to promote the missionary spirit and commitment throughout the Congregation. On 25 March, he presided at the Eucharist in the General House of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus for the giving of the missionary cross by the Mother General to the three missionaries departing for Sudan and Uganda.

On 7 April together with a member of the Missions Sector, he met with the director and members of the Salesian Historical Institute (ISS) at UPS in Rome to begin initial discussions about a possible commemorative event on the 150th anniversary of the first missionary expedition in 2025. On 17 April he gave the ‘good night’ at the on-line meeting during the ‘Missiolab’, a path of missionary animation for the youth of the ICC Province. On 30 April, he participated in the meeting of the Board of *Findazione Don Bosco nel Mondo*.

During this semester, in particular the month of May, there were the quarterly online meetings of the PDMA in all regions. These meetings are coordinated by the Regional Coordinator for Missionary Animation (RCMA) in close coordination with the contact person of the Sector for the region. During these meetings, the Councillor for Missions was present either for a brief greeting to the participants or for a brief presentation on a topic requested by the PDMA. Fr Maravilla also had online meetings with various missionaries and Provincials. There were several meetings as well with the Councillor for Social Communications and his team to prepare for the meet-

ing of Provincial Delegates for Social Communications and Missionary animation in the second semester of 2021 as well as to prepare for Salesian Mission Day 2022.

On 27 May, Fr Maravilla participated in the online General Assembly of the *Don Bosco Network*. On 30 May 30, he was in Chieri where he presided at the concluding Eucharist of the Marian month. On 31 May he was back at the Generalate to participate in the summer session of the General Council.

The Economer General

During **January**, the Economer General was present at the various meetings of the General Council held at Headquarters in Rome. In the middle of the month he took part in the Salesian Family Spirituality Days held in Rome and in the meeting of Economers General. On 18 January, Bro. Muller took part in the meeting of the General Assembly of Don Bosco International (DBI) which was held online.

During **February**, the Economer General took part in the 8th Assembly of the Don Bosco Network. From 15 to 19 February, he and his team organised the formation course for provincial economers

who appointed in 2020 and 2021. During the following week, from 22 to 26 February, Bro. Muller took part in several sessions of the online meeting with provincial economers from the South Asia Region. On the last day of the month, he had to attend the funeral of his sister, who died suddenly from COVID, in Luxembourg.

In **March**, after some meetings with the other sector councillors, the Economer General took part in a meeting with DB Tech Africa and participated in the online meeting with the provincial economers in the East Asia-Oceania region from the 16th to the 18th. In the second half of March he took part in the formation meeting with six new provincials at Headquarters. This was the first physical presence formation event since the beginning of the pandemic.

In **April**, the Economer General, together with his team, began analysing various documents in preparation for the Conference to be held in September 2022 entitled: *Change: Our Chance, Our Challenge*.

As a councillor of the *Don Bosco Nel Mondo* Foundation, he had the pleasure of being able to take part in the budget discussion, which was positive for 2020 despite the pandemic.

From 15 to 26 April, Bro. Muller travelled to Uganda and Rwanda to visit various works and projects of the AGL province and had the opportunity to meet several communities of young people living in these difficult areas. On 29 April, in a round table discussion with representatives of the DBN NGO and others, he reported on his visit to AGL and answered questions about various projects, funding and planning in this region.

On 30 April, he was invited to speak at a symposium of the Holy Childhood Work on the negative effects of the current political and health situation on the rights of children and especially young children and the disabled.

In **May**, the Economer General participated in a number of meetings with the other sector councillors and took part in online meetings on the issues such as artificial intelligence, ecology and pedagogy. On 8 May, at the invitation of the Association of General Economers, he spoke about the possible effects of the “Economy of Francis” on the structures and decisions of individual Orders.

On 10 May he took part in the search for ways out of the emergency situation of children and young people who have to support their families through hard physi-

cal work and exploitation by adults and who have no access to education. This discussion took place in the framework of the International Year 2021 against Child Labour at the opening symposium: “Ending Child Labour by 2025, to act, inspire and scale up”.

On 26 May, the *Pro Universitate* board meeting took place at the Salesian University (UPS).

On 27 and 28 May, the Economer General was invited to attend the Global Solution Summit 2021, an initiative that envisages, proposes and evaluates policy responses to major global problems.

From 31 May, the work of the Summer Session of the General Council began.

The Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region

The Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, alongside the work of the Council from December 2020 to January 2021, participated in the organisation of the Salesian Spirituality Days, setting up his office from 15 to 17 January for the coordination team for French-speaking participants (Africa and Europe), together with Fr Jean-Claude Ngoy and Fr Alejandro Guevara.

On 11 February, at the end of a week of consultation between the General Council and the AFC, the Regional Councillor went to Africa to present the letter closing the Extraordinary Visitation in 2019 to the Confreres of Our Lady of the Assumption Province (AFC). Assisted by Fr Guillermo Basaños, who was carrying out the Extraordinary Visitation to the ATE Vice-province, Fr Alphonse travelled to the Democratic Republic of Congo and together they had a series of meetings with Fr Albert Kabuge and members of his Provincial Council, with the Rectors and finally, on the evening of 15 February, with the assembly of confreres convened at the Theologicum in Lubumbashi. On 16 February, Fr Alphonse held a video-conference from the Provincial House with the confreres of the AFC diaspora. The following day he went to Goma, in the East of the DRC, for an assembly with the confreres of the future AFC Delegation. Each assembly was also the occasion for the presentation of the missionary cross to the seven young who in both Lubumbashi and Goma were preparing to go on mission *ad gentes*.

On his return to Rome, the Regional for Africa attended the intermediate session of the General

Council from 1 to 3 March. Once the new AFC Provincial and the seven members of the new Provincial Council had been appointed, Father Alphonse left again for the Democratic Republic of Congo on 17 March to preside over the installation of the new Provincial in Lubumbashi, on the solemnity of St Joseph, on 19 March. The following day, he also presided over the two meetings of the *Curatorium*, at the Theologicum and at Kansebula, in the company of the new members of the *Curatorium* and Father Manolo Jimenez, Superior of the ACC Vice-province who was in the DRC for these two celebrations.

Due to restrictions imposed by the Government of Madagascar, the Councillor had to cancel the visit planned for this Vice-province.

After 15 days of quarantine in Cameroon, he went to Kenya to begin an ordinary visitation in East Africa (AFE). From 9 to 17 April he visited the main works in Nairobi, from Bosco Boys to DBYES, passing through Don Bosco Utume (Theologate). On 14 April, he took the opportunity to meet the AFE Provincial Council and to address the Confreres of the AFE Delegation of Sudan and South Sudan, on the afternoon of

16 April. From 17 April to 5 May he visited the 11 Salesian presences in Tanzania, from Mafinga to Arusha (Kiitech), before visiting other works in Kenya such as Makuyu, Embu, Machakos, Korr and finally Marsabit. Father Alphonse promised to return to continue this acquaintance by also visiting the work in Kakuma and, as soon as possible, the two Sudans. These meetings, held in the atmosphere of the Feast of the Ascension in Nairobi (Upper Hill), postponed to Sunday 16 May, also made it possible to visit the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Nairobi, especially in Hurlingham, Mutuini (novitiate) and Dagoretti. During these weeks of 'pilgrimage', the Regional was also able to take part – from a distance – in the meetings of the *Curatorium* in Messina on Friday 16 April, the AFO *Curatorium* while in Marsabit (Kenya) on Tuesday 11 May, and most recently the ATE *Curatorium* from Rome on Friday 28 May. Thanks to a diversion to Yaoundé, Father Alphonse went to meet Father Camiel Svertvagher (AFE), the new Visitor appointed on 27 April by the Rector Major, to continue the Extraordinary Visitation in ATE begun on 17 January by Father Basañes, now called to other duties.

The Councillor for the Latin America - South Cone Region

At the end of the General Council winter session, the Councillor left for Argentina.

On 30 January he presided over the celebration of the perpetual profession of three Salesians in Cordoba; while on 31 January he received the first profession of seven new Salesians from the Province of North Argentina.

From 15–28 February, after a few days visiting relatives, he attended a course in Portuguese Sao Paulo Brazil Province.

From 1 March to 20 May 2021 he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Brazil Recife. During this time he had meetings and conversations with all the Salesians of the Province, and visited the 14 houses and 3 works run by the laity, personally realising how much work the confreres have in that area, their pastoral ministry and mission supported by a variety of works and activities: from colleges, to parishes, vocational formation centres, chaplaincies in rural areas, social works, oratories and youth centres.

He met the Provincial Council and all the Salesian rectors. He also had talks with seven diocesan

bishops and with the Provincial of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

In the communities he met with Salesian Family Groups, some of which were founded in Brazil, such as the *Medianeiras da paz*, the *Canção Nova* group and the Sisters of Charity of Jesus. The latter work together with the Salesians in Fr Cicero Batista's *Horto*, a holy priest who brought the Salesians to Juazeiro do Norte and today accompanies many *romeiros* (pilgrims) who go on pilgrimage to the land of this saint.

On 7 May, he participated in the *Curatorium* for the Postnovitiate in Córdoba, which welcomes young Salesians from various provinces: ARN, ARS, CIL, PAR, URU.

He also visited the post-novices and theology students from Recife Province who study in Lorena and Lapa respectively.

He also participated online in the meetings of the Salesian Network of Brazil (RSB), the provincials of Brazil (CISBRASIL) and provincials from CIS-UR.

From 21 to 28 May he was in the Province of Brazil Manaus, taking part in an ordination to the diaconate in Sao Gabriel de Cachoeira and in some meetings with the Provincial Council, rectors and confreres of this Province.

On 29 May he returned to Rome to take part in the winter session of the General Council.

The Councillor for the East Asia and Oceania Region

From February-May 2021, as the Covid-19 pandemic continued its impact on many countries, Fr Joseph Nguyen Think Phuoc could not make any trips to the respective provinces/vice-Provinces in his Region. His animation was implemented by holding three-day online meetings with the Provincials and Superiors (1-3 March). He presented the Regional's role and tasks and plan in accordance with the General Council Directory and asked for collaboration from the Provincials. The presence of and addresses by General Councillors for Youth Ministry, Formation and Economy during these online meetings, highlighted some of their guidelines in the six-year plan of the General Council. The meaningful talks each day given by the Rector Major and the Vicar were welcomed by all the participants, as these two Superiors shared their understanding and concerns regarding the Pandemic situation in the Congregation at large and encouraged the

Provincials to be courageous in their services.

Another online meeting was held to appoint the Regional Formation Coordinator on 15 May 2021 with successful result. The EAO Regional also took part in as many as possible of the online meetings organised by different Sectors to come to a better understanding of the situation of each of the provinces/vice-provinces. In his mediating role, he facilitated some issues of administration with the General Council as requested by each case.

He was involved with preparations for, and execution of the online Asia-Oceania Past Pupils Congress held on 25-26 of June.

Through all these virtual encounters, the Regional is apprised of great resources for deepening and developing the Salesian charism and services in the Region, in particular, the care of vocations to Salesian life and works.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

After the conclusion of the General Council's winter session, the Regional for South Asia, Fr Biju Michael, travelled to India on 6 February 2021. On 8 February

2021, the Regional presided over the installation ceremony of the new Provincial of New Delhi (INN), Fr Davis Maniparamben. On 9 February the Regional addressed the Rectors and Leaders of communities of the INN province together with the new Provincial. After a short visit to the Salesian Provincials of South Asia (SPCSA) offices, on 10 February, the Regional travelled to Bangalore. On 11 February, Fr. Jose Koyickal, the new Provincial of the Bangalore Province (INK) was installed by the Regional. After a number of short meetings at Don Bosco Skill Mission, Don Bosco Renewal Centre, the Regional joined the Economers of Provinces joined for their annual meeting at Delhi from 22-23 February.

From 25-26 the Regional joined all the Provincials of the South Asia Region at Bangalore for the SPCSA Council which was followed by the SPCSA Assembly on 27-28 February. On 1 March, the SPCSA Council met again for a day after the Assembly meetings.

From 4 March the Regional started the Extraordinary Visitation of the Kolkata Province (INC) and visited the communities in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Due to

the trying times of the spike in Covid-19 pandemic, the visits to the houses had to be halted for about two weeks. During that pause, the Regional met the confreres online and after that once again continued his trips to visit the confreres and houses and thus visited all the houses of the Province. The Extraordinary Visit which was scheduled to end on 22 May was extended to 5 June 2021.

During the Extraordinary Visitation, the last two weeks of April (18-30 April) were scheduled for a visit to Sri Lanka for the Consultation for a new Superior of the Vice Province of Sri Lanka (LKC). Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 pandemic, international travels were blocked and so the consultation was done online only. Online meetings were held on 23 and 24 April and on 1 May to launch the consultation and the consultations ended on 15 May.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions on international travel, the Regional could not join the General Council in person for the Summer Session starting on 1 June but joined it online and was set to close the Extraordinary Visitation on 5 June 2021. As soon as the international travel block is released, the Regional hopes to join the General Council in person.

The Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region

After the winter session of the General Council, which took place from 29 November 2020 to 28 January 2021, the Councillor went to Poland for the Extraordinary Visitation (VS) in the Province of Wrocław "St John Bosco" (PLO), which took place from 3 February to 8 May 2021.

On 3 February he arrived at the Provincial House in Wrocław and began the Extraordinary Visitation by meeting with the Provincial Council and the Rectors of the Salesian Communities. During this period, he visited the following communities:

- **February:** Wrocław NSPJ (04-08), Wrocław św. Michał (13-16), Wrocław Chrystus Król (17-20), Twardogóra (21-24), Bukowice (25-26). From 26 February to 6 March, he had to interrupt the Visitation because of the COVID-19 virus, which he contracted and thus had to undergo ten days of quarantine;

- **March:** Wrocław-Provincial Council meeting in online form (01), Lubin NSPJ (9-11), Lubin MBCz (11-12), Lubin św. Jana Bosko (12-13), Chocianów (14-16), Środa Śląska (16-17), KSIP (Con-

ference of Polish Salesian Provinces) meeting in Wrocław-Provincial House, during which four Provincials from the Provinces of PLO, PLE, PLN and PLS participated (18). From 19-31 March he was in Rome at Salesian Headquarters for the intermediate session of the General Council, during which the Formation Course for new provincials was held, five of whom were from the Central and Northern European Region;

- **April:** he spent the Easter period at Salesian Headquarters (01-06), after which he returned to Wrocław Province to continue the Visitation: Poznań Wroniecka (07-08), Poznań Winogrody (09-11), the meeting of the Provincial Council at the Provincial House in Wrocław (12), Tarnowskie Góry and held a formation meeting with the confreres in their quinquennium (13-15), Dąbrowa Górnicza (16-17), Sosnowiec (18-19), and on 21-22 he went to the Interprovincial Theological Studentate - Kraków-WSDTS which is located in the Province of Krakow (PLS). In order to meet with the confreres in initial formation from the Province of Wrocław. Then Częstochowa (22-23), Assembly PLO (24), Kopic - Interprovince Novitiate and Biała, Kamyk, Czarny Las (25-28), Sulów (29-30). From 30 April to

1 May he was in the Interprovince Postnovitiate in Łąd (PLN) to conduct talks with the confreres of the Wrocław Province.

- **May:** From 1-3 May he was in Dębno (PLN), Skrzyszew - visit to a confrere from PLO (04), the meeting of the Provincial Council in Wrocław Province (7), on 8 May he had a meeting with Rectors of Communities, Directors of Schools, Parish Priests, and the Provincial Council and in this way concluded the Extraordinary Visitation in the Province of Wrocław, From May 10-29, he had various commitments and meetings in the Polish Provinces (PLN, PLO, PLS, PLE), and on May 30, he arrived at Salesian Headquarters in Rome for the Summer Session of the General Council, which began on 1 June.

The Councillor for the Interamerica Region

The General Councillor for the Inter-American Region began the new year by taking part in the General Council sessions from 8 to 28 January and speaking at the Salesian Family Spirituality Days from 15 to 17 January.

He took part in several online meetings, the *Curatorium* for the post-novitiate in Orange, SUO-

SUE, an extraordinary meeting with provincials, the new rector of the theologate in Guatemala, the CRESCO commission, the Salesian Bulletin Commission for Mexico. At the same time, he carried out the consultation for the new Provincial of Bolivia and spoke at the extraordinary *Curatorium* for CRESCO.

From 12 February to 25 May he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation of Our Lady of Guadalupe Province, Mexico (MEM). The Visitation began with a meeting with the Provincial and Provincial Council, followed by meetings with the Rectors and confreres and with the Provincial animation teams. He visited the sixteen communities of canonically erected houses, conversing with all the confreres. He also visited the forty works animated by Salesians and lay collaborators.

He then presided over the *Curatorium* for the Novitiate at Coacalco where there are 14 novices belonging to the provinces of ANT, CAM, HAI, MEG and MEM. He presided over the work of the *Curatorium* for the Theologate at Tlaquepaque where 23 confreres from the provinces of ANT, HAI, ECU, VEN, MEG and MEM study, plus a small group of 'Prelature seminarians'. In both formation communities there is a very good

atmosphere and climate which encourages the formation processes of the confreres. This is made possible by the good formation teams.

He had meetings with the bishop of Tehuacán Puebla, Bishop Gonzalo Alonso Calzada Guerrero of San Cristóbal de la Casas, Chiapas, Bishop Rodrigo Aguilar Martínez of the Mixepolitan Prelature of Oaxaca, Bishop Salvador Cleofás Murguía, and the Bishop emeritus of the Prelature, Bishop Hector Guerrero: all satisfied with the presence of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The visit concluded with some meetings during which the General Councillor was able to present his final report, shared with the Provincial and his Council and with the confreres who were able to be part of the Provincial Assembly.

On 29 May 2021 he returned to Rome to take part in the summer session of the General Council which began on 1 June 2021.

The Councillor for the Mediterranean Region

At the end of the General Council meetings, the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region went to Naples to begin the Extraordinary Visitation on behalf of the Rector Major to the Blessed Michael Rua

Province of Southern Italy (IME). The visit began with a meeting with the Provincial and the Provincial Council and he immediately went to Salerno where on 31 January, the Solemnity of Don Bosco, he began visiting the houses of the province. The visitation took place in several stages. The first was from 31 January to 13 March, visiting the houses at Salerno, Caserta, Don Rua in Naples, Vietri, Pacognano, Vomero in Naples, Torre Annunziata, Don Bosco in Naples, Bova Marina, Locri, Soverato and Vibo.

During the visitation, on 6 February he took part online in the provincial feast of the *Maria Auxiliadora* Province (SMX) in Spain and on the morning of 20 February he met online with the provincial council of the Middle East Province (MOR). On that afternoon he took part in the *Curatorium* for Casa Zatti a house for the specific formation of the Brothers, in Barcelona, and on the 21st he had an online meeting with the Provincials of Italy (CISI).

On 13 March he gave an online conference on the “Shared Mission between Salesians and lay people” to Salesian Cooperators in Barcelona Province and from 14 to 16 he visited the post-novitiate formation house in Nave with the Rector Ma-

gor and Fr Francisco Santos from the Formation Sector. On 20 March he went to Utrera, the first Salesian house in Spain, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the foundation of the first Association of Mary Help of Christians, giving thanks to God in the Eucharist. He then joined the work of the Intermediate Council and moved to the Crocetta in Turin on the 24th and 25th for a visit to get to know and animate the theological college. After the Intermediate Council meetings which ended on 31 March, he visited the house in Cerignola, celebrated the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday in Potenza, resuming his visit to the houses in Bari, Taranto, Corigliano, Cisternino and Andria until 15 April.

From 16 to 23 April, he presided over a meeting of all the *curatoriums* for the formation houses in Italy and from 25 to 29 April, in Florence, he took part in the meetings of the Iberian Conference, the Mediterranean Region and CISI. After the Provincial Feast day in IME the Extraordinary Visitation resumed its final stage with visits to the houses at Lecce, Corigliano D’Otranto, Brindisi and Potenza. In the last stage from 18 to 29 May he visited Foggia, Santeramo and the houses in Albania – Shkodër, Tirana and Lushnje – and Kosovo –

Pristina and Gjilan - ending the meeting on the 30th with the Provincial and Provincial Council. On 31 May, with a meeting with the Rectors and a farewell lunch, the

visit concluded with thanksgiving for the intense and lively experience of Salesianity experienced during this Extraordinary Visitation to the Southern Province (IME).

5. DOCUMENTS AND NEWS

5.1 New Provincials

Below (in alphabetical order) are some details of the Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council in June 2021.

1. JUSTINIANO FLORES LÍDER, Provincial of the Province of Bolivia (BOL)

On 10 June 2021, the eve of the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Rector Major with the consent of the General Council appointed Fr Justiniano Flores Líder as the new Provincial of the Province of Our Lady of Copacabana in Bolivia (BOL) for the six-year period from 2021-2027.

Fr Justiniano Flores Líder was born in Buen Retiro, Ichilo, Santa Cruz (Bolivia) on 15 April 1982. He made his first profession in 2004 in Cochabamba and his perpetual profession in Rome, on 29 October 2010. He was ordained a priest on 25 August 2012 in Santa Cruz (Bolivia).

Since 2013 he has held numerous posts in the Cochabamba province. From 2013 to 2016 he was a councillor in the former postnovitiate of Fatima. In December 2016 he was Rector of *Colegio Don Bosco*, Quin-

tanilla – a post he held until February 2019, when he began his new assignment as Rector of the community of Montero - Muyurina in Santa Cruz.

On 4 December 2020, again in Bolivia Province, he was appointed Provincial Councillor and, on 1 February 2021, Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family. He speaks Spanish and Italian.

He succeeds Fr Juan Pablo Zabala Tórrez who died prematurely on 1 March 2021 after being infected by Covid-19.

2. MIRANDA ANGELO SYLVESTER Superior of the Sri Lanka (LKC) Vice-province

On 11 June 2021, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, with the consent of the General Council, appointed Fr Miranda Angelo Sylvester as the new Superior of the Salesian Vice-province of St. Joseph, Sri Lanka (LKC), for the six-year period 2021-2027. He is the Vice-province's fourth Superior.

Fr Miranda Angelo Sylvester was born on 27 December 1979 in Negombo (Sri Lanka). He completed high school at St Mary's Institute in Negombo and upper secondary school at Don Bosco Seminary in Dankotuwa. Recalling his first ex-

perience of Salesian life, Fr Miranda Angelo Sylvester said: "I am happy to say that I attended the oratory in the Salesian House in Negombo, the Mother House of the Salesians in Sri Lanka. I spent much of my childhood in the Salesian oratory, and it was there that the Salesians shaped my religious and Salesian vocation".

In 1996 he entered the "Don Bosco" Aspirantate in Dankotuwa and completed his pre-novitiate there. He attended the Salesian novitiate in Kotadeniyawa in 1998-1999 did his practical training in the house at Sevana-Usweta-keiyawa, at the Dankotuwa and Kandy works. He made his perpetual profession on 1 May 2006 at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Parañaque, Philippines, and was ordained a priest on 4 September 2008 in Dungalpitiya, Sri Lanka.

After ordination he worked as economer (bursar) at the Negombo Technical Centre and at the Don Bosco Boys' Home in Murunkan. He was assistant parish priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Palliyawatta, in 2010-2011. He was Dean in the Ahungalla work, at the Ahungalla-Pallawarayankattu Technical Centre, and at the English Academy in Killinochchi. In 2012-2014, and in

2018-2019, he served as Socius at the novitiate in Kotadeniyawa. Prior to his studies in Italy, he was Rector of the Sevana-Usweta-keiyawa work in 2014-2015.

Lately he has worked as Vicar to the Superior since 2019, and as Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry from 2020.

In addition, he holds a Master's degree in Salesian Spirituality from the Pontifical Salesian University (UPS) in Rome (2016-2018) and has undergone formation for Rectors and Formators at the Don Bosco Renewal Centre in Bangalore, India, and a Course for Formators at the UPS. He speaks both Sinhala and Tamil, the two main languages of Sri Lanka, as well as English and Italian.

Fr Miranda Angelo Sylvester takes over as the new leader of the Vice-province from Fr Joseph Almeida, who has ably served the Vice-province for the past six years.

5.2 New Salesian Bishops

Here is the data relating to the appointment of a Salesian Bishop appointed by the Holy Father in the second half of 2020.

GUILLÉN SOTO Walter; Bishop of Gracias (Honduras)

The Holy See Press Office announced on Saturday 14 November that His Holiness Pope Francis had appointed Salesian priest Fr Walter Guillen Soto as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Fr Guillen Soto, at the time the Rector of the National St John Bosco Youth Shrine in Tegucigalpa, was assigned the titular episcopal see of Nasbinca.

On 27 April 2021, it was announced that the Holy Father Francis had erected the new diocese of Gracias, in Honduras, and appointed as its first bishop Salesian Bishop Walter Guillén Soto, who had been appointed titular Bishop of Nasbinca and Auxiliary Bishop of Tegucigalpa in November.

The new diocese was established with territory separated from the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Copán and is a suffragan of the Metropolitan Church of Tegucigalpa. It covers an area of 7,357 km² and has a

population of 574,693 inhabitants, animated through 21 parishes and 28 diocesan priests – there being no religious priests; at the same time, however, there are 17 seminarians and 22 women religious.

Walter Guillen Soto was born on 6 December 1961 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. He holds a Licentiate in Theology from the *Universidad Francisco Marroquín* in Guatemala; a Licentiate in Pedagogy and Educational Sciences from the *Universidad Don Bosco* in San Salvador, El Salvador; and a Doctorate in Education and Pedagogical Sciences from the *Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*, Spain.

He made his religious profession as a Salesian of Don Bosco on 13 June 1980 and was ordained to the priesthood on 5 November 1988.

In his religious life he has held the following positions: Academic Director of the San Miguel Institute in Tegucigalpa; Rector of the Archdiocesan Theological Institute in Tegucigalpa; Rector of the Ricaldone Institute in San Salvador; Rector of Don Bosco College in San José, Costa Rica; Rector of the *Instituto Técnico Don Bosco* in Panama City, Panama; Rector of the *Instituto Tecnológico Don Bosco AC* in Saltillo, Mexico; Particular Secretary of the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Card.

Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, also a Salesian.

Since 2017 he had been Rector of the *San Juan Bosco* Shrine in Tegucigalpa and since 2018 General Chaplain of the Catholic University of Honduras. He has also been President of the Catholic Federation of Panama and President of the Inter-American Confederation of Catholic Education (CIEC).

On 11 June 2021, the solemn episcopal ordination was celebrated in the temple of St Mark, the oldest in the city, which has now

become the Cathedral of the new diocese, presided over by the Apostolic Nuncio to Honduras, Archbishop Gábor Pintér.

In the message sent for the occasion, Pope Francis highlighted the characteristics of a bishop who is a Salesian of Don Bosco: “We thought of you, venerable brother, who in your pastoral work as a father of the young and in your heart as a teacher, have shown yourself to be gifted in heart and mind and have seemed to us to be suited as the shepherd this flock”.

5.3 Our deceased confreres (1st list January-June 2021)

“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” (C. 94).

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P ADAMO Rosario	Salerno (Italy)	02.01.2021	84	IME
P ALBERTI Oscar Julián	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	14.06.2021	48	ARS
P ALVARADO VELASCO Pablo	Monterrey, Nuevo León (Mexico)	20.03.2021	77	MEG
P ÁLVAREZ DE JUAN Antonio Daciano	Palencia (Spain)	24.02.2021	91	SSM
P APRILIS Elio	Torino (Italy)	11.03.2021	84	ICP
P ARAGÓN RAMÍREZ Miguel	Córdoba (Spain)	09.04.2021	93	SMX
P ARMIÑANA Pascual Antonio	Barcelona (Spain)	21.05.2021	96	SMX
P ARULKANNU Sahayaraj	Thanjavur, Tiruchy (India)	04.06.2021	61	INT
P AUDANO Silvano	Genova (Italy)	14.01.2021	78	ICC
L AVALLE Giovanni	Torino (Italy)	12.04.2021	89	ICP
P ÁVALOS GUILLÉN Francisco Javier	Città del Mexico (Mexico)	03.05.2021	89	MEM
P BALGAC Francisco	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	27.03.2021	80	ARS
L BARZAGHI Carlo	Arese (Italy)	10.03.2021	91	ILE
P BASILE Vittorio	Sumirago (Italy)	26.06.2021	78	ILE
P BELKO Rudolf	Zagabria (Croatia)	18.01.2021	67	CRO
P BELTRAMIN Angelo	Irapuato (Mexico)	14.01.2021	95	MEG
P BERTOLINO Marco	Torino (Italy)	01.04.2021	91	ICP
P BOLLA Claudio	Venezia-Mestre (Italy)	25.05.2021	80	INE
L BONASSOLI Giacomo	Torino (Italy)	09.02.2021	80	ICP
P BONZI Marcello	Torino (Italy)	24.06.2021	80	ICP
L BORLENGO Cesare	Torino (Italy)	22.04.2021	86	RMG
L BORST Wijnand	Assel (Netherlands)	23.03.2021	94	BEN
P BRACHE DÍAZ Francisco Milcíades	Jarabacoa (Dominican Rep.)	05.03.2021	82	ANT
P BRYNS Francisco	Porto Alegre (Brazil)	22.02.2021	90	BPA
P CABELLO MARTINEZ Antonio	Barcelona (Spain)	31.01.2021	97	SMX
P CAMPOS RUIZ Ricardo	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	08.02.2021	82	BOL
P CAPOBIANCO Michele	Grottaglie (Italy)	01.03.2021	89	IME
P CARBONELL LLOPIS José	El Campello, Alicante (Spain)	22.04.2021	94	INA
	<i>Was Provincial for 12 years.</i>			
P CARLIN Silvio	Aosta (Italy)	19.02.2021	78	ICP
P CARMONA VELÁZQUEZ José A.	Irapuato (Mexico)	25.01.2021	81	MEG
P CARNEVALE Giovanni	Macerata (Italy)	11.04.2021	96	ICC
P CASTELLO Cayetano	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	05.06.2021	79	ARS
P COUDENYS Paul	Kortrijk (Belgium)	13.01.2021	87	BEN
P CUCAS Gilberto Theodoro	Manaus (Brazil)	31.01.2021	83	BMA
P DE BONI Amedeo	Torino (Italy)	02.02.2021	93	ICP
P DE JUAN FRANCO Roberto B.	León (Spain)	17.03.2021	87	SSM
P DE NICOLÒ Maurilio	Sesto San Giovanni (Italy)	11.03.2021	79	ILE

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P DELGADILLO CORNEJO Salvador	Monterrey (Mexico)	06.02.2021	68	MEG
L DESTIN EXIMA Laresner	Forte Liberté (Haiti)	27.01.2021	62	HAI
P DEVOTI Pierino	Castello di Godego (Italy)	24.05.2021	86	INE
P DI LENARDA Elio	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	03.02.2021	94	BOL
P DIDONÉ Tarcisio	Montebelluna (Italy)	07.01.2021	88	INE
P DORAN Joseph	New York (U.S.A.)	02.03.2021	92	SUE
P DROBNIČ Franc	Trstenik (Slovenia)	03.01.2021	86	SLO
P DVORSKÝ Jozef	Nitra (Slovakia)	26.05.2021	72	SLK
P EGUIZÁBAL ARRIETA José M.	Logroño (Spain)	29.05.2021	79	SSM
P EKKA John	Kolkata (India)	14.05.2021	51	INC
P ESQUIROZ ASPIROZ Juan Carlos	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	10.02.2021	80	BOL
P EVERAERT Johan	Lubumbashi (Dem. Rep. Congo)	17.01.2021	87	AFC
P FANTI Giovanni Battista	Milano (Italy)	10.01.2021	81	ILE
P FERRERA Calogero	Palermo (Italy)	05.02.2021	84	ISI
L FIORE Francesco	Ancona (Italy)	10.03.2021	85	ICC
P FLORES PEÑA Sixto Alfonso	San Salvador (El Salvador)	03.01.2021	54	CAM
P FORIN Pasquale	Campo Grande (Brazil)	10.01.2021	84	BCG
P FURLAN Adelino	Venezia-Mestre (Italy)	11.05.2021	97	INE
P FURTADO Roberto D. dos Santos	São Paulo (Brazil)	08.06.2021	62	BSP
L GABANIZZA Arturo	Verona (Italy)	13.05.2021	83	INE
P GAINZARAIN ETXANIZ José	Logroño (Spain)	17.02.2021	92	SSM
P GARCÍA SASTRE Esteban	Ourense (Spain)	25.05.2021	81	SSM
L GENTILINI Aldo	Torino (Italy)	04.05.2021	79	ICP
P GENTILINI Leonardo	Córdoba (Argentina)	06.04.2021	94	ARN
P GIACOMELLI Aurelio (Elio)	Lima (Peru)	18.05.2021	72	ILE
L GOMES André	Évora (Portugal)	10.03.2021	73	POR
P GRINSELL John	White Plains, New York (U.S.A.)	12.03.2021	79	SUE
L GUERCIA Corrado	Eboli (Italy)	20.05.2021	86	IME
P GURIA Paulus	Tezpur (India)	02.05.2021	34	ING
P GUTIÉRREZ DÍEZ Faustí	Barcelona (Spain)	18.01.2021	74	SMX
P GUTIÉRREZ Santos Manuel	Logroño (Spain)	11.03.2021	67	SSM
L HENNIG Hans Günther	Essen (Germany)	17.02.2021	77	GER
P HERNANDEZ MARTINEZ Jesus	Jarabacoa (Dominican Rep.)	26.01.2021	91	ANT
P HERRERO SANZ Miguel Angel	Sucre (Bolivia)	03.01.2021	75	BOL
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
P JACKERS Julien	Nairobi (Kenya)	11.03.2021	76	BEN
P JEANNOT Gérald	Milto (Haiti)	18.06.2021	63	HAI
P JURCZYŃSKI Jacek	Oświęcim (Poland)	05.02.2021	57	PLS
P KACHHAP Sanju Mukul	Polsonda More (India)	29.04.2021	42	INC
P KERKETTA Stanislaus	Dibrugarh (India)	28.05.2021	81	IND
P KNEBEL Kurt Franz	Trier (Germany)	21.04.2021	84	GER
P KORZENIOWSKI Henryk	Ełk (Poland)	06.03.2021	76	PLE
P LE FEVERE DE TEN HOVE Benoît	Manicoré (Brazil)	22.01.2021	76	BMA
P LEORÍN Mauro	Castello di Godego (Italy)	06.01.2021	92	INE
P LEUCKX (Gustave) Staf	Boortmeerbeek (Belgium)	24.04.2021	89	BEN
P LIMA Arlindo	Lins (Brazil)	20.02.2021	78	BCG

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P LLANES Ricardo Agustin	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	02.06.2021	55	ARS
L LUCA Salvatore	Gerusalemme (Israel)	30.01.2021	91	MOR
L LUCIAN Fabbio	Hawassa (Ethiopia)	02.06.2021	83	AET
P MACUA JIMÉNEZ Víctor Javier	Barcelona (Spain)	05.01.2021	83	SMX
P MADAUSS Wilhelm	Essen (Germany)	27.04.2021	94	GER
P MAMPRA Anthony	Sulthan Bathery (India)	16.05.2021	94	INK
P MANIYANGATTU THAZHE Joseph A.	Hyderabad (India)	06.06.2021	58	INH
L MANSILLA RAMIREZ Eliseo	Città del Guatemala (Guatemala)	08.06.2021	93	CAM
P MARCHESI Costa Moyzés	Brasilia (Brazil)	16.01.2021	93	BBH
P MARTÍN PULIDO José	San José del Valle (Spain)	21.05.2021	82	SMX
L MARTÍN VILLANOVA Jaime	El Campello, Alicante (Spain)	17.06.2021	90	SMX
E MARTÍNEZ ALVAREZ Segismundo	Corumbá (Brazil)	21.04.2021	78	EP
<i>Was Bishop of Corumbá for 16 years.</i>				
P MASCIMINO Camillo	Riesi (Italy)	09.01.2021	84	ISI
P MASIERO NOSTRAN Bruno	Valencia (Venezuela)	16.04.2021	81	VEN
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
P MATEOS SÁNCHEZ Antonio	Bahía Blanca (Argentina)	04.06.2021	92	ARS
P MATEOS VICENTE Juan Manuel	Sevilla (Spain)	31.01.2021	86	SMX
P McCARTHY Florence	Tralee (Ireland)	20.01.2021	85	IRL
E MELANI Marcello Angiolo	Pucallpa (Peru)	14.04.2021	82	EP
<i>Was Coad. Bishop of Viedma for 2 years; Bishop of Viedma for 7 years; Bishop of Nequen for 9 years and Bishop emeritus for 10 years.</i>				
P MINJ Agapit	Katihar (India)	15.04.2021	60	INC
L MONETTI Orfeo	Venezia-Mestre (Italy)	06.01.2021	86	INE
P MURARO Aldo	Montebelluna (Italy)	06.01.2021	89	INE
P NDIOMO André	Yaoundé (Camerun)	11.03.2021	71	ATE
P NELLIYOTUKONAM Gerard	Chennai (India)	22.03.2021	81	INM
P OKORN Stane	Trstenik (Slovenia)	18.01.2021	98	SLO
P OLESZKIEWICZ Krzysztof	Szczaniec (Poland)	11.03.2021	63	PLN
P PAIZ CRUZ Ventura	Málaga (Spain)	13.02.2021	86	SMX
P PANAKEZHAM Thomas	Bangalore (India)	24.04.2021	91	INK
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years and 18 years councillor for Asian region.</i>				
P PAPA Rosario	Palermo (Italy)	22.01.2021	77	ISI
P PARADA DIAZ Hernando	La Ceja (Bolivia)	16.04.2021	83	BOL
P PAVANETTO Anacleto	Roma (Italy)	06.01.2021	89	UPS
L PÉREZ FERNÁNDEZ Ulpiano	La Coruna (Spain)	28.03.2021	80	SSM
P PIEMONTE Pietro	Venezia-Mestre (Italy)	09.05.2021	91	INE
L PIEROBON Antonio	Lima (Peru)	18.06.2021	87	PER
P PORRINI Adriano	Sumirago (Italy)	19.02.2021	78	ILE
P POTACKERRY Antony	Chennai (India)	02.06.2021	86	INM
P POZZONI Luca	Chiari (Italy)	10.03.2021	47	ILE
P PRINA Mario	Antananarivo (Madagascar)	12.01.2021	88	MDG
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
P PULINTHANATHUMALAYIL Cyriac	Itanagar (India)	03.02.2021	58	IND
P PYTLIK Jan	Piura (Peru)	25.01.2021	70	PER
L RAUSCH Florián Nicolás	Córdoba (Argentina)	11.06.2021	77	ARN

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P RAUSCH Raimundo Antonio	Córdoba (Argentina)	28.05.2021	81	ARN
P REVOLON Virgilio	Torino (Italy)	05.06.2021	96	ICP
L RIZZANTE Ferdinando	Castello di Godego (Italy)	15.01.2021	91	INE
P ROBLES VEGA Antonio	San Juan (Puerto Rico)	21.02.2021	87	ANT
L RODRIGO BONET Alfredo	Logroño (Spain)	23.04.2021	78	SSM
P RONDON FERREIRA de Andrade	Recife (Brazil)	20.05.2021	80	BRE
P ROSSO Stefano	Torino (Italy)	15.04.2021	89	ICP
L ROTA Federico	Castello di Godego (Italy)	15.05.2021	86	INE
L RUIZ RODRÍGUEZ Mariano	Madrid (Spain)	02.03.2021	88	SSM
P SABATTI Luigi	Milano (Italy)	14.01.2020	76	ILE
P SÁNCHEZ RAMOS Rodolfo	Città del Mexico (Mexico)	12.02.2021	85	MEM
L SARCANO José	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	04.02.2021	84	ARS
L SASAKI Francesco Masahiro	Yokohama (Japan)	07.04.2021	83	GIA
P ŠEBO Jozef	Trenčín (Slovakia)	06.06.2021	83	SLK
L SEGURA Angel Octavio	Cartagena (Colombia)	20.01.2021	86	COM
P SEMERARO Cosimo	Cerignola (Italy)	08.03.2021	78	IME
P SIERRA MÉRIDA René Humberto	Cochabamba (Bolivia)	29.01.2021	91	BOL
P ŠILHÁR Štefan	Bratislava (Slovakia)	11.05.2021	88	SLK
E SIRKAR Lucas	Aradhana Mandir (India)	18.04.2021	84	EP
<i>Was Bishop of Krishnagar for 16 years; Coad. Bishop of Calcutta for 2 years; Archbishop of Calcutta for 10 years and Archbishop emeritus for 9 years.</i>				
P SKOPIAK Stanislaw	Szczecin (Poland)	27.02.2021	82	PLN
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
P SOOSAIRATHNAM Antonysamy	Chennai (India)	23.06.2021	62	INM
P SOTO Yul Valente	Pucallpa (Peru)	19.04.2021	55	PER
P STEFANI Alfonso	Cuorgné (Italy)	10.01.2021	95	ICP
P STEIN Robert	San Francisco, California (U.S.A.)	16.02.2021	72	SUO
P STUHLI Vladimir	Tamatave (Madagascar)	29.03.2021	57	MDG
E SYLVAIN Ducange	Mirebalais (Haiti)	08.06.2021	58	EP
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years and Auxiliary Bishop of Port-au-Prince.</i>				
E TAFUNGA Jean-Pierre	Pretoria (South Africa)	31.03.2021	78	EP
<i>Was Provincial for 2 years and Dicesan Bishop for 17 years.</i>				
P THEKKEKARA Mathew	Aluva (India)	01.03.2021	73	INK
P THEOPHILUS James	Salem (India)	05.06.2021	68	INT
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years.</i>				
P TRAN VAN Cuong	Xuan Hiep (Vietnam)	02.02.2021	64	VIE
P ULLUCCI Luigi	Roma (Italy)	17.01.2021	83	ICC
P VADAKETHANNIKAL Sebastian	Jhansi (India)	14.04.2021	74	INN
P VALENTINI Donato	Roma (Italy)	18.01.2021	93	UPS
P VAN DIJCK Alois	Lubumbashi (Dem. Rep. Congo)	06.04.2021	77	AFC
L VENTORINOI Rolando	Venezia-Mestre (Italy)	16.02.2021	94	INE
P VERDECCHIA CULLA Luigi	Caracas (Venezuela)	16.04.2021	78	VEN
P VIDIC Franc	Trstenik (Slovenia)	11.01.2021	80	SLO
P VOCI Pasquale	Salerno (Italy)	22.04.2021	101	IME
P VRECAR Daniel	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	05.03.2021	88	ARS
P VUOTTO José Francisco	La Plata (Argentina)	05.04.2021	70	ARS

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P WINKLER Josef	Cuiabà (Brazil)	05.02.2021	85	BCG
L WINSTANLEY (Sheard) Michael	Prestwich (England)	24.02.2021	81	GBR
P XALXO Emmanuel	Imphal, Manipur (India)	11.06.2021	64	IND
P ZABALA TÓRREZ Juan Pablo <i>Was Provincial for 7 years.</i>	La Paz (Bolivia)	01.03.2021	56	BOL
P ZAMMUTO Giuseppe	Palermo (Italy)	08.02.2021	98	ISI
P ZARAMELLA Angelo	Verona (Italy)	08.01.2021	80	INE
P ZINGALI Vincenzo	Palermo (Italy)	18.02.2021	94	ISI
P ZIÓLKIEWICZ Józef	Nowy Dwór Mazowiecki (Poland)	03.04.2021	81	PLE
P ZULIAN Luigi	Torino (Italy)	06.04.2021	93	ICP