

acts

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**“Do all through love, nothing through constraint”
(Saint Francis de Sales)**

**IN THE FOURTH CENTENARY
of the death of St Francis de Sales:
two giants in continuity with one another
in the *Salesian charism*.**

Let me begin by stating that it is not my intention to be writing a short book on the life of St Francis de Sales. There are already excellent biographies written by true experts. It would be absolutely presumptuous on my part and certainly beyond my ability and intentions. On the other hand, in the light of the splendid figure of St Francis de Sales I intend, through these pages, to throw light on the occasion of the 4th centenary of his death, and on our Salesian Family, the Family of Don Bosco, which has its roots in and draws daily from this Salesian spirituality.

From the outset I speak of *two giants who are in continuity with one another in the Salesian charism*, since both are a great gift in the Church and because Don Bosco, like no other, knew how to translate the spiritual strength of Francis de Sales into the day-by-day education and evangelisation of his poor boys. And, therefore, the entire Salesian Family continues to have this task in the Church and in today's world.

This is why I would like to state from the outset that “symbolically”, both Francis de Sales and John Bosco (Don Bosco) have much in common from the cradle onwards.

Francis de Sales was born beneath the Savoyard sky that crowns the valleys crossed by streams rising from the highest peaks of the Alps.

How could we not think that John Bosco, too, was a “Savo-
yard”? He was not born in a castle but had the same gift as
Francis did: a gentle, faith-filled mother. Françoise de Boisy
was very young when she was pregnant with her first child,
and at Annecy, before the Holy Shroud that spoke to her of the
passion of God’s blessed Son, she was deeply moved and made
a promise: this child would belong to Jesus forever.

One day Mamma Margaret would tell John: “When you
came into the world, I consecrated you to the Blessed Virgin.”

Don Bosco, too, would kneel before the same Shroud in
Turin. Christian mothers generate saints. In a castle, like
Francis, or in a run-down country shack like John.

They say that the first sentence Francis managed to put to-
gether was: “The good God and my mother love me very much.”

The good God watched over Francis and John and gave
them both a big heart. Francis studied in Paris and Padua, in
the most famous universities in the world at the time. John
studied by candlelight in an alcove in the “Caffè Pianta”. But
the Spirit is not hindered by small human difficulties. The two
were destined to somehow cross. And one day Don Bosco told a
group of young men who had grown up with him: “We will call
ourselves Salesians”. From that moment onwards, always led
by the Spirit, the great tree of Don Bosco’s Family, the *Salesian
Family*, began to grow.

St Francis de Sales is an historical figure who, with the
passing of time, has grown in relevance and significance,
thanks to the prolific dissemination of his insights, experiences
and spiritual convictions. Four hundred years later, his propos-
al of Christian life, his method of spiritual accompaniment and
his anthropological vision regarding the relationship between
human beings and God are still fascinating.

The theme chosen for this *Strenna for the Family*, ever
faithful to the legacy and tradition bequeathed to us by Don
Bosco himself, comes from the pen of Francis de Sales who is

today at the centre of our attention in celebrations for the fourth centenary of his death.¹

The Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco contain many of the elements and characteristics of the spirituality of St Francis de Sales. The same goes for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and for many other groups of *Don Bosco's Family*, given that their identity has so many *Salesian* elements to it. Thus it is not difficult to find harmony and direct applications and links between texts written four hundred years ago by Francis de Sales, and what belongs to our Salesian spiritual patrimony as features of our identity.

In particular, as a guide for what I am writing here, I turn to article 38 of the Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco which describe the characteristics of the Preventive System in our mission within the framework of our educative and pastoral service, and which expresses a summary of the aspects I wish to develop, almost as if it were an updated index to reading the thoughts of St Francis de Sales. Thus we read:

Don Bosco has handed on to us his Preventive System as a means for carrying out our educational and pastoral service. "This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness": Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelligence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being.

¹ *Lettre CCXXXIV. A la Baronne de Chantal*, OEA XII, 359. The letter is dated 14 October 1604: "But if you really like the prayers you are used to saying, please don't drop them; and if you happen to leave out some of what I am telling you to do, have no scruples about it, for here is the general rule of our obedience written in capital letters: DO ALL THROUGH LOVE, NOTHING THROUGH CONSTRAINT; LOVE OBEDIENCE MORE THAN YOU FEAR DISOBEDIENCE. I want you to have the spirit of liberty, not the kind that excludes obedience (this is freedom of the flesh), but the liberty that excludes constraint, scruples and anxiety. If you really love obedience and docility, I'd like to think that when some legitimate or charitable cause takes you away from your religious exercises, this would be for you another form of obedience and that your love would make up for whatever you have to omit in your religious practice."

It brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue.

Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith" (C. 38).

What distinguishes our Salesian Family in today's manifold and different societies and cultures is precisely Don Bosco's Preventive System, which is capable of being applied, known and accepted in the most diverse contexts. I find many common elements in the article cited, and in the central lines of the thought and spirituality of St Francis de Sales, which *allow me* to initiate a dialogue between Francis de Sales and Don Bosco on the basis of what we discover here:

1. **Nothing through constraint. Freedom is God's gift:** → and it is because of this that our system of education appeals to other resources "*instead of constraint*".
2. **God's presence in the human heart:** → through which we recognise the "*love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being*".
3. **Life in God:** → which "*brings together educators and youngsters* [tr. note: the Italian Constitutional text here includes the phrase: "*in un'unica esperienza di vita*" which literally translates as "a unique experience of life". This has been omitted in the English text].
4. **A kind and friendly way of dealing with people:** → which leads to living with our youngsters "*in a family experience of trust and dialogue*".
5. **Unconditional and unrestrained love:** → which makes it possible in our family that by "*Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom*".
6. **With the need for a spiritual guide:** → hence "*We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions*".

7. Ultimately doing “**All through love**”: → so that they “*gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith*”.

1. Nothing through constraint. Freedom is God’s gift

This is why our system of education appeals to other resources “*other than constraint*”.

“The charity and kindness of St Francis de Sales will guide me in everything.”² At the seminary in Chieri, Don Bosco had the opportunity to get to know the basic works of St Francis de Sales. One of his resolutions before his priestly ordination shows that he had found in him a model not only for his activities but also for his life. The charity and kindness that St Francis de Sales showed in his relationships with people throughout his life made a compelling impact on Don Bosco that marked him for the rest of his life, beginning with the dream he had when he was nine years old: “Not by blows”³.

“Nothing through constraint” is a beautiful proposal, an invitation to make it a precious gift of our personal life.

It is a guide, when accepting a task, to assume the attitude with which one carries out a mission, a responsibility or a service for others. It is what sustains and gives consistency to this option, to this way of living as Christians, in harmony with *the decision of God himself who created us and made us free*.

We have all had the experience that when things are imposed, without reason, without a “why”, simply by imposition and constraint, they do not last long; or they last only while the

² The young Don Bosco’s fourth resolution during the retreat before his priestly ordination, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 971.

³ G. BOSCO, *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 1176. The translation here and in subsequent references is from the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers New Rochelle, New York, 2010, p. 34.

command lasts. God does not act this way and St Francis de Sales experienced this in his pastoral activity. As a Tridentine bishop and a promoter of the Catholic counter-reformation raised in the struggle against lukewarm faith, he chose *the life of the heart and not that of constraint*. And all he was doing was contemplating and living God's attitude. He wrote thus to his spiritual daughter: "Like a good father holding his son by the hand, he will adapt his steps to yours and will be happy not to walk faster than you."⁴

For the humanist St Francis de Sales, freedom is the individual's most precious element.⁵ The reality of the Incarnation is the most sublime reason for affirming this dignity. It can be said that God not only created us in his image and likeness, but that, in Christ, God himself – these are St Francis de Sales' words – "made himself to our image and likeness"⁶. This greatness of the human being, the human being's value as an individual, is manifested in the freedom that makes the human be-

⁴ Letter to Jeanne de Chantal (OEA XIV, 111). For the quotations from Saint Francis de Sales, we see that many authors cite the same sources, sometimes using different nomenclature. To avoid confusion, we will cite, if possible, the original work with its book and chapter so that it can be found more easily in any version or language. The most accepted reference of his works is the complete edition of 27 volumes based on handwritten items and original editions under the care of the Sisters of the Visitation of the first Monastery at Annecy, *Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales* quoted with the initials OEA ("Oeuvres Edition Annecy", indicating the volume and page from this work). Sometimes I will only cite the secondary source. There is a magnificent digital library with all the works of St. Francis, available in various digital formats, for your reference and reading pleasure: https://www.donboscosanto.eu/francesco_di_sales/index-fr.php

⁵ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales. Un progetto di formazione integrale*, LAS, Roma 2021, 76-77.

⁶ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 76. The complete quote: "God has signified unto us by so many ways and means that his will is that we should all be saved, that none can be ignorant of it. To this purpose he made us to his own image and likeness by creation, and made himself to our image and likeness by his Incarnation, after which he suffered death to ransom and save all mankind." *Treatise on the Love of God*, IV (English ed. All references to this work here are to the edition held by the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/devout_life.html).

ing responsible. For Francis de Sales, freedom is the person's most important part because it is the life of the heart. And it has so much value and dignity that God himself, who gave it to us, does not demand it by force, and when he asks us for it, he wants us to give it to him with sincerity and willingness. God "never forced anyone to serve him and will never do so."⁷

God's intervention, his grace, never takes place without our consent. He acts forcefully, but never to oblige or constrain, instead to attract the heart, not to violate, but *out of love for our freedom*. The freedom God gave the human individual is always respected. God, as Francis de Sales used say, draws us to himself through his kind initiative, at times as a vocation or call, at times as the voice of a friend, as an inspiration or invitation and at times as a "prevention" because he always anticipates. God never imposes himself: he knocks at our door and waits for us to open it.⁸

In the same way Don Bosco, in his relationships with the most disadvantaged and poorest youngsters at Valdocco, learned to follow the way of the heart in accepting them and accompanying them in their education. His implementation of pastoral zeal, of the desire to save souls, of the commitment to the full development of his boys, was carried out without coercion, without imposition, always through the youngster's acceptance of the proposal to enter into this relationship of friendship because in his heart he felt that he was loved, that there was someone who was thinking of his good and who wanted him to be happy.

Human freedom will always be a value to safeguard, even when other values come into play like faith, justice and truth. For us, Don Bosco's Family, this is fundamental. We do not believe it possible to educate without sacred respect for the free-

⁷ Cf. Homily on the conversion of St Augustine (OEA IX, 335). Cited in M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 76.

⁸ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 140.

dom of every individual. Where the freedom of the individual is not respected, God is absent. This is why, according to St Francis de Sales, God attracts people through his love in the way that most conforms to our nature. Here is how he puts it in this wonderful text:

The band of the human will is delight and pleasure. We show nuts to a child, says St Augustine, and he is drawn by his love; he is drawn by the cords, not of the body but of the heart. Mark then, how the Eternal Father draws us: while teaching, he delights us, not imposing on us any necessity... So sweet is God's hand in the handling of our hearts! So dexterous is it in communicating unto us its strength without depriving us of liberty, and in imparting unto us the motion of its power without hindering that of our will! He adjusts his power to his sweetness in such sort, that as in what regards good his might sweetly gives us the power, so his sweetness mightily maintains the freedom of the will. *If thou didst know the gift of God*, said our Saviour to the Samaritan woman, *and who he is that saith to thee, give me to drink; thou perhaps wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water...* Theotimus, inspirations prevent us, and even before they are thought of make themselves felt, but after we have felt them it is ours either to consent to them so as to second and follow their attractions, or else to dissent and repulse them. They make themselves felt by us without us, but they do not make us consent without us⁹.

As Francis de Sales writes, God attracts like the perfumes of which the Song of Songs speaks. **The attempt to combine human freedom and God's attraction occurs gently.** The strength of God's attraction, powerful but not violent, lies in

⁹ *Treatise on the Love of God*, XII: That divine inspirations leave us in full liberty to follow them or repulse them. (English ed. All references to this work here are to the edition held by the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/desales/love.html>).

the sweetness of his attraction, and, moreover, God's love has nothing to envy with regard to human love for creatures in the spiritual experience lived and shared by Francis de Sales. No love ever turns our hearts away from God except what is contrary to him. Far from excluding love for others, the Salesian mystical experience, this love of God we are speaking of, demands it.¹⁰

And so we understand that God respects human freedom and at the same time wants our good and offers us so many signs of his love. Undoubtedly, perhaps the first of these would be his unconditional respect for our freedom. Love vanishes if it seeks to impose or demand, and herein lies the intensity with which Francis de Sales presents the positive image of a loving God who offers his friendship, who gives of his goods, and who leaves us room in freedom to reciprocate it through communication with him.

This is also enlightening for us regarding the care and respect for each individual's religious freedom. Having, as Francis de Sales did, a friendly presence among non-Catholics, a presence that we understand as a form of evangelisation through witness, having a presence that at times must be calm, silent, respectful, will be perfectly valid since it is based not only on the principle of non-violence but, more importantly, on a profound respect for people's freedom.

We identify very much with this mode of presence that St Francis de Sales was already practising in conflict zones due to the religious wars of his time, offering a prophetic testimony of patience and perseverance with a style focused on Christ's cross and Mary's motherly intercession.

Our presence as a *Salesian Family* in so many parts of the world demands that we make the choice of this kind of presence.

¹⁰ Cf. F. VINCENT, *Saint François de Sales, directeur d'âmes. L'éducation de la volonté*, 264 (note 1). Quoted in M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 140.

And certainly, exploring the legacy of Francis de Sales and seeking to apply his spirituality to the very real situations of our time will be the best way to grow in “Salesianity”.

2. God’s presence in the human heart:

We recognise “*the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being.*”

Saying “Nothing through constraint” is not just a strategy or method but above all a deep belief of trust and faith in the human being – Christian humanism – that St Francis de Sales had, going very much against the current, and that Don Bosco was able to magnificently develop through his optimism and complete trust in the young, in his boys: the human being, the young person, every individual, each of us, carries the need for God, the desire for God, “a natural inclination for God”, inscribed in our being.¹¹ The natural desire to see God is transformed in our saints into the conviction that God is present and makes himself present to each individual in those moments of their life that only God himself chooses and in the way that only God knows.¹²

These theological principles, so contemporary to us, are expressed concretely in the profoundly Salesian spiritual attitude of collaboration with God's action: serving human beings in a spirit of freedom that had already taken shape in St Francis de

¹¹ Cf. *Treatise on the Love of God*, XVIII: “But seeing we have not power naturally to love God above all things, why have we naturally an inclination to it? Is not nature vain to incite us to a love which she cannot bestow upon us? Why does she give us a thirst for a precious water of which she cannot give us to drink? Ah! Theotimus, how good God has been to us!”

¹² Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22: “The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light [...] All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all men of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For, since Christ died for all men,(32) and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.”

Sales in optimism, positivity, faith in human nature and, consequently, in the value of friendship and the likely search for happiness.

From this positive image of God who offers us his friendship, it is easy to understand this element that throws light on the lived Salesian spirituality proposed by Don Bosco: “Strive to make yourself loved rather than feared.”¹³ Our father Don Bosco, following Francis de Sales, wanted God to be loved rather than feared, and if the “fear of God” should be how one walks in holiness, it will not be out of fear of a terrible punishment, but a fear closely united with trust in God’s goodness.

Far from sowing pessimism, negativity or fear, the presence of God, the desire to meet God, the desire for his friendship and for that to be returned, are the basis of Salesian spirituality. Contrary to those who look on God as a guardian who represses violations of the law, or as a distant and indifferent God, Francis de Sales experienced him as a God concerned for his creatures and their happiness, always respectful of their freedom and committed to guiding them with firmness and gentleness.¹⁴

Francis de Sales shares the Aristotelian idea that there is an aspiration for happiness in every individual, a movement towards that end, a natural desire that is common to all humanity. But at the same time, from his personal experience, he was aware that a first approach to happiness consists of self-acceptance, accepting who we are, because happiness can be confused with the means of achieving it. Some seek it in wealth, others in pleasure, others in human glory. In fact, for Francis de Sales, only the supreme good can fully satisfy the human heart. This supreme good is God to whom the human heart naturally tends. He had learned from his philosophy

¹³ Commentators on St Francis de Sales suggest that a line that expresses the depth of this principle be attributed to St. Francis de Sales: “Those who love to make themselves feared, fear to make themselves loved...”

¹⁴ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 145.

teachers that “practical happiness” consists in possessing wisdom, honesty, goodness and pleasure, but that the “essential happiness” of the human being can be found in God alone. As a disciple of Thomas Aquinas he trusted in the ability of the human intellect and will to intuit or discover God as the ultimate end. St Augustine’s *Confessions* comes to mind, marvellously summing up these ideas and with which Francis de Sales composed some of his homilies: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you” (*Confessions*, I, 1.1).¹⁵

But the tendency that we naturally feel towards God cannot be achieved by ourselves, because it is God’s gift, he always takes the initiative. St Francis de Sales offers us the conviction in his spirituality that although we tend to happiness – identified with the encounter with God, and we cannot achieve this alone – God is committed to giving it to us because this is what he wants. And this promise of fullness, together with the desire in us for God, is called to bear much fruit.

We can understand that Francis de Sales’ theological and anthropological vision allows us to keep the dialogue between faith and reason in its correct balance – and this is also very important for us today. In his time when Francis de Sales was in conversation with his adversaries (whom he called brothers) he maintained that accepting God as the supreme good found support in reason, in human nature itself. Unlike those who relied solely on the Bible, Francis de Sales showed that reason and faith spring from the same source, and being the work of the same Author, they cannot be contrary to each other. Theology does not destroy the use of reason but presumes it; it does not cancel it out but completes it.

¹⁵ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 130, note 1: “In the manuscript of the philosophy course for the month of March 1586, he had copied in large type this Latin phrase from St. Augustine: “*Fecisti nos – inquit- Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec revertatur ad Te*” (OEA XXII, 7). It is also found in a homily from 1594 (OEA VII, 189).

This is the context in which Francis de Sales developed his reflection and his spirituality. It is up to us today to give continuity to this spiritual current that has brought so much light into the lives of so many people in their search for happiness and, ultimately, in their search for God himself.

Francis de Sales and Don Bosco, each in his own time, lived with this strong conviction and bequeathed it to us. Francis wrote: “There is no soil so thankless that the farmer’s dedication cannot make it productive.”¹⁶ And so he proposes another fundamental element of Salesian spirituality and pedagogy: patience, which is nothing other than the imitation of the patience that God has with us. This was also a constant in Don Bosco’s life.

Today, as a family sharing in this spirituality, it is up to us to continue to trust in and consolidate the resources of our intelligence, heart and desire for God in confronting any kind of difficulty. Certainly this work requires a specific and well-defined profile of the Salesian educator who has and strongly guards within him or herself the conviction that the good is always nestled in the heart of every person, of every young person, however hidden it may be – as Don Bosco also believed – and that every human heart is capable of encountering God. It is up to us to help every young person and every other individual on this path.

3. Life in God:

that “brings together educators and youngsters” in a unique experience of life.

Francis de Sales was able to present spiritual life as *something available to everyone*. The term par excellence that he uses to refer to this Christian life in God is “*devotion*”, as an expression of love for God which is not exclusive.

Francis de Sales found no opposition in wanting to be com-

¹⁶ Cf. OEA XV, 28, quoted in M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 29.

pletely of God while fully living his being in the world. Probably this is his most original and “revolutionary” proposal.

If devotion is love of God before anything else, it is also love of neighbour, and this devotion is to be exercised by everyone in any human situation. It is not necessary to withdraw from the world, going into the desert or entering a convent, to lead a genuine Christian life.

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, addressing himself to anyone, using the poetic name ‘Philothea’, who wants to love God, he charts a way of living a Christian life amid the world, showing that *it is necessary to use one’s wings* to achieve the heights of prayer, while at the same time *using one’s feet* to journey together with other human beings in holy and friendly conversation.

But, in fact, all true and living devotion presupposes the love of God; – and indeed it is neither more nor less than a very real love of God, though not always of the same kind; for that Love one while shining on the soul we call grace, which makes us acceptable to His Divine Majesty; – when it strengthens us to do well, it is called Charity; – but when it attains its fullest perfection, in which it not only leads us to do well, but to act carefully, diligently, and promptly, then it is called Devotion [...] In short, devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly; and just as charity leads us to a general practice of all God’s Commandments, so devotion leads us to practise them readily and diligently. And therefore we cannot call him who neglects to observe all God’s Commandments either good or devout, because in order to be good, a man must be filled with love, and to be devout, he must further be very ready and apt to perform the deeds of love.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Introduction to the Devout Life* I, 1.

I cannot resist quoting here some of the most luminous and fruitful lines of our Author which refer to the conviction that each individual comes into this world with a personal plan of God for them; a plan of happiness and full realisation of God's will for each of his creatures.

In his *Introduction to the Devout Life*, speaking of the need for each one to find, in their state of life, the best way to give glory to God, St Francis de Sales, in dialogue with Philothea, says:

A different exercise of devotion is required of each – the noble, the artisan, the servant, the prince, the maiden and the wife; and furthermore such practice must be modified according to the strength, the calling, and the duties of each individual. I ask you, my child, would it be fitting that a Bishop should seek to lead the solitary life of a Carthusian? And if the father of a family were as regardless in making provision for the future as a Capuchin, if the artisan spent the day in church like a Religious, if the Religious involved himself in all manner of business on his neighbour's behalf as a Bishop is called upon to do, would not such a devotion be ridiculous, ill-regulated, and intolerable? Nevertheless such a mistake is often made, and the world, which cannot or will not discriminate between real devotion and the indiscretion of those who fancy themselves devout, grumbles and finds fault with devotion, which is really nowise concerned in these errors.¹⁸

This path leads to a Christian theology of vocation in which it is up to each one to carry out the process of searching for his or her own vocation, in harmony with what was affirmed by the Second Vatican Council: all the faithful, Christians of every condition and state, strengthened by so many and so powerful means of salvation, are called by the Lord, each one in his or her own way, to the perfection of that holiness by which the Father himself is perfect. (Cf. *LG*, 11).

¹⁸ *Introduction to the Devout Life*, I, 3.

Both Francis de Sales and Don Bosco make daily life an expression of the love of God which is received and also returned in exchange. Our saints wanted to bring the relationship with God closer to life and life closer to the relationship with God. This is the proposal of “next-door-neighbour holiness” or “the middle-class of holiness” which Pope Francis speaks to us about with so much affection.

I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God’s presence. We might call them ‘the middle class of holiness.’¹⁹

Like Don Bosco, we too must be experts today in carrying out this important task of accompanying the young in their search for their vocation and holiness, as well as doing this ourselves. Perhaps this is what they are asking of us most urgently, and how they are in need of it! We still hear the recent echo of the appeal made to the Church during the Synod on young people who ask, among other things, to be accompanied in the discernment of their vocation. Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, seeking to respond to the young, is also a challenge for us as a Salesian Family:

There are many priests, men and women religious, lay and professional persons, and indeed qualified young people, who can help the young with their vocational discernment. When we are called upon to help others discern their path in life, what is uppermost is the ability to listen.²⁰

¹⁹ JOSEPH MALÈGUE, *Pierres noires. Les classes moyennes du Salut*, Paris 1958, Quoted in FRANCIS, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 7.

²⁰ CV, 291

And so we touch, almost with our own hands, another fundamental element of our spirituality: presence and listening, precisely to help all those who come to us, those we approach, to establish a relationship of friendship, an encounter of closeness, something that once again acquires the Salesian flavour of putting the young person, the human person, at the centre. Don Bosco's "*Da mihi animas*", which before that was Francis de Sales', is still fully valid today.

St Francis de Sales oriented his pastoral life towards the accomplishment of a mission entrusted to him. It was his participation in God's love that led him to share in the saving mission of Christ the Good Shepherd. Beginning with his personal experience of God's love, he felt that this ardent love, or loving ardour, is translated into joy at the conversion of the sinner and sorrow at the hardness of heart of those who reject this invitation. This is the particular reading of the *da mihi animas* of St Francis de Sales.²¹

We would be implementing this pastoral zeal and charity of St Francis well if, like him, we were to keep our life firmly rooted in Christ. Only this way can apostolic action be fruitful, because it is carried out starting from the need we experience to communicate the love with which we feel ourselves loved. **Yet again a beautiful homage to St Francis de Sales in the fourth centenary of his death would be *the renewal* and, in some cases, *the recovery of the apostolic energy of the *da mihi animas coetera tolle*, giving ourselves to***

²¹ In dealing with zeal for souls in his book on the Spirit of Blessed Francis de Sales, Bishop Jean Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley and a personal friend of Francis de Sales praises the saint's detachment from material goods, his purely pastoral concern, and puts on his lips the prayer addressed to the Lord: "da mihi animas, coetera tolle". For this prolific writer, these words express the ardent pastoral zeal that always guided all his undertakings. Cf. J. P. CAMUS, *El espíritu de San Francisco de Sales II*, Balmes, Barcelona 1947, p. 339. Cited in E. ALBURQUERQUE, *Don Bosco y sus amistades espirituales*, CCS, Madrid 2021, San Francisco de Sales. Afinidad y convergencia espiritual, p. 11-27.

God and the young with the same pastoral charity that he and Don Bosco had.

Don Bosco's Salesian spirituality, compared with other spiritual currents that certain specialists call "abstract", falls along very different lines because it is inspired by a master like Francis de Sales, proposing a spirituality for ordinary life.²² In a happy expression attributed to the Saint, it is said that "we must flourish where God has planted us". This is a fundamental characteristic of Salesian spirituality: it is realistic. Learning to love the circumstances that are ours, accepting life as it is, and loving it as a manifestation of acceptance of God's will, may seem a passive thing, but it is not so when it comes to practising virtue, doing good, carry out one's duty, the things of daily life, in the place where God's providence planted us, and perhaps where we did not always want to be, or perhaps would have liked to be. It is to prepare the heart for the acceptance of *God's will*.

It immediately comes to mind that this was the spirituality proposed by Don Bosco himself to his boys and to the Salesians. For example, Dominic Savio's acts of mortification.

"You've got me in a real bind. Our Blessed Lord says that if I don't do penance I will not get to heaven. I am forbidden to do any penance; what chance then have I of heaven?"

"The penance Jesus wants from you is complete obedience; obey and that's enough."

"Can't I do some other penance?"

"Yes, you can allow yourself the penance of being patient with others and the unpleasant things of life; to accept equally the heat and the cold and the rain; to be cheerful when tired and not feeling so well and whatever God wants to give you."

²² Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 156. St Francis de Sales draws his inspiration from spiritual masters who were preachers, pastors and spiritual directors all in one, such as St Philip Neri, founder of the Oratory in Rome. His main sources of spirituality are works of spirituality that bring Christian perfection closer to the common condition of the Christian in the world.

“But,” said Dominic “these things come to you whether you like it or not.”

“Precisely,” I replied “offer them willingly to God; there is nothing that will please him more, and you will be doing real penance.”

Thus reassured, Dominic was very happy and completely at peace.²³

Our Salesian Family has embraced his way of living the relationship with God through the fulfilment of duty, with the knowledge that this is the way we correspond, participate and cooperate with God in his creative action and with Christ in the building up of the Kingdom.

Don Bosco promoted and lived the characteristics of this simple, neighbourly, daily way of being in relationship with God with his young people and his Salesians. It corresponds to Francis de Sales’ way of proposing the daily practice of virtues, but the virtues that correspond to one’s condition and status, not that of others.

“When God created the world He commanded each tree to bear fruit after its kind: and even so He bids Christians, – the living trees of His Church, – to bring forth fruits of devotion, each one according to his kind and vocation”²⁴

4. A kind and friendly way of dealing with people:

which leads to living with our youngsters “*in a family experience of trust and dialogue*”

St Francis de Sales is known above all for his kindness and gentleness. In one of his letters he writes:

²³ G. BOSCO, *Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico, allievo dell’Oratorio di S. Francis de Sales*, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 1059. English translation here available at Salesian Digital Library, <http://sdl.sdb.org/greenstone3/library/collecction/dbdonbos/browse/CL4#CL4.4,CL4.4.10>

²⁴ *Introduction to the Devout Life* I, 3.

I love especially these three little virtues: Gentleness in the heart, poverty in the spirit and simplicity in life. And also, the rougher exercises: Visiting the sick, serving the poor, comforting the afflicted and the like, but everything without impetuosity, but in true freedom.²⁵

Those who have studied his life and personality agree in saying that his friendly and amiable character was not something spontaneous,²⁶ just as it wasn't in Don Bosco. St Francis de Sales proposed the imitation of Jesus Christ, meek and humble of heart, as a model to be imitated²⁷ and it could be said that meekness was his characteristic virtue. "His meekness, however, differed altogether from that artificial gentility which consists in the mere possession of polished manners and in the display of a purely conventional affability. It differed, too, both from the apathy which cannot be moved by any force and from the timidity which does not dare to become indignant, even when indignation is required of one. This virtue, which grew in the heart of St. Francis as a delightful effect of his love of God and was nourished by the spirit of compassion and tenderness, so tempered with sweetness the natural gravity of his demeanour and softened both his voice and manners that he won the affectionate regard of everyone whom he encountered."²⁸

²⁵ Letter 308. to Baronness de Chantal, 8 September 1605. Consulted in digital edition, p. 83/321. OEA XIII, 92. Quoted in: Cf. EUNAN McDONNELL, *God Desires You*, DeSales Resource Center, Stella Niagara, N.Y., 2008, p. 56.

²⁶ For example: "Many biographers say that he had a choleric temperament, strong, impatient, very much of his race, a true Savoyard. Because of this, anger often boiled in his head, he felt discouraged by insolent language or inconsiderate actions, he was irritated by disorder, his countenance changed colour and he reddened at a contradiction. However, the constant struggle against these temptations, vigilance, ascetic effort, personal mastery and the help of grace, lead him to that exquisite meekness which makes him a living image of Christ. We should not, therefore, speak of a natural gentleness of Francis de Sales, but rather we should see in it the fruit of a victorious struggle." Cf. E. ALBURQUERQUE, *Espíritu y espiritualidad salesiana*, Editorial CCS, Madrid 20217, 105-12.

²⁷ Cf. EUNAN McDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p. 56-67.

²⁸ Cf. PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 26

It was this meekness that also attracted Don Bosco from the beginning of his pastoral work, and that also characterised his educative style in relating to his boys. Reflecting today on kindness and gentleness, from Rome, allows us to intuit some of the feelings that Don Bosco himself had towards his boys and that he passed on, not without pain, in his letter of 10 May 1884 to his Salesians. He reminds us: “May the charity of those who command and the charity of those who must obey cause the spirit of St Francis de Sales to reign among us.”²⁹

Don Bosco teaches us that acceptance, cordiality, courtesy, kindness, patience, affection, trust, gentleness, meekness, are expressions of love that generate confidence and familiarity. It is in this environment that our Salesian spirituality was born, rich in understanding and mercy, in acceptance and the ability to wait patiently for young people to grow.

Like Francis de Sales, Don Bosco wanted to live with the meekness and humility of Jesus’ heart. (*Mt* 11:29). In the dream at nine years of age he received a command from the “Teacher”, amid a crowd of goats, dogs, cats, bears and other animals: “This is the field of your work. Make yourself humble, strong and energetic. And what you will see happening to these animals in a moment is what you must do for my children.”³⁰ What is so moving is that in these early memories recorded in

January 1923. Pope Benedict XV intended to write an encyclical for the third centenary of the death of St Francis de Sales. In 1923 it was his successor who did so, Pius XI, emphasising a holiness that was kind and accessible to all. His meekness of heart shone through, which could be said to be his characteristic virtue.

²⁹ G. BOSCO, *Lettera da Roma alla comunità salesiana dell’Oratorio di Torino-Valdocco*, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 451. The English translation of the *Letter from Rome* here is found in the appendix to the *Constitutions and Regulations*.

³⁰ G. BOSCO, *Memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francis de Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, in ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 1176-1177. The translation here is from the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers New Rochelle, New York, 2010.

the *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, which Don Bosco wrote out of obedience, there is a high priority given to the humble attitude with which to confront difficulties.

The qualities of meekness and humility of heart were, for Francis de Sales, the only help he had in his mission in the Chablais region, where he carried out a wonderful pastoral ministry as a missionary, a model for apostolic style today. In a very different way to other missionaries, who sought to make themselves feared, Francis de Sales attracted more flies with a spoonful of his usual honey than with a barrel full of vinegar!³¹

This spirit of kindness, gentleness and meekness was deeply ingrained in the first Salesians, since it belongs to our most ancient tradition. Everything indicates that we cannot neglect it, nor even less lose it, at the risk of significantly damaging our charismatic identity. The way in which this spirit of goodness and kindness is transmitted and communicated among us can be seen in the lives of the boys who became Salesians, precisely because of their personal experience of the familiar, welcoming, kind and respectful traits offered by living with Don Bosco and the first Salesians at Valdocco. In fact, in the early days there was talk of a “fourth Salesian vow” that included *kindness* (first of all), work and the preventive system.³²

Combining this testimony with the one left to us by the witnesses in the dream in the *Letter from Rome*, especially Valfré

³¹ Cf. J.-P. CAMUS, *L'Esprit du bienheureux François de Sales*, partie I, section 3. Quoted in M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 97. Bishop Jean Pierre Camus, speaking of his personality, highlights the expressions he used before his opponents and adversaries, which reflect well his humble disposition and his meekness. He spoke of brothers, sons of the Church in readiness, brothers in hope in the same vocation to salvation, and he always called the See of Geneva “my poor” or “my dear” Geneva, terms of compassion and love.

³² Cf. A. GIRAUDDO, *op.cit.* p. 3-5, “[...] *abbiamo tre quarti voti. Secondo i vari aspetti: la bontà, il lavoro, il sistema preventivo [...]*” (p. 70). Cf. commentary by A. ALBURQUERQUE, *Espíritu y espiritualidad salesiana*, “El cuarto voto salesiano” and in a note: A. CAVIGLIA, *Conferenze sullo Spirito Salesiano*, Istituto Internazionale Don Bosco, Torino 1953, p. 107.

who appears in the dream and who was at the Oratory before 1870, we read:

It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping [...] In one corner a group of youngsters were gathered around a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a cleric was playing with a group of lads at *chase the donkey* and *trades* [...] You could see that the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors [...] closeness leads to affection and affection brings confidence [...] it is this that opens hearts.³³

We cannot imagine a Salesian presence around the world, a presence of the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, of the *Salesians of Don Bosco* or of the thirty-two groups that make up the *Salesian Family of Don Bosco*, that does not have this characteristic of kindness as its distinguishing element, or at least we should have it, as Pope Francis sought to remind us through his enlightening expression, the “Valdocco option”.³⁴ It is our option for the Salesian style of kindness, affection, familiarity and presence. We have a treasure, a gift received from Don Bosco, which it is now up to us to revive.

In the *Charter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family* we see that affection and Salesian loving-kindness are a characteristic feature of the identity of the Salesian Family.

The loving kindness of Don Bosco is without doubt a characteristic trait of his pedagogical method which is considered still valid today, both in contexts still

³³ G. BOSCO, *Lettera da Roma alla comunità salesiana dell’Oratorio di Torino-Valdocco*, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 444-445. Or in the appendix to the *Constitutions, Letter from Rome*, p. 259.

³⁴ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to members of GC28*, in AGC 433, “*What kind of Salesians for the youth of today?*” *Post-Chapter Reflection of the Society of St Francis de Sales*, Roma 2020.

Christian and in those in which young people belonging to other religions are living.

It cannot, however, be reduced to simply being a pedagogical principle but needs to be recognised as an essential element of our spirituality.

It is, in fact, authentic love because it draws its strength from God; it is love which shows itself in the language of simplicity, cordiality and fidelity; it is love which gives rise to a desire to correspond; it is love which calls forth trust, opening the way to confidence and to profound communication (“education is a matter of the heart”); it is love which spreads out and in this way creates a family atmosphere, where being together is beautiful and enriching.³⁵

Francis de Sales drew people to himself through his gentleness. St Vincent de Paul described him as the man who best reproduced the Son of God living on earth.³⁶ He had learned from Jesus, meek and humble of heart. This heart of Jesus had deep significance for Francis de Sales and for Don Bosco. God’s love, become flesh, found in the human heart of Jesus the most eloquent expression of love. Starting from the freedom with which God creates humanity, through gentleness, goodness and affection as God’s way of treating his sons and daughters, we arrive at the core of Salesian spirituality, which is also the model of our being and living: *love*.

For many of our young people, the most remembered experience of meeting the Salesian Family in the world is very often the family trait, the acceptance and affection with which they feel treated. In short, *the family spirit*.

Where does this capacity for love and amiability come from, this gift of self in Francis de Sales? Undoubtedly from the deep certainty he came to after surviving two powerful crises that

³⁵ *Letter of Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no. 32.

³⁶ Cf. EUNAN McDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p. 57. Cf. Also André Ravier SJ *St Francis de Sales*, ed. Aldo Girauda, p. 12.

made him feel unworthy of God's love. In fact, the experience of crisis and darkness, which we can all experience, was also what other great saints went through, like Teresa of Avila, Teresa of Calcutta, St John of the Cross etc... In Francis de Sales a purified hope was born that led him to trust not in his own merits, but in the mercy and goodness of God. He moved in the direction of "pure love", a love that loves God for Himself. God does not love us because we are good, but because He is good, and we do not love God because we want something good from Him, but because He Himself is the greatest good.

Fulfilment of God's will is not achieved through feelings of "unworthiness", but through hoping in the mercy and goodness of God. *This is Salesian optimism.*

This perspective leads us to strongly reject any idea that portrays God as arbitrary and vengeful, and to accept instead the God revealed by Jesus – a God who is mercy and love – and contemplate how in Francis de Sales his heart expands when he perceives the infinite love of God. So when he is telling us about God's love he is speaking of his own experience. This is his own story. So then, *Francis de Sales responds to God's love with love.* The following deeply sincere statement he makes in prayer is truly moving:

Whatever happens, Lord, you who hold everything in your hand and whose ways are justice and truth: whatever you have ordained for me regarding the eternal decree of predestination and reprobation: you whose judgements are a deep abyss, you who are ever a just judge and merciful father, I will love you, Lord, at least in this life if it is not granted me to love you in eternal life; I will love you at least here, my God, and I will always hope in your mercy, and will always repeat your praise, despite all that Satan's angel continues to inspire me to the contrary. O Lord Jesus, you will always be my hope and my salvation in the land of the living. If, because my conduct requires it, I must be cursed among the cursed who will

not see your most sweet face, at least grant me that I will not be among those who curse your holy name.³⁷

Francis de Sales' crisis revealed the deepest part of his being: *a heart deeply in love with God*. He understood that the submission of one's will, in imitation of Christ in the Garden of Olives, is the apex of pure love. Such an answer can only be given out of pure love, and it springs from the most sublime centre of the spirit. It is a heroic love based on perseverance and sacrifice for the beloved. Jesus, in the agony in the garden, is our model in this regard: "Yet, not what I want, but what you want" (*Mk* 14:36)³⁸.

The conviction that God's love is not based on feeling good, but on doing the will of God the Father, is the core of Francis de Sales's spirituality and must be the model for the whole Family of Don Bosco. Francis expressed this splendidly by alluding to the need to move on from the consolations of God to the God of consolations, from enthusiasm to true love, remaining faithful amid trials; passing from falling in love to true love for others. A pure, disinterested love that seeks nothing for itself, is detached from self. God, who wishes all to be saved, shows us that perfect love drives away all fear. Do all through love, nothing out of fear, because it is the mercy of God and not our merits that urges us to love.

Starting from this Salesian spirituality, it will be significant for us to discover the unconditional love of God as the centre of all the dynamics of charity and pastoral zeal toward others that Francis de Sales first, and Don Bosco later, developed so magnificently.

³⁷ OEA XXII, 19-20.

³⁸ Cf. EUNAN McDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p.18.

5. Unconditional and unrestrained love:

“Imitating God’s patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom.”

Holiness for everyone is an essential element of Francis de Sales’ spiritual proposal, based on love of God, and for each and every person. It is in devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that this love has a solid model to imitate and follow. Together with meekness and humility, submitting one’s will, the imitation of Christ in the Garden of Olives, it is the apex of pure love. To love is an act of the will, an act of abandonment in which one chooses God’s will.

Francis de Sales mentions the heart more than three hundred times in the *Treatise on the Love of God*. Being a Christian humanist, he continually refers to the person created in the image and likeness of God; and in the human person he finds the “perfection of the universe”:

Man is the perfection of the universe; the spirit is the perfection of man; love, that of the spirit; and charity, that of love. Wherefore the love of God is the end, the perfection and the excellence of the universe. In this, Theotimus, consists the greatness and the primacy of the commandment of divine love, which the Saviour calls the first and greatest commandment.³⁹

The heart of the human being (woman and man), a prodigal heart, when it turns away from the good, will always keep that will which continues to draw it to the good, because this is the way God has created us, and we cannot reach God by our own strength alone, depending only on our human nature, if he does not help us with his providence, his grace and his love. The natural inclination towards the good, the beautiful and the true may be enough to set us off, to set us on our way, and it is there that God’s action in us, his

³⁹ *Treatise on the Love of God*, X, 1

grace, which is not denied to anyone who seeks it, assists and guides us.

If St Augustine said that “our heart is restless until it rests in Thee”⁴⁰, by following the thinking of Francis de Sales we could say with von Balthasar “Your heart, O God, is restless, until we rest in You.”⁴¹

In the Salesian tradition we find numerous examples of the preferential devotion to the Heart of Jesus, both in Francis de Sales and in Jeanne de Chantal, and especially in one of her daughters of the Visitation, St Margaret Mary Alacoque; and right up to the time of Don Bosco with the particular impulse given to this devotion by Pope Pius IX,⁴² who beatified Margaret Mary Alacoque and in 1877 declared St Francis de Sales a Doctor of the Church. Don Bosco’s era was marked by devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and since the building of the Basilica accomplished by our father at the request of Pope Pius IX, *the Salesian Family has been bound to the Love of Jesus expressed in the heart*. Perhaps this is another point of likeness and contact between St Francis de Sales and Don Bosco: *fidelity to the Church and to the mission of proclaiming the Gospel, placing Christ at the centre of pastoral activity in order to reach everyone*. It is not inconsequential to describe the

⁴⁰ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, I, 1.

⁴¹ Cf. H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Heart of the World*, Ignatius Press, 1979, quoted in EUNAN McDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p. 30.

⁴² Pius IX published various documents on the Office of the Mass of the Sacred Heart, erected numerous confraternities, granted indulgences to multiple devotional practices, and also beatified Margaret Mary Alacoque (August 19, 1864). Some of these important motifs are reflected in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in the *Castro Pretorio* in Rome: The painting over the high altar is a canvas by artist Francesco de Rohden whom Don Bosco commissioned. It represents the third apparition of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St Margaret Alacoque in 1687. The composition was designed by Don Bosco himself: Christ is placed in the centre with a flaming heart in his hand. Surrounding him is a multitude of angels. At the bottom is a kneeler with depictions of St Francis de Sales and St Margaret Alacoque. At the top, a cherub holds a scroll with the quotation from the Book of Proverbs.: “*Praebe, fili mi, cor tuum mihi*” (Prov. 23:26): My child, give me your heart.

minor Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Rome an “International church”, like “Tibidabo” in Barcelona and many other churches dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus throughout the Salesian world and, of course, in the whole Church.

Alive in the Heart of Jesus there is the *incarnate* presence of God’s love and His will for the redemption of the world. This assures us that God’s last word in the world is Him, love.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, in his precious and masterful encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, describes Jesus Christ as the incarnation of God’s love, the manifestation of God’s intervention in human history, which finds its highest expression in Jesus:

When Jesus speaks in his parables of the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, of the woman who looks for the lost coin, of the father who goes to meet and embrace his prodigal son, these are no mere words: they constitute an explanation of his very being and activity. His death on the Cross is the culmination of that turning of God against himself in which he gives himself in order to raise man up and save him. This is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ (cf. 19:37), we can understand the starting-point of this Encyclical Letter: “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). It is there that this truth can be contemplated. It is from there that our definition of love must begin. In this contemplation the Christian discovers the path along which his life and love must move.⁴³

This brief *excursus* on devotion to the Sacred Heart brings us to the centre of our spirituality. There is no goodness, there is no dedication to the needy, there is no kindness or freedom, there is no charity or any of the traits we have presented, if the original source of God’s love is missing. It is love and not sin that explains God’s free decision to be part of humanity and to be one of us. Thus we understand that the Incarnation, the be-

⁴³ BENEDICT XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 12.

coming man, was eternally willed by God. It is not a kind of plan “B” that God invents because of man’s sin. Even if there had been no sin from which to redeem us, God would still have become man. This is the deep conviction of Francis de Sales.

Furthermore, the Incarnation is not just an historical fact, but a continuous, metaphysical and personal one. God is incarnated in our history, through His pure and free initiative.

Hence the apostolate and our dedication to the mission take on their fullness of meaning, as an imitation of the One who gave his life out of love for us; loving in the same way, with the gift of our life, with that humility that Francis de Sales called “descending charity”, entering into relationships with others, *making ourselves small with the little ones, out of love, to lift them up*. This is the “ecstasy”, going out of ourselves to encounter others in an attitude of service like Jesus’ washing of the feet (*Jn 13*): “Jesus called them to him and said... ‘whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many’” (*Mt 20:27-28*).

We can read Don Bosco’s fatherliness in the light of the Word of the Lord and following the good example of Francis de Sales. It was an expression of his unconditional love for poor, abandoned and at risk young people.

In our Salesian spirituality, devotion and the spiritual life are not separate from the apostolate and the exercising of charity. For this reason, next to the church, Don Bosco wanted an educational and formation centre for his boys; a house that, like the one in Valdocco and like all the others around the world, would be a home for the neediest youngsters. Playgrounds where they could meet with their friends. This is how genuine devotion, which leads to the exercise of charity towards one’s neighbour, is made complete and fully realised. Don Bosco wants *love for Christ to lead us to love for the young*, a Salesian characteristic of our life and an ongoing challenge for Don Bosco’s Family today and always.

6. The need for a spiritual guide:

“we then accompany them so that they may develop solid convictions.”

The Salesian Family continues to develop the art of accompaniment, the same art that Francis de Sales and Don Bosco developed, each in his own time.

The ministry, the service of spiritual direction has been and is esteemed in the Church as something that is really important in the Salesian system of education and pedagogy and that we should put into practice even better: *accompaniment*. For this challenge, too, we implement Salesian principles, those inherited from Francis de Sales: goodness, kindness, patience, listening, waiting...

The young people of today, like those of all times, are waiting for a helping hand on their journey. The spiritual direction that Francis de Sales offered to so many people, helping them to journey towards God in the state of life in which they found themselves, was what Don Bosco did with his young people. Accompanying each of them through an educational environment and personal contact. After all, it was Don Bosco who invented the “word in the ear”, his way of saying that he was suggesting a personal journey of holiness and growth to each of them, in their own lives, to the point of becoming what God had “dreamed” for each of them.

Reflecting on this service to young people encourages us to explore the meaning that the accompaniment of individuals has for us. It is a precious way of serving others by generously giving of our time to listen to others. There is nothing more appreciated in the relationship between people than the time generously given to listening to the other: leaving aside other commitments, other tasks, offering full availability to welcome, listen, orient, guide, make suggestions, accompany.

During the fourth centenary of the death of Saint Francis de Sales we cannot forget this simple and humble service to young

people, which clearly expresses the appreciation and importance we place on their lives when we dedicate our time to be with them, listen to them, understand them and help them follow the plan that God proposes to them in their life. For us, followers of the spirituality of St Francis de Sales in Don Bosco, helping young people to discover and follow God's will gives meaning to our educative and evangelising vocation. This is also the reason why we came into being in the Church, the reason why the Holy Spirit gave rise to the Salesian charism in Don Bosco and which his religious family puts into practice today.

Our predilection for poor and abandoned young people is made concrete and expressed in this dimension of the pastoral service of accompaniment. It is certainly not the same cultural environment, nor are they the same kinds of people whom Francis de Sales accompanied. However, there is no difference in the importance given to the search for God's will in the life of each individual, each young person, each beneficiary of our mission. It becomes clear that the individual before us is important when we leave other things aside to pay attention to their life, their story, their situation. This is the concrete way to put into practice Don Bosco's motto: "Da mihi animas, caetera tolle" – as urgent and important for us today as it was for him.

We find Don Bosco's desire to become the "soul friend" of many young people in the vividness of Salesian language. Just as Francis de Sales had experienced the spiritual friendship that ensued from the people he accompanied, Don Bosco, following in the footsteps of Francis de Sales, sought to lead his young people to friendship with God, the centre of all spiritual life: in daily life, in the most ordinary circumstances as well as in special and difficult moments. He wanted to be that kind of friend for young people who could trust him, and as a friend and father bring them closer to God. Don Bosco himself recounts:

On such occasions I found out how quite a few were brought back to that place; it was because they were

abandoned to their own resources. “Who knows?” I thought to myself, “If these youngsters had a friend outside who would take care of them, help them, teach them religion on feast days... who knows but they could be steered away from ruin or at least the number of those who return to prison could be lessened?” I talked this idea over with Fr Cafasso. With his encouragement and inspiration I began to work out in my mind how to, leaving to the Lord’s grace what the outcome would be. Without God’s grace all human effort is in vain.⁴⁴

In the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Francis de Sales places no conditions when suggesting looking for a “friend of the soul” in life’s journey. Unconditional acceptance also consists of this. This is the “Salesian style of accompaniment”.⁴⁵

When Tobias was bidden to go to Rages, he was willing to obey his father, but he objected that he knew not the way; – to which Tobit answered, “Seek thee a man which may go with thee:” and even so, daughter, I say to you, If you would really tread the paths of the devout life, seek some holy man to guide and conduct you. This is the precept of precepts, says the devout Avila, – seek as you will you can never so surely discover God’s Will as through the channel of humble obedience so universally taught and practised by all the Saints of olden time.”⁴⁶

Finding a friend of our soul who will accompany us on our

⁴⁴ G. BOSCO, *Memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francis de Sales dal 1815 al 1855*, in ISS, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, 1234-1235. *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers, New Rochelle, New York, 2010, pp. 101-102.

⁴⁵ The study of accompaniment has regained interest in recent years, and there is no lack of works that present interesting proposals for further study. In our Salesian environment, cf. FABIO ATTARD - MIGUEL ANGEL GARCÍA (EDS), *L’accompagnamento spirituale. Itinerario pedagogico spirituale in chiave salesiana al servizio dei giovani*, Elledici, Torino 2014, and also CRESPO-BUEIS, J. (coord.), *Acompañar a los jóvenes*, CCS, Madrid, 2021.

⁴⁶ *Introduction to the Devout Life*, I, 4

journey would also be a beautiful fruit of this Salesian centenary. Don Bosco took much account of this, and made it concrete with unconditional acceptance, seeing to the setting and presence, friendship, affection, trust, the search for the good of each person, listening to God who put the very person who can accompany us on our path. He himself shows from his own experience the great value of accompaniment in his life, especially at certain decisive moments. He says:

Fr Cafasso, who for six years had been my guide, was especially my spiritual director. If I have been able to do any good, I owe it this worthy priest in whose hands I placed every decision I made, all my study and every activity of my life.⁴⁷

Francis de Sales had written about this in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*:

In truth, your spiritual guide should always be as a heaven-sent angel to you; – by which I mean that when you have found him, you are not to look upon him, or trust in him or his wisdom as an ordinary man; but you must look to God, Who will help you and speak to you through this man, putting into his heart and mouth that which is needful to you; so that you ought to hearken as though he were an angel come down from Heaven to lead you thither. Deal with him in all sincerity and faithfulness, and with open heart; manifesting alike your good and your evil, without pretence or dissimulation. Thus your good will be examined and confirmed, and your evil corrected and remedied; – you will be soothed and strengthened in trouble, moderated and regulated in prosperity. Give your guide a hearty confidence mingled with sacred

⁴⁷ Cf. ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, document no. 309: “*memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francis de Sales dal 1815 al 1855*”, p. 1234. *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers, New Rochelle, New York, 2010, p. 101.

reverence, so that reverence in no way shall hinder your confidence, and confidence nowise lessen your reverence: trust him with the respect of a daughter for her father; respect him with the confidence of a son in his mother. In a word, such a friendship should be strong and sweet; altogether holy, sacred, divine and spiritual.⁴⁸

At the end of the time he spent at the *Convitto ecclesiastico* in Turin, Don Bosco wanted God's will to guide his steps in what he had to begin, and he entrusted himself to the judgement of the one who knew him best and could guide him: Fr Cafasso. He shows us, in the following brief dialogue with him, how he had fully assimilated what Francis de Sales had taught about indifference, sincere research and obedience in accompaniment. He shows us a way of living – not a proposal addressed to others, but to be put into practice ourselves first.

One day, Fr Cafasso took me aside and said, “Now that you’ve finished your studies you must get to work. These days the harvest is abundant enough. What is your particular bent?”

“Whatever you would like to point me towards.”

“There are three posts open: curate at Buttigliera d’Asti; tutor in moral theology here at the Convitto and director at the little hospital beside the Refuge. Which would you choose?”

“Whatever you judge best”.

“Don’t you feel any preference for one thing rather than another?”

“My inclination is to work for young people So do with me whatever you want I shall know the Lord’s will in whatever you advise.”

“At the moment, what’s the wish nearest your heart? What’s on your mind?”

“At this moment I see myself in the midst of a multitude of boys appealing to me for help.”

⁴⁸ FRANCIS DE SALES, *op. cit.*, I. 4

“Then go away for a few weeks holiday. When you come back I’ll tell you your destination.”

I came back from the holiday, but for several weeks Fr Cafasso never said a word. And I asked him nothing.

One day he said to me, “Why don’t you ask me about your destination?”

“Because I want to see the will of God in your choice, and I don’t want my desires in it at all.”

“Pack your bag and go with Dr Borrelli. You’ll be director at the Little Hospital of St Philomena, and you’ll also work in the Refuge Meanwhile God will show you what you have to do for the young.”

At first this advice seemed to cut across my inclinations. With a hospital to take care of, preaching, and confessions in an institute for more than four hundred girls, there would be no time for anything else Nevertheless this was the will of heaven, as I was soon assured.⁴⁹

In the spirituality of Francis de Sales we discover, therefore, with regard to accompaniment, that our educational style is a “spiritual mystagogy” that assumes responsibility for the other with an educational friendship that enlightens, introduces to interior life and generates a relationship with God; with a lifestyle and a friendly, jovial, close relationship that is not superficial but capable of accompanying each one on a journey that leads to the Love of God. And the Salesian who does the accompaniment must also have the attitudes proper to those who live the preventive system and pastoral charity.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cf. ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, documento n. 309: “*memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales dal 1815 al 1855*”, p. 1240. *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers, New Rochelle, New York, 2010, p. 108.

⁵⁰ Cf. ALDO GIRAUDDO, «Direzione spirituale in san Giovanni Bosco. Connotazioni peculiari della direzione spirituale offerta da don Bosco ai giovani», in: FABIO ATTARD – MIGUEL ANGEL GARCÍA (EDS), *L’accompagnamento spirituale. Itinerario pedagogico spirituale in chiave salesiana al servizio dei*

7. “All through love”:

so that “*they may gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith.*”

One element that runs through all Salesian spirituality (of Francis de Sales) is the great value given to prayer.

I have referred in these pages to some forms of devotional expression such as to the Sacred Heart, the fundamental attitude of trust, abandonment into the hands of Providence, the awareness of having an “inner sanctuary” in us, the friendship with God that we must cultivate, and to the goodness of God who never refuses his help to those who do all they can and are faithful in small things.

One can perceive in all this the pastoral zeal of Francis de Sales, his patience with everyone, his kindness, optimism, fortitude and also his desire to communicate the good news of the Gospel to all. This is all the result of his profound and simple, daily relationship of true friendship with God. His prayer life is his personal love story with God, of his progress and what he did to avoid his relationship with the Heart of his heart, the centre of his life, growing cold.

For Francis de Sales, prayer as communication with God is the heart of the person who speaks to the Lord’s heart. It is the prayer form of embodied spirituality. God is not only God of the human heart but is the “friend of the human heart”.

Prayer allows us to find this heart of God and conform our hearts to His.

giovani, Elledici, Torino 2014, 160. “Don Bosco is a model: he tends to identify in himself the educator, the confessor and the spiritual director; he insists on affectionate acceptance, kindness, magnanimity and care for individuals, the intensity of affection shown in such a way that the young people have confidence and trust, and collaborate in the formative action with willing and cordial obedience.”

We unite our understanding to God to behold and penetrate the features of his infinite beauty; and upon the seventh, we join our wills to God, to taste and experience the sweetness of his incomprehensible goodness; for upon the top of this ladder, God bending towards us, gives us the kiss of love, and makes us taste the sacred breasts of his sweetness, better than wine.⁵¹

Francis de Sales experiences prayer as a dialogue of hearts in which God takes the initiative.

A friend's present is always grateful. The sweetest commandments become bitter when they are imposed by a tyrannical and cruel heart. Jacob's service seemed a royalty unto him, because it proceeded from love... Many keep the commandments as sick men take medicines, more from fear of dying in a state of damnation, than from love of living according to our Saviour's pleasure. On the contrary, the loving heart loves the commandments; and the harder they are, the more sweet and agreeable it finds them, because it more perfectly pleases the beloved, and gives him more honour.⁵²

It is about loving God's will, putting it into practice, and finding the best support for accomplishing it in prayer. The key to this spirituality is that we turn to prayer to be with the One we know loves us, to make the beating of our heart coincide with that of the Master, like the beloved disciple, to contemplate, since prayer is not about thinking much but loving much; and to rest in Him, as a way to recover and find the strength to continue loving.

→ *Charity as the measure of our prayer*

Charity is the measure of our prayer because our love of God is manifested in our love for our neighbour. This is

⁵¹ FRANCIS DE SALES, *Treatise...*, *op. cit.*, XI, 12

⁵² *Ibid*, VIII, 5.

the “*prayer of life*” that is so important for St Francis de Sales.⁵³ It consists in doing all our activities in love and for love of God, so that our whole life becomes a continuous prayer. Those who do works of charity, visit the sick, assist in the courtyard, give time to others to listen, welcome those in need ... are praying. Commitments and occupations should not hinder union with God, and whoever practises this form of prayer does not run the risk of forgetting God. When two people love each other – Francis de Sales concludes – their thoughts are always for each other.

The simple means he suggests for achieving union with God – a question so dear to our spirituality as sons and daughters of Don Bosco – are ones we recognise in the practices of piety Don Bosco proposed for his boys and his first Salesians. To those who are busy with temporal things, he advises finding moments, even very short ones, of recollection to unite the heart to God with brief aspirations, short prayers and good thoughts, or to just be aware of God in our spirit. While in the midst of conversations or activities, we can always remain in God's presence. In this way, true prayer does not neglect the obligations of daily life.

Anyone who has experienced all this recognises that Francis de Sales lived what he advised and taught others. What he did, he did for God and in God. He considered this “active prayer” better than the others. When he was overwhelmed with tasks and commitments, he devoted almost no time to formal prayer: “his life was a continuous prayer.”⁵⁴

Francis de Sales offers the degrees of prayer in the *Introduction to the Devout Life*, closely following the example of St Teresa of Jesus (vocal, mental, contemplative and silent prayer). For

⁵³ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 160.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. WIRTH, *San Francesco di Sales*, 160. In a note, he refers to this fact in the letter from Chantal's mother to dom Jean de Saint-François, in JEANNE-FRANÇOISE FRÉMYOT DE CHANTAL, *Correspondance*, t. II, 305.

our daily practice, it would be worthwhile to elaborate on the value of meditation for Francis de Sales, who considers that just as a watch is wound up so as not to stop, so prayer and time devoted to the Lord in meditation and examination of conscience, and other practices of piety, keep alive our zeal, our apostolic ardour, and our desire to belong to God. It is good to find moments to retreat into your heart, away from the hustle and bustle, and have a heart-to-heart conversation with God.

There is no clock, however good, but must be continually wound up; and moreover, during the course of each year it will need taking to pieces, to cleanse away the rust which clogs it, to straighten bent works, and renew such as are worn. Even so, any one who really cares for his heart's devotion will wind it up to God night and morning, and examine into its condition, correcting and improving it; and at least once a year he will take the works to pieces and examine them carefully; – I mean his affections and passions, – so as to repair whatever may be amiss. And just as the clockmaker applies a delicate oil to all the wheels and springs of a clock, so that it may work properly and be less liable to rust, so the devout soul, after thus taking the works of his heart to pieces, will lubricate them with the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist. These exercises will repair the waste caused by time, will kindle your heart, revive your good resolutions, and cause the graces of your mind to flourish anew.⁵⁵

When the process is a genuine one, prayer leads to action and vice versa. The added value is that prayer is practised with simplicity and with the abandonment of “ask for nothing, refuse nothing”. And this helps to purify the motivations for following Christ, allows us to be guided by God and readies us to be genuinely free.

⁵⁵ Cf. FRANCIS DE SALES, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, *op.cit.* V, 1.

→ ***Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Let us turn to this Mother and call on her motherly love***

I will only make a brief and concise reference to this, but I want to emphasise that human growth in faith also finds a model in Mary, the mother of Jesus.⁵⁶

St Francis de Sales said that the work of the Visitation, founded together with Jeanne de Chantal, would have as its symbol a heart pierced by two arrows, crowned by a cross, surrounded by a crown of thorns and with the holy names of Jesus and Mary engraved on it.

Mary's role in Francis de Sales' theology is identical with that of the Second Vatican Council. She is placed firmly in the heart of the Church. And her mission is to "attract and lead all people to her Son".⁵⁷ This is why Francis de Sales encourages us to join with Mary, like the disciples, to receive the source of unity, the Holy Spirit.

Honour, revere and respect the Blessed Virgin Mary with a very special love; she is the Mother of our Sovereign Lord, and so we are her children. Let us think of her with all the love and confidence of affectionate children; let us desire her love, and strive with true filial hearts to imitate her graces.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the figure of Mary, model of all virtues, presented as "clothed in Christ", walks the path of humility like her Son, with her total dependence on God, available to him; she receives God's generosity in abundance. When she sings the humility of her servant in her *Magnificat*, it is because she has attracted God's gaze.

Finally, the Salesian trait of devotion to the Virgin, our

⁵⁶ EUNAN MCDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p.127-135.

⁵⁷ Cf. OEA XXVI, 266. Quoted in EUNAN MCDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p.128.

⁵⁸ *Introduction to the Devout Life.*, II,16

mother and guide, corresponds to the trust that Don Bosco placed in Mary as the *Consolata* (Consoled), Mary Immaculate and Help of all of her Son's brothers and sisters. She cooperates in God's plan of salvation and, in the words of Francis de Sales, God made Mary "pass through all states of life, so that all people may find in her whatever they need to live well in their own state of life."⁵⁹ In her we see what God is ready to do with his love when he finds willing hearts like Mary's. By emptying herself, she receives the fullness of God. By remaining available to God, He is able to accomplish great things in her.

Mary's contemplation, with her life and her yes to God, invites us to open ourselves to God's love in the knowledge that the heart of Jesus, on the tree of the cross, contemplates us and loves us. In Mary we see completed the true destiny of our heart, the heart of God.

→ ***Francis de Sales, a Christian humanist who communicates God***

There is another characteristic of Francis de Sales for which he is perhaps best known in the cultural circles of our world: he is the Patron Saint of journalists. At a time when communication is carried out in many ways, with its undeniable advantages and defects, Francis de Sales stands out for a value that gives dignity to the journalistic profession: the search for and dissemination of the truth.

In 1923, when Pope Pius XI declared Francis de Sales patron of journalists,⁶⁰ he pointed to his principal characteristics as a communicator. His gracious manner of holiness showed others, through his writings, the sure and simple way of Christian perfection.

Demonstrating, as Francis de Sales did, that holiness is for

⁵⁹ OEA IX, 342. Quoted in EUNAN MCDONNELL, *God Desires You*, p.134.

⁶⁰ PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 26 January 1923.

everyone and that it is perfectly reconcilable with all the offices and conditions of civil life, also involves knowing how to communicate the contents of faith and religion in simple, understandable and pleasant language. And this is the Salesian virtue and characteristic of communicating the truth, using every possible means so that the proclamation reaches everyone and helps everyone to understand the message that is intended to be transmitted.

This desire to communicate the truth of the Gospel was accompanied by an unparalleled creativity and originality, such as the posters he hung in public places or distributed under doors when he did not have a pulpit to give his catechesis to the people of God who had been entrusted to him as their pastor. In this simple, free and accessible way he made himself present.

In his encyclical for the third centenary of the death of Francis de Sales, Pius XI spells out the fundamental principles which are still current and worthy of consideration as a model of upright, professional and honest behaviour.

It is Our wish that the greatest fruits should be gained from this solemn Centenary [the third centenary of the death of Francis de Sales] by those Catholics who as journalists and writers expound, spread, and defend the doctrines of the Church. It is necessary that they, in their writings, imitate and exhibit at all times that strength joined always to moderation and charity, which was the special characteristic of St. Francis. He, by his example, teaches them in no uncertain manner precisely how they should write. In the first place, and this the most important of all, each writer should endeavour in every way and as far as this may be possible, to obtain a complete comprehension of the teachings of the Church. They should never compromise where the truth is involved, nor, because of fear of possibly offending an opponent, minimise or dissimulate it. They should pay

particular attention to literary style and should try to express their thoughts clearly and in beautiful language so that their readers will the more readily come to love the truth. When it is necessary to enter into controversy, they should be prepared to refute error and to overcome the wiles of the wicked, but always in a way that will demonstrate clearly that they are *animated by the highest principles and moved only by Christian charity.* Since *St. Francis, up to this time, has not been named the Patron of Writers in any solemn and public document of this Apostolic See, We take this happy occasion, after mature deliberation and in full knowledge, by Our Apostolic authority, to hereby publish, confirm and declare by this encyclical, everything to the contrary notwithstanding, St. Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva and Doctor of the Church, to be the Heavenly Patron of all Writers.*⁶¹

We have here a valuable commitment to truth and its proclamation, to the Salesian style of goodness and gentleness, to simple proclamation and to the right intention of getting the proclamation of truth out to everyone, always seeking the good of people.

In addition to what we have just said, proclaiming, announcing the faith entails another important aspect to consider because Francis de Sales was faithful to it. As Bishop of Geneva, he was always concerned with the evangelisation of the people of God and especially with catechesis. We cannot lose this charismatic value as Don Bosco's Family. Communicating the message of the Gospel so that it may be lived is part of our charism. The Salesian Congregation, the Salesian Family, were born from a simple catechism lesson.⁶² The Church has

⁶¹ PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Omnium Perturbationem*, 26 January 1923. Italics and parentheses are mine.

⁶² The meeting with Bartholomew Garelli in the Church of St Francis of Assisi, 8 December 1841. "[...] I stood up and made the sign of the cross to begin; but my pupil made no response because he did not know how to do it.

recently instituted the Ministry of Catechist.⁶³ We are offered a wonderful opportunity to revitalise our evangelising dimension with these perspectives.

Let us not forget that Don Bosco, too, with the means he had at his disposal at the time, published three hundred and eighteen works over the course of forty years, because, like Francis de Sales, he was convinced that a good word or a rich reading could do great good. Whatever the effort, it was nothing to him if it meant gaining someone's good and salvation.

Finally, it was always Francis de Sales' intention to reach out to everyone and proclaim the salvation and liberation that God's Love offers. This became a reality in the particular and amiable way he practised pastoral zeal, going out to visit, meet, seek and encourage people in various ways. The founding of the Order of the Visitation together with Jeanne de Chantal, speaks to us, in the language of the time, of this "Church going forth" proposed by Pope Francis, a Church which goes out to meet anyone who wants to hear the message of Jesus.

The image of Don Bosco visiting the boys during the week in their places of work, the image of Francis de Sales visiting his parishioners and leaving a message of faith and love for God under the doors of their homes, the inspiring image of the Virgin Mary visiting her relative Elizabeth, should encourage and enthuse us, and be pretty much a challenge to us.

In that first catechism I taught him how to make the sign of the cross. C I also taught him to know God the creator and why he created us. [...] This was the beginning of our Oratory. It was to be blessed by the Lord with growth beyond my imagining at that time." Cf. ISTITUTO STORICO SALESIANO, *Fonti salesiane. 1. Don Bosco e la sua opera. Raccolta antologica*, LAS, Roma 2014, documento n. 309: "Memorie dell'Oratorio di S. Francis de Sales dal 1815 al 1855", p. 1237. *Memoirs of the Oratory of St Francis de Sales*, Salesiana Publishers, New Rochelle, New York, 2010, p. 104-105.

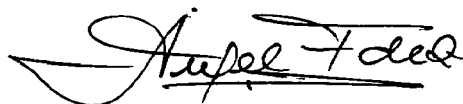
⁶³ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Letter in the form of the "*Motu Proprio*" *Antiquum Ministerium*, 10 May 2021 (Liturgical Memorial of St John of Avila) with which he instituted the ministry of catechist.

Conclusion

We too, as a Salesian Family, need to make the “charism of the visitation” explicit as a desire of the heart to announce, without waiting for others to come to us, going into areas and places inhabited by so many people for whom a kind word, an encounter, a look full of respect can open their horizons towards a better life.

In short, going out to meet young people, wherever they may be and in whatever situation, continues to be our most distinctive feature, confirming Don Bosco’s desire to love what young people love so that they will love what we love, spreading the Salesian spirit, our “Valdocco option”, wherever the desire to be with young people takes us, living a true “Salesian sacrament of presence”, and the commitment to carry out “small charity works”. This is how we were born and this is how we want to follow Don Bosco, who found in Francis de Sales a model and a kindred spirit, a sort of soul mate.

May the anniversary we are celebrating this year help us to continue to grow in our dedication to poor and abandoned youth with the Salesian charism of Don Bosco imbued with the spirit of St Francis de Sales.



Fr Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

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SOMETHING TO READ OVER ONCE MORE AND REFLECT ON, AND FOR OUR HEART TO DWELL ON

Let me end this essay with some thoughts from St Francis de Sales, Don Bosco, Pope Francis, and even from what I have written myself. Perhaps these, among others, might help us to reflect, be something for our hearts to dwell on after reading the Strenna. Among others, I have “collected” the following:

- The charity and kindness of St Francis de Sales will guide me in everything.
- “Nothing through constraint” is a beautiful proposal, an invitation to make it a precious gift of our personal life.
- As a Tridentine bishop and a promoter of the Catholic counter-reformation raised in the struggle against lukewarm faith, he chose *the life of the heart and not that of constraint*. And all he was doing was contemplating and living God’s attitude.
- God’s intervention, his grace, never takes place without our consent. He acts forcefully, but never to oblige or constrain, instead to attract the heart, not to violate, but *out of love for our freedom*.
- God, as Francis de Sales used say, draws us to himself through his kind initiative, at times as a vocation or call, at times as the voice of a friend, as an inspiration or invitation and at times as a “prevention” because he always anticipates. God never imposes himself: he knocks at our door and waits for us to open it.
- We do not believe it possible to educate without sacred respect for the freedom of every individual. Where the freedom of the individual is not respected, God is absent.
- The strength of God’s attraction, powerful but not violent, lies in the sweetness of his attraction.

- Far from excluding love for others, the Salesian mystical experience, this love of God we are speaking of, demands it.
- The human being, the young person, every individual, each of us, carries the need for God, the desire for God, “a natural inclination for God”, inscribed in our being.
- God is present and makes himself present to each individual in those moments of their life that only God himself chooses and in the way that only God knows.
- Both Francis de Sales and Don Bosco make daily life an expression of the love of God which is received and also returned in exchange. Our saints wanted to bring the relationship with God closer to life and life closer to the relationship with God. This is the proposal of “next-door-neighbour holiness” or “the middle-class of holiness” which Pope Francis speaks to us about with so much affection. “I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church militant. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbours, those who, living in our midst, reflect God’s presence. We might call them ‘the middle class of holiness.’”
- God does not love us because we are good, but because He is good.
- Fulfilment of God’s will is not achieved through feelings of “unworthiness”, but through hoping in the mercy and goodness of God. *This is Salesian optimism.*
- *Francis de Sales responds to God’s love with love.*
- I will love you, Lord, at least in this life if it is not granted me to love you in eternal life; I will love you at least here, my God, and I will always hope in your mercy.

- Francis de Sales' crisis revealed the deepest part of his being: *a heart deeply in love with God.*
- The conviction that God's love is not based on feeling good, but on doing the will of God the Father, is the core of Francis de Sales's spirituality and must be the model for the whole Family of Don Bosco.
- Move on from the consolations of God to the God of consolations, from enthusiasm to true love
- Passing from falling in love to true love for others.
- Do all through love, nothing out of fear, because it is the mercy of God and not our merits that urges us to love.
- If St Augustine said that "our heart is restless until it rests in Thee" , by following the thinking of Francis de Sales we could say with von Balthasar "Your heart, O God, is restless, until we rest in You."
- Don Bosco wants *love for Christ to lead us to love for the young*, a Salesian characteristic of our life and an ongoing challenge for Don Bosco's Family today and always.
- His prayer life is his personal love story with God.
- For Francis de Sales, prayer as communication with God is the heart of the person who speaks to the Lord's heart. It is the prayer form of embodied spirituality.
- Prayer allows us to find this heart of God and conform our hearts to His.
- Charity is the measure of our prayer because our love of God is manifested in our love for our neighbour.
- This is the "*prayer of life*": It consists in doing all our activities in love and for love of God, so that our whole life becomes a continuous prayer.
- It is good to find moments to retreat into your heart, away

from the hustle and bustle, and have a heart-to-heart conversation with God.

- In her we see what God is ready to do with his love when he finds willing hearts like Mary's. By emptying herself, she receives the fullness of God. By remaining available to God, He is able to accomplish great things in her.

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES



SOCIETÀ DI SAN FRANCESCO DI SALES

SEDE CENTRALE SALESIANA
Via Marsala 42 - 00185 Roma

General Councillor for the Missions

4 April 2021
Easter Sunday
Prot. 21/0155

The Salesian Missionary Vocation *Reflections, processes and operational guidelines*

The Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, has invited the whole Congregation to respond with missionary courage and generosity to requests for new presences in the poorest contexts, strengthening our involvement among refugees and opening new places for mission.¹ In fact, “we all share responsibility for the evangelising and missionary work of the Salesians of Don Bosco throughout the world”.²

This presentation has the threefold purpose of *motivating* the confreres to respond to the missionary invitation of the current successor of Don Bosco, *improving* the processes of discernment, formation and integration and *harmonising* earlier operational guidelines that are still relevant in our context today.

¹ Cf. A. FERNÁNDEZ, “Closing address to GC28”, in AGC 433, p.150.

² A. FERNÁNDEZ, “Missionary Appeal 2021” (8 December 2020).

Part 1. Rethinking the Missions Today

Today we find ourselves in a different context to that of the missionary projects that spread the Congregation to the Americas (1875), Asia (1906) and Africa (1980). New perspectives and new questions have led to new missiological reflections. A renewed vision on the Salesian Missions is needed.

1. Missionary Vocation and the Salesian charism

THE MISSIONS

The Trinity is the source of the Church's existence and missionary nature. Moreover, the concept of communion lies at the heart of the Church's self-understanding.³ *Mission* and *communion*, then, are essential for an adequate understanding of the mystery of the Church. Therefore, every local church, including ones recently founded, in as much as it is a member of a communion of churches, shares responsibility for helping the other local churches in a variety of needs. It should be noted that Vatican II had already emphasised the fact that missionary activity must also extend to churches that have existed "founded long since" but which "are in a certain state of regression or weakness".⁴

We collaborate with the Church in fulfilling its mission to evangelise (*Mt* 28:19-20).⁵ Proclaiming the Gospel, especially to the young, is our primary missionary task.⁶ Our initiatives for human advancement, motivated by a deep faith, are an Initial Proclamation. We value the 'rays of Truth' in cultures and other religions. In contexts where we cannot even mention

³ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, II Extraordinary Assembly (1985), *Relatio finalis*, II, C), 1.

⁴ *Ad Gentes* no.19.

⁵ Cf. *Ad Gentes* no.2; PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), no.14.

⁶ Cf. A. FERNÁNDEZ, "Rector Major's Guidelines for the Salesian Congregation", in *ACG* 433, p.22.

the name of Jesus, we proclaim him through the testimony of our personal and community life.⁷ Having clear intentions to foster Initial Proclamation can help us overcome the danger of being seen as social services providers or social workers rather than witnesses to the primacy of God and proclaimers of the Gospel.⁸

Certainly, there are still peoples or sociocultural contexts today where Christ is not known. In many countries, especially in urban centres, even in our own suburb, there are those who do not know Jesus, those who, having come to know him, have abandoned him, or those who live their faith as something cultural. So, the missions are to be found wherever there is a need to proclaim the Gospel. Today ‘the missions’ cannot be understood merely in geographical terms, as movement towards ‘mission lands’ like once upon a time, but are also to be understood in sociological, cultural terms and even in terms of our presence in the digital continent. Today, missionaries come from the five continents and are sent to the five continents. This multi-directional movement of missionaries is already happening in many dioceses and congregations. For us Salesians it was ‘Project Europe’ which brought us face to face with this change of missionary paradigm, which still requires many confreres to undertake a journey of conversion of mind and heart in order to appropriate it.

AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE OF THE SALESIAN CHARISM

Fr Eugene Ceria said that “Don Bosco’s missionary idea grew in him. At first it was an inner voice calling him to take the Gospel to unbelieving countries; later it was a flame of zeal, kindled by the desire to extend the activities of his sons to that field as well.”⁹ Instead, Fr Paul Albera summed up Don Bosco’s missionary spirit this way: “The missions were the

⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), no. 277.

⁸ Cf. P. CHÁVEZ “Address at the opening of GC27”, in *GC27* p. 82; no.38.

⁹ E. CERIA, *Annali della Società Salesiana*, I (SDB: Torino, 1888) p. 24.

favourite subject of his discourses, and he knew how to instil in hearts such a keen desire to become missionaries that it seemed the most natural thing in the world ... for Don Bosco the second aim of his Congregation had to be that of the missions and nothing kept him from embracing it in all its breadth”.¹⁰ We are not just talking about a personal interest but a real *charisma foundationis* that our founder passed on to his Salesians and to the entire Salesian Family.¹¹

Therefore, GC19 stated that “the Salesian Congregation ... revives the ideal of Don Bosco, who wished that the work of the missions to be a permanent preoccupation of the Congregation, to the extent of being part of its nature and end”.¹² “The mind and heart of the Founder”, Fr Viganò wrote, “and the uninterrupted tradition in our Family, are an open confirmation of the fact that the missionary dimension is an ‘essential feature’ of our charism”.¹³ The current Rector Major says that “the missionary dimension is part of our identity”.¹⁴ Besides, it is the missions that drive the Congregation forward to free us from “paralysing inertia”, giving rise to “beautiful dreams that come true”.¹⁵

THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY SPIRIT

As Salesians, we are, everywhere, true missionaries of the young and youth is our mission land.¹⁶ We Salesians all live Don Bosco’s missionary spirit as the heart of pastoral charity, which manifests itself in the ‘oratorian heart’, fervour, drive

¹⁰ P. ALBERA, “The Oratories – The Missions – Vocations” (13 May 1913) no.13, in *Lettere Circolari di Don Paolo Albera ai Salesiani* (SDB: Turin, 1922) p. 133.

¹¹ Cf. L. RICCERI, “The Missions, the Way to Renewal”, in ACS 267, p. 13; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco* (SDB: Rome, 2012), no. 16.

¹² CG 19, p. 178.

¹³ E. VIGANÒ, “Pope’s Appeal for the Missions”, in AGC 336, p. 11.

¹⁴ A. FERNÁNDEZ, “Belonging more to God, more to the Confreres, more to the Young”, in ACG 419, p. 22.

¹⁵ A. FERNÁNDEZ, “Guidelines”, p. 47.

¹⁶ Cf. L. RICCERI, “Missionaries of Youth”, in ASC 279, p. 6; GC22, no.13.

and the capacity for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue. It is the passion for evangelisation, especially of young people, and the willingness to be sent wherever there is a need, expressed in the *'ci vado io'* ('I'll go there') that Fr Albert Caviglia considered as being the 'Salesian motto'. In short, the missionary spirit – summed up in the *'Da mihi animas'* – is typical of every Salesian, because its roots are in the Salesian charism itself. It is this missionary spirit that makes us live the Salesian consecrated life “permanently in a state of mission”.¹⁷

The summer missionary experience for the young confreres, for the formators and for the teachers of the study centres, as well as the experience in the international formation communities, fosters openness of mind, intercultural and inter-religious relations and, ultimately, the Salesian missionary spirit.¹⁸ The missionary prayer every eleventh of the month, the yearly *Salesian Mission Day* and other missionary animation initiatives help keep the missionary spirit alive in every community and Province. It is the same missionary spirit that makes every Salesian community available to welcome and accompany the new missionaries arriving in their own Province.

THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY VOCATION

The fact that the entire Church is missionary does not exclude there being missionaries *ad gentes* and *for life* by vocation. Similarly, there are some Salesians who feel called, with *total availability* for being sent out of their own cultural setting or country to any part of the world whatsoever (*ad exteros*) to cooperate *zealously* and *boldly* in the new frontiers of our mission of evangelisation, or where the Church is not yet fully established (*ad gentes*). It is a radical and complete gift

¹⁷ Cf. FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) no. 25; J.E. VECCHI, “Our Missionary Obligation in view of the Year 2000”, in *AGC* 362, p. 6-8; F. CEREDA, “Encouraging International Communities (GC27 75.5)”, in *AGC* 429, p. 44-46.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

of self which, by its very nature, implies total availability without any time limits (*ad vitam*).¹⁹

Through the Sacrament of Baptism, all Christians are part of the people of God and share in the mission of the Church. Our religious profession is a unique and fruitful deepening of our baptismal consecration in view of our particular mission in the Church.²⁰ Hence the Salesian missionary vocation as a call from the Lord, within our common Salesian vocation.²¹ Therefore, the Salesian missionary vocation, as an essential feature of Don Bosco's charism (C. 30), is a more radical expression of pastoral charity. It is a gift from the Lord, one that needs to be invoked in prayer, awakened in the confreres, verified in their discernment and accompanied in their growth. The Salesian missions are part of the one Salesian mission. Therefore, the Salesian missionary does not belong to an *élite* group of privileged confreres. He is someone who wants to express in a more generous and radical way the common Salesian vocation of all the confreres.

The current Rector Major reiterated several times that no Provincial can hinder a confrere who has made a journey of discernment of his own missionary vocation with the help of his Rector, spiritual guide and the Provincial himself, just because of a lack of personnel, or because the Province needs him. The missionary send-off in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco is a gesture with which the Congregation renews, in front of Mary Help of Christians, its missionary commitment.

THE SALESIAN MISSIONARY

The Salesian missionary is definitively assigned to a Province or Delegation (C. 159), not only to respond to the

¹⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), no. 32, 65; E. VIGANÒ, "Pope's Appeal", p. 33.

²⁰ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consacrata* (1996), nos. 30-31, 71, 78.

²¹ Cf. *Ad Gentes* no.23; *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 65.

need for personnel but, above all, to contribute to intercultural dialogue, to the inculturation of the faith and the charisma and to trigger processes that can generate new local vocations. The missionary is not only the one who gives, but above all the one who receives; not only does he teach, but above all he learns from the people he serves, who are not only passive recipients of his efforts. As a mediator, the missionary keeps nothing for himself but takes care to keep alive his ardour for holiness through the 'grace of unity', spending himself generously, even until he is consumed.²²

The missionary is integrated within the local church, and in the life and educative and pastoral plan of the Province, enriching them with his personal gifts, apostolic zeal and missionary sensitivity. Inculturation is a slow process that can never be fully realised. Therefore, the missionary is open to being enriched by the local culture, while continuing to deepen his understanding of it in the light of the Christian faith and the Salesian charisma. Each missionary is committed to collaborating with the laity, missionary volunteers and other members of the Salesian Family by promoting a true exchange of gifts and values, according to the specific vocations and forms of life of each group.²³ In old age, he continues his missionary work by sharing his friendship and wisdom, with prayer and by the example of his life. The missionary devotes himself to the people entrusted to him until his last breath: burial in his mission land seals this love.

The presence of missionaries in the Province strengthens inculturation: local confreres have a perception of their own culture that missionaries do not possess, while missionaries offer some perspectives of the culture not perceived by local confreres. In fact, a Province made up only of confreres of the same culture risks being less sensitive to the challenge of interculturality and

²² Cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 284; *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 90.

²³ Cf. *Charter of the Charismatic Identity*, no. 10, 19.

less able to see beyond the confines of its own cultural world. Thanks to missionaries, today the charism of Don Bosco is present and inculturated in 134 countries. In fact, the missionary commitment of the Congregation also contributes in a decisive way to the global redistribution of confreres required by GC27.²⁴

THE MISSIONARY PROJECT IN THE PROVINCE AND THE CONGREGATION

In his programme for the six-year period, the Rector Major has continued to invite every Province to open its own missionary project.²⁵ This does not exclude missionary generosity for the whole Congregation's missionary project. In fact, the Province cannot be generous with regard to the Congregational missionary project if it is not seriously concerned with a Provincial missionary project. And indeed, the missionary commitment within the Province is a credible sign and stimulus for the missionary commitment of the Congregation, and vice versa. Each influences the other, stimulates it and helps it.²⁶ It is the missionary impetus of the Congregation that invigorates faith, gives new vocational enthusiasm and revitalises the charismatic identity of the confreres both in the Province that sends and in the Province that receives missionaries. In addition, it frees us "from the dangers of a middle-class lifestyle, spiritual superficiality and genericism" and is "leading us forward into the future with hope".²⁷

THE MISSIONS INTEREST ALL SALESIANS

GC20 already insisted that "the missions are of interest to the whole Congregation; therefore, all the confreres are involved in them in different ways".²⁸ Don Bosco's tenth successor has stressed that now is the time for generosity in the whole Congregation, thus inviting confreres to a greater availability for the

²⁴ Cf. GC27, 75.5; E. VIGANÒ, "Pope's Appeal", p. 11; F. CEREDA, "Encouraging International Communities", p. 46-48.

²⁵ Cf. A. FERNANDEZ, "Guidelines", p. 48.

²⁶ Cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 34.

²⁷ E. VIGANÒ, "Pope's Appeal", p.12.

²⁸ GC20, no. 480.

Congregation's missionary projects.²⁹ The Provincials share in this solicitude of the Rector Major through their missionary concern for the whole Congregation. Every Salesian Province, whether rich or poor in personnel or resources, shares responsibility for the missionary projects of the whole Congregation. Therefore, there are no longer Provinces that are only 'recipients' or 'senders' or 'missionary Provinces'. All the Provinces send and receive missionaries. This missionary reciprocity makes us available for the mutual sharing of means, personnel and spiritual assistance. Elderly and sick confreres also provide valuable support with their prayers and sacrifices. Meanwhile, the contribution that the Mission Offices at the congregational and provincial level (*R.* 24) and Salesian NGOs makes the beginning and growth of many missionary projects in all continents possible.

Part II. Processes and Operational Guidelines

These processes and operational guidelines follow in the light of these missiological and charismatic reflections:

2. Discernment of the Missionary Vocation

The missionary vocation needs careful discernment. This is a gradual and progressive process that is carried out with the help of the spiritual guide, the Rector and the formation team. The criteria and the process of discerning a missionary vocation are clearly explained in the brief document on *Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco*.³⁰ However, some elements need to be emphasised here.

In the different phases of initial formation, all those being formed are encouraged to keep the missionary spirit alive as an essential element of our charism, through the contents to

²⁹ Cf. A. FERNANDEZ, "Guidelines", p. 45-48.

³⁰ Cf. Mission and Formation Departments, *Missionary Formation of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (SDB: Rome, 2014), p. 27-34.

be emphasised, the attitudes to be cultivated and the experiences to be promoted in each formation phase.³¹ They are formed to be available and to keep an eye open on the life of the Church and the Congregation by making missionary projects known. “It is the responsibility of the Provincials, Provincial Delegates for Missionary Animation and formators to encourage discernment of the life-long missionary vocation, especially in young confreres.”³² Those who show interest in becoming missionaries are more closely accompanied, so they can embark on a good discernment path.

The post-novitiate is the formation phase where charismatic identity is deepened. Therefore, it is the most suitable phase of formation for serious missionary discernment. The experience of recent years shows that it is the formation phase where there is the most lively and generous missionary availability among those in formation.

There is no age limit for leaving as a missionary. After consulting his Rector and his spiritual guide, the confrere can write to the Rector Major presenting his missionary availability. However, our many years of experience show that intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, inculturation and language learning are easier at a young age.

Depending on the case, in order to better discern one’s missionary vocation, the Provincial, in dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions, may send the post-novice missionary candidate for a year of practical training in a missionary work in his own Province, or in another one. During this year, the candidate may write to the Rector Major presenting his missionary availability.

The distinctive Salesian missionary cross is given during the send-off ceremony by the Rector Major only to those who

³¹ Cf. *Missionary Formation*, p. 13-21.

³² F. CEREDA, “Encouraging International Communities”, p. 50.

offer themselves to be missionaries, generally in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco. Their names are written in the official register at the Missions Sector.

3. The Selection and Sending of Missionaries

From the first missionary expedition (1875) until the Special General Chapter (1971), Salesian missionaries were chosen and sent out as follows:

- The candidates, convinced of their missionary vocation, presented their application directly to the Rector Major.
- The Prefect General (later the General Councillor for the Missions) took direct charge of the discernment, destination and sending of the candidates. The vast majority left from among the missionary aspirantates in Europe (Ivrea, Cumiana, Astudillo, Shrigley, Coat-an-Doc’h, etc.) to begin their novitiate in the missions together with the local novices.
- The European missionaries left Europe for the ‘mission lands’ in different continents. The vast majority received their Missionary Cross in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

With this method of direct intervention by the Rector Major through the General Councillor for the Missions, confreres of different nationalities were sent to a nation, thus encouraging the internationalisation of missionary communities.

When Fr Egidio Viganò launched ‘Project Africa’ in 1980 as a project involving all Provinces, another way of discerning, choosing and sending out missionaries was also initiated:

- A good number of confreres presented their missionary desire to their Provincial (in writing or orally). At times he suggested and encouraged the choice, in a dialogue of obedience.
- The Provincial himself chose and sent the missionaries to their mission territory (especially to Africa and to the

new frontiers of Asia, America and Oceania). Some were sent ‘*ad tempus*’, others with a permanent and definitive commitment.

- Normally the departing missionaries received the Missionary Cross in a provincial or local community celebration.
- There was always the choice of available candidates, who sent their personal letter to the Rector Major, who intervened directly, through the General Councillor for the Missions.³³

This method fostered a rapid expansion of Provincial missionary projects and stimulated a new missionary enthusiasm in almost all the Provinces. On the other hand, the number of missionaries serving the missionary projects of the Congregation diminished considerably, as did the international face of our missionary communities.

Since Fr Pascual Chávez launched ‘Project Europe’ in 2008 a more collegial approach began, which has been consolidated in the present process of discerning, choosing and sending missionaries:

- a. The Rector Major writes a missionary appeal to all the confreres on 18 December (anniversary of the founding of the Congregation) where he lists the missionary priorities for the year.
- b. The confrere writes a letter directly to the Rector Major presenting his missionary availability.
- c. On receiving the letter, the Rector Major forwards it to the General Councillor for the Missions.
- d. The General Councillor for the Missions begins or continues the dialogue with the candidate.
- e. The General Councillor for the Missions dialogues with the candidate’s Provincial asking him and his Council for

³³ Cf. L. ODORICO, “Candidates for the Salesian Missions”, in *AGC* 337, p. 55-56.

- a written opinion to verify the candidate's suitability. If the candidate is in initial formation, the written opinion of the Rector and the House Council is required.
- f. Having received the favourable opinion of the Provincial and his Council (and of the Rector and the House Councillor) the General Councillor for the Missions makes a study with the Rector Major on the needs, the missionary priorities for the year and the possible destinations.
 - g. The General Councillor for the Missions puts a proposal to the General Council regarding the destinations of the members of the next missionary expedition.
 - h. It is appropriate that there be a farewell ceremony in the Province for the missionary confrere. During the Eucharistic celebration the Superior blesses the departing confrere and makes another significant farewell gesture. The giving of the missionary cross is reserved to the Rector Major alone at the time of the missionary send-off.
 - i. The missionary candidate arrives in Rome for the five-week Orientation Course in preparation for his missionary posting. During the course, having heard the candidate personally, the General Councillor for the Missions concludes the discernment for the new missionary's final destination.

After the ceremony of giving of the Missionary Cross, the missionary returns to his Province of origin where he prepares his documents and waits for his visa. If he is able to obtain a visa in Italy, he will be temporarily assigned to a Salesian house, pending the migration procedures, with the prior consent of the Provincial concerned.

The missionary's Provincial of origin is asked to give the departing missionary who is awaiting migration procedures, the possibility of beginning his study of the language of his destination, according to local possibilities.

For missionaries who leave as practical trainees, time spent exclusively studying the language or waiting for migra-

tion procedures is not considered as being part of their practical training.³⁴

4. The request for Missionaries

As an expression of his fatherly concern for the whole Congregation, the Rector Major sends missionaries to the Provinces that need them. On the other hand, a Provincial may ask the Rector Major to send missionaries to his own Province according to the following procedure:

- a. The Provincial, with the consent of his Council, presents a concrete missionary project to the Rector Major. The Rector Major, with his Council, will evaluate it. The approval of the project will be the condition for sending missionaries to that Province. Without this prior condition, the sending of missionaries will not be possible.
- b. Once the Rector Major accepts the request, the Provincial will dialogue with the General Councillor for the Missions regarding:
 - the profile of the new missionary or missionaries;
 - nationalities who find it easy to enter the country or to obtain a visa;
 - documents to be presented by the missionaries in order to obtain a residence or missionary visa.
 - the *Reception and Integration Plan*³⁵ for the new missionaries, indicating the following in particular:
 - A formal language course of at least six months, which can be extended if the new missionary needs it;
 - A specific confrere to accompany new arrivals;
 - How to provide for the spiritual needs (confessions, spiritual direction) of the new missionary;

³⁴ Cf. *Missionary Formation*, p. 32.

³⁵ The elements of this plan are specified in the brief document on *Missionary Formation*, pp. 31-32.

- The gradual process of introducing the new missionary into the receiving Province;
- c. The Provincial Secretary of the missionary's Province of origin sends the personal documents necessary for the provincial archives to the Provincial Secretary of the missionary's new Province;
- d. After five years, the missionary, with the help of the Provincial, evaluates his missionary experience, in particular his integration within the life and activities of the Province, his cultural integration, and his apostolic zeal and missionary commitment.³⁶
- e. The General Councillor for the Missions, or his collaborators, verify the accompaniment of the new missionaries at an appropriate time.

The Salesian goes on mission to remain there. Exceptionally, if a missionary, for serious reasons, needs to return to his Province of origin, he must write, explaining his reasons, to the Rector Major, who, after hearing the opinions of the two Provincials concerned, shall give his consent or otherwise.³⁷

5. The 'Missionary Experience'

In the Congregation the confreres can offer to work temporarily in another Province, or to respond to a specific or urgent need.³⁸ This is a positive experience for many Provinces. In the light of our current reflection, missionary availability and commitment cannot be limited in time. Thus, it is no longer appropriate to speak of *missionaries ad tempus* (temporary) but of *missionary experience*. For some confreres this missionary experience may be an opportunity to discern and mature their missionary vocation. In this case, they will present their total availability to the Rector Major for the

³⁶ Cf. *Missionary Formation*, p. 32.

³⁷ Cf. S. MARTOGLIO, "Transfer of Confreres", no.1.b/1, in *AGC* 436.

³⁸ *GC19*, p. 180: *GC19* gave the confreres the possibility of serving in the missions "for at least five years, provided they are considered suitable".

missionary projects of the Congregation. However, the following guidelines must be stressed here:

- a. The Provincial who sends a confrere for a missionary experience signs a temporary transfer agreement with the receiving Provincial specifying the duration of the service and the duties and responsibilities of both Provinces towards the confrere. A copy of the agreement is sent to the General Councillor for the Missions, the General Councillor of the Region and the Secretary General.³⁹
- b. This transfer may be for three or five years and may be renewed.⁴⁰
- c. The missionary experience may not last longer than a total period of ten years, after which the confrere shall return definitively to his Province of origin. If he wishes to belong definitively to the Province where he has had his missionary experience, he must write to the Rector Major, who, after hearing the opinions of the two Provincials concerned, shall express his consent or otherwise.

Conclusion

“Missionary generosity has been one of the reasons for the good health and expansion of the Congregation during its first century and a half of life.”⁴¹ Let us respond with courageous generosity to the missionary appeal of the current successor of Don Bosco!

These reflections, processes and operational guidelines were approved by the Rector Major and his Council at their meeting on 29 March 2021. They enter into force on 24 May 2021.

Fr Alfred Maravilla, SDB

General Councillor for the Missions

³⁹ Cf. S. MARTOGLIO, “Transfer of Confreres”, no. 1.b/2; no. 3.

⁴⁰ Cf. F. CEREDA, “Encouraging International Communities”, p. 47.

⁴¹ J.E. VECCHI, “Our Missionary Obligation”, p. 35.

4. ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL

4.1 Chronicle of the Rector Major

The Rector Major's main events in the six months from July to December 2021 are as follows:

In July the Rector Major was busy with meetings in the second part of the summer plenary session of the General Council. During this period, or in other words until the end of the month, as well as Council sessions he also had meetings with the confreres involved with translations.

During the month he met Fr Guido Novella, the Rector of the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, Ms Giovanna Bruno, Salesian Co-operator and Mayor of Andria in Puglia; the new Rector of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Fr Michele Viviano from the Province of Sicily in Italy; Fr Gabriel Cruz, Delegate for Pakistan.

On 12 July, together with his Vicar and the General Councillor for Social Communication, there was an exploration of some of the communication problems. On 13 July and the days that followed he dedicated time to preparing a draft relating to Strenna 2022.

16 July began with a meeting with aspirants, followed by a long and interesting discussion with the Postulator General, Fr Pier Luigi Cameroni. The day ended with the visit to the house in the Bufalotta district in Rome where it is planned to transfer the theology students from 'Gerini' in Rome.

On 18 July, at the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians General House, together with members of the General Council he shared some fraternal time with the Mother General and the sisters on her Council. The meeting began with Mass at which he was the main celebrant and ended with supper and the traditional exchange of gifts among confreres and sisters.

On 22 July he met with the Regional Councillors, while the 23rd was dedicated to specific study regarding the Pakistan Delegation.

On 26 July he received the Procurator General, Fr Pier Fausto Frisoli, with whom he checked on the various religious discipline procedures. In the afternoon he went back to dealing with the problem of translations.

On 27 July he met with the Dean and Secretary of the Classics Faculty at the Pontifical Salesian University.

On 5 August the Rector Major was in Mornese for the perpetual profession of some Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

After returning to Rome, on the 10th he received a former Provincial and on the 12th he met with the Dean of the Communications Faculty at our University, Fr Fabio Pasqualetti. He then returned to Piedmont to evaluate the animation of the "Salesian Places". From Turin he went to Spain for some rest and to be with his elderly parents. He remained in Spain until the end of the month.

September began with a meeting with Sector Councillors. In the afternoon of the 1st he took part in the Executive Council of the Union of Superiors General (USG).

He then went to Turin, where on the 8th he opened a new section of the Don Bosco House Museum.

From 9 to 10 September, he was in Pordenone for the Festival of Religious Publishing, where he gave a talk on the theme: Education in times of Pandemic. On this occasion he met the confreres of the

local Salesian house and the Provincial Council of the North East Italy Province (INE). On the same occasion he met the Archbishop of Pordenone, the organiser of the Festival, Mr Sandro Sandrin, and many former students and members of the Salesian Family. Furthermore, the Mayor presented the Rector Major with the City Seal as a sign of gratitude and esteem for the work carried out by the Salesian confreres over almost one hundred years of presence.

From 12 to 21 September he was again at Valdocco in Turin to meet a group of Salesian Provincials who had reached the halfway mark of their service.

On the 15th, having received news of the death of his elderly father, the Rector Major returned to Spain. He remained in his home town for the funeral and to comfort relatives.

On the 24th he returned to Rome to prepare for the Retreat he would be called to preach during this six-year term to Provincial Councils in the various Regions.

On 28 September he met Fr Ti-homir Sutalo, Provincial of Croatia.

On 1 October he was the main celebrant for the funeral rites at the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome

for Fr Giuseppe Nicolussi, former Provincial in Chile and former General Councillor for Formation.

From 4 to 13 October he presided over the work of the General Council's interim session and made numerous contributions to the formation meeting for new provincials.

On the morning of 5 October he celebrated Mass at the chapel in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians' General House on the day of the election of the Mother General. The Chapter members elected Sr Chiara Cazzuola and the Rector Major, in the name of the Congregation and the Salesian Family, paid homage to the newly elected Mother General.

On 6 October he was in Ariccia for the opening Mass of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus' General Chapter.

On 13 October he met with the Full Professors at the Pontifical Salesian University and the following day, as Grand Chancellor, he took part in and presided at the opening of the new Academic Year.

On 15 October he visited the St James the Greater Province, Madrid, for the occasion of the 50th Jubilee of the Salesian house at Valladolid where the Rector Major was a pupil. After a quick

visit to Leon, on the 16th, again at Valladolid, he opened a Park with a monument donated by the local Municipal Administration and dedicated to Don Bosco as a mark of gratitude for the work carried out by the Salesians.

He was received by Card. Ricardo Blázquez Pérez, Archbishop of Valladolid. He then met with the Salesian Rectors of the Province and with the Salesian Family. On the 17th, in the parish church, he was the main celebrant for the thanksgiving Mass for the Golden Jubilee of the Salesian presence there. On the same day he visited the theologate at Atocha in Madrid

On the 18th, he met in Turin with the Provincial and Provincial Council of the Piedmont Special Circumscription (ICP). During the days that followed he accompanied a second group of Salesian provincials who had arrived at the halfway mark of their six-year term, and on 21 October, at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, he was the main celebrant at the closing Mass for the Sisters of Charity of Jesus' General Chapter.

On the 24th, he was main celebrant at the Mass for the conclusion of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians' General Chapter, at their General House.

From 2 to 3 November he was in Turin for the meeting with Rectors and Councils of the three communities who supervise the Salesian Places: Valdocco in Turin, Colle Don Bosco, Chieri.

On return to Rome, he met on the 4th with the architects planning renovations of Headquarters at the Sacred Heart Basilica.

On the 8th he had a first meeting with a group of confreres preparing for their missionary departure.

On the 9th, at the TV studios of TV2000, the Italian Bishops' Conference broadcaster, he gave a beautiful interview to journalist Monica Mondo. The interview would later be broadcast on 5 December.

On the 11th he took part in the press conference to launch the Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival. Several Italian, Spanish and American television stations took part.

On the 12th, at the Urbaniana University in Rome, he contributed to the presentation of a book by Ferruccio Pallavera *Ho fatto Cristiano il Papa. Don Enrico Pozzoli il missionario salesiano che ha battezzato papa Francesco (I christened the Pope. Fr Enrico Pozzoli, the Salesian missionary who baptised Pope Francis)* published by

the Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Also at the ceremony, besides the Rector Major, were Card. Luis Antonio Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Defence Minister for the Italian Republic, Dott. Lorenzo Guerini.

On the 15th he met with the preparatory commission for revision of the *Ratio Studiorum*, while on the 17th he was once more in Valdocco, Turin, until 23 November, to preach the first of the retreats for Provincials and Provincial Councils of the Mediterranean Region.

Before the conclusion of the retreat, on 19 November in Turin the Rector Major contributed to the Film Festival award ceremony, and through an online link he also took part in the Executive Council meeting of the Union of Superiors General (USG).

Sunday 21 November, Solemnity of Christ the King, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, he was main celebrant at the Eucharist during which he gave the Crucifix to a group of missionaries (men and women) due for their departure and who represented the 152nd missionary expedition.

On the 24th, at Sacrofano (Rome) he took part in the work of

the USG half-yearly Assembly. At the end of the month he was in Turin for the meeting with Provincials of the Central and North Europe and Mediterranean Regions.

On the 29th the Rector Major remained in Turin for the recording of several interviews relating to *Strenna 2022* and for preparations for the Salesian Family Spirituality Days to be held in January 2022.

Before returning to Rome for the General Council's plenary session work, he went to Spain to visit his sick and elderly mother.

On 1 December, in the evening, he presided at the Academic Senate of the Pontifical Salesian University, in his role as Grand Chancellor.

In the first days of the month he received the Rector of Port Louis and some confreres and collaborators from Mauritius. He also met Card. Maurice Piatt, Archbishop of Mauritius, who was visiting Rome. He discussed with them the working project for the extension of a school that has received financial aid from Pope Francis and the offices of the Italian Bishops' Conference.

On 5 December he opened the course for sixteen newly-appoint-

ed provincials. As well as hearing contributions from the members of the General Council, they also engaged the Rector Major in relaxed individual conversations.

On 8 December, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, he was the main celebrant at the Eucharist in the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome, where he recalled Don Bosco's encounter with Bartholomew Garelli and together with representatives of the Salesian Family said a *Hail Mary* that recalled the beginning of the first oratory.

On 17 December he met the new Past Pupils of Don Bosco World Council as well as the Italian Past Pupils Presidency.

On 22 December, with confreres from the houses dependent on the Rector Major, and together with the General Council, he was at Genzano for the monthly Recollection preached by Fr Giovanni Cesare Pagazzi. In the afternoon of that same day the Rector Major presented a preview of the video and contents of *Strenna 2022*.

The days that followed saw the 10th Successor of Don Bosco busy with the work of the General Council, visits from various Salesian Family representatives, and Christmas celebrations with the confreres at Headquarters.

In the afternoon of Monday 27 December, the Rector Major presented the Strenna for 2022 at the General House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The following day, at the Social Communications Faculty of the Pontifical Salesian University, he offered a second “worldwide” presentation of the contents of the Strenna for 2022.

On 29 December he went to his family in Spain for a time of rest and to visit relatives.

4.2 Chronicle of the General Councillors

The Vicar of the Rector Major

The Vicar of the Rector Major, having completed the summer General Council session, went to Madrid in early August for a two-day meeting regarding the National Centre for Youth Ministry (CNJP), meeting the Provincials and the CNJP Director, together with the General Councillor for the Mediterranean Region. They were fruitful days of reflection and planning.

On his return to Rome he went to his family for a period of rest. Afterwards he went to Colle Don

Bosco for the annual celebration of “Don Bosco's birthday” and for other meetings at the parish at Castelnuovo Don Bosco.

Back in Rome once more, during the final ten days of August he met with the provincial assemblies of the Central Italy Circumscription and the Piedmont and Valle d'Aosta Special Circumscription: they were valuable opportunities for contact with the confreres and for accompanying the provinces.

On 8 September 2021, at the Sant'Andrea parish, Castelnuovo Don Bosco, he presided at the first religious professions of the Salesian novices from Colle Don Bosco: it was an extremely significant place because it was in this church that John Bosco was baptised and took his first steps on his journey of Christian life.

From 12 to 30 September and in the second half of October, he took part with the Rector Major and Fr Saimy Ezhanikatt in the animation of the two courses for accompaniment of provincials who had reached the halfway mark in their service of animation and government. It was a very fine experience, an excellent insight by the Rector Major for accompanying provincials and remaining close to

them during their valuable and laborious service. Normally the course takes place each year, but two were held this year to recover the one for the previous year that was not held due to COVID.

In the first part of October the Vicar was involved in the work of the autumn interim session of the General Council, during which he met with some of the provincials who were in Rome for their formation. As well as all the Sector Councillors being present, there was also a group of new provincials there for their formation course. This formation course for provincials, too, was a very fruitful experience. The formation of provincials and their accompaniment kept the Vicar of the Rector Major very busy and allowed him to deepen his knowledge of the Congregation.

At the end of October the Vicar spoke at the Congress organised by our University on the figure of Fr Paul Albera. Here he had the opportunity to share an important and profound reflection on the person and the role played by the second successor of Don Bosco in the difficult moments of the First World War.

In the first week of November

the Vicar of the Rector Major made his annual canonical visit to the community at Castel Gandolfo which, on 1 September, joined the group of houses directly dependent on the Rector Major. This visit highlighted the good steps taken by the new Salesian community. Now all the houses that carry out an apostolate in relation to the Holy See are directly dependent on the Rector Major.

From the 8th until his return on 21 November, the Vicar of the Rector Major carried out an animation visit to the Central Africa Province (AFC), beginning with the newly erected East Congo Delegation with its headquarters in Goma. The visit is part of the tasks that the six-year plan has entrusted to the Vicar for accompaniment of the Province.

The trip and the knowledge of the communities and the mission of the confreres allowed the Vicar of the Rector Major to verify the excellent work accomplished in 110 years of presence in this vast territory. All this is a sign of the great vitality of the charism in these lands.

On his return to Italy and after the prescribed quarantines linked to the world pandemic situation, from 26 to 28 November, the Vicar

of the Rector Major went to Turin for the meeting that has been taking place every two years for the last fifteen years.

At the beginning of December, the Vicar returned to Headquarters to take part in the winter plenary session of the General Council.

General Councillor for Formation

In July 2021, during the General Council summer session, the Formation Sector team organised four working groups (focus groups), involving online sharing and drawing up of texts to reflect together on topics of particular importance in revision of the *Ratio*: formation in mission, joint formation, formation in a digital world, affectivity and sexual orientation. There were also various meetings for revision of the Salesian Proper, and an online meeting of those animating the Salesian School of Accompaniment (SSA) in preparation for the Italian and Spanish versions of the School, listed for August and September 2021. Then followed several animation moments for provincials or inter-provincial groups (SUE - 14 July;

Rectors in Brazil - 20 September), focused mainly on the documents known as *Animating and Governing the Salesian Community – The Ministry of the Salesian Rector and Young Salesian and accompaniment*.

The World Consultative Council for Formation was held online from 2 to 8 August 2021. Due to the pandemic we had to abandon the idea of holding it in person in Mumbai (India). One of the conclusions was to go ahead with preparation of the *Salesian Formation Handbook*.

The School of Salesian Accompaniment, coordinated by Bro. Raymond Callo from the Formation Sector team, began as planned on 16 August 2021 at Valdocco, with 17 participants. The Formation General Councillor was there for the opening week. The rest of the school, ending on 17 September, was held at Colle Don Bosco.

From 21 to 26 August the Councillor was in Spain, together with Fr Santos, to visit places associated with Msgr José Luis Carreño, a great missionary and formator in India, Goa and the Philippines. He was able to meet the communities at Pamplona, Atocha in

Madrid and visit the theologate at Atocha.

Fr Coelho was in Colombia, together with Fr Francisco Santos from 16 to 19 September, to visit the theologate at Bogotá. He also visited the COB prenovitiate at Mosquera. From Colombia he went to Guatemala City to meet the theologate community, the Salesian Brothers community in specific formation (CRESCO), the prenovitiate for the CAM Province and confreres at the interprovincial postnovitiate.

During this period the Councillor took part with Fr Santos in the online meeting of Provincial Formation and Youth Ministry Delegates for the Interamerica and America South Cone Regions. This meeting, planned as an in-person meeting at Amatitan (Mexico), had to be carried out in other ways because of the ongoing pandemic.

From 23 September until 2 October, the Councillor met with the Formation team to prepare the meeting to be held from 15-28 November 2021, its primary aim being to read and interpret the many items of feedback collected over preceding months from all provinces, on revision of the *Ratio*.

Once the work of the General Council's interim session in the first half of October was over, the Councillor with Fr Silvio Roggia went to Nairobi (Kenya) for the meeting of Provincial Formation and Youth Ministry Delegates from the Africa and Madagascar Region. This was the first "in person" meeting of its kind since the beginning of the pandemic. During this period he made brief visits to the formation houses in the city, especially the AFE prenovitiate, and the interprovincial theologate at Utume.

From 21 October to 2 November the Councillor went to Jerusalem and also visited the houses in Bethlehem, Cremisan and Beit Gemal. During this period he also participated online in the Formation Commission meeting for the Mediterranean Region held at Valdocco, and, again online, in the International Conference on Fr Paul Albera for the first Centenary of his death. The Conference was organised by the Salesian Historical Institute in collaboration with the Pontifical Salesian University.

On his return to Rome, he took part in online meetings of the Formation Commission for the South Asia and East Asia - Oceania Re-

gions; here too there was a joint meeting with Youth Ministry Delegates for these Regions.

From 15 to 28 November a group of 21 confreres from around the world met at Headquarters with the formation team to study and interpret the feedback from the questionnaires that had been sent out for for the revision of the *Ratio*, and reflections drawn up by the four focus groups in June and July.

The meeting of the Formation Commission for the Central and North Europe Region was held from 22 to 25 November, under the direction of Jozef Skala, coordinator, and Francisco Santos, involving the Formation Councillor at certain times.

From 26 to 28 November Fr Coelho took part in the meeting of Provincials from Europe held at Valdocco, Turin.

On 4 December 2021 the Councillor presided over the curatorium for the Z. Namuncurà House in Rome, and on 9 December he visited the San Tarcisio postnovitiate, also in Rome.

In October and December he also had formation meetings with the new provincials who were at Headquarters.

From 1 December he took part in the work of the General Council plenary session.

General Councillor for Youth Ministry

The General Councillor for Youth Ministry gave the opening speech at the Annual Conference & General Body Meeting 2021 for the Don Bosco Higher Education India Network - DBHEI (7 November), He also spoke at the opening and closing of several regional online MGS-LEADS meetings. He was similarly present in the online course promoted by the Ongoing Formation Centre in Quito. (2 August).

He was asked to contribute to the online COMECE-DBI meeting on Vocational Education and Training (3 June) and for the presentation of Dottore Cursi's book at the UPS (15 July).

The Councillor sent a message for the 2nd Quarterly Newsletter of the Salesian Representative to the United Nations, for the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano – CELAM* (video message) and a contribution for Cagliari11, published in October. Again in terms of written material, he wrote three monthly articles for the

Catequistas journal (Spain) and one for *Misión Joven*.

In the last months of 2021 there were regular coordination meetings where he was present and which he led, with DBI (5 sessions) and with the Sector team (15 sessions). At the same time, coordination meetings were held with the FMA Youth Ministry Sector (12 July, 7 September).

Fr Miguel Ángel began fostering coordination between DB Tech India, DB Tech Africa, the CFP America Network and Tech Don Bosco, Madrid (20 May, 18 June, 18 September and 11 December). He convened a Select Committee for the implementation of DB Tech Europe (27 July, 12 November and 7 December). He also convened the meeting of mobility Project managers from the Salesian Works in Europe that took place in Madrid (17-19 November).

The Councillor for Youth Ministry carried out the official launch of the International Congress of Works and Social Services (13 October), as well as regional preparatory meetings in November: Europe (8), America (10), South Asia (11), Africa-Madagascar (15) and East Asia-Oceania (17).

He also participated actively in the preparatory Focus Group for the drafting of the *Ratio*, promoted and led by the Formation Sector (11 June and 9 July).

Fr Miguel Ángel presented a reflection at the coordination meeting between some IUS Institutes from the Americas and the *Red América Social Salesiana* (RASS) (11 June). In October he also inaugurated and guided the work of the new *Red de CFP de América* (13th October). A first meeting was held with the new head of the DBGA (28 October).

In the area of formation the Councillor, with the Sector team at Headquarters, convened the third webinar on “education to love” (3 June) which was attended by many delegates and lay people.

He then coordinated the regional online meeting for Youth Ministry Delegates from different Regions: Europe (9 to 12 February), the Americas (13 to 15 September), South Asia (2 to 5 November) and East Asia-Oceania (10 to 13 November).

The meeting with the Africa-Madagascar Region (18 to 19 October) was held in person.

It is important to highlight the numerous meetings with Youth Ministry Delegates online.

He was involved at national level in the following appointments: the meeting with the National Centre for Youth Ministry, Spain (3 August), the *Note di Pastorale Giovanile* editorial team, Italy (21 June) and also with the National Team - South Asia (3 November).

The Councillor for Youth Ministry held a coordination meeting with the Rector Major and his Vicar (22 June and 4 October), then with the other Sector Councillors (16 June and 7 July) and with the Councillor for Formation (19 July).

Fr Miguel Ángel gave formation sessions to the following groups: new provincials (11 June, 8 October and 10 December); SYLS (Salesian Youth Leadership Conference) of the SUO province (13 June); team of educators from the Salesian School at Ciudad Real-Spain (24 June); SYM Europe (26 June); teachers from the Silva Enríquez University, Chile (27 and 30 July); the IME Province Assembly (28 August); National Youth Ministry Centre Team - Spain (8 September); DB Tech Africa (28 September); formation seminar with the GBR Province (25-28 October); Provincial Assembly of Educators from ECU Province (22 November); School of Social Com-

munication for East Asia-Oceania (1 December) and Africa (14 and 15 December). Finally, a conference at the IRC National Congress in Messina (2 December).

In addition, it is important to mention the online information meeting with provincials from the Interamerica Region (1 September), Africa and Madagascar Region (4 November) and the in-person formation session provincials from Europe at Valdocco (26-28 November).

Over these months, Fr Miguel Ángel coordinated preparation of the “Youth Ministry and Family” document which he then personally handed over to provinces; at the same time he was busy with preparation of the “Parishes and shrines entrusted to the Salesians” document. He also sought out and involved experts from the different Regions in the revision of the “A youth ministry that educates to love” text. And not least, he was busy with the collection of data regarding the broad sector of integral ecology in provinces and houses, and with preparation for a formation session for a better understanding of this area, the aim being to envisage then plan where it can find its place in Province EPPs.

General Councillor for the Missions

Following the General Council's summer session, the Councillor for the Missions, Fr Alfred Maravilla, left to visit the Salesian presence in Istanbul, Turkey, from 29 July to 2 August. During his stay he was able to speak with the confreres, meet young refugees from the Don Bosco Centre and gain better understanding of the context.

In the afternoon of 17-18 August he took part in the Regional meeting of Provincial Mission Animation Delegates (DIAM) and Provincial Social Communication Delegates (DICS) for the South Cone Region, where he gave a brief address on "The mentality of millennials and Generation Z". On the morning of 25 August he took part in the Board Meeting of the Don Bosco Network. During these six months there have been three online meetings with the DIAM and DICS from Interamerica (24-25 August), Africa-Madagascar (13-14 October), Mediterranean (27-28 October), South Asia (15-16 November), East Asia - Oceania (16-17 November) and Central and North Europe (23-24 November) Regions.

On 12 September he presided

at the perpetual profession of 4 young Salesians and 3 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in St Augustine's Basilica in Milan. Late that afternoon he left for Slovenia. During his visit from 12 to 16 September he met with the Provincial Council, all the Rectors and a group of confreres, to present 'Project Europe' and the consequent duties and responsibilities of the Province in receiving the first 3 missionaries in Slovenia. From 4 to 13 October he took part in the General Council's interim session, during which the course for new provincials took place at Headquarters.

From 20 to 25 September he visited our presences in Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, accompanied by the IME Vice-provincial, Fr Mihaj Tomë. While abiding by all the health protocols for COVID-19, he was able to meet all the confreres, some lay co-workers, some young people and also the FMA. His visit enabled him to assess the strengths, potential and challenges of our presence in these countries with a view to their growth.

On 30 September he went ahead with a visit to the Salesian Mission Offices, accompanied by the coordinator for Mission Offices, Fr

George Menampampil. There was a day of fruitful and fraternal exchange with the new Procurator of *Missioni Don Bosco* in Turin, Fr Daniel Antúnez, and his co-workers, enabling the General Councillor to understand how the Office functioned and then, in turn, share the Congregation's expectations of the Mission Offices. On 1 October at Colle they met the Rector of the Colle Don Bosco work, and Ms Letizia Pecetto, in charge of the Don Bosco Ethnological Missionary Museum. On the occasion of this visit Fr Maravilla officially launched the survey organised by the Missions Sector on Salesian Missionary Museums.

On 5 October he took part in the DBN General Assembly at Salesian Headquarters in Rome. On 14 October he presented an address, "Rediscovering First Announcement" during the symposium on *New Perspectives on Mission* organised by SEDOS. From 18 to 22 October he visited the Salesian presence in Bulgaria, accompanied by Fr Pavel Ženisek from the Mission Sector in order to gain better understanding of the Salesians, lay mission volunteers and the challenges and opportunities for future development. As planned, he was joined

by Fr Martin Hobza, the Czech Province Provincial (CEP), his Vice-provincial and Provincial Economist. This allowed them to meet with the Provincial who then took the necessary decisions.

On 29 October, together with Fr Pavel Ženisek, he spent the evening with the postnovitiate community at San Tarcisio, Rome, for mission animation. From 5 November, together with Marco Fulgaro, he accompanied the new missionaries of the 151st missionary expedition in their orientation, culminating in the missionary send-off at the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Valdocco on 21 November.

From 26 to 28 November he was part of the meeting of Provincials from Europe at Valdocco. From 3 to 5 December he was in Algeria at the invitation of the Archbishop of Algiers, who is inviting the Salesians to his diocese. Following this, he took part in all the sessions of the General Council's winter session.

General Councillor for Social Communication

From August to December 2021, the Councillor for Social Commu-

nication closely accompanied the preparation and implementation of the Salesian School of Social Communication for about 400 people (Communication Delegates, members of SB teams, Radio and Communication Teams, carried out in the 10 Schools of Communication across the various Regions), with monthly meetings in each School.

He had several meetings with the Communication Delegates from the Regions (America South Cone, Interamerica, Africa-Madagascar, South Asia, East Asia-Oceania, Central and North Europe) with a view to drawing up the Communication Plan for each region and scheduling them.

In September, he spoke at the meeting for new provincials at Headquarters in Rome.

In October he took part in two online meetings with the coordination team for the Salesian SDB and FMA Communications Day, planned for the end of April 2022. He also participated online in the meeting with Salesian Bulletin editors and Radio directors in the South Cone and Interamerica Regions; and in online meeting with the Heads of Publishing Houses (America and Europe).

From September to November: he accompanied five online meetings with Communication and Mission Delegates in the Regions, presenting the theme of new evangelisation in the digital and virtual world. In particular, on 11 November, at Headquarters, he met with the Italian press regarding the Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival. And on 19 November he was at the Festival at Valdocco, Turin.

On 20 November he offered a conference to formators in formation houses in the East Asia-Oceania Region on the question of digital technology in the life of new formators.

From 25 to 28 November, together with the Rector Major and other members of the General Council he contributed to the meeting of provincials from Europe at Valdocco, Turin

At the beginning of December he took part in the work of the General Council plenary session, also contributing to the course for new provincials who were at Headquarters in Rome.

He spent the Christmas period with the *Sacro Cuore* confreres in Rome.

The Economer General

In August he visited the AFC Province from the 16th to the 22nd to carry out an *audit* relating to the Province's administration and economer's office. On this occasion, the Economer General was able to see the different Salesian communities and the activities carried out in the Province. From 25 to 27 August, Bro. Müller went to Colle Don Bosco to be present for the change of the house economer.

From 3 to 5 September he took part in the *Don Bosco Mondo* curatorium in Bonn. On the 11th he met with those responsible for "Verona 31 1": an innovation hub for accompanying promising young people in discovering their talents and seeking out business networks based on Don Bosco's preventive system. On the 22nd he met the ICP Provincial Economer and the local Economer at Colle Don Bosco to plan the next steps in view of carrying out important works for welcoming young people. On the 28th and 29th he went to Lisbon where he took part in the meeting of Provincials of the Mediterranean Region.

During October, the Economer General's office launched the SDB

Change Congress website, to take place from 19 to 23 September 2022 at the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome.

In the early days of the month, Bro. Müller took part in the work of the General Council interim session and was able to meet the new provincials who had arrived in Rome for their formation meeting which was held at Headquarters.

On 21 October the Economer General contributed to the "The Challenge of artificial intelligence" Symposium being held at the *Palazzo della Cancelleria* [Chancellery Palace, former Papal Chancery] in Rome.

From 22 to 26 October he visited houses in the CRO Province, both those in Croatia and those in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On the 28th he held a conference during the Conference being held in Munich regarding the future of the young and difficulties in today's society.

At the end of the month, on the 30th and 31st, he took part in the Conference on Fr Paul Albera held at the UPS.

From 5 to 2 November he visited some of the works in MEG Province, accompanied by the Provincial Economer: Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, Leon and Guadalajara. The Sale-

sians carry out numerous services in these locations for the care of migrants along the border with the USA. Here Bro. Müller emphasised the importance of professional training for staff and the importance of adequate financial investment.

On 24 November he took part in an online meeting with provincial ecomomers from the Interamerica and America South Cone Regions.

From 25 to 28 November Bro. Müller contributed to the meeting with Provincials from the Mediterranean and Central North Europe Regions being held at Valdocco.

On return to Rome, from 1 December he took part in the various meetings of the General Council's winter session.

General Councillor for the Africa and Madagascar Region

Once the General Council plenary session had ended, on 2 and 3 August Fr Alphonse left for Nairobi (Kenya) to take part in the DB Tech Africa Central Committee meeting, transferred to the new rented offices in the Apple Woods building.

On 10 August he met with the AFE Provincial and his Council, as well as with Fr Paul Antimi, Delegate for Sudan.

On 19 August he began a long journey through the AFO and AFW Provinces which have just given birth to the Bl. Artemides Zatti (ANN), Notre-Dame de la Paix [Our Lady of Peace] (AON) and St Joseph (AOS) Provinces.

On 20 August he presided over and coordinated the work of the first assembly of confreres in Nigeria, bringing together the communities from Lagos Iju, Omole and Ijebu Ode. Accompanied by the Delegate, Fr Anthony Oche, he went to Ondo, passing through Ijebu Ode, in view of the second assembly to be held on 23 August.

After a brief visit to Akure, where he went to the Salesian Prenovitiate, and to the Marian Shrine and Youth Centre, Fr Alphonse then wen to Abuja to guide work for the third assembly in the northern sector, held on 26 August.

Fr Alphonse was able to see the land acquired by the confreres in the Buari district. On the same occasion he also visited the nearby Veritas Catholic University, discussing possible perspectives for future collaboration with the University's management.

On Saturday 28 August Fr Alphonse went to Ghana, continuing the following day to Kumasi and

Sunyani. Here, on 30 August he led the first assembly in Ghana for the two communities nearby the novitiate.

On return to Accra on the 31st, he led a new meeting with confreres at the Provincial Headquarters in Ashaiman.

On 1 September the Regional Councillor for Africa arrived in Monrovia (Liberia) and took part in the confreres' assembly. After the assembly, on Saturday 4 September, the Regional was received by the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Dagoberto Campos Salas.

On Monday 6 September the assembly of confreres from Sierra Leone was held at Don Bosco Fambul. At the end, Fr Alphonse carried out a brief visit to the Don Bosco Fambul 2 field: a new project on behalf of children and young people in difficulties.

After this series of meetings in the English-speaking countries, Fr Alphonse moved to the French-speaking side, starting with Senegal. The Senegal confreres' assembly for those from the 3 works in the country, was held on 9 September in Dakar, the new headquarters for the Delegation. Still at Dakar, on Sunday 12 September an online consultation

was held with the 4 confreres at Kunkujang in Gambia.

From Dakar the Councillor went to Guinea Conakry where he conducted a meeting of all the confreres who were also coming from Kankan and Siguiri.

After Conakry, from the 16th to the 17th, Fr Alphonse stayed at Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) for the confreres' assembly, before leaving on Saturday the 18th for Bamako (Mali). The assembly of confreres from Mali was held on Sunday 19 September. On 21 September the Regional went to the Ivory Coast for a meeting with all the Salesians from Abidjan, Korogho and Duekoué, on Thursday the 23rd. He arrived in Togo from the Ivory Coast to hold the largest assembly of them all, the one for the Postnovitiate (Maison Don Bosco) at Akodessewa. On the sidelines of this penultimate assembly, he also visited the Parish at Gbenyedzi and the Philippe Rinaldi Novitiate in Gbodjomé.

On 28 September Fr Alphonse arrived in Benin where the last assembly was held at the Don Bosco Centre in Zogbo. This also saw strong participation of confreres from all of Benin.

The Regional took advantage of the remaining days in September

to make a visit to Ouidah, in the company of the Provincial, Fr José Elegbede, and Fr José Luis de la Fuente, to assess the most appropriate site for building the headquarters of Our Lady of Peace Province but also to visit the FMA at Cotonou and the two Salesian works at Porto-Novo: the large Foyer-Don Bosco and Prenovitiato complex, and the Parish of St Francis Xavier where, on 1 October, he also laid the foundation stone of the parish block planned for catechesis.

On 3 October Fr Alphonse arrived at the Postnovitiato in Luanda, Angola, to begin the Extraordinary Visitation. In order to renew a so-called “border visa”, the Regional, with the help of Fr Martin Lasarte and the Economist, Fr Jojo Kachappilly, carried out three visits in the Angolan Vice-province: from 4 to 14 October he visited the Salesian works and confreres at Palanca, Viana, Lixeira, Dondo and Ndalatando. It was also an opportunity, especially in Palanca, to meet with the Provincial Council, the Formation Commission, the ISDB collaborators and to visit the site of the future headquarters of the Vice-province in Cacucaco.

The second brief visit, from 27

October to 6 November, allowed him to visit the Novitiate at Calulo and the FMA, Luena, Huambo and Kalakala.

The Regional remained in Nairobi from 6 to 20 November, where he presided at the 20th CIVAM General Assembly. He returned to Angola, and continued his visitation, starting with the house at Benguela.

From 22 to 23 November he also visited the St Paul’s Parish in Luanda, meeting the confreres and Salesian Family, with a brief visit to the parish chaplaincies and especially to the Magone Centre, a reception centre and school for street kids. The last days of the visitation involved a series of meetings with various confreres in Luanda: the confreres in their Quinquennium, the Rectors, the Provincial Council with whom he shared the conclusions of the visitation.

On 27 November 2021 he returned to Rome for the General Council’s winter plenary session.

General Councillor for the East Asia-Oceania Region

Due to the pandemic, and not being able to travel to Asia, Fr Joseph Nguyen Think Phuoc, the Regional for East Asia-Oceania

seized the opportunity to carry out several visits to some Provinces in Europe and to experience how the Salesian has put down roots and grown in these countries.

After two days during which he visited the Don Bosco House Museum at Valdocco, he went to France and visited the communities in Nice, Toulon and Paris from 8 to 14 August 2021. From 15 to 27 August, he visited the Province of Hungary. In all this he saw positive changes such as the great transformation of these two provinces, where the confreres seemed full of hope in the future growth of their provinces through consolidation of community life and the relaunching of services of various kinds for the young, especially the poor.

Eight years ago, there were 24 Catholic schools run by the Salesians in France. This year, 2021, there are 69 schools entrusted to the Salesians and their lay collaborators, for pedagogical and pastoral accompaniment. The list of schools that want to be part of this system is still a long one. The superiors have been successful in achieving a huge transformation through the action guidelines of GC26 and GC27. The fruits of this can be seen in vocations.

In Germany from 13 to 18 September, the Regional Councilor visited various Salesian works for poor youth in the country. The Salesians and lay people offer various services to help these young people reintegrate into society as dignified citizens. In Bonn he had a meeting with the Mission Office there.

Another important element for our mission in Europe are the Indian, Vietnamese and African missionaries.

Thailand opened its borders in November, and Fr Joseph Nguyen Thinh Phuoc was able to visit a part of the Province, meeting confreres and members of the Salesian Family. He visited the work for the visually impaired where, alongside confreres, there are also lay people from other religions dedicated to these people. The Regional was able to see the appreciation the confreres and lay workers in our works enjoyed. They are works of a highly professional quality, with many students.

The Regional was able to appreciate the great commitment to vocation ministry in this province which had 10 novices in 2021: the highest number ever achieved in this country (considering that the

Catholic Church represents only 0.58% of the population).

The Salesian charism appears to be marvellous and excellent everywhere, with visible fruits in the works that Salesians and members of the Salesian Family offer to young people of all social circumstances, especially the poorest, and according to the possibilities allowed in each country.

The Councillor for the South Asia Region

The Councillor for the South Asia Region, Fr Biju Michael, following the General Council summer session from June-July 2021, and which he had to take part in online because of travel restrictions due to Covid-19, left for the Dimapur Province (IND) on 9 August 2021 and held a meeting with the Provincial Council. On 10 August he gave a conference to the postnovices and opened the new IUS building at Salesian College in Dimapur. On the same day he visited the B.Ed College, the Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre and the community at the Don Bosco School in Dimapur.

On 11 August, after meeting with the Provincial, he went to

Diphu in Guwahati Province (ING). On 12 August he visited the missions in Satgaon, Baithlangso and spent the night in Umswai. The following morning he visited the mission at Amkachi and continued on to the Provincial House in Guwahati, passing via the Don Bosco University. He spent the afternoon with the children at Snehalaya-Guwahati then gave a conference and interacted with the Assembly of confreres from Guwahati Province.

On 14 August, after Mass with the confreres, he visited the General House of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Help of Christians and the Provincial House of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate (both member groups of the Salesian Family) and conversed with the MSMHC Mother General and the Sisters and Provincial of the SMI Sisters. He then had lunch with the FMA Provincial and Sisters from Guwahati Province. In the evening he visited the Don Bosco Institute and had supper with the confreres in the Provincial House.

On 15 August, Fr Biju arrived at the Provincial House in Trichy (INT). On 16 August, Don Bosco's birthday, he began the Extraordinary Visitation to Trichy Province with the meeting with Rectors and others in charge of communi-

ties. From August to November he continued the visitation to 31 communities in the Trichy Province.

From 1 to 3 September the General Councillor presided at the meeting of the Council of the Salesian Provincial Conference of South Asia (SPCSA) held at the Provincial House in Trichy.

From 4 to 15 September he visited some of the communities in Hyderabad Province (INH) leading the consultation for the new Provincial.

On 21-22 October was the guest of Salesian Bishop Rajendra George in the Thuckalay diocese.

On 10 November the Regional led an online meeting with all the Moderators of Provincial Chapters for the South Asia Region.

On 12 November, Fr Biju joined the South Asian Economers Forum meeting online.

During the Extraordinary Visitation of Trichy Province, as well as animating and interacting with Rectors and those in charge of communities (16 August and 24 November) and with the Provincial Council (17 August and 23 November), the Regional also conducted one-day animation programmes for young confreres (those in formation and university studies on 28 August), and for Salesian Brothers (16 November).

On 24 November, during the monthly commemoration of Mary Help of Christians, the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Trichy came to a conclusion and the three-year preparation for the celebration of the Silver Jubilee in 2024 was announced.

On November 24-25, the Regional went to Chennai where he visited the confreres at the Provincial House. On 25-26 November he visited the Don Bosco Skill Mission and the Don Bosco Renewal Centre at Bangalore (INK).

On 26-27 November the Regional visited the Provincial House in Mumbai (INB) and visited the community at Don Bosco Matunga and the Dominic Savio High School in Andheri.

On 28 November the Regional returned to Rome to take part in the General Council's winter plenary session.

The General Councillor for the America South Cone Region

At the end of General Council's summer session, the Councillor left for Brazil to begin the Extraordinary Visitation in the Province of St John Bosco in Belo Horizonte.

The first days he participated in the Curatorium for the Novitiate at Barbacena (BBH, BCG, BMA) and the Postnovitiate in Campo Grande (BCG, BBH, BMA, BRE).

From the 5th to 7th he was able to make a fraternal visit to some of the houses in the Campo Grande Province (Provincial House, Dom Bosco College and Parish, Mary Help of Christians Parish, and the Prenovitiate at Indápolis). After, he took part in the CRESCO Curatorium in Guatemala City (10-11 August).

On 12 August the Extraordinary Visitation of the Province of Belo Horizonte began in the name of the Rector Major. The visitation ended on 24 November. During this time he was able to speak with all the confreres of the Province (114); he visited the 17 canonical houses. He got to know the situation of the 15 colleges, 11 parishes, some with their chapels in rural areas, and 4 public chapels, the four centres for reception and formation of working minors (CESAM), the social works, the youth centres and the festive oratories, the job training centres.

He met twice with the Provincial Council and once with all the Salesian Rectors. He also spoke with three diocesan bishops and with the Provincials of the Daugh-

ters of Mary Help of Christians.

On 20 August he took part online in the Curatorium for the Theologate at Santiago, Chile (CIL, PER, BOL, ECU) and visited, again for the Curatorium, the interprovincial Novitiate at Curitiba (BSP, BPA, BPA) on 26 August.

When visiting communities he met with the Salesian Family groups (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Salesian Cooperators, Past Pupils, ADMA, Volunteers of Don Bosco, the *Damas Salesianas* Association and also with a *Canção Nova* Group).

He took part online with the Curatorium for the Theologate in Buenos Aires (ARS, ARN, PAR, URU) on 6 September; and the Novitiate at Montevideo (URU, ARN, ARS, CIL, PAR) on 8 September. He presided at the Curatorium for the Postnovitiate at Lorena (BSP, BRE, BPA) on 14 October, and on 15 October was at the interprovincial Theologate at Lapa, São Paulo.

During this time he presided over two meetings of the *Rete Salesiana del Brasile* (RSB) for the Provinces of Brazil (CIS-BRASIL), CISUR and CIS.

From 17 to 27 October he visited Recife Province to begin the consultation for the appointment of

the new Provincial. On 24 and 25 November he visited the Ongoing Formation Centre in Quito where he had a meeting with the formation team.

On 28 November he returned to Rome to take part in the General Council's winter session.

The Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region

The General Council summer session concluded on 28 July, and the following day Fr Roman, General Councillor for the Central and North Europe Region, spent some days with his family in Warsaw, Gębice and Dębno.

On 8 August he met with the Provincial of Piła Province (PLN) and the following week with the Provincial of Warsaw Province (PLE) and the Provincial of Wrocław Province (PLO). From 8 to 19 August he visited the many Salesian communities in Poland.

On 20 August he was in Stuttgart in Germany for some days with the family.

From 26 to 30 August he visited two works in Lithuania, Vilnius and Telschei.

On 1 September he took part in celebrations for the 1st Centenary

Jubilee of the Salesian school in Łódź (PLE). From 7 to 9 September he was in Szczecin, Dębno and the Postnovitiate in Łąd (PLN).

From 20 September to 7 October he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation to the Irish Province (IRL).

On 8-9 October he held an online meeting for the beginning of the consultation for the appointment of the new Provincial of Great Britain Province (GBR); and in Poland from 10-14 October, he opened the consultation for the new Provincial of Wrocław Province (PLO).

From 20 October to 21 November he carried out the Extraordinary Visitation for the Belgium North and Holland Province (BEN).

On 22 November he was again at the Postnovitiate in Łąd (PLN) where he had a discussion with the Rector of the formation community. On 24 November he was back in Rome and then the following day in Turin to take part in the meeting of provincials of the two European regions until 28 November.

Back in Rome on 1 December, he took part in the work of the General Council's winter session.

During the session on 15 December he had an online meeting with the Provincial of Hungary (UNG), while on 20 December he presided at the online meeting of the Conference of Salesian Polish Provinces (KSIP).

On 24 December he went to Poland for some days with the family and to meet the Provincial of Piła Province (PLN) as well as for some chats with confreres in communities in Warsaw Province (PLE).

General Councillor for the Interamerica Region

After the conclusion of the summer session, on 8 August he arrived in Guatemala City where he visited the Provincial House, then presided at the Curatorium for CRESCO on 10 August, the Curatorium for the Postnovitiate on 11 August and the Curatorium for the Theologate on 12 August.

On 14 August he went to Haiti to begin the consultation for the appointment of the new Superior and to celebrate the Eucharist with first professions. Unfortunately the new earthquake that struck this area did not allow him to carry out the full program he

had planned. So the Councillor remained in Santo Domingo from where, on the 16th he began the consultation online.

On the following days he visited the community at Barahona and on 21 August he flew to Lima for the Extraordinary Visitation to the Province of Peru, which took place from 23 August to 23 November.

During this period he visited 15 communities and spoke personally with all the confreres and with the lay people responsible for some sectors of our works. In addition to these, he had meetings and celebrations with some groups of the Salesian Family.

During the Extraordinary Visitation he was received by some of the bishops: Archbishop Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio, Archbishop of Lima and Primate of Peru, Archbishop Salvador Piñeiro García Calderón of the Archdiocese of Ayacucho, Bishop Martín Quijano Rodríguez SDB of the Vicariate of Pucallpa and Bishop Jesús María Aristin Seco CP of the Vicariate of Yurimaguas.

On Saturday 25 September, he took part in the festivities and celebrations for the 130th anniversary of the arrival of the Salesians in Peru. The celebration took

place at the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Lima.

On 27 September, the opening ceremony of the diocesan process for the beatification and canonisation of the Servant of God Fr Luis Bolla, a Salesian missionary, was held at the Archbishop's Palace in Lima.

From 1 to 3 September, he took part in the annual meeting of the Provincials of the Interamerican Region; on 20 November he presided at an extraordinary Curatorium at the novitiate in Coacalco. On 22 November he presided at the Curatorium meeting for the Postnovitiate in Quito. All these meetings took place online.

On 25 November he returned to Rome for the General Council's winter session.

General Councillor for the Mediterranean Region

After the General Council's summer session, the Councillor for the Mediterranean Region went to Spain to take part in the course from 1 to 7 August for the new Rectors from the Region in Santiago de Compostela.

On 3-4 August he had a meeting in Madrid with the Provincials of Spain, the Vicar of the Rector Ma-

yor, the General Councillor for Youth Ministry and the Director of the National Youth Ministry Centre in Madrid, to continue reflection on the future of the Centre which will be moved to a new location in Madrid.

Returning to Rome for the administration of the anti-COVID vaccine, he was at Colle Don Bosco from 12 to 16 August for the meeting of the prenovices from Europe. On 17 August, in Messina, he gave a talk to the confreres about to make their perpetual profession.

After some time spent in Spain with the family, he presided at the celebration of the first profession of the novices at Genzano on 8 September.

From 9 to 24 September he began the first part of the Extraordinary Visitation to Sicily (ISI), taking advantage of this time during which the Visit to the Middle East was planned, but for health reasons could not be carried out as planned.

From the 25th to the 30th he was in Portugal for the meeting of the Iberian Conference of the Mediterranean Region and the CISI Conference, together with the Vicar of the Rector Major and the Economer General.

He then moved to Lebanon to finally begin the Extraordinary

Visitation in the Jesus the Adolescent Province of the Middle East. The visit lasted from 5 October to 10 November.

The visit began on 5 October in Beirut (Lebanon) with the houses at Al Fidar and El Houssoun. On 10 October, in Syria, he visited the houses at Kafroun, Aleppo and Damascus. On 23 October he returned to Beirut from where he left to visit the houses in Egypt: from 24 to 28 El Sahel, Cairo, from 29 October to 2 November Zeitun, Cairo and from 3 to 8 November Alexandria. From Alexandria, he participated online in the Curatorium for the San Tomaso Theological Centre in Messina.

On 10 November, he left for Spain where he had a meeting with the Iberian Conference.

On 17 November, he presided at the Curatorium for the Novitiate at Genzano and, later, the one for the Postnovitiate at San Tarcisio in Rome.

From 18 to 23 November, at Turin Valdocco, he took part in the retreat preached by the Rector Major to the Provincial Councils of the Mediterranean Region.

On 24 and 25 November, he took part in the Curatorium meetings for the formation houses: the Novitiate at Colle, Crocetta. Turin and the Postnovitiate at Nave.

From 26-28 November he took part in the 8th Meeting of Provincials from Europe, and on 29-30 November he had the opportunity to visit the Zatti House for specific formation of Brothers in Barcelona, returning again to Rome to take part in the General Council sessions from 1-24 December.

During this time he had other meetings including the distribution of the Rector Major's solidarity funds from the Mission Offices.

He attended the celebration of the 120th anniversary of the foundation of the House of Corigliano d'Otranto; the meeting of the Board of Directors of the Madrid Mission Office; the celebration of a festive moment with the Spanish confreres at UPS, the Christmas celebrations at the FMA Novitiate in Castelgandolfo and at the Tempio Don Bosco in Cinecittà. After celebrating the Nativity of the Lord with the community, he left for Spain on 28 December to spend a few days with his family.

5.1 New Salesian Provincials

The following (in alphabetical order) are some details of Provincials appointed by the Rector Major with the consent of his Council in December 2021

1. *BADJI JÉSUS BENOÎT* *Provincial of the Northwest Africa Province (AON)*

With the consent of his Council, on 23 December 2021, the Rector Major appointed Jésus Benoit Badji as Provincial of the new Our Lady of Peace Province of Northwest Africa (AON) for the six year term from 2022-2028.

The Our Lady of Peace Northwest Africa Province is one of the three new circumscriptions canonically erected by the Rector Major. Fr Jésus Benoit will be its first Provincial. It stretches over 3000 km, from Benin to Senegal, and will therefore include, from east to west, Benin, the future headquarters of the new circumscription, Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea Conakry, Gambia and Senegal.

This new Province was created from the Delegation that was based in the Malian capital Bamako, and which will now be in Dakar, since Mali will no longer be part of the new AON Delegation.

At the moment there are more than a hundred confreres who will be part of this new Province. Of these, most have already provided their willingness to remain in this new Province, even though they come from outside of it.

Fr Jésus Benoit was born on 21 February 1974 in Tambacounda, Senegal. He is the son of Nicolas Badji and Joséphine Sambou. He made his novitiate in Gbodjomé (Togo); he professed his first vows on 8 September 1999 and his perpetual vows on 30 July 2005 in his birth city of Tambacounda. He completed his theological studies in Yaoundé and was ordained a priest in Tambacounda (Senegal) on 18 July 2009.

Fr Jésus Benoit was in Zogbo (Cotonou) from 2002 to 2004, then in Cameroon at St Augustine's Theologate from 2005 to 2010. His other years and experiences took him mainly to Togo, first in 1999, then in 2004 and, since his ordination, to Mary Help of Christians Parish in Gbényédzi from 2010 to 2013, then to Maison Don Bosco – the Salesian Postnovitiate – from 2013 to 2017, and finally to the Blessed Philip Rinaldi Novitiate in Gbodjomé since 2017, where he was at the time of his appointment.

Fr Jésus Benoit has accumulated experience at local and provin-

cial level. He served on the local council at Gbenyedzi, became Economer of the Akodessewa Postnovitiate, Rector of this Postnovitiate and Economer of ISPSH Don Bosco - now ISDB.

At the Provincial level, from 2005 to 2013 he was Delegate for Social Communication, then Youth Ministry Delegate in the Eastern sector and, since 2013, Provincial in charge of formation as Delegate and then as Vice-provincial since 20 April 2016. Fr Jésus Benoit is currently completing his doctorate in philosophy.

2. *BONHOMME MORACHEL* *Superior of the Haiti Vice-province* *(HAI)*

On 9 December 2021, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council appointed Fr Morachel Bonhomme as the sixth Superior of the Blessed Philip Rinaldi Haiti Vice-province (HAI). He will carry out his mandate for a six-year term from 2022-2028.

Fr Morachel Bonhomme was born in Jacmel, Haiti, on 29 November 1960; he entered the novitiate in Jarabacoa, in the Dominican Republic, in 1987, and professed his first vows as a Salesian on 16 August 1988, then his perpetual vows on 5 June 1994 in

Pétion-ville, Haiti. He was ordained priest on 26 July 1998 in Thorland.

He was Economer and Rector at Fleuriot House in Port-au-Prince (2001-2005); Rector for five years (2006-2011) in Carrefour-Thorland; in charge and School Principal of the Salesian presence in Gressier (2011-2013); then Vice-rector (2013-2015) and then Rector (2015-2019) of the work in Fleuriot-Tabarre. Since 2019, he has held the position of Rector of the Salesian work in Pétion-ville.

He has also held numerous posts at provincial level: he was Economer of the Vice-province from 2000 to 2004; Delegate for the Salesian Family from 2004 to 2009; he was part of the Formation Commission from 2006 to 2008, and was Vice-provincial.

He is currently Delegate for Formation, a post he has held continuously since 2009; Delegate for Youth Ministry - Vocations Sector, since 2016; Assistant for the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB); and Vice-provincial 2016.

Fr Morachel succeeds Fr Jean-Paul Mesidor who has led the Vice-province during the last six years.

3. *BRIODY JAMES GERRY*
Provincial of Great Britain Province
(GBR)

With the consent of his Council, the Rector Major has appointed Fr James Gerry Briody as Provincial of St Thomas of Canterbury Province of Great Britain for a second term.

Fr James Briody was born in Motherwell, in the County of Lanarkshire (Scotland), on 7 May 1964. He entered the Salesian novitiate in Dublin on 7 September 1983 and made his perpetual profession in 1991 in Glasgow, Scotland. He was ordained deacon at Battersea, London, on 17 July 1994, and his priestly ordination took place a year later, on 22 July 1995, at Motherwell, the city of his birth.

Over the years, he has held a number of positions, including Councillor in the Salesian House in Farnborough (2002-2005) and in Bootle (2005-2015), where he was also Headmaster from 1 September 2005 to 1 September 2015.

On 14 August 2016 the Rector Major, with the consent of his Council, appointed him Provincial of Great Britain, a post he has been reappointed to for the next six years.

4. *CRISAFULLI JORGE MARIO*
Provincial of Africa Nigeria Niger
Province (ANN)

On 23 December 2021, at the conclusion of the first part of the General Council's winter session, the Rector Major, with the consent of his Council, appointed Fr Jorge Mario Crisafulli as the first Provincial of the new Blessed Artemides Zatti Province of Africa Nigeria Niger (ANN), for the six-year term from 2022-2028.

Fr Jorge Mario Crisafulli was born on 19 March 1961 in Bahía Blanca, Argentina. He is the son of Salvatore Crisafulli and Gladia Gamberini. He entered the novitiate in San Miguel de La Plata, where he professed his first religious vows on 30 June 1980, and then his perpetual vows six years later, in 1986, in Junín de los Andes. He was ordained a priest in Bahía Blanca on 5 May 1990.

Fr Crisafulli belonged to the ABB Province of Argentina and then went as a missionary to the AFW (Anglophone West Africa) Province, of which he was the second Provincial from 2010 to 2016.

Before being appointed Provincial, he was in charge of and then Rector of the Sunyani community and, while Vice-provincial, was the Rector of the Provincial House

in Ashaiman, Ghana. Following his service as Provincial, Fr Jorge was Rector Freetown (Fambul) community in Sierra Leone, where the Rector Major's most recent appointment reached him.

He is now the first Provincial of the Province of Africa Nigeria Niger, canonically erected on 3 March 2021, under the patronage of Salesian Brother Blessed Artemides Zatti.

The new ANN Province includes the territory of Nigeria, with 9 communities: Abuja, Akure, Ibadan, Ode Ijebu, Koko Kontagora, Ondo, Onitsha and the two communities in Lagos (St Joseph and Mary Help of Christians in Iju). The headquarters of the Province will be in Iju, Lagos.

Over the coming years the new Provincial with the confreres of the Province will open new presences in Niger, thus extending the field of the Salesian mission.

Fr Crisafulli speaks Spanish, English and Italian.

5. *POLAŃSKI BARTŁOMIEJ* Provincial of Poland West Province (PLO)

On 14 December 2021, during the work of the General Council's winter plenary session, the Rector Major, with the consent of his

Council, appointed Fr Bartłomiej Polański as Provincial of the Province of St John Bosco in Poland West (PLO) with its seat in Wrocław for the six-year term from 2022-2028.

Fr Bartłomiej Polański was born in Oleśnica, Poland, on 21 March 1982. He entered the novitiate in Kopiec on 27 August 2001, where he professed his first vows as a religious on 8 September 2002 and his perpetual vows on 7 September 2008. He was ordained priest in Wrocław on 22 May 2010.

After working in the novitiate as socius to the Novice Master, from 2011-2018 he carried out his pastoral ministry in Środa Śląska. From 2018 he was the Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry and from 2019 also a Provincial Councillor.

The PLO Province where Fr Polański will become the eighth Provincial, was erected in 1979 and currently has 177 Salesians running 23 canonically erected works.

Fr Polański will succeed Fr Jarosław Pizon, in office since 2016.

6. *SANTIAGU THOMAS* Provincial of India Hyderabad Province (INH)

On 10 December 2021, the Rector Major with the consent of his

Council appointed Fr Santiago Thomas as the sixth Provincial of St Joseph's Province, Hyderabad, India (INH).

Fr Thomas succeeds Thathiredy Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy who has accompanied the confreres from 2016 until now.

The Hyderabad Province currently has 209 Salesians working in 31 presences in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha. Fr Santiago, Vice-provincial since 2018, will succeed Fr Thathiredy Vijaya Bhaskar, who has ably served the Province for the past six years.

Fr Santiago was born on 23 August 1976 in Kottaiyur, in the district of Sivagangai, Tamil Nadu. His family belonged to the Parish of St Francis Xavier, Broadway, Chennai. After completing high school in the Salesian St Gabriel's school in Broadway, he entered the prenovitiate in Pallithammam, which then belonged to Chennai Province and now to the Tiruchy Province. He then entered Hyderabad Province as a novice in 1994 and made his first profession on 24 May 1995.

Sent to Yercaud for his postnovitiate, he completed his practical training at the house of philosophy in Karunapuram and then for two years in the novitiate at

Manoharabad. He completed his Masters in Social Work (MSW) at Sacred Heart Tirupattur. He made his perpetual profession on the Feast of Don Bosco, 31 January 2004. After completing his specific formation at the Sacred Heart Theological Studentate in Shillong, he was ordained a priest on 27 December 2005.

During the first five years of his priesthood he was very involved in the pastoral and social initiatives of the Province. In 2011, he was appointed the Director of Bosco Seva Kendra, the Province's Planning and Development Office, and also joined the Provincial Council in the same year. He served as Rector of the Don Bosco in Ongole for three years, from 2015 to 2018; and in 2018 he was appointed Vice-provincial.

He also served the INH Province as Delegate for Youth Ministry and Formation.

Fr Thomas Santiago will carry out his mandate for the six-year term from 2022-2028.

7. SORO KOLOTCHOLOMA DENIS Provincial of the Southwest Africa Province (AOS)

On 23 December 2021 the Rector Major with the consent of his Council appointed Fr Soro

Kolotcholoma Denis as the first Provincial of St Joseph's Province of Southwest Africa (AOS) for the six years from 2022-2028.

St Joseph's Province, canonically erected on 3 March 2021, is characterised by the great complexity and variety of the West African sub-region. It begins with 20 communities: 3 in Ivory Coast and 6 in Togo for the two French-speaking nations; on the English-speaking side, 3 communities in Sierra Leone, 3 in Liberia and 5 in Ghana where the provincial headquarters are located. Currently the Province has 175 confreres.

Fr Soro was born on 16 May 1972 in Korogho diocese in the Ivory Coast. He is the son of Philippe Oualehe and Cécile Silue Tailiga. He made his novitiate in Maison Don Bosco (Togo) and made his first religious profession on 16 August 1993 in Lomé, and his perpetual profession on 10 July 1999 at Yaoundé, Cameroon, where he spent his four years of theological formation. He was ordained deacon at Yaoundé on 10 June 2001 and on 25 January 2003 was ordained priest at Sikasso, in Mali.

After his years of formation in Togo, Benin, Cameroon and Mali, Fr Soro held many positions: priest in charge (Sikasso, Zogbo),

principal of a formation centre (Lomé, and Zogbo), parish priest (Abidjan and Bobo-Dioulasso) and has been Rector on three occasions (Abidjan, Bobo-Dioulasso and Sikasso).

At Province level, Fr Soro was part of the Social Communication team from 2006 to 2010, then responsible for parish coordination from 2010 al 2012, after which he was appointed Provincial Councillor from 12 June 2013 until his current appointment.

On 20 April 2016, he was appointed Provincial Delegate for the Senegal-Mali-Guinea Conakry Delegation, a responsibility that was renewed on 4 June 2019 for a second three-year term. Since 2018, Fr Soro was also a member of the Youth Ministry Commission, and in particular responsible for the Coordination of Schools, and in this capacity, Provincial Representative at Don Bosco Tech Africa.

Fr Soro has a degree in theology and philosophy. He speaks Senufo, English and French.

8. *VIEIRA JUNIOR FRANCISCO INACIO* Provincial of Brazil Recife Province (BRE)

During the General Council meeting on Wednesday 15 December

2021, the Rector Major with the consent of his Council appointed Fr Francisco Inácio Vieira Junior as the new Provincial of the St Aloysius Gonzaga Province in Brazil-Recife (BRE).

Fr Francisco Inácio Vieira Junior is 40 years old and was born in the State of Ceará, in Juazeiro do Norte, the land of Fr Cícero Romão Batista, a great benefactor of Salesian work. His parents, Francisco and Maria, live in this city, as does his older brother. Here he met the Salesians and decided to begin his vocational journey.

He made his novitiate in Jaboatão-Colônia, where he professed his first vows on 30 January 2003. He continued his formation in the postnovitiate in Recife, then in Bongi for his practical training. He studied Theology in São Paulo, at the Lapa Centre. He made his perpetual profession

on 30 January 2009 in Bongi, Recife and was ordained a priest on 18 December 2010 in Recife (the Sacred Heart Basilica).

Between 2011 and 2015 he studied Liturgy at the Sant'Anselmo Institute in Rome and since February 2015 he was part of the formation team at the Theological Studentate in Lapa, as Vice-rector of the community and coordinator of studies at the institute.

In February 2019 he was called back to his Province in Recife as Delegate for Youth Ministry, Councillor and Provincial Secretary, posts he has held until today.

Fr Francisco Inácio Vieira Junior, appointed for the six year term from 2022-2028, will succeed Fr Nivaldo Luiz Pessinatti, who has spent six years in the generous service of animation and governance of the Province of North-East Brazil.

5.2 Our deceased confreres (2nd list July-December 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 ALMASIO Mauro	Treviglio (Italy)	12.09.2021	84	ILE
P ARDITO Sabino	Rome (Italy)	07.12.2021	82	RMG
P BALDISSERA Luigi	Mestre, Venice (Italy)	04.07.2021	90	INE
P BARBERO Pierino Riccardo	Sanremo (Italy)	04.08.2021	87	ICC
P BAUER Bruno	Munich (Germany)	08.12.2021	65	GER
P BIESMANS Jozef	Oud-Heverlee (Belgium)	12.10.2021	85	BEN
P BISIO GRILLI Enrique <i>Was Provincial for 6 years</i>	Montevideo (Uruguay)	18.07.2021	77	URU
P BŁĘDEK Eugeniusz	Przasnysz (Poland)	14.12.2021	86	PLE
P BOEKHOLT Peter	Tutzing (Germany)	17.09.2021	77	GER
P BOKŞEBELD Wim	Port-au-Prince (Haiti)	05.08.2021	80	HAI
P BORŠNIK RUDI <i>Was Provincial for 6 years</i>	Scutari (Albania)	05.07.2021	97	IME
P BOTTA Angelo	Rome (Italy)	04.10.2021	96	RMG
D BOVO Luigi	Florence (Italy)	06.11.2021	76	ICC
P BOYLE Hugh	Dublin (Ireland)	31.12.2021	84	IRL
P BRANDL Josef	Hamburg (Germany)	05.11.2021	81	GER
P BUTLER John Evangelist	Fenor Hill (Ireland)	01.10.2021	93	IRL
P CANCIANI Angelo	Castano Primo (Italy)	18.11.2021	92	ILE
P CÁNEPA Angel	Buenos Aires (Argentina)	26.11.2021	87	ARS
P CASTEJÓN BLAZQUEZ Pablo	Arévalo (Spain)	13.12.2021	89	SSM
P CASTRO LOPEZ Julio	Caracas (Venezuela)	29.10.2021	84	VEN
P CAVICCHIOLO Gianfranco	Ivrea (Italy)	04.08.2021	89	ICP
P CERVANIA Vicente	Makati City (Philippines)	04.08.2021	73	FIS
L CHASSEUR Pietro	Castello di Godego	19.11.2021	91	INE
P CHÁVES RAMÍREZ Cristóforo	Mexico City (Mexico)	22.08.2021	49	MEM
P CHISTÉ Sergio	Salerno (Italy)	01.11.2021	97	IME
P COSTA Lecy Gomes da	Campinas (Brazil)	01.10.2021	91	BSP
P COTTEN Léon	Noisy-le-Sec (France)	12.09.2021	91	FRB
L COUFORT Theodore	Roanne (France)	01.12.2021	82	FRB
P CUNNINGHAM Michael <i>Was Provincial for 6 years</i>	Manchester (England)	16.10.2021	77	GBR
P D'ANGELO Anthony	Tampa, Florida (USA)	22.09.2021	98	SUE
S D'ANGELO RIVAS Hugo Ernesto	Montevideo (Uruguay)	15.10.2021	62	URU
P DARCEL Michel	Cambrai (France)	10.12.2021	84	FRB
L DAS Joseph	Chennai (India)	25.08.2021	87	INM
L DEMEYER Etienne	Brussels (Belgium)	14.08.2021	83	BEN

SURNAME AND NAME	PLACE of death	DATE	AGE	PROV
P DEMMING Georg <i>Was Provincial for 9 years</i>	Munich (Germany)	21.12.2021	83	GER
P DURAIRAJ Vincent Senior <i>Was Provincial for 6 years</i>	Chennai (India)	31.07.2021	84	INM
P ESTÍBALEZ EGUILUZ Jesús	San Sebastián (Spain)	04.07.2021	68	SSM
P FAVALE Agostino	Rome (Italy)	01.12.2021	101	UPS
P FERNANDEZ Ruben	Cebu City (Philippines)	14.08.2021	69	FIS
P FERRAROLI Alessandro	Bologna (Italy)	07.11.2021	84	ILE
P FILIĆ Sebastijan	Zagreb (Croatia)	30.11.2021	81	CRO
P FORMATO Ermelindo	Bova Marina (Italy)	30.07.2021	82	IME
P FRANCISCHI Francisco Prado de	São Paulo (Brazil)	15.07.2021	92	BSP
P GAGNÉ Robert	Montreal (Canada)	17.09.2021	81	SUE
P GAISÁN VALLE Marcos	Santander (Spain)	25.12.2021	87	SSM
P GAMBINO Vittorio	Rome (Italy)	02.07.2021	92	UPS
P GARCÍA CASTELBLANCO Pedro Elías L.	Santiago, Chile (Chile)	28.10.2021	93	CIL
P GASPARINI Domenico	Turin (Italy)	14.11.2021	90	ICP
P GÂTEAU Jacques	Nice (France)	07.08.2021	95	FRB
P GONZÁLEZ SANTOS Guillermo	Sevilla (Spain)	27.09.2021	91	SMX
P GONZÁLEZ VILLANUEVA Pedro	Mexico City (Mexico)	22.11.2021	83	MEM
P GREPPI Livio	Verduno (Italy)	08.10.2021	95	ICP
P GUANGDIAT Nicholas	Dimapur, Nagaland (India)	22.09.2021	51	IND
P HAJKOWSKI Stanisław	Grodziszczany (Poland)	14.11.2021	68	PLE
L HIGGS Thomas	Cedar Hill, Missouri (U.S.A.)	23.12.2021	81	SUE
L HOANG Van Chuyen	Ben Cat (Vietnam)	31.10.2021	97	VIE
P HURNÍK Alois	Ostrava (Czech Republic)	20.12.2021	86	CEP
L ILLERA GUTIERREZ Teodoro	Caracas (Venezuela)	10.11.2021	87	VEN
L INTERLANDI Gaetano	Catania (Italy)	21.12.2021	100	ISI
P JERSTICE Brian	Aldershot (England)	27.11.2021	92	GBR
P JUBERT Joseph	Dinan (France)	21.10.2021	95	FRB
P JYRWA Dominic Savio	Shillong (India)	22.07.2021	36	INS
P KOGA Tetuo	Sao Paulo (Brazil)	09.10.2021	78	BSP
P KRALJEVIĆ Žarko	Rijeka (Croatia)	01.10.2021	81	CRO
P KUSTERER Ernst	Hamburg (Germany)	06.09.2021	77	GER
P LA GUARDIA Renan Michael	Makati City (Philippines)	03.08.2021	56	FIN
P LAGGER Germain	Yaoundé (Cameroon)	28.08.2021	86	ATE
P LAI Giovanni	Rome (Italy)	19.10.2021	83	ICC
P LARES MACÍAS Rubén	Zapotiltic, Jalisco (Mexico)	20.12.2021	73	MEM
P LEDDA Salvatore	Ragusa (Italy)	07.11.2021	87	ISI
P LEILUA Mikaele Senio	Suva (Fiji Islands)	10.09.2021	58	AUL
P MAGEEAN James Francis	Manchester (England)	09.09.2021	76	GBR
L MANO Riccardo	Bra (Italy)	07.11.2021	91	ICP
P MATA NATAL Emilio	León (Spain)	19.09.2021	94	SSM
P MATT Wendelin	Hamburg (Germany)	21.10.2021	82	GER
P MATUŠŮ Emil	Zlín (Czech Republic)	26.11.2021	72	CEP
P McCAUGHEY George	Raynestown, Dunshaughlin (Ireland)	27.10.2021	84	IRL
L MEEGAN Gerald	Tampa, Florida (U.S.A.)	19.12.2021	79	SUE

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P MÉLIDA AMEZGARAY Jesús M.	El Campello (Spain)	29.10.2021	90	SMX
P MÉLIDA AMEZGARAY José Luis	El Campello, Alicante (Spain)	24.11.2021	88	SMX
P MENEGHETTI Lino	Mestre (Italy)	09.07.2021	83	INE
P MIDALI Mario	Rome (Italy)	26.11.2021	93	UPS
P MILITANTE George Abraham Pace	Cebu (Philippines)	01.07.2021	68	FIS
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years</i>				
P MONDOL Samuel Sudorshon	Kolkata (India)	28.12.2021		INC
P MORÁN GONZALEZ Jesús	Leon (Spain)	08.12.2021	100	SSM
P MUÑOZ RUIZ Eusebio	Madrid (Spain)	01.09.2021	76	SSM
<i>Was Provincial for 6 years and for 6 years Delegate of the Rector Major for the Secretariate of the Salesian Family</i>				
P MUZINGA KATOLO Thomas	Lubumbashi (Dem. Rep. Congo)	09.10.2021	42	AFC
P NADACKAL George	New Delhi (India)	02.08.2021	66	INN
P NAPIERAŁA Kazimierz	Pila (Poland)	31.10.2021	77	PLN
P NARDELLI Claudio	Viamao (Brazil)	17.11.2021	91	BPA
P NEDIĆ Nedo	Split (Croatia)	12.12.2021	69	CRO
P NICOLUSSI Giuseppe	Ancona (Italy)	29.09.2021	82	UPS
<i>Was Provincial for 12 years and for 12 years General Councillor for Formation</i>				
L NKONDE LIBAY Pierre	Likasi (Dem. Rep. Congo)	25.10.2021	64	AFC
P NOCERA Calogero	Alcamo (Italy)	15.08.2021	98	ISI
L NOGUERA i URGELLES Joan	Barcelona (Spain)	03.10.2021	84	SMX
P NYLAND Patrick Joseph	Dublin (Ireland)	11.08.2021	63	IRL
P OKA Lorenzo Michinobu	Chofu, Tokyo (Japan)	11.09.2021	84	GIA
P ONDREJKA Aloiz	Bardejov (Slovakia)	06.11.2021	90	SLK
P PAK Thaddeus (Byong Dal)	Gwangju (South Korea)	03.09.2021	90	KOR
P PALIĆ Antun	Novi Marof (Croatia)	09.10.2021	78	CRO
P PETROMILLI Leonardo	Frascati (Italy)	18.12.2021	90	ICP
P PHAM Van Chinh	Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)	24.07.2021	65	VIE
P PIETSCH Willibald	Ensdorf (Germany)	07.08.2021	92	GER
P PILOTTO Luigi	Mestre, Venice (Italy)	15.12.2021	97	INE
P PONTON PLAZA Celso	Quito (Ecuador)	14.08.2021	87	ECU
P PUGGIONI Giuseppe	Rome (Italy)	20.10.2021	83	ICC
L PUNZI Antonio	Salerno (Italy)	01.11.2021	87	IME
P REEN Jeremiah	Largo, Florida (U.S.A.)	10.07.2021	80	SUE
L REQUARDT Horst	Trier (Germany)	04.11.2021	86	GER
P ROA BLANCO Ramon	Caracas (Venezuela)	01.11.2021	48	VEN
P RODRIGUEZ ALAYÓN José Antonio	Bogotá (Colombia)	31.12.2021	88	COB
P ROELOFS Theo	Wijchen (Netherlands)	10.11.2021	85	BEN
P ROSARIO PEÑA Luis Emilio	Santo Domingo (Dominican Rep.)	29.12.2021	76	ANT
S RWE GASIRA Aphrodisius Medard	Nairobi (Kenya)	03.10.2021	33	AFE
P RYDZEWSKI Jerzy	Dabrowa Bialostocka (Poland)	08.08.2021	86	PLE
P RYKAŁA Jan	Łódź (Poland)	26.10.2021	88	PLE
P SADECK Francisco José dos Santos	Pará (Brazil)	02.07.2021	65	BMA
P SAGUES OLLA José Antônio	Manaus (Brazil)	20.11.2021	83	BMA
P SÁNCHEZ GIMÉNEZ Jesús Andrés	Córdoba (Argentina)	10.09.2021	81	ARN
P SANTULIANA Giulio	Castello di Godego (Italy)	21.08.2021	83	INE
P SAVASSA ORLANDIN Genézio	Manaus (Brazil)	02.09.2021	83	BMA

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P SCOMPARIN Mario	Santiago del Chile (Chile)	27.08.2021	86	CIL
P SENNO Carlo Luigi	São Paulo (Brazil)	12.09.2021	97	BSP
P SOUSA SERRA DE Wilton Magno	Belo Horizonte (Brazil)	16.10.2021	84	BBH
P SURESH Xavier Antony Minoth	Chennai (India)	06.12.2021	36	INM
P TAMARES Roger	Makati City (Philippines)	24.07.2021	56	FIN
P TSUCHIYA Tarcisius Shigeaki	Osaka (Japan)	29.12.2021	87	GIA
L VALSANIA Giovanni	Turin (Italy)	26.08.2021	83	ICP
P VATTOTH Thomas	Dimapur (India)	08.12.2021	86	IND
P VÁZQUEZ MARTÍNEZ Siro	Seville (Spain)	31.08.2021	89	SMX
P VEGAS Gil Leoncio	Seville (Spain)	23.11.2021	86	SMX
P VELIATH Dominic	Bangalore (India)	27.11.2021	79	INK
P VIGNATI Luigi	Rome (Italy)	15.09.2021	91	ICC
P VILLALBA ALBARIÑO Vicente	Fernando de la Mora (Paraguay)	13.09.2021	88	PAR
P VUILLERMOZ Samuele	Turin (Italy)	07.12.2021	88	ICP
P WALCZYKIEWICZ Bogdan Józef	Ciechanów (Poland)	15.11.2021	78	PLE
P WARNIEWSKI Franciszek	Szczecin Wielgowo (Poland)	03.10.2021	85	PLN
P XAUSA Fernando	Mogliano Veneto (Italy)	13.11.2021	81	INE

