



acts

of the general council

year CV

Convocation GC29

N. 441

official organ
of animation
and communication
for the
salesian congregation

Sede Centrale
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acts

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

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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LETTER OF CONVOCATION OF GENERAL CHAPTER 29

Turin, 24 September 2023

My dear confreres,

On the day on which we celebrate the sending of the 154th missionary expedition to Valdocco, as our father Don Bosco did on 11 November 1875, I too feel the joy of being able to share with you the reflection and the decision we have taken in these days, after having carried out a wide-ranging consultation with the Salesian Provinces on our forthcoming 29th General Chapter.

We are all aware that the events of the last few months have thrust us into a congregational dynamic that leads us to the preparation of an important General Chapter after the circumstances of the pandemic that struck the world and prematurely interrupted the work of the 28th General Chapter that we were celebrating in Valdocco at the time.

Together with the General Council, we saw fit to consult the ninety-two provinces around the world, even though we knew that time for reflection and local response was short. But we are very happy to have received a contribution from 70 Provinces.

We perceived great motivation and commitment, and I am personally very grateful as Rector Major, and so are we all in the General Council.

And now is the moment of the announcement and preparation for the forthcoming General Chapter 29 which must be, as on other occasions, “the principal sign of the Congregation’s unity in diversity” (C. 146).

1. CONVOCATION OF GC29

At this time, with joy and great hope, from this Salesian holy place that is “our” Valdocco, **and in accordance with Article 150 of our Constitutions, I am convening the 29th General Chapter**, which will have what follows as its theme, developed in three core areas (or parts) of particular importance, and which are real challenges for the Congregation.

“PASSIONATE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, DEDICATED TO YOUNG PEOPLE”

Living our Salesian vocation faithfully and prophetically

*“So they came to him... to be with him and to be sent out
to proclaim the message” (Mk 3,14-15)*

Note: Scripture quotations in English from the Revised New Jerusalem Bible

Core area 1. **ANIMATION AND CARE OF THE TRUE LIFE OF EACH SALESIAN**

*“Rekindle the gift of God that you possess”
(2 Tim 1:6)*

- As believers conquered by God we fix our gaze on the Salesian consecrated life centred in Jesus Christ.
- Always taking care of our own vocation and that of others,
- Faithful to God, together as a community, in living a common vocation, a fraternity that is authentic, evangelical and attractive.
- Accompanying fully the different stages of our own life and that of the confreres; taking care of initial and ongoing formation.
- With the commitment to live evangelical fraternity in our religious communities and in openness to those who suffer experiences of exclusion in the world.

Core area 2. SALESIANS, SALESIAN FAMILY AND LAY PEOPLE TOGETHER “WITH” AND “FOR” YOUNG PEOPLE

“One heart and mind” (Act 4:32)

- By completing the reflection undertaken by GC28 we seek to grow in *shared mission*.
- With spiritual and apostolic vitality in our commitment to children, adolescents and young adults in situations of the most varied kinds of poverty.
- Because it is not enough to offer educational services, we seek to educate and evangelise by accompanying life and offering new opportunities to those on the edge of survival.
- Looking for new models of presence, preferential options, new expressions of the Salesian charism in God’s name.
- In communion with young people towards an “integral ecology” to which they are so sensitive, and for formation in the “digital culture” where young people live.
- Seeking, together with the laity, financial sustainability of Salesian presences without ever excluding the poor.

Core area 3. A COURAGEOUS REVIEW AND RE-PLANNING OF THE CONGREGATION’S GOVERNANCE AT ALL LEVELS

*“Do not be conformed to this world,
but be transformed by renewal of mind,
so that you may discern what is the will of God,
good, pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2).*

- For charismatic fidelity: an animation and governance that looks after people’s lives and the mission to the poorest and knows how to modernise service structures.
- In carrying out an evaluation of leadership in the Congregation: it is time to evaluate the leadership and effectiveness of the animation of the General Council; to look at discernment for elections in the General Chapter; to develop reflection for

courageous decisions on Sectors, Secretariats, structuring of the Regions of the Congregation, services of the General Council itself.

- With an evaluation of the governance of the provinces and the animation of their life that responds to the juridical matters already proposed and new ones that will come from the Provincial Chapters.

1.1. REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF THIS THEME

The chosen theme is the result of a rich and profound reflection that we have carried out in the General Council on the basis of the answers received from the Provinces and the vision that we have of the Congregation at this time. We were pleasantly surprised by the great convergence and harmony we found in the many contributions from the Provinces, which had a lot to do with the reality we see in the Congregation, with the path of fidelity that exists in many sectors and also with present challenges.

As can be seen from the chosen theme, it refers to the centrality of God (as Trinity) and Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives, without ever forgetting young people and our commitment to them. And what is offered as a subtitle captures our priority and concern at this time, both in religious life in general and in our consecrated life in particular. If fidelity and prophecy were lacking in our Congregation, we would be like the light that does not shine and the salt that does not give flavour. We have expressed our concern during many General Council sessions about the lack of charismatic identity that we sometimes perceive. In the letter that will be published in the Acts of the General Council 440, I will address precisely this reality by taking stock of the achievements of these years and the challenges that I perceive and that are so because we have not been able to overcome certain weaknesses that make us more vulnerable.

With this proposed theme for the 29th General Chapter, our intention is that the Congregation may highlight those chal-

lenges, those shortcomings that in a very real way instead of launching us forward on the path of fidelity to the Lord and in the prophetic witness of our lives, slow us down, limit us, make us or may make us incapable of challenging. There are many beautiful things in the lives of the majority of the confreres, Provinces and the Congregation in many countries. But this is not enough and cannot serve as “consolation”, because the cry coming from the world, the great and new kinds of poverty, the daily struggle of so many people – I won't say just poor, but also simple and hard-working people – cry out to us, look to us, ask help from us as they raise their hands. How many times have I stated in these ten years as Rector Major that we cannot remain peacefully in our houses, sometimes as large and solid as castles, when there is so much pain around us. And the General Council is also very sensitive to this situation, as are many Provinces.

In short, with the help of the Provinces through consultation, we believe we have identified the main reasons for concern and the signs of our Congregation's vitality, always with the cultural traits of each context.

In the Chapter theme we propose to focus on what it means for us *to truly be Salesians who are passionate about Jesus Christ*, because without this we will offer good services, we will do good to people, we will help, but we will not leave behind much else worthwhile.

As I told you in the presentation of the Post-Chapter Reflection of GC28, “Our world, the Church and the young along with their families, need us today as they did yesterday, in order to continue on their journey of fidelity to the Lord Jesus. They need us as *significant and courageously prophetic* individuals. May the Lord grant us this gift. Mediocrity and fears would allow us to offer little to the young, and this little would not be able to transform their life and fill it with meaning.”¹

When we read in the Gospel that Jesus called those he wanted

¹ GC 28, pp. 10-11.

“to be with him and to be sent out to proclaim the message” (Mk 3:14-15), he is telling us that Jesus chooses and calls to himself those he wants, and among them he has called us. The Kingdom of God is made present and those first Twelve are also an example and a model for us and for our communities. These twelve were taken from ordinary people, with strengths and weaknesses: it was not a community of the pure or a group of friends.

And we, from the moment of our profession, have opted for true companionship with Jesus, in a person-to-person relationship that totally involves us. And from this involvement with Jesus, we feel urged in the direction of our young people.

The mission of Jesus continues and is visible in the world today also through us, his envoys. We are consecrated to construct ample places of light for today’s world, to be prophets. We have been consecrated by God to follow his beloved Son Jesus, but to truly live as people *conquered by God*. Therefore, once again, it is all about the Congregation’s fidelity to the Holy Spirit, living, in the spirit of Don Bosco, a *Salesian consecrated life centred in Jesus Christ*. If this is missing – and sometimes it is missing – we can offer services, have schools, and vocational training, have oratories and youth centres, and even homes for welcoming young people..., but without having focused on Him, today we are here and tomorrow no.

And I can say that there are various voices in the Congregation asking us to address this reality and our way of living in the Lord with and for young people, including the poorest. More authenticity is sought and desired. And there is the desire and expectation for a courageous General Chapter where things are said; we do not want to get lost in phrases that may sound good, but do not touch life. In general, the confreres wish to see a Salesian Congregation always faithful to the Lord and with him, faithful to Don Bosco. They would like us all, as Salesians of Don Bosco, to live with this passion for God and for the mission. It hurts when this is not the case; it hurts when there are different speeds in the approach to dedication and the radical nature of the gospel.

All this is what is at stake in this GC29, provoked also – dare I say it – by the Spirit of God through many mediations, including, first and foremost, the Holy Father himself with his decisions.

Dear confreres, I still need to emphasise one aspect that I am sure many of you have perceived. I am referring to that sure continuity that can be seen with GC28, since the theme focuses strongly on our Salesian consecrated identity, with a real desire to grow in the fidelity and prophetic value of our life, as well as on the mission shared with the laity and the Salesian Family, but always taking the young and their families, so often poor and distressed, into our hearts. A continuity also in reference to issues concerning the animation and governance of the Congregation that were not addressed previously. I can assure you that almost all the Provincials have asked that we give some time in the Chapter for this – because in the previous one it was impossible – to delve into these essential and vital situations.

1.2. Other tasks

Although it is already indicated in Core area 3, I wish to make it explicit because I believe it will reassure the confreres, who in their responses have asked what I will now say: “there is a surprising coincidence in the responses of the Provinces in asking that we also clarify many juridical questions in a definitive way, that require changes to the Regulations (because life has already gone beyond what we have legislated), or that with much rigour and courage we address the evaluation and necessary changes in the government of the Congregation at all levels.”

It is requested that all juridical issues that could not be completed in the previous General Chapter because of COVID be addressed. A response is expected, for example, to the new question regarding the Holy Father, Pope Francis’ authorisation that even in clerical congregations (such as ours) one can have coadjutor brothers as community superiors (directors/rectors). There are also many other issues to be resolved.

1.3. THE DATES FOR HOLDING THE 29th GC

The 29th General Chapter will have almost the same duration as the previous one and will begin on **16 February 2025 and end on 12 April 2025**, on the eve of Holy Week, the same day Don Bosco arrived at Valdocco with his boys, 12 April 1846, adapting the shed to become a chapel.

The opening celebration of the Chapter will be the Eucharist of the Holy Spirit at 5pm in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

1.4. Place of celebration of General Chapter 29

After searching several places, we felt that once again the most suitable place was **Valdocco - Turin (Italy)**. In order to offer all of us the best possible facilities for excellent reflection, prayer, work and decision-making, we have already booked sufficient rooms in and around Valdocco itself.

All the facilities will be very well prepared for the event, and certainly the fact that we will be in this beautiful Salesian holy place, where we were all born to a vocation, will be an element that will help us reach the deepest and most charismatic part of the work we want to do.

1.5. MODERATOR of General Chapter 29

After reviewing the history of the last General Chapters and their Moderators, taking into account the reality of our Congregation and the cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as the growth of the Congregation, especially now in the Region of Africa and Madagascar, but also in South Asia and in some Provinces of Oceania, I asked the Regional Councillor for Africa and Madagascar, **Fr Alphonse Owoudou**, to be the Chapter Moderator. Fr Alphonse has accepted with great generosity and I am sure that all of us are grateful to him.

2. METHODOLOGY FOR PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

The single theme with its three complementary aspects must be dealt with or handled differently depending on the core area, in the preparation of the Provincial Chapters.

- The first two core areas, on our being consecrated and the shared mission, can be immediately addressed by the Provincial Chapters with a reflection on the points contained, according to the traditional methodology of the work of the Provincial Chapters, seeking to offer the reflection of the Province, best practices and also operational proposals on the various aspects already contained in the proposal that will arrive.
- The third core area which can we refer to as the “institutional” area, must have a different, reverse approach. We are of the opinion that the General Council can take in hand the evaluation of the leadership in the Congregation (the shape of the General Council divided into sectors, regions and secretariats), of the animation of the Regions and their structuring, because over these years we have experienced and known situations that can really enlighten us a lot.

The sole purpose of this methodological choice is to offer a draft of a wholistic proposal that will be sent to the provincial chapters, so that all the provinces of the Congregation can see it and enrich it, or reject, change, delete; all of which serves to arrive at the GC29 with a pre-considered and balanced opinion and wholistic overview.

- We can say the same for the juridical issues. We believe they must be sent to the Provincial Chapters for initial study. This will allow us not to have a juridical commission in GC29 (opinion stated by many Provinces in their contribution sent for the summer consultation on GC29). For this to happen, a juridical commission will be set up to work on juridical issues in the coming weeks, just as the Council will work on the

animation and governance of the Congregation, in order to be able to send everything to the Provincial Chapters in good time.

The methodology of the Chapter assembly to be held in Valdocco, as well as those of the individual Provinces, must be more inductive than on previous occasions, according to the contributions from the individual Provinces.

Such a methodology will also allow us to get to know the best and finest practices that exist in so many Provinces, a very rich heritage that we can and must share.

3. HOW WORK WILL PROCEED

We are now therefore called upon to reflect, at the provincial level, on the three proposed core areas with their different aspects. On this basis, a series of questions were developed that have been left open to offer everyone, in the individual Provinces, the opportunity to fully express their reflections.

On the first core area regarding the **ANIMATION AND CARE OF THE REAL LIFE OF EVERY SALESIAN**, we will ask ourselves, including in the Provincial Chapter:

1. How can we revive our dialogue and a living, creative and quality personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. What are our proposals for accompanying the confreres in human and vocational terms in the different stages of their life?
3. How can we strengthen the link between initial and ongoing formation and our specific mission? How can we live the educative and pastoral experience as a source of spirituality and also discover the “spirituality of the courtyard/playground”?
4. How to create formal and informal dynamics of inter-generational and intercultural community life sharing?
5. How can we more strongly value our fraternal life in

community, made up of listening, dialogue and caring for one another, helping one another to be faithful to our consecration?

6. What are some practices of fraternal life/community life shared with young people, or with lay people or other groups in the Salesian Family?

On the second core Chapter area SALESIANS, SALESIAN FAMILY AND LAY PEOPLE TOGETHER “WITH” AND “FOR” YOUNG PEOPLE, we ask ourselves:

1. What can be done to grow in and truly arrive at a real *conversion towards shared mission*? And shared responsibility with the laity? What are the real obstacles to overcome? How do we overcome them?
2. How can we make decisive progress in rediscovering the “new mission territories” to which we are called, especially with children, adolescents and young adults in various situations of poverty? How can we deal with the reality of mission in settings involving other religions or multi-religious settings?
3. What are the best practices of shared responsibility, accompaniment and joint formation with the laity, leading to an increasing integration of the laity and the Salesian family in our Educative and Pastoral Communities?
4. How do we imagine new models of presence so that they are an effective proposal to guarantee our identity as educators and evangelisers in our Works, maintain them and promote new ones?
5. What specific actions do we suggest to pay particular attention to the mentality and practice of vocation promotion and to the improvement of structures where we accept vocations – vocations processes, host communities and qualified accompaniers? How do we involve communities in this mentality and practice of vocational animation?
6. How can we sensitise our young people to carry out concrete actions regarding integral ecology?
7. How can we live in the “digital culture” with a clear Salesian

identity and pastorally accompany young people in this environment?

With reference to the third core area, this has already been indicated above in how to work in the individual provinces (see what is written regarding the methodology for the Provincial Chapters).

4. THE TIME FOR GC29 IS HERE

This expression takes me back to five years ago when I was writing the convocation letter for GC28. Not much time has passed, and yet how many things we have experienced.

I think we can say that we are arriving at GC29 with a similar feeling. We have, by grace and Divine Providence, a wonderful opportunity to prepare our Congregation and each of us Salesians to transmit more light, to be more and more passionate about God and about the Lord Jesus. A wonderful opportunity to truly leave our Congregation in the “hands” of the Holy Spirit who will guide us as he did with Don Bosco.

We have a wonderful opportunity to seek to live more and more in fidelity, simply and authentically, enthusiastically and with commitment, and at the same time, with deep faith and prayer, in a frenetic and utilitarian world, convinced as we are that God accompanies us. A wonderful opportunity to be significant. Some will realise this. Others not, but it doesn't matter. It will only be important to serve in the name of the Lord, to do everything for Him in love, and to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to those to whom we are sent, their families, and those who have no family, no voice, and no opportunity. So we will be a bit more prophetic (or very prophetic).

“Here am I, send me” (Is 6:8) says the Lord. This is why we believe that the new GC29, in which we are already somewhat immersed without expecting it, will be a wonderful opportunity in faith for our Salesian Congregation worldwide.

Dear confreres, I only lack one thing to ask of you: to prepare ourselves over the next sixteen months in a personal, community and provincial journey in an attitude of profound prayer.

Without prayer, without a heart that continually matures in faith, all we can do are sociological things that will be over almost before they begin. Only in faith does God have the power to make all things new.

May our Mother the Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, accompany us as she accompanied Don Bosco throughout his life until the moment when she had him understand that “She had done everything”.

With a huge fraternal embrace,

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

ÁNGEL FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb
Rector Major

2. GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES

2.1. PREPARATION PROCEDURES FOR GENERAL CHAPTER 29

The preparation of GC29 involves a schedule of engagements, marked by the following calendar.

– *September 2023*

During the period 18 - 26 September, the Rector Major and the General Council studied the theme of General Chapter 29, its procedures and calendar. On 25 September, the Rector Major appointed Fr Alphonse Owoudou as Moderator of GC29, in accordance with Article 112 of the General Regulations.

On the same day, 25 September, the Rector Major, in accordance with Art. 112 of the Regulations, appointed the Technical Commission for GC29, composed of the following confreres: Fr Alphonse Owoudou, Fr Guido Garino, Fr Patrick Anthonyraj, Fr Francesco Marcoccio, Bro. Jean Paul Muller, Fr Stefano Martoglio.

This Commission, chaired by the Moderator, met in Turin on 26 September and drafted the following contributions:

- Preparation process for GC29, as of the starting date set by the General Council.
- Outline for reflection and work on GC29, offered as an aid to Provinces.
- Suggestions for the preparation and conduct of the Provincial Chapters.
- Juridical norms for the elections

The contributions prepared by the Technical Commission were forwarded to the Rector Major through the Moderator and have become part of this issue 441 of the Acts of the General Council.

– *October 2023*

On 4 October, the Rector Major officially convoked General Chapter 29, through no. 441 of the AGC, in accordance with articles 150 of the Constitutions and 111 of the General Regulations. He then established its main purpose, place and starting date.

With the Acts of the General Council No. 441, the following are sent to the Provinces: the letter of convocation of the Rector Major with the theme and aims of GC29; the guidelines concerning the process of preparation for GC29; the outline of reflection for the local and provincial communities; the instructions for the conduct of the Provincial Chapters; the norms for elections.

– *November 2023*

The Regulator sends Provincials the forms for the minutes and specimen forms for the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and the confreres to GC29. They are also posted on the Salesian Headquarters website: www.sdb.org

The Rector Major appoints the Commission for the revision of the minutes of the election of the Provincial Delegates to the GC29 (cf. Reg. 115). Under the responsibility of the Moderator, this commission checks in advance the count and the lists of confreres belonging to the Province or Vice-Province in view of the Provincial Chapter.

– *December 2023 – June 2024*

By the end of December 2023, the Provinces shall send the “General List of Confreres belonging to the Province in view of the Provincial Chapter” to GC29 (cf. *AGC 441*).

In the period from December 2023 to June 2024 the preparatory work is carried out in the Provinces and Provincial Chapters are held (C. 171-172), the date for which must be set with the following deadline in mind.

– *February 2024*

The Rector Major appoints the Pre-Chapter Commission to prepare the “Working Document” to be sent to participants of GC29 (cf. R. 113).

– *1 July 2024*

By this date, the following documents must be received by the *GC29 Moderator* in digital format:

- Minutes of the election of GC29 Delegates and their substitutes
- Contributions from the Provincial Chapters.
- Contributions from individual confreres or groups of confreres.

Proposals arriving after 1 July 2024 cannot be considered.

The Provincial Chapters, which will study issues related to the Province and will have established resolutions that must be approved by the Rector Major with his Council in accordance with Constitution 170, shall send these resolutions to the *Secretary General*.

– *End of July 2024*

The contributions received are sorted and classified by a group specially established by the Moderator.

– *September 2024*

The Pre-Chapter Commission meets to prepare the “Working Document” (Reg. 113).

– *November 2024*

The GCG29 “Working Document”, prepared by the Pre-Chapter Commission, is sent in digital format to the Provincials and Provincial Delegates to GC29.

– *December 2024 - February 2025*

Members of GC29 shall study the documents in their own provinces.

– *16 February 2025*

Beginning of General Chapter 29 Arrival by 15 February.

– *Conclusion of the Chapter*

The duration of GC29 is seven weeks and four days; the conclusion is scheduled for 12 April 2025.

2.2. OUTLINE FOR REFLECTION AND WORK ON THE GC29 THEME

This outline offers some suggestions for what Provinces must do in preparation for GC29. They can be useful to focus the attention of the confreres, local communities and the Provincial Chapters on the theme of GC29, guiding the reflection and work of everyone.

2.2.1. Letter of convocation of GC29

The letter of convocation of our 29th General Chapter (GC29) comes at a crucial moment for the Congregation, marked by the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the dream at nine years of age and the appointment of the Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, as Cardinal. GC29 intends to follow up on the recent Chapters, GC27 and GC28, focusing on charismatic identity and the profile of the Salesian today, in collaboration with the laity. It is essential to carefully study the letter of convocation of the Rector Major and discuss its contents in community.

The main theme of the Rector Major's letter and therefore of the GC29 is "Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people". This theme underlines the importance for us to return to the heart of the *Christ-centred Salesian consecrated identity*. The three core areas that articulate it concern the need to renew the spiritual life and formation of Salesians through an authentic relationship with Christ and a deep commitment to mission. This encourages personal and community growth through prayer, reflection and spiritual accompaniment. In addition, GC29 stresses the importance of collaboration between Salesians, lay people and members of the Salesian Family in the educational and pastoral mission. It is important to recognise the value and

contribution of each member of the EPC in the realisation of the Salesian Educational Project and to promote a synodal culture of communion and sharing of responsibilities. Finally, the structures of animation and governance of the Congregation need to be reviewed and updated to make them more effective and responsive to the challenges of today. This requires us to critically evaluate leadership methods and make courageous decisions for the good of the Congregation and its mission.

It will therefore be important, at all steps and levels of reflection, to bear in mind that while the theme is unique, it is divided into core areas that delve into different aspects of Salesian vocation and life. Their understanding is fundamental, but they are not independent of each other. There is a continuity that is not limited to simple chronology in the study, but is also systemic and thematic. The common thread of this continuity is communion with Jesus, which gives rise to synodality with the laity, with and for young people. In addition, GC29 will have to make it clear how decisive the institutional core area – the third – is for guaranteeing and fostering our fidelity and the fraternal and pastoral charity explored in the first two core areas. It is clear that the service of authority finds in its etymology and vocation the growth, development and welfare of individuals, communities and especially the beneficiaries of our mission. During the work of the Provinces and the Chapter Assembly, this link between the personal spiritual and vocational level, the community and pastoral level, and the institutional level that keeps our Society cohesive and efficient due to animation and government will be highlighted.

Reflecting on the Chapter theme “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people” is a journey with deep connections with the current Magisterium of the Church and that of the Congregation. Pope Francis, with his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, invites us to care for creation and an integral ecology. *Fratelli Tutti*, moreover, emphasises the importance of *taking care* of the

other and of universal brotherhood, with the emphasis on the call received from Christ. This call implies care for oneself and one's neighbour, shared mission and the consequent *accompaniment of both confreres, our co-workers, and especially young people*, especially those in situations of poverty. Many of us remember the document “New wine in new wineskins (cf. Mk 2:22)” which in 2017 addressed the issue of the revision of consecrated life, inviting a constant renewal of the *sequela Christi*, fraternal life and the evangelical counsels. These aspects are found in the third core area of GC29, which deals with the review of congregational governance at all levels. From the Salesian point of view, the 28th General Chapter, and the recent 2023 Strenna of the Rector Major, with their focus on the identity of the Salesian today and on collaboration with the laity and young people themselves in mission and formation, underline the importance of this synodal dimension.

The 29th General Chapter therefore represents a unique opportunity for the Congregation to discuss the challenges and opportunities presented by the theme and the three proposed core areas, in the light of ecclesial documents and biblical reflections. We are all invited by the Spirit to work together for a faithful and prophetic life of our Salesian vocation, rediscovering the essence of our consecrated identity and renewing our commitment to the educational and pastoral mission with the EPC, with and for today's young people.

2.2.2. Process for preparation for GC29

The preparation of the 29th General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco (GC29) involves several phases, including the Provincial Chapters, which play a crucial role in the process. The forthcoming Provincial Chapters, convened by the Provincials and Superiors of Vice-Provinces as soon as possible, constitute an important step on the journey to GC29. According to our Constitutions (Articles 171 and 172), Provincial Chapters have

different objectives and functions. First of all, they allow the members of the Congregation to reflect and discuss issues related to Salesian life and mission, taking into account the specific challenges and opportunities of each province. They offer a space to share the experiences, concerns, and aspirations of the Congregation's members at the local level. Secondly, the Provincial Chapters will contribute to the preparation of GC29 by providing information, suggestions and proposals on the topics and issues to be addressed during the General Chapter. These contributions are essential to ensure that GC29 addresses issues that are relevant and significant to the entire Congregation. Finally, the Provincial Chapters are also an opportunity for the members of the Congregation to actively participate in the process of discernment and election of superiors, taking into account the needs and priorities of the Congregation at the local and international levels.

2.2.3. Articulation of the GC29 theme

The Salesian is a mystic of the Spirit, a prophet of fraternity and a servant of the young. By living and working together in community, his following of Jesus Christ becomes prophetic and attractive. Through his personal life project, he gives primacy to God and asks him for the “grace of unity”. With his planning mentality, he actively plans, executes and reviews the educative and pastoral plan with the members of the Educative and Pastoral Community to ensure the integral evangelisation of young people. Aware of his charismatic identity, he shares with the laity the charisma and mission of educating young people in the faith.

This is how the last General Chapters defined the Salesian. This vocation is a following of the Eucharistic Christ, faithful to the Father and to those for whom he gives his life. As stated in our Constitutions, “From him we draw energy and endurance in our work for the young” (C 88). *The true life of each Salesian is called to be a Eucharistic life.* Through this quasi-sacramental

fidelity, a deep communion and a sharing of responsibilities in journeying together is created. Consequently, the service of authority is also lived with and out of love, “in imitation of Christ and in his name” (C 121), for the Master and King who washed the feet of his disciples.

Animation and care of the true life of each Salesian

The importance of Salesian consecrated life centred in Jesus Christ. Salesian consecrated life is of importance for us for our identity as believers conquered by God. We are therefore called to focus our attention on this spiritual dimension, recognising the central role of Jesus Christ as a guiding figure and model to follow. Our Salesian charismatic identity is based on total dedication to God and a commitment to live according to Gospel values, putting into practice the teachings of Jesus in our daily lives and in our actions, following in the footsteps of Don Bosco our father. In this way, we can deepen our relationship with God and grow in our faith, contributing at the same time to the proclamation of the Gospel and the spreading of the Kingdom of God on earth.

Caring for our own and others’ vocation. We are called to pay special attention to caring for our own vocation and that of other members of the community. Fr Vecchi saw in these two aspects an expression of an authentic fraternal life and pastoral care.¹ We must recognise the importance of nurturing and supporting each individual's calling so that all may realise their full spiritual potential and contribute to the common good. The care of vocation also involves attentive listening to the Word and voice of God (C 87), which calls each one to follow a particular path of life and service. It is necessary to be ready to help and support everyone in their vocational discernment, offering them spiritual support, advice and guidance.

¹ Vecchi, J. E. (1992). *Pastorale giovanile: una sfida per la comunità ecclesiale*. Elle Di Ci.

Fidelity to God and fraternity in the community. We feel called to live together as a community, sharing a common vocation and building an authentic, evangelical and attractive fraternity (C 49). This requires fidelity to God and a commitment to put Christian and Salesian values into practice in daily life, promoting unity, solidarity and brotherly love among community members. Salesian fraternity is based on mutual respect, understanding and accepting differences, favouring the spiritual and personal growth of each individual. God calls us to be witnesses of this evangelical fraternity in the world, showing by our example how it is possible to live together in harmony and peace, despite – and even because of – cultural, social and religious differences.

Accompaniment and formation. We accompany and support the different stages of our life and that of the confreres of all ages, taking care of initial and ongoing formation. Accompaniment and formation are essential to ensure the growth and maturation of the confreres and colleagues, so that they can successfully face the challenges and opportunities that arise in their journey of life and service.² Beyond that, we must be ready to learn from each other, sharing their experiences, knowledge and wisdom, in a climate of dialogue and mutual exchange.

Commitment to evangelical fraternity and openness to the excluded. God has called us to live evangelical fraternity in our religious communities and to be open to those who suffer experiences of exclusion in the world. The theme of GC29 reminds us of the need to be sensitive to the needs and suffering of others, especially the poorest, the marginalised and the oppressed. Christ calls us and teaches us to actively engage in the promotion of justice, peace and solidarity, working for the

² Departments for Formation and Youth Ministry (2020). *Young Salesians and Accompaniment. Orientations and Guidelines* - Headquarters, Rome.

transformation of social and political structures that generate injustice and inequality, so as to “be in the Church signs and bearers of God’s love for young people, especially the poorest of them” (C 2). This also implies remaining ready to welcome and support those seeking refuge and protection, offering them a place of hope and spiritual renewal.

Salesians, Salesian Family and lay people together “with” and “for” young people

Completing the reflection undertaken by GC28. The main objective continues to be, after clarifying and consolidating the profile of the Salesian, to progress in the mission shared with the laity, strengthening collaboration between the various members of the Family and the Salesian community. The encounter and collaboration between religious men and women and the lay faithful in particular, appears as an example of ecclesial communion and at the same time enhances apostolic energies for the evangelisation of the world. To achieve this goal, it is essential to deepen the paths of reflection undertaken by the GC28, analysing the different issues, best practices and challenges faced while giving “our attention to the lay people responsible for evangelization of their local area, and to the family where different generations come together and build the future of humankind” (C 29).

Increasing spiritual and apostolic vitality. To sustain the commitment to young people in situations of poverty, the spiritual and apostolic vitality of the Salesian community must be renewed and strengthened. We feel the need to deepen the life of prayer, daily meditation, the experience of the sacraments and opportunities for spiritual renewal (C 91), a greater dedication to the service of those most in need, and a constant search for new ways of evangelising and promoting social justice. We encourage the ongoing formation of community members, in order to develop increasingly effective pastoral and pedagogical skills.

Educating and evangelising. As the Rector Major says well, in addition to providing quality educational services, it is crucial to accompany young people on their path of personal growth, offering them new opportunities and helping them overcome the difficulties they encounter in their daily lives. Therefore, a constant commitment to listening, dialogue and sharing is necessary to create an environment of trust and mutual support. It is also important to promote the integration between education and evangelisation, enhancing the spiritual and transcendent dimension of human experience and fostering the discovery of the meaning of life and personal vocation.

Seeking new models of presence and new expressions of the Salesian charism. In order to respond to the needs of young people and spread the Salesian charism, it is essential to explore new forms of presence and some preferential options. We must pay constant attention to the social, cultural and religious dynamics of the context in which we operate, in order to identify emerging challenges and opportunities for evangelisation. This requirement also corresponds to the third priority of the current six-year period, relating to the “Salesian sacrament of presence” (Priority 3, AGC 434). The Spirit calls us to value creativity and innovation in the design and implementation of pastoral, educational and social activities, in order to make the Gospel message ever more relevant and meaningful to our young people today (cf. GC28).

Communion with young people and formation in integral ecology and digital culture. Working closely with young people is essential to promote an integral ecology and to form them in digital culture in order to understand and interact with the world in which they live. Through GC29, we want to promote a holistic approach to the education and evangelisation of young people, thus taking into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions. Therefore, our educational and pastoral commitment should be constant in the involvement of young people in

community life. In addition, it is essential to develop digital and media skills, in order to effectively and responsibly use new technologies in communication, education and evangelisation.

Seeking, together with the laity, financial sustainability of Salesian presences, without ever excluding the poor. To ensure the financial sustainability of Salesian presences, the experience of our provinces teaches us how important it is to collaborate with the laity and other members of the Salesian Family, in order to identify and implement self-financing and resource management strategies. We are called to pay attention to the efficiency and effectiveness of the activities carried out, in order to optimise the use of available resources, to establish a greater system of solidarity in the works, in the Provinces and in the Congregation, and to always guarantee a quality service to young people and their families. In addition, it is essential to maintain a priority commitment to the poor and the marginalised, and thus bear witness to the Gospel in promoting social justice and the good of all.

A courageous review and re-planning of the governance of the Congregation at all levels

Charismatic fidelity. Charismatic fidelity emphasises the importance of governance and animation that cares about people's lives, the mission and the poorest. In this context, it is critical that our institutions commit to supporting and promoting human dignity, social justice and solidarity among community members. To achieve these objectives, it is necessary that the animation and governance structures are updated and modernised, in order to respond to the needs and challenges of the contemporary world. Moreover, a culture of dialogue, listening and cooperation between the different levels of responsibility should be promoted, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.³

³ Scola, A. (2007). *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*. Vita e Pensiero.

Evaluation of the leadership. This evaluation concerns the assessment of the effectiveness of the animation of the General Council, considering the discernment for the elections at the General Chapter and developing reflections to make courageous decisions regarding Sectors, Secretariats, the structuring of the Regions of the Congregation, and the services of the General Council itself. This process of review and evaluation is essential to ensure that the various levels of leadership are able to guide the Congregation towards achieving its goals and responding to the challenges of the current context. We want to promote a climate of transparency, responsibility and participation among the members of the Congregation, in order to foster a constructive and collaborative work environment.

Evaluating the governance of the provinces and the animation of their life. The evaluation of the governance of the provinces and the animation of their lives consists in ensuring the correspondence between the juridical issues already proposed and those that will emerge from the Provincial Chapters. This evaluation process is essential to ensure that the provinces are able to effectively fulfil their role of supervising and coordinating the Congregation's activities at local and regional levels. It will also be essential to adapt to the changes and new challenges that emerge in the social, cultural and religious context in which they operate. Article 15 of the Regulations also implicitly suggests forming and exercising young people in leadership and the micro-social dynamics of the *polis* in our works and institutions.

Courageous and innovative approach in the management of the Congregation. The importance of a courageous and innovative approach in the management of the Congregation is reflected in the special focus on charismatic fidelity, leadership and governance of the provinces, but also on a worldwide level, thus affecting three levels: the Rector Major and his Vicar, the General Councillors, the Secretariats. However, in recent years, the

experience of governing the Congregation has highlighted the importance of the intermediate level constituted by the Regions, the Provincial Conferences and the Extraordinary Visitations as a method of accompaniment. Evaluating even this intermediate level is of fundamental importance to ensure adequate management of the Congregation in its growing complexity. This approach requires a critical, proactive and dynamic vision, able to anticipate and face the challenges of the contemporary world and to promote the growth and development of the Congregation in its service of animation and governance.

2.2.4. Methodology of Community Discernment

At recent General Chapters, we adopted the methodology of community discernment. In “*Evangelii Gaudium*”, “*Amoris Laetitia*”, in the “Preparatory Document” for the Synod of Bishops on Young People, in “*Gaudete et Exsultate*”, Pope Francis invites us to take up *the practice of discernment*. It is believed that, in keeping with the current direction of the Church and the experience gained in GC28, we can continue with this methodology.

Listening. The first step asks us to listen attentively to the reality around us, with an eye on the lives of the confreres, our communities, EPC and our beneficiaries. We need to recognise the challenges that the current situation presents to us, as well as the opportunities it offers for their growth. In this way, we will be able to identify certain priorities as well as promising or risky expressions that need to be developed or addressed and overcome.

Interpretation. In the second step, starting from the aspects recognised through listening, it is a question of interpreting the situation in depth, identifying the deep causes of well-being or discomfort and understanding the challenges and risks that it entails. This step is a particularly complex one, but also decisive for the success of the entire process of discernment. Only through

a correct interpretation of the situation, based on the principles of the Gospel, the life of the Church, the Constitutions and the signs of the times, are we able to identify the concrete actions to be taken to respond to the needs of young people and the Salesian community. In this regard, the interpretation of the situation prepares the ground for the next step, the step where choices are made.

Choices. The third and last step of the discernment process consists in identifying the choices to be made, which will lead us towards new ways of living the Salesian consecrated identity, taking care of our own vocation and that of others, of communion in the Salesian Family and the whole EPC and with the young people, and of the service of animation in our community, in the Province and in the Congregation. The choices we make must be the result of careful listening and interpretation of the situation, and they must also be prophetic and bold, capable of reinforcing what is already present but still unfinished, overcome what is weak and risky, and finding new ways. The choices must also be essential and fundamental, and may concern processes and steps to be implemented, so that the needs of young people and the Salesian community can be met effectively and efficiently.

Please note. The third core area of GC29 “A courageous review and re-planning of the Congregation’s governance at all levels” will only be addressed by the Provincial Chapters once the complete text, prepared by the General Council, is available. This text will be sent to the Provinces from January 2024.

The process of discernment asks us to focus on some priorities, both in listening and consequently in interpretation, and in choices. A written document will constitute the contribution of the Provincial Chapter to GC29. For each core area, the written document to be sent to the Moderator as the Provincial Chapter’s contribution to GC29 should not exceed two pages.

The Provincial Chapter is advised to avoid paper documents

as much as possible and to use digital technology instead, in order to foster an ecological mindset and to ensure cost savings.

2.2.5. Contributions to be sent to the Moderator of GC29

By 1 July 2024 the various contributions must be received by the GC29 Moderator; they can be of five different types:

- *contributions from the Provincial Chapters on the theme of GC29 “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people”.* These contributions refer to the first two core areas, each of which has a specific form;
- *contributions from the Provincial Chapters on topics concerning the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or the Regulations;* these contributions also have their own separate form; only one proposal should be placed on each form;
- *contributions by individuals or groups of confreres on the theme of GC29 “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people”.* These contributions refer to the first two core areas and have their own form;
- *contributions from individuals or groups of confreres on topics concerning the life of the Congregation, the Constitutions or the Regulations.* These contributions have their own form; only one proposal should be placed on each form.
- *contributions from Provincial Chapters, individuals or groups on topics concerning the service of governance and animation of the Congregation, at all levels.* As explained in the Methodology, we will work on the latter core area later when the text arrives from the General Council for the Provincial Chapters. These contributions also have their own form.

Let us prepare ourselves with prayer and courage for the approaching General Chapter. We are grateful to the Lord for the opportunity to participate in this important event and we are committed to carefully discern His will for our Congregation and for our mission in the Church and in society. We entrust the work of the provinces, commissions, chapter members, experts

and facilitators to the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, who guides and enlightens us along this path. We are certain that her maternal guidance accompanies us in every decision and helps us to pursue our commitment of service to the young and the Church, following the example of Don Bosco. Let us make our own her example and her invitation to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you!” (Jn 2:5)

2.3. OUTLINE OF REFLECTION ON JURIDICAL TOPICS FOR GC29

The Rector Major, in convening the 29th General Chapter, divided the general theme of study into 3 core areas.

The third core area concerns “*A courageous review and re-planning of the governance of the Congregation at all levels*”.

He specified that this third core area touches on three aspects of service.

- **The service of authority in the world community** on topics such as: the effectiveness of the animation of the General Council, methods of discernment in General Chapter elections, arrangements for Sectors and Secretariats, structuring of the Regions. In the letter of convocation this area is deliberately open to gather suggestions and proposals from the provincial chapters.
- **The Service of Authority in the Provincial Community**, taking up the nine topics that the 28th General Chapter could not address due to early closure. Other suggestions and proposals from the Provincial Chapters may also emerge in this regard.
- **Service of authority in the local community.** In this regard, the General Chapter will have to decide whether or not to avail itself of the dispensation granted by Pope Francis to can. 588 §2 CIC (with rescript of 18 May 2022), in reference to the possibility that a non-cleric religious is appointed local Superior and Major Superior, or is elected Supreme Moderator in a clerical Institute of pontifical right.

The following are the nine juridical issues not addressed in GC28. These issues, together with the proposals that will come from the Provincial Chapters, will be placed in order by the Pre-Chapter Commission and offered for reflection by GC29.

PROVINCE

1. Tasks of the Vice-Provincial

CIC can. 620; can. 134 §1; can. 618; can. 619

C 168; 167; 166; 164

R 154

PdV 880-881

Situation

- 1.1. Are the duties as set out in C. 168 sufficiently clear?
- 1.2. Have any special problems arisen in the performance of his duties?
- 1.3. If so, which are they?

Proposal

Are there any proposals regarding the tasks of the Vice-Provincial? If so, which are they?

2. Composition of the Provincial Council

CIC can. 627

C 164

R 155; 160

PdV 878-882

CG23 244 - Ratio 247

Situation

- 2.1. Is the composition of the Provincial Council provided for in C 164 considered satisfactory?
- 2.2. If not, why?

Proposal

- 2.3. Should the Provincial Delegate for Formation, as suggested in Ratio 247, be an ex officio member of the Council in addition to the Vice-Provincial and the Provincial Economist?

- 2.4. If so, why?
- 2.5. Is it considered that in addition to the Vice-Provincial and the Provincial Economist, the Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry should also be a member of the Council by right, given the importance of this Delegate as indicated in GC23 No. 244?
- 2.6. If so, why?

3. Offices, secretariats, provincial commissions

CIC can. 617; can. 618; can. 633
C 123; 124
R 157,5; 160
PdV 815-822
GC23 244; - Ratio 247

Situation

- 3.1. Looking at the current practice and what is indicated in Ratio 247 about the provincial formation commission and in GC23 244 about the provincial youth ministry team, is what is provided in R 160 about the “offices, secretariats and commissions for advice and pastoral activity at the provincial level” sufficient?
- 3.2. If not, why?

Proposal

- 3.3. Are there proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

4. Exclusion of the purchase and preservation of real estate for the sole purpose of income, and any other form of interest-bearing capitalisation.

CIC can. 634; can. 635; can. 640; can. 1254; can. 1284
C 77; 187; 188,4
R 59; 187; 188

PdV 909-914

Economy in service Nos. 14-15; 79; 84-85

Situation

- 4.1. Looking at the current practice, have any problems arisen regarding what is required by the second paragraph of C 187? If so, which are they?
- 4.2. Even in the absence of specific problems, are there doubts about the interpretation in the second paragraph of C 187? If so, which are they?
- 4.3. Are there issues concerning the economic and financial sustainability of individual houses? If so, which are they?
- 4.4. And if so, what has been done to tackle them?
- 4.5. Are there problems concerning the economic and financial self-sufficiency of the Province as a whole? If so, which are they?
- 4.6. And if so, what has been done to tackle them?

Proposal

- 4.7. Are there proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

The questions distinguished the economic from the financial sphere. There may be houses or provinces that have a sustainable economic balance, but an unsustainable financial situation, for example due to delays in the collection of receivables or excessive debts.

A distinction was made between the economic and financial viability of individual houses and the economic and financial self-sufficiency of the province. The latter has different and distinct commitments: maintenance of the provincial headquarters and of provincial services, support for the houses of formation, fees for confreres in formation, extraordinary expenses, etc.

LOCAL COMMUNITY

5. Consistency in number and quality of the community

CIC can. 115,2; can. 602; can. 607 §2; cann. 608-611; can. 665 §1
C 49; 51;182

R 20; 150; 181

PdV 408-411; 420-424 - GC 173-174

Fraternal life in community 3; 55; 57; 64; 66

AGC 422, 25-36

Situation

5.1. Have any particular problems emerged to ensure the consistency of communities in terms of number and quality?

If so, which are they?

5.2. And if so, what has been done to tackle them?

5.3. Are there still aspects of this question that require clarification? If so, which are they?

Proposal

5.4. Are there proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

6. Economist in the local community

CIC can. 636; can. 638 §2

C 179; 184

R 183; 186; 194,3; 198-202

PdV 901-902

GC26, n. 121.

Situation

6.1. Have there been any difficulties in implementing what is required in C 179.1 and 184, which stipulate that in each local community there should be a religious economist/bursar who is a member of the local council? If so, which are they?

6.2. If yes, what has been done to tackle these problems?

- 6.3. Has the Provincial so far exercised the power provided for in GC26 121 to appoint a lay person to act as local administrator of the work? If so, for what percentage of the total number of houses in the Province?
- 6.4. If so, have any positives emerged? Indicate which ones.
- 6.5. And in this case have any problems emerged? Indicate which ones.
- 6.6. Are there still aspects of this question that require clarification? Indicate which ones.

Proposal

- 6.7. Are there any proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

7. Legitimacy of the Rector/Director - local Economist

CIC can. 636 §1

C 55; 176

R 172; 198-202

GC26, n. 121.

Situation

- 7.1. Are there Rectors/Directors in the province who also act as economists/bursars?
- 7.2. If so, for what percentage of the total number of Rectors/Directors?
- 7.3. If so, did the assignment of the local economist/ bursar's tasks to the Rector/Director give rise to any problems? Indicate which ones.
- 7.4. Have any solutions been adopted? If so, briefly describe them.
- 7.5. Are there still aspects of this question that require clarification? If so, which are they?

Proposal

- 7.6. Are there any proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

8. Council of the Religious Community and Council of the Educative and Pastoral Community

C 47; 178-181

R 5; 148; 180

GC24 156-161; 167-172

Situation

- 8.1. Is the Educative and Pastoral Community Council, formally established as indicated by GC24, to be found in the Province's houses?
- 8.2. If so, for what percentage of the total number of houses?
- 8.3. Where the Educative and Pastoral Community Council is established and operates, has there been any interference with the tasks assigned to the Council of the religious community by the Constitutions?
- 8.4. If so, which are they?
- 8.5. Are there still aspects of this question that require clarification? Indicate which ones.
- 8.6. Have any solutions been adopted? If so, briefly describe them.

Proposal

- 8.7. Are there some proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

9. Council of the Work run by the laity under the responsibility of the Province

GC24 180-182

Situation

- 9.1. Are there lay-run works in the province under provincial responsibility?
- 9.2. If so, for what percentage of the total number of works in the Province?

- 9.3. And if so, have any problems arisen in implementing the provisions of GC24 180-181?
- 9.4. Are there still aspects of this question that require clarification? Indicate which ones.

Proposal

- 9.5. Are there some proposals in this regard? If yes, please indicate them briefly.

2.4. PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS

Some suggestions are offered here to the Provinces and Vice Provinces which may be useful for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapter.

2.4.1. Tasks of the Provincial Chapter

“The provincial chapter”, art.170 of the Constitutions states, “is the fraternal gathering in which the local communities strengthen their sense of belonging to the provincial community, through their common concern for its general problems. It is also the representative assembly of all the confreres and local communities.”

The tasks of the provincial chapter are indicated in art.170 of the Constitutions and art.169 of the General Regulations.

In the present case the provincial chapter is convoked primarily and specifically for the preparation of the GC29. In consequence:

- *It will mainly explore the topic of GC29:*
“PASSIONATE ABOUT JESUS CHRIST,
DEDICATED TO YOUNG PEOPLE”
- *It will elect the Delegate or Delegates to the General Chapter, and their substitutes (C. 171,5).*

In addition to fulfilling these primary requirements, the chapter *can deal with other matters of more immediate concern to the province* and considered of particular importance, as provided for by C 171, 1-2.

2.4.2. Preparation for the Provincial Chapter

After receiving the Rector Major’s letter convoking GC29, it is desirable that the Provincial **call his council together:**

- to appoint the *Moderator of the Provincial Chapter* (R 168):
- to analyse more deeply the purpose and theme of GC29, and to clarify the objectives of the PC which is to prepare for it;
- to take notice of the study outline on the theme assigned to GC29;
- to study the norms governing the preparation and carrying out of the provincial chapter;
- to invite likely experts and observers to the chapter (R 168).

If it is considered opportune, the Provincial with his council may appoint a *preparatory commission*, to help the Moderator in preparing the provincial chapter. A provincial preparatory commission is not prescribed by the General Regulations. It has nevertheless proved useful in many provinces for the preparation of the provincial chapter. It is for the Provincial and his council to decide how it should be made up.

The provincial chapter should be convened by a letter from the Provincial encouraging the confreres and the communities to reflect on the theme and to participate in the Chapter's work. In it he will announce:

- the name of the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the members of the preparatory commission (if there is one);
- the date for the opening and place of the chapter, which could be spread over more than one session;
- the manner of grouping of communities which have less than six confreres, for the purpose of electing the delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute (cf. R 163).

After the election of the delegates of the local communities, the Provincial in a second letter will

- communicate to the confreres the names of those elected,
- and present the list of perpetually professed confreres eligible for election to the chapter as delegates of the confreres of the province (cf. R 165, 1-2).

2.4.3. The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter

The Moderator of the Provincial Chapter:

- will decide and inform the communities of the dates by which must take place the election of:
 - the delegates of the communities and their substitutes;
 - the delegates of the confreres (from the provincial list);
 - eventual new substitutes for community delegates if a substitute is subsequently elected from the provincial list as a delegate of the confreres;
- will send to the communities the norms governing the election of the delegates of local communities and the forms for recording the minutes of their elections;
- will also announce the method to be used for the election of delegates of the confreres of the province

2.4.4. The provincial preparatory commission

It will be the task of the **provincial preparatory commission** (if there is one) to study, suggest to the Provincial, and foster all the initiatives it may consider useful for:

- sensitising the confreres to chapter perspectives (by conferences, study days, group and community meetings, etc.)
- helping the confreres to prepare themselves spiritually for the work and obligations associated with the chapter (through retreats, days of prayer, celebrations, etc.)
- clarifying the chapter theme and helping the confreres in their study of it: every confrere could well be given a copy of the letter convening GC29, of the study outline found elsewhere in this edition of the Acts.

The preparatory commission can also suggest to Provincials ways of involving members of the Salesian Family (FMA, DBV, Cooperators, Past-pupils) ... lay collaborators, friends of our works, (religious, competent members of the clergy – including our Bishops and Prelates etc.) requesting their collaboration in the form and areas allowed by our norms and local situations.

In the provincial chapter it is important to find some special way of *involving young people* both at local community level and at that of the celebration of the PC.

The Moderator, in conjunction with the preparatory commission,

- will send out forms to the communities, for collecting the contributions and reflections of the confreres and/or communities;
- will lay down a date by which the forms must be returned to the Moderator of the provincial chapter;
- will study the contributions and proposals sent in by the communities and confreres, and arrange them in a manner which will facilitate their use for the provincial chapter's reflection and decisions.

2.4.5. The carrying out of the Provincial Chapter itself

Every effort should be made to ensure that the provincial chapter is celebrated in a *fraternal atmosphere of reflection and prayer*, and that it is seeking God's will as we try to bring an ever better response to the expectations of the Church and of youth. This will be helped by an appropriate preparation of the liturgy as regards content, method, aids, etc.

Every provincial chapter will have its own brief *set of regulations*, containing norms for work, discussions, and the organisation of the Chapter members into study groups or commissions. For these regulations the norms indicated by the Constitutions and General Regulations should be kept in mind (C 153, R 161, 164, 169) together with any indications found in the provincial directory.

For the *communication of proposals and contributions to the GC28*, the indications given by the Moderator of GC29 must be scrupulously observed. In particular, proposals and contributions must be written on the appropriate forms. Proposals from provincial chapters will carry the details of the voting. They can be written in *Italian, French, Spanish, English or Portuguese*.

2.4.6. Participation of the communities and confreres

It will be convenient at the end of these suggestions to list some duties of the communities and individual confreres.

The communities

- Accompany the whole of the chapter process by their daily prayer.
- Elect their delegate to the provincial chapter and his substitute. They compile the minutes of the election, following the model supplied by the Moderator of the PC.
- Receive and study the motives and material sent them by the Moderator of the PC.
- Deepen their knowledge of the theme proposed in view of the GC28, and submit contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the PC.

The individual confreres

- Follow, through information and prayer, the preparation, realization and conclusions of their provincial chapter.
- A climate of personal conversion is proposed so as to assume the spiritual and pastoral implications of the topic for GC29, “Passionate about Jesus Christ, dedicated to young people”.
- Vote in the election of the delegate of their own community and his substitute.
- Take part in the election of the delegates of the confreres of the province.
- Make a personal study of the theme, availing themselves of aids and of the exchange of ideas in their own community,
- Submit personal contributions and proposals to the Moderator of the provincial chapter and collaborate in the drawing up and discussion of proposals and contributions from their own community.
- Send, if they so wish, personal proposals and contributions directly to the Moderator of GC29, using the appropriate forms.

2.5. NORMS FOR ELECTIONS

2.5.0. Introduction - lawfulness and validity of acts

The provincial chapter is a community act, whose value and consequences transcend the provincial community and the time at which it takes place.

The provincial chapter in fact elects delegates for the General Chapter and draws up proposals for the latter. In addition it can make decisions which, after the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his council (cf. C 170), have binding force for all the confreres of the province, including those who have not taken a direct part in the decision-making.

Its realisation therefore is governed by norms which guarantee that its acts are valid and lawful. These norms are listed in the universal law and in our own proper law (Constitutions and General Regulations), from which the provincial chapter derives its authority.

The observance of the laws concerning validity and lawfulness, and precision in compiling official documents, ensure clarity and expedition at successive stages of the work and eliminate delays, reference back, explanations and sanctions.

As a service to provincials and moderators of provincial chapters the following list of norms and juridical indications is provided. These norms refer to:

- *Canonical erection of houses*
- *Appointments*
- *Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed*
- *Minutes of the elections*
- *Special cases*
- *Formal indications*

2.5.1. Canonical erection of houses

The canonical erection of the house is indispensable (cf. can. 608, 665§1) before the confreres can meet in an assembly which has the power of validly electing the delegate to the provincial chapter, and before the president of such an assembly of the confreres, who is the Rector according to C 186, can take part by right in the chapter (C 173, 5).

For individual houses which existed before 1926 as communities in their own right (and not “*filiati*” i.e. dependent on another community) it is sufficient that there be evidence of its existence before that date in which houses were canonically erected without individual documentation. The same form of erection was made for the houses of Poland existing before 1930.

It is necessary therefore:

- a) to verify in good time the canonical erection of each house;
- b) to verify that in houses recently canonically erected a Rector has been appointed;

It should be remembered that “the one in charge” of a canonically erected house, if he has not been appointed Rector, cannot take part by right in the PC and cannot organise the election of the Delegate of the community to the PC.

- c) To see to the necessary procedure for the canonical erection of those houses not yet erected, before the election of the delegates.

For the canonical erection of a house the Provincial must ensure that it has at least three confreres (cf. can.115 §2); after consulting his council and obtaining the written consent of the diocesan bishop or the equivalent (can. 609 §1), the Provincial must make formal application to the Rector Major (cf. can.608-610); and finally have received from the Rector Major himself the decree of the canonical erection (cf. C. 132 § 1,2).

- d) To indicate the way that canonically erected houses that do not have six confreres should meet together so as to elect the delegate to the PC and his substitute (cf. R. 163).

In the case of *canonically erected* houses with *less than six confreres* the norms of R 163 apply: if possible the provincial should arrange that they meet together so as to form the number of at least six members under the presidency of the rector who is senior by first profession. Thus united they will elect the delegate for the provincial chapter and his substitute. If however because of special circumstances the members of a house with less than six professed members cannot join with another in like condition the provincial will join the community with less than six professed members to a larger one (with six or more professed) and together the members of the two communities with equal rights (both active and passive) will proceed to the election of the delegate and his substitute for the provincial chapter. It should be remembered too that the rector even of a community with less than six professed members (provided it be canonically erected) takes part in the provincial chapter by right.

- e) To assign to a canonically erected house those confreres who belong to a house not yet canonically erected.

In the case of houses *not canonically erected* the provincial will assign the group of confreres concerned to a house already canonically erected in which they can fulfil their duties and exercise their rights as electors together with the confreres of that house. It should be remembered that the “one in charge” of a house not canonically erected does not take part by right in the PC.

2.5.2. Appointments

A verification must be made to see that the appointments of those who take part by right in the provincial chapter are in order and have not lapsed. This is especially important in places where the provincial chapter takes place at a time when there is normally a change of personnel and new assignments.

An appointment is in order when:

- a) it was made in accordance with the Constitutions;
- b) the person appointed has taken possession of his office in the manner prescribed;
- c) his term of office has not expired.

The Superior Council, on 23.6.1978, made the following decisions concerning entry into office and its cessation:

- the appointment of confreres to various offices, at either local or provincial level, becomes effective from the moment that the confrere formally takes over the office;
- such confreres remain in office until their successors formally take over the same office; this must happen not more than three months after the expiry of their mandate.

What has been said above is to be applied, case by case:

- to provincials and superiors of vice-provinces or special circumscriptions (cf. C 162, 168);
- to members of provincial councils (cf. C 167);
- to superiors of provincial delegations (cf. C 159);
- to rectors (cf. C 177);
- to directors of novices (cf. C 112).

For a vice-rector, given that with the approval of the provincial he can take the place of the rector if the latter is seriously impeded (cf. C 173, 5), there must be a formal document regarding his appointment as vice-rector. Sufficient for this purpose is the letter of obedience given to the confrere. There must also be a formal document indicating that the provincial has recognised the serious impediment preventing the participation of the rector in the provincial chapter and approves his substitution by the vice-rector.

2.5.3. Calculation of number of confreres and the various lists needed

The calculation of the number of confreres who belong to a province (or a vice-province) for purposes of the provincial chapter is very important. It determines:

- a) the number of delegates of the province (or vice-province) who take part in the provincial chapter (cf. C 173, 7; R 161-166);
- b) the number of delegates which the province (or vice-province) sends to the General Chapter (cf. C 151, 8; R 114-115, 118)

On this account it is very important to have the following **lists of confreres**.

- A general list of confreres belonging to the province made for purposes of the PC.
- A list of those who take part in the chapter “by right”;
- A list of confreres having “active voice”;
- A list of confreres having “passive voice”.

The norms governing the compiling of each of these lists are as follows:

2.5.3.1. A general list of confreres belonging to the province (or vice-province) for purposes of the PC.

It should be noted that this list of confreres belonging to the province “for purposes of the provincial chapter” does not coincide with the list that is asked for each year for statistical purposes; the latter includes also confreres in “irregular” situations.

The following are to be considered as *belonging to the province (or vice-province) for the purpose of the PC*:

- a) confreres who made their first profession in the province (or vice-province) and are still resident in it at the time the list is compiled (C 160);
- b) confreres who came from another province (or vice-province) as a result of a *definitive transfer* and who still reside in the province at the time the list is compiled (cf. R 151);

The *making of definitive transfers* belongs to the Rector Major (cf. R 151). *Definitive transfer* is considered to have taken place in the following cases:

- confreres who in the act of erection of a new province or vice-province are assigned to it (cf. ASC 284, p. 68, 3.2);
- missionaries who return definitively to their home country and are assigned by the Rector Major to the province he considers most suitable for their condition;
- all those for whom the Rector Major (or the Vicar General) has issued a decree of definitive transfer.

- c) confreres who at the time the list is compiled reside in the province (or vice-province), though coming from another province (or vice-province) on *temporary transfer*, in accordance with the norm of art.151 of the Regulations;

Temporary transfer is brought about:

- either by a mandate of obedience (e.g. when a confrere is sent by obedience to exercise an office (rector, director of novices, teacher, etc. in another province), as long as the mandate lasts;
- or by agreement between two provincials, when a confrere is sent to help in another province (cf. R 151).

Confreres who are also temporarily transferred are counted and vote only in the province where they currently reside.

confreres who belong to the province (or vice-province) by one of the above-mentioned titles: (A, B, C), but who are *temporarily absent for lawful reasons*.

In accordance with R 166 the following are to be considered as “*lawfully absent*” (and hence to be included in the list):

- a) confreres of the province (or vice-province) who at the time the list is made are living temporarily and by express mandate of their own provincial of origin in a Salesian house of another province (or vice-province) for specific reasons of *study, health or work received from their own provincial*;

The confreres referred to here, those temporarily absent for reasons of study, health, or for work given them by their own provincial, are not “transferred”, even temporarily, to another province. They:

- vote in the house where they are resident (outside their own province) for the election of the delegate of the community;
- but for the election of the delegate of the provincial community they are included in the provincial list of their own province .

It should be noted that the work given them by their own provincial, which is referred to here must be effectively a work for their own province of origin. This is evidently not the case of a confrere who resides and works in an inter-provincial house: in a formation community or an inter-provincial study centre, for instance, the formation or teaching personnel belong in all respects to the province of the territory in which the house is situated, and are counted only in that province. Here it is a matter of “temporary transfer” as long as their assignment lasts.

- b) confreres who have received from their own provincial permission for “*absentia a domo*” (cf. can.665, §1) or who have received from the Rector Major (or from the Apostolic See) the indult of “*exclaustration*” (cf. can.686). Confreres who are “exclaustrated” (can.686) or “*absentes a domo*” (can.665), and whose permission to be absent has not expired, are Salesian religious and therefore to be included in the general list. Nevertheless:
- those exclaustrated in accordance with common law (can.687) are deprived of the right of active and passive voice;
 - those “*absentes a domo*” can be deprived of the right of active and passive voice in the judgement of the provincial especially when leave of absence is granted for vocational reasons, at the time the concession is granted; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985.

To be still more precise the following, although still belonging to the province (or vice-province), *must not be counted for purposes of the provincial chapter* and must therefore not be included in the above-mentioned general list:

- a) confreres who have made a formal request for dispensation from priestly or diaconal celibacy; or who have made a formal request for secularisation or for dispensation from perpetual or temporary vows;

The practice is that for the purposes of the provincial chapter, confreres who have made a formal request to leave the Congregation are not counted, even though the request is still under consideration and has not reached a definitive conclusion

- b) confreres who are unlawfully outside community for any reason i.e. *confreres in “irregular” situations*.

The “general list” of the confreres of the province is the one to be used for calculating

- both the number of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter (one for every 25 or fraction of 25 members: R 165, 3),
- both the number of delegates to the GC: one if the total number of confreres is less than 200, two if equals or exceeds 200 (R. 114 as modified by Deliberation n.16 of GC27, in proceedings of the General Chapter 27, n. 91).

As soon as this general list has been compiled, a copy is to be sent to the Moderator of the GC29, according to the norms and the forms he provides. It is his duty to verify the calculations of the individual provinces (or vice-provinces), so as to ensure the validity of the election of delegates to the General Chapter.

2.5.3.2. *List of those who take part in the provincial chapter “by right”.*

This is a list that the Provincial or Moderator of the PC will communicate to the confreres, so that they know which members attend the chapter by right.

In accordance with C 173 the following are members “by right” of the provincial chapter:

- the provincial (or superior of a vice-province);
- the provincial councillors;
- the delegates of the individual provincial delegations;
- the moderator of the provincial chapter;
- the rectors of canonically erected houses, even if the number of confreres is less than six;
- the director of novices.

*As was said earlier, the composition of the chapter of the *circumscriptions with a special statute* is laid down in the respective decree of erection.*

2.5.3.3. *Lists of confreres having “active voice” (electors).*

They are of two kinds of lists:

A) *List for the election of the delegates of each community to the PC.*

This list is compiled in each community and includes all *perpetually and temporarily professed confreres who reside in the community concerned*, including those of other provinces (or vice-provinces) who are there temporarily for reasons of study, health, or for a mandate received from their own provincial of origin (cf. R 165,2).

B) *Provincial list for the election of delegates of the provincial community to the provincial chapter.*

To this list, which is important for the election at provincial level, belong *all the confreres, both perpetually and temporarily professed, included in the “general list” of the province, except those who are deprived of active and passive voice.*

Those deprived of active and passive voice, even though they be included in the general list of the confreres of the province, are:

- confreres who have an indult of exclaustation, in accordance with can. 687;
- confreres who have received permission for “absentia a domo”, and to whom in receiving such permission the right to active and passive voice was not granted.

In the case of the “absentes a domo”, their being deprived of active and passive voice must be clear from the document by which the provincial (with the consent of his council) grants permission for absence; cf. the letter of the Vicar General of 20.01.1985. .

2.5.3.4. Lists of confreres with passive voice (eligible for election).

There are three kinds of Delegates: Delegates of the community for the PC, Delegates of the province for the PC, and Delegates of the province for GC28. For this reason there are three types of lists:

A) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as “delegates of a community”.*

It includes *all the perpetually professed members of the community* (including those of other provinces residing there even if only for reasons of study and health),

- except for those who are already members by right of the provincial chapter (cf. *list 2.5.3.2*)

B) *List of confreres eligible for election to the provincial chapter as “delegates of the province.”*

This list includes all the perpetually professed members on the “general list” of the province (*list 2.4.3.1*), with the exception of:

- those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right (*list 2.5.3.2*),
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice: those exclaustrated and “absentes a domo” to whom the right to active and passive voice was not granted.

C) *List of confreres eligible for election to the GC*

For the election within the provincial chapter of the delegate or delegates of the province to the General Chapter, it should be kept in mind that *all the perpetually professed on the “general list” (list 2.4.3.1) are eligible for election, except:*

- the provincial, who is a member of the General Chapter by right;
- Rector Majors emeriti, present in the province, who are also members by right of the General Chapter;
- confreres deprived of active and passive voice.

3. MINUTES OF THE ELECTIONS

A) The rules for voting and scrutinies for the *Delegate of the local communities* are set out in arts.161-163 of the General Regulations (cf. also C 153).

The corresponding minutes of the election of delegates of the local communities and their respective substitutes must be drawn up on the appropriate forms and be examined by the relevant provincial commission.

This provincial commission for the examination of the minutes of the election of the delegates of the communities will be appointed by the provincial in agreement with the Moderator of the provincial chapter.

B) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for delegates of the province to the PC are set out in art.165 of the Regulations.

The corresponding minutes of the election of the delegates of the province must contain the following details:

- the date of the scrutiny,
- the names of the scrutineers,
- an indication that the procedure required by the Regulations has been observed,
- the results.

The minutes drawn up on the appropriate forms, must be endorsed by the signatures of the one presiding over the scrutiny and of the scrutineers.

C) The rules for voting and scrutinies in the voting for *the delegate(s) of the province to the GC29* are set out in art. 161-162 of the General Regulations (cf. also C. 153).

The minutes relating to the election of delegates to the GC28 and their substitutes must be drawn up only on the

special forms provided for the purpose by the Moderator of the GC28 and in accordance with the instructions they carry.

These minutes must be sent without delay to the Moderator of the GC28, who will pass them to the appropriate juridical commission appointed by the Rector Major for the prescribed examination (cf. R 115).

4. SPECIAL CASES

A) *Salesian Bishops*, even though retired from office and resident in a province, have neither active nor passive voice, and if they are invited to the provincial chapter they do not vote. The same norm applies to Bishops reinserted in Salesian communities (cf. AAS 1986, p.1324).

B) *Rector Majors emeriti* have both active and passive voice in the local community in which they are inserted and in the election of delegates of the provincial community; but if they are elected as delegates to the provincial chapter either of the local community or the provincial community they have active voice in the provincial chapter but not passive voice, since they are already members by right of the General Chapter.

5. FORMALITIES FOR COMPILING THE LISTS OF CONFRERES

1. *Names* of the confreres are to be numbered progressively.
2. *Names are to be given in alphabetical order and spelled as in the Annuario for 2023.*
3. *Use capital letters* for the PATERNAL SURNAME and lower case for the Christian name..
4. Indicate by the appropriate *sign* whether the confrere is
 - a) Priest (P)
 - b) Deacon (D)
 - c) Lay Salesian (L)
 - d) “clerical” student, (candidate for the priesthood) (S).
5. *Indicate* by the letter “t” if the confrere is in *temporary vows*.
6. If a member of the provincial chapter, indicate the title to participation:
 - a) By right
 - b) Delegate of local community
 - c) Delegate of Provincial community.

