



Dear Confreres and Friends,

The first article is a scripture/salesian meditation on Christmas. It gives us also the words of the Christmas song which Don Bosco composed for the boys at the Oratory. We thank Arthur Lenti for this contribution, including the original music at the end with his translation of the song.

The second is a letter from Don Francesco Cereda, Councilor for Formation. It is meant to be an aide to help us in celebrating this year as preparation for the world wide renewal of our religious vows as the culminating moment of the 150th anniversary of the founding of our congregation. This letter gives very concrete suggestions as to how we can prepare for this wonderful moment. Lastly, the monthly words of Don Pascual Chavez.

God bless, Gael E, Sullivan,sdb,
Office of Ongoing Formation



Don Bosco with Breviary
1861 Bartolomeo Bellisio

gifts (three visits): that of the angel from God, that of the Holy Spirit, and that of Jesus. This last gift is the most important, since it signals the day of the *Incarnation* of the Son of God.

Jesus comes to live in the midst of his people, in the womb of Mary, to begin a new creation. Luke's narration is an echo of similar narrations in the Old Testament. In addition to being an individual person, Mary is also the type or model of the "poor of the Lord," of those humble and sincere persons who placed all their *trust* and all their *hope* in God.

Mary receives a double mysterious message: (1) her son will be Son of the Most High and Son of David, and he will reign on the throne of his father David; and (2) her son will be the Holy One, the Son of God.

Mary knows, like Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:14) that nothing is impossible for God. With this knowledge, in faith, she declares herself the humble servant of the Lord, ready to accept God's will. The *Magnificat* is her song of joy, love and praise.

[1b. *Christmas in Saint Luke II: Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem*]

[*Lectio divina*: Luke 2:1-20]

To begin with Luke points out that Emperor Augustus, who claimed to be the master of the world, was just a simple instrument in the hands of God who was bringing about the *mysterious plan* for the future of the world. The Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem, and the decree of the emperor made this possible.

Jesus was born in a poor place, as the poor were usually born, but not in a caravanserai (inn), for Mary in her condition needed privacy. He was born in a stable such as would be attached to the home of poor Palestinian peasants, was swaddled by Joseph in makeshift wraps laid in the manger, while a beast of burden and a cow looked on.

The day of Jesus' birth, the people who received the good news with great joy were poor shepherds. They were exploited persons, despised and discriminated against. They were the poorest of the poor who had to work day and night, without rest. To them first came the angel with the joyful message from God, good news for all the poor people of the land. God ignored the powerful and invited the poor and the humble. Herod and the priests did not know that anything had happened; only the poor knew.

Mary is presented as a theologian who tries to understand—to make sense of—what was taking place. The message of the angel in the annunciation and now the visit of the shepherds begin to become pieces of a puzzle, the mystery that she will ponder throughout her life.

Poverty, simplicity, joy. —
What Saint John writes in his *First Letter* might well express Mary's and Joseph's experience of the Nativity: "What we have heard, what we have

Christmas: Saint Luke & Don Bosco Poverty, Simplicity, Joy

1. Christmas in Saint Luke

The essential Christmas story in the gospel of Luke consists of two brief passages—simple but rich and allusive: the annunciation of the angel to Mary (Lk 1:26-38) and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Lk 2:1-20).

[1a. *Christmas in Saint Luke I: Annunciation made to Mary*]

[*Lectio divina*: Luke 1:26-38]

The annunciation by the angel who appears to Mary may be seen and the "vocation of Mary." When an annunciation is made in the Scriptures the recipient usually is asked to accept the message in faith, as given. Mary responds to the angel without any hesitation, accepting the role God offers her, although she asks how it will take place, since she is a virgin. In that moment Mary receives three

seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of life. This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it... so that our joy may be complete” (1 John 1:1-4).

The joy that was Mary’s and Joseph’s is also ours. Also for us this Word of life is rendered visible, and we may touch it: in our daily life, in the neighbor to love and serve, in our way of the Cross, in our prayer and in our Eucharist—our Christmas Eucharist that makes our joy complete.

[2. Don Bosco’s Christmas 1842]

By the end of 1842, while at the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*), Don Bosco had gathered a small group of young men. As Christmas approached he wrote a Christmas carol for them. The group performed it in various churches during the Christmas season, with Don Bosco at the organ. It was long remembered and it has come down to us as recorded in 1866 by one of the original oratory group.

[*Lectio Salesiana: EBM II*, pp. 101-103]

[*Canticum patris: Ah! si canti...* — Come and sing...]

Meanwhile Don Bosco used every means to make the Sunday oratory gatherings as pleasant as possible. He managed to play the piano and organ fairly well and had thoroughly studied the best methods of instrumental and vocal music. He was gifted with a voice whose melodious range extended to high C of the second octave. As Christmas approached, he wrote a little carol in honor of the Divine Infant. He jotted it down standing at the window-sill of a little apse in St. Francis Church and then he set it to music. Here it is:

Ah! sing in tones of jubilee,
Ah! sing in tones of love.
Ye faithful, our tender Savior
Is born.

Oh, how splendidly shines
every star,
The moon is fair and bright
And the veil of the shadows
tears.

Oh! seraphic band, whom
heaven discloses
Singing in jubilee: peace
on earth!
Others respond: glory be
in heaven!
Come, come, beloved peace,

To rest within our hearts.
Oh Infant within our midst
We want to keep You here.

Ah! si canti in suon
di giubilo,
Ah! si canti in suon
d’amor.
O fedeli, é nato il tenero
:/ Nostro Dio e Salvator /:
Oh! come accesa splende
ogni stella,
La luna mostrasi lucente
e bella,
E delle tenebre squarciasi
il vel.
Schiere serafiche che
il ciel disserra
Gridan con giubilo,
“Sia pace in terra!”
Altre rispondono,
“Sia gloria in ciel!”
Vieni, vieni, O pace amata,
Nei cuor nostri a riposar.
O bambino, in mezzo a noi
:/ Ti vogliamo conservar. /:

Though the music did not adhere to the rules of counterpoint, it was so moving that it brought tears to one’s

eyes. Don Bosco then set about teaching it to his boys who knew nothing at all about music or meter. His perseverance overcame all obstacles. At first, since there was no place at the *Convitto* for practicing, they went outdoors. People stopped and stared in astonishment at seeing a priest surrounded by six or eight boys walking up and down Doragrossa Street and Milano Square repeating a song in a low voice. The melody made such an impression that several of those boys still remembered it in 1866. It was then, after so many years, that the notes were set down for posterity. The precious manuscript of the carol was also found and is still extant.

This carol was first sung in 1842 at the Dominican Church, and subsequently at the Consolata [Our Lady of Consolation Church], with Don Bosco conducting the choir and playing the organ. The Turinese, at that time, were unaccustomed to hearing the silver voices of a boys’ choir and they loved it. Hitherto only deep and often not so melodious voices had been heard at church functions.

This first success encouraged Don Bosco to set to the same musical theme new verses he composed for singing during Holy Communion:

Ah! let us sing in jubilee
Ah! let us sing in love.
Ye faithful, we are awaited
By our God and Savior.

Oh! what infinite
Goodness He manifests
In giving us Bread
That gives us life,
And great graces
Upon us confers.

Seraphic legions
Whom heaven discloses,
Descend jubilantly
From heaven to earth;
Everywhere they sing
Praises to the Lord.

With a few variations, he again used the same musical theme for a *Tantum Ergo* which the boys often sang during the next twenty years, especially during their occasional long hikes through the countryside. Thus their limited musical, training, used opportunely, brought them both fame and friendliness among the country people. Later Don Bosco set to music [the invocation] *Lodato sempre sia it Nome di Gesù e di Maria, e sempre sia lodato it Nome di Gesù Verbo incarnato* [Praised ever be the name of Jesus and Mary, and the name of Jesus the Word become flesh] which is still sung in Mary Help of Christians Church at the close of the morning sermon.

Further, he composed a *Gloria in excelsis Deo* which was sung in Castelnuovo when he hiked there the first few

Ah! cantiamo in suon di
giubilo
Ah! cantiamo in suon
d’amor
O fedeli, qui ci attende
Nostro Dio Salvador
O come mostrasi
Bontà infinita!
Cibo a noi donasi
Chi diè la vita;
D’immense grazie
Apportator.
Schiere serafiche
Che il Ciel dissera
Scendon con giubilo
Dal cielo in terra;
Ovenque cantano
Lodi al Signor.

times with his oratory boys. This was the first part of an unpretentious Mass he set to music, and it seemed a marvel in those days. He also composed a musical theme for the Magnificat, in which the choir and the congregation, taking the role of chorus, sang alternately, the chorus ever repeating the first verse. He did the same for the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

Suggestions for the Celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation

Francesco Cereda, SDB

DIREZIONE GENERALE OPERE DON BOSCO

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Il Consigliere generale per la formazione

Roma, July 14, 2008

Prot. 08/0522



To the Reverend Father Provincials

And the Provincial Formation Delegates

Dear Provincials and Delegates,

After sending a letter to all the confreres dated June 24, 2008, regarding the 150th anniversary of the founding of the congregation, the Rector Major requested me to offer some suggestions to the provinces on how to live this event. I have met with a task force made up of the following confreres: don Andrea, don Guido Errico, don Guido Novella and don Daniel Federspiel. Together we have prepared these proposals which we present to you.

This year and next year are marked by certain events: the transmission of the 26th General Chapter, the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, the Strenna which invites the Salesian Family to grow as a spiritual and apostolic movement committed to the salvation of youth.

This period of time 2008 – 2009, marked with these events, already constitute the first stage of the preparation for the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco in 2015. In this period of time together with all the Church we also live the 2000th anniversary of the birth of St. Paul.

We have not programmed these events; they have come, offered as a gift of circumstances, of life, of history, and definitely from the Spirit. They come to us seeking recognition, a welcome, valuing them because they are moments of grace. They involve the individual confrere and the Salesian community, young people, lay people of the educative pastoral community, the Salesian Youth Movement, and the Salesian Family. It is therefore important that in the province the Delegate for Formation, the Youth Ministry Delegate, and the Delegate for the Salesian Family, together with the Provincial, endeavor to study how to unify efforts and initiatives.

The following suggestions refer to the formative planning for the community, the Province, and for educative pastoral planning. They refer to the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Salesian Congregation. Suggestions for assimilating the 26th General Chapter and the implementation of the Strenna for 2009 already have been presented elsewhere.

It corresponds to the Province to assume, therefore, to take up that which may be useful, to avoid a multiplication of proposals, thereby unifying endeavors which otherwise might end up scattered.

1. Significant Celebrations

Taking up the invitation of the Rector Major to make of the year 2009 “the point of departure for a renewed offering of our life to God for the young,” it is suggested first of all to underline some Salesian feasts. The year begins on January 31st and ends on December 18th with the renewal of our profession. It is certainly worthwhile to promote the feast of St. Dominic Savio, the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians, the day of the birth of St. John the Baptist, and August 16th, the day of Don Bosco’s birth. Every province and community will seek to plan concrete initiatives to celebrate these singular feasts.

31st of January – St. John Bosco - personal conversion

Road to conversion and a renewed offering of oneself to God and to the young.

Among the initiatives proposed for this feast, at the level of the Salesian community it will be opportune to witness to the dimension of personal conversion underlined in the first nucleus of the 26th General Chapter. For the educative pastoral community it will be important to promote clearly that in this year we commemorate the birth of the Congregation. If the text of the Chapter has not yet been handed out already, then it could be done on this occasion. During the triduum of the feast the celebrations could utilize the already prepared material found in the teaching materials of the CD for the transmission of the nucleus of the material as well as that which has been prepared for the handing out of the chapter document.

6th of May – St. Dominic Savio

apostolic advocacy on behalf of the young

Youth as cofounders with Don Bosco

In understanding the Salesian mission we have become accustomed to view the young as those to whom we are sent. The 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation now calls us to rediscover the young as cofounders, and therefore, as protagonists of the charism of Don Bosco. The feast of St. Dominic Savio is an occasion to make evident the involvement of young people in the Salesian mission and in the evangelization of their peers. These young people are to be invited to “act for the well being of their own companions”.

25th of May – Mary Help of Christians

entrustment to Mary

A humble acknowledgement of being accompanied by the presence of Mary, mother and teacher.

We are not always aware of the presence of Mary in our Congregation and in Salesian life, as Don Bosco has said, "It is she who has done everything". It is opportune, therefore, to reawaken in us and in our pastoral activity the help of Mary. This is the very feast of the Salesian Family, expressing gratitude to Mary, as inspiration and founder (cfr. Cost 1). In 2009 the feast falls on a Sunday in Easter time, and so the liturgy of Mary Help of Christians is celebrated on the 25th of May.

24th of June – The birth of St. John the Baptist gratitude to the successor of Don Bosco

A family all around the successor of Don Bosco

In a family the name day of a member provides an opportunity for the kind of affective rapport which unites all the members. June 24th at Valdocco, the name day of Don Bosco, was celebrated as a feast of gratitude and this feast was the traditional moment to experience among all the feeling of family, which cultivated a rapport of sons around their father, a warm fraternity amongst us, a unity for the mission, and a common plan for the young. On this occasion we will find the way to express our affectionate remembrance of and prayers for the Rector Major, successor of Don Bosco and center of the unity of the Salesian Family

16th of August – The Birth of Don Bosco - the Gift of Life Life as a gift of God and a gift to our very selves.

With the recollection of Don Bosco's birth we rediscover the gift of our very own lives: a gift received with gratitude which becomes the gift of self, a work of sanctification, a vocational path, happiness, and fullness of life. On "the way that leads to love" we give witness around ourselves of the enthusiasm and joy of daily sanctity and of the total gift of self to God for the young.

18th of December – The Founding of the Congregation commitment to the Salesian vocation

Joined together in enthusiasm and responsibility to continue the vocation of Don Bosco to the young

It is the culmination of the journey undertaken. On this day, in the entire Congregation, all the confreres renew their fidelity to God's call, in following of Don Bosco, giving themselves entirely to the mission for the young, to community life, and to the radical following of the obedient, poor and chaste Christ. In the prepared materials the indications for the celebration can be found.

2. A path for the Salesian community.

Lent 2009

Lent, for every Christian, is a privileged time of interior renewal and conversion, in the rediscovery of the grace of Baptism and in the endeavor to live in a way which is in conformity with one's own vocation. For us, Lent 2009 can be above all the occasion to translate into action one of the suggestions of the 26th General Chapter, that is, the

invitation to a more frequent contact with the Constitutions.

Already on the occasion of the feast of January 31st the book of the Constitutions, perhaps printed in a larger format, could be displayed in the community chapel, under the picture or statue of Don Bosco, as an external sign of a greater attention which the community intends to dedicate to this "living testament" of our Founder.

During the course of Lent it is opportune that each day that there be a reading of some article of the Rule, in whatever way the community thinks is most convenient: that is, at the beginning of meditation or at evening prayer or at the beginning of meals. For an ever deeper awareness, it would be useful to review the content again in the good night or in a community conference, giving importance to the text of the official Commentary and the prayers that are placed at the end of each article. Such daily contact with the Constitutions will also be a personal endeavor on the part of each individual.

It is suggested then at the time of meditation to invite all to a personal *lectio divina*, starting with a reading from the liturgy of the day or a continuous reading of any of St. Paul's letters.

On the occasion of the monthly day of reflection during February and March, the spirituality of the "da mihi animas, cetera tolle" could be deepened through a *lectio divina* of the two texts of St. Paul, in which the Apostle deals with the urgency to evangelize (2 Cor 4, 1-6) and of the tribulations he has undergone in pastoral ministry (2 Cor 4, 7-12). These two pages could be made relevant by making reference to nuclei II and IV of the document of the 26th General Chapter. In such occasions we can enhance the value of the celebrations of the Liturgy of the Word and of Eucharistic adoration, as prepared in the CD of 26th General chapter, relative to parts II and IV.

The Lenten journey of conversion could culminate in a community penitential celebration in which the confreres would be invited to ask pardon from God for any vocational infidelity and together ask for the gift of a greater adherence to our Rule of Life. From such penitential celebrations is evolved a plan for celebration.

Advent 2009

The time of Advent will be marked by a celebration on December 18th, in which every Salesian will live the experience of the renewal of religious profession. Seen in light of the liturgical time, it is suggested to give importance to the *novena of the Immaculate Conception* placing particular attention on the "Here I am" of Mary in relation to the God's call, to the positive response of Don Bosco after the dream at nine years of age and our personal acceptance at the beginning of our vocation.

The way proposed, after comparison of Mary's "Yes" to that of Don Bosco, provokes each confrere to be responsible for the gift of his own vocation and to participate in that of every other Salesian of the community.

It is suggested that each confrere recall, perhaps even written down on paper the origin of his own vocation through its retelling or by a “letter to Don Bosco” or by recalling a particular Salesian who was very influential in his vocational decision. With a prayer to Don Bosco, each one finally will be called to give thanks to our Father and Founder.

During the novena in the time of meditation, the first ten minutes could be used for a reading of the suggested passage and for the presentation of some points of reflections, leaving the remaining time then for personal silence. It would be good for each confrere to have a copy of the reference texts.

The days of the novena could be articulated in the following way:

- **November 29th**, the First Sunday of Advent – Vespers and Eucharistic Adoration
- **Monday, November 30th**: lectio divina on Lk. 1:26-28 – The Annunciation I
- **Tuesday, December 1st**: lectio divina on Lk. 1:29-33 – The Annunciation II
- **Wednesday, December 2nd** – lectio divina on Lk. 1:34-38 – The Annunciation III
- **Thursday, December 3rd** – a meditative reading of the account of the “dream at nine years of age (I)
- **Friday, December 4th** – a meditative reading of the account of the “dream at nine years of age (II)
- **Saturday, December 5th** – B. Rinaldi: each confrere recalls or writes on the beginning of his vocation.
- **Sunday, December 6th**, the Second Sunday of Advent – Vespers and Eucharistic Adoration
- **Monday, December 7th**: Each confrere prays or writes his prayer to Don Bosco.

On the days following the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, as an immediate preparation for December 18th, the local community can plan at least one encounter of sharing in which each Salesian have the opportunity to share his own vocational story, reading it to all the other confreres as well as his prayer to Don Bosco, which has evolved in the preceding days.

3. The involvement of the young

The Rector Major, on this 150th anniversary and in consonance with the thematic nucleus of the 26th General Chapter “the need to come together”, asks us therefore to narrate to the young the history of the beginning of the Congregation in which they themselves have been cofounders” together with Don Bosco, so that we involve them in apostolic action with the very same passion of the “da mihi animas”, and propose to them the Salesian consecrated vocation in its two forms.

It is also suggested that the educative pastoral community promote with all the young the history of the birth of the Salesian Congregation, that came about by the work of the Holy Spirit, with the maternal intervention of Mary, with the collaboration of Don Bosco with the young.

These feasts of the young people, if they are carried out in the provinces, can be the occasion for the narration of these very charismatic beginnings. It would be opportune to encourage a *listening encounter*, a communication and dialogue of the young with the Salesian community regarding a witnessing to, an appreciation of, and suggestions for the Salesian community that the young feel in their relation to the Congregation.

It is suggested, moreover, to the educative pastoral community to promote activities and *apostolic endeavors* in which the young themselves are the protagonists of the evangelization of their peers.

Promote youth groups or associations of apostolic endeavor, inspired by the spirituality of the “da mihi animas”. Make the most of the feast of St. Dominic Savio, above all for those children and young people who are already apostolically involved. The coming together of the Salesian Youth Movement helps to develop apostolic endeavor.

The Salesian community can find moments to communicate the vocational story of the confreres, above all with those young people committed to apostolic action and disposed to vocational discernment. Involve the young, lay people and families in prayer for vocations to a special consecration. Offer to the young experiences of sharing community life. Initiate or continue reflections and on the kinds of local vocational animation and on the aspirantate community.

4. Sharing with the laity

“The spirit, mentality and pastoral experience of Don Bosco led him to mature some convictions: the possibility of the Salesian spirit being seen in diverse states of life and therefore of contributing through the bringing together of “good people” to the great mission of the Church, the foundation of the first group, centered around the oratory experience, with diverse bonds, with diverse associative status, and with diverse prerequisites for belonging” (presentation of the Strenna for 2009).

In the Salesian tradition educative pastoral work is a way of holiness. In the spirit of the Strenna for 2009, wherever it is possible, a coming together of the co responsible and deeply committed laity in the Salesian mission is proposed. These, in a climate of fraternity, are invited to share their experience of how each one sees the Salesian mission and how this work enriches them. In making the best use of this experience of sharing, it can be concluded with a moment of celebration.

The presentation of number 4 of the Strenna offers some suggestions that can inspire reflections and initiatives to “endeavor that the Salesian Family becomes a vast movement at the service of the salvation of the young” (Presentation of the Strenna of 2009). This also refers to the laity involved in the Salesian mission and co responsibility, therefore, becoming a part of the Salesian movement, while in fact not all these lay people belong to the Salesian Family.

5. Provincial Moments

Preparation for and celebration of Professions

This year we should give particular attention to the preparation of first profession, whether in the year of novitiate, those renewing vows, or those making perpetual vows. In 1859 the Congregation was born. This year it is reborn and continues growing even now each time a young man accepts the invitation of the Lord Jesus to follow him in consecrated life according to the footsteps of Don Bosco. Our vocation is consecrated life, which must be placed at the center from the first steps of formation and with all the rest of us refocusing on this reality.

In today's cultural climate, in which young people live with the incertitude of the future and the weakness of being unable to make decisions, strong experiences are necessary before novitiate, precisely from which is derived the importance of the aspirantate and the prenovitiate, so as to help mature a conscious and responsible choice. The temporary profession then is not to be considered as a kind of volunteer experience; but rather strives towards the offering of all of one's very own life to God for the young. The formula for the temporary profession very well underlines that this is a definitive choice, in which in fact the one professing affirms that while having the intention of offering himself for life, according to the dispositions of the Church makes the vow to be obedient, poor and chaste for a determined period of time. In the Congregation it is important to bring about a change of mentality in this respect, because an erroneous way of understanding the temporary profession runs the risk of reinforcing that provisionality and fragility that are noted in the new generations.

In the Province the celebrations of the first professions, the renewal of profession and perpetual professions are seen as gratitude to God, who always raises up generous young men who intend to give priority to God in their life, to commit themselves to the following of Christ, to live available to the Spirit for the sake of the young, above all those who are most poor. Such celebrations in their simplicity, dignity and solemnity must favor the creation of a mentality of a lifelong choice. In the Provinces ordinarily professions should be celebrated on January 31st, May 24th, August 16th, or on September 8th.

It is suggested, therefore, that during the preparation for perpetual profession, those making profession share their vocational story with the perpetually professed confreres of their community and with the confreres who have accompanied them most closely during the various years of their formative path.

Annual Spiritual Exercises

The annual spiritual exercises for 2009 could concentrate on a deepening in the Constitutions. They could also reflect upon the way in which they are lived: whether in the morning the meditation were to take the form of a "lectio divina", and in the afternoon an instruction might

concentrate upon the Constitutions. The two moments ought to be united: the biblical foundation of the morning should lead into a charismatic application in the afternoon. Community prayer, programmed reading, reflection and personal prayer could concentrate upon our Rule of Life.

The Constitutions are the project of life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. During the Exercises each confrere is to be invited to concretize his own personal plan of life in the perspective of the Constitutions. Consecrated life is a way that leads to holiness, which requires a spiritual methodology, without which there is no growth. The personal project of life promotes such methodology. It is the rule of life adapted to the proper situations of the "hic et nunc". The Spiritual Exercises, therefore, propose to the confreres the reformulation of the personal project of life. The lines of action of the 26th General Chapter refer to the endeavor of the individual confrere, and can help each one to assume the profile of the Salesian which emerges from the Constitutions and from the Chapter itself and to concretize in oneself said project.

Pilgrimage of the urn of Don Bosco

Already during the year 2009, the urn of Don Bosco will pass through some Provinces, and in the following year will visit other Provinces. In the year 2009 this journey can characterize itself with a remembering of the beginnings of the Congregation and of the Salesian Movement, both of which have Don Bosco as their founder. The visit of the urn of Don Bosco will certainly have the capacity of bringing together young people, families, and lay people; involving the local Church and the immediate surrounding areas, offering to all an experience, a message and above all a renewed start in their own paths.

6. Symbolic signs and actions

The celebration of this year 2009 could be enriched by some signs that externally manifest the importance of this anniversary and remain as a reminder of the path already undertaken. Sensitivities and cultures are diverse; therefore, every community should choose whatever is most useful.

Through these signs the value of the text of the Constitutions can be enhanced, printed in a much bigger format. This, as already indicated, might be on display in the community chapel, used daily for the reading of any article and signed by all after the renewal of profession on December 18th.

It is necessary to do whatever possible so that the materials which form the "*Salesian Resources*" are gathered together, as has been requested in the 26th General Chapter, so that confreres can have a frequent contact with the principal texts of our spiritual tradition.

The *coat of arms* of the Salesian Congregation can be commemorated and visually made use of, with the motto "da mihi animas, cetera tolle". In like manner the *medal* of the first profession and *cross* of the perpetual profession can be accentuated.

Some kinds of slogans can be presented and used as

communication elements: "Without you, I could not have done anything" (Don Bosco); "I have made the sketch, you have given the color" (Don Bosco), "The seed has become the tree and the tree has become forest" (Rector Major).

There already exist multimedia teaching aids for the various initiatives. In particular the DVD made by "Missioni don Bosco", "Venne un uomo mandato da Dio, il suo nome era Giovanni" (There comes a man sent by God whose name was John) (6') can be singled out, and also the CD from Rome "Verso il 2015. Il CG 26" produced by the Department of Social Communications

Finally, it is suggested, wherever most opportune, to send an invitation to participation in the 150th anniversary of the birth of the Congregation to those responsible for the local Church and to local civic officials.

Conclusion: This event of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation constitutes an occasion for the deepening of our charismatic identity. It is then proper for the Director to promote good community animation, together with the involvement of the confreres, young people, lay people and families. Materials for celebrations are also enclosed with these suggestions.

I hope that for you the journey of this year will make profitable and prolonged the pentecostal experience that has been the 26th General Chapter. May the Holy Spirit open our minds and inflame our hearts! In Don Bosco
Don Francesco Cereda

January Courses at Don Bosco Hall



The following Three courses will be offered at Don Bosco Hall on the indicated dates. For further information please contact Don Bosco Hall at (510) 204-0801 or email Gael Sullivan, sdb at sullivanrael@aol.com.

Salesian Accompaniment of the Young, Part 2.

Jan. 5 - 9, 2009

Don Vecchi extracted from Vita Consecrata a spiritual itinerary for the Salesian Family. He underlined the pastoral dimension of Salesian Spirituality with an emphasis upon accompaniment: Service to the dimension of spirituality goes beyond the confines of the Christian community and appears as an accompaniment and support for all who are seeking sense and direction. "All who embrace the consecrated life, men and women alike, become privileged partners in the search for God which has always stirred the human heart and has led to the different forms of asceticism and spirituality." These "privileged partners" in Salesian spirituality are those who choose to journey with the young in their path to holiness. More than simply a commentary,

Don Vecchi set a course and a direction for his years as Rector Major. The primary purpose of this inter-session course is to examine the themes of Salesian Spirituality set down by Fr. Vecchi as part of the ongoing effort to "return to Don Bosco" and to deepen the fire of inner conversion linking us to this spiritual heritage. This course will be presented by Fr. John Roche.

Spiritual Identity of the Salesian Brother - Jan. 12 - 16, 2009

The course begins with an examination of Article 45 of the Salesian Constitutions, expressing the complementary identities of brothers and priests in the Salesian community. It then investigates how this article grew out of Don Bosco's idea of the Salesian Brother. More material comes from documents issued during the Vatican II renewal period in Salesian history. The course looks at how the brother's spiritual identity came to be theologically expressed in the Constitutions and practically applied in formation and vocation ministry, and concretely in the life of Blessed Artemide Zatti, concluding with reflection on how to apply the Salesian brother's identity to study local problems in formation and vocation ministry. This course will be presented by Br. John Rasor,

Multimedia and Youth Ministry Jan. 19 - 23, 2009

Fr. John Roche begins by examining the moral elements of communications media. We move from the theory to the practice with a session presented by Br. Al Vu on how to use media in youth ministry. The last component is with Duoc Le on actual manipulation of the software available for putting together media for use in ministry.

Message of the Rector Major, Don Pascual Chavez Villanueva December: EDUCATON & CULTURE

"The primary and essential task of culture in general and also of all cultures is education. This consists in fact in enabling man to become more man, to 'be' more than just to "have" more and consequently, through everything he 'has,' everything he possesses, to 'be' man more fully." (JOHN PAUL II, "Juvenum Patris", 1.)



Education is a specific process of becoming human; it seeks to build up a man freeing him from the conditioning that could prevent him living his vocation to the full, and enabling him to develop all his creative capacities. Man's development necessarily evolves through culture, understood

as a way of relating to the world around him, to others, to himself, to God; but also as a way of coming into contact with a patrimony of knowledge, benefits and values, and as a personal process of assimilation, re-elaboration and enrichment. Therefore culture is not a patrimony accepted by everyone: we are dealing with a society that is more and more complex, post-ideological and multicultural, with all the aspects of ambiguity that this last term evokes.

Then it is also necessary to take into account the aspect of globalization that crushes personal identity and creativity. So the next challenge to education in the future will be precisely that of a world view and a situation of interculturalization, in which recognizing what the differences are and seeing beyond the stereotypes will be essential and the valuable product of education. Education is capable of placing the situations and the aspirations of young people in the wider context of the experience of mankind as expressed in the cultural heritage and in the current changing view of the world.

■ Salesian education is based on a scale of values which derives from a particular understanding of man: the development of a mature conscience through seeking after the truth and holding on to it; the development of a responsible and creative freedom through the understanding of what is good and in choosing it; the ability to relate to others and a sense of solidarity based on a recognition of the dignity of the individual; preparation for the assumption of responsibilities based on a sense of justice and peace. Salesian houses are places of education and culture, in which young people are offered the knowledge that makes them aware of the problems of the world, sensitive to values and constructively critical; in which young people acquire attitudes that allow them to behave as free individuals with the capacity to be competent and effective in their activities.

The situation of unbelief in which most young Europeans are growing up is well-known. This has an extraordinary impact on culture. Just to look at the world of literature and of the cinema. It is very difficult to find among those that are considered successful any production in which the main characters draw inspiration for their lives or for a way of life of dignity from Christianity. Religious experience is presented in a very negative light as something infantile or guilt-ridden. Nevertheless, for us Christ is the best news we can give to the world; in Him man finds his highest dignity, in so far as he is recognized as a son of God, and the boundaries of his life reach out to eternity. Therefore the final purpose of education is evangelization as the synthesis of faith and culture, faith and life. Salesian educational establishments seek to pursue the integration of knowledge, education and the Gospel.

Reference to Christ is the criterion to be used in discerning those values that build a man up and those counter values

that degrade him. In fact, it is above all the irrelevance of the faith in culture and in life that is making the young indifferent to or oblivious to the world of religion, making the question of God insignificant, emptying religious language of its meaning and tending to undermine every effort at evangelization.

■ For many centuries the Christian faith has inspired thinkers in Europe in their reflections, authors in their writings, artists in their creations, musicians in their compositions. Nowadays with great temerity (or cynicism?) there are those who try to deny the Christian roots of European culture. For too long an effective witnessing presence of Catholics has been lacking in the specific areas of culture.

There is a lack of politicians, writers, teachers, doctors, poets, lawyers, journalists outstanding as Catholics. Since unbelief has a strong cultural impact in the West it is important that Catholics make culture their field of activity. Militant Catholics are needed in the world of the arts, of thinking, of the media, capable of giving fresh prestige to the Christian event. “The Church calls upon the lay faithful to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture, that is, the world of education-school and university-in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities.” (JOHN PAUL II, “Christifideles”, 44.)

The educator according to the heart of Don Bosco knows that the educative process is meant for the total development of the individual. In his teaching he throws light on human knowledge with the data of the faith, without detracting from the aim that is proper to it; in the educational process he seeks to develop the individual’s culture as the capacity to be in communion with others and listen to them, as a duty to be at their service, and as a sense of responsibility towards others, and not as a means of self assertion and self profit. The Salesian educator helps in the discovery of the profound coherence between the faith and the values that culture pursues.

On the next page you will find the Christmas music of Don Bosco.

We hope you will enjoy it and perhaps even learn how to sing it.

Christmas Song by Don Bosco

[Words & Music by DB]

English Translation: Arthur J. Lenti, SDB

Ah! si can-ti in suon di giu-bi-lo, Ah! si can-ti in suon d'a-mor.
Come and sing in strains of ju-bi-lee, Come and sing in strains of love.

O fe-de-li e na-to al te-ne-ro No-stro Di-o e Sal-va-tor.
For to us is born in Beth-lehem Christ the Sa-vior from a-bove-

No-stro Di-o e Sal-va-tor. Oh! co-me-ac-ce-sa splende ogni stel-la,
Christ the Sa-vior from a-pove. Oh how the stars rejoice brilliantly shin-ing,

La lu-na mo-stra-si lu-cente e bel--la, E del-le te-nebre squarciasil vel.
The moon in beauty breaks thru veils confin-ing, Out of the gloom of night brightly appear

Schiere se-ra-fi-che cheil ciel disser-ra Gri-dan con giu-bi-lo, Sia pa-ce in
Countless an-gel-ic hosts joy-ful-ly sing-ing: Let there be peace, on ea-ter, Christ is

ter--ra! Al-tre ri-spon-do-no, Sia glo-ria in ciel! Vie-ni, vie-ni O pa-ce a-
bring-ing, Glo-ry to God on high, the Lord is near. Come, O bless-ed peace a-

ma--ta, Nei cuor no-stri a ri--po--sar. O bam-bi-no in mez-zo a
mong us, with the grace Christ's birth im-parts. O sweet Child, God's Word made

noi Ti vo-glia-mo con--ser-var Ti vo-glia--mo con--ser-var.
flesh, Come and dwell with-in our hearts- Come and dwell with-in our heats.