

ACTS OF GENERAL CHAPTER XXIII



Broaden Your Vision!

With The Young,
Missionaries of Hope and Joy

Rome, September 22 - November 15, 2014

Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians - Rome

Presentation

Dear Sisters,

I am happy to present you with the Acts of General Chapter XXIII. They are an echo of the experience that we lived as an event of grace and that must now continue with new charismatic dynamism in all our communities. Thank you for your active participation in both the time of preparation as well as during the course of the Chapter. We were united and in sync with one another, not only by means of technology, but also by virtue of the strong sense of belonging to our great Family. We tried to build a “home” open to the world, and with young people and lay people who share the Salesian charism, we have woven a wide network of communion and collaboration. It is more beautiful and effective to *work together* to bring the world the message of hope that’s born from the Gospel of Jesus.

Throughout the Chapter we tried to remain docile to the Holy Spirit, so that every choice and decision was made in His light. The time of discernment during the election was accompanied by the wisdom and discretion of Claretian Father Jose Cristo Rey Garcia Paredes.

I entrust the text of the Acts of General Chapter XXIII to you on the Solemnity of Mary Immaculate and at a time of many meaningful events, among which are the Year of Consecrated Life and the Bicentenary of the Birth of Don Bosco. In this document you will find the fruit of much reflection and sharing done in the Assembly, in commissions and in fraternal, informal dialogue, all of which is always enriching.

The text was constructed together day by day, matured in discernment, in prayer, in give and take, though sometimes fatiguing, but where the young were always present. They are the “Sacred Ground” where we meet the Lord, and with Him, we live out His dream for our Institute.

The title of the document: *Broaden Your Vision! With Young People Missionaries of Hope and of Joy*, expresses our commitment to give our lives and our educating communities wide horizons, cultivating a more passionate living of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*. In this way, we intend to express the invigorating missionary breath that has characterized the mission of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello and which can also give new life to our communities. In the title, we hear an echo of Pope Francis' words during that unforgettable Audience granted to the Chapter Members on November 8. There, he forcefully repeated twice: "Extended your gaze. Broaden your vision!"

The evangelical icon of the disciples of Emmaus accompanied us throughout the entire Chapter journey. Like them, we too have tried to open our eyes and our hearts to hope, allowing ourselves to be transformed by our encounter with Jesus and reviving the joy of proclaiming the Gospel with the young. They are protagonists with us in the Church as "missionaries going forth" who challenge us to *pastoral conversion*.

A Church that makes its missionary commitment a concrete reason for its loyalty to Christ is the great horizon in which we broaden our vision in order to give our lives as consecrated educators the dynamism of depth and radicality that makes us prophetic in today's world.

In this sense, the Chapter Assembly intended to develop the theme of *Being Today, With Young People, a Home that Evangelizes*. A house built on solid rock that is Christ, inhabited by the breath of the Spirit, must be a house that is open, supportive and missionary. The Spirit urges us to go out, makes us true disciples of Jesus on the roads of the world, and invites us to communion, making us fruitful.

The text that I give you is in three parts: *the first* presents the Chapter document; *the second* contains the decisions made by the Assembly and the changes to articles of the Constitutions and Regulations; *the third* contains the speeches and greetings offered at the opening and closing of the Chapter as well as the speech of Pope Francis during our unforgettable audience with him.

The part dedicated to the content of the Chapter is broken down in five points illuminated by the passage of the disciples of Emmaus. The first, of narrative character, is the sharing of the rich experience lived together. The four chapters that follow provide brief summaries of the Chapter reflection articulated according to the dynamics of

the methodology that guided the Assembly of GC XXIII: *challenges* as God's call; the appeal to *changes of mentality*; *choices* that allow us to implement pastoral conversion in today's world. The choices are listed as *guidelines* and *concrete actions* intended to express our commitment to offer the world prophetic signs.

We wanted to give ample space to the message given to us by the young people and the lay people during the Chapter days of reflection lived together. Their words echoed God's call to rediscover the joy of our vocation and to live together with them in a world marked by challenges and the seeds of the newness of the Gospel. For this reason, we wanted to visually highlight their words in the text of the Acts.

I am aware that the Chapter will bear fruit in the measure in which it is lived in the local communities. It is there that the charism develops, enters into history and changes life and everyday actions. We hope that each local and provincial reality will know how to accept the Chapter deliberations, and with new wisdom and creativity, commit themselves to building, together with the young, houses that evangelize, Gospel spaces, where Jesus is at the center, where the Word and the Bread transform life and nourish the commitment to "go out" to the human outskirts, especially the educational margins.

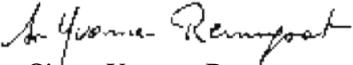
Our life will be *contagious and vocationally fruitful* if we know how to widen the gaze of our heart to perceive the deep need for God that arises from the young whom we encounter every day on our journey, if we know how to be available to find evangelical responses together.

As encouraged at the conclusion of the Chapter: let us take Mary home with renewed filial affection, allowing ourselves to be guided by her maternal presence, always quick to find paths to communion, to joy, and to hope, like those who are little and who are poor. Every time we look at her, "we return to our belief in the revolutionary strength of tenderness and affection"(EG 228). This is the prophetic energy present from the beginning of our mission of *evangelizing by educating*. Don Bosco, on the bicentenary of his birth, expects to find in our communities the climate of Valdocco where the *air of God* is in harmony with the *air of the family* and where one breathes a climate of holiness. This same *environment*, deeply rooted in evangelical and therefore humanizing values, was reproduced by Mother Mazzarello with creativity and feminine intuition. Mornese, together with Val-

docco are the places of our charismatic origins where we draw inspiration for today in view of the future.

May Mary accompany us every day of this six-year term and give our steps the rhythm of joy and hope.

Rome, December 8, 2014


Sister Yvonne Reungoat
Superior General

THEME OF GENERAL CHAPTER XXIII

**Being with Young People Today,
a Home that Evangelizes**

**First
Part**

CHAPTER DOCUMENT

Broaden Your Vision!

Missionaries of Hope and Joy with the Young

- 1. As Disciples: Telling the Story of an Experience**
- 2. Listening to God's Calls**
- 3. Open to Changes of Mentality**
- 4. Time to Take Up the Journey Again**
- 5. Courageous Enough to do Prophetic Things Together**

*An Artistic Interpretation of the Gospel Passage of the
Disciples of Emmaus*

1. AS DISCIPLES: TELLING THE STORY OF AN EXPERIENCE

Our Chapter Assembly

1. We began a journey like the disciples of Emmaus, coming from the five continents (Lk 24:13-31). Our desire was to shed light on our life experiences and get back on track with a heart aflame with the presence of the Lord. Each of us arrived, bringing our own reality with us, wondering how to talk about God to the people of today. In our hearts and minds, we carried the young people, the FMA of the world who, with the laity of the educating communities, work with faith, love those around them despite limitations and difficulties, and dare to hope, scrutinizing the future with confidence.

The meeting made individuals into a “we,” a worldwide community of 194 FMA representing the 94 countries in which we are present; a “we” joined by an experience of sharing, research, hard work, listening and discussion.

Places that speak to us

2. The meaningful places in this experience, in addition to Rome, the symbol of the catholicity of the Church, were Mornese, Turin, and Nizza Monferrato, the heart and origin of the charism. Here, Mother Mazzarello and Don Bosco reminded us that “*joy is the sign of a heart that really loves the Lord*”¹ and that we must never lose sight, on our day to day journey, of the great surrender: “*For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life*”.² The time of retreat allowed us to re-read our reality as persons, community, and Institute. Msgr. Thomas Menampampil³ gave us some key words: faith, depth,

¹*Wisdom of Life. Letters of Maria Domenica Mazzarello*, Rome, FMA Institute 2004, Letter 60,5.

²*Chronicles of the Oratory of Fr. Ruffino*, in Salesian Central Archives 110, notebook 5, p. 10 (edited in BM VII 585).

³Salesian Archbishop Emeritus of Guwahati (India).

intensity, radicalism and responsibility. He proposed that we look at reality with eyes of faith, helping us to understand that in the transition of thought and research that we are living, our Institute is called upon to make an increasingly skilled contribution to the Church and society through the education of young people and the evangelization of culture.

Lu Monferrato, in the centenary of the death of Sister Angela Vallese (1914-2014), is symbolic of the missionary passion always cultivated in our Institute. In Rome, we entered into the heart of the Church, learning from several witnesses.

The Chapter as a moment of grace

3. We realized that we needed a climate of discernment to live the Chapter as a particular experience in which God speaks to the entire Institute. On this journey we felt the presence of Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, beside us. The climate was fostered by listening to the Word - in the liturgy, in reflection, and in dialogue among ourselves - where individually and as a group, we always searched for the good of the Institute.

General Chapter XXIII was a Church event at a time when the urgent call to proclaim the joy of the Gospel resounds. For us, this means to be consecrated women who allow ourselves to be evangelized by the One who calls us to announce. Religious communities that encounter Jesus, allowing themselves to be transformed and renewed become a gift to the whole ecclesial community.

The Chapter was also a social event. Being educators brings forth our awareness and responsibility to make the world more livable, more welcoming, more according to God's plan in our desire to educate young people so that they can be "happy in time and in eternity."⁴

⁴Bosco John, *Letters to the Salesian Communities of the Oratory of Turin-Valdocco* Rome, May 10, 1884, in BRAIDO Pietro [ed.], *Don Bosco Educator. Writings and Witnesses* Rome, LAS 2005³, 377. The expression comes up also in different letters addressed to individual boys.

Words and actions

4. "Open your hearts to receive the interior movements of God's grace; open your eyes, broaden your gaze to recognize the most authentic needs and urgencies of a society and of a generation that change."⁵ The words and deeds of Pope Francis, the meeting with him, as well as the ecclesial magisterium and reflection of the Synod of bishops on the family,⁶ celebrated at the same time as our Chapter, often echoed in our reflections, along with many situations in the world. Side by side with goodness and buds of justice, peace and solidarity that exist in different countries, we catch sight of persecution based on faith, war, violence, conflict, injustice, new forms of slavery, human trafficking, natural disasters, forced migration and all the forms of poverty that each person lives in his or her own context. We were not closed to the reality of the world and its contradictions; we decided to embrace it and love it as a necessary condition to enhance its riches and change what does not respect humanity and creation. The words and deeds of Mother encouraged us to live in docility to the Holy Spirit, fulfilling our responsibility to guide the path of the entire Institute in dynamic fidelity to the charism.

The joys and struggles of the journey

5. We accepted the invitation to look at reality with an attitude of hope, cultivating the goodness that usually grows in silence, as we were taught by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. This attitude has helped us to overcome the struggles of becoming aware of our differences, getting to know one another, and journeying together.

It was beautiful to see everyone's love for the Institute, the sense of belonging. There was a desire for communion, despite the diversity of cultural and personal limitations, all so that we could "embrace the miracle": the miracle of unity in diversity in our reli-

⁵Pope FRANCIS, *Audience with the Chapter Members* (November 8, 2014).

⁶Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the theme *Pastoral Challenges on the Family in the context of evangelization*. (Rome October 15-19, 2014).

gious family, in its past, full of grace, and in the beauty drawn from the charismatic sources. We recognize with joy that this grace of unity fills our present, with its strengths and its potential, its labors and its weaknesses and as we look with confidence to a future inhabited by God.

Together we lived an intense experience of “Home,” aware that our relationship with one another becomes a dwelling place and that the road itself becomes a home when we leave room for the creativity of the Spirit.⁷ We listened to our wounded, and gradually healed reality, thanks to witnesses who told us about their love for the most vulnerable.⁸ The charismatic predilection “for the little ones and the poor,”⁹ which needs to be continually renewed, urges us to be preventive and concrete in promoting young people, focusing on them to cooperate in building a more humane society.

With the young people and lay adults

6. The meeting with the young and with the lay people, including several representatives of the Salesian Family, made the educating community more visible in our General Chapter. What they said to us resounded as a call to open our eyes to our communities and to rely on them for a shared mission.

Working as a Chapter

7. As a Chapter community we had one task, taken from the *Letter of Convocation of CG XXIII*¹⁰ and from the *Working Document*: to look at the reality of the Institute, the world, the young, and the poor, and listening to the Holy Spirit, seek together how to *be a home that evangelizes with young people*. The theme was divided into five key points, each introduced by these questions: How can we proclaim Jesus in a changing

world to a generation that changes? What new vision of community¹¹ with the young will help us to be a prophecy of Salesian religious life today? How should we place ourselves in the culture of communication? Why, with all the formation we receive, does life not change? Are we just restoring or are we doing something new?

In personal reflection and in commissions, each key point was examined on the basis of three questions: What challenges emerge from this key point, for the Institute today? What change of mentality is required of us? What choices are we called to take on?

Passionate dialogue led to an agreement that *pastoral conversion* was the great horizon, recognizing *hope* and *joy* as the foundation, expressed in a Salesian way by means of *encounter with others*.

The journey is just begun

8. Telling the story of this experience continues in the life of each FMA and each community. The Holy Spirit, who renews us every day, just waits for us to allow Him the space to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary with us in our everyday life. He helps us to be like Mary, prompt in helping and receptive to His loving intuition.

All this work confirmed for us that the Institute, sharing in a charism that is living and prophetic, has an innovative contribution. Indeed, we believe that the world awaits this educative contribution which comes to life through our motto: *da mihi animas cetera tolle*. This is why we look at the **challenges** (in Chapter 2) as a call of God and as an opportunity to be faithful. We hear the powerful impulse to be with young people, side by side with adults, to research and work in favor of other young people, so that, in the experiences of their lives, more and more, they can come

⁷*Working Document of GC XXIII. To be a Home that Evangelizes with the Young Today*, Rome, FMA Institute 2014, n. 3 and 58.

⁸Contributions to the Round Table on the Chapter Theme, October 3, 2014.

⁹*Constitutions and Regulations [of the Institute of the FMA]*, Rome, FMA Institute, art. 6, 63, 65.

¹⁰*In Preparation for General Chapter XX III*, Circular n. 934, Rome, FMA Institute 2013.

¹¹In conformity with the other documents of the Institute, every time the term community appears in the text without any adjectives, it indicates the educating community.

to have a vital and humanizing encounter with Jesus. In order to be new communities, it is necessary to decisively implement a **change of mentality** (Chapter 3). Therefore, with courage, we prepare ourselves to leave aside established patterns, which are sometimes a little outdated, to start looking at the educational mission with new eyes. And this new outlook should be one that sheds light on our **choices** and **concrete steps** (Chapters 4 and 5).

Making this a dream come true

9. The purpose of this text is to communicate what has been shared, the “dream” and the shared plan for the coming years entrusted to the discernment and choices of the General Council, the Provinces and the local communities. We are called to identify concrete ways to fulfill an educational and evangelical presence in tune with our Salesian identity and the expectations of young people. The rapid change that marks our era necessitates walking Gospel paths, faithful to the Salesian charism - that is faithful to the young and ready to continually investigate the signs of the times.

Enlightened and guided by the Word

10. In the Chapter reflections, as in the period of preparation for the Chapter,¹² we allowed the passage of the disciples of Emmaus to enlighten us (Lk. 24: 13-31). Like them, we are challenged by the reality that surrounds us. We struggle to interpret this reality from the perspective of hope.

The encounter with Jesus opens their eyes, offering them a fresh look. His Word enlightens, purifies, changes the way of seeing and assessing situations. The disciples recognized the Lord, asking Him to stay with them, allowing Him to enter into their lives. Transformed by meeting Him, they return immediately to Jerusalem, the city of Easter and Pentecost, with the desire to proclaim the risen Lord and to share this experience of complete happiness that has opened

their eyes and their hearts.

¹²*Working Document*, n. 9-10.

2. LISTENING TO GOD'S CALLS

*“And they
talked to each other
about everything that
had happened”
(Lk. 24:14)*

Along the way the disciples of Emmaus meet a stranger who becomes their companion. His presence helps them transform discouragement into confidence and challenges into God's calls.

Even for us consecrated, educating women in support of the young and in synergy with those who are in favor of life, each day is an event of grace, a kairós, to welcome with the eyes of hope.

TOGETHER WITH THE EDUCATING COMMUNITIES

**A living
letter**

11. With the laity,¹³ we lived a *never before seen time* in the General Chapter. Some of the lay people – from different continents engaged in educating communities and in different groups or associations of the Salesian Family – shared their educational experiences and offered feedback on the Chapter theme. Their words are like a living letter that reaches us in the bicentennial of Don Bosco's birth and reminds us of the origin of the Salesian charism that brought together religious and lay people in the one mission. They told their life story and made a passionate appeal to work together.

¹³The laity represented the 11 Interprovincial Conferences and the young people represented the three Interprovincial Conferences of Europe.

Listening to the Laity

Being with the young

12. *Today's reality* is the key to understanding the urgent commitment that awaits us in the education of young people. It's about living in a way that accepts that reality is the place of encounter with God, knowing that it is not plans that renew us, but seeing reality through His eyes.¹⁴

Among the questions we ask ourselves, we share these: Do we breathe the same air as the young people breathe? Do we find ourselves on the same 'wave-length'? Are we credible in our relationships? When we use the term 'us,' do we include the FMA and educators of all environments and of all conditions? The need to risk more and be more daring is palpable, so that everything that takes place aims to increase the quality and not just the quantity of initiatives. We must understand the reality in which young people live and help them to acquire a critical way of looking at today's culture and how it affects them. We must help them to cultivate their interior life, beginning with the values which they live, without imposing on them from outside and reaching out to the youth on the margins today.

This involves going out into the street and reaching the frontiers of poverty, of religious and ethnic discrimination. This is where we will find God and the journey of pastoral conversion. We are called to prepare ourselves for all this. We cannot recognize a thirst for God in the young if we have not first experienced it; nor can we be bold in our educational choices unless we form and cultivate our spirit.

Only by knowing the world of youth can we get in touch with young people and slowly create a relationship with them. Of course, the first thing to do is to "be there" and to be happy to "be there" without being

To be a "home under construction" in today's world

in a hurry. We may be fellow travelers, points of reference, instruments of Jesus' love, but only a personal encounter with Him can transform and give meaning to each person's life.

13. "Being a home" in these times is to risk living and loving without measure and without time limits. Our main concern is the salvation of youth and their good. The challenge of evangelization is knowing how to communicate the faith to young people who have lost their Christian values and their love for life. We need to be close to them, to enter into their world, to enter there so as to accompany and guide them even after they leave our houses.

Faced with the challenges of the culture of life and peace, in everyday life, our young people must learn to communicate without violence, to manage conflicts, to lose without the desire for revenge, and to win without crushing. It is necessary that our works are places where one learns to relate, to take steps toward reconciliation, to live loving kindness, to escape the spiral of competition. They must be places where adults live what they require of others, where the witness of actions has more strength than good words. They must be places of joy, unconditional welcome and attention to the most fragile, where true friendship is possible and where we experience what it means to "count on others."

Do not be "afraid of young people" because they trust you; they feel good around you and are at home. Be, as they expect you to be - sisters and mothers full of compassion, full of wisdom to guide and empower, full of hope to encourage, nurturing the vision of a more positive future for all.

Our houses, like our life, can not be "private" places. Our evangelization is credible to the extent that it is rooted in the social dimension of our action and our presence. The defense and protection of human rights and the common good require a strong connection between our daily action, our witness and education, and

¹⁴POPE FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter: *Lumen Fidei* (June 29, 2013) n.4.

Home: A space of life and collaboration

a great capacity for communication. The Social Doctrine that the Church offers us is a necessary attribute of our evangelizing work and of our daily actions.

14. The strength of a proposal and of social and evangelizing action is rooted in the ability to coordinate, to be united, and to form ourselves together. This is why we all need to share clear guidelines and to strengthen the relationship between the various components of the Salesian Family, developing collaborative teams and strategic partnerships, both in planning and in working. For us, foreseeing love is a real and concrete witness of evangelization.

The values of free, voluntary, active citizenship must become the pillars of an educating community and of a real policy of serving the citizens. Young people believe in this and are ready for it. Open the doors more and more to young people. Commit yourselves to facilitating and finding the space needed for their participation.

In the world of communications, education is the key

15. The new information and communication technologies (ICT) lead us "closer to each other", but also to a radical change in the way we relate to one another. It is our duty to use this "new public property" in the right way, understanding Salesian assistance as creative presence in various playgrounds. Communicating through social networks offers the opportunity to share and build a new culture together with others, even amid considerable diversity: that of brotherhood, of solidarity, of the common good, and of peace.

A community that intends to "be with young people today, a home that evangelizes" is called to overcome the traditional means of direct and limited communication to become a guide in building a vision of the world that is different from the current one, full of divisions. This is the time to offer the witness of foreseeing love through communication on social networks. "Professional communication" is a valuable vocation, heralding a real social mission.

Our *communication* also must have "courage" and the

digital network must become a place rich in humanity - not a network of wires, but of people, as Pope Francis writes. Interest in *social media* allows young people to be seen and heard. Being aware of who and what is important in their lives will allow us to know and understand them in a way that they themselves are not able to communicate in face to face interactions with us. Sharing in our spiritual journey, with its efforts - as well as the way of our Founders Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello - will help us to gain trust and respect.

Listening to Young People

As members of educating communities, young people were a meaningful part of our Chapter experience. Some from different European countries have reflected on the theme of the Chapter and have turned to us with some specific requests. We will summarize them here.

Sharing the Good News with our life

16. In order to proclaim Jesus, it is necessary to *evangelize especially with our life*. Because of this, we expect that you would look at us young people with kindness and trust, to make us even more aware of our value. In particular, you FMA should really be interested in our lives, listening, welcoming, and staying with us, loving what we like, adapting yourselves to us, studying our lingo, understanding our lives, and not being afraid if you don't understand us immediately.

It seems important that as FMA you can care for your relationship with God - pray, read Sacred Scripture, be filled with the Holy Spirit, evaluate your intentions and activities; dedicate yourself fully to the mission, with all your soul and with great patience. Don't be lukewarm, but be Christians with a clear identity, constantly engaged and an example of being "alive, vital and vibrant." Be witnesses of joy, happy about your vocation in your daily life. In this way, each of us will

**Evangelizing,
even with
words**

feel the presence of God through your life. We will feel that He is approachable!

17. But it is also important to *evangelize with words*. First, listen to our story, listen to who Jesus is for us and don't only think about giving us a message; you could offer us different experiences of prayer and more demanding commitment to help us deepen our personal relationship with Jesus. Speak about Him, about His humanity, about Someone who is part of everyday life.

We expect that as FMA you support the young people who are involved by giving them a "community," and to those who desire, the ability to share your community life. We expect that you encourage us to deepen our faith and our responsibility to society, helping us to become catechists, animators and leaders, to open ourselves to the different vocations. Therefore, we would like you to be available for spiritual direction, to help us find meaning in what we live, without ready-made answers, with a more modern and creative language.

You must understand the new culture of communication, because even in this area, your work is important. It is precisely in this *environment* that you must take the first step to understand us. Your messages must be attractive and exciting. To do this, you must be in tune with us, you must "chat" with us, learning to use the same means, trying to set a good example by giving us a good reason to use social media.

**FMA Houses:
homes for the
young**

18. The novelty that we hope to see in you requires a move from a house that is already "done" to a home under construction, with the participation of the entire educating community involved in thinking, praying, and acting. A house that promotes a real "pastoral of the mind", and more broadly, of the person. We need evangelization that is shared through culture, which helps us to discuss different ideas; this necessitates rais-

ing the cultural level of the communities.

The true home is one where a family lives, where no one thinks they have "arrived" or believes that only the other has to change. For this, we would like you to be able to build relationships with the courage to open your facilities, your minds, and your hearts. We want you to share your daily life with those who cross the threshold of your homes, with an authentic and sympathetic presence, letting go of perfectionism, anxiety, and control. Trust us enough to plan these changes together: consider us as hardworking partners and not just recipients, creating spaces for dialogue in order to live the commandment of love in the Family Spirit.

Together we can commit ourselves to welcome the poorest, not only in terms of material poverty, but also the spiritually and existentially poor. The last should be our favorite because they have been "wounded before" by life, especially young people who do not seek you out. We ourselves are the key to reach those young people. Help us to feel that we are not guests, but children in the house of God, in your homes. You can even share your economic difficulties with us so we can seek solutions together.

True prophecy is tapping into the new vision of the house and proposing a different model that is centered on the core values of being a Christian. The beauty of a pilgrim community rests on four pillars: welcoming, motherhood, testimony, and prayer.

Rediscover the value of collaboration with the Salesians, not only at the level of activities and pastoral work, but also at the level of construction of the great Salesian Family House, networking with educating communities as a sign of a creative communion that is so necessary in society and in the Church.

LOOKING AT THE WORLD WITH HOPE

19. The disciples of Emmaus were talking to each other about what had happened to Jesus in Jerusalem during Passover. The core of their experience is embodied in the fact that in the company of Jesus, a story that was serious, tragic and disappointing, is transformed into a blessing, a story full of hope.

Our conversations, though filled with worries and fears, embraced the things that stand before our communities and our personal decisions as a call from God to look at the world with renewed passion. But not only. Our Institute is also called to challenge the world by virtue of its educational charism that sows seeds of Gospel newness in society.

At a Time of Great Change

20. What we have heard and lived with the laity and young people confirms that the changes taking place are a call to renewal and to open ourselves with kindness and resourcefulness to our time.

Among the many situations echoed in the Chapter Assembly, we welcomed those who have a greater impact on our lives and those of young people. There, God awaits our personal and community response.

Cultural and anthropological changes

21. We are challenged by cultural and anthropological changes that affect our view of the human person, our values and our relationship with God, with others, and with creation. These changes, which are also the result of the new culture of communication, have an impact on the family and society, on educating communities, on younger generations and how they perceive reality and participate in its transformation.

Good signs and resources

22. Recognizing the great advances in the defense of *human rights*, in *volunteerism*, in the feeling of being *citizens of the world*, especially on the part of young people, we are called to cooperate so that the

world will become more livable for everyone. Today's possibility of *simultaneous communication* creates new forms of gathering and participation, involving young people in particular in the commitment to stand together in favor of authentic democracy and the defense of each person's rights.

Concerns and pitfalls

23. While *relativism*, *superficiality* and *individualism* affect daily life, the conquest of inner freedom, the depth and consistency of the choices in a "liquid (constantly changing) society,"¹⁵ *global warming*, the *scarcity of natural resources*, the *hole in the ozone layer* and *pollution* threaten the healthy life of human beings and challenge us to educate young people to care for creation.

Excessive *competitiveness* and the exaltation of *efficiency* create a culture of waste that marginalizes minorities or entire populations, increasing discrimination between women and men, and between social groups. Moreover, the *inequality of opportunities*, even those caused by the *digital divide*, accentuate the exclusion of peoples and individuals as well as the effort of the intergenerational dialogue.

Challenges to consecrated life

24. Although many communities take courageous risks in circumstances of great distress, consecrated life seems to have lost *significance and visibility* as a result of the rapid transformations of the twenty-first century. With the beauty of the Gospel, religious life is called to denounce that which humiliates people and creation, and in life and words, proclaim the values that make society fully human. But in many parts of the world, it remains on the margins.

Our presence in *pluralistic and multi-religious* contexts challenges us to be open to a *culture of encounter and dialogue*, as experts in humanity, who are able to translate Gospel values in a shared *universal language*. This requires gestures expressing joy and peace, aware

¹⁵BAUMANN Zygmund, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press 2000.

that we are a “minority”, concentrating on the essentials of the *sequela Christi*.

Consecrated life is experiencing the season of winter: the right time to work on the basics. Without the winter, there would be no spring. Winter is the time when we nourish the roots.

If the roots are strong, spring will herald the harvest of fruit.¹⁶

Hunger and Thirst for God and for Spirituality

Asking for spirituality

25. Thirst for God emerges in us FMA, in many young people, and in adults, with the desire for a deeper spirituality. Though at times it seems that some are losing faith, many, with equal intensity, wish to search for paths to a deeper and more meaningful life.

Just the same, we experience weak faith, or we notice it around us. It is almost like a “*spiritual anemia*”¹⁷ which does not allow the individual to be transformed by Jesus. The person sometimes falls into a mediocrity that generates sadness and resignation, stifling enthusiasm and creativity.

As FMA, *taking charge* of our own *spiritual growth* on the journey of following Jesus is a necessary condition so that all the experiences of life can become opportunities for growth as missionary disciples.

Both personally and as a *community*, we are called to seek the plan of God *together* to celebrate the “mysticism of meeting” in everyday life and joyfully witness to our faith experience. “*Love is the measure of faith and faith is the soul of love.*”¹⁸ This requires the courage of pruning to make room for new habits, in ourselves and in our structures, without being afraid to *open ourselves to God’s surprises*.

¹⁶Conference of Mons. José Rodríguez Carballo, *The Prophecy of Religious Life in the Light of Evangelii Gaudium*. Speech for the Chapter Members (September 30, 2014).

¹⁷POPE BENEDICT XVI, *Angelus* from February 1, 2011.

Educating Community, Place of Encounter and Cooperation

In the Family Spirit

26. At the heart of the educating community, *the religious community* is challenged to *witness to prophetic* consecrated life as an alternative, which with full awareness, accepts the situation of the present moment and responds with *Gospel radicality*. This community cares for the quality of life without succumbing to the temptations of numbers and of efficiency.

We realize that everywhere there is a considerable need for the Family Spirit, for humanizing *interpersonal relationships* lived primarily in the religious community. For each FMA, this religious community is the primary place of fraternity which is necessary so that young people can believe that these experiences are possible.¹⁹

Where we learn to communicate

27. The Family Spirit challenges the educating community to *learn to communicate* with authenticity, simplicity, and sincerity, to create an *open environment conducive* to the maturation of every person, where each one cares for and feels responsible for each member, and are not united only by tasks to be accomplished.

The community is challenged to witness to a life based on the gospel - *forming one another, FMA and laity* - for the shared mission. The community is called to reach out to others with the same young people who help us to understand and live the gospel according to the Salesian charism, to go out with them to *proclaim Jesus*. This presupposes a real interaction between *education, communication, and evangelization*.

To accept others with availability and gratuity

28. The “*dream home*” - of family, of happiness, of a future and of a sense of meaning - present in so many young people who are looking for direction, challeng-

¹⁸POPE FRANCIS, *Angelus* from October 26, 2014.

¹⁹*Costitutions and Regulations [of the Institute of the FMA]*, art. 50. 66-67.

es us to welcome them in an unconditional and gratuitous way, to be with them and to accompany them, emphasizing the novelty they bring.

Alongside generous self-giving and missionary boldness, we note in ourselves as FMA, *the temptation to escape* from our inner being and from the mission, the temptation to close ourselves in private times and spaces of self-centeredness and an understanding of our religious vocation as a professional employment.

Young People, Our Holy Land

By the side of young people

29. Pope Francis, developing the ecclesiology of Vatican II in our times, asks the Church for a real *pastoral conversion*. This implies a new commitment for us, as we face our educational mission.

Competitive society tends to reject those who are disadvantaged, so, in many countries, *young people and even more so, young women*, are excluded from active participation in development. The Salesian vocation leads us to place ourselves beside children and the poor.

Margins that challenge us

30. In different contexts, it is the young, and particularly young women, who stand in the “periphery” inasmuch as the dominant system deprives them of instruction, of places of education, work, play, healthcare, citizenship, and the freedom to choose and design their own future. The *different forms of poverty* affecting young people challenge us in our presences and in our choices, in our creativity and in our formation. These poverties call us to become involved in seizing opportunities for development and education, even in situations of weakness and insecurity. In this sense the young people on the margins urge us on in our desire for transformation and the ability to recognize the new frontiers of youth where God speaks to us and awaits us.

Style of Animation and Government

Leadership suited to the times

31. In a culture that challenges institutions and in which the same authorities struggle to express their role in an effective and attractive way, as FMA, we feel the need to form ourselves to *a type of leadership that is adapted to these times* for a style of animation and government that is authoritative because it is consistent in word and action, able to facilitate involvement, fostering obedience to God’s plan and promoting co-responsibility in the mission.

A style of animation and government that begins from a faith filled reading of reality will provide insight about how to *clearly guide* the plan to give new meaning to consecrated life, our presences and our works in light of the Salesian charism and in fidelity to our Rule of Life. The implementation of *Coordination for Communion* is a challenge to us at all levels of responsibility.²⁰

New Formative Needs

The need for a new model of formation

32. The changing world and the young people who enter the Institute question *our lifestyle* and *the community experience* and urge us to continuously rethink our *proposal and model of formation*. The new generations need a community in a state of *ongoing formation*, where the *inter-generational relationship* can be experienced as a manifestation of God’s foreseeing love. They need a community that is a *pedagogical place* in which to mature as believers, consecrated religious, and educators of young people. They need a place where prayer is alive and the experience of the elderly Sisters is valued in passing on the charism and

²⁰*Rooted in the Covenant. Plan for the Formation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, Leumann (Turin), Elledici 2000; *That They May Have Life and Have Life In Abundance: Guidelines for the Educational Mission of the FMA*, Leumann (Turin), Elledici 2005.

²¹Typical experiences and timeless Salesian traditions, intended to nourish our spirituality and make the Salesian Family Spirit grow among ourselves and with the young people are - in addition to our sacramental life, Marian spirituality, and love for the Pope and the Church - the personal meeting, the good night, recreation, and feast days prepared and lived together.

in faithful witness.

The process of personal conversion to *make the contents of our formation become part of our life* requires using means that are inculturated, offering appropriate accompaniment, and making the most of the typical methods proper to our spirituality.²¹

All phases of life require *careful formation* in order to live our vocation in a way that is meaningful and joyful. The new cultural situations demand *preparation and continuous updating* in view of our educating and evangelizing mission.

3. OPEN TO CHANGES OF MENTALITY

*“Were not our hearts burning
within us...”
(Lk. 24:32)*

The pilgrim who walks with the disciples opens them to a different perspective, to a new interpretation of reality. His presence makes their hearts burn. That’s why they invite Him: “Stay with us!”

Even today, an encounter with Jesus offers us new vision, opens our eyes, changes our hearts and our minds.

Only a true encounter with Him transforms us from within and helps us to re-read reality with new eyes. The resulting change becomes a power that transforms, a source of vocational and missionary fruitfulness.

**The implications
of a change of
mentality**

33. Before the many challenges that face us, analysis is not enough; instead, conversion, as a sign of loyalty to God and to the young, is necessary. Don Bosco went ahead *as God inspired him and as circumstances required.*²²

A change of mentality requires reviewing our criteria for judgment, our priorities, and our knowledge. A real change leads to ways of acting that are different from how we have acted up to the present.

²²MB XVIII 127.

Our life is characterized by an inner energy, powered by the Holy Spirit, which makes us move ahead on the journey. We consider it important to have a dynamic stance, to move from one way of thinking to another, with the awareness of our fragility, with the humility of one who knows how to start again, placing oneself in the shoes of a disciple. This leads us to consider the world from different perspectives. In order to change it is necessary to penetrate our own humanity and that of others at a very deep level, without fear, in order to see life with hope.

Let us look at the world from the point of view of those on the periphery, with the eyes of Jesus, which help us to read the signs of the times.

Faced with Transformations

A positive view

34. A change of perspective invites us to cultivate a positive attitude toward each other, going beyond the exterior and looking at every person with the eyes and unconditional love of Christ.

This requires moving from a certain skepticism about what is present and what isn't working well, to a positive view of what is present and what works well. The person who has a positive attitude considers herself, the community, and other realities as an expression of beauty and spiritual wealth.

Living this change requires *abandoning the logic that says, "We always did it this way"* to be challenged by God's calls, especially those which come to us through young people. As educators, we can no longer think of ourselves as those who move in a familiar environment with the task of making others get to where the educators are already. We have to have the view of one who is accompanied, walking side by side, on a journey with young people, *researching and discovering new paths together*. This requires the flexibility of someone who is willing to *continuously learn and unlearn*.

Discernment as a lifestyle

35. The changing world leads us to evaluate which

works and actions have to be adapted and/or changed in order to have a *youth ministry suitable to the times*. Because of this, decisions cannot be based on our need for security, or on the criterion of what to keep, focusing our attention only on internal problems and emergencies. We are required instead to make *discernment a lifestyle*, an ongoing commitment to welcome the newness of the Spirit, which sometimes leads to huge changes in vision and structures and sometimes only to small steps forward.

Throughout the Institute, flexibility is required, making the transition from multi-cultural tolerance to intercultural processes possible. As an intercultural reality, we can be an eloquent sign of communion in diversity for a world divided by partisan interests and the logic of domination.

Rediscovering A Presence Together

Continual conversion

36. In the process of transformation, we must learn to discover the presence and action of God in the unfolding of history and to free ourselves from a pessimistic outlook. Whoever has God, whoever encounters Him, looks to the future with confidence. For this reason, we believe we need to *transform* our communities into *communities of hope: joyful communities*, living *difficulties as opportunities*, recognizing the current moment as a time of grace. We must become communities where there is a commitment to profoundly live the Preventive System's spirituality, feeling co-responsible to change and renew the charism. Like us, young people and lay people have a thirst for God. This calls us to *ongoing conversion* to grow together in faith as educating communities in which each member allows himself or herself to be evangelized, and evangelizes by the witness of his or her life.

Quality relationships

37. Being with young people, sharing faith, relying on them and not just working for them, makes us grow in an educational and co-responsible relationship with regard to the mission. Therefore, being with

young people requires us to *overcome formal relations* that are functional and hurried to *focus on having an authentic encounter* lived in the Family Spirit and in Salesian accompaniment. In the educating community, we must cultivate an *enterprising and planning mindset*, networking with others, able to make use of all the resources available, for innovative educational choices.

On Behalf of the Young

Protagonists of evangelization

38. To really be with young people, we need to have a more open-minded mentality to accept them, so as to overcome the fear of being with them. If we consider young people as agents of evangelization of other young people, we will see them not only as recipients, but, together, we will be involved in offering opportunities for quality formation. This comes about when there is a commitment to move from simply communicating the contents of faith to bringing the experience of encounter with Jesus who takes on flesh in our daily life, present in the Word, in the Eucharist and in the face of every person. It means moving from a mentality of pastoral activities to a mindset of processes which are promoted and shared by all pastoral agents in the educating community.

From the Viewpoint of the Periphery

For a change of perspective

39. If we face poverty, standing beside the smallest and poorest, journeying with them, our parameters of judgment and the choices we make in our mission are changed, and we open ourselves to the periphery also present in our communities. It's time to *dare to change our perspective*, our way of looking at reality, creatively rethinking things beginning with the poor and being able to live like Jesus, without safety nets and privileges. We feel we need to move from the risk of favoring comfortable ways of life, with a lot of security, to working together to build flexible, less structured communities, imbued with tenacious mission-

ary passion.

These are communities where formation is not lived in an individualistic way, but it is considered a shared journey in which, with a sense of belonging, we share, we discern, we accompany each other, we allow ourselves to be challenged by the poorest young people, identifying them as our priority and growing together with them.

A New Understanding of Authority and Animation

Coordination for Communion

40. In line with what is contained in the Plan of Formation and the Guidelines for the Educational Mission of the FMA²³ we feel the urgency *to assume and implement coordination for communion effectively*. It offers a more inclusive style of animation and government which, by being circular, awakens the responsibility and initiative of each one.

This involves understanding animation as a service and a process that is open to dialogue, evaluation and discussion. The one who animates accompanies paths of maturation, promotes co-responsibility and obedience, making use of each one's resources in order to foster a common project, while listening as well to those who have different ideas.

From managing works to attention on the person

41. We are talking about moving from animation and government that worries mostly about the administration of works to a *style that pays attention to the person*.²⁴ This attention on the person will also help us develop an effective animation of educational works entrusted to us. This requires a style of government that accompanies processes started and which overcomes both the risk of "laissez-faire" as well as authoritarianism or power struggles.

In our current society, there is a request for a *new balance in mutual relationships* between those who have a task of animation and government and others, shar-

²³*That They May Have Life*, nn. 135-141.

²⁴*Costitutions and Regulations [of the Institute of the FMA]*, art. 113-114.

ing the responsibility with those who perform this work. Even among the FMA, creating a climate of trust in those who are called to lead the community, with the contribution of all in different degrees, will revive our common dream that the Institute be suitable for future generations. *By believing in others, we create them!*

For Renewed Attention to Formation

Responsibility for self-formation

42. *Formation is a process that takes place in daily life.* It requires an awareness of how important it is to *take care of our lives* so that we can give our life more fully. That's why we feel the need to switch from passively living formation to the *responsibility of integral self-formation*, faithfully making use of mediations as a process of conformity to Christ that lasts a lifetime.

Privileged places of formation

43. The *community* and the *mission* are our privileged places of mutual formation, where we re-elaborate content and experiences on the path to vocational unity. Theoretical knowledge that is not life-changing is not sufficient.

Regardless of the context, it is important not to attribute the cause of one's discomfort only to persons or external situations, but to make the decision to look within ourselves, accepting our personal history with mercy and humility, in the light of the Paschal Mystery, renewing our lives with deeper motivations.

Escaping self-centeredness

44. Communities in mission help us to escape *self-centeredness* and establish a *real encounter with people*, especially with young people and families. In this way, we allow ourselves to marvel at, to question, and to be evangelized by the mystery that each person holds within himself or herself. It seems important to move from an individualistic *mentality of self-fulfillment to the courageous assumption of the cetera tolle*, and from a weak faith that rejects the setbacks and difficulties of life, to the capacity to reaffirm our con-

viction that we are in the hands of God. In this way, we learn to manage conflicts without fear of facing them, to harmonize differences and to overcome the temptation of destructive *gossip*.²⁵

Open to a global vision

45. Changing our perspective and evaluating processes of restructuring/consolidation and even the possibility of new presences in a new way requires shifting *from a mindset centered on local realities*, limited even to our own provincial reality, *to a global vision* of the Church and of the Institute as a sign of membership and of communion. This requires us to be ready to move according to the needs of the mission. This availability would help us overcome a sense of satisfaction with what we already do and to grow in our ability to take on the risk of concrete and meaningful choices.

Upgrading our cultural preparation

46. Interest and openness to the values of different peoples opens the door to the Gospel. This is why it is important to overcome the temptation to complete formation in a way that is hasty or improvised. We must *commit ourselves to care for cultural and religious preparation*, so that we can contribute to the renewal of society from within.

Communication as an Opportunity

Overcoming a vision of usefulness

47. Changing our mentality is necessary so we can also look at communication from a different perspective. Choosing communication involves personal changes in our relationships and in the structures and processes we adopt. Having a balanced view allows us to see the world neither as a new field to conquer nor as something from which to defend ourselves. The exchange generates in us FMA an awareness of communication as a mission. It requires *overcoming*

²⁵Pope FRANCIS, *Audience with the Chapter Members* (November 8, 2014).

an instrumental view of new technologies to enter the digital world not only as users, but as people looking for meaning and as promoters of the new culture.

Present in
cyberspace

48. This is possible by overcoming the uncertainty of feeling unprepared, sometimes frightened by youth cultures. Instead, it allows us to have the confidence to learn together with the young and to have the desire to meet them even in the new digital marketplaces and neighborhoods, *opening paths of evangelization with them* with an oratorian heart. It is also important to overcome the risk of superficiality seen in relationships on the web as well as digital addiction so that we can discern what is good among the plethora of information, *reclaiming our spiritual nature*, for authentic communication.

Escatological
mentality

49. The desire to form ourselves and *share just and ecological thinking*, respecting the integrity of creation and human rights, brings us *to turn away from consumerism and selfishly using new technologies* which are often produced using raw materials extracted at the cost of so many lives.

4. TIME TO TAKE UP THE JOURNEY AGAIN

“They set out immediately”
(Lk. 24:33)

Transformed by their encounter with Jesus, the disciples returned in haste to Jerusalem to announce the One who is risen and has changed their lives. The experience they lived filled them with an overwhelming joy, driving them to bring the Gospel of Life to everyone. The encounter with Jesus transforms even our daily life, creating and nourishing communion, making us, together with the young and the entire educating community, confident evangelists, whose lives stand as a prophecy for the world.

WITH A VIEW OF PASTORAL CONVERSION

In a constant
state of mission

50. The horizon that motivates the choices and concrete steps of renewal is *pastoral conversion*. This horizon puts us in tune with the call of the Church and in continuity with the paths of conversion of GC XXII. Several processes started in the past six years require continuity; others are now emerging with greater force. We ourselves are challenged by the words of the Pope: “I hope that all communities find a way to implement the necessary means to advance on the journey of pastoral and missionary conversion, which can not leave things as they are now [...]. In all regions of the earth we see a “permanent state of mis-

sion.”²⁶

These words of Pope Francis, addressed to the entire Church, resonate for us as consecrated women and for every educator as a pressing call to renew the passion and commitment to the educational mission of evangelization. This applies in any situation, in any work, even in innovative works, which express the Salesian charism.²⁷ The human, moral, spiritual and social development of young people, so that they will be *good Christians and honest citizens* today, requires us to make changes regarding our usual ways of living and working. Seeing things from the viewpoint of the margins, as presented in the *Working Document of CG XXIII*²⁸, is the perspective with which we look at reality, bearing the burden of both the values and the inconveniences which young people endure.

With the style of Mary

51. Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, who recognizes the footsteps of the Spirit in big events as much as in those that seem imperceptible, entrusts us with her style of *humility and tenderness, service and boldness* in the mission of evangelization. In the changing times in which we live, the commitment to *be with young people a home that evangelizes* is not only to improve something. It requires, before all else, a real missionary conversion, practicing the very motherhood of Mary to become a Church that “creates, builds up, corrects, feeds, and leads by the hand...”, a Church that is able to rediscover the maternal womb of mercy. Without mercy, there is really no way to fit into a wounded world, in need of understanding, forgiveness, and love.”²⁹

Creating environments of evangelization

52. The conversion process involves the whole of our personal and community life, transforming us and our homes into places of evangelization where young people become the protagonists of the same mission. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI stressed that the Church evangelizes not just with words, but with the shape it takes on within history.³⁰ Still today, to evangelize, we cannot separate the dimension of our transformative encounter with Jesus from communion with one another and with young people, or from going out to others and reaching the outskirts of human existence.

As a prophecy for the world

53. Conversion pushes us first to get out of our mediocrity, living in an authentic and credible way, so as to be a prophecy for the world. It urges us to act boldly, docile to the Holy Spirit: *the brave person invents, risks, and is not paralyzed by fear, but starts innovating and illuminates the future.*³¹ As daughters of dreamers, the options and choices that will guide our way in the coming years should originate from the great dream of God for our Institute. The contribution of each one is necessary, both in activity as well as in offering prayer. In the heart of each burns the fire and the joy of the call, as Mother Mazzarello recommended. “*Be very careful not to let the fire that the Lord has lit in your heart be extinguished.*”³²

The one who is led by true inspiration, by seemingly impossible dreams, by a cause, a creed, an ideal, can easily find other dreamers who share a dream and wish to participate in making it a reality. The important thing for them is not an immediate plan but letting the dream lead them to the impossible.³³

²⁶Pope FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 25-27.

²⁷*Constitutions and Regulations [of the Institute of the FMA]*, art. 63-64.

²⁸*Working Document*, nn. 8-24.

²⁹Pope FRANCIS, *Speech to the Brazilian Bishops* (Rio de Janeiro, July 27, 2013, 4).

³⁰PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 dicembre 1975).

³¹*Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 30, 33.

³²*Letter* 41,2.

³³SINEK Simon, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*, New York, Penguin Group 2009.

CHOICES FOR PASTORAL CONVERSION

54. Knowing that now is the time for bold decisions, the Chapter Assembly identified three basic choices in view of pastoral conversion. These choices are closely intertwined with each other. They arise from vocational unity, pointing us to a path of continual conversion. We have formulated them from the key words of the Chapter theme: *Transformed by the Encounter, Together with Young People, and Missionaries of Hope and Joy.*

Transformation Through *Encounter*

Which changes
our life

55. “The first motivation for evangelization is the love of Jesus that we have received, the experience of being saved by Him that drives us to love Him more and more. However, what kind of love does not feel the need to talk about the loved one, to introduce them to others, and to make them known?”³⁴

Young people will be able to believe in the love of Jesus if we love them freely as He loves them and share with them the experience of our encounter with God, and in an ever more fluid society, if we can remain faithful to the end, like Mary at the foot of the Cross awaiting the Resurrection.

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but of an encounter with an event, or with a Person, who gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”³⁵ *Living as disciples, we can encourage a personal encounter of young people with Jesus who transforms them and, in turn, makes them missionaries.*

and nourishes
a culture of
encounter

56. Salesian spirituality expressed in daily life does not close us in on ourselves, but feeds a culture of encounter that makes us *eager to serve* young people and

the laity, *in the style of Mary.* All this is done through personal relationships in which the *human quality* is the first concrete proof of the *quality of the Christian faith.* Among the qualities to be cultivated in our communities is, first of all, *fraternal charity*³⁶ as a credible sign for the people we meet and as the foundation for living a circular style of animation.

An experience
of faith
incarnate

57. Considering the diversity of local situations and the different paths of each Province, we propose some lines of action.

- 1.** To discern the conditions and find ways to make *prayer* an experience that nourishes the mystical and prophetic dimensions of life, giving *quality* to *fraternal* relations and, at the same time, making us passionate for God and for the *young.*
- 2.** To deepen and share the *Word of God* among the members of the educating community and other church groups, for a *wise understanding of reality,* so as to find out what God wants from us.
- 3.** To cultivate *evangelical and humanizing relationships,* looking at every person with the eyes of Jesus, to bear witness to communion in everyday life and to be credible in our lives and in the educational mission.
- 4.** To use the Constitutions to *periodically evaluate* our *style of community life* so that it is simpler and more basic. Ensuring the quality of our community life through the *ordinary means of Salesian tradition,* particularly the colloquio, the good night, moments of recreation and community relaxation.
- 5.** To involve the young people in formation in drafting *initial formative journeys.* Making sure that the preparation of all *formators* is adequate for

³⁴Pope FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 264.

³⁵BENEDICT XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Deus Caritas Est* (December 25, 2005) n. 1.

³⁶*Constitutions and Regulations [of the Institute of the FMA]*, art. 50, 52.

In ongoing formation

today. Ensuring that the Temporary Professed Sisters have skilled formation and accompaniment in gradually inserting themselves in community life and in the mission, giving them confidence and responsibility, valuing the novelty they bring to *inter-generational dialogue*.

6. To recover the *educational value of daily life*, of the practical experience of being with the poorest young people, helping them to responsibly assume their own life formation.
7. To give priority to *ongoing formation* by investing in *systematic preparation* (of FMA and laity) required today by the mission of education and evangelization. Ensuring that there is time for study and *adequate cultural formation*.

Together, with the Young**Sharing fraternal life and the mission**

58. The origins of the Institute are marked by the experience of a group of young women who shared a call: "I entrust them to you."³⁷ Since then the charism continues to grow and become incarnate in communities that express vitality and originality.

We share the *dream* of being open and welcoming communities - Gospel places in which Jesus is at the center, where young people can live with the Family Spirit typical of Valdocco and Mornese, respecting each person and living in co-responsibility, places which prepare youth for an active involvement in society.

Fidelity to the charism requires a commitment to find balance between the care of the spiritual life and the administration of works, between searching for the common good and attention to the good of the individual. The *circular style of animation* promotes the

coordination needed to implement all this in the community.

In continuity with the intuition of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello we believe it is time to redefine, and start in some contexts, a *shared mission* with lay people who share the human values we propose, even if they are not Christians. In particular, in talking to young people about the Gospel, we feel that the best spokespersons are the young people themselves who more easily speak the language of those who are not familiar with the faith and Christian values. It is time, therefore, to be willing to let ourselves be transformed by our relationships with them.

Open to youth taking the lead

59. As educators we choose to consider youth not only as recipients but as protagonists of evangelization *announcing Jesus to other young people*. Because of this, in the educating community, it is important that our planning gives priority to the proclamation of the Gospel as *good news* for the life of many young people, offering differentiated paths and assuming the mentality of journeying as an educating community.

In every educational reality, it is important to strengthen the *animating nucleus* to facilitate a process of growth in humanity and an explicit proposal of evangelization according to the Salesian style, open and respectful of each cultural or religious difference.³⁸

Listening to their need for a home

60. Listening to young people puts us in touch with their reality. Often living in precarious family situations,³⁹ many of them feel a strong need for a home and for belonging. They are looking for meaning for their lives, for responsibility, for leadership, for meaningful ties, for solidarity, and for ideals to pursue.

³⁷*Cronistoria [of the Institute of the FMA]*, edited by G. Capetti, Roma, FMA Institute, 1977, vol. I, 97.

³⁸*That They May Have Life*, n. 70.

³⁹*Report on the Synod of the Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the theme of The pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization*, Rome October 18, 2014, n. 60.

61. Considering the diversity of local situations and the different journeys of each Province, we propose some lines of action.

In community

1. To assume an *oratorian heart*⁴⁰ as a criterion of renewal for our presence and our communities. Organizing our time and space in relation to the mission of the community, in an atmosphere of family, faith, and Salesian joy.
2. To commit ourselves to stay with young people, listening to them, trusting them, believing in them, meeting them where they are: other than in the traditional environments, even on the streets, in the projects or in the ghetto, at the store, the workplace, in the digital world, at universities, in *shopping centers*, in *pubs*, etc.
3. To involve resources of the local area when possible: the local Church, the Salesian Family, especially the alumnae and alumni, *Vides* or other volunteer organizations, the Human Rights Office, or other church groups or movements in discernment and choices regarding the significance of our presence.

With a circular style of animation and government

4. To initiate processes that make the strategy of *coordination for communion* effective at the general, provincial and local levels, as is indicated in the Plan of Formation⁴¹ and in the Guidelines for the Educational Mission.⁴² This brings all our resources into play and necessitates examining our style of animation/government and obedience in the evangelical and Salesian sense, as indicated by Church Magisterium.⁴³
5. To promote reflection on the structure of anima-

⁴⁰INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *Oratory: A Work in Progress*, Rome, LAS 2013;

⁴¹*Rooted in the Covenant*, pp. 149-168.

⁴²*That They May Have Life*, nn. 135-141.

⁴³CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *The Service of Authority and Obedience* (May 11, 2008).

tion and government in view of the restructuring and/or studies taking place in the Institute.⁴⁴

On the side of young people

6. To invest with foresight in the formation of the Animators of communities and Sisters who hold tasks of animation at the local and provincial levels, accompanying their experience in the assumption of responsibility assigned to them. Ensuring that they can offer first-rate service in their task, without an overload of commitments that leaves no time for community.
7. To provide, in the field of the New Evangelization, formation for young people according to the pastoral paradigm of the Institute⁴⁵. Strengthening the Salesian Youth Spirituality in every one of our environments and in particular in the accompaniment of the Salesian Youth Movement and the promotion of volunteerism.⁴⁶
8. To care, with greater determination, for the development of vocational communities and promote a vocation culture in every community, taking into account the different vocations in the Church and in society, paying special attention to those of the Salesian Family. Beginning to offer systematic, adequate and inculturated studies in our educational presences, focusing on discernment and vocational accompaniment of the young.
9. To dare, as an educating community, to make creative choices to meet the needs of young people most at risk, promoting active citizenship with them.⁴⁷
10. To fortify our study of anthropology with its chal-

⁴⁴*Report on the Life of the Institute in the Six-Year Term 2008-2014*, Rome, FMA Institute 2014, nn. 211-212; 248.

⁴⁵For this paradigm, refer to the *Guidelines for the Educational Mission of the FMA*.

⁴⁶*That They May Have Life*, nn. 135-141.

⁴⁷Social perspective of the *Guidelines for the Education Mission of the FMA (That They May Have Life* n. 51).

lenges and prospectives in light of the Christian vision of *the person and the human identity*. Reflecting in particular on issues of daughterhood,⁴⁸ family relationships and the ideology of *gender*, so as to provide appropriate educational contributions.

11. To know the current reality of families and let ourselves be moved by them. Together with these same families, to focus on *family pastoral*,⁴⁹ in line with Church guidelines, accompanying young people in developing a vision of life and of the family that is in line with Christian values.⁵⁰

Missionaries of Hope and Joy

Like Mary

62. The encounter with the God of Life is inseparable from the encounter with people. That's how it was for Mary: full of life and grace from God, she met others in a new way. The first to be evangelized becomes the first evangelizer. Like her, bringing joy to Elizabeth, we open ourselves to a *new missionary dynamism*. *Going out*, like the disciples of Emmaus, further strengthened in faith and hope, we go with courage and joy to the *marginalized youth*, in need of the light of the Gospel.⁵¹ So we approach poverty in love, especially poor youth, because the poor are the face of Christ and meeting them allows us to open our eyes, to experience mercy and to give it. The greatest service we can offer, because it accompanies the human being to its fullness, is education. Educational activity becomes more effective when networking, especially with other groups of the Salesian Family but also at the intercongregational level and in collaboration with other local resources.

⁴⁸FARINA Marcella - SIBOLDI Rosangela – SPIGA Maria Teresa (editors), *Daughterhood: Journeys of Reflection and Research*, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2014.

⁴⁹Report on the Life of the Institute in the Six Year Term 2008-2014, nn. 111, 141, 214, 260.

⁵⁰Working Document of the Third General Assembly of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the theme of *the pastoral challenges to the family in the context of evangelization*, n. 50.

⁵¹*Evangelii gaudium*, n. 20.

Through a renewed educational presence

63. Networking in education today implies *redefining our presences* and rethinking them from the perspective of prevention. In contexts of new poverties, the educational commitment to *justice, peace, the integrity of creation*, and the *defense of life*, are signs that make us credible before all and open us to a shared mission. In these new contexts, we are called to live charity with a view to society according to the Social Doctrine of the Church. Only communities that are healthy and rich in passion for education can promote original thinking and support the creative undertakings of individuals and institutions. In this way, we assume the educational and social perspective of Don Bosco: "We don't do politics. We may make policies, but these are absolutely harmless; instead, they are beneficial to every government. We tend to decrease urchins, vagabonds, and minor criminals, emptying the prisons. This is our politics."⁵²

Communion of goods for the service of the mission

64. A highly esteemed sign which makes us credible in today's society is the *communion of goods* at the service of the mission in real, inculturated, and verifiable ways. These goods are the result of wise administration as we *construct the house* entrusted to us as well as a coherent self-control on the personal and community levels. Goods grow and multiply if they become an expression of solidarity, equity and confident abandonment to Providence.

Social Networks

65. In *social networks*, being missionaries calls us to evidence a prophetic and evangelizing presence, to cooperate in manifesting the face of an *outgoing Church*, filled with Christ's joy, journeying with all.

66. Considering the diversity of local situations and the different journeys of each Province, we propose some lines of action.

⁵²*The Feast Day of a Father and His Children Having Dinner with Him*, in *The Salesian Bulletin* 7 (1883) August, p. 128. Conference of Don Bosco to the Past Pupils.

Community
that moves
outward

1. To establish *concrete signs* that express our fidelity to the charism in the *preferential option for the poorest*, though we are in varied contexts, works and situations.
2. To foster a *culture of peace* according to the Gospel. To form one another mutually to attitudes that are non-violent, law-abiding, and tolerant, respecting all individuals. This leads to uniting with other people and institutions to denounce the structures of injustice and exploitation.
3. To realize *ecological conversion* in the communities and in our educational-pastoral proposals, in order to rediscover a taste for the beauty of creation and to marvel at the wonders of creation; maturing a critical capacity to grasp the injustices present in a model of development that does not respect people and the environment; assuming a *sober and respectful lifestyle* in our use of natural resources as a form of responsibility towards future generations and in solidarity with the less fortunate.
4. To reconfirm our educating communities in the commitment to *Educommunication*, living the Preventive System today in light of anthropological vision proposed by the *Guidelines for our Educational Mission* and the view of its Educational Frames of Reference.⁵²
5. To investigate more resources at the central and provincial levels for *training qualified people* (FMA, youth and adults) so that they can acquire communication skills to proclaim the Gospel. To prepare FMA in the catechetical and pastoral fields, as well as in Religious Education emphasizing the direct commitment to evangelization and to the formation of leaders and catechists.
6. To allow our *evangelizing presence* to emerge on the web, in order to create a culture in defense of the rights of the poorest, especially of girls and women, and in favor of justice and peace.

that evangelizes
in a changing
world

Sharing of
goods

7. To create moments of reflection and evaluation at the provincial and local levels on our way of interacting with *new information and communication technologies*, and to work together to discern guidelines about the relationship between valuing these means of communication for our mission and our choice of poverty.
8. To work as an educating community for a *prophetic, educational presence in the territory* and in the Church, working with the Salesian Family and other organizations committed to education and the promotion of justice, peace, solidarity economy, the defense of life, of human rights and the integrity of creation.⁵³
9. To start a *network of solidarity*⁵⁴ so as not to imitate methods that generate inequality, exclusion and impoverishment within the Institute. Sharing time, as well as financial and human resources to express the communion of goods.
10. To establish and/or strengthen *international communities* to accompany and support migrants, with special attention to children, young people and women. Commit ourselves to *intercultural, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue*, to find new ways of communion; and to begin a journey that leads from multiculturalism to inter-culturalism.
11. To be available with our own human, cultural, and spiritual wealth for greater mobility, so that, networking together, we can face the demands of the mission of the Institute and experience the uncertainty that unites so many people in the world.

⁵²*That They May Have Life*, nn. 41-57.

⁵³Documents of the Commission on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

⁵⁴INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, *Cooperation for Development. Guidelines for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, Bologna, Editrice Missionaria Italiana 2006.

5. COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO DO PROPHETIC THINGS TOGETHER

Preventive education's perspective

67. Consecrated life needs to be renewed in order for the Holy Spirit to be manifested in different ways according to the times. He relies on us today to search for new ways of bringing the freshness of the Gospel to men and women, especially to the young. It's up to us to *awaken the world* to the vital importance of evangelizing education and to cooperate in favor of a more just society where even the most vulnerable can find their place with the dignity of God's children and make their own contribution.⁵⁵

Called to develop the charism today

68. As FMA, we feel the joy of following Jesus that sends us forth to forge paths with the young as did Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, and many of our Sisters.

The profound renewal of how we understand love of neighbor, especially thanks to the Magisterium of the most recent Popes, calls into question our communities and the educational programs that they offer. The *social dimension of evangelization*, indicated explicitly in *Evangelii Gaudium*, challenges our entire mission and opens new areas of attention to the poorest young people.

A seed of prophecy that is not yet fully developed is planted in the soil of the charism. In an unprecedented time, as we face the future, boldness is an act of love.

69. In the Chapter Assembly, in addition to the choices and lines of action identified, there was a desire to agree on steps that would be common to the whole Institute, concrete answers to the great phenomena that challenge us to be a *prophetic sign* for a future with renewed missionary energy.

⁵⁵FRANCIS, *Address to the participants at the worldwide meeting of popular movements* (October 28, 2014).

To be Implemented with the Coordination of Mother and the General Council

1. The Phenomenon of Migration and Intercultural Communities

Collaborative actions in favor of migrants

70. As Interprovincial Conferences, to discover how to connect FMA communities, different groups of the Salesian Family and the various civil and ecclesial institutions, so as to investigate the causes of migration, to collaborate in educational projects that promote the prevention of this phenomenon, and to accompany migrants at their points of origin, transit, and arrival, to work in a specific way to protect women and children, undertaking the proposal of possibly forming intercultural communities to oversee this effort.

Working together to develop the charisma

71. As an Institute, we welcome the commitment to launch a debate in the Interprovincial Conferences and on various continents on the challenges related to the development of the charisma and to the need for a New Evangelization. We are committed to continuing the path of *Reflection Europe* as a shared *project* in the Institute to revitalize our presence, even through intercultural communities that give new life to the charisma in different contexts. We can then respond to the urgent needs of evangelization, taking into account the demographic characteristics of the FMA communities and complex phenomena throughout the continent, in particular that of secularization and lack of religion.

The community in Jerusalem

72. Jerusalem, city where the three great monotheistic religions meet, and a spiritual point of reference for much of the world, is a particularly significant home for the FMA. We feel the responsibility as an Institute to support an intercultural community that expresses solidarity with Christians in the Holy Land and is a sign of peace and dialogue among people of different faiths.

2. Sharing of Goods

73. We are committed to effectively sharing assets (people, resources, material goods, money) in the communities, in the Provinces, and in the Institute to be a prophecy of fraternity in today's world of growing inequalities, to reach out to the poorest and respond to emergencies that occur in different parts of the Institute and of the planet.

- The General Council will explore practical methods to favor a greater movement of goods in the Institute, developing guidelines for economy, according to the directives of the Holy See and in dialogue with the Provinces.
- The provincial and local realities will commit to live Article 25 of the Constitutions and Articles 17 and 18 of the Regulations more radically.
- As an Institute, we will be attentive to emergency situations in the world (epidemics, wars, and natural disasters ...) finding ways to address them together by means of preventive education, through gestures of economic solidarity and/or by sending personnel or beginning appropriate projects.

To be Implemented at the Provincial and/or Interprovincial Levels

Oratory-Youth Center

74. In the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco, we rekindle the passion of an "oratorian heart" as a characteristic trait of the Salesian identity. In continuity with GC XXII, we strive to find new ways for non-formal and popular education, even beyond our houses. In particular, we propose, as an educating community, the project of Oratory-Youth Centers to provide quality educational experiences already in place and promote other creative types of edu-

cational experiences, in order to give an answer to young people who are jobless, abandoned, migrants, exploited, or live on the street.

The Oratory-Youth Center is a privileged place of missionary and vocational experiences. This is a way of bringing attention to the different peripheries, creating solidarity among young people, and offering opportunities for growth through experiences of economic solidarity.

Attachment

An Artistic Interpretation of the Gospel Passage of the Disciples of Emmaus

The three scenes in this image speak of listening, meeting, and deciding to continue the journey. What we have lived as a Chapter experience becomes a paradigm for each educating community.

The renewal process occurs when the educating community pays attention to reality, is open to dialogue, and is willing to find new meaning in life, in light of the encounter with Jesus. He is our motivation for reaching out to others with enthusiasm and joy, knowing that we are missionary disciples.

In the painting by Elda Broilo, a Scalabrinian Sister from Brazil, there is a new interpretation of the passage of the disciples of Emmaus (Lk. 24:13-33). It is presented in three scenes which she described as follows:

First scene. There is Jerusalem and the Temple as a light among people's homes. There is the path that leads to Emmaus. The light is the evangelical strength of sharing bread, the Word, service, forgiveness,

unity, and the command: “Love one another.” There, Jesus had lived a farewell dinner offering his final recommendations. The disciples walk away disappointed and fearful, in the direction of the night. The child gazes toward the light, toward the place of hope and life. Along the way, Jesus comes to stand in the midst of them, reminding them of the story of the people of Israel, rekindling their memory. The hearts of the disciples are warmed, on fire. They invite him to stay with them because night is falling.

Second scene. Jesus accepts their invitation, enters the house, sits down, takes the bread in his hands, blesses it and gives it to them. He repeats the actions of the Last Supper. The disciples are surrounded by a great light, and their eyes are opened. They represent the two attitudes of those who follow Jesus. The first figure’s face is in the shadows, bowed, silent, resigned and contemplative of the Great Guest, Jesus Christ made Bread and Word. The second figure is a woman with a joyful face, looking to humanity. Her hands are open to serve, and her feet are ready to resume the journey. With her bag in hand, she is fortified by the encounter with Jesus.

Third scene. The disciples are wrapped in a luminous circle of bright light. They return in haste to Jerusalem to again meet with the others and tell them everything that happened. In this sharing, they leave aside their fear. They have new energy from their experience and are taken by the power of Jesus Christ resurrected. They understand that the effectiveness of the mission depends on the profound and conscious intimacy with the Lord and communion with our brothers and sisters.

Second Part

DECISIONS AND MODIFICATIONS OF ARTICLES OF THE CONSTITUTIONS AND REGULATIONS

Decisions Assumed by GC XXIII

Articles of the Constitutions and Regulations Modified by GC XXIII
