

**Third
Part**

SPEECHES AND MESSAGES

Opening of General Chapter XXIII

(September 22, 2014)

Closure of General Chapter XXIII

(November 15, 2014)

Address of Pope Francis at the Audience Given to the Chapter Members

(November 8, 2014)

Homily of the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime

Pr. 3: 27-34; Ps. 14; Lk. 8:16-18.

Dearest Mother Yvonne dear Sisters and Chapter Members, dear Sisters and Brothers, all here to attend the General Chapter or to accompany its official beginning, I greet you with my heart in my hand.

I am very happy to be here with you and so represent the whole Salesian Family who have long prayed for this event of the Spirit - for the good of the whole Church and society, for the good of the young and of the world.

The brief Gospel that the liturgy offers us today makes me think of three images, three words to share with you: *light, transparent walls and treasure*. I'll explain myself immediately. Dearest Sisters, today in this house a bright and special **light** is lit that becomes a lamp, indeed, a beacon for the whole Institute and for our family because what you will live in these coming days is called to illumine the personal and community path in every house and in every province.

A general chapter is followed not only by the Sisters present here, but also by all those around the world. What will make this radiating fire stay aflame during the whole time of the chapter will be your passion for God, for the Kingdom, for all humanity, for girls and boys who still await us everywhere.

I wish you a wonderful experience of fraternity and discernment that allows you to share not only your reflection, but above all your life, so that everyone knows about the Pentecost that you are living here in Rome.

The Gospel reminds us that *"No one lights a lamp and covers it with a clay jar or puts it under a bed ..."*. The entire Salesian Family is the child of a father who knew how to enlighten the world and flood it with the spirituality and the pedagogy of the preventive system, beginning from the profound experience with hundreds of young men and especially with a nice group of young people who decided to stay with him. Main, enlightened also by the witness of Don Bosco, did the same thing, together with the first Sisters of Mornese.

Dearest Sisters, may the world hear not only about your beautiful

reflections and insights, but above all, may the world hear about the beautiful experience of fraternity and faith that you will have here.

A second image that I want to share with you today is the **transparent walls**. The Gospel says that *“There is nothing secret that will not be revealed, nothing hidden that will not be known and come into the light.”* That’s why I say “transparent walls” because in some way our life is lived in a transparent house, a house made of glass. This is very nice, because what we communicate, what we proclaim is what we experience, what we live, what we touch with our own hands. You speak of “a house that evangelizes”: the proclamation of the Good News will not be a speech about a doctrine, a teaching about a certain moral or a certain way of looking at life, but above all, what you are living in your religious communities and in your educating and pastoral communities, together with a host of lay people and especially with young people. The “transparent walls” will allow you to look at the world that is near you, at the social context, at the world of young people with whom you journey and also at those who are not so close. The “transparent walls” allow the world to see inside your homes and wonder why you are so happy, so committed to giving yourself to others, so joyful in your prayers and in your encounter with the Lord. The “transparency of the walls” will help you be more faithful, to purify what the Lord wants to purify in you, as He does also with us, SDB, and with the whole Salesian Family.

Finally, in the third image, I wanted to speak to you about a **treasure**. The Gospel says that, *“to everyone who has, more will be given.”* Then, we can ask, “What do we have?” And I tell you, with all sincerity and affection: you have yourselves, you have your educational and pastoral communities, you have thousands of young people who are close to you or who still await you! This is the treasure you have to offer and announce.

I always enjoyed reading the letters of Mother Mazzarello to the Sisters who were far away in mission lands, and to see her great humanity, and to enjoy her tender motherhood and sisterhood!

Dearest Sisters, you have a real personal, community and charismatic treasure that you are invited by the Lord of Life to care for and increase. It is a treasure that can not be hidden or overlooked. Today, different societies in general, but especially the young people, call for the presence of other women and other men like themselves, but who are also different, capable of profoundly living their human nature,

their culture, their identity as sons and daughters. They need women like you, who are not afraid to be real women, women who are a great gift, who give of themselves, as a clear sign of the inexhaustible tenderness of God, a sign of great fertility and motherhood.

Today many young people among us seem to be orphans of living fathers and mothers. All young people have the need and the right to be loved, accompanied, and encouraged by adults who love them completely and freely. Today, in many areas of the world where you are present, there are so many girls and boys who can not have a decent life for lack of food, education, and affection. And you bring with you the treasure received from God in your vocation and in the charism.

Light, transparent walls and treasure. Three images, three words, that today's Gospel gives us that are incentives in our everyday life, to be builders of a cozy home, with open doors, with family warmth, with a missionary impulse, and rich in sharing and in sincere affection. Mary is your guarantee. With her, everything is possible. I ask the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, so that you can catch the fire that already burns among you, so as *“to be, today, with the young, a home that evangelizes.”*

Address of the Superior General Mother Yvonne Reungoat

*Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life,
Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State Emeritus of Vatican City,
Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints,
Cardinal Raffaele Farina, prefect Librarian and Archivist Emeritus of the Holy Roman Church,
Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation
Fr. Francesco Cereda, Vicar General of the Salesians, and other members of the General Council,
Fr. Joaquim D'Souza, Departing Superior of the UPS Pre-province,
Fr. Eugenio Riva, new Superior of the UPS,
Prof. Carlo Nanni, Great Rector of the Salesian Pontifical University and other Salesians present here,
Prof. Pina del Core, Dean of the Pontifical University of Educational Sciences, the "Auxilium"
Representatives of the various groups of the Salesian Family,
Fr. Luigi Cameroni, Postulator General for the Causes of Saints of the Salesian Family
Young people, friends, benefactors gathered here,
FMA participants of the 23rd General Chapter, and other representatives of all the FMA of the world,*

I am happy that you are present here among us; it is a sign of respect and appreciation for the Institute which today celebrates the official start of General Chapter XXIII. Your being here honors us and encourages us to live the chapter experience as an ecclesial and charismatic event. At this solemn moment, as an Institute, we reaffirm our commitment of fidelity to the Pope and to his teaching, the will to live and work in full communion with the directions of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. We feel that we are in communion with the bishops in the particular Churches, with which we intend to continue fruitful collaboration, together with all the consecrated men and women, sharing the wealth of different charisms, so as to collaborate in the one mission of salvation with the specific gift of the Salesian charism.

The theme of the Chapter -being with young people today, a home that evangelizes, - will be the heart of prayer, reflection and discernment that we will share in the Chapter Assembly. This theme responds to the deepest core of our charismatic identity and is in harmony with the journey of the Church reintroduced by the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization¹ and at the insistence of Pope Francis, who encourages young people to take control of their lives, as builders of the present and the future of the Church and of society.

For us Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, young people are the place where God speaks to us, meets us, transforms us and sends us. They are the leaders at the construction site of the New Evangelization and, in some way, are even our teachers. In fact, they share with us the art of hope, the patience of waiting, the joy of meeting and sharing in brotherhood, the desire for a genuine faith that touches our lives, and the need for a simple life centered on what is essential. Young people encourage us to be constantly searching, in dialogue and profound listening, to be able to express the beauty of the Gospel in a new way.

We can not imagine the future horizons for our Institute without young people. In their questions, often unspoken, we read the need to *feel at home*, that is, to have points of reference that are affective and social, to have a sense of belonging, and to be able to share Gospel values and actions. The loneliness of the family, which is often helpless and fragile, weak interpersonal relationships, lack of involvement, and closing in on themselves to protect their world against external invasions, can make people, especially young people, feel alone and disoriented. It is significant that our Chapter is conducted while the Synod on the family is being held in Rome.

Offering a home, better yet, being a home and being a home with young people, means to have open human and spiritual relationships which we want to build in the group or in the community, and, at the same time, in relation to all, since this home has open doors and windows. It is an open, friendly, meaningful place, where each person lives responsibly, caring for each other and, together, tending toward a goal of beauty and fulfillment in Jesus, the true meaning of life. We are aware, in fact, that we can not be home that evangelizes if God is not

¹The Synod *The New Evangelization to Transmit the Christian Faith* (XIII Ordinary Assembly of Bishops) took place in Rome from October 7-28, 2012.

our home.

Every General Chapter is above all a great gift of God and is a family meeting convened by the Holy Spirit which is as big as the whole world. A Chapter engages the energies of the Institute to identify horizons for the future vitality of the charism. It involves an experience of trust that propels us into the future: a time not yet lived, and no one can predict its developments. It is a privileged moment of creativity to generate new life. The solid starting point is the Family Spirit, which is able to create a climate, a *house*, in which young people can feel welcomed, loved, valued, responsible for their own life and that of others, and encouraged to discover God's plan for them. Young people are not primarily the ones we care for, but they are leaders of cultural and social change in the light of the Gospel and of the Salesian charism.

We will allow ourselves to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, by the rich Church and Salesian magisterium, by the events of history, and by the life of the Institute. We are aware of having a precious heritage to draw upon in order to have light and direction for the journey. Right now I would like to recall the words of Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*: "There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting Him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever He wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place." (n. 280). We can have this profound experience of true creative freedom under the breath of the Holy Spirit!

In this solemn moment, I wish to express the Institute's gratitude for the pontificate of Benedict XVI. We appreciated his breadth of vision and doctrine, his extraordinary humility and sensitivity, his firm and serene way of facing serious problems within the church.

I thank Pope Francis, who is giving to the Church community a style of evangelical simplicity, announcing mercy and inviting us to leave our securities to be companions on the journey for the human person, which is often fragile, tired, confused, and fragmented; to enter into the events of history - not looking in from the outside - but speaking on behalf of justice, peace and dignity of the poor.

In Rio de Janeiro (July 2013) and in several of his visits - the last in South Korea with the youth of the Asian continent - we have noted his love for the young in a special way, and advised them not to be robbed

of hope. And, precisely with hope, we begin our Chapter reflection, as is highlighted in the *Working Document*.

Hope is the perspective from which we view the world, listen to its cry, and let ourselves be challenged by its challenges. We hear the new and old poverties that threaten the world, not only economically, but in the human, cultural, social, and religious realms. In this reality, where pessimism, skepticism and shooting for easy money, seem to dominate, we want to hear the call of God: we feel that we are invited to rediscover the charm of religious life, witnessing the joy of following Jesus, the beauty of living authentic relationships and collaborating in the construction of a humanity that rediscovers its dignity and vocation.

Pope Francis recommends that we *not let our hope be stolen*. Not only do we have to not allow it to be robbed, but we have to reclaim it from the periphery of existence. Indeed, the very periphery becomes an evangelical lookout, from which we look at life with love. In fact, the periphery is not only the bearer of problems, suffering, limitations, and death, but of life and hope. We can learn wisdom by living in pain, and with limitations, sharing simplicity and poverty. The poor, especially poor youth, evangelize us by their very existence. Jesus identifies himself with them. In sharing with the poor, we become more creative, joyful and essential, more capable of offering the beauty of the Gospel.

The periphery is also a charismatic perspective. Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello were people in the margins and they began their mission among the young of the existential periphery of the time they lived in, involving them personally, and making them protagonists.

In the periphery, we recognize the face of our communities. Together with the educating communities, we rediscover the joy of loving and serving in areas where life is more fragile, insecure, and threatened. From this point of view, even the family founded on marriage, is now an existential periphery, for which we must care. No less care must be given to our communities, which have become increasingly inter-generational, inter-cultural and, in some places, with an elderly average age, with the wealth and the effort that this new reality entails.

The requests for inter-congregational collaboration are becoming more frequent: in this way, we discover an open field for the con-

struction of the common home as a large family of sons / daughters of God who live in communion, sharing what we have and who we are. The periphery offers no certainties, indeed it requires that we risk our life, but it is an unavoidable choice for a fruitful future, because it is evangelical and Salesian and because it makes hope more tangible. From the periphery we can experience joy because that is where God calls us, speaks to us, sends us, and gives us His consolation. From the margins, we can testify that we are people who are happy to follow Jesus and proclaim the Gospel of joy to the young. We are called to stay in places where we can meet them, to listen to their thirst, to offer a credible and convincing presentation of the Gospel. This must be a reliable proposal that, in word and gesture, makes the very life of Jesus visible. Young people are a demanding generation, but among them we can meet the Lord; it is with them that we can live the charism of prevention and revive our own hope. They know how to surprise us with their generosity. If we are in the midst of them with an oratorian heart, they will show us their true face, that of poverty and hope, beauty and altruism, even to the total gift of self.

The crisis of the family challenges us not only to accompany young people, but to implement a family ministry, especially for young families, so that they will be able to lead and support other families.

The new poor are not only found where the gospel has not arrived, but in many margins of existence. We are particularly challenged by: violence against women and children, child abuse within families, trafficking in human beings, migration, corruption, and the use of war as a solution to problems.

This is why we welcome the invitation of Pope Francis to be a Missionary Church going out, joining forces to combat situations of degradation of the human person and nature.

On the positive side, we want to educate to life, to gratuity, to giving, to responsibility for others and for creation, and to caring for our relationship as brothers and sisters.

With young people and with the whole educating community we commit ourselves to build a family house through humanizing relationships, inspired by the spirituality of the Preventive System of Don Bosco. We know that the charism is a word of God for today: we want to revitalize it by empowering our communities' style of living, so that they will be more prophetic and joyful along with the educating communities. Relationships will save us from individualism and self-centeredness; at the same time, they will lead us to put people at

the center, restoring dignity. Being a home that evangelizes begins with relationships. In encounters with others, we open windows that enable knowledge, an exchange of gifts, respect and appreciation for one other.

The Salesian charism offers us an interesting pedagogical journey. It challenges us to improve our relationships, to find the soft spot open to goodness ("punto accessibile al bene"), in other words, the level of contact that allows the person to feel welcomed in their deepest reality, as happened in the environments of Valdocco and Mornese.

Relationships, in the spirit of family, lived as an educating community, become a prophecy of a different way of living, of telling our stories, of expressing ourselves, and of reaching out to others, even helping to form our own identity. Indeed our face becomes visible, like in a mirror, from our relationship with others. We are called to revive the prophecy of fraternity and to ensure that it reaches the outskirts of existence within our heart and in all the people we meet on our journey. It must especially reach young people, to whom we are sent with the momentum of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle* and the tenderness of those who perceive the call to care for others with compassion and mercy.

General Chapter XXIII is a particularly good time, a *kairós*, in which God speaks to us, waits for us, and sends us out. The treasures of grace of the Chapter further enrich the gift of the celebrations in honor of Don Bosco our Founder, on the bicentenary of his birth, and the Year of Consecrated Life called by Pope Francis for 2015.

We do not want to lose these precious opportunities to live that pastoral, personal, and community conversion, which is at the heart of the New Evangelization.

We recognize that we are poor and fragile, and therefore, we ask the help of Mary Help of Christians to support us, her daughters, in the mission of being helpers for the younger generation.

The spiritual retreat that the Chapter Assembly lived in Mornese led us back to the places of the origins, permeated with the Salesian charism lived by women, beginning with Saint Maria Domenica Mazzarello and the first Sisters. The meditations on faith offered by Msgr. Thomas took us back to the Gospel sources of our faith.

This is where we want to start again, identifying paths for the future, where the route will be more fruitful, to the degree that we are rooted in the Gospel and in the Salesian charism. We feel comforted by the

grace of the retreat. We will be consoled and encouraged by the words of those who will share with us, whether they bring the message, the prayer or the affection of the groups of the Salesian Family and of many people who have assured us that they will remember us.

We feel supported especially by prayer and by the commitment of all the FMA of the world. Some provide the total gift of self, even to the offering of their life. Supported by this abundance of grace, today we begin General Chapter XXIII of our Institute.

The assembly is comprised of 194 members, of which 4 are invited. Of these, 113 participate for the first time. The youngest is 34 years old; the oldest is 77 years old and participates in the General Chapter for the seventh time. Together we will listen to our different realities, in an attitude of discernment of what the Spirit is saying today to our Institute.

Mother Antonia Colombo, Superior General emeritus, is not currently present in our midst, for health reasons. She deserves our thanks for her shining testimony and for the spiritual, cultural and charismatic wealth that she gave us: we welcome this as a precious heritage destined to leave an impression on the coming years of the Institute.

We rely on your prayers that this attitude can accompany us throughout the course of the General Chapter. A specific task of the Chapter, which is an important moment, is that of electing the Superior General and her Council.

We invoke on our Assembly, the help of Mary, and of the Saints and Blesseds of the Salesian Family, and of the whole Church. Thank you all for your support in the journey that we are beginning.

Address of Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

Introduction

For three years, now, I've been in Rome, serving the Pope, together with a group of forty people who work every day at the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA). We are in contact with a universe of about a million and a half consecrated people in the world, belonging to about 2,000 Orders, Congregations, Societies, Secular Institutes and *Ordo Virginum*.

We are nearing the fiftieth anniversary of approval of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, approved by the Council Fathers gathered with the Pope in the Vatican. It was November 21, 1964. The Council's Decree on the updating of Religious men and women, *Perfectae Caritatis*, was approved October 28, 1965. In 2015, this important document for consecrated life will be 50 years old. In order to pick up the great plan with which the Council outlined the steps that the consecrated life has made over the years, Pope Francis proclaimed 2015 the "Year of Consecrated Life". In Rome we are working on the preparation of this significant event; its announcement has evoked a positive response from consecrated men and women around the world.

The sixth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 43-47) considers the religious as part of the people of God which is the Church. Without them an important part of this people is missing. Therefore, if religious men and women do not feel or are not considered as elements of the great and unique people of God, they lose the perspective and the most important background for their own charism. In fact, all of the Founders and Foundresses were deeply ecclesial men and women, closely tied to the experience of God, lived in communion with the Church and in the service of humanity, especially the poorest.

The Second Vatican Council gave prominence to the life of the evangelical counsels in this new moment in the history of the Church and

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of humanity, because it recognized that this lifestyle is based on the words and example of the Lord, and was recommended to us by the Apostles, the Fathers and Doctors and Pastors of the Church.¹

“Therefore, this Sacred Synod encourages and praises the men and women, Brothers and Sisters, who in monasteries, or in schools and hospitals, or in the missions, adorn the Bride of Christ by their unswerving and humble faithfulness in their chosen consecration and render to humanity generous services of all kinds. “(LG 46, § 3)

It is of various forms of consecration: Monastic life in the East and in the West, the Order of Virgins and of Widows, Hermits, Institutes devoted entirely to contemplation, Institutes of Apostolic Life, Secular Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, and also the new expressions of consecrated life, including many who are like “Ecclesial Families,” gathering various forms of consecration and apostolic commitment, as well as marriage, in the same charism. This ecclesial phenomenon has been seen both among Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life, as well as in movements of the laity, with very similar characteristics.

In the years since the Council, there began a process of renewal of consecrated life - renewal that continues today - that has had moments of difficulty, but also moments of surprising vigor and growth (VC 2, § 4). The Synod on Consecrated Life in 1994 was instrumental in this process of renewal. The Apostolic Exhortation of 1996, which was the fruit of this ecclesial event, continues to be a powerful guide for the time that we are going through.² We will talk about it later, especially the second chapter, numbers 41-58.

¹LG 43 highlights the Christological character of consecrated life. This will be elaborated in particular by the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*. Pope St. John Paul II emphasized this dimension in the first message for the World Day of Consecrated Life: “As the Council underlined (LG 44) and as I have had occasion to emphasize in the above-mentioned Apostolic Exhortation, consecrated life “constitutes a closer imitation and an abiding re-enactment in the Church’ of the way of life which Jesus, the supreme Consecrated One and missionary of the Father for the sake of his Kingdom, embraced and proposed to his disciples” (VC 22). It is thus a special and living memory of his being Son, who makes of his Father his only love -- his virginity; who finds in him his exclusive richness -- his poverty; and who has, in the will of his Father, the “food” by which he is nourished (Jn 4:34) -- his obedience.”(Message of February 2, 1997, no. 3).

²The monumental work coordinated by G. Rocca, *Dictionary of the Institutes of Perfection* (DIP, 10 volumes) testifies to God’s people and offers a wealth of charismatic experiences that help them to live their baptismal vocation and mission of the Church: “The same gifts infused by the Spirit are aimed toward the will of Christ and by his nature to the whole body, so that it can give life to its functions and activities” (MR 5).

Vita Consecrata presents this ecclesial vocation as a “confession of the Trinity.” In the second chapter, it expresses this Trinitarian reality as “a sign of brotherhood.” So consecrated life in the Church is seen as “a sign of communion.” To help the Church to enter the new millennium, Pope St. John Paul II recognized the centrality of the spirituality of communion. This is the news that gives new light to consecrated people today, uniting the diversity of many charisms, old and new, in the mysterious communion of the Church.³ St. John Paul II says that the spirituality of communion must become the guiding principle of education wherever men and women of our time are in formation. These are the new best practices that can help consecrated men and women to walk with determination and conviction through the stages of renewal that lie ahead. Culture has changed in our days. Humanity’s points of reference (moral compass) have changed. But Christ and His Gospel do not change. Its light is forever, although it should always be reinterpreted for the men and women of today.⁴

There have been several occasions when Pope Francis turned to us consecrated men and women, encouraging us to be genuine in our commitment to follow Jesus, for the renewal of consecrated life in line with Vatican II. One of these was in 2013 at the meeting of the Pope with 800 Superiors General at the UISG (International Union of Superiors General) in Rome⁵, as well as on other occasions.⁶

³A constant contribution to continue and promote the renewal of religious life was and is offered by specific magazines in many countries of the world. The leaders of 14 of them, from 7 countries, gathered in Rome for the III International Congress, with the theme “Following in the Footprints of the Council” (28-30.11.2012). The Congress explored the conciliar magisterium and mutual cooperation. For those who are interested it may be useful to consult the works published together in this period, especially the Acts of the semi-annual meetings of the Conference of Superiors General (USG), published in various languages.

⁴JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43-45. We suggest again: AA.VV., *Consecrated Life, A Gift of the Lord to His Church*, Leumann (Turin) 1993; AA.VV., *Consecrated by God, A Gift to the Church and to the World. Studies on the Apostolic Exhortation “Vita consecrata”*, Rome 1997; AA.VV., *The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations of Pope John Paul II. Broad Themes*, Rome 1997. -

⁵FRANCIS, *Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)*, May 8, 2013.

⁶See, for example, the response of Pope Francis in an interview with the editor of “The Catholic Civilization”, August 19, 2013: “Religious are prophets. They are those who have chosen to follow Jesus in a way that imitates his life by obedience to the Father, poverty, community life and charity. In the Church, Religious are called to be prophets testifying how to live the way of Jesus in this world, and preach what the

So, let's examine three realities, by means of an overview:

1. The renewal of consecrated life 50 years after Vatican II.
2. Consecrated life, a sign of communion in the Church and in the world, in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, especially n. 41-58.
3. Consecrated men and women, disciples of the Lord, learning to live in communion.

1. The renewal of consecrated life 50 years after Vatican II

We will develop this theme in two phases:

- Religious in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* on the Church (Chap. VI, n. 43-47);
- The Council's Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*.

1.1. Religious in the Dogmatic Constitution "Lumen Gentium" on the Church (Chap. VI, n. 43-47)

Lumen Gentium devoted Chapter VI entirely to religious, considering them as integral members of the Church, the People of God, together with the faithful, members of the hierarchy and the laity. As we have seen, currently, consecrated men and women are a considerable reality in the Church - numerous and very significant. They are men and women who, with their lives, respond not to a commandment - though they are subject to all - but to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, "a divine gift, which the Church received from its Lord and which it always safeguards with the help of His grace" (n. 43).

And its value is such that "the state of life [...] constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, though it is not the hierarchical

Kingdom of God will be like when its perfection comes. Being prophet sometimes implies making noise, I do not know how to say it ... prophecy creates noise, some would say that it creates "great confusion." In reality, however, its charism is to be leaven: prophecy announces the spirit of the Gospel "(SPADARO A., Interview with Pope Francis, in *The Catholic Civilization* n. 3918, September 19, 2013, 464-465). And also, the three hour discussion of Pope Francis with about 120 Superiors General on November 29, 2013 at the Synod Hall at the Vatican. This time brought such great joy to the Superiors. Some of them said: "Pope Francis gathered us around him like a father gathers his children in his house." (SPADARO A., "Wake up the world." Pope Francis' Interview with the Superiors General, in *"The Catholic Civilization."* 3925, January 4, 2014). CIVCSVA, Circular Letter Rejoice! in preparation for the Year of Consecrated Life, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome 2014.

structure of the Church, nevertheless, undeniably belongs to its life and holiness" (n. 44 § 4).⁷

Today, 50 years after the Council, the study conducted by the Church Council, both as theological research, and as a concrete experience of communion, in the happy expression of St. John Paul II, we can say that the hierarchical dimension and the charismatic dimension of the Church are equally essential: "I have often had occasion to stress that there is no conflict or opposition in the Church between the institutional dimension and the charismatic dimension, of which ecclesial movements are a significant expression. Both are co-essential to the divine constitution of the Church founded by Jesus, because they both help to make the mystery of Christ and his saving work present in the world. Together they aim at renewing in their own way, the self-awareness of the Church, which in a certain sense can be called a "movement" herself, since she is the realization in time and space of the Father's sending his Son in the power of the Holy Spirit."⁸ This in no way prevents "the duty of the same hierarchy to care for the People of God and to lead them to most fruitful pastures. (Ez 34:14) Church authority has the duty of wisely regulating by law, the practice of the evangelical counsels, perfecting the love of God and love of neighbor in an outstanding manner." (LG 45).

In men and women religious, the Council sees the opportunity for the Church to portray Christ more and more perfectly for men and women, "in contemplation on the mountain, in His proclamation of the kingdom of God to the multitudes, in His healing of the sick and maimed, in His work of converting sinners to a better life, in His so-

⁷This theological figure is taken up in the Apostolic Exhortation *Consecrated Life*, in which St. John Paul II provides the motivation, uniting consecrated life directly with its source by the fact that "the profession of the evangelical counsels is intimately connected with the mystery of Christ, has the duty of somehow making the way of life which he chose present, adapting to be an absolute and eschatological value. Jesus himself, by calling some people to give up everything to follow Him, established this type of life which, under the action of the Spirit, would gradually develop down the centuries into the various forms of consecrated life. The idea of a Church made up only of sacred ministers and lay people does not correspond, therefore, to the intentions of her divine Founder, as revealed to us in the Gospels and by other New Testament writings "(VC 29; 23).

⁸JOHN PAUL II, *Message to the Participants at the World Congress on Church Movements*, Rome May 27-29, 1998, n. 5.

licitude for youth and in His goodness to all people, always obedient to the will of the Father who sent Him.”(LG 46).

The Council Fathers recognize that the profession of the evangelical counsels involves the renunciation of goods that are very precious. This necessary renunciation, however, is not opposed to the true progress of the human person; rather, it is of great advantage to the purification of the heart, spiritual freedom and the fervor of charity. The Virgin Mary and the holy Founders are proof of this. So, too, are consecrated women and men, in a very particular way, an example to their contemporaries, assuring them of the tenderness of Christ (LG 46).

Today, more than ever, the presence of consecrated women and men in the Church and in the world can help modern culture, inviting her to “not be afraid to be happy”, to guide this desire and this goal to the most profound levels, provided, however, that the men and women religious are themselves people who are humanly happy and fulfilled, authentically witnessing that following God and living the Gospel makes people fulfilled. The numerous individuals who abandon consecrated life, often with a sad face, many of them closed to others, and the lack of a family spirit in some religious houses indicate that there is something to be re-examined in this witness of joy offered by consecrated life.

1.2. The conciliar Decree “*Perfectae Caritatis*”

In this decree, Vatican II “intends to deal with the life and discipline of those institutes whose members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience and to provide for their needs in our time.” (PC 1).⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, as recalled by the Decree, stated that “the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom.” (id.).

⁹The debut novel of reference is TILLARD M.R. - CONGAR Y.M.J., *The Renewal of Religious Life. Studies and Commentaries on the Decree Perfectae Caritatis*, Vallecchi Editors, Florence 1967. Also see CISM-USMI, *Religious Life, Review and Perspectives. Acts of the Celebration of XXV Years Since the Council Decree, Perfectae caritatis*, ed. Rogate, Rome 1991.

We know the life and discipline of men and women who, from the beginning of the Church, set out to follow Christ in this way and have spent their lives in solitude or founded religious families that the Church has approved. Today there is a very great number of these religious groups that make the Church ready for every good work and enhance it with their charismatic richness.

I think it's good to repeat here the general principles of a proper renewal of life and discipline of Religious Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life and Secular Institutes, which the Council presented 50 years ago, and evaluate the progress of their fulfillment. It is a constant return to the sources of Christian life, to the initial and original inspiration of the Institutes and adapting it to new conditions of current times:

- Implement the following of Christ proposed in the Gospel as supreme rule;
- Know and observe faithfully the spirit and intentions of the Founders as well as sound traditions;
- Participate in the life of the Church by promoting initiatives and intentions of the local Church regarding its biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, and missionary aspects, as well as social issues;
- Inform members about the conditions of humanity and modern times and the needs of the Church, for right judgment and wise participation;
- Promote the renewal, especially spiritual renewal, which must be primary;
- Adapt anywhere, but especially in mission territories, to the physical and psychological conditions of the religious today, the needs of the apostolate, and the needs of the culture and the social and economic conditions;
- Cultivate the spirit of prayer, going to the sources of Christian spirituality;
- In the first place, to take the Holy Scriptures in our hands daily;
- Celebrate the sacred liturgy with our lips and our hearts, especially the Eucharistic mystery;
- Nourished by the Word and the Eucharist, loving our brothers, respecting and valuing our Pastors with a filial spirit, living and feel

ing more and more in communion with the Church, devoting oneself entirely to the mission.¹⁰

After 50 years since the Council took place, it will be very good for each of our Institutes to read and review, with tranquility, (possibly through the General Chapter) these general principles presented to us by the highest authority of the Church: the Council presided over by the Pope. Much has been accomplished in many religious families, but the renewal program is broad and intense and not exhausted. Now more than ever, this effort becomes necessary, because the epochal change is accentuated, and Pope Francis encourages us strongly to do this.

The Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* also speaks to the Institutes devoted to contemplation, devoting numbers 7, 9, 16 and 21 to them. They “always retain (...) an eminent place in the Mystical Body of Christ” (n. 7). They are like ornaments of the Church and sources of heavenly graces. They are a source of fertility, honoring and nourishing the People of God. Solitude, silence, assiduous prayer, and fervent penance lead members to engage exclusively in the contemplation of God.

The Council, however, also called for the contemplative life to revise their way of being, in the light of the principles and criteria listed above, naturally adapting to the demands of contemplation. From East and West, contemplatives are called by the Council Fathers to faithfully guard the true spirit of the “venerable institution of monastic life.” Over the centuries it has acquired merits both in the Church

¹⁰For these calls, because of the prophetic nature of consecrated life, we could add questions that Pope Francis posed during his homily for Pentecost: “Innovation always makes us a bit 'scared, because we feel more secure if we have everything under control (...) we are afraid that God will make us explore new avenues, may make us go out of our often limited horizon, which is closed and selfish, by opening us up to His horizons (...). Let us ask ourselves today: are we open to the “surprises of God?” Or are we closed, with fear, to the newness of the Holy Spirit? Are we brave enough to travel on the new roads that the novelty of God offers us or do we defend ourselves, closed in delapidated structures that have lost the capacity to welcome?” (FRANCIS, Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost, May 19, 2013, 1).

as in human society. Monks and nuns are called to serve God, remaining in his presence, whether devoting themselves entirely to divine worship in a silent life, or legitimately taking on some works of apostolate and Christian charity. The renewal of ancient traditions, in view of the changing needs of people today, should be done in such a way that the monasteries become centers for the dissemination of the Christian life (PC 9).

Three important dimensions, especially related to the life of the nuns, are now being reviewed by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA), taking into account the desire of Pope Francis and the continual renewal proposed by the Council. They are formation, papal enclosure and the autonomy of the monasteries.

Understood today as “ongoing formation”, formation includes the initial stages and lasts a lifetime. It must take into account the *sequela Christi*, continued cultivation of the charism of the Founder or Foundress, in addition to paying attention to the current culture. In the continuously updated documents of the Magisterium, consecrated life in general, and contemplative life in particular, will find safe and fruitful direction.

Papal enclosure refers to nuns who live a wholly contemplative life. The Council has asked that it be firmly maintained while at the same time, it is adapted to the times and places, eliminating obsolete practices. The decisions, however, should be taken after hearing the opinion of several monasteries. In this regard, in 1966, Pope Paul VI already issued rules to implement the conciliar decrees; later also our Congregation published texts on the same topic of enclosure.¹¹

¹¹PAUL VI, *Motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, August 6, 1966, in particular: Part II, VI: *The Cloister of Nuns*. Also see: SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES, *Instruction on Contemplative Life and the Cloister of Nuns Venite seorsum*, August 15, 1969; CIVCSVA, *Verbi Sponsa. Istrction on Contemplative Life and the Cloister of Nuns*, May 13, 1999.

Other committed nuns, however - as required by their constitutions - in works of the apostolate, are not tied to the papal enclosure. These retain their cloister in accordance with their Constitutions (PC 16 § 2).

Institutes and monasteries on the path to extinction, should join another institute or monastery with similar aims and spirit (PC 21).

The Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* also favors the establishment of federations and unions of independent institutes and monasteries (*sui iuris*) (PC 22).

2. Consecrated life in the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, a sign of communion in the Church and in the world (VC 41-58).

For nearly twenty years the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* has guided us constantly in the conciliar renewal of religious life. Today, there are many Institutes who have updated their constitutions, their rules, and their superiors, following its information and directives.

The Apostolic Exhortation on consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world from March 25, 1996 (30 years after the approval of the Council Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*) is the result of the Synod of Bishops, which took place following the Synods dedicated to the laity and priests, thus completing “the study of the distinctive features of the states of life willed by the Lord Jesus for his Church” (VC4). It had, and still has a great influence on the guidelines for consecrated life; it marked and continues to mark a new stage of adaptation for hermits, contemplative monasteries, ancient orders, congregations, societies of apostolic life, and for Institutes in the Church, in dialogue with the Lord and with men and women of our time.

We do not have the ability to comment here on the entirety of this valuable ecclesial document, given its length¹² and also given the

depth and breadth of its vision. We considered only numbers 41-58, which are the beginning of the second chapter, because we seem to find here the heart of the permanent values of consecrated life as a sign of communion in the Church.

We are moved, in particular, by the prospect of the Church as a mystery of communion, and that’s why being the “image and likeness of the Blessed Trinity” is the foundation of the life of the sons and daughters of the Church, more precisely, consecrated men and women

We are not yet sufficiently aware that the Holy Trinity, adored with all our strength, professed with great care according to precise terminology by the Church throughout history, will no longer be an incomprehensible theorem to the disciples of Jesus. This theorem can be summarized in the question: how can we combine unity and diversity in God and therefore, in his human image of men and women, so that it can be lived in the daily life of the Church as communion, inserted in a globalized world? Hence, we prefer to develop some perspectives used in Christian anthropology and in current ecclesiology, showing us a universal way to ensure that the communion of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit can be present in our lives. We will pause to reflect on this a little later.

The exhortation *Vita Consecrata* helps us to understand the *sequela Christi*, proper to consecrated life, through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in light of the Trinitarian mystery. In the exhortation, consecrated life is seen as an image of the Holy Trinity (VC 41). The community of the “twelve” around Jesus, the community created around the apostles and Mary (Acts 2,42-47; 4: 32-35), are the models by which the Church was inspired. It is essentially a mystery of communion, “a people made one by the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”¹³

¹²200 pages in the publication by Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996.

¹³S. CIPRIANO, *De Oratione Dominica* 23: PL 4, 553; VATICAN COUNCIL II, *LG* 4. The Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* picks up the text of St. Cyprian and points out, “Fraternal life seeks to reflect the depth and richness of this mystery, taking shape as a human community in which the Trinity dwells, in order to extend in history the gifts of communion proper to the three divine Persons.” (VC 41).

To the extent that consecrated life, today, is aware of the Trinitarian anthropology and ecclesiology, and experiences the spirituality of communion in the charism proper to each Institute and also between the various institutes, it will continue to shed light on how to follow Jesus. "Consecrated life can certainly be credited with having effectively helped to keep the obligation of fraternity alive in the Church as a form of witness to the Trinity. By constantly promoting fraternal love, also in the form of common life, the consecrated life has shown that *sharing in the Trinitarian communion can change human relationships* and create a new type of solidarity."(VC 41)

With new theological insights, a reflection of the experience of communion in the Church, today we can advance in our understanding and witness of fraternal life, understood as a reflection of the Holy Trinity. Precisely because of the Church's source in the Trinity "fraternal life, understood as a life shared in love, is an eloquent sign of ecclesial communion." (VC 42) We are talking about unconditional love based on the new commandment of the Lord (Jn. 13:34), called to become mutual love, essential law of the Christian community and in particular of consecrated people.

It is in this light that we can review some of the typical experiences of consecrated life, such as the couplets of: authority and obedience, consecrated men and women, young and old, or even the triad of master, disciple, and missionary.

Authority and obedience within the Church, which is the mystery of communion, can not be converted into authoritarianism or slavery within communities of consecrated men and women. They must, of necessity, become mature and free experience of fraternity. In fact, you can not indicate the will of God or obey this through a superior, if the authority and those who obey do not together seek to follow Jesus, all being his disciples, possessing the same dignity, posing as human spaces inhabited by the Trinity so as to share the gifts of communion that belong to the three divine Persons throughout history. (VC 41)

Without abdicating their responsibility as the first one accountable

for the community, authority serves precisely to strengthen fraternal communion and not to frustrate the profession of obedience. (VC 43)¹⁴ But this is possible only when "those in power" and "those who obey" recognize one another and treat each other as brothers and sisters. One of the most incisive and convincing reasons for this lies in the fact that one can find the will of God only if two members of the community (ie. the two disciples of the Lord) recognize and experience their brotherhood.

The life of the Holy Trinity becomes fraternal love in community and awakens another concrete dimension of love, which is so necessary today: the care of the elderly and the sick. "The elderly and the sick have a great deal to give in wisdom and experience to the community, if only the community can remain close to them with concern and an ability to listen." (VC 44).

As mentioned before, the Apostolic Exhortation invites consecrated persons to live according to the image of the apostolic community *sentire cum Ecclesia*, (feeling one with the Church), building the brotherhood of the Church both in the world, and in every local Church. And so, this experience, called to continually grow, becomes an experience of dialogue animated by charity. This applies in particular to the witness of brotherhood in a divided and unjust world. The time has come for a sincere communion among the various Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life, as seen in many places. Today, coordinating organizations, just like communion and collaboration, require the mutual support of religious and laity (VC 55-56).

The dignity and the role of all women, particularly of consecrated women, was highlighted in *Vita Consecrata*. (VC 57 and 58) The Exhortation offers new perspectives on the presence and action of women, as well as the urgent need to create "opportunities for participation in various sectors and at all levels, also in the processes of decision-making, especially in what concerns them." (VC58). Recently, Pope Francis has been very insistent on this participation, as in the case of the Congregation for Consecrated Life in Rome. Women represent the majority of consecrated persons, however, they are not proportionally represented. The same is true for the various fields of

ecclesial life in which their presence means greater “humanization” of relations and a more complete manifestation of the maternal dimension of the Church. Still, consecrated men and women, capable of reciprocal relationships illuminated by the love that comes from the heart of the Trinity, can experience greater complementarity between the male and female dimensions without diminishing their own sense of being consecrated through immaturity and / or lack of mutual understanding .

3. Men and women religious, disciples of the Lord, learning about communion

Consecrated persons are those on whom God has placed his very intense, loving gaze, calling them personally. This same look from God happens to all the other vocations in the Church and, therefore, is not a privilege of consecrated people. To the latter, however, the Lord has allowed an understanding of the beauty of some aspects of the Gospel, as a unique way of following and being intimate with him, and this happens by living the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity (virginity) and obedience.¹⁵

The call to consecration is a gift of God who is love. For others, this same call is to marriage or other forms of life. God’s call is completely free. The answer, depending on your call, takes place in freedom, though the path of discipleship appears demanding. The positive response of the disciple to the Lord does not lack inner suffering, leading him or her to make choices that demand the renunciation of other realities.

Today we understand better that all the baptized are called to be disciples, that is, people who practice what the Lord has taught and testified. In this sense, the “theology of the states of perfection” should be well understood, so as not to conclude that the remaining states are destined to imperfection. It is necessary to return to a more profound understanding of our baptism. The different vocations, includ-

ing the call to the service of priestly ministry, have the same dignity. The foundation of all of these is the dignity that was received in baptism: the dignity of God’s children. All equally children of God, with gifts and different vocations to serve the one people of God. This is the teaching of the Gospel reclaimed in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* from the Second Vatican Council. Fifty years after the Council it is necessary to continue along this road so that it can become the lifestyle of the Church.¹⁶

The lynchpin of the *sequela Christi* is continuous contact with the Word of God and the daily decision to turn it into everyday life, making it our experience. Furthermore, the God of Love comes to help us with the power of the sacraments, which the disciples feel they need to be able to follow his path.

The element of novelty in Christian life, and in the following of Jesus by those who are or want to become his disciples is the transition from an individual *sequela Christi*, which is always necessary, to a communal *sequela Christi*,¹⁷ unavoidable in today's globalized culture.

¹⁶The various forms of life in which, according to the plan of Christ the Lord, make up the life of the Church, relate to one another, on which we should stop. All the faithful, by virtue of their rebirth in Christ, share the same dignity; all are called to holiness; all collaborate in building of one Body of Christ, each according to his vocation and the gift received from the Spirit. (*Rm.* 12: 3-8; *LG* 32; *CIC* can. 208) The equal dignity of all members of the Church is the work of the Spirit, rooted in Baptism and Confirmation and is strengthened by the Eucharist. But the multiplicity of forms is also the work of the Spirit. It is He who makes the Church an organic communion in the diversity of vocations, charisms and ministries. (*AG* 4, *LG* 4.12.13, *GS* 32, *AA* 3; *ChL* 20-21: *AAS* 81 (1989), 425-428; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Communione notio* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church as communion (May 28, 1992), in *AAS* 85 (1993), 847.

¹⁷The declaration is based on "the community character of the human vocation in the plan of God," as affirmed by *Gaudium et Spes* 24, which opens new horizons: the Lord Jesus, when He prayed to the Father, "that all may be one. . . as we are one" (John 17:21-22) opened up vistas closed to human reason, for He implied a certain likeness between the union of the divine Persons, and the unity of God's sons in truth and charity. This likeness reveals that man, [...] on earth, is the only creature that God willed for itself."

¹⁵VC 15.17-19.

Therefore, in the new historical moment that is developing, the spirituality of communion offers educational principles necessary to form humans and Christians.¹⁸

3.1. Consecrated life that is big enough for God and people oriented today

The men and women of contemplative life as well as active life do not exist first and foremost to deal with particular works and structures entrusted to them from the past. Often these works and structures have become increasingly heavy and difficult to manage, in a situation of reduced availability of personnel faced with social and public demands that are increasingly global. This seems to be the reality of most religious institutes, especially in Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia. The same phenomenon, however, is also present on other continents.

As the Council asked us, it is necessary to return to the true meaning of consecrated life, that is, following God, discovering his love, and discovering why he has called us to live the charism of our Founder. In reality, what characterizes the Founders is that they followed the light that God had given them. That is why they were fulfilled; they were happy and they built monuments of beauty and holiness in the Church.

On the other hand we are becoming aware of the fact that the men and women of today have reached a new level of maturity. They are

¹⁸JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43: "A Spirituality of Communion. To make the Church *the home and the school of communion*: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings." VC 51: "The Church entrusts to communities of consecrated life the particular task of *spreading the spirituality of communion*, first of all in their internal life and then in the ecclesial community, and even beyond its boundaries, by opening or continuing a dialogue in charity." (CIVCSVA, Instruction *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 28-29: the spirituality of communion cannot be fully lived if not by means of a sincere gift of self. (*Lk* 17: 33); (*GS* 24).

jealous of values such as freedom, equal dignity, justice, diversity, and peace. Globalization, facilitated by the development of technology, has invaded every corner of the earth. At the same time, however, we are heirs of phenomena that are ingrained in us, like individualism, the loss of traditional and universal values, secularism, in a frenzy to combat religion, but which itself becomes a religion, the eternal dream of man without God, believing that we are self-sufficient. In the heart of men and women today, there still lives a desire for happiness, pursuing personal and collective fulfillment, even if it is achieved only in a few fleeting moments.

As Christians, we realize that the great heritage of light from the past millennia in the history of the faith, although it felt like a great wealth, is no longer sufficient today. Times have changed, human needs have changed, life's possibilities have changed, and we were not always in step with the cultural phenomenon that today is rapidly evolving. Trends of *traditionalism* and *futurism* have returned in the Church, as ways to find safety in the experience of faith. The aging of many congregations, the lack of vocations, men and women religious of all ages frequently leaving religious life, the lack of a relationship between older and younger religious, founders who are unfaithful to the charism as a result of their unfaithfulness to the Gospel, all this makes us wonder. What does it mean to live consecrated life that is big enough for God and worthy of the men and women of today?

3.2 God is love (1 Jn. 4, 8:16). Man and woman, too, are love (Gen. 1:27)

At the beginning of our vocational journey as consecrated men and women, we were, without a doubt, impressed by a profound experience of God who attracted us with his love, whether gently or strongly. What most of us do not have any doubt about, is that it was a truly engaging experience. In love, we followed this vocation, through sometimes simple early signs, without realizing the size of the demand that would be revealed later, but following the Lord without fear down little known trails. This is the most significant moment that gave direction to our lives. It is necessary to go back to this moment decisively, so as not to lose our way, and to keep aflame the pursuit of

happiness that burns within us.

John, the apostle and evangelist, assures us that God is love (1 Jn 4, 8:16). Love is not a feeling of God, or one of his virtues, but it defines the nature of God: He is love. This is his being, this is his essence. Experiencing God's call at the beginning of a call to consecrated life is to perceive the presence of love, testing the strength of love's attraction, feeling the need to be love. Surely, then, God has not only involved our intelligence to adhere to a truth of faith, or our will to adhere to Christian morality, generating new behaviors. It was definitely a broader experience, involving our emotions and sexuality.

Only by experiencing love, can we understand that God has taken the initiative, becoming flesh, becoming human in the person of the Son, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Virgin Mary. It is Love: He who is in search of his creature distanced by sin, to take back what belongs to him. The mystery of the incarnation of the Son has the characteristics of love. It is a manifestation of love. With the coming of the Son, we understand that love is not solitude, but communion. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, has revealed to us that he does not live alone. He has a Father - God - as he himself is God. Jesus also reveals and communicates the Holy Spirit to us. The Spirit is God like Him and like the Father. This is why the Three who are love do not form three solitudes, but three different and well-defined people, each one different from the other person. At the same time, with each other they form a single unit, perfectly balanced. In fact, in God-Love, unity and diversity are not contrary, but they are two sides of the same reality. Today, this approximation of the central mystery of God can help the Christian ontology and anthropology to assume new paradigms, helping today's culture positively, by a positive composite of the dimensions of unity and diversity in the human experience and understanding and in experiencing the nature and the universe.¹⁹

Why should we search for the deeper reality, opening the way to an anthropological experience for our time, within the mystery of the Holy Trinity?

¹⁹MORICONI B. (editor), *Christian Anthropology*. Bible, Theology, Culture, New City, Rome 2001.

Because these are new, challenging, complex times, marked by technological advances that enable new human experiences, never before possible. These technologies modify many of the parameters and criteria of life that we use even now. Faith itself has assumed forms of past cultures, that are no longer significant. There is a growing awareness of the importance of human values that must be agreed upon, and which cannot be inconsistent with the values that faith offers. It is preferable to achieve human happiness rather than seek an uncertain and difficult future of happiness, and this does not depend on the degree of difficulty to reach it. For us men and women of faith, Christians who want to risk everything for the person of Jesus Christ, this is the new challenge. Why does our experience of faith not seem to offer us a happiness greater than that of someone who does not follow Jesus? Let's again return to the Word of God to take a necessary step from the reality of God to our human and cosmic reality. Let's return to the story of creation, as is described in the book of Genesis. The man and the woman are: *creature, son and daughter, the image of God.*

Creature

God created human beings in his image: "in the image of God he created them. Male and female he created them." And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1: 27-28)

God created human beings: the Bible expresses the certainty that God exists and that humanity is not God, but is created by God and therefore is his creature.

The human being is the image of God: there is a common identity between God, man and woman. Today, after the coming of Jesus Christ, we understand that man is the image of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, that is, the Holy Trinity. It was the Son of God who has revealed and communicated this great mystery to us. Since God is love, the human being is also love.

The human being is man and woman: these are the two faces of humanity, male and female. They are placed on an equal footing with one another, called to form a unity of life. They are different, like the persons of the Trinity, but called into the fellowship of life, as the Holy Trinity is one God.

In creation God blessed the man and the woman: They are blessed creatures and so are pleasing to God. At their origin, men and women are good and born from His hands. Man and woman were wanted by God from their origin, and salvation history, narrated by the Bible, shows that God cannot live without searching for and loving man and woman. That is why he made them fruitful. The existence of other human beings, born from the first man and the first woman, does not change the characteristics of the origins. While all men are called to the banquet of life, because of the fruitfulness of our first parents, all are God's creatures, all men and women are the image of God, all are blessed by him. They, too, are the fruits of this fertility, called to dominion over nature, perfecting it with their intelligence and conserving it for the good of all.

Son and daughter

“For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal. 3: 26-28)

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” (Gal 4: 4-7)

The grace of divine filiation is what gives man and woman their great and unique human dignity. No ministry, no charism, no state of life gives new dignity, these are only services to offer to the members of God's people, all clothed with the same dignity as children of God.

Today we have to roll up our sleeves to change our old attitudes of failure, inherited from a culture contrary to the Gospel. We bishops, and all the men and women religious, we are called to this necessary inner change.

We come to this truth, without necessarily having to deny the light that comes from reason about man and woman, as we are enlightened by faith. In fact, it was the Son, Jesus Christ, who has revealed and communicated to us that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God in three distinct persons.

For a deeper examination of the wonderful mystery of man and woman, created in the image of God, we must reverently approach the God's identity. It is not likely that man and woman would come to know God in three persons, without the Son, from on high, having revealed it. Today, helped by the *sequela Christi* and by the theological reflection on the still very current documents of Vatican II, we come to understand that consecrated life will need to take further steps towards the spirituality of communion. This journey will emerge from the mystery that is certainly a source along the path: the Most Holy Trinity. An outline of the road that must be traveled as an ecclesial experience by consecrated men and women, but also by all the disciples of Jesus today, considering the profound changes in our time, is the following: God is Triune, because God is love. (1 Jn. 4: 7-21) The incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, has allowed men and women to know and to experience love. The Letter of Paul to the Philippians (2: 5-11) explains the love of God as *kenosis* (self-emptying). The mystery of the incarnation, the life of Jesus of Nazareth and the paschal mystery confirm the path of revelation and the communication of God's love as *kenosis*. This is the only path to love between men and women. Therefore, it is necessary to start reading the text to the Philippians from v. 5.

So our challenge, to experience God-Love, passes through rebuilding the relationship with the person before us. Without this, according to Jesus, there is no experience of God. There is only one God in three persons, whose relations are constituted by love: the Father is Father only because he has a Son; the same with the Son, in front of the Father; the Holy Spirit is the love that unites the Father and the Son. Between us, the experience of loving relationship with one an-

other allows us to experience God. So today, it will not be distancing ourselves from one another to protect ourselves that we will find and will experience God, but getting close to others, man or woman, with simplicity of heart, willing to love others: this is how we will penetrate the mystery of God. This is a necessary change in the practice of spirituality today.

In God, unity and diversity come together perfectly. Man and woman, created in the image of the God who is One and Triune, are beings in love relationship with each other and with all other men and women. Consequently, man and woman can properly build their own identity only in a loving relationship with other men and women. *Kenosis* (self-emptying for the good of others) is the only possible way to experience unity among people, without destroying diversity. Human love that becomes divine has the capacity to love everyone, to love first, and to love always, as God loves. Love that becomes mutual, between at least two or three people, generates the presence of Jesus in their midst (Mt. 18:20). People who live the experience of Trinitarian love in their relationships show evidence of the true happiness. This happiness does not exist without the condition set by Jesus: renouncing himself and carrying his cross. The new understanding that illuminates this path is that renouncing oneself and taking up one's cross are motivated by love, like that of Jesus.

3.3. Love, who is God, is Being and non-Being at the same time: *kenosis* as a *sine qua non* (necessary) condition of love. (Phil. 2:5)

To understand love and experience its effects in men and women, to the point that they experience happiness, a proper system of ideas, as well built as it is, is not enough. Love is, first of all, the result of a constantly repeated experience in our relationship with God and in continuous relationship with man and woman. It must, however, begin from the supreme mystery of the Trinity.

The Son of God was sent by the Father to ensure men and women that God is love and therefore, he never stopped loving his creatures, instead, he destined them to become his sons and daughters. The Son of God made man has revealed and communicated to us that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are not three gods, but only one

God. He is Being, the foundation of all being. Only in Him do all things exist. Only in him do man and woman exist.

But God is also non-being, because the Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Father. The Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son. In God, diversity is “just one reality,” without ceasing to be “difference” at the same time. In God, being and non-being coexist in perfect identity and distinction.²⁰ Man and woman, image and likeness of this one true source, are called to express, in their human reality of “sons in the Son,” the mystery hidden in God.

To perceive and experience something of this infinite reality we need to investigate what Love is. The best way to do that is to observe what God the Father does when he sends his Son in the Incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

The Apostle Paul helps us in the Letter to the Philippians. (2: 5-11) This Christological hymn tells of the “emptying” of the Son in order to meet the smallness of man and woman. Only love is capable of such an unusual and apparently contradictory act. In theology we call this, God's way of acting, *kenosis*. It is present in the mystery of the Incarnation, in the hidden life in Nazareth and in an almost incomprehensible way in the mystery of the cross (the passion and death of the Lord). This is how the love of God to men and women is manifested in the most complete and radical way, to the point of “abandonment” and the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus of Nazareth, the man, the Son of God, died “alone”, with no response from the Father to his cry of extreme pain. He died without a response from the Father, no response whatsoever. He was on our side even at the hardest moment, when his entire life and all of his work may have seemed like absurdity, or like a great illusion. The Father, from whom the Son came and with whom the Son lives, the Father, who has loved and loves the Son from all eternity, left the Son “alone,” without intervening in his condition of fidelity to man and woman. Therefore, the Son gives us the blessed legacy of failproof loyalty - continuing, as the only option left to him - to believe in the love of the Father. Consequently, his last

²⁰*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 254.

gesture is to deliver his spirit into the hands of the Father.

In light of the unfathomable mystery of pain and love contained in the Paschal Mystery, the spirituality of unity, or the spirituality of communion, helps us today to arrive at assuming a conclusion that can have very deep effects on our lives as disciples: Jesus' cry of abandonment on the cross is his moment of greatest pain; it is also the moment of his greatest love. For us disciples, Jesus' cry of abandonment shortly before his death on the cross becomes the most perfect model of love. This, in fact, is the act of perfect obedience.²¹

A love like this, lived by man and woman before God as an unconditional response of love and at the same time, lived with the same intensity and quality in the face of every human person, is capable of offering life and happiness beyond where they seem to weaken or die. I sincerely believe that we have here a spiritual and human reality that is capable of reviving and developing consecrated life even in its current moment of crisis.²²

A disciple of Jesus, who loves others according to the love that is God, with a love that is simultaneously human and divine, creates ideal conditions for others to feel loved, to experience joy and true happiness, and to desire to walk the same path as the disciple of Jesus who loved him. When this happens among two or more people, the promise made by Jesus in Matthew 18: 20 becomes a reality. Among them a real community is begun, where the presence of Jesus is tangible. This presence, attractive in itself, evangelizes, causing communion to become the true and essential condition for the evangelizing mission, with visible and surprising results.²³

So Love, which is reciprocity between the Persons of the Holy Trinity, becomes reciprocity between the disciples and generates the Lord's presence in their midst. Thus we understand that the mission is born from communion and is nourished by it. We can also say with conviction that the Word became flesh so that flesh becomes communion,

²¹JOHN PAUL II, *NMI 37*; CIVCSVA, *Starting Afresh from Christ*, 27.

²²VC 24: *The Paschal Dimension of Consecrated Life*.

nourished by the Word and the Eucharist. Thus, we have recalled, as an experience to be lived in communities today, the characteristics of the first community of Jerusalem: they were united by the doctrine of the Apostles (the Word of God), in *koinonia* (communion) and in the breaking of bread (the Eucharist) (Acts 2: 42).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, quoting the "Fides Damasi"²⁴ says: "God is one, but not solitary" (n. 254). Love, the essence of God, essential communion of the Three Divine Persons, is the source and origin of the essence of man and woman. Jesus, the Son sent by the Father, has revealed and communicated this mystery to us. It is Jesus who has lived among us in this way, and through the Apostles, leaving us the testimony of his gestures and his words. We can truly believe in the Incarnation of the Word. To men and women, he has revealed and communicated the love that makes the Three communion. Just like for the Word of God, the way that allows men and women to find love and to be love is *kenosis*, self-emptying²⁵ in order to be love for others.

This is the same path traveled by the Lord in regard to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a very great abyss of the Lord's self-emptying. Passing on this mystery to the disciples caused a great scandal. Some definitively abandoned the Master. "*O res mirabilis*" Eucharistic piety called it, because on Calvary, Love, who is God, hides the divinity of Jesus in order to be close to every person. In the Eucharist, Love also hides his humanity, becoming "a thing" to be close to his own people, simultaneously throughout the world.

²³In the life of the community it should also be somewhat tangible that fraternal life in communion, before being a tool for a specific mission, is a theological space, where one can experience the mystical presence of the Risen Lord (*Mt 18,20*) (ST. BASIL, *The Shortest Rules*, q. 225: PG 31, 1231). This happens thanks to the reciprocal love of those who make up the community. (VC 42 § 3; 72)

²⁴Profession of Faith of Pope Damasus (*DS 71*).

²⁵LONGHITANO T., *Trinitarian Life and Kénosis*, Rome, Urbanian University Press 2013; CODA P., *God as Other, Revelation and Kénosis in Sergej Bulgakof*, Rome, New City 1998; MITCHELL D.W., *Wisdom on Christian Kenosis in View of Interreligious Dialogue*, in *New Humanity* 25 (2003/3-4) 147-148, pp. 457-502.

Conclusion

Concluding this our itinerary today on consecrated life, 50 years after the Council, I put together some highlights of the path we have journeyed, so that they will be a positive stimulus for our commitment as consecrated men and women.

* The experience of God as Love needs to again become central to consecrated life, so that the charism of the Founder will be a mirror and path for the disciple. The beauty of every charism must be seen as a flower of the Church which is one of many other flowers in the garden, adding its beauty to the garden of the Church.

* It is necessary to patiently build community life, concentrating all our efforts on living the Word of God in order to communicate it to our brothers and sisters as a real experience. Make the transition from an individual spirituality to a spirituality of communion, reconstructing interpersonal relationships in the light of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. In a spirit of communion, assume the structures of communion, which are passed on through structures at various ecclesial and charismatic levels of our religious families.

* Improve the experience of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience on a personal level. Enter and remain in the personal wounds of our communities, the Church and humanity in the spirit of Christ, who cries out his abandonment and surrender to love. Believe in the hundredfold that the Lord gives us in this life and in eternal life. Start smiling again in our congregation, as an authentic expression of our happiness. Simplify the spiritual path of communion, giving as much value as possible to the present moment of our lives: this is the only moment we really have.

Thank you, sisters and brothers for listening and for your warm reception.

Address of the Rector Major, Fr. Angel Fernández Artime

Dearest Mother Yvonne, and dearest Sisters at the Chapter:

It is an honor and a joy to be present among you, at the opening of General Chapter XXIII of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, at a very important historical moment. It is the beginning of the celebration of the “Bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth,” an event that coincides with the year the Holy Father has dedicated to consecrated life. I am among you, not only on behalf of the Salesian Congregation, but of our entire Family spread throughout the world, though many brothers and sisters of every branch of this great tree are already present in many ways.

With these words I would like to join all of you in giving thanks to the Lord, because through his Spirit, great things continue to happen in his Church, in our Salesian Family and, as you will continue to see, in a particular way when you see yourselves as an Institute: a living monument to Mary.

I would also like to express our fraternity and communion, assuring you that not only the Salesian Congregation in the world, but the whole Salesian Family, to which we belong, is here with you. We join you in your prayer, in your searching during these months and in the hope with which you face this call of the Holy Spirit, which is your Twenty Third General Chapter.

All in all, I would like to share with you that I felt in deep communion with you as I read the *vision* that you proposed in the *Working Document*, which resulted from the contributions of the Provincial Chapters and the development of the two preparatory commissions.

I should note that I am very pleased to find a number of times, in the Working Document and in Mother's most recent *Circular*, the awareness that you have of being called today to testify to the prophetic power of the Salesian spirit lived in Valdocco and Mornese by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello and that, on the threshold of GC XXIII, this was highlighted in the theme: “Being with young people today a home that evangelizes.” In this sense, every General

Chapter offers a wonderful opportunity to continue the journey and implement the means necessary to advance towards a pastoral and missionary conversion which, as Pope Francis reminds us, can not leave things as they are. We do not need simple administration now, but in all regions of the earth we must establish ourselves in a permanent state of mission.¹

This is how we, SDB, tried to live our GC XXVII and, I believe, Sisters, this is also your desire today: to live “the celebration of GC XXIII as a time of innovation, under the action of the Holy Spirit, in the certainty that not only the 194 FMA gathered in Rome from September 8 to November 15, but each FMA is urged to closely accompany this journey.”²

Without a doubt, immersed in dialogue and reflection, guided by the Working Document, you will allow yourself to be guided by the perspective to which the Pope invites us: the geographical and existential peripheries of the mission entrusted to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, with a preferential eye for the poor, for the least. A vision which, once again, will touch your hearts and invite you to processes of change and pastoral conversion. Because it is true, Sisters, I also expressed this at the Assembly of our GC XXVII, that young people, especially the poor, evangelize us. They are and must be our “*burning bush*” (Ex. 3: 2); through them our God speaks to us and, in young people, he awaits us. If we are with them and among them, they are the first ones who do good to us, evangelize us, and help us to truly live the gospel in the spirit of the Salesian charism.

It is the same Lord who invites all of us, always, to renewal and conversion, so that before diving in to planning and strategies, you would surely need to experience the same Lord here in the Chapter. He is the one who invites you to go out and to commit yourselves to renewal. What will make renewal possible will not primarily be planning and projects, but looking at reality and the mission with the eyes of God (*Working Document* n. 12). With all my heart, my Sisters, I wish you

¹*Evangelii Gaudium* n. 25.

²Mother Yvonne Reungoat and the General Councilors, *Circular* n. 947, Rome, July 16, 2014.

this grace of the Lord as a very important first fruit of the Chapter.

I am sure that with this attitude of faith, you will focus on communities, on evangelizing and missionary presences in each of your provinces around the world, and together with the inevitable limitations of every human situation; you will joyfully find so many signs of vitality for the growth of educating communities, with many lay men and women with whom you share the mission.

In this context, allow me to share with you something that I carry in my heart when I contemplate the Salesian Congregation and, in some way, our family. Sisters, it is this: I am convinced that any attempt at radicality in our consecrated life, any attempt at truly being a 'home that evangelizes,' any lasting attempt at an option for young people and, among them, for the poorest, passes through one of the essential aspects that constitute our Salesian religious life: fraternity. The Lord, in fact, gave you Sisters to love and we must continue to grow so that indeed our community life will have the power of attraction of fraternity lived according to the Gospel, to the point of being 'irresistible' in its attraction.

For this reason, I confess to you, that one of my main concerns is to think, to see, to imagine, or to talk about how we can go in the right direction, when faced with this sometimes weak reality. Frequently, we sacrifice our community life for other things! For example, I ask myself why we, who should be experts in humanity, especially because we are educators of young men and women, why we have, in our communities, sometimes in the dining room or in adjacent rooms, brothers and sisters who are injured in their heart, torn by loneliness and disappointment; brothers and sisters who wanted to be happy as Salesians, as FMA, but are not. It is true that this is not the whole of reality, but it is a current reality, and just one single case should be enough, one wounded brother or sister should make everyone's heart bleed a bit. In our case I think you could qualify it as a sin if, in word or deed or by silence, if we are like Cain, faced with the Lord's question: "Where is your brother?". "I do not know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"(Gen 4.9). Yes we are! Not custodians, but we are called to care for him or her.

In this regard, I'm always impressed by Mother Mazzarello's ability

to fully believe in the value of people, so much that, always trusting in God's grace, she had a realistic and optimistic view of the Sisters that had been entrusted to her; her maternal touch made her attentive to each and able to guess what would be the appropriate time to intervene, console, encourage, inspire, or correct. "She always knew how to approach people, understanding their existential situation with a style of gentle loving kindness."³

In my opinion, and in light of the entire history of our Salesian charism, a challenge that makes our renewal either attainable or difficult is this: Make our communities real places of living in communion. How can we move from a common life with fixed schedules, regulations, and plans - that certainly can be of help - to a life of communion?

No doubt this presupposes personal and communal conversion. Affective and effective efforts are required to carry out this goal. It is a process that requires us to recognize that at every stage of our lives there is an opportunity to grow, to open up to the novelty of a more authentic encounter with the other, thanks to the strength that God gives us, to make his presence among us more visible. "Fraternity," your document says, "is in fact the prophecy that the world today most readily understands."⁴ This is why you also affirm that, "in today's context, so different from those of the origins, we continue to live the one educational passion that flows from the *da mihi animas cetera tolle* and the commitment, "*I entrust them to you.*" We compare ourselves with the community of the origins to draw inspiration for today in view of the future. It's like going home to find out about our identity and our roots (*Circular* no. 934). The first community of Mornese shines in the eyes of witnesses as the "house of the love God," of joy, of self-giving, of silence, and of simplicity ... and the language of joy and authenticity says more than many speeches and educates young people to follow the Lord by sharing the ideals of

³Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, *With You, Main, on the Pathways of Life. Supplement to Project Mornese*, 121.

⁴*Working Document*, n 56.

⁵*Ivi*, n 49.

their educators.”⁵

Another result, which no doubt will come from the enlightenment of the Spirit in your chapter work, I believe will be the movement of the whole Institute in the light of your reflections and thoughts, to be truly prophetic in your choices, in the freedom to be guided by the Spirit, in evaluating the evident signs of hope, in journeying towards the ability to grow in unconditional acceptance of the young men and women, with the specific characteristic of spiritual motherhood that finds its inspiration in Mother Mary and in Maín, a practical model of life with these attitudes.

The desire *to be with young people today a home that evangelizes*, will require of you, no doubt, as required of all those in religious life, is a courageous choice for a life of evangelical radicalism, overcoming a desire for the past to continue moving forward towards a present and a future filled with fruitfulness.

With all my heart I wish you, dear Sisters, renewed courage which is the result of the freedom that illuminates your work expressed by Pope Francis, when he says: “There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything to the last detail, and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills. The Holy Spirit knows well what is needed in every time and place.”⁶

May the Holy Spirit be the true protagonist of your GC XXIII. I accompany you, we accompany you along with the whole Salesian Family, in this special, important moment of grace. Count on our love and our prayers. We invoke Mary Help of Christians, that she will continue to take care of you as her dearest daughters; and we ask Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to intercede with the Father for you, so that you may make that living Monument of gratitude to Mary Help of Christians desired by our Founder, resplendent today.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus who experienced a transforming experience of life, may you also have the strength to adhere

fully to the person of Jesus and to joyfully undertake the mission that he entrusts to you: to extend his presence and to be Good News with and for young people, that is, be missionary disciples, so that everyone feels at home. Encountering young people becomes a place of apostolate and of meeting with Jesus.⁷

May the Lord bless you. We hope you can really be today with the young, a home that evangelizes.

Happy and fruitful General Chapter!

⁶*Evangelii gaudium*, 280.

⁷*Working Document*, n. 7.

Greetings of the President of the Confederation of the Association of the FMA Past Pupils

Beloved Mother Yvonne, dear Rector Major and dearest Chapter Members,

Today is one of those days that I can not forget and I intend to keep in my heart as a precious gift. At such an important event for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, I have the honor and privilege of offering my personal greetings, together with that of each pupil and past pupil of the world. With emotion, passion and joy, we are close to you at this particular moment in your Institute because we love you and we gather closely around you, assuring you of the support of our prayer.

Our Association is the natural lay expression of the service and the educational mission - in the Church and for society - of the Institute that you, dear Mother Yvonne, represent. You are the tallest landmark of our Association, promoted by the Institute, as clearly spelled out in the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in Article 74:

“We shall maintain cordial relationships with our Past Pupils, receiving them with the welcome proper to our family spirit. Their sense of belonging becomes closer when they become members of the Association promoted by the Institute.” And again: “... let us encourage them to become members, pledging themselves to live Salesian values in their family, in the Church and in society, and to collaborate in our works.”

Thank you, Mother Yvonne, for this valuable service. We express our gratitude to Sister Maria Luisa Miranda, General Councillor for the Salesian Family and Sr. Maritza Ortiz, World Delegate. In them we say thanks to all the delegates at provincial and local levels, and to every FMA in the world for their accompaniment.

Our Association is alive in the world and is committed to promoting the values of its charismatic Salesian spirituality. It has been handed

on to us by each Daughter of Mary Help of Christians we had the gift of meeting on our journey. Although there are different levels of membership in the Association, we can say that there is a large number of Past-Pupils in the world who agree to live Salesian spirituality with a specific style, in the Church and in society, in the way that was typical of the family climate that was in the air in Mornese. Many of them engage in mutual aid, as Fr. Philip Rinaldi asked, or are passionately committed to the mission of education in the ways proper to their state in life, performing many works of charity and solidarity; offering a quality Gospel witness. All and Not One Less, a non-profit organization, represents the face of the Confederation in solidarity in the world, funding projects mostly backed by the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or some groups of the Salesian Family in favor of youth, women and families.

In our world, becoming smaller and more globalized, among many gifts and opportunities, we also see many challenges to living, a lack of ideals, conformism in degrading the fabric of humanity, and lacking values, which give meaning to existence. How much suffering, how many young people and families in disarray: men and women disoriented like small islands adrift in the current!

The eye that sees, however, also knows how to catch sight of the many signs of life and hope: there is a new sensitivity to those in need, there is greater solidarity, a desire for spirituality is emerging, though it is sometimes confused, and new faces of young people appear, who do not fall within the categories in which we sometimes classify them. We want to join the ranks of many men and women of good will who build the future by recognizing and enhancing the good that is present.

We want to let Pope Francis' appeal resound in our heart: “Don't let yourselves be robbed of hope.” We have something to say, to testify, and we wish to commit ourselves more and more in the process. We intend to be together, as a Salesian Family and with you in particular, as a significant presence in the territory in which we operate, striving to live our specific mission, bearing witness in every encounter, relationship, and action, to the joy of having met the Risen Christ, the true meaning of our lives. He has filled our hearts with a love so great that it overflows and with which we feel the need to flood the earth, which is sometimes dry and drained of lifeblood. We intend to give

this love with courage, zeal and passion, as we were taught by Don Bosco, Mother Mazzarello, and all the host of Salesian Saints and Blesseds that illuminate the firmament.

We, Past-Pupils of the world, who have a specific identity and have shared roots, history and objectives, with you, want to really be a **driving force** capable of effecting change in the world around us and helping to make the Kingdom of God recognizable by a love that involves, transforms and creates women and men of hope and peace.

We feel we are the *secular branch of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*. We are a secular force with great potential, and on which the Institute can always count; a force that intends to take part actively, consciously and responsibly, in sharing the educational mission and in family ministry. It is great love for young people, especially for the poor and needy, that drives us to cooperate in joint responsibility with you and to be women and men, parents, grandparents, and apostles among them and among those who are suffering and trying to find a reason to live.

To you, Mother Yvonne, and to you, dearest members of the Council, we ask you to support us and accompany us in lifelong learning, working together to know and love our Association. We need your help; we need to feel you close at all times, in every community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians!

To Mary, Woman Who Said Yes, a model of total abandonment to the will of the Father, we entrust the work of Chapter XXIII, in the certainty that the Holy Spirit will know how to guide your future choices and will help you to *“Be with young people today a home that evangelizes”* with us and with many lay persons committed to helping young people become rich in faith, courage and apostolic passion.

On behalf of every Past Pupil of the world we greet you with deep affection and gratitude and wish you good work!

Paola Staiano
Confederation President

Greetings of the Worldwide Coordinator of the Association of Salesian Cooperators

Dearest Mother and all dearest Sisters in Don Bosco,

It is with great joy and gratitude that I am here with you today to address to you, in addition to my own affectionate greeting, that of all the Salesian Cooperators of the world, who watch your General Chapter with fraternal interest.

Our Association is experiencing a particularly fruitful time of renewal following the approval of the Plan of Apostolic Life, the result of demanding reflection and sharing that has given us not only a document, but rather “a precious book of life” as expertly defined by our dear Rector Major Emeritus, Fr. Pascual Chavez.

The master plan drawn up by our beloved founder is faithfully retold, but with the sensitivity of men and women of the third millennium who wish to make their significant contribution to the Church and in it, to the Salesian Family, conscious of possessing the grace of a secular charism to live every day for the benefit and support of the young.

As a result of this concerted effort, which was intense and worldwide, over which we prayed that the Holy Spirit would breathe with his gifts, now an equally significant step awaits us: the dissemination, understanding and implementation of this project to give a consistent and “mature” response to the boys and girls that the Lord makes us encounter.

Young people feel a strong desire to work, but do not always find credible witnesses and too often are duped by false certainties, by illusory highways that leave them painfully wounded. Here, the Salesian Cooperators feel called to an apostolic commitment to evangelization where the Lord puts them, trying to be for young people a concrete example of how we can live daily life with meaning. There is no lack of shining champions of Christian witness lived with joyful simplicity and radicality in the family, at work, and in the oratory: I think of Attilio Giordani, Alberto Marvelli, the Beltrame

Quattrocchi spouses, and many holy Cooperators who have lived in hiding, aware of being faithful to the “*da mihi animas cetera tolle.*”

I am certain that the educational wealth of the charism and the Salesian experience will support this process, as will the fraternal sharing of intentions, goals, and serious projects with the whole Salesian Family.

In this journey of life, the certainty of having the FMA beside us, in a deep spiritual communion and fruitful operational network, is certainly a strength that we want to appreciate more and more.

The current cultural and social situation, so complex and multifaceted in its dimensions, challenges us and encourages us to radically live the spirit of the Beatitudes and the prophetic insight of Don Bosco to found a “family” to take care of the most marginalized young people, abandoned and poor in soul and body, more and more an everyday reality. For us, Salesian Cooperators, as I think for the whole Salesian Family the motto “*vis unita fortior*” (united strength is stronger) is more applicable than ever, and therefore, the challenge before us is to risk together, with renewed vigor, beside the weakest, as consistent peacemakers in a society torn apart by violence and selfishness, promoting justice and the rights of the person to serve as Christ taught us, clothed with the apron of availability, acceptance, forgiveness, and joy.

With a spirit of fraternal communion, I ask for this:

- To help us, through the dear Delegates, to achieve the ambitious plan to renew society from within bringing the Good News of peace, grace, joy to the world of the young;
- To be in profound communion as brothers and sisters, in prayer, in formation, in studying the Word, and in completing real projects;
- To revitalize the relationship between the centers of the Salesian Cooperators, and the delegates, especially in the local area where the need for communion in mission is most strongly felt;
- To collaborate with the dedication typical of the spirit of Mornese, beginning processes of education especially in family and youth ministry;
- To come together in celebrating the bicentenary of Don Bosco's birth, intimately animated by the awareness of sharing a great mission alongside young people, supporting them as they find themselves, find their own vocations, are actively inserted in society, in

order to one day, become leaders.

May Mary Help of Christians, Mother and Teacher, guide and sustain us in this commitment and enlighten us with her maternal goodness to serve Christ in young people.

With gratitude, affection and heartfelt participation in prayer, I wish you, dear Mother, and all the Sisters a fruitful work for the Institute, blessed by the Lord in honor of Mary, for the sake of “the most valuable part of human society.”

Noemi Bertola
Worldwide Coordinator

Greetings of the World Leader of the Volunteers of Don Bosco

Most reverend and dearest Mother Yvonne, dearest Chapter Members, honored guests and representatives of the groups of the Salesian Family.

First of all I want to thank you for having once again invited me to speak at the opening of your Twenty Third General Chapter. Six years ago I was also here to greet you, and I was very moved, because for the first time, I was attending this great and beautiful gathering. That is why I so strongly felt honored to participate, and I had a sense of great respect for the Chapter and the Chapter Members of your Institute, which is so dear and important to us Volunteers of Don Bosco. Today I feel more at ease, and I feel here, even now, that I am “in the house that evangelizes.” During these six years I and all other VDB of the Central Council experienced your goodness, kindness, sympathy and creativity from a closer vantage point. I want to thank Mother Yvonne and all the General Councilors for this testimony of authentic help and sisterly affection.

To become with young a home that evangelizes requires a lot of courage, but the FMA are women of faith, which means that you are also very brave women. Among all the elements that will guide your Institute in the future is the need for dialogue with our time. It is certainly good to understand the difficulties that afflict today’s young people and respond to them appropriately.

During your precapitular time, we accompanied you with prayer, but also with some reflection on this theme. I would like to highlight two issues.

As women we have received a great gift from our Creator. The feminine genius with its characteristics can build the *house* where deep, warm, stable relationships are born, which can withstand various pitfalls and overcome many difficulties. The problems facing families today are not small: different kinds of poverty, unemployment, stress brought on by new technologies, a culture that diminishes traditional values, new ideologies that detract from family life, free relationships without responsibility.

Family, with its established roles and stable form (woman, man and children) has been questioned and, very often, is compared to the new family unions that exist. Proponents of this new way of thinking and the political and social movements that feed them say their first goal is to respect human rights, especially women’s rights, and sexual and reproductive rights.

Those human rights that want to liberate women from her first task, namely that of “being a mother” which predisposes her to love and be loved, reduce her instead, in some cases, to a simple object who decides according to her own pleasure and her own convenience. If the woman loses her ontological objective, the family remains simply a place where people become autonomous.

Women’s rights must be realized in complementarity with the rights of man and the other members of the family. Today, it often happens that every member of the family believes they have the right to do what he or she wants for his or her own good, choosing to act according to one’s own concept of “good”: we can see how much disorder and disorientation this creates in families. Not to mention the difficulties that young people find growing up in these families.

I would also like to refer to the many places at war, which is still ravaging many countries of the world and that produces not only physical wounds, but especially wounds that affect the psyche as well as spiritual wounds in many young people. There is an urgent need to create a “home that evangelizes” there. We must believe that peace is possible again, although it is difficult, especially if not only homes, but often families, neighbors, and friends have been destroyed. Rebuilding hope to revive love requires above all great faith in God, who teaches us all, through his Son, to forgive.

Building a “home that evangelizes” in this world is not easy, but possible, because the times were always difficult whether because of extreme poverty, or because of ongoing wars, or because of ideologies.

The answer is that Jesus has prepared hope, even for our times. And also for the new generations hope is only in Him, because “there is salvation in no one else.”

Dearest FMA Sisters, I wish you not only good work and a good chapter, but also a future full of hope for your Institute and for all young people.

May God bless you and your Mother Mary protect you! Don Bosco, looking at you, is happy, even now! Best Wishes!

Olga Križová
Leader of the VDB

Greeting of the World Leader of the Volunteers with Don Bosco

Dearest Mother Yvonne, dear Chapter Members and special guests members of the Salesian Family, in this year of joy for the whole Salesian Family, by reason of the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of our father, teacher and the friend of youth, St. John Bosco, I offer you all my personal and fraternal greetings and that of all the Volunteers with Don Bosco.

Just a few months ago, we celebrated our General Assembly - with the welcome participation of Mother at the opening celebration - and we felt personally accompanied by your prayers, which joyfully and fraternally we now wish to return to you.

It is really a favorable time to celebrate the General Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, in this jubilee year of celebration, of joy and of spiritual renewal. This occasion invites us all to look more and more to the person on whom Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello centered their life: Jesus Christ.

The theme of your Chapter *“Being with young people today a home that evangelizes”* is very interesting and modern, providing food for thought for us too, who, in harmony with our secular vocation, “do not form houses to evangelize with youth,” but we are integrated as seed and leaven of the Gospel in the homes of all, that is in the different environments in the world. Therefore, we share with you the urgent need to renew ourselves in the spirit and the charism, to fill ourselves with God’s love and pass it on to young people for whom we work. They need to be accompanied, they ask us to walk with them, within us, they search for loving kindness, warmth, closeness, joy and the sweetness of Christ. May young people feel that they really are loved by us and that we are willing to accompany them; may they see us happy in loving God and loving them; may we become capable of “wasting” time with them.

This is the God that we have to let them know in the Salesian style.

On behalf of all the *Volunteers with Don Bosco* I wish you a General Chapter rich with presence of the Holy Spirit.

We support you with our prayers, always trusting in the help of the Virgin Mary and certain of the intercession of Don Bosco, of Mother Mazzarello and of all the Salesian Saints.

With Salesian Joy,

Darwin Petit
Global Leader of the Volunteers with Don Bosco

Greetings of the President of VIDES International

Dearest Mother and dearest Chapter Members,

It is a great joy for me to be here today to bring, at the opening of the important work of the Twenty Third General Chapter, not my greetings, but those of all the young people from the 57 membership groups or associations, and 205 local groups of VIDES present and active in the world with you, together with the greetings of more than 5,000 active volunteers in this year, and many tens of thousands of volunteers who, in 43 countries and in 56 provinces, over the years have crossed paths with us and with you and, very often, in your own homes. Nearly 27 years we have journeyed together, thanks to the wise guidance and caring accompaniment that you have always given and for which we thank you. This care has brought us to maturity, which now also requires greater responsibility and proactive participation from us. All of us who work with VIDES today feel that we are an active and operative part of the Institute in working together for the Institute with young people, to help the most vulnerable. Educational Volunteerism, sponsored by the Institute through Vides, is a field of leadership for the young to build a society of fraternity and solidarity. This connects us to the Chapter theme: *“Being with young people today a home that evangelizes”*, because the construction of the family home is the basis on which civil society is built as a reference and a place of respect and protection of the dignity of every person.

It is with this responsibility, dearest Mother, that we would like to point out in this brief greeting, some essential points of reflection that we shared at Vides International.

1. *Our homes, like our life, must be strongly rooted in everyday reality.* They cannot be “private” places. In our homes we learn to be witnesses and “evangelists”. We leave our homes to live and work in the local community and the world, through the testimony and purpose-filled action, with the spirit Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello's foreseeing love. The world, now more than ever, needs a new culture of love and solidarity to rebuild the real human face

and peace. Children, young people, women, all are looking for that hope that Pope Francis invites us not to lose. We make our homes the central focus around which communion is born, grows, and develops the “*communitas*”. We go out of our homes to go among the youth. We open our homes and our work to young people, in the setting of Salesian spirituality shared by the entire family of Don Bosco. This spirit of “family”, in our houses-works, is currently a need and, at the same time, a right of all young people! We received it as a gift, as a charism for the construction of the Church and society: a talent not to bury, but to be enhanced.

2. *Our witness of evangelization is credible to the extent that it is rooted in the social dimension of both our action and our presence with young people and communities.* The social doctrine that the Church offers us is the hallmark of our evangelizing action and our daily actions. Our message and our action are not understood and are not accepted, unless they are lived in reality and are not just part of our lingo or our plan. Pope Francis proves it every day, in his messages and in his activities. “Human is my name, Christian, my last name,” said Raoul Follereau. The values of being a Christian determine the quality of my action and being men and women means being “good Christians and honest citizens”, as we learn from Don Bosco.
3. *The defense and protection of human rights and the common good require a strong relationship between the reality of our daily action, our testimony and education,* but these also require great communication skills, cultural enrichment, and institutional and political lobbies. The action of the Office of Human Rights, opened in Geneva with the Institute's great prophetic vision, together with VIDES, are an essential beacon for this purpose. The light of this beacon is powered by the work and the experiences of life in every little reality, in youth groups, in your provinces and individual houses. It is the voice of our homes, of our young people, our families which reaches big institutions - reaches the powerful. We can not be quiet! We can not remain silent! Let us unite, with the simplicity of Pope Francis, shouting “no more wars,” “no more murdered children.” We combine our small voices, so that “the shout” of “our home,” “our proposal of Love,” will be more and more audible. Let us strengthen our mission of education, understood as developing all the resources of each person, to harmonize them with those of

others in order to build the one true society for the Common Good. Let us value the charism of the Spirit who gave us Love for young people, the educational wisdom of Don Bosco, sharing the joy of living for others with the young.

4. *The house is home to the family and place of collaborative living together.* This is why we all need to strengthen the relationship between the various components of the Salesian Family, developing synergy and coordination, strategic, methodological and operational partnerships, . There is huge number of activities, realities, youth and people who are centered around the Institute, the Provinces, and your houses. The power of planning and evangelizing for social action, especially in the context of a globalized world like the one in which we find ourselves today, is rooted in the ability to *coordinate* and to be *united*. The fragmentation and multiplication of subjects and realities diminish the power of our identity and our presence, creating unnecessary competition and confusion for those on the outside.
5. *The Sisters are “mothers” for young people,* who must be able to give direction to the young, accompany them in growth, welcome them, listen to them, encourage them, and empower them. Do not be “afraid of the young” because young people have confidence in you; they are happy to be with you and feel at home with you. The experiences of volunteering for young people offer young people the opportunity to learn how to live and are decisive for their future. It is a concrete and essential tool to practice foreseeing love. We must not only strengthen our action in volunteerism, but also improve it by welcoming, listening, and guiding. Tomorrow, these young people will be parents, teachers, administrators, businessmen, politicians. They will be the face, head, and soul of the community and society. *Be true mothers, rich in compassion, to welcome, to listen, and to treat wounds, full of wisdom to guide and empower, full of hope to encourage, while nurturing the vision of a more positive future for all.* The meaningfulness of our presence and our being citizens, must allow the young and all those we meet, to find in us the strength and the ability to bring a new face to our community. We all have many dreams. They are entirely ours and very beautiful, but these dreams are useless if they are left alone. The values of volunteering and active citizenship must become the pillars of a community and a real policy at the service

of citizens. We defend these values; let us not sell them out to interests. Only then can we build a “single common dream” and make our action and our presence powerful and joyful. Committing ourselves to accompany you in these laborious months with our prayer, dearest Mother, we hope that this reflection will emerge a stronger and more concrete action to *strengthen coordination, at the levels of both planning and operations*, with clear guidelines so that our witness and our presence is more consistent and effective in responding to the challenges of our times, with the force of foreseeing love, a real and concrete witness of evangelization. *Young people believe in this and are ready. Open the doors more and more to young people. Young people are the present and the future. Strive to facilitate and to find the necessary space for their participation.*

And finally, *thanks*: for your ability to “dare”, to sense, to prevent. *Thanks* to you, dearest Mother and to Sr. María Luisa Miranda, the Council Member who has accompanied us in recent years. Special *thanks* also to Sr. Leonor Salazar, Delegate for VIDES International and to Sr. Maria Grazia Caputo, Director of the Office of Human Rights. To all of you, good work.

Guido Barbera
President of VIDES International

Message of the Young People

I am Anna Pascale, I attended Jesus of Nazareth Institute in Rome since kindergarten. Despite being a past pupil for two years now, I have not stopped being part of the great Salesian Family - in fact, I work as a volunteer with the VIDES FMA group and remain in contact with the Sisters at the schools that welcomed me, happy to see them again. We are here before you, proud to represent the young followers of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, hoping to be “new, bold, and daring witnesses”, as Mother Yvonne Reungoat invited us in the letter convoking General Chapter XXIII.

I am Jacopo Rondinelli, and I come from St. John Bosco in Colleferro, a place not far from Rome. I have gone there since childhood. It's the place where I grew up and where I still serve as an animator for the oratory. It is with joy that we want to greet you on behalf of all the young people of the world, those young people who live in your houses and in your hearts; this is a challenging task but it's exciting, too.

Anna. Today's world puts a strain on each one of us. We young people are constantly looking for new emotions capable of giving us the shock to reawaken our soul: this is a constant search for one's own self, often leading one to undertake dark paths that cloud our view and darken our minds. Then how can you not give in to the temptations of life? I do not know if I learned it correctly, but I learned from you that planning gives color to our days, believing that we are part of a design created by Someone who is above everything and everyone, finding the strength to master ourselves and not give in to the shadow that is before us.

Jacopo. Greeting you in light of the theme of this Twenty Third General Chapter allows us to relive important moments of our journey of faith and commitment in Salesian places. Today, more than ever, the concerns and the lack of hope for the future, motivate young people to search for places of reference where we can experience true relationships. By your presence, you offer a true “training camp for life”, in which every young person feels welcomed beginning from what society discards: their weaknesses and poverty.

Anna. Never as in this historical period, is there the need for bold-

ness, perseverance, commitment, and kindness in witnessing our values, our beliefs and our faith. This courage can only be the result of education from those who help us grow. So I have always seen my school like my second home and the educational community as my second family. Home is a safe place, home is a set of people who have extended their hand and made me a *woman*. I imagine the whole community of FMA like a mother watching her child crawl, walk, run and even fall, as a mother who wants to be attentive and caring, who wants to be a mother and not a friend, because she is conscious of the role she plays. I am who I am thanks to my family, but also thanks to you, because you have always reminded me that a woman and a man must be good Christians and honest citizens in the reality of life, without being intimidated by those who are different, but accept diversity as a source of wealth.

Thanks to you, I am a girl eager for a life marked not by a monthly salary, but by the achievement of goals and dreams that do not make things into gods. Instead, these goals and dreams allow her to look on reality with eyes of love. Let me emphasize that my thanks is nothing but that of all young people who have lived and still live in your houses.

Jacopo. For us, you are evidence of the “house built on the Rock”, in which the love of God is manifested in fellowship, a tangible sign that fascinates the young and that makes them feel at home. A family spirit that infects you and step by step allows you to walk through the “narrow gate” that leads to the encounter with Jesus. That's when you recognize that the charism you are given is a gift in those everyday gestures that accompanied your growth. Thus, every gesture and attention to the smallest child finds new meaning: the true joy of being an instrument of evangelization. We feel involved, and stand beside you in a common educational mission: *to be for other young people, a home that evangelizes.*

Anna. Finally, to you who are consecrated women, I ask you to continue to be mothers who reprimand, educate and embrace the young.

Like Mary, who is Mater Dei and Mother of us all, don't give up in the face of those young people who do not seem to listen to you, they may be the first to put your teachings into practice. Be demanding, without fear of being too strict, and be gentle and loving without fear of being too permissive.

Jacopo. We hope that through the work of the General Chapter, you may open new ways of evangelization, to make more and more young people know that they are not guests, but sons in the house of God. Always be a prophecy of hope for us in Jesus.

Homily of the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime

Phil. 3: 8-14; Ps. 17; Lk. 10, 38-42

Dearest Mother Yvonne, dearest Sisters of the Chapter, and dearest sisters and brothers all who are here present to accompany the conclusion of the XXIII General Chapter, I greet you with great affection.

I come again among you as a brother, father and friend, so that we can share faith and the Salesian charism, joy and the announcement of our brotherhood, and our love for young people, especially the most disadvantaged.

We are here to give thanks for the work that has been done, for the experience, for lives that have been given and woven together, thanking and praising God above, who demonstrated his closeness and presence and once again showed his merciful and paternal face. *You have had the opportunity to talk with one another about all the things that had happened* and that continue to happen in your houses and in the young. Sharing and fellowship helped you to open your hearts together, to listen together, to engage in a mission of hope and joy, because the mission is indicated by Jesus, not by our imagination or mere speculation; it is a mission that daily calls for steadfast and open loyalty, helping to foster and build Community harmony among you, in the educating communities and in all those of good will who are working in or out of the Church for the good of the young.

Dearest, I can imagine you as you experienced the intense days of the General Chapter with the heart more and more captivated. Indeed, *were not your hearts burning* in these days? You have lived very demanding, even tiring days. Certainly, many times you have turned “one glance to earth and ten to heaven,” as we learn from the life of Blessed Maddalena Morano. Surely, with an open heart, you welcomed the interior movements of the Spirit, and you have “*broadened your vision to recognize the most authentic and urgent needs of a society and of a generation in flux,*” as Pope Francis has asked you.

As a Salesian Family, you and we have so much for which to thank the Lord and our Mother Help of Christians for so much of God's grace.

Now you must *leave without delay*, returning to your provinces and houses, reaching the four cardinal points, and bringing the beauty of your Chapter experience and the challenges that arise from the call to a *pastoral conversion* that will make all the Sisters of the world more aware “*of the need to implement appropriate paths of change ..., thus turning your homes into places of evangelization, where, especially young people, are involved in your own mission,*” as the Pope said to you. *Leave without delay* so that you can help each and every one in the educating communities to be transformed by encountering God, sharing our life and our experience of faith, living in our Salesian “holy land” which is young people, sharing life with them, accompanying them and being encouraged by them.

Martha or Mary ...? Luke wants to clearly emphasize Mary's “contemplative” attitude, as compared to *being taken up with many chores*, like Martha. Very well! But I say, Martha or Mary? Both! We Salesians are called to live both of these icons! You have heard the call to acknowledge that *we are “under construction” at this time*, and you have reflected on the experience of the two disciples who leave Jerusalem discouraged and sad until they meet up with Jesus on their way and they invited Him to stay at their home in Emmaus. Here, in a *home*, in their own *home* in Emmaus, Jesus fully reveals Himself as Risen! And what beautiful thing did Martha do? She accepted Jesus *into her home*. The Gospel does not say that the house belonged to Martha and Mary, but only to Martha.

Dearest Sisters, we must learn from Martha, who welcomed Jesus into her home. We, too, you too, must welcome Jesus. His presence will make a difference, giving the sense of a real open home that evangelizes. And Martha is the sister who is ready to serve, to make having guests more pleasant, more awaited, so that they will feel that they are really “at home.” But it is true that Mary had “chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away”, because she chose to listen to the words of Jesus and to stay with him as long as possible. Actually, these are not two opposed attitudes, and even less, are they contradictory.

We, the Salesian Family, are called to intensely live the intertwining of these two ways of living in our relationship with Jesus. We should serve Him, but not only serve Him, we should also listen to Him while remaining with Him. This is truly the entering point in God's weaving of human history: to become the weavers and builders of salvation

history and, as we build up the city of God, the Kingdom. “*Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth,*” says the first letter of John. Hence, we need not only have nice words and carefully crafted documents, but instead, life, our life given every day, our convictions which become attitudes and preferences, translated into choices, with actions we can see and witness, first-hand. This is what it really means to love, and therefore, to live, because “*the one who does not love remains in death.*”

May Mary, our Mother, Teacher and Helper, help us to germinate the word of truth in our hearts like the truth that prompted Blessed Maddalena Morano to engage with wisdom and perseverance in the education of young people, and so “*be today with young people, a home that evangelizes*” and to “*enlarge our hearts to hope.*”

Closing Words of the Superior General Mother Yvonne Reungoat

Dear Sisters,

Today we celebrate the culmination of this great charismatic world meeting, General Chapter XXIII. Our hearts are open in gratitude for the wealth of experience that we have lived and shared. This is a wealth that we will gradually discover when we go back to daily life. We had an experience that consisted of mutual listening, of dialogue, of discernment and prayer, but above all, of great hope. In its development, the Chapter was a powerful time of ongoing formation and certainly, something has changed in us.

The process of preparation began long ago, by choosing the theme of the *Letter of Convocation* (circ. N. 934 from February 11, 2013), used as a basis for reflection by all the communities, and often involving the educating communities and groups of the Salesian Family present in the area.

The provincial chapters' responses to the questions posed in the *Letter* confirmed the significance of the theme: “*Being with young people today a home that evangelizes.*”

The Working Document, sent to all the participants in the General Chapter and made available to the communities, has allowed a more detailed study of the theme.

Listening to the interventions in the committees and in the Assembly of GC XXIII, the careful preparation by all was perceived, along with the desire to give the substance of vital and experiential content to a very timely issue for now and for the future of the mission of the Institute in the Church and in society. We feel a great responsibility to proclaim the good news of the Gospel with joy and passion to the new generations, and to do so together with them.

It's nice that the final day of General Chapter XXIII coincides with the liturgical feast of Mother Maddalena Morano, marking the twentieth anniversary of her beatification. The Chapter is inscribed in an atmosphere full of holiness where everything is a gift and a call: a “Holy Year” for the Church and for the Institute. We think enrollment of saints John XXIII and John Paul II, and the declaration of Paul VI as Blessed.

This year, the Institute commemorated the centenary of the death of Sister Angela Vallese, FMA pioneer to missions in Patagonia and in Tierra del Fuego. Our visit to Lu Monferrato, on September 18, allowed us to know the land of her origins and to remember her boldness in proclaiming the Gospel. We are living the celebrations of the bicentenary of our Father and Founder, Don Bosco, and celebrating his birth. This happens to coincide with the Year of Consecrated Life called by Pope Francis, which will officially begin on November 29.

The Chapter took place in a setting with great horizons of holiness and missionary universality. These are the horizons that Pope Francis recalled in the audience on November 8, when he spoke to the Chapter, inviting us to “broaden our vision to recognize the most authentic needs and urgencies of a changing society and generation.” We tried to maintain this breadth of vision throughout the time of the Chapter, combining it with the challenges of local situations.

During the retreat in Mornese, Monsignor Thomas Menamparmpil highlighted the importance of having a perspective of *faith*, of *depth*, of *intensity*, of *radicality* and of *responsibility* to guarantee our communities a path of light and hope at a time of new opportunities and new calls from God. These key words also punctuated our path, helping us to create a community that is listening to the Holy Spirit and the needs of young people, allowing ourselves to be continually challenged to become more and more “communities going out on mission.”

There were moments of fatigue, darkness and suffering on our journey. We welcomed them and lived through them together, certain that the Lord walks with us every day, as He was with the disciples of Emmaus, and He enlightens us with His Word that makes our hearts burn with love for Him.

The Great and Silent Protagonist of the Chapter

From the beginning of the chapter we saw that only a house filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 2) can evangelize: a house in which the FMA, laity and young people let themselves be inhabited and moved by Love. With the guidance of Father José Cristo Rey García Paredes we asked ourselves: *Will we be able to listen to the Spirit?* Together we tried to listen with our hearts, to cleanse our hearts, to tune in with Him, to accept His ever-new gifts, aware that the first act of the Chapter was to receive the hospitality of the One who is the main guest.

Guided by the light of the Spirit, we tried to change our gaze to scrutinize the signs of His action in us, in the community, in the Church and in the young people and, together with them, to dream about the future. Even when the going was tough, the Holy Spirit sustained our hope and helped us not to stop at problems to be resolved, but to “embrace the miracles” that His love never ceases to work in our poverty.

Today, at the end of the Chapter, we reaffirm together our trust in the wonderful work of the Spirit in the Church, in the Institute, in humanity, and especially in young people. We continue to decipher his voice among the many voices of every day, to discover His call to “go out,” to deliver us from our structures and our fears to be true collaborators of the Spirit in evangelizing, helping young people, especially the poorest, to meet Jesus in the Church and to be evangelizers of other young people.

A new door opens today on our steps: steps that lead us out into the midst of the world bring new light, to be an effective educational presence among the young and to offer a prophetic witness to everyone. Jesus comes to us as we journey. Our hearts will recognize him, but we must always be on alert like sentinels.

The joy of meeting Jesus

In this time we effectively experienced the secret of the stability of our *house*. It is strong if it is built on the solid rock of God’s Word and the Eucharist; if it is animated by the Holy Spirit who pushes us to go out to proclaim Love to the world. In him, the uncertainty of the searching is transformed into peace. We allow ourselves to be accompanied by the Lord Jesus. The act of enthroning the Book of the Word every week in the Chapter Hall evidenced the certainty that His light guided us in discernment and was the source of communion.

This communion was strengthened every morning around the altar and in breaking the bread of the Eucharist we discovered ourselves more as Sisters, more in solidarity with the wounds of humanity, and more open to young people, with greater hope. Jesus continues to captivate our hearts and to stimulate our lives, which are sometimes shallow and lukewarm, inviting us to follow Him with the total gift of our lives.

In every Eucharist, we tune our lyre and our harps by listening to the Lord, so as to sing the wonders of His love throughout the day. Our melody of peace and hope should wake up the world, our own com-

munities and the hearts of young people.

The first motivation in fact to accept the call to evangelize - as the Pope reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium* - is the love of Jesus, the experience of being saved by Him. (EG n. 264) The encounter with Jesus, who has chosen and called us to follow Him, helps us to bear witness to the humanizing power of the Gospel. It opens us to hospitality and compassion, guiding us to proclaim Him by our words and our lives, to go out to the periphery, awakening the passion of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*. We will really be prophetic if we are more evangelized, more Salesian, more missionary, and more joyful.

The Beauty of Building Together

We lived the Chapter by trying to build together, day by day, the *house that evangelizes*, in fidelity to Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. Each one brought her unique contribution; together we let ourselves be challenged by the new calls of history. The Lord, present in our midst, supported us in creating a large and beautiful community, a prophecy of fraternity and universality in the Church and in the Institute. Despite our weaknesses, we want to be a prophetic community throughout the world, bearing witness, announcing, convening, putting all this together in our daily contact with people and especially with young people; a bold and courageous community that does not let itself be robbed of joy and hope.

As the Pope said in his audience, “Today people suffer because of poverty, but also because of a lack of love and relationships.” This is a challenge present in all our communities.

Lay people, the young people, and our Sisters of all ages yearn for quality relationships. As the young people suggested to us, we believe that the house is to be built on four pillars: welcoming, motherhood, witnessing, and prayer, which also represent a call for us. The real *house*, in fact is that *home* where you weave simple and true relationships, living in co-responsibility and sharing the common mission, expressing gestures of maternity and praying together.

We want to confidently open our homes to young people, trying to make them leaders in evangelizing other young people, especially the poorest. We are committed to testify - according to the desire expressed by young people themselves - the beauty of being Christian women, religious who educate with the heart of Jesus the Good Shepherd, in the style of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

If the human and spiritual fullness of our belonging to Jesus according to Salesian spirituality shone in us and in all our houses, our communities would become contagious and many young people would respond to the luminous call to follow the Lord. The future of the charism is in gestation in the heart of each FMA and in every community. Let us not get tired of finishing the sketch begun by Don Bosco because each of us is responsible, where she lives, for this future.

Missionary Daring

The missionary passion is the *leitmotif* of this Chapter, in order to accept the call of the Church and proclaim Jesus by finding new ways of communicating the faith, beginning with a real *pastoral conversion*.

“The heart of our evangelizing action,” we read in our Constitutions, “is the proclamation of Christ.” (C 70) This is the *good news* that we must shout with our lives, with the joy that shines from our face, with the Family Spirit that reigns in our homes, with the patience to be with young people and to accompany their growth. In the Salesian educational mission, there is no priority more central to this. The times that we are currently living in the Church, imbued with the fresh wind of the New Evangelization, this is our time! We are daughters of this Church and Founders who were impassioned for the proclamation of Jesus to the little ones, to the poor, and to those who do not count in society.

Da mihi animas cetera tolle and an active response to the consignment, *I entrust them to you* make up, I think, the Salesian translation of what Pope Francis wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: “When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts.” (n. 272) Within the mission we form ourselves as missionaries, rediscovering the call to a continuous and more skilled formation at all levels.

Dear Sisters, we can not disappoint the deep thirst for God that dwells in the hearts of so many young people. We can not be deaf to the cry of salvation and hope rising from so many old and new peripheries. Let us allow our hearts to be evangelized, recovering the original freshness of the Gospel and of the charism and then we will be bold and creative in finding innovative ways to tell everyone how great is the love of the Father which reaches us in Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The time that is given us to live is in complete harmony with the dream of Pope Francis: “How I long to find the right words to stir up enthusiasm for a new chapter of evangelization full of fervour, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction!” (EG n. 261)

We take Mary back into our home with renewed filial affection, and let ourselves be guided by her maternal presence. Every time we look at her “we once again believe in the revolutionary force of tenderness and affection,” (EG n. 288) the power that was inscribed at the beginning of our mission of *evangelizing by educating*. If we refine our ear, in our houses, we will be able to hear her swift footsteps, her tender voice that urges us to go out, and with our lives, to tell the story that the Lord is Risen, allowing our Sisters, young people and all those we meet to feel His love. May she teach us to be that empty space that Jesus fills with light, with hope, and with bold and active charity. What we are, the quality of our relationships, will make inroads into the hearts of young people, will be passed on to them and will make our homes places where together we live the gospel of joy.

With Renewed and Profound Gratitude

I feel the need to express my thanks once again to each of you. We shared joys and sorrows by listening to each other, listening together to the Lord and with Him, to the heartbeat of the world, of young people, and of the educating communities. GC XXIII was a great workshop of inter-culturalism in the family spirit, where the contribution of each enriched our common searching and will continue to give support and comfort as we move forward. Thank you for being a gift to me, to the Institute and to your countries.

I again express my deep gratitude to the dear Sr. Emilia Musatti, who was a loyal, discreet, and wise vicar, with whom I shared the hardships and hopes of the journey in these six years. Together with her, I wish to dearly thank the Sisters of the Council who have finished their service: Sr. Maria Américo Rolim, Sr. María del Carmen Canales, Sr. Giuseppina Teruggi, Sr. Kathleen Taylor, Sr. Carla Castellino, and Sr. Marie-Dominique Mwema. I felt their fraternal presence, their tireless dedication, their charismatic passion, and their strong sense of belonging to the Institute as a big family led by Mary Help of Christians. May she fill these Sisters with blessings in the new mission that will be entrusted to them. The Institute will continue to be present in their lives and in their prayers.

Many thanks to you, Sisters of the new Council. With availability, you have accepted the call of Jesus to go out, leaving your provinces to witness and proclaim Jesus and the beauty of the Salesian charism to the world. Together we will continue to build a beautiful *home*.

Special thanks to Sr. Chiara Cazzuola, the new Vicar General and Moderator of this General Chapter. With her, I thank the team of Facilitators, the Secretaries and the editing commission.

I thank the Commission Presidents and Secretaries who have done intense and very valuable work, and the translators who have been accurate and effective.

I would also like to thank you for the animation of the liturgies, which was carefully prepared by Interprovincial Conferences or individual Provinces.

I also express on behalf of all, a big thank you for the Good Nights which favored the knowledge of some of the provincial realities; for recreations which were the magic touch in helping us to remain cheerful and serene.

Our gratitude also goes to the Sisters of the General House, who, with their hospitality, their precious work, prayer and offering have helped create the family atmosphere that we breathe in this time.

Thanks to all the Sisters of the Institute, the young men and women, members of the Salesian Family who prayed and offered for us, the Sisters in the cloistered monasteries that have assured us of their daily remembrance to the Lord and to so many people, whose faces we will perhaps never know, but who sustained us spiritually.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Rector Major Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime. Throughout GC XXIII, he made us aware that he was near us and encouraging us like a brother, along with all our Salesian Brothers. I thank the groups of the Salesian Family, especially the Past Pupils, the young people, and the laity with whom we lived unforgettable days of the Chapter, the educating communities of the world, particularly the young people and those who have prayed and offered for us.

Guided by the Holy Spirit and Mary Help of Christians, let us continue to courageously strengthen our faithfulness to the Lord Jesus, our love of predilection for the young, and the communion between us, so as to be a prophetic presence in the world and in the Church today. Together, let us write a new page of holiness and evangelization in the Institute and in the Church today.

Transformed by our encounter with Jesus, Sisters, together, let's go with young people along the roads of the world, as missionaries of hope and joy.

Address of Pope Francis at the Audience Given to the Chapter Members

November 8, 2014

Dear Sisters, Mother Yvonne expressed gratitude for the audience, but it would not have been possible without her insistence! I do not know if this Superior General knows how to govern - I do not know, that's your business - but she knows how to knock on doors, and powerfully, yes! I assure you!

Thank you, Mother, for what you said. I, too, permit myself to be insistent, thinking of Patagonia ... I won't say any more! These days you have focused your attention on the theme "Being with young people today, a home that evangelizes", which fits well in the social and ecclesial context of today, marked by so many forms of spiritual and material misery. In fact, today we suffer from poverty, but also from lack of love and relationships.

In this context, you can especially perceive the fragility of young people to whom you dedicate yourselves with loving commitment, in the style of Don Bosco and on the path of Mother Mazzarello. You are called to offer all people the message of the Gospel, which is summarized in the Father's merciful love for each person.

From your work, fundamental guidelines emerge for the life of each religious and every community. First, the commitment to be guided by the prospect of "going out", to begin a journey towards the many geographical and existential border areas, with a preferential attention to the poor and to the various forms of exclusion. There are so many!

Then the awareness of the need to implement appropriate paths of change and pastoral conversion, thereby turning your houses into places of evangelization where, especially young people, are involved in your same mission. This creates a climate of co-responsibility that fosters each individual's journey of faith as well as personal adherence to Jesus so that He continues to attract everyone. In this way young people are trained to become themselves agents of evangelization for other youth.

I can only encourage you to go forward with enthusiasm on this path

of action that the Holy Spirit is suggesting. Open your hearts to receive the interior movements of God's grace; broaden your vision, broaden your vision to recognize the most authentic needs and urgencies of a society and of a generation in flux.

Wherever you go, be a prophetic witness and an educational presence, by unconditionally accepting young people. Face the challenge of inter-culturality and in the midst of an apostolic context of youth, permeated by the virtual world and new and often digital technologies, find ways to make your apostolic work effective.

To do this you must always put Christ at the center of your existence; you must be shaped by the Word of God which enlightens, guides and supports; you must nourish the missionary spirit with persevering prayer, with worship, and by "wasting time" before the tabernacle.

At the same time, you are called to witness the ideal of fraternal communion among yourselves, with feelings of mutual acceptance, understanding one another's shortcomings and valuing the qualities and the gifts of each, according to the teaching of Jesus: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." (Jn 13:35)

I want to repeat a suggestion that I just gave a few days ago to another group of religious: unity. Never, never let there be envy or jealousy among you; do not allow these things! Be united in your houses. The most dangerous thing is terrorism in religious life: it has entered, the terrorism of gossip. If you have something against a Sister, go and say it to her face. This terrorism should never be, because a rumor is a bomb that you throw at the community and that destroys it. Be united, without the terrorism of gossip.

And this unity requires - as you well know - a serious process of formation, which includes updating even in those human sciences that can help you in your mission. It is in fact required of you to be able to listen with openness and understanding those who have recourse to you for moral and human support, to know how to interpret the situations in which you operate, in order to inculturate the Gospel message. In this regard, the mission *ad gentes* offers you a huge field in which to make a gift of yourself with love.

In the course of the Chapter, you have not failed to reflect on your daily apostolic activity, which puts you in contact with the joys, the hopes and the sufferings of people. Being in courtyards with children in classrooms with students, with young people in real cities or in the

"virtual neighborhoods," in markets with young women, you encounter new realities and problems that challenge you. For all people, be missionaries of hope and joy, witnessing to the values of your own Salesian identity, especially the area of encounter, a fundamental aspect of your charism: it is always a fresh and vital source that you can tap into to find that love which revitalizes your passion for God and for the young.

Don't let inevitable difficulties, encountered in the journey, slow your enthusiasm for apostolic action. Indeed, the example of St. John Bosco and St. Mary Mazzarello should inspire you to contribute even more enthusiastically to the New Evangelization with your activities in the area of education and schools, catechesis and the formation of youth in the apostolate.

Dear Sisters, you know how the Church esteems the consecrated life. In fact, it is at the very heart of the community and is a decisive element for her mission, offering a specific contribution through the witness of a life given totally to God and to our brothers and sisters.

May this, with the maternal help of Mary Most Holy, whom you venerate with the title of Help of Christians, be the commitment of each one and of your entire Congregation!

With this hope, I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to you and all your Sisters. And I ask you to pray for me, and do not forget Patagonia! Thank You.

List of Participants at General Chapter XXIII**General Council**

Madre Reungoat Yvonne	Superior General
Sr. Musatti Emilia	Vicar General
Sr. Américo Rolim Maria	Counselor for Formation
Sr. Canales Calzadilla M. del Carmen	Counselor for Youth Ministry
Sr. Miranda María Luisa	Counselor for the Salesian Family
Sr. Deretti Alaíde	Counselor for the Missions
Sr. Teruggi Giuseppina	Counselor for Social Communication
Sr. Tallone Vilma	Counselor for Administration
Sr. Boullosa Silvia	Visiting Counselor
Sr. Castellino Carla	" "
Sr. Cazzuola Chiara	" "
Sr. Mwema Mukato Marie-Dominique	" "
Sr. Ozhukayil Lucy Rose	" "
Sr. Peče Marija	" "
Sr. Taylor Kathleen	" "
Sr. Cavaglià Piera	Secretary General

AFRICA**PROVINCE**

Sr. Moscoso Luisa	Equatorial Africa. <i>S. M. D. Mazzarello</i>	AEC
Sr. Roca Botey Vera Cruz		
Sr. Tomasi Roberta	Africa Ethiopia-Sudan <i>M. Ausiliatrice</i>	AES
Sr. Mora Ruth del Pilar		
Sr. Chongo Cola Bernadette	Central Africa <i>Our Lady of Africa</i>	AFC
Sr. Bizige Nirere Charlotte		
Sr. Mukase Ruzagiriza Chantal	East Africa <i>Our Lady of Hope</i>	AFE
Sr. Reakes Geraldine		
Sr. Munyemba Julienne	Southern Africa <i>Our Lady of Peace</i>	AFM
Sr. Aguirre María Consuelo		
Sr. Vizzi Maria Ausilia	Western Africa <i>Mother of God</i>	AFO
Sr. Ulate Ana Victoria		

Sr. Da Silva Juraci Maria	Angola <i>Queen of Peace</i>	ANG
Sr. Bernardo Paulo Catarina		
Sr. Hernández Ciriaca	Madagascar <i>Mary Source of Life</i>	MDG
Sr. Rasoamifara Valérine		
Sr. Langa Paula Cristina	Mozambique <i>St. John Bosco</i>	MOZ
Sr. Hermínio Carolina Ilda		

AMERICA

Sr. Figueroa Carmen María	Antilles <i>St. Joseph</i>	ANT
Sr. Ramírez Basilia		
Sr. Komar María Ana	Argentina <i>St. Francis de Sales</i>	ABA
Sr. Fernández María Elena		
Sr. Heit Silvia Beatriz	Argentina <i>St. Francis Xavier</i>	ABB
Sr. Mansilla Jovita		
Sr. Paz Angela Bernardita	Argentina <i>Our Lady of the Holy Rosary</i>	ARO
Sr. Giana Sandra Noemí		
Sr. Franco Ruíz Edith	Bolivia <i>Our Lady of Peace</i>	BOL
Sr. Conde Nancy		
Sr. Moreira Maria Helena	Brazil <i>Mother Mazzarello</i>	BBH
Sr. Silva (da) Jane Maria		
Sr. Dorilêo Gonçalves Mariluce	Brazil <i>Our Lady of Peace</i>	BCB
Sr. Souza (de) Alves Nelcina		
Sr. Barreto Maria Lúcia	Brazil <i>Immaculate Help of Christians</i>	BCG
Sr. De Abreu Canavarro Dilma		
Sr. Dias Pereira Francisca	Brazil <i>Laura Vicuña</i>	BMA
Sr. Furtado Ferreira Leonéia		
Sr. Scaramussa Madalena Luiza	Brazil <i>St. Therese</i>	BMT
Sr. Santos (dos) Terezinha de Jesus		
Sr. Floriani Maria	Brazil <i>Our Lady of Aparecida</i>	BPA
Sr. Da Silva Silvia Aparecida		
Sr. De Assis Castro Amélia	Brazil <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	BRE
Sr. Sampaio Lobato Neiva		

Sr. Pinto Ana Teresa Sr. Agrizzi Carmelita Leonilda	Brazil <i>Our Lady of the Rock</i>	BRJ
Sr. Gesser Helena Sr. Rampi Dorcelina de Fátima	Brazil <i>St. Catherine of Siena</i>	BSP
Sr. Bolaños Ena Veralis Sr. Cifuentes Ana Leonor	N. Central America <i>Most Holy Redeemer</i>	CAM
Sr. Flores Elia María Sr. Durán Rita María del Carmen	S. Central America <i>O. L. of the Angels</i>	CAR
Sr. Rossi Aurelia Sr. Díaz Leonor	Cile <i>St. Gabriel the Archangel</i>	CIL
Sr. Aldana Tonny Lucía Sr. Potes Luz Stella	Colombia <i>Our Lady of Chiquinquirá</i>	CBC
Sr. Díaz Ana Leonor Sr. Botello Lucila	Colombia <i>Our Lady of the Snows</i>	CBN
Sr. González Nubia Rosa Sr. Uribe Carmen Lucrecia	Colombia <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	CMA
Sr. Rangel Ferreira Ana Dolores Sr. Vélez Ciro Olga Lucía	Colombia <i>St. Mary Mazzarello</i>	CMM
Sr. Purcell Elizabeth Sr. Fontaine Françoise	Canada <i>Our Lady of the Cape</i>	CND
Sr. Navarro María Beatriz Sr. Piña Cruz María	Ecuador <i>Sacred Heart</i>	ECU
Sr. Jean Marie Claire Sr. Nicolas Aline	Haiti <i>Our Lady of Perpetual Help</i>	HAI
Sr. Torres Montiel M. Guad. Sr. Rodríguez Juana Patricia	Mexico <i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i>	MME
Sr. Rodríguez Myrna Elizabeth Sr. Castaño Graciela	Mexico <i>Mother of the Church</i>	MMO
Sr. Romero Leandra Sr. Palacios Teresa de Jesús	Paraguay <i>St. Raphael the Archangel</i>	PAR
Sr. Patiño Gloria Luz Sr. Núñez Elsy	Perú <i>St. Rose of Lima</i>	PER

Sr. Dunn Karen Sr. De Rose Marisa Ann	Eastern U.S. <i>St. Philip the Apostle</i>	SUA
Sr. King Patricia Sr. Ruiz Rosann	Western US <i>Mary Immaculate</i>	SUO
Sr. Wynants María Inés Sr. Guisado Laura	Uruguay <i>Immaculate Conception</i>	URU
Sr. Hernández Margarita Sr. Rizzo Esther Maigualida	Venezuela <i>St. John Bosco</i>	VEN

ASIA

Sr. Liu Man Wai Monica Sr. Siu Sau Hung Helen	China <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	CIN
Sr. Lee Mei Yin Rosetta Sr. Om So Ok Teresa	China <i>Star of the Sea</i>	CSM
Sr. García Teresita de Jesús Sr. Ditching Gertrudes	Cambodia-Myanmar <i>Mary Our Help</i>	CMY
Sr. Garcia Sarah Sr. Dimayuga Florita	Philippines <i>St. Mary D. Mazzarello</i>	FIL
Sr. Inoue Sumiko M. Assunta Sr. Takeishi Satoko Monica	Japan <i>Alma Mater</i>	GIA
Sr. De Souza Wilma Sr. Joseph Theresa	India <i>St. Mary Mazzarello</i>	INB
Sr. Pettayil Mary Sr. Valliyil Elizabeth	India <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	INC
Sr. George Elizabeth T. Sr. Komuhra Lydia	India <i>Mother of the Church</i>	ING
Sr. D'Almeida Crescentia Sr. Kaidathara Marietta	India <i>Sacred Heart</i>	INK
Sr. Soosai Magnificat Sr. Yetukuri Alphonsa Maria Sr. Kanickaraj Mary Tamizharasi	India <i>St. Thomas the Apostle</i>	INM

Sr. Suja Isabella Sr. Susngi Rosina	India <i>Immaculate Heart of Mary</i>	INS
Sr. Choi Joo Yong Silvia Sr. Kim Eun Kyeong Cecilia	Korea <i>Morning Star</i>	KOR
Sr. Abou Naoum Lina Sr. Daniel Yusef Marie	Middle East <i>Jesus the Adolescent</i>	MOR
Sr. Tovichian Maria Anna Sr. Kitsakul Thong-yoo Angela	Thailand <i>St. Mary Mazzarello</i>	THA
Sr. Battagliola Paola Sr. Gusmao Jacinta Maria	Timor-Indonesia <i>St. Mary D. Mazzarello</i>	TIN
Sr. Uong thi Doan Trang Teresa Sr. Vu thi Kim Lien Rosa	Vietnam <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	VTN

EUROPE

Sr. Maul Maria Sr. Breuer Rita	Austria-Germ. <i>St. Mary D. Mazzarello</i>	AUG
Sr. Pitti Bénédicte Sr. Ilunga Cécile	Southern Belgium <i>Most Holy Sacrament</i>	BEB
Sr. Uyttersprot Hilda Sr. Huysentruyt Hilde	Northern Belgium <i>Sacred Heart</i>	BEG
Sr. Tkadlecová Marie Sr. Jagminaitė Jurgita	Czech. Rep - Lithuania <i>Mary Immaculate</i>	CEL
Sr. Pietruszczak Małgorzata Sr. Lisak Jolanta	E. Europe - Georgia <i>Mother of God</i>	EEG
Sr. Fert Chantal Sr. Orcel Anne	France <i>Our Lady of Lourdes</i>	FRC
Sr. Cameron Constance Sr. Devine Patricia	Great Britain <i>St. Thomas of Canterbury</i>	GBR
Sr. Doran Mary Sr. Downey Mary	Ireland <i>Our Lady of Ireland</i>	IRL
Sr. Cocco Maria Teresa	Lombardy <i>Holy Family</i>	ILO

Sr. Merli Cristina Sr. Colombo Patrizia		
Sr. Corna Celestina Sr. De Fortunati Palmira Sr. Turrisi Silvia	Emil.-Ligure-Tosc. <i>O.L. of the Cenacle</i>	ILS
Sr. Scano Marinella Sr. Meschini Carla Sr. De Siena Maria Ausilia	Southern <i>Mother of Good Counsel</i>	IMR
Sr. Degiovanni Elide Sr. Casalis Paola Sr. Stara Cristina	Piedmontese <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	IP1
Sr. Tagliaferri Maria Rosaria Sr. Smerilli Alessandra Sr. Maccioni Angela Maria	Romana <i>St. John Bosco</i>	IRO
Sr. Razionale Anna Giovina Sr. Pisciotta Maria Anna Sr. Anzaldi Maria	Sicilian <i>Mother Magdalene Morano</i>	ISI
Sr. Chinellato Marisa Sr. Peron Anna Sr. Costabile Carolina	Triveneta <i>St. Mary D. Mazzarello</i>	ITV
Sr. Lewandowska Halina Sr. Świątek Anna	Poland <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	PLA
Sr. Strzelczyk Lidia Sr. Szczęsna Anna	Poland <i>Our Lady of Jasna Góra</i>	PLJ
Sr. Rodrigues Maria das Dores Sr. Santos Maria da Conceição	Portugal <i>Our Lady of Fatima</i>	POR
Sr. Tramte Damjana Sr. Pangeršič Majda	Slovenia-Croatia <i>St. M. of Brezje</i>	SLC
Sr. Kurkinová Jana Sr. Skalová Monika	Slovakia <i>St. John Bosco</i>	SLK
Sr. Pérez Sanz María Isabel Sr. Mató María Asunción	Spain <i>Our Lady of the Pillar</i>	SBA

Sr. Rubio Teresa de Jesús Sr. Redondo María Paloma	Spain <i>Virgin of the Way</i>	SLE
Sr. Luján María Sr. Díaz María de los Angeles	Spain <i>St. Teresa</i>	SMA
Sr. Reboso María Nieves Sr. Ruíz Pérez María Dolores	Spain <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	SSE

DELEGATES OF THE COMMUNITIES DEPENDENT ON MOTHER

Sr. Cristaino Anna Rita Sr. Loparco Grazia	General House Auxilium	RCG RMA
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AUSTRALIA

Sr. MacDonald Edna Mary Sr. McMahon Helen	Pacific Region <i>Mary Help of Christians</i>	SPR
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VISITING COUNSELOR ELECTED ON 10-29-2014

Sr. Neves Phyllis (SUA)

INVITED GUESTS

Sr. Pitterová Michaela Sr. Li Yanxia Xinqian Teresina	General House China <i>Star of the Sea</i>	RCG CSM
Sr. Nwe Ni Moe Veronica Sr. Riccioli Marta Liliana	Cambodia-Myanmar <i>Mary Our Help</i> Argentina <i>S. Francesco di Sales</i>	CMY ABA

MOTHER AND THE GENERAL COUNSELORS ELECTED AT GC XXIII

Madre REUNGOAT Yvonne	Superior General
Sr. CAZZUOLA Chiara	<i>Vicar General</i>
Sr. REBOSO María Nieves	<i>Counselor for Formation</i>
Sr. COCCO Maria Teresa	<i>Counselor for Youth Ministry</i>
Sr. MIRANDA María Luisa	<i>Counselor for the Salesian Family</i>
Sr. DERETTI Alaide	<i>Counselor for the Missions</i>
Sr. MOREIRA Maria Helena	<i>Counselor for Social Communication</i>
Sr. TALLONE Vilma	<i>Counselor for Administration</i>
Sr. BATTAGLIOLA Paola	<i>Visiting Counselor</i>
Sr. BOULLOSA Silvia	" "
Sr. INOUE Sumiko Maria Assunta	" "
Sr. MUKASE Ruzagiriza Chantal	" "
Sr. NEVES Phyllis	" "
Sr. OZHUKAYIL Lucy Rose	" "
Sr. PEČE Marija	" "
Sr. CAVAGLIÀ Piera	<i>Secretary General</i>

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