

In preparation for General Chapter XXIV

N. 985

Dearest Sisters,

In the atmosphere of the World Youth Day recently celebrated in Panama, in which I joyfully participated along with many young people and carrying in my heart the rich experience of the Synod: *The Young, Faith, and Vocational Discernment* (October 2018), I reach you to share the process of discernment carried out together with the Sisters of the Council in preparation for the coming General Chapter XXIV.

From these great Church events we feel confirmed in the beauty of our vocation and re-invigorated with enthusiasm for the educational mission, a sure path of the future for the new generations.

In the work of the Plenum, we let ourselves be challenged by the journey of the Church today and by the priority needs of the life of the Institute which, during the triennial Evaluations, were highlighted and shared.

Another important event that inspired us during this time: in 2022 occurs the 150th anniversary of the foundation of our Institute that rose in Mornese on August 5, 1872. It is the heart's need to thank God for the prodigies of holiness and of grace that have happened in our history up to now. At the same time, it is an appeal to decisively renew our fidelity to Jesus and our missionary daring so that our Religious Family may continue to be in the Church and in the world, a sign of love and hope for many young people.

We understand how significant and fruitful it is in the three years that prepare us for this jubilee, to make a journey together of discernment, of prayer, of vital renewal, and of shared joy. Certainly new energies of life and vocational fruitfulness will come to the Institute

In the following pages, you will find the official convocation of General Chapter XXIV, some reflections on the chapter theme, matured in prayer and in sharing with the Council Sisters, and the guidelines for the celebration of the Provincial Chapters.

Convocation of General Chapter XXIV

With this Circular, I officially convoke General Chapter XXIV, according to article 138 of the Constitutions. It will begin in Rome in the Generalate on September 18, 2020.

The General Chapter “is a key moment for evaluation, reflection, and guidance in a common search for God’s will”. All the FMA and educating communities collaborate in this event “through their prayer, study, and proposals” (135).

The aim of the General Chapter is to deal with the more important topics relative to the life of the Institute “in order to be an ever-more efficacious presence in the Church and in the world” (C 136).

The election of the Superior General and the General Councilors is of particular importance.

As Don Bosco wrote when convoking the Second Chapter at Nizza Monferrato, “the good of the Institute and the glory of God depend to a great extent upon the election of a good Council and a wise Superior General”.¹

¹ Cf. Letter to the FMA of May 24, 1886, in the Appendix of the Constitutions 410.

I ask you to begin now to invoke the Holy Spirit both at the personal and community levels for the good outcome of the next General Chapter, which we entrust to the special protection of Mary Help of Christians.

As the **Moderator**, I have designated *Sr. Chiara Cazzuola* who takes on the responsibility of accompanying the preparation and development of General Chapter XXIV. All the documents of the Provincial Chapters are to be sent to her.

It is a beautiful custom that the Capitulars live in the land of their origins and have an experience of profound listening to the Word of God, of prayer, and comparison with the sources of the charism. For this reason, the General Chapter will be preceded by a time of mutual knowledge among the participants and the Spiritual Exercises at Mornese. It will be like *returning home* to re-discover our roots, to live today with wisdom and courage, and to project ourselves towards the future with hope.

The Chapter Theme

With an intense process of discernment, prayer, and sharing we identified the theme, keeping in mind the suggestions that emerged in the triennial Evaluations, listening to the reality of the Institute through the canonical and animation visits, the educational challenges, the journey of Consecrated Life in the Church, and particularly the Bishops' Synod: *The Young, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*. Thus, we arrived at this formulation:

“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2: 5).
Communities that generate life
in the heart of *Contemporaneity*.

The objective we propose to reach in GC XXIV is: ***To awaken the original freshness of the vocational fruitfulness of the Institute***

Let us allow ourselves to be guided by Mary for a regeneration in the Holy Spirit, to make our educating communities generate new life.

Beginning with meditation and sharing the Word of God, we let ourselves be inspired by the Gospel text of the *Wedding at Cana* (Cf. Jn 2: 1-12).

As an element of novelty with regard to the method of the previous General Chapters, we intend to draw the various aspects of the theme from this Word.

Who more than Mary can help us as Institute to discern in the light of the Holy Spirit, the paths for the revitalization of our communities so that they may be prophetic and fruitful at the level of vocations?

Mary teaches us to have an educative vision, open to reality, to intuit the needs of young people today and to consider them as interlocutors in the mission, together with the laity, valuing their potential. She will educate us in obedient listening to Jesus, who with His Spirit, regenerates our communities, working the miracle of *new wine* for everyone's joy.

The words spoken by Jesus to Johnny Bosco resound in us: *"I will give you the teacher"* and the trust received by Mary Domenica Mazzarello: *"I entrust them to you"*.

The freshness experienced at the origins is today re-proposed as fascination for the Mornese environment, in the simplicity of life and in relationships, in the ardent love for Christ, and in missionary daring, characteristics of the first community.

The theme is placed in the journey of **preparation for the 150th Anniversary of the foundation of the Institute** (1872-2022). Grateful to God and to Mary Help of Christians for the great history that

we have lived as FMA, we already feel the desire to revive the vocational wealth of our charism, to be more meaningful and contagious in the various contexts of today's world. The Chapter event marks the path of the Institute towards the celebration of the 150th anniversary of its foundation. Together, we will live three years of grace and renewal: in 2019 we prepare for GC XXIV, in 2020 we will celebrate it, and in 2021 we will implement it in the communities.

Contributions to study the theme starting from the Word

The key to reading the chapter theme is the prophetic 'sign' of Cana. For us, it is the source of inspiration for re-reading our FMA identity and the mission shared with the young and the laity in the educating communities.

In this light we will study the various aspects that will help us to re-awaken in the heart of the contemporary world, the original freshness of vocational fruitfulness in the Institute.

"The mother of Jesus was there" (Jn 2:1)

Being in the heart of Contemporaneity with the attitude of Mary

Contemporaneity is not just a temporal category; it is a complex relationship with one's own time for reading the social, political, religious, institutional, educational, and cultural scenario in which one lives.

*Meaning of
contemporaneity*

The contemporary person is the one who, while perceiving the darkness of the present, is able to grasp its light, to interpret its own time, placing it in relation with the past, to read its history and its value in an unprecedented way, to transform it from Kronos, time of finitude, into Kairós, time of salvation open to the surprises of God. Being aware of the moment in which we are called to 'be there' is a condition for our mission.

We live in the time of '*post*': post-modern, post-industrial, post-truth, post-culture. Sociologists and opinion leaders support the shared hypothesis that recourse to the '*post*' prefix indicates a widespread difficulty in evaluating positively the characteristics of this era of ours, described as an *age of transition*. Post-modern thinking questions the role of history, the value of the temporal dimension, and the conception of the future.

*The processes of
change and
transformation*

We witness the rapidity with which the processes of change and transformation evolve, which characterize emerging societies and cultures, the youth universe. The combination of complexity and rapid change places us in a context of fluidity and uncertainty never experienced before.² At the same time, we are witnessing extraordinary scientific developments that have a direct impact on the self-understanding of the person, in particular, in the field of genetics, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence.

Digital technology offers great and efficient communication potential, and young people inhabit this environment naturally, making it their usual place for meeting and sharing, friendship, and getting together with peers.

² Cf. PAPA FRANCESCO, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si' on the care of the common home*, Vatican City, Publishing Library Vatican 2015, n. 18.

But virtual reality constitutes a kind of challenge that does not exhaust the deep longing for meaning, especially of the young. Often the digital environment is a land of solitude, manipulation, exploitation, and violence; however, it is also an indispensable place to reach them and involve them.³

What is happening requires not only moral evaluation, but also a review of the anthropological and ethical categories used to express value judgments. It is a situation that requires abandoning regrets and dreams of returning to a different world, to take on an integral and positive vision, although aware of the condition of vulnerability, of the social and economic malaise of large sections of the population. It is necessary to look with realism and hope, overcoming misunderstandings and prejudices to migrations that now affect every part of the world and today constitute the largest movement of persons and peoples of all times.⁴

*The
ecological
crisis*

Climate change is a global problem, with serious environmental, social, economic, and political implications and is one of the main current challenges for humanity. Many poor people live in places particularly affected by phenomena related to warming and have no economic or other resources that allow them to adapt to climate impacts or to cope with catastrophic situations.⁵

As pilgrims in the Common Home, we are aware that the ecological crisis has an obvious human root. We are invited to look at ecological challenges in connection with the issues that most directly concern human existence: the deterioration of the quality of life, social degradation, injustice.

*Techno-sciences
and human
complexity*

Techno-sciences⁶ have greatly increased the ability to act, but not sufficiently the responsibility to evaluate and predict the consequences, the results for the experience of the human being, for the environment, for the future. There are no certain goals. The world is an open sea. Meaning lies in the event, not in the realization of a project, in reaching a goal, or in the fulfillment of a promise. We live the ethics of the traveler, who does not expect anything reassuring and stable. Diverse is the ethic of the pilgrim who, like Abraham, father of believers, is guided by a promise that changes human history into the history of salvation and transforms the wanderings of every nomad of the earth into a journey of pilgrims for heaven. Human life has a goal, an intrinsic finality, and the human vocation consists precisely in the attainment of this goal.⁷

The complexity of the phenomena, which in the concreteness of life mutually influence each other and have a strong impact on social dynamics, challenges consecrated life, called to *parresìa*, to recover the beauty of the essential and to take on the novelty of the Gospel to make structures more consonant with the charism.⁸ It is time to take stock of the new, good wine and the wineskins that contain it; time to follow a path open to the needs of the mission with

³ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Working Document of the XV Ordinary Assembly, 19 June 2018, n. 57-58.

⁴ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Message for the 100th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 5 August 2013.

⁵ Cf. *Laudato si'*, n. 23.

⁶ "Human technosciences" refers to a vast field of practices and technologies, disciplines and research programs that achieve the convergence of bio / technoscientific knowledge, such as cybernetics, information technology, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, genetics and humanistic and anthropological knowledge. They have man as the subject / object of study. CASTORINA Rosanna, Technoscience's and human complexity. The concepts of 'error' and 'noise', in the International Journal of Philosophy Online www.Metabasis.IT, May 2013 year VIII, n.15.

⁷ Cf. SANNA Ignazio, Christian anthropology between modernity and post-modernity, Brescia Queriniana 2001.

⁸ Cf. Pope Francis, Homily 5 September 2014.

*be there with
the heart*

a prophetic gaze, between potentialities and limitations, between realism and hope, between insidious shadows and Easter light, between the ephemeral and the eternal. Our time represents a challenge and an opportunity to enter with an evangelical heart in our societies that, also because of human mobility, are increasingly multicultural and multireligious, an opportunity to *'be there' with the heart*, understood according to biblical anthropology, as interiority, the most intimate and profound dimension of being, the generative source of human will and actions, the place that is converted into the 'seat' of the Spirit.

Jesus in his Heart, is the very depth of the human being and of God, the fruitful source of the Spirit. In the Incarnation He worked with human hands, He thought with human intelligence, He lived with human will, He loved with a human *heart*, in the heart of His own reality.⁹

*Let's look at
Mary, woman
of the new wine*

Let us look at Mary, woman and mother, who invites us to understand what it means to enter with a motherly heart into the scenarios of profound social and cultural changes in which new languages and new grammars of relationships develop. With her, "let us take on her attitudes of faith, hope and charity" (C 4) that made her so contemporary to the situation as to move her to intervene at Cana with feminine intuition, anticipating the hour of Jesus.

From the attitude of Mary, attentive to the needs of the world, we grasp her openness to the unexpected, to the community miracles of an ever-new wine in the reality in which we are inserted.

The empty jars of today signify the lack of meaning, of joy, of life, of hope which is the absence of the Bridegroom. They lead us to be vigilant in denouncing what threatens human dignity, ready to proclaim the preciousness of the person, to contribute in a community way to the construction of a world of peace, justice, fraternity, to pay attention and respond to a new thirst for spirituality which expresses itself in our society in various and sometimes contradictory ways.

Accompanied by Mary we are called to live the generative power of the charism in this historical hour, sustained by the joyful and unshakable certainty that the Holy Spirit spreads and infuses in our today new vitality and creativity, full of the hope of the new wine that springs from faith.

"They have no wine" (Jn 2: 3)

Intuit and act with a mother's heart

*maternal
solicitude
of Mary*

The Mother intervenes at the banquet bringing to Christ the urgencies of humanity: "They have no wine" (Jn 2: 3) and reminds humanity of attention to the Word of the Son "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2: 5). Her maternal solicitude becomes our solicitude.

At Cana, so too today, she is beside us and invites us to a clear understanding of life, urges us to have the courage of decisions, new relationships, undertaking with the young Gospel ways of generative transformation.

Her maternal intuition guides us to fruitful community relationship, which finds its roots in life according to the Spirit. He is the author of every change and realizes

⁹ Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.

in us what He did in Mary. The Mother is solicitous and attentive to reality and to people, she senses and perceives their needs, interceding with Jesus. Her presence contributes to the miracle of transformation, because joy and celebration are nourished in the community. 'The woman of new wine' is she who awakens the dawn of God's newness,¹⁰ enters into dialogue with Him, welcomes the Word, and bends to the Lordship of the Spirit. Here we find the theological density of her motherhood, which expresses her thinking and her existence in the free sharing of what she is and reverses the way of reading the experience of faith: "It is not Mary who makes Christ her Son, but Christ who makes Mary his mother".¹¹

*Mother
Mazzarello
woman
who generates
life*

In the luminous wake of Mary is the source of the generativity of Mother Mazzarello who defines herself: "the mother who loves you so much"¹² and declares to her spiritual daughters: "I am ready to do everything for your good".¹³ She has the best attitude to 'take care' of those entrusted to her; the rhythms of her life are modulated according to the person's relational being, and the spaces of private life are reduced to a minimum. Her mission is to generate and educate the first FMA and to create a new way of being a missionary community (cf. C 7/66).

At the origin of her vocation Main welcomes the commitment: "I entrust them to you!"¹⁴ that shapes her style of relationships and mission. From the first moment of her apostolic intuition she assumes the educative action by collaborating with Christ, who through human mediations, takes care of us. Her response evokes the attitude of full docility to the One who watches over her life with a Father's tenderness. Mary Mazzarello possesses and implements the typically feminine art of grasping, with the intuition of the heart, the essential and focal points of life, relationships, needs. In her wisdom she exhorts the educators not to have a small heart, but a "generous and big heart"¹⁵ not divided by anything or anyone,¹⁶ to avoid shrinking into narrow horizons. Her educational project is marked by "great things"; for this reason its value and its charismatic fruitfulness do not diminish with changing situations.

*generativity in
Mornese and
Valdocco*

At the origin of Don Bosco's mission there are two mothers from whom he learns to educate, continually generating life in his young people. Mother Margherita educates him with a tender and robust motherhood and, in his dream at 9 years old, he receives from Jesus, Mary the Mother and Help of Christians: "*I will give you the teacher*". From the experience of feminine tenderness, John Bosco matured the Preventive System.

Mary, who called and educated our saints and the communities of Mornese and Valdocco to be life-giving, also calls and sustains our educating communities to act like her, with the heart of Mother and to make present among the young her face as Help of Christians (cf. C 4).

The communities, clothed with the spirit of Mornese, are invited to revitalize the Marian face of the Institute and to recreate the educational originality of Mother Mazzarello, giving life to an environment that develops a vocational culture, in the

¹⁰ Cf. BELLO Tonino, *Mary, woman of today*, Cinisello Balsamo, Ed. San Paolo 2000, 66-68.

¹¹ Cf. DOTOLO Carmelo, *Maria response to the expectations of contemporary culture*, in <http://www.carmelodotolo.eu/Theotokos.pdf>.

¹² Cf. POSADA M. Esther - COSTA Anna - CAVAGLIÀ Piera (ed.), *Wisdom of Life. Letters of Mary Domenica Mazzarello*, Rome, Institute FMA 2004, 63,5.

¹³ Cf. *ibid* L 52,5.

¹⁴ Cf. *Cronistoria* I 96.

¹⁵ Cf. L 47,12; 27,14.

¹⁶ Cf. L 35,2; 65,3.

commitment for the transformation of a world that needs new wine: Jesus. The communities today recognize that many times the wine of pastoral conversion is missing; the gaze that knows how to seize the opportunities to discern the ‘taste’ of *new wine* in the dreams of its members and in events is still weak.

At Cana, the Mother entrusts herself to Jesus and to His transforming intervention. She teaches us to understand that changes arise from the heart of a believing community. She, the first disciple, is a model of every discipleship.¹⁷ We assume her attitudes of faith and humility to trace a new community face in the spirit of Valdocco and Mornese.

Mary, the praying woman and the caring Lady,¹⁸ who knows how to recognize the action of the Spirit in great events and also in those that seem imperceptible, will help us to let ourselves be guided by Him.

“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2: 5)

Let yourself be regenerated by the Holy Spirit in the obedience of faith

*disciples
with Mary*

It is the mystical and prophetic dimension of the obedience of faith, which gives foundation and contagious joy to life, to relationships, and makes the mission fruitful. Mary is a disciple who walks in faith, listens to and obeys the Word of Jesus. She has the courage to give life to the dream of God, so she answers: *"Behold the servant of the Lord: be it done to me according to your word"* (Lk 1: 38). Expert in listening, she invites us to be disciples with her and to trust Jesus by repeating: *"Do whatever He tells you"*.

*in response to
the Covenant of
love*

It is a call to continually renew the Covenant of love, the free gift of God, and to revitalize fidelity to the Bridegroom who loves us, sends us, and involves us in the mission as a community.

The great message of Mary: *"Do whatever He tells you"* echoes the response of the people of Israel to the Covenant on Sinai: *"As the Lord has said, thus will we do"* (Ex 19: 8; 24: 3). This solemn declaration echoes the voice of the Father, who proclaims in the transfiguration of Jesus on Tabor: *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him"* (Mt 17: 5).

*in the
vocational
experience*

Every vocation in the Church is born from the fascination of Jesus who calls to follow Him, to listen to His voice, to become a welcoming space for His mystery, as Mary did.¹⁹ So it is in the vocational experience of each person, so it was at the origins, in Mornese. The Holy Spirit opened the hearts of those simple and courageous women to make of their existence prolonged loving attention to the One who loves first. God's essence led them to express His love in total self-giving.

¹⁷ Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, Youth, faith and vocational discernment. Final document, Turin, LDC publisher 2018, nos. 83,114. Shortened to DF.

¹⁸ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world, 2013, n. 288.

¹⁹ Every life is a vocation, so each person is created as a "dialogic" being and is called to respond to a project of life and a specific mission in the world. Cf. DF n. 79-81.

Continuously regenerated by His Word (cf. 1Pt 1:2), strengthened by the Eucharist. and by forgiveness received and given, the first community of the FMA, led by Mary Domenica Mazzarello, is a generator of life, hope, and joy for poor girls and for families in difficulty.

Many young women welcomed in Mornese and Nizza Monferrato, fascinated by the freshness and joy of the FMA, were contagioned and became themselves proclaimers of the good news in the peripheries of their country and in their missions. Fidelity to the Word of God and to the Constitutions is a guarantee of the future because it generates fidelity. A joyful community, rooted in Jesus, coherent, despite its fragility, infects those who live near it, as in Valdocco and Mornese. “*Do whatever he tells you*” projects the community into a dynamic of vocational fruitfulness that knows fatigue but is interwoven with joy and holiness in daily life. This requires:

- **A JOURNEY OF DISCERNMENT** in listening to the Word and to reality, as communities founded on the obedience of faith, capable of that accompaniment that makes sisters and young people grow, awakening their potential and directing them to Jesus.

The words and gestures of Jesus indicate a continuous process of openness to the newness of the Kingdom of God that challenges people and communities on a synodal journey.²⁰ The first step of this openness is discernment, welcomed as a gift of the Spirit, lived as a criterion for choice and evaluation. It is a response to a one-on-one dialogue, which nourishes itself on all the occasions for encounter with the Lord, for fraternal experience, and for welcoming the poor with whom Jesus identifies Himself.²¹

It involves the rejection of all that is in contrast with the Gospel; it requires silence, asceticism, and purification of the heart. It is a journey that helps to acquire the inner freedom necessary to make concrete and verifiable choices, sometimes in contrast with the surrounding environment, for the fruitfulness of the mission. A discernment based on the obedience of faith, as Mary teaches us, favors harmony with the will of the Father and the acceptance of His calls that come to reality through multiple mediations.

- **A NEW STYLE OF FORMATION**, more docile to the Holy Spirit “*who gradually leads us to configuration to Christ*”,²² attentive to the person and rooted in concrete reality.

The time in which we live requires a rethinking of the formation of every baptized person as no longer limited to a period of life. The Christian life itself requires, by its nature, constant availability. Since it is in itself a progressive assimilation of the sentiments of Christ, it is evident that this path must last for the whole of life, to involve the whole person, heart, mind, and strength and make it similar to the Son who gives Himself to the Father for humanity. Thus formation also for the FMA is no longer only a pedagogical time of preparation for Profession but represents a theological way of thinking of consecrated life itself, as a never completed formation, as participation in the action of the Father who, through the Spirit, molds the sentiments of the Son in the heart.²³

*in a community
that contagions*

*path of inner
freedom*

*new style of
formation*

²⁰ Cf *ibid* III parte cap. I.

²¹ Cf. *ibid* 110.

²² *Constitutions and Regulations of the FMA Institute, Rome, Institute FMA 2015*, art. 39.

²³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Consecrated Life. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, Vatican City, Vat. Pub. 1996, 66

*docibilitas:
letting oneself be
formed by life*

Understanding formation in this way, we cannot be content with directing the docility, the customs and traditions of a group, but it must make the person really *docibilis* to the active and transforming presence of the Spirit. It means forming a free and available heart, ready to learn at every age, in every context, from every person and culture, to let itself be changed by the fragments of beauty, truth, and goodness that it discovers around itself. Above all, she will have to learn how to let herself be formed by everyday life, from her brothers and sisters, from ordinary and extraordinary things, from prayer as well as from the educational mission, in joy and suffering, to the moment of death.²⁴

The assumption of ongoing formation is an indispensable priority for the present and future of the Institute, a condition for renewal and missionary fruitfulness.²⁵ In a fragmentary and labile context, to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world and to the needs of the charismatic mission today, a qualified and solid cultural formation is required at all levels.

One of the fruits of the journey of ongoing formation is the daily capacity to live the vocation as an ever new gift to be gratefully welcomed. A gift to be answered with responsibility, to be witnessed to with joy, conviction, and the capacity to contagion others, so that young people may also feel called by God to this particular vocation or to others.

*for a new
vocational
fruitfulness*

The FMA is by nature a vocational animator. Those called cannot but become ‘callers’. Indeed, there is a natural link between ongoing formation and vocational animation.

Ongoing formation is a womb that generates vocational fruitfulness, guards it, and helps mature the individual's identity. It helps to sustain through vigilant care, the ‘mystery’ of love we bear. This formation will make our communities a real expression of Mornese ‘house of the love of God’, a fruitful womb for vocations and missionary vitality.

- **A RENEWED AVAILABILITY FOR ACCOMPANIMENT** which springs from witnessing to the beauty and joy of the vocation lived in community and in a shared mission.

The main way of vocational animation for consecrated life is that which the Lord himself began, when he told the apostles John and Andrew: “*Come and see*” (Jn 1, 39).

*welcoming and
joyful
communities*

The encounter requires living our consecration deeply to become a visible sign of the joy that God gives to those who listen to His call.

Hence the need for welcoming, joyful communities capable of sharing their ideal of life with young people, letting themselves be challenged by the demands of authenticity and ready to walk with them.²⁶

Accompaniment becomes a constant presence of closeness, of listening, of tenderness, and willingness to walk together a stretch of road to direct them towards

²⁴ Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *Starting afresh from Christ: a renewed commitment to consecrated life in the third millennium*. Education, Vatican City, Vatican Publishers 2002, n. 15; cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *For new wine, new wineskins*. From the Second Vatican Council, consecrated life and challenges still open. Guidelines, Vatican City, Vatican Publishers 2017, n. 35 d.

²⁵ Cf. Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, *Rooted in the Covenant*. Formation Plan of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Leumann (Turin) Elle Di Ci 2000, pp. 49 ss.

²⁶ Cf. *Starting afresh from Christ*, 16

authentic choices. The one who accompanies accepts with patience, raises real questions, and recognizes the signs of the Spirit.²⁷

The communities accompanying the path of vocational discernment of the young are urged to show the source of their identity, to rediscover the pedagogical art of arousing and freeing profound questions. Communicating one's life experience is always remembering it and rediscovering the light that guided one's vocational choice.

that attract and generate life

Every community is therefore called to take responsibility in the educative relationship, for the evangelical pedagogy of following Christ, and for the transmission of the charism. Young people wait for those who know how to propose true Gospel lifestyles and paths of initiation to the great values of human and Christian life.

It is the style of accompaniment that we see reflected in the experience of Mary Domenica Mazzarello, humble and wise animator. It is a way of exercising *motherhood*²⁸ generating children to freedom and to the discovery of the dream of God for the persons entrusted to us.

in the communities: the miracle of Cana

This requires a solid cultural preparation, a profound experience of faith, of humanity, of the maturation of the relational virtues, delicacy in making space for the other, and willingness to get involved in cultivating a true spirituality of communion. It is for us FMA, the rediscovery of the *great generative resource of the vocation* as Salesian consecrated women and educators.

The communities regenerated by the *new wine* continue in the Church and in the world the miracle of Cana, a prophetic sign of that Covenant between God and His people, in which the Bridegroom is God Himself who does not cease to transform our lives and make them more conformed to the face of Jesus.

... he and his mother, [his] brothers, and his disciples went down to Capernaum ” (Jn 2: 11-12).

The new community of disciples

A community with many faces generated to faith and fraternity

Mary, the Mother, has been in the Church since the beginning, the woman who arouses faith in Jesus in the disciples,²⁹ awakens fascination of Him, accompanies on the path of discipleship, guards in time of trial.

From the ‘sign of Cana’ the community of disciples begins to constitute itself as ‘together’: the various members have been individually called, each has a personal experience of encounter with Jesus. After the ‘sign’ of the good wine, they perceive a deeper meaning in the being of the Master, because of this ‘together’ they descend with Him to Capernaum, crossroads of peoples and religions, to be with Him and to bear witness to having met Him.

It is a very diverse community that walks towards Capernaum, made up of more or less believers, of men who begin a journey of discipleship, and there is Mary, the first disciple, who in turn grows in faith and in the knowledge of

²⁷ Cf. DF 97.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid* 91.

²⁹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 21.

her own Son. She does not have a message of her own, she cannot say other words: she is the first disciple among the disciples, who invites everyone to look at Jesus, to do what He asks (cf. Jn 2,5).

All are around Jesus who creates a new community, continually generated to faith and fraternity of relationships, open to all, although the levels of faith and commitment are different.

Today too, as educating communities, together with young people fascinated by Jesus, we are called to go down to Capernaum, to live immersed in reality, to say with a life shared in love that it is beautiful to be with Him..

*Synodal communities*³⁰

*centered in
Christ,
enriched by
dialogue*

To form a community of many faces, which lives and works together, is possible because it is "gathered by the Father, founded on the presence of the Risen Christ and nourished by him, Word and Body" (C 49). The centrality of Christ qualifies the life and mission of the community called to serve joyfully, in a profound family spirit, and with a strong missionary impulse, to participate in the saving action of Christ through witness, the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of salvation (cf. C 63).

The genuine educational environment of the origins, characterized by authentic sisterly relationships, by sharing life and mission with the students and with some lay educators sent by Don Bosco himself, is the *good wine* that young people of that time and today need.

Inspired by the *Synod of Bishops: Young people, faith and vocational discernment*, we want to live a synodal style in our communities with greater depth and new dynamism. We also recognize that we are "the people of God formed by young and old, men and women of every culture and horizon, and the body of Christ, in which we are members of one another, beginning with those on the margins".³¹

*in the
synodal
style of the
Preventive
System*

We are aware that this is the time of *new wine* to be placed in *new wineskins*. It is the young people themselves who ask us to open ourselves together to listen to each other and to the Holy Spirit, to seek out more authentic forms to live and witness the Gospel in the new frontiers, coming out of our own certainties and comforts. Faithful to our Founders, we believe that the protagonism and freshness of the young become a source of new life, of concrete and generous responses, of renewal and openness above all towards those who are marginalized and/or far from faith. We are convinced that everyone has something to learn in intergenerational, intercultural, interreligious dialogue. We are called to conversion, to change style in this 'walking together' taking better care of the fundamental features typical of the Preventive System, which characterize the synodal style: the sacred sense of the human person, the joyful and familiar welcome, trust, proximity, hospitality, solidarity, gratuity, integration, recognition of others for what they are.

Listening, dialogue, discernment in the Holy Spirit, planning, and shared formation will favor the construction of an inclusive 'we' towards the whole human family and the entire creation.³²

³⁰ Cf. INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, City of the Vatican, Vatican book publisher 2018.

³¹ Cf. DF n. 121.

³² Cf. *ibid* n. 125.

*In a style of animation that involves
and promotes communion*

At Cana, Mary suggests a style of animation in which Salesian spirituality is easily reflected.

*Mary leads to
an animation
that serves*

Article 114 of the Constitutions describes the Salesian characteristics of authority, recalling that the "true Superior" is the Madonna and that the FMA called to a service of authority lives in an attitude of interior poverty and openness to the Spirit and expresses with the heart of mother, the strong and sweet love of Mary, becoming all to all.

Pope Francis affirms that "for the disciples of Jesus, yesterday and today, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross".³³ In the complexity of the contemporary world, we are invited to live, as a community, a new mode of animation and government in deep harmony with the Gospel:

"But it shall not be so among you" (Mt 20:26), and with the original spirit of Mother Mazzarello whose authority imposes itself from below, totally stripped of power.

*accompanies
involves and
generates life*

Authority cannot but be at the service of communion: a true ministry to accompany our brothers and sisters towards a conscious and responsible loyalty.³⁴ The animator is in the community a "sister among her sisters" (C 52), as was Mary with the guests at Cana. She hears not only the voices, but also the climate, the gestures, the silence, like a Synodal Church that is a listening Church and knows how to value the resources of all the members.³⁵

The leadership of the one responsible at various levels in the different communities and groups, is free from the cult of self-image, to discover and value the talents of all, like Mary who also involves the servants, awakening in them the call to give themselves to something greater and to become the first collaborators of the mission of Jesus. In our communities at every level, an animator or a person responsible shares the common purpose, involves each member in a broad project, so that everyone knows the importance of their role, taking into account the totality of the itinerary to be carried out together. It is a generative and humanizing authority, capable of accompanying people's growth, promoting collaboration and mutual aid. The *Council*, at all levels, is a privileged space for participation, discernment, and co-responsibility, and becomes a formation school because it fosters maturation in the interpersonal relationship, in the shared mission, and in the capacity for governance.

Coordination for communion is our style of animation "precisely of those who believe that the resources present in each person are waiting to be awakened and valued to express themselves fully for the glory of God and at the service of the common educational mission."³⁶ This favors the vocational culture within the community because each person discovers God's will for her life.

This was the style of animation of Mother Mazzarello, able to involve all members both internal and external to the community. The recipients of her letters are varied: sisters, Salesians, priests, doctors, directors of schools, benefactors, parents,

³³ POPE FRANCIS, Address for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, 2015.

³⁴ Cf. For new wine, new wineskins, 47-61.

³⁵ Cf. *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, n.110.

³⁶ *Rooted in the Covenant*, 133.

girls, and missionaries. She communicates and shares life, expressing her thanks and her maternal goodness.³⁷

It is a style of animation that shares visions, arouses new energy, opens horizons, and generates life.

For a shared mission in diversity

Communion and the meeting between different charisms and vocations is a journey of hope. No one constructs the future solely by their own strength nor by isolating oneself, but by recognizing self in the truth of a communion that opens up to encounter, dialogue, listening, mutual aid, refusing self-referencing. Consecrated life is called to pursue a sincere harmony between all the vocations in the Church, so as to increase the spirituality of communion, first of all within itself, and then in the same ecclesial community and beyond its borders.³⁸

The shared mission is an expression of this synergy created by the Salesian charism and is the undisputed element of our mission (Cf. C 68). Don Bosco is not a solitary and is not the only protagonist in the mission with young people. He is a man with others and for others: "I have always needed everyone and everyone's help".³⁹

The shared mission is participation in the same charism, it is a way of living the mission that is not simply a 'substitution' of the consecrated person by the laity, nor only simply collaboration. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the present and for the future in which the laity are an "active, conscious, and responsible part of the Church's mission".⁴⁰ It is a space for diversity and apostolic complementarity.

The shared mission is not only work, it is also a personal relationship, prayer, action, discernment, contemplation, realities that give strength and meaning to the mission. At Valdocco and in Mornese there were times when together we strengthened our identity as laypersons and religious within a real family, nourishing each other, not as single people, but as a single body because "everyone was given to drink from the same Spirit" (I Cor 12: 13).

In the Institute there are educating communities formed only by lay people, called to keep an ear open (cf. Is 50:4) to guide the mission where the urgencies are most lacerating. There are lay people who belong to different confessions, or to other religions; they too are invited to the 'shared mission' because they are part of the same body. To those who belong to other religious or non-believer traditions, it would be appropriate to propose suitable goals to convey the values of Salesian pedagogy and spirituality (cf. C 74).

In the dialogue with the laity during GC XXIII we welcomed their appeal: "Trust us to plan changes together: consider us interlocutors and protagonists and not only recipients".⁴¹ Even the laity are called to be vocation animators, living faith and Christian commitment in the perspective of Salesian spirituality, whose growth they are responsible for with us..

Diverse vocations in synergy, at the service of the one mission of the community

³⁷ Cf. L 55,10; L 13,1.

³⁸ Cf. POPE FRANCIS Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the year of consecrated life, 2014, n. 3.

³⁹ *Biographical Memos III, 34*: «In the dream of the bower of roses, Don Bosco suddenly bursts into tears recognizing that he must continue on his own. But he is soon consoled because he sees a large group of priests, clerics, and laity coming towards him and saying: "Here we are: we are all yours; we are ready to follow you!" And so, placing himself at the head of the group, he resumes walking».

⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christi fideles Laity* (December 30th, 1988), n. 3.

⁴¹ *Acts of the General Chapter XXIII. Broaden your vision. With the young missionaries of hope and joy, Rome, Institute FMA 2014*, n. 18.

The shared mission is an opportunity to break down walls, open windows so that our hearts may be filled with faces and names for the Kingdom of God.⁴²

Toward a prophetic missionary spirit

The missionary dimension is an essential element of the identity of the Institute (cf. C 75), which is found in the words of Pope Francis “*I am a mission on this earth, and for this I find myself in this world*”.⁴³

The community of Mornese experiences from the beginning the missionary joy that orients it to witness to Jesus not only in His own land, but in the world. The ‘mysticism’ of living together flourishes in the momentum towards broad horizons, and becomes a atmosphere, a fire that burns and radiates light and heat. Here we find the evangelical dynamics, but also the human one of the mission: “Life grows and matures to the extent that we give it for the life of others.”⁴⁴ From this springs joy, the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing.

Fertile and attractive communities

The first communities of Mornese and Nizza Monferrato are generators of other communities through an evangelizing presence in the countries where they are rooted. The transmission of faith takes place through the contagious love of open, dilated hearts, where joy and enthusiasm express the rediscovered meaning and fullness of life.⁴⁵ These communities with a strong missionary dimension are typically vocational, where many young people breathe a atmosphere of faith and of donation.

In line with the first apostolic community, born from the sign of Cana, even in our Institute the mission is always communitarian. The community truly centered on the mission is joyful, because it is shaped by the obedience of faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the Eucharist. It requires and shapes humanly mature people, capable of expressing proximity and appreciating the beauty of multiple vocations aroused by the one Spirit, in a progressive communion of differences.

that find the original freshness of joy and of missionary openness

The construction of a community with many faces brings the light of the Gospel more easily into the social environments that challenge us today. It makes it possible to offer alternative styles of life in the different educational realities that express the beauty of faith and belonging to Christ. “It is a matter of discovering the responsibility of being prophecy as a community, of seeking together with humility and patience, a word of meaning and of witnessing to it with simplicity.”⁴⁶

The different realities of the Institute are called today to ‘prophetically’ rethink their presence on the territory, if they are a sign of unity and inclusion around faith and forms of solidarity, to introduce Gospel yeast into the current cultural context. Only the creativity of love leads us to discover new ways, more open to relationships, to gratuity, and to communication.

We listen to discern “other places” where we can live the Gospel logic of gift and fraternity.⁴⁷ We allow ourselves to be questioned by all the human peripheries, with particular attention to the situation of young people and young women; to

⁴² Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, n. 274.

⁴³ *Ibid* n. 273.

⁴⁴ *Ibid* n. 10.

⁴⁵ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Message for World Mission Day, 19 May 2018.

⁴⁶ CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE,; to the Consecrated persons on the path of the signs of God, Vatican City, Vatican Publishing 2014, n. 13.

⁴⁷ Cf. POPE FRANCIS Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the year of consecrated life, 2014.

human mobility, the care of the common home, digital spaces, the search for a just and secure peace.

To build ourselves as educating communities, witnesses of love and peace, implies for us FMA a more solid identity, to open ourselves to a serene and constructive dialogue with the laity, and to offer our experience of communion (Cf. C 68). “Working together means being formed together, proposing a gradual path that from simple socialization passes to integration and finally reaches that of cooperation in a reciprocal relationship”⁴⁸ to discover and live together other horizons full of hope.

Conclusion

Dear sisters, in this time of preparation for the GC XXIV, a time of grace for the whole Institute, we are invited to enter into the depth of the content that the theme offers us to rediscover and live our being together as educating communities with greater generative awareness.

Faithful to the Salesian charism, we feel the need to grow in the capacity to ‘take care’ of reciprocal relations between the various members of the educating community, with and for the young people whom the Lord entrusts to us so that they may grow and flourish. In our homes, we also welcome migrants, poor and fragile people, women and girls in need, where everyone can find attention, care, affection, and the chance to look to the future with hope.

In preparing for the Chapter, let us involve the educating community and other groups of the Salesian Family. In dialogue and sharing, let us make sure that young people can express themselves and tell us what they feel and think.

In each Province, the Provincial with her Council will find the most suitable ways to study what is proposed in the Circular and will be able to concretize the work proposal in preparation for the Provincial Chapter..

We entrust ourselves to Mary so that, as at Cana, she will help us to listen to what Jesus tells us, to transform the water of our daily life into the wine of new vocational fruitfulness. I invite you to meet every day in the prayer of entrustment according to the proposal I offer you.

To Mary

Help of Christians

With gratitude and filial trust we turn to you, Mary,
who are a living presence in the 150 years of the Institute's journey.

In this time of preparation for the XXIV General Chapter,
make us docile to the Word of Jesus
and teach us to “Do whatever He tells us”.

Make our communities,
fruitful wombs of new vocations.
You, Woman of the new wine,
guard in us the capacity for listening
and openness to the newness of the
Spirit, present in the today of history.

Let us learn from you to have a mother's heart with
the young and the people we meet.

⁴⁸ *Perché abbiamo vita e vita in abbondanza, Linee orientative della missione educativa delle FMA*, Torino, Elledici 2005, n. 108.

Help us to walk in synodality
as Educating Communities and Salesian
Family, to proclaim the joy of the Gospel.

May your presence, Mary,
contribute to the *miracle of good wine*
so that faith in your Son Jesus may grow in the communities.
Amen.

With the Sisters of the Council, I greet you with affection,

Affectionately, Mother

Rome 24 February 2019

Work Proposal

The purpose of this proposal is to facilitate reflection on the theme of GC XXIV, a reflection that starts from experience and touches life, arousing processes of change.

The Chapter begins with each of us in the certainty that the Holy Spirit is questioning us as people and as a community and invites us to give a response of conversion.

It is a strong moment to live in an attitude of discernment and attentive to create the conditions that favor it: silence, prayer, listening, sharing, verification, the search for new paths.

The theme of GC XXIV: **“Do whatever he tells you” (Jn 2: 5). Communities that generate life in the heart of the contemporaneity** offers the opportunity for a deeper keeping in mind the contexts in which we work and we live the mission to awaken the original freshness of the vocational fruitfulness of the Institute.

The theme, inspired by the Gospel passage of the wedding of Cana (cf. Jn 2: 1-12), aims to take into consideration the **reality of the communities**, gift and strength in the Salesian charism, to evaluate if they are prophetic in their own context.

Here are highlighted some key aspects, as indicated in the convocation Circular:

Communities that live in the heart of contemporaneity, of which they know the values and accept the challenges, and place themselves in the context with deep participation, compassion, and solidarity to be agents of transformation at an educational level.

Communities that bring to Jesus the urgencies of humanity and commit themselves to contribute, in the ever new fruitfulness of the charism, to the miracle of the transformation of daily life.

Communities regenerated by the Holy Spirit because they are in an attitude

- of continuous discernment in listening to the Word of God and to reality;
- of ongoing formation;
- of accompanying young people and each sister with Mary's motherly style.

Missionary communities in the shared educative mission

- communities of disciples who are sent;
- who seek and share the *good wine* of synodality;
- in a style of animation that involves and promotes communion;
- for a shared mission in the diversity and complementarity of vocations;
- with the missionary impulse of the origins, which identifies us, inspires us, and attracts us to follow Jesus.

Methodology for studying the theme

At the Community Level

Contemplating Mary's style at Cana

The process of preparation for the General Chapter begins with a careful and thorough personal reading of the *Circular of convocation*, an indispensable condition for a serious study of the theme and for constructive dialogue at the community and provincial levels.

Each Province indicates to the communities the most appropriate way to approach and listen to young people, especially those that we do not normally reach, and lay people: collaborators,

educators, teachers, parents, members of the Salesian Family. This dialogue should be as broad as possible especially regarding the first question with which we begin the study and the dialogue.

1. In listening to the reality, emerging cultures, and the contemporary context identify with the young people and the laity, the most urgent challenges for our communities.⁴⁹

After identifying the most urgent challenges, we suggest organizing a celebration in which we become more aware:

- of the resources that make the community capable of responding to the challenges identified and we thank the Lord for His loving presence and for what He achieves through us;
- of the shortcomings and limitations that, on a personal and community level, block the paths of response to the challenges, and ask forgiveness from God, from our brothers and sisters. We give thanks for the gift of His mercy that transforms and regenerates us from our poverty.

This first stage will be followed by reflection, study, and answers to the second and third questions.

- 2. What paths does the Holy Spirit suggest, on a personal and community level, to live the fruitful accompaniment of the young people entrusted to us?**
- 3. What choices can make the communities ‘synodal’ in the style of animation and government, of synergy between different vocations, for a prophetic missionary spirit?**

AT THE LEVEL OF THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

With Mary, in a climate of profound openness to the Holy Spirit, the Provincial Chapter is invited to

- ✦ *reflect* on the three questions indicated, which correspond to three key aspects of the Chapter theme: appropriately *involve* lay people and young people, *discern* the material received from the communities, and *draw up* a synthetic answer (at most one page) for each of the three questions.
- ✦ *elect* the Delegate or the Delegates to the General Chapter and their substitutes;
- ✦ *prepare* any proposals to send to GC XXIV;
- ✦ take into consideration aspects and problems that emerge in the life of the Province.

The answers to the three questions on the Chapter theme, the minutes of the election of the Delegates and Substitutes, and any proposals of the Province will be sent to the Chapter Moderator by **December 1, 2019**.

To facilitate the preparation and the event of the Provincial Chapter, it is opportune to appoint a sister as Moderator.

In preparation for GC XXIV at the central level, a *pre-chapter Commission* will be set up, composed of sisters from different cultural backgrounds, who will study what comes from the Provinces and this will form the basis for the elaboration of the *Working Instrument*.

Subsequently, the *Working Instrument* will be sent to the Provinces so that the participants in the General Chapter can read and study it. If it is considered opportune, it can be shared with the sisters and with those who took part in the Provincial Chapters or with people competent on the themes treated.

⁴⁹ Cf. Constitutions # 68.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

The **Word of God** and the **Constitutions** accompany the whole journey of reflection on the chapter theme at the community and provincial levels.

We also point out some documents of the Church, of consecrated life, and of the Institute that will facilitate this study.

Documents of the Church and of Consecrated Life

POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium on the proclamation of the Gospel in the present world*, 2013.

- *Apostolic Letter to all consecrated persons on the occasion of the year of consecrated life*, 2014.
- *Laudato si'* encyclical letter on the care of the common home, 2015.
- *Discourse for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops 2015*

SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Youth, faith and vocational discernment. Final document*, 2018.

JOHN PAUL II, *Vita Consecrata, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation*, 1996.

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, 2018.

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE, *For new wine, new wineskins. From the Second Vatican Council, consecrated life and challenges still open. Guidelines*, Vatican City, Vatican Publishing Library 2017.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL OF JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004.

These are also significant for the chapter theme:

- the messages of Pope Francis on the occasion of the opening and closing of the Synod on young people, World Youth Days; of peace; Social Communications; Migrants & Refugees;
- indications of the continental and national Bishops Conferences, of the Bishops of the various dioceses, of the continental and national Conferences of religious.

Documents of the Institute

The sources relating to Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello are essential charismatic points of reference.

Rooted in the Covenant. Formation Plan of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Turin, 2000.

So they may have life and life in abundance. Guidelines of the FMA Educational Mission, Turin, Elle di ci 2005.

Guidelines for the Management of Goods in the FMA Institute, Rome, Institute FMA 2017.

Mother's Circulars.

On the Institute's website you can find insights on the chapter theme.

ITER IN PREPARATION FOR GENERAL CHAPTER XXIV

2018-2019
December
February During the winter plenary session, Mother and the General Council carried out a journey of discernment to identify the theme and to elaborate the present dossier in preparation for General Chapter XXIV.

2019
February Mother sends the *circular of convocation of the Chapter*, according to the indications suggested by Article 138 of the Constitutions.

From
February to
November *Study of the Chapter theme at the community level.*
Celebration of the Provincial Chapters.

December The following documents must be received by the Moderator by **December 1st**:

- *Provincial Chapter minutes* relative to the election of the Delegate or Delegates to GC XXIV and their respective substitutes, together with the list of the members of the Provincial Chapter (*Reg. 122*);
- *Summary of the reflections on the three questions of the chapter theme* indicated in the work proposal;
- Possible *proposals* for the General Chapter.

To facilitate the work of the pre-chapter commission, the answer to each question is to be summarized on a single sheet and sent to the Moderator

- in only one copy initially in digital format, then in the original text;
- in the Italian language (also attach the text in the original language);
- in universal format sheets (21 x 29.7), numbered according to the three questions indicated in the work outline;
- each sheet bears the *abbreviation and the stamp* of the Province.

The Provinces are asked to send the requested material as soon as it is available, without waiting for the due date indicated above.

The *summaries* sent to Rome must be brought to the attention of all the communities of the Province.

The *eventual proposals* of the communities and of the individual sisters (Const. 135) are also drawn up according to the modalities indicated above.

- On each sheet specify the topic (top right) and indicate the motivations.
- The proposals for the General Chapter can be sent through the Province or sent directly to Rome, addressing them to the Moderator.

NB: proposals that arrive after 1 December 2019 cannot be taken into consideration.

From Dec.
2019
To Feb. 2020 In Rome, *classification and organization of the material* sent by the Provinces by the Pre-Chapter Commission.

2020

- January* - The Moderator of GC XXIV with two Councilors chosen by the Superior General proceed to reviewing the minutes of the election of the Delegates to the GC and their respective substitutes, with the legible List of the members of the Province or Pre-province Chapters and the related signatures of all the participants.
- The General Council indicates to the Presidents of the Interprovincial Conferences the celebratory moments of GC XXIV entrusted to the animation of the Provinces.
- March* *Working Instrument* is sent to the Provinces.
- By 4 Sept.* **Chapter members arrive in Rome**
- 5 September* Free Day
- 6 September* Getting to know each other
- 7 September* Trip to Mornese
- 8-15 September* Spiritual Exercises – Concluding Eucharist in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, Turin
- 15 September* Return to Rome via Nizza Monferrato
- 16 September* Free day
- 17 September* Presentation of the technology to be used during the Chapter
4.00 pm Orientations for the General Chapter
- 18 September* **Official start of General Chapter XXIV.** The maximum duration of about seven weeks is expected with the closing on 8 November 2020.
- Departures of the Capitulars from Rome starting from November 9th.

NORMS RELATIVE TO THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

Here you will find some indications that will be useful for the preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapters.

1. Premises

- * Every indication given for the *Provinces* is also valid for the *Pre-provinces*.
- * The Generalate, dependent on the Superior General, and 'Mary Mother of the Church' Preprovince of Rome (RMC) organize the pre-chapter Assembly according to the indications of its own Statutes (*Reg. 122*).
- * For the *preparation and carrying out of the Provincial Chapters* prior to GC XXIV, refer to the following articles: *Constitutions*: articles from 135 to 139; from 156 to 159. *Regulations*: articles from 119 to 122.

2. Convocation and preparation

- * Having received this dossier, the provincial and her council
 - *study* the content;
 - *study* the best way to present it to the Province, to involve the sisters and the communities, and to opportunely interest Salesians, lay people, young people, other institutions and/or people, as indicated on pages 17-18.
- * The provincial sends to the communities the circular of convocation of the provincial chapter indicating the date and place of the provincial chapter and the name of the moderator. Invite all to active participation with prayer, studying the theme, and any proposals.
- * For the elections of the Delegate of the community and of the Delegates of the Province, follow norms established in the Constitutions and Regulations which are recalled here.

3. Elections of the Delegate of the community to the Provincial Chapter and of the Substitute

Ballots

The Provincial sends to the houses with at least *five* sisters a convenient number of ballots, perfectly equal, marked by the *stamp of the Province*, bearing in mind that each election (of the Delegate and the Substitute) may also require three successive scrutinies (*Reg. 119 a, b, c*).

Minutes

The Provincial sends to the houses *two copies of the Module for the Minutes*, of which a model is proposed in the Appendix of this dossier. The two copies are marked with the province stamp.

- The minutes must be *signed* by all the participants in the elections, after the *reading* of the same.
- It must be drawn up in duplicate, *one* of which is kept in the archive of the house, while the *other* is sent to the Provincial in a sealed envelope with the appropriate stamp.
- The name of the house with the declaration is highlighted on the envelope: *this contains the minutes of meeting*. This envelope is inserted in a second one, which is sent as a registered letter to the Provincial.

4. Participants in the election of the Delegate of the community and of the Substitute

Participants with active and passive voice (can vote and receive the vote):

- all the sisters with perpetual vows belonging to the Province;
- the sisters with the permission of absence from the religious house have equal rights.

Participants with active voice (can vote but cannot receive the vote):

- Sisters with temporary vows;
- the animators, the vicar and the other provincial councilors, the provincial treasurer and secretary, the novice formator. They vote in the house of their residence, but cannot receive the vote since they are members of the provincial Chapter or of the Preprovince by right;
- the Provincial or the Superior of the Preprovince votes only in the Provincial or Preprovince Chapter.

Sisters in special situations:

- * The sisters, who for serious reasons are *absent from the religious house* (Rule 119 d), can participate in the election of the Delegate of the community to which they refer, by sending the appropriate ballot in a sealed, unmarked envelope. The ballot is placed in the urn together with the others at the time of the election. Also each of these sisters is sent as many ballots as there are scrutines foreseen: three for the Delegate and three for the Substitute (*Reg 119 d*).
- * The *missionaries* who, for reasons of home visits or for other reasons are outside the Province, are in effect members of the Province they belong to. They are considered "absent for serious reasons"; therefore fall within the category provided above.
- * The Sisters belonging to the *Generalate* and to "*Mary Mother of the Church*" Preprovince of Rome take part in the pre-chapter assembly in the houses where they are located, according to their own *Statutes*, and therefore do not participate in the similar voting operations of their Provinces of origin..
- * The *Student Sisters who are outside the Province* and do not belong to the Generalate or to "Mary Mother of the Church" Preprovince of Rome:
 - vote in the community in which they find themselves, participating in the election of the Delegate of the house to the Provincial Chapter;
 - for the election of the Delegates of the Province to the Provincial Chapter, they vote only for the Province of belonging, according to the list that will be sent to them, in due time, by the Provincial.

In the first case they have only active voice; in the second, if they are professed with perpetual vows, they also have a passive voice.

- * The *exclaustrated sisters* enjoy neither an active voice nor a passive voice. It will be the responsibility of the Provincial Secretaries to carefully check the expiration of the absence and exclaustration permissions.

5. Voting procedure

- * In the houses where the elections take place (the communities with at least 5 members), the one who presides reads the list of eligible sisters and distributes the ballots on which each one writes - secretly and without signing it - the name of the one she intends to elect as Delegate to the Provincial Chapter.

- * Having collected the ballots in the urn, two scrutineers open them and read the name aloud. The sister who has obtained the absolute majority is elected, that is, more than half the votes of the electors (*Reg. 119 a*).
- * The operation is repeated when no one has obtained an absolute majority, according to the indications of the *Regulations 119 b*. In the third ballot, the one showing the relative majority is elected, that is, more votes than the other candidates.
- * In the same way, proceed for the election of a Substitute, in accordance with the indications of the *Regulations 119 c*.

6. Elections of the Delegates of the Province to the Provincial Chapter

- one for every 15 or a fraction of 15 for the Provinces up to 250 sisters (*Cost. 159 b*)
- one for every 30 or a fraction of 30 for the Provinces with more than 250 sisters (*Cost. 159 b*)
- * The provincial, having received the results of the elections held in the individual houses, in the presence of at least two Councilors opens the envelopes containing the minutes, *verifies their legality and has the minutes written* that report the result of the elections in the various houses. Those present, put their signature on it.

Then *she communicates* to each house the name of the Delegates of the communities to the Provincial Chapter and sends *a list with the names of the Perpetually professed who are still eligible*, indicating the number of sisters to be elected as Delegates of the Province to the Provincial Chapter (*Cost. 159 b*).

She also sends the necessary ballots for this new election, indicating the methods for their compilation and collection (*Reg. 120 c, d*).

For all the *necessary lists*, the alphabetical order of the *surnames* and names is always followed as they appear in the General Elenco of the Institute.

If there are sisters *absent* for serious reasons or *student* sisters temporarily outside their Province (except those belonging to the Generalate or to "Mary Mother of the Church" Preprovince in Rome), the Provincial also sends to them:

- the list of the eligible sisters (*Cost. 159 b*);
 - Indicates for the number of Delegates to be elected;
 - the appropriate ballot, marked by the Province stamp..
- * After receiving the completed ballots, the Provincial proceeds to the *scrutiny* and draws up or has drawn up the *list of Delegates of the Province*, as prescribed by the *Regulations* (Article 120 e, f, g). Then the *appropriate minutes* are written. *She communicates* to the houses, the names of the Province Delegates to the Provincial Chapter.
- Should it happen that among the Province delegates a sister is elected who is already designated as a Substitute for the local Delegate, her community will elect another Substitute (*Reg. 120 h*).

7. Provincial Chapter

Nature – aim – tasks Refer to Article 156 of the *Constitutions*.

Members

- members *by right* (*Cost. 158*);

- *elected* members (*Cost. 159*);
- other sisters or competent persons (*Reg. 121*) can be invited, but without the right to vote.

8. Elections at the Provincial Chapter

At the Provincial Chapter, elections are held for the Delegate or Delegates to the General Chapter, of the Substitute or of the respective Substitutes (*Cost. 139 g*).

Before proceeding to the elections

- *read the list of the members* of the Provincial Chapter;
- Distribute the *ballots* to everyone present;
- proceed to the *election* by secret ballot.

For a possible second or third scrutiny, one proceeds according to the rules that have governed the local elections.

The provincial has only an active voice, because she is a member by right of the General Chapter, but if her mandate expires before the celebration of GC XXIV, she can also benefit from the passive voice in the election of the Delegate to the GC XXIV (cf. Acts CG XIX, p.186 - Italian edition).

The Superior General emeritus in the Provincial Chapter has only active voice because she is a member of the General Chapter by right.

Elections Completed

- the *minutes* are prepared in duplicate (see the model attached in the Appendix with the necessary modifications, as indicated in the NB);
- it is *read* to those present who sign it;
- *one copy* is kept in the Provincial Archives with all the documents concerning the elections; the *other* is sent to Rome by registered mail addressed to the Moderator of GC XXIV **no later than December 1 2019**.

MODEL OF THE MINTUES

Province or
Preprovince.....Acronym.....
House.....

Date.....2019, convened at the meeting under the presidency of the Superior
Sister according to the due norms, the election of the **Delegate** to the Province or
Preprovince Chapter

Number voting.....

Results of the first scrutiny are:

Sr. N.N., with votes;
Sr. N.N., with votes; Sr. N.N., with votes; etc.

Not having obtained an absolute majority, we proceed to the second scrutiny with the following
results:

Sr. N.N., with votes
Sr. N.N., with votes ; Sr. N.N., with votes.....;etc.

Not having obtained an absolute majority, we proceed to the third scrutiny with the following
results:

Sr. N.N., with votes; Sr. N.N., with votes; etc.

Thus the elected Delegate to the Province or Preprovince Chapter (or proclaimed by seniority of
profession or of age)

Sr. N.N., with votes

The election of the **Substitute** follows

The results in the first scrutiny are:

Sr. N.N., with votes (see above).

***NB – With the necessary modifications, the model can also serve for the minutes of the elections
at the Provincial Chapter.***

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