

TALK OF *La Madre*, MOTHER GENERAL, SR. YVONNE REUNGOAT, FMA

TO THE WORLD COUNCIL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SALESIAN COOPERATORS

FEBRUARY 19, 2016, AT ROME

Bringing together 12 people from 6 Continents and understanding each other even while speaking different languages certainly are prophetic signs. Another is working together from all over to put together a plan for the future. When we meet, it is like another United Nations. But there is one huge difference: we share a common spirit and a common charism. This is the strength giving us the unity that goes beyond the differences. This is the sign of the Holy Spirit's presence. When we return to our individual nations, we will no longer be the same because we have opened up a new horizon and had an experience which changes hearts - and these we can share.

You will leave here knowing that you have a relationship with all the others and you will bring this home to your native lands with you. This is important because when you leave from this experience, you accompany the Association with a universal spirit: a horizon which is the world and which is the entire Association of the Cooperators, as well as of the entire Salesian Family. Beginning from this very moment, we are no longer just a man or a woman from a particular land; instead, we are men and women belonging to the whole earth. This is the seed which will sprout peace in the world. It is not only a symbol; it is a seed planted in the earth for the whole world. I think that it is very important to cultivate this prophetic vision of the Association. You will be the ones who will animate the others in this dimension. I thank you for your dynamism, your enthusiasm, and your commitment and hard work to "add the colors" to the broad strokes of Don Bosco's original canvas. The Salesian charism of the Association becomes real in today's world and is incarnated in every culture through us. Don Bosco was prophetic: his wish right from the start to see the Cooperators as part of his Congregation was a prophecy of the new forms of religious life today. In his day, it was not possible. Still, it points to the great strength that Don Bosco gave to the Salesian Cooperators. This is the strength that must exist in the relationships among the Salesians of Don Bosco, the Salesian Cooperators, and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Without a doubt, it also needs to be extended to the entire Salesian Family, but there must remain among us a special bond if we wish to see Don Bosco's dream come true. You, here, are living its beginning in this moment. This beginning will create newness in the entire Association. The Lord has chosen each one of you to coordinate your particular Region. This is a mission entrusted to you by the Lord. Whenever there is a new Council, new hope is born – as are new initiatives that you seek to make happen together. It is important to believe that the Holy Spirit accompanies you for the sake of the growth of the Association, of its fidelity to the charism, and of its development, too.

I think that the Salesian charism has a great dynamic strength which is continually generating something new and which is inside of us. If we are here, it is because we bear the charism within. It does not come from outside. It is within. When it is shared, it grows. The more it is shared, the more

it grows. I think that one responsibility we have is to “infect” a huge number of people with this gift that we have received. There are many people with whom the Salesian spirit resonates: laity, Priests, Bishops, the Pope. The charism has a strength which “infects” very strongly – even among those who are sometimes against the Church. This is because Don Bosco is present. And we are Don Bosco today. For this reason, I believe that we have a huge responsibility in the world, in all the situations in which we find ourselves: at work, in society, in our families, in the Church – in all our relationships. I encourage you very much – just as I tell the FMA also – to make the vocation of the Salesian Cooperators known, speak of it, and invite people to it because it is meant to grow, beginning with the young and especially the young who belong to the Salesian Youth Movement for they grow and become adults, the fathers and mothers of families who can feel this call. Further, if a Salesian Cooperator Center is alive, it must “infect” others – because a group is always more “contagious” than one person alone. Pass this on, live your Christian life in the Salesian way so that Salesian spirituality can radiate into the entire world. This is how I see the Association of Salesian Cooperators – more so in some parts of the world, less in others, but still able to grow in every part of the world.

It is also important for us to be visible in the Church as Salesian Cooperators because we participate in the various realities of the Church. But we participate with a special characteristic, a special style. And we have the responsibility to make this charism present and visible in the Church. Indeed, there are laity – Communion and Liberation – of Don Giussani who make themselves visible through their powerful organization. I believe the Salesian Cooperators can do the same. We ought not be afraid to make ourselves and our charism known and to express our gift within the Church and society for we can be present in places where the Church is not. Our life must speak. I encourage the Salesian Cooperators to grow in the strength that resides in a group, and in communion, for it can radiate this presence and reach the young in their concerns – something which is common to the entire Salesian Family. No matter what our job may be, we are Salesians, and, therefore, educators, for we carry this inside ourselves: educators to make life grow. There are so many needs that the young have - what Don Bosco conceived – to create synergy when responding to these needs – is still necessary and true today, everywhere in the world. If we realize that we are connected in one Association, in one Family, throughout the world, this is a great strength – for even if we ourselves seem small in the world, still, there is a force of love which transforms the world by attracting the attention of society-at-large to the importance of education for the poorest youth. Just as with Don Bosco, the Holy Spirit invites us to give our life for the salvation of the young in those forms which are compatible with our life.

One great threat to the young is the continuous warfare which only increases poverty. I believe that together we can make a huge contribution to building peace in the world. We can do so through the relationships we have and through our communion to make the young believe that peace is possible: that it is possible to build a different world, a world in peace.

Today you made a Pilgrimage of Mercy. As Salesians, we express the mercy of Jesus the Good Shepherd, who remains close to His sheep, who allows His heart to be touched, who walks in midst of His people, and who puts Himself out for them, encouraging, and animating. In this way He is a

concrete sign of love, of true, concrete, tangible love. This is translated into each of our relationships with the young and also in our families, among our colleagues at work, with our fellow parishioners, and with everyone with whom we come into contact. We have before us an example: Pope Francis. He definitely has some “Salesian” in his heart. He invites us to build bridges, to create relationships, and to dialogue within our differences. He himself gives us the example. I believe this is a Family characteristic of ours, also: this is the Preventive System.

So, it is in this sense that I encourage you to love your vocation passionately, to love it so much that you wish to communicate it to others. It is true that it is the Lord Who calls. Still, we are mediators of His call to the vocation of the Salesian Cooperators, to the vocation of the Salesians of Don Bosco, and to the vocation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The question of vocation is a question of communion of all of us together. It is important that we know this inside because we do what carry inside. We always seek the way to make what we believe in come true. Therefore, I encourage you to be creative, to propose even to us, the Salesians, and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a journey in greater synergy so we can face together some situations which are difficult at times, and so that we may find the way together in the complementarity of our vocations. Certainly, Mary Help of Christians is always near to us. She is always encouraging us, inviting us to give more, to love more. But every now and then She tells us that we are doing well and that She is happy with us because this is important for us to hear. A gathering such as this one also helps us strengthen each other – to give each other courage to go forward. It is in prayer that we find the inventiveness to be creative. Mary teaches us to listen to the Holy Spirit. Take heart, then. Courage!

I wish you a good continuation of your meeting, and a successful election tomorrow – I know that you will be voting. We will pray for you so that God’s Will be done. And I wish you a good journey for this next triennium. Take courage. I always tell the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians that the vocation of the Salesian Cooperators is important and that we must make it known. Thank you!

(During the discussion: Surely in those Christian families in which all are working hard and committed to the Faith, vocations continue to flourish.)