Constitutions and Regulations of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

Rome 2015
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My dear Sisters,

On June 24, 1982 our renewed Constitutions received the definitive approval of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

This ecclesial document puts the most authoritative seal of authenticity on the text of the Rule, so carefully studied and drawn up by General Chapter XVII.

The words written by Don Bosco to his sons when the first Constitutions of the Salesian Society were approved are still relevant today. "This event must be greeted by us as the one which assures us that in the observance of our Rule we rest on a firm, secure foundation." (April 3, 1874)

The Constitutions begin with a brief text already present in the first draft of our Rule, and which here constitutes an important key to reading them, for the better understanding of the spirit which underlies and gives life to the articles contained therein.

In a dynamic synthesis, Don Bosco outlined the spiritual portrait of the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. The presentation in which the saint lists the virtues which, "should be well-tested and rooted in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians," culminates in that "grace of unity" so desired by the chapter and expressed by Don Bosco in his customary, profound simplicity of style, "...in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the active life must keep pace with the contemplative life, reproducing Martha and Mary, the life of the Apostles and that of the Angels." (Cf. FMA Constitutions 1885, Chapter XIII, Article 5)

This is the ever relevant spirituality that was present from the time of our origins, which we find authentic and alive in the articles of our renewed Constitutions.

They constitute the sure way to the full realisation of Don Bosco's apostolic project for young people.

Each of us, in fact, will find in the founder's words the characteristic traits of her own identity, and the Institute will discover in them the roots of its perennial vitality.

May Our Lady Help of Christians continue to be for all of us our mother, teacher and guide. Let this be our heartfelt wish for each other!

Rome, August 5, 1982

Your affectionate Mother,
Sr. Rosetta Marchese, FMA
The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, which has its generalate in this city of Rome, dedicates itself in a particular way to the Christian education of girls and young women, also in countries not yet evangelised. The Preventive System, the spiritual heritage of St. John Bosco, inspires their educational project.

In conformity with the norms of the Second Vatican Council and other ecclesiastical recommendations, with great diligence it has drawn up the renewed text of the Constitutions which the superior general, in the name of General Chapter XVII, has presented to the Holy See, humbly asking its approval.

This Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes entrusted the text to the consulters to be studied by them, and awaited a favourable opinion from their scheduled meeting held on June 23. The present decree approves and confirms the text, with the modifications requested by the same meeting, in the Italian copy preserved in their archives according to the established norms.

Let the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians keep ever in mind St. John Bosco's affirmation that the observance of the Constitutions assures the fulfilment of God's will, the vitality of the Salesian spirit and the unity of the Institute.

Faithful to their vocation in the Church let them live the da mihi animas cetera tolle of their founder, and like him, recognise the Virgin Help of Christians as their mother, teacher, and guide.

Rome, June 24, 1982, the anniversary of the canonisation of Mother Maria Domenica Mazzarello, Co-foundress of the Institute.

E. Card. Pironio, Pref.
Agostino Mayer, O.S.B.
Sec.
Presentation of the Second Edition of the Constitutions and the Regulations of the FMA

Dear Sisters,

It is significant to present the new edition of our Constitutions and Regulations during this year of grace in which we celebrate consecrated life in the Church, and in the Salesian Family, the bicentenary of the birth of our founder, Don Bosco.

The text of our Rule of Life, drawn up according to the directives of Vatican II, received the official approval of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, on June 24, 1982.

In our commitment to harmonise the text with the new demands of our Institute and mission, general chapters from 1984 to 2014 introduced modifications that were deemed opportune, both in the light of the experience of the FMA and in fidelity to the guidelines of the Church.

The articles of the Constitutions that were modified in General Chapters XVIII (1984), XIX (1990), XX (1996), XXI (2002), XXII (2008) and XXIII (2014), are as follows: Art. 10, 20, 28, 58, 74, 75, 95, 118, 121, 123, 124, 126, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 139, 140, 141, 146, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 159, 161, 163, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172.

Articles 129bis, 130bis, and 142bis were added, and 160, 162, and 165 suppressed.

The modification and integration of the articles of the Constitutions were approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life with the required decrees (Cf. Prot. n. T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/82; T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/90; T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/96; T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/2002; T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/2008; T. 41\textquotesingle\textquotesingle/2014).

Through a process of accurate internal discernment during the aforementioned general chapters, the Regulations were also revised during these years and approved by the general chapter members. The following articles were modified: Art. 2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 16, 19, 22, 24, 28, 37, 38, 44, 48, 50, 56, 58, 60, 63, 66, 68, 70, 71, 72, 74, 77, 78, 80, 82, 86, 90, 91, 94, 96, 97, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 111, 115, 116, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131.

Articles 60bis, and 132 were added, and Articles 43 and 79 were suppressed.

The index has been updated and some headings added, while the appendix retains the charismatic sources that allow one to deepen the spirit of the Rule. The discourse of Pope Francis to the general chapter members during the audience of November 8, 2014 has been added to the documents of the teachings of the Church.

With open minds and hearts, may we welcome the text of the Constitutions and Regulations as a sign of Don Bosco’s love for us. Through our creative and dynamic fidelity, like Mother Mazzarello, let us express our grateful love to our founder and father. May he help us to make our houses Gospel spaces where the charism is alive and where one can experience a renewed vocational and missionary fruitfulness.

May Mary Help of Christians, who inspired our Institute, continue to bless it and accompany it on the path to holiness so that, together with young people, we may all be able to be ever more missionaries of hope and joy.
Rome, March 25, 2015
Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat
Superior General
## Initials and Abbreviations

### SACRED SCRIPTURE

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### TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

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<td>Ad gentes, Decree of the Second Vatican Council</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>Christus Dominus, Decree of the second Vatican Council</td>
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<td>Catechesi tradendae, Apostolic exhortation of John Paul II, 1980</td>
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<td>DC</td>
<td>Dimensione contemplativa della vita religiosa, Guidelines issued by SCRIS, 1980</td>
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Dom.C.  La cena del Signore, Letter of John Paul II to all the Bishops, 1980
DV  Dei Verbum, Constitution of the Second Vatican Council
EM  Eucharisticum Mysterium, Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on the cult of the Eucharistic Mystery, 1967.
EN  Evangelii nuntiandi, Apostolic exhortation of Paul VI, 1975
ES  Ecclesiae Sanctae, Motu proprio of Paul VI, 1966
ET  Evangelica testificatio, Apostolic exhortation of Paul VI, 1971.
GE  Gravissimum educationis, Declaration of the Second Vatican Council
GS  Gaudium et spes, Constitution of the Second Vatican Council
LE  Laborem exercens, Encyclical Letter of John Paul II
LG  Lumen gentium, Constitution of the Second Vatican Council
MC  Marialis cultus, Apostolic exhortation of Paul VI
MR  Mutuae relationes, Guidelines issued by SCRIS-Sacred Congregation of the Bishops, 1978
OT  Optatam totius, Decree of Second Vatican Council
Paen  Paenitemini, Apostolic Constitution of Paul VI, 1966
PC  Perfectae Caritatis, Decree of the Second Vatican council
PO  Presbyterorum ordinis, Decree of the Second Vatican Council
PU  Religiosi e promozione umana, Guidelines SCRIS, 1978
RH  Redemptor hominis, Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, 1979
SC  Sacrosanctum Concilium, Constitution of the Second Vatican Council
ScC  The Catholic School, Document of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977
SCRIS  Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes

SALESIAN TEXTS

C1885  Constitutions of the Institute of the FMA (last edition revised by Don Bosco)
R    Regulations of the Institute of the FMA (1982 edition)
DB L  Letters of Don Bosco
MM L  Letters of Mother Mazzarello
RUA L  Circular letters of Don Rua
ALBERA L  Circular letters of Don Albera P.
MO    Memorie dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales [Italian edition]
MB    Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco (19 volumes) [Italian edition]
Cron  Chronicles of the Institute of the FMA (5 Volumes) [Italian edition]
Profile of the FMA
as outlined by Don Bosco
in the First Constitutions

1. Patient and zealous charity,
   not only towards children
   but also towards young women
   and everyone without exception,
   with the aim of doing as much good as possible
   for souls.

2. Simplicity and reserve combined with cheerfulness,
   a spirit of mortification both interior and exterior;
   strict observance of poverty.

3. Obedience of will and judgment,
   humility in accepting, willingly
   and without comment, the advice and corrections given,
   and the work entrusted to them.

4. A spirit of prayer that helps the Sisters
   to carry out their practices of piety willingly,
   to remain in the presence of God,
   and to abandon themselves to Divine Providence.

5. These virtues must be well tested and deeply rooted
   in the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,
   because in their lives
   the contemplative and active life must go hand in hand,
   reproducing Martha and Mary,
   the life of the Apostles and that of the Angels\(^1\).

\(^{1}\) C 1885 XIII, “Essential virtues proposed for study by the novices and to be practised by the professed Sisters”.
Constitutions
The Identity of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
“You did not choose me, but I chose you and I appointed you to go and bear fruit and that your fruit will last” (John 15:16).

The FMA Institute in God’s plan

1. Through a gift of the Holy Spirit and with the direct intervention of Mary, St. John Bosco founded our Institute as a response of salvation to the profound hopes of girls and young women. He endowed it with a spiritual heritage inspired by the charity of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and imparted to it a strong missionary characteristic.

Through the approval of the Sovereign Pontiff, St. Pius X, the Institute is one of Pontifical Right. Within the Church it shares in the salvific mission of Christ, through Christian education according to the Preventive System.

In an attitude of faith and gratitude to God, and in imitation of St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello we, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, give our life to God becoming the sign and expression of his foreseeing love among young people.

R 1

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3 Decree of approval dated September 7, 1911.
4 Cf. Cron I 246.
Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, same experience of apostolic charity

2. In his wonderful Providence
   God gave Don Bosco
   a heart as great as the sands of the seashore,
   making him the father and teacher
   of a multitude of young people.¹

   In the unique divine plan
   God enkindled
   the same experience of apostolic charity
   in St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello,
   making her a unique,
   active collaborator in the foundation of the Institute.²

   Together with our first Sisters
   she lived our founder's project in creative fidelity,
   thus giving rise to the "Spirit of Mornese"
   that must characterise
   the lifestyle of our communities today.
   For this reason she is recognised by the Church
   as mother
   and “Co-foundress”.³

   R 2

¹ Prayer for the Feast of St. John Bosco.
² Cf. Maccono, Ferdinando, Santa Maria D. Mazzarello, Torino FMA 1960, I 89-91.182.
³ Sacra Congregatio Ritum, Aquot. Beatification et canonizationis servae Dei Mariae Dominicae Mazzarello,
   Confundatrix Instituti Filiarum Mariae Auxiliatrixis. Novissima Positio super virtutibus, Romae Typ. Guerra et Belli
   1935.
The FMA in the Salesian Family

3. Our Institute
   is a living part of the Salesian Family
   which, throughout time, implements in different ways
   the spirit and mission of Don Bosco,
   thus expressing its perennial newness.
   
   As successor of Don Bosco,
   the rector major
   of the Society of St. Francis de Sales
   is animator and centre of unity of the Salesian Family.
   
   In this family we share
   the spiritual heritage of the founder
   and, as in Mornese, we offer
   the unique contribution of our vocation.

Mary Most Holy, Mother and Teacher of the Institute

4. Mary Most Holy
   inspired our Institute,¹
   and continues to be its mother and teacher.
   We are, therefore, "a religious Family
   that belongs entirely to Mary".²
   
   Don Bosco wanted us to be a living monument
   of his gratitude to Mary Help of Christians,
   and asks us to extend his thanks throughout all time.³
   
   Let us be aware of Mary's presence in our lives
   and entrust ourselves entirely to her.
   
   We strive to make her dispositions
   of faith, hope and charity,
   and her perfect union with Christ, our own.⁴
   Let us open our hearts
   to the joyous humility of her Magnificat
   to be helpers, like her, especially among young people.⁵

¹ Cf. Maccono, Santa I 309.
² Cron I 305.
³ Cf. Cron I 306; MB X 600.
⁴ Cf. LG 63.
⁵ Cf. Amadei, A. Un altro don Bosco. Il servo di Dio don Rua, Torino SEI 1934, 405.
Our Vocation in the Church

5. God our Father calls us
to live our baptismal consecration
wholeheartedly
consecrating us by the gift of the Spirit.

United in community,
we bind ourselves publicly by vow
to follow Christ, chaste, poor, and obedient,
totally available
for his mission of salvation.¹

In this way we proclaim
our will to live for the glory of God
by our service for the evangelisation of young people,
walking with them on the path to holiness.²

¹ Cf. LG 44; PC 1.
² Cf. C 1885 IX 5-6.
Evangelisation of young people through education

6. The *da mihi animas cetera tolle*,¹ that led Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to dedicate themselves completely to the poorest and the least,² is the heart of our educational mission.

It urges us to go out to children and young people in need, especially the poorest, to help them grow to full stature in Christ.³

Striving to keep alive the missionary fervour of our origins, let us work for the spreading of God's Kingdom in Christian countries, in those not yet evangelised, and in those in need of re-evangelisation;⁴ paying particular attention to the signs of the times and the needs of the local Church.

R 56

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¹ *MB* XVII 365-366; V 126; VII 585; XIV 547.
² Cf. *MB* VI 4-5; *Cron* III 190-191.
³ Cf. *C 1885* I 1.3.4.
⁴ Cf. *C 1885* I 3; *Cron* II 257, 276-278.
in the style of the Preventive System

7. The Preventive System\(^1\)

is the hallmark
of our vocation in the Church,
and our specific spirituality
and method of pastoral action.

It is an experience of apostolic charity
that has its source in the heart of
Christ himself,
and finds its model in Mary's motherly care.

It consists of an educational presence
which, using only the power
of persuasion and love,
collaborates with the Holy Spirit,
for the growth of Christ in the hearts of young people.

This spirit has been passed on to us
and must guide our criteria for action,
permeate our relationships
with others, and characterise our lifestyle.\(^2\)

Like the first community of Mornese,
we are called to live
this patient charity that excuses all,
trusts all,
bears with all, and never loses hope.\(^3\)

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\(^1\) Cf. *MB* IV 546-552.
\(^2\) Cf. *MB* XVII 628.
\(^3\) Cf. *I Cor* 13:4-7.
Our Vocation
as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
"...I have called you by name
you are mine" (Isa 43:1).

**Following Christ, apostle of the Father**

8. We live our vocation
   as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
   as a response to the Father
   who, in Christ,
   consecrates, unites, and sends us forth.

   Through the grace of the Holy Spirit
   we give ourselves to God, whom we love above all else,
   by following Christ more closely
   in his mission of salvation.

   In a community
   animated by the apostolic spirit
   of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello,
   we live the new life
   of the Beatitudes radically,
   proclaiming and bearing witness
   to young people, and with them,
   the Good News of God's saving love.

   In the Church,
   we collaborate
   by a new and special mandate
   for the spread of the Kingdom.
   We transform every moment of our lives
   into a joyous hymn of adoration and praise,
   thereby becoming a sign of the eternal values
   already present in this world.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Cf. *LG* 44; *PC* 1
we enter into a covenant of love

9. By our religious profession
   we make the total gift of ourselves to the Father,
   and become part of the covenant of love
   that God made
   with Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello,
   and which continues to be lived out
   in the fidelity of our Congregation.

   The Institute, in turn,
   welcomes us into a loving community,
   making us active members of its whole life.
10. The formula of our religious profession is as follows:

Heavenly Father, you consecrated me in baptism and now, through the power of the Holy Spirit you call me to follow Jesus Christ more closely, in order to share more intimately in his saving mission in the Church.

In response to your love I bind myself to live the Beatitudes of the Kingdom radically, in communion with my Sisters, proclaiming Christ to young people according to the spirit of St. John Bosco and St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello.

Today, before the community and all here present, I Sister ................................................ freely and entirely give myself to you. I make the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience (for one year – for two years - forever) in the hands of ................................................
(superior general or delegate of the superior general) according to the evangelical way traced out by the Constitutions of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Trusting in your grace, in the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and of all our saints, and with the support of my Sisters, I want to live faithfully, for your glory, the commitments I assume in making my profession.
Amen!
1. Sharing in the mystery of Christ  
chaste, poor, obedient

...immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him (Matt 4:22).

In Christ, chaste, poor, obedient

11. Binding herself by vow
the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
assumes the chaste, poor, and obedient way of life
that the Son of God chose for himself,
and which his Virgin Mother
embraced with total dedication.

By continually renewing this offering to God
of her capacity to love,
her desire to possess,
and the possibility
of regulating her own life,¹
she will attain true spiritual freedom.

Thus, in communion with her Sisters,
she can devote herself better
to making the love of Christ
present to young people.²

¹ Cf. ET 7.
² Cf. LG 46.
CHASTITY

"I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice in steadfast love and in mercy," (Hosea 2:19)

Chastity, the response to the Father’s gift

12. Chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven is a precious gift of the Father. We accept it in faith and respond gratefully and joyously by offering our "capacity to love".

We pledge ourselves to follow Christ with an undivided heart, open to love of God and neighbour, totally available for the mission of the Institute.

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1 Cf. PC 12; ET 15.
2 ET 7.
3 Cf. LG 42; PC 12; MM L 65,3.
a witness of love in the Church


This offering of her entire being makes her a sign of the union of the Church with Christ her spouse. She becomes a witness to the hope of the People of God who await the eternal vision of the Lord.¹

¹ Cf. LG 44.
an energy for the education of young people

14. Our mission among young people, as Don Bosco taught us, requires that chastity be our special characteristic.

We shall therefore practise this virtue to an "eminent degree", expressing it through Salesian loving-kindness, that allows God's love to shine through us, and is a reflection of Mary's motherly goodness.

Thus it will enable us to welcome young people with that warm, sincere affection that gives them the joy of knowing that they are personally loved, and helps them to mature in unselfish love, through a purity that is radiant and liberating.

R 4

\[\text{\footnotesize C 1885 III 1.}\]
builds community spirit

15. Consecrated chastity lived in its fullness builds and strengthens the bonds of community life, leads to self-giving, fosters true friendship, and favours personal and community growth.

The community, in turn, animated by the Family Spirit, supports our chastity,¹ that is a source of joy, peace, and apostolic fruitfulness.²

¹ Cf. PC 12.
² Cf. LG 42; ET 14.
becomes fruitful in times of trial

16. Fidelity
to the, "preferential love for God"¹
is the fundamental law of chastity.

In moments of difficulty or trial
let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
contemplate Christ,
who loved her even to death on the Cross,
and endeavour to live confidently and with hope
those renunciations required by her loving choice,
secure in the knowledge that they are a source of new life.

¹ ET 13.
is strengthened through prayer and asceticism

17. In order to strengthen the gift of chastity
   the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
   will nourish the awareness of the presence of God.¹
   Let her draw strength from her intimate union with Christ
   by encountering him in the Word, the Eucharist,
   and the sacrament of Reconciliation.
   Let her entrust herself lovingly to Mary,
   the Virgin Mother
   who gave Our Saviour to the world.

   In an attitude of humility
   and total detachment from all that is not God,²
   let her be faithful to the Salesian commitment
   of, "work and temperance",³
   practising mortification,
   and self-control,⁴
   also exercising a balanced discipline in the use
   of the means of social communication.

   Let her also make use of those ordinary means
   that promote health of mind and body,
   and the formation of a well-balanced person.⁵

¹ Cf. C 1885 III 3.
² Cf. C 1885 III 1.
³ Cf. MB XII 466; XIII 326.
⁴ Cf. C 1885 III 1-3.
⁵ Cf. PC 12.
POVERTY

“I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.’”
(Ps. 16:2).

Poverty, a sign of God’s gratuitous love

18. In order to follow Christ with greater freedom of heart, and moved by the Holy Spirit, we willingly embrace evangelical poverty.

In this way we become sharers in the mystery of the self-emptying of the Son of God who, being rich, made himself poor that we might become rich through his poverty.¹

We imitate Mary, the humble handmaid who surrendered everything to her Lord.

In loving abandonment to the Father's providence ² we place ourselves unreservedly at the service of the most needy young people, becoming for them a sign of God's gratuitous love.

We proclaim thereby that he is our only good, and that all created things are given to us only to increase our capacity to love.³

¹ Cf. 2 Cor 8:9; PC 13; C 1885 V 6.
² Cf. PC 13.
³ Cf. GS 37.
Personal poverty

19. By the vow of poverty
the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
renounces the right to retain or to dispose
of anything of monetary value
without the permission of her lawful superior.

Therefore she is obliged to place in common,
for use in the mission of the Institute,
all that she receives in payment for her work, or as a gift,
or from pension funds, grants or insurance.
She may not lawfully keep
or administer anything.
In this way each Sister, "is considered
as literally possessing nothing".¹

The Institute, for its part, will provide
all that each one needs, as in a family.²

R 7-8, 10-11

¹ C 1885 Introduzione p.27
² C 1885 II 8.
While possessing goods, we may not dispose of them

20. The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians retains ownership of any goods she may have inherited, and the possibility of legitimately acquiring others. She may not renounce this right of ownership to a third party, by a deed of gift, save in exceptional cases and with the consent of the superior general.

However, before profession the novice must freely surrender the administration of her possessions and dispose of the use and usufruct of them for all the time that she will be bound by vow.

Before perpetual profession the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians must dispose by will of the goods she owns or may acquire.

In the event of a Sister leaving the Institute she has no right to claim recompense for work done by her.

R 7-9
Like the poor, we are dependent

21. Each Sister is personally responsible for what she has promised to God.

She will therefore practise the detachment and dependence inherent to every form of poverty, freeing herself from all self-seeking and the desire to possess.

Let her be moderate in her requests, simple and sincere in her dependence on the superior, remembering that permission alone does not guarantee that she is poor according to the spirit of the Beatitudes.

She will also express her poverty by a strong sense of belonging to the community, and by loving attention to the needs of her Sisters.

Those whose duty it is to provide whatever is necessary or useful for the Sisters should be foreseeing and generous.

R 12

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1 Cf. ET 21.
2 Cf. PC 13.
Our poverty

22. The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians will love poverty in, "an authentic and practical way," since Jesus made it an indispensable condition for those who wish to be his disciples. It is also a necessary requirement of the da mihi animas cetera tolle.

Placing her trust in God alone she will accept her own limitations and those of others with serenity. Let her be content with what is strictly necessary, grateful for what the community offers, and happy to leave the best things for her Sisters.

Let her also be ready, "to suffer heat, cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue, and contempt," willing to sacrifice everything as long as she can co-operate with Christ in the salvation of young people.

R 12-13, 15

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1 Cron III 266
3 C 1885 V 5.
4 Cf. MB VII 48.
lived in community

23. Let each one of our communities testify to poverty in a credible way, frequently and courageously reviewing its practice.

Keeping in mind the teaching of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello,\(^1\) we will adopt a way of life that is moderate and unpretentious, according to the Salesian style of temperance, joy, and simplicity. Let us also ensure that our houses, especially the areas reserved for the Sisters, reflect true poverty.

Let us be attentive to the conditions of the place in which we live, both by being sensitive to the demands of poverty, and by not adopting an affluent lifestyle.

Let us also endeavour to help young people to free themselves from the slavery of material things, and to form in themselves the capacity to share and to give.

R 14-15, 20

\(^1\) Cf. *DB L* 24.5.1886; *Cron* III 265-266.299-300.
24. Diligent, creative, and responsible work is an essential aspect of our poverty through which we collaborate in the ongoing work of creation and redemption of the world.¹

Let us generously submit
to the common law of work,²
thus sharing in the lot of the poor
who must labour in order to earn their daily bread.

Let us carry out our work
in an apostolic spirit,
and with the tireless dedication
of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

We will strive to bear witness
to the Christian meaning of work
in the construction of a more humane world
in accordance with God's designs.
Let us educate young people
to seriously assume
life’s responsibilities
in fidelity to their daily duty.³

¹ Cf. GS 34; LE 25.27.
² Cf. PC 13.
³ Cf. LE 24.
We share God’s gifts

25. Following the example of the early Christians each of us will willingly place material goods and the fruits of her work at the disposal of the community, as well as her time, talents, and personal abilities.

Let this sharing and sisterly communion extend from the local to the province community through the provincial, and to the worldwide level, through the superior general, thus placing everything at the service of the Institute for its apostolic mission, according to the needs of different situations.

R 17-18

in the service of the Church on behalf of poor young people

26. Let our communities also be open to the needs of the Church, and attentive to the hopes and expectations of the poor, entering into solidarity with them, like Don Bosco who loved them in Christ, shared their anxieties, and devoted himself to their evangelisation.

Let them show a special predilection for young people in need, working for their advancement and the education of the whole person. In their apostolic work let the Sisters feel the responsibility for strengthening the bonds of solidarity, and promoting social justice according to the teachings of the Church.

R 18, 56

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1 Cf. PC 13; ET 17.
2 Cf. MB VI 4-5; XII 374.
3 Cf. ET 18.
Administration of goods

27. The Institute, provinces, pre-provinces, and houses have the legal right to acquire, own, administer and dispose of temporal goods.

The economic administration carried out with diligence and exactitude is a service rendered by those responsible with the aim of fostering personal and community poverty, and making everything available for the needs of the apostolate.

Let there be "unity of administration" in every house as the expression of, and witness to the communion of goods according to evangelical poverty. The norms of the Universal Law of the Church and the Law of the Congregation should always be observed, also taking into account the laws of the nation.

R 21-22

1 MB X 1098.
according to the Salesian Spirit

28. Religious poverty according to the Salesian spirit does not permit any form of profit-making, neither the ownership of immovable goods for the sole purpose of revenue, nor any other form of permanent, interest-bearing investment.¹

The Institute, therefore, may retain only the ownership of the material goods necessary for the development of the mission.

R 16, 20

¹ Cf. PC 13; MB XVII 257-258, 627-628; VIII 902; X 1056.
OBEDIENCE

"My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to complete his work" (John 4:34).

Like Jesus, available to the Father

29. As members of his Mystical Body we are called to live evangelical obedience in communion with Christ and with each other.

He, the Son sent by the Father, became obedient even unto death on the cross, making himself the servant of all to free them and re-unite them in the community of the redeemed.

Strengthened by the Holy Spirit we freely offer our will as the sacrifice of ourselves to God. We thus enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ’s total availability, and bind ourselves more firmly to the service of the Church according to Don Bosco’s apostolic project.

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1 Cf. Phil. 2:7-8.  
2 Cf. John 11:52.  
3 Cf. PC 14; C 1885 IV 1.  
4 Cf. PC 14; ET 23.
through mediations of God’s will

30. By her profession of obedience
    the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
    proclaims that God is Lord,
    and confidently abandons herself to him,
    the Father who in all wisdom and goodness
    guides her to the full freedom of the children of God.

    With docility of mind and heart,
    she will recognise the Constitutions
    and the directives of the superiors as mediations of God's will,
    as well as God’s Word,
    and the teachings and laws of the Church.

    She will see in her community
    a privileged manifestation
    of God's loving design,
    welcoming the signs of its presence in other people,
    in the situations of the present time,
    and in the events of daily life.

The vow of obedience

31. Through the vow of obedience,
    made with faith and love,
    the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
    publicly commits herself
    to submit to her lawful superiors
    as, "God's representatives"¹
    in all that they prescribe in conformity with the Constitutions.

    The vow binds in its most serious manner
    when a formal command
    is given, "in the name of obedience"
    by a lawful superior.
    Such commands, however, must be given
    only in exceptional cases and for grave reasons.

¹ PC 14; Cf. MB IV 749; IX 575.
in the Salesian style

32. Don Bosco considered obedience as the "hinge"\(^{1}\) of our life because it is closely linked to our apostolic mission and to the community dimension that characterises it.

Through obedience we become totally available for whatever may be asked of us to carry out the mandate entrusted to us in union with the superior and with our Sisters.

We will obey in a spirit of faith,\(^{2}\) "cheerfully and humbly",\(^{3}\) with a sense of responsibility and of belonging to the Institute.

Let us live our obedience, "in all simplicity"\(^{4}\) in the Salesian attitude of, "I'll go", ready even to make, "great sacrifices of our will".\(^{5}\) Let us make Mary's \textit{fiat} our own. By her adherence to God's will she became mother of the Redeemer and our mother also.\(^{6}\)

\(^{1}\) Cf. \textit{MB} VI 933.
\(^{2}\) Cf. \textit{PC} 14.
\(^{3}\) \textit{C 1885 IV} 3-4.
\(^{4}\) \textit{MM L} 18,4.
\(^{5}\) \textit{MB VII} 47; Cf. \textit{MB XII} 606.
\(^{6}\) Cf. \textit{LG} 61.
witness of communion

33. Obedience and authority are complementary aspects of the our participation in Christ's offering. They imply the mutual desire for communion so that together we may serve, "God's loving designs".

In our Institute this relationship is lived according to the Family Spirit in which requests are made with discretion and kindness, and are carried out promptly and joyfully.

In a world wounded by pride and egoism, the community witnesses to the possibility of exercising authority as service and obedience as sisterly collaboration and this contributes to the fulfilment of one's human dignity.

R 23, 44

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1 ET 25.
2 Cf. MB VIII 829; Maccono, Santa I 290.
3 Cf. PC 14.
Seeking God's will, the personal encounter

34. An especially favoured occasion
   for strengthening communion,
   discovering God's will,
   and deepening the spirit of the Institute
   at a practical level,
   is the personal encounter
   that each Sister will have with the community animator.\(^1\)

This encounter will take place monthly,
   in an atmosphere of faith and charity,
   mutual trust, loyalty, and secrecy.

Thus practised, it will become,
   as Don Bosco desired,
   an irreplaceable means
   of personal and community growth
   in our identity
   as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Cf. C I885 XVIII 18.20.
\(^2\) Cf. MB XVII 376; IX 689.995.
and community dialogue

35. Let us strive as a community
to discern God's will
and to review our fidelity to our vocation.
We will, therefore, participate actively
in these key-moments of co-responsibility;
giving our contribution
to community dialogue
in order to reach the best decisions;¹
accepting with serenity
the possible sacrifice
of our personal opinions and initiatives.

The community animator will lead this discernment
in a way that promotes communion within the community.
When she considers it necessary,
she will make the final decisions
that best favour the implementation
of the community plan.²

Let each Sister own these decisions
and collaborate in acting upon them.

¹ Cf. MB XI 157-158; Cron II 11.
² Cf. PC 14.
2. United in community in the name of the Lord

“As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

Community founded on Trinitarian communion

36. Our community
   of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,
   a specific expression
   of the ecclesial community,
   finds the deepest reason for its existence
   in the mystery of Trinitarian communion.

   Among the People of God
   it is a particular sign
   of a new way of living together,
   not founded on ties of flesh and blood,
   but on the power of faith
   and sisterhood in Christ.

   It lives the spirituality of the Preventive System,
   creating a family atmosphere
   in which young people
   can experience what it proclaims,
   celebrates, and bears witness to by its way of life.
OUR PRAYER

"All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary, the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14).

Praying in the Spirit

37. Through the grace of our adoption as daughters and sons the Holy Spirit prays in us, intercedes incessantly for us, and invites us to make room so that through our voice the Father may be praised and invoked for the salvation of the world.

Docile to the Spirit’s action let us persevere in prayer with and like Mary, in order to intensify our communion with God and be open to Christ present in our sisters and brothers and in every reality.

Characteristics of Salesian prayer

38. Our prayer is expressed in a single movement of love towards God and neighbour. It both requires and creates in the community that Gospel atmosphere of faith and constant self-giving that permeated the house of Mornese. It leads us to live in the presence of God, trusting in his Fatherly love. It must be simple, essential, capable of transforming our everyday life, of expressing a sense of celebration, and involving the young people in the joy of meeting Christ.

\footnote{Cf. PC 6.}
Listening to and meditating on the Word of God

39. God loved us so much that he sent his Son,\(^1\) the Word of Truth and Life, who continually challenges us, as individuals and communities, requiring our practical response.

Meditation is a high point of this inner dialogue. Each of us will attend to it with special diligence for half an hour each day.

In the silence of our whole being\(^2\) like Mary, "the listening Virgin",\(^3\) we will allow ourselves to be permeated by the power of the Holy Spirit who leads us gradually to put on Christ, strengthens sisterly communion, and renews apostolic zeal.

Each day we shall also dedicate ourselves to personal and community spiritual reading in order to deepen our spiritual, ecclesial, and Salesian formation.

R 24-25

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\(^1\) Cf. John 3:16.
\(^2\) Cf. ET 46.
\(^3\) MC 17.
The Eucharist builds and renews our community

40. The source and culmination of our prayer is the Eucharist, the paschal sacrifice, from which the whole life of the Church springs.¹

Let us participate in it every day to unite ourselves with the offering of Jesus, adorer of the Father² and, nourishing ourselves at the table of his Word and Body, to become like him "bread" for our sisters and brothers.³

Let us make the Eucharist the centre of our day, the moment on which community life is built and renewed.⁴

Jesus present in the Tabernacle, will be the heart of the house both for us and the young people.⁵

In the community Visit and in frequent, spontaneous, personal visits, that characterise our tradition,⁶ let us remain before him with loving confidence,⁷ listening and thanking him, allowing ourselves to be drawn into his desire for our salvation, and learning the secret of authentic dialogue with our neighbour.

R 24, 26-27

² Cf. SC 48; ET 47; RH 20; DC 9.
³ Cf. DV 21; Dom. C 5-6.
⁴ Cf. LG 26; PO 6; ET 47; MB VII 795.
⁵ Cf. ET 48; DC 9; Maccono, Santa I 373.
⁶ Cf. MB VIII 49; Maccono, Santa I 305; II 187; Cron I 123.
⁷ Cf. EM 50; Dom. C 3.
The sacrament of Reconciliation

41. The sacrament of Reconciliation is a trustful encounter with the faithfulness and mercy of the Father.\(^1\)
It renews our participation in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and reconciles us with our sisters and brothers in the Church.\(^2\)
It helps us to peacefully accept our poverty and to accomplish our journey towards freedom from sin.\(^3\)

Let each of us approach this sacrament in a humble attitude of faith, with the regularity and frequency asked by the Church, recognising its importance for personal and community growth in Christ.\(^4\)

Let us prepare for it by the daily examination of conscience\(^5\) and by generous, sisterly forgiveness.

R 28

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1 Cf. DCL 1; RH 20; DM 13; C 1885 XVII 4.
2 Cf. LG 11; Paen. 1.
3 Cf. PO 18.
4 Cf. DC 10.
5 Cf. MB IX 355.
United with the Church in praise

42. By his incarnation
the Son of God entered into history,
making every hour a time of salvation.

In union with him
the Church continues his praise,
thanksgiving, and supplication to the Father.¹

Sharing in this prayer
by which, in Christ, we become the voice of humankind,
we shall celebrate
morning and evening prayer in community.
They are the high points of the Liturgy of the Hours,
that sanctify the entire day²
and nourish
our personal and community prayer.³

R 24, 29

¹ Cf. SC 83.
² Cf. SC 84; ES II 20.
³ Cf. SC 90; DC 12.
let us live the mystery of Christ throughout the liturgical year

43. In the course of the year the Church, a pilgrim in time, celebrates the perennial presence of Christ in history, and renews the work of salvation by means of the liturgical cycle which has its culmination in Easter, and is expressed each week in a particular way on the Lord's Day.

Incorporated into this mystery of grace let us live the various liturgical seasons in faith, and with a deep sense of Church.

In this way we will participate progressively in the liberating work of our Redeemer.

R 29

1 Cf. SC 102.
2 SC 106.
with Mary Immaculate Help of Christians

44. Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, is actively present in our lives\(^1\) and in the history of our Institute.\(^2\)

Trusting in Don Bosco's words, "It is Mary who guides us",\(^3\) let us cultivate a grateful, trusting love for her, and commit ourselves to pass this love on to young people.\(^4\)

In Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians, let us contemplate the fullness of self-giving to God and neighbour.

Let us imitate her openness to God's Word, to live as she did the beatitude of, "those who believe," and devote ourselves to apostolic action that inspires hope.\(^5\)

let us turn to her in simplicity and confidence, celebrating her liturgical feast,\(^6\) and honouring her in those forms of prayer proper to the Church and Salesian tradition, especially the daily praying of the rosary, in which we relive, together with her, the mysteries of our Redemption.\(^7\)

R 24, 30

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\(^1\) Cf. *Cron* III 299; V 51-52.
\(^2\) Cf. *MB* XVII 510.
\(^3\) *MB* XVIII 439.
\(^4\) Cf. *MM L* 47,10; *Cron* III 331.
\(^5\) Cf. *LG* 65,67; *DC* 13.
\(^6\) Cf. *SC* 103.
\(^7\) Cf. *MC* 49; *DC* 13; *MB* I 90; VII 240; IX 356
in communion with the saints

45. God shows us his presence and image
    in the lives of the saints,
    and speaks through them.¹

    Let us entrust ourselves to these our sisters and brothers,
    looking to their lives as models
    and seeking help through their intercession,
    certain of sharing with them
    in the one communion of the Church.²

    Let us honour in a special way
    St. John Bosco, St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello,
    and the other saints of the Salesian Family;
    St. Joseph,
    St. Francis de Sales, and St. Teresa of Jesus,
    whom our founder
    gave us as patrons of our Institute;³
    together with the angels
    who forever contemplate the glory of the Lord ⁴
    and accompany us on our earthly pilgrimage.⁵

R 31

¹ Cf. LG 50.
² Cf. LG 51; SC 111.
⁵ Cf. Exod. 23,20; Tob. 12,15; Ps. 90,11-12.
An attitude of conversion and penance

46. Conscious of her fragility, let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians continually renew her determination to be converted to the Gospel.¹

Through an intimate participation in the Lord's Paschal Mystery let her live with faith the mystery of the Cross, which touches every human life, and is the source of grace and true freedom. Let her learn how to use lovingly the opportunities for voluntary mortification, to make up in her own body all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his Mystical Body.²

In addition to the times set aside by the Church,³ the monthly spiritual retreat and the annual retreat,⁴ will be particularly effective times of spiritual renewal. Don Bosco considered them to be of great importance in giving new impetus to our journey towards holiness.⁵

R 32-34

¹ Cf. Mark 1:15.
² Cf. Col 1:24; Paen 1.
³ Cf. SC 109-110.
⁴ Cf. C 1885 XVII 5; XVIII 1; MB IV 683-684; XIII 419.
⁵ Cf. MB XII 471; XIII 126.
Our community prayer

47. Animated by Jesus’ words, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them”,\(^1\)
let us faithfully participate in community prayer, an indispensable element of our being together for the Lord.

Aware that God’s presence will only become alive and active in us if we are rooted in love,\(^2\)
let us commit ourselves to the creation of real bonds of communion among ourselves.

Thus united we shall give praise to the God, entrusting to him the joys and sorrows of each person, all our apostolic projects and the expectations and hopes of young people and of the whole world.

In this way our prayer will be a sign of our being Church and a celebration of the love of Christ.

R 24

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\(^1\) Matt. 18:20.
\(^2\) Cf. 1 John 4:12.
Our liturgy of life

48. Mother Mazzarello teaches us that,
"true piety consists in fulfilling all our duties
at the right time, in the right place
and only for love of God".\(^1\)

Therefore, let us seek to work
in that spirit of apostolic charity
that prompts us to offer a total gift of self,
making every action
an authentic encounter with Our Lord.\(^2\)

Let our commitment to the \textit{da mihi animas},
source of ever-new energies,
a silence that is conducive to attentive listening to the Holy Spirit,
and frequent short prayers
make of our day
a liturgy lived in simplicity and joy,\(^3\)
as an, "unending hymn of praise" to the Father.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Maccono, \textit{Santa} II 57; \textit{Cron} II 338.
\(^2\) Cf. \textit{DC} 6.
\(^3\) Cf. \textit{MB} X 592; Maccono, \textit{Santa} I 135. 423-424.
\(^4\) Cf. Maccono, \textit{Santa} I 306; \textit{MB} X 592.
OUR LIFE TOGETHER

“Love one another; even as I have loved you!
By this everyone will know
that you are my disciples” (John 13:35).

Gathered in Christ by the Father

49. Living and working together
   in the name of the Lord
   is an essential element
   of our vocation.

   Our community, gathered by the Father,
   is founded on the presence of the Risen Christ
   and nourished by him, Word and Body.
   It is called to serve the Lord in gladness
   in a deeply rooted Family Spirit,
   and to work with optimism and solicitude
   for the Kingdom of God,
   confident that the Holy Spirit
   is already at work in our world.

   Let it seek to form,
   “one heart and one soul,”
   thus fulfilling the new commandment
   by which we will be known as Jesus’ disciples.

   This communion of life,
   rooted in faith, hope, and charity,
   also responds
   to the deepest needs of the human heart
   and makes it ready for apostolic self-giving.

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1 Cf. DC 15.
2 Cf. I Cor. 10:17.
3 Acts 4:32; cf. MB IX 356.
we live the Family Spirit

50. The Family Spirit, the creative outpouring of Don Bosco's heart,\(^1\)
must characterise all our communities and requires the commitment of everyone.

Let each person, therefore, always welcome her Sisters with respect, esteem and understanding, in an attitude of open, family-like dialogue, of goodwill and true sisterly friendship.\(^2\) She will value each one's contribution to the community and, in turn, give of her best.

Let her be ready to prefer the good of her Sisters to her own, to choose the hardest part for herself and to carry it out in humble, joyful simplicity,\(^3\) living sisterly love, not only on great occasions but more especially, in the circumstances of everyday life.\(^4\)

The spirit of mutual trust and joy thus created in the community will be passed on to the young people and to our collaborators and will favour the growth of Salesian vocations.

R 39-41

\(^1\) Cf. MB IX 687.
\(^2\) Cf. C I 885 XVIII 15.
\(^3\) Cf. C I 885 XVIII 15; MB XIII 214; Cron III 281.
\(^4\) Cf. GS 38.
for a fruitful apostolic action

51. Each of our communities is an apostolic community where the concerns, hopes, prayers, aims of our apostolic work, the work itself, and material goods are all shared in view of the mission of the Institute.

This requires of everyone willing participation, co-responsibility, mutual communication in a calm, honest exchange of ideas, and a harmonious integration of personal values.

Let each Sister, therefore, willingly give her contribution to the creation of the genuine educational environments of Valdocco and Mornese, and be ready to live for and with the young people, seeking only their salvation in Christ.
The community animator

52. In the community the animator is a sister among her Sisters, with the specific responsibility for animating and guiding them.¹

Being the first in docility to the Holy Spirit,² let her carry out her service of authority, resolving to follow the teaching and example of Mother Mazzarello.

Let her combine firmness with, “patient and kindly love,”³ in such a way as to demonstrate to the Sisters and the young people the love with which God loves them⁴ and to serve his plan for each one.⁵

Let her devote herself with particular attention to the personal encounter with her Sisters, and foster genuine, sisterly relationships within the community.

Let her guide and encourage her Sisters to give an ever more conscious response to their vocation in fidelity to the Constitutions, and co-ordinate the energy and efforts of all to achieve the aims of the shared plan of pastoral charity.

The Sisters will recognise her role and correspond wholeheartedly.

R 55, 124

¹ Cf. MR 13.
² Cf. PC 14.
³ DB L 24.5.1886
⁴ Cf. PC 14; MB X 1094.
⁵ Cf. ET 25.
The demands of love

53. Constantly tending towards love, and with Salesian optimism, let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians strive to correct in herself attitudes and behaviour that do not build sisterly communion. Let her readily practise the renunciation required by her presence in community and among young people, which is a source of true joy.

Let her live the Gospel teaching on forgiveness and sisterly correction through frank, yet delicate relationships, generously overcoming any feeling of resentment or over sensitivity.¹

If it should happen that she offend someone let her obey Our Lord's command, "If you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister".²

¹ Cf. Matt. 18:15-16; C 1885 XVIII 14-15; MB VII 601; IX 998; XIII 880; MM L 27,10.
in living community life

54. Constant, cordial participation
    in the different moments of community life
    is both a requirement and an experience of communion.

    Let each Sister consider herself
    personally responsible
    for contributing to harmony within the community.
    This facilitates growth in maturity
    and each one’s daily response to the Lord.

    Community life
    also requires a silence
    that is an expression of charity
    and consideration for others,
    as well as respect for their times of work,
    prayer, and rest.
    This is conducive to reflection and attentive listening,
    prepares us to encounter God,¹
    and makes our mission more fruitful.

R 42

¹ C 1885 XVI 1.7; Cf. ET 46; DC 14; Maccono, Santa 1 400.
and in the joy of communion

55. Times of recreation and relaxation have a considerable effect on our personal and community life. They help to maintain a happy balance, nourish spontaneous union of minds and hearts, and restore our energies for the apostolate.¹

Let us, therefore, take part in them with a lively sense of community and sisterly cheerfulness.

Let us share our special times of celebration and family life with young people and join in their recreations as a friendly presence that inspires affection and trust, both of which are irreplaceable elements of Salesian education.²

R 39-40, 45

¹ Cf. C 1885 XIV 4.
² Cf. DB L 10.5.1884
Hospitality and the areas reserved for the Sisters

56. Seeing Christ in every person, let us welcome everyone with the simple, considerate kindness proper to the Salesian Spirit and, when necessary, offer hospitality with delicate attention and wise prudence.

To facilitate community life, and ensure the respect due to each Sister, certain areas of the house will be set aside for the exclusive use of the community.

R 47

Relationships with our family

57. The total giving of ourselves to God does not weaken the bonds of affection for our family. On the contrary, it makes them stronger and more profound.

Even with the real demands of inner detachment we grow in our capacity to share the joys and sorrows of our dear ones, by offering our prayers and our daily fidelity to the commitments of our vocation.

Let us show special gratitude towards the parents of the Sisters, considering them, as Don Bosco did, to be the first benefactors of the Institute. ¹

R 46

¹ Cf. Maccono, Santa I 334.
The religious habit

58. Let us consider the religious habit and crucifix as signs of our consecration and our belonging to the Institute. Given the pluralism in which we live, the use of both, or of the crucifix alone, depends on the socio-cultural context. Let us make our own Don Bosco's exhortation and live in such a manner that not only the signs, but our whole way of living, make us recognisable as, “religious, that is, people consecrated to God”.2

R 48

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1 Cf. PC 17; ET 22.
2 MB X 616.
The mutual gift of love

59. Let the entire community
surround the sick or elderly Sister with
affectionate consideration
and support her in all her needs.

Let each one recognise
in the elderly Sister a special presence
of fidelity and offering.
Let her express her gratitude
in a practical way
by valuing the experience
of the older members and giving them the opportunity
to contribute,
according to their ability,
so that they can feel that they are participating in community life.

Let the Sister who is tried by suffering or illness
be comforted by the certainty
that she shares more intimately
in Christ's redeeming mystery,¹
and in this way contributes
to strengthening sisterly communion
and the expansion of the mission of the Institute.

⁰ ⁰ ⁰ ⁰

¹ Cf. 2 Cor 4,10; LG 41; AA 16; MM L 39,4.
unites us beyond time

60. The communion that has united us in life
continues and is strengthened
when we reach the moment
of passing from this life to the Father's house.¹

Let the remembrance and gratitude we owe to those Sisters
with whom we have shared
the demands and the joys of our vocation,
the toil and the hopes of daily living,
encourage us to offer for them
the prescribed suffrages
and those suggested by charity²
and to live more generously
the giving of ourselves to God.

R 35-36, 38, 50

¹ Cf. LG 49; C 1885 XVIII 23.
² Cf. LG 50.
Witness to unity and communion in the Church

61. Let each Sister
   cultivate a strong sense of belonging
   to the province community.
   This links us to the whole Institute
   in that unity
   which is rooted in the spirit of our origins
   and is expressed by each Sister's fidelity to her vocation.

   Let each community collaborate
   with the local Church,\(^1\)
   with other groups of the Salesian Family,
   and with the religious communities in the area
   as a witness to communion,
   and in order to carry out a more effective service
   for the Kingdom of God.\(^2\)

\(^{1}\) Cf. \textit{CD} 34.35,5; \textit{ES} I 28; \textit{MR} 12.18,22.
\(^{2}\) Cf. \textit{PU} 24.
Mornese in our communities

62. The first community of Mornese
    is for us an invitation and an encouragement
    to make our community
    the, “house of the love of God,”¹
    where the young people will feel themselves welcomed,
    and where daily life,
    lived in love and joy,
    becomes a continuation of Mary’s Magnificat.

¹ Maccono, Santa I 306.
3. Sent for young people
in the spirit of the *da mihi animas*

OUR MISSION

“As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth” *(John 17:18-19).*

Sharing in the salvific mission of Christ, the Good Shepherd

63. Our mission

comes from the saving initiative of the Father\(^1\)
who calls us to participate, as an apostolic Salesian community,
in the Church,
to share in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry of Christ,
by witnessing, proclaiming the Word,
and rejoicing in salvation.\(^2\)

It implies

a preferential love for young people\(^3\)
and commits us to become for them,
at the school of Mary,
signs and mediations
of the love of Christ, the Good Shepherd,
through the Christian education
of the whole person,
according to the Preventive System.

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\(^1\) Cf. *MR* 16.
\(^3\) Cf. *Albera L* 18.10.1920.
By the Church’s mandate

64. The apostolic mandate is entrusted by the Church to the Institute,¹ that implements it through the provinces and local communities in communion with the local Church² and participating in its evangelising activities.

By the very fact of being a member of a specific community every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians is an apostle.

Let each of us, therefore, no matter what task has been assigned by obedience, live her identity as a Salesian educator in communion with her Sisters, in the spirit of the da mihi animas, and in the certainty that through different, but complementary roles, everyone co-operates in the salvation of young people.

¹ Cf. PC 8.
² Cf. MR 52.
we dedicate ourselves to young people

65. Our mission is directed
toward poor young people
at every stage of their development.¹

With the preferential love
of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello
we dedicate ourselves to the poorest,
that is, to those who, for various reasons,
have the least chance of success in life
and are more exposed to danger.²

Let us pay particular attention
to the adolescent
stage of life,³
when fundamental choices mature.

R 56-57

¹ Cf. C 1885 I 1.3-4; Cron II 400.
² Cf. MB III 203; XII 75-76; XV 703-704; Cron III 190-191; MO 162-163.
³ Cf. Cron I 97.
in the style of the Preventive System

66. In our apostolic work
    the Preventive System,
    Don Bosco's indispensable heritage
    to the Salesian Family,¹
    becomes an experience of communion
    lived among ourselves and with young people,
    in an atmosphere of spontaneity, friendship, and joy.

    Its basic components,
    reason, religion, and loving-kindness,²
    inspire an educational project
    which responds fully
    to the needs of evangelisation
    in the world of young people.

    This requires
    that we know how to propose
    and share with them
    authentic Gospel values,
    appealing to
    the inner resources of the person
    in an attitude
    of optimism, respect, and kindness,
    that are expressions of God’s love for them.

    Practised in this way, the Preventive System
    offers them the possibility of experiencing
    the liberating power of God's grace,
    facilitates the development of sound convictions,
    and opens them to generous self-giving.

¹ Cf. MB XVII 628.
² MB IV 547.
Salesian assistance

67. Salesian assistance, a typical expression of the Preventive System, is an indispensable educational need resulting from our communion with Christ that makes us attentive to the Holy Spirit at work in each person.

It is a welcoming, active, witnessing presence among young people, a warm-hearted, friendly sharing in their lives, hopes, and aspirations.

Assistance involves the whole community. It requires that each person give her contribution in creating a family atmosphere where young people are not only loved but know that they are loved. Finding themselves accepted and understood in the things that they like, they, in turn, will be more ready to accept what we propose.¹

¹ Cf. DB L 10.5.1884.
The educating community

68. An indispensable requirement for fruitful apostolic action is the formation of and responsible participation in, the educating community. This is composed of:

- the religious community that animates it in the spirit of the Preventive System,
- the young people, who both receive and play an active role in the formation process,
- the parents, guardians and collaborators.

The educating community has the task of ensuring the unity and continuity of all formative interventions within the one educational plan.

It is credible if it lives the ideals it proclaims, is sensitive to the needs of the Church and the social environment, mindful of the values present in each individual.

R 59, 73
Education of the whole person

69. The response of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello to the salvific will of God can be seen in their concern to form young people as, "good Christians and honest citizens".\(^1\)

Our pastoral plan, therefore, has the aim of promoting the development of the whole person.

It leads young people to gradually assume responsibility for their own growth, and to form themselves as persons capable of right judgment, free choices, and service to others.

It helps them to discover the mystery of God's presence in their lives and to value their baptismal call.\(^2\)

R 60-62, 74-75

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\(^1\) MB XIII 618; Cf. C I 1885 1 4; MB XVI 290; MO 218.
\(^2\) Cf. GE 1-3; ScC 45.
**Catechesis, our fundamental mandate**

70. The heart of our work of evangelisation is proclaiming Christ. This is done through various forms of pastoral service, especially through a catechesis that fosters growth in the faith, and its integration into life and culture.

This most important task is an essential part of the mission of the Institute. Let our communities, therefore, carry it out with care and competence, and in accordance with the directives of the local Church.¹

Let every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians do her utmost to ensure that the environment in which she works becomes one of faith, where the young person can experience true Christian living.

R 63-64, 74

¹ Cf. *GE* 4; *EN* 44; *CT* 15.22.65.
Commitment to sacramental and Marian life

71. Animated by apostolic charity let us guide young people to discover the deep joy of communion with God.

Let us educate them to live the liturgy, especially the sacraments of Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation,¹ as transforming encounters with Christ, and active participation in the ecclesial community.²

Let us also help them to know Mary, the Mother who welcomes and understands them, the helper who instils security,³ so that they may learn to love and imitate her in her openness to God and neighbour.⁴

This sacramental and Marian life is the foundation of Salesian spirituality and education.⁵ It becomes a serious commitment to, "cheerfulness, work, and prayer"⁶ that leads young people to become apostles among their peers⁷ and is a genuine way of holiness for them.⁸

R 29-30, 65

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¹ Cf. MB VI 145; XIII 921; XVI 168.
² Cf. CT 23-24.
³ Cf. MB III 32; Maccono, Santa II 280.
⁴ Cf. LG 66.
⁵ Cf. MB VII 167-171.680.
⁶ MB VII 159.
⁸ Cf. EN 72; Bosco G., Vita del giovanetto Savio Domenico, in Centro Studi Don Bosco, Giovanni Bosco. Opere edite XI, Roma, LAS 1976 [ristampa anastatica] [203].
leading to effective vocational guidance

72. The goal towards which all our pastoral work must be directed is the education of young people to discern God’s plan for them in their lives\(^1\) and to accept this as their mission.

Open to the particular perspective of the vocation of the woman in the Church,\(^2\) we shall help young women to become aware of the important issues of our times, and to be capable of contributing with competence and a Gospel spirit, to the building of a society more in keeping with the aspirations of the human person.

R 66, 68, 71

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\(^1\) Cf. *MB* XI 238; XIII 407.
\(^2\) Cf. *MR* 49; *PU* 12.
Vocations in the Church, Institute, and Salesian Family

73. Knowing that in every age
God calls some people to follow him more closely,
let us take special care of those young women
who show signs of a religious vocation. ¹

In gratitude to God for having called us
to the life of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
let us be especially responsible
for vocations to our Institute.

Let us ask God for vocations by incessant prayer
and by our own joyful and constant fidelity.²

We shall promote vocations
by making the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello
known to the girls and young women,
by having them share
in our apostolic work,
and offering them
suitable experiences of community life.³

We shall propose alternative vocations in the Salesian Family
to young people and our lay collaborators
who feel drawn to share in the mission
for young people and for those most in need.

¹ Cf. MB XVII 305.
³ Cf. PC 24.
The past pupils

74. Faithful to the teachings of the Church and in accordance with our tradition, we shall maintain cordial relationships with our past pupils receiving them with the welcome proper to our Family Spirit.

Through the education received, all past pupils form part of the Salesian Family. Their sense of belonging becomes closer when they become members of the association promoted by the Institute.

Therefore, let us encourage them to become members, pledging themselves to live Salesian values in the family, Church and society, and to collaborate in our works.

To our past pupils who belong to other religious traditions, or to no religion, let us propose suitable means to enable them to live and transmit to others the values assimilated during their formation.

R 59, 64, 68

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1 Cf. GE 8.
2 Cf. MB XIV 511; XVII 489.
The missionary dimension of the Institute

75. The missionary dimension, an essential element of the identity of the Institute and the expression of its universality, has been part of our history since its very beginning.¹

We work among people who have not yet received the good news of the Word so that they may find in Christ the deep meaning of their aspirations and of their cultural values.²

We make the Church present by helping these our sisters and brothers, especially young people, to grow in their experience of God’s personal love for them. This can awaken the desire within them to receive the Gospel and to become witnesses and apostles.

Like our first Sisters in Mornese, wherever we work we shall seek to increase interest in the challenges of evangelisation and encourage missionary vocations.

R 64, 69-72

¹ Cf. C I 885 I 3; MB IX 409-410; XII 66.177; Cron II 257.276-278; MM L 4,14; 5,9; 9,4.
² Cf. AG 11; EN 48.51.
Unity of the *da mihi animas* in the plurality of environments

76. Let us carry out our mission in the unity of our charism and the plurality of socio-cultural situations, with the adaptability, courage, and creativity that impelled Don Bosco to go out to meet young people.¹

Ordinarily this is done through the ministries proper to the Institute: oratories, youth centres, schools, and other educational, developmental, and social work.

Let us also respond to the needs of the local Church and the area with other forms of presence, according to our possibilities, and always in fidelity to the character of the Institute.

In every place and in whatever situation we may find ourselves, let us make these words of our founder our own, "I have promised God that I shall work for my poor boys to my last breath".²

R 73-75

¹ Cf. *MB* XIII 283-284.
² *MB* XVIII 258.
Our Formation
1. General principles

“The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil.1:6).

One in Christ in the Salesian lifestyle

77. Formation is founded on the Father’s plan, which through the Holy Spirit seeks to render us, “conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family”.¹

In our life as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians formation assumes the characteristics of the specific experience of the Holy Spirit that Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello transmitted to us, and which we personally and in community, have the duty to live and develop in harmony with the Body of Christ which is in continual growth.²

¹ Rom.8:29.
² Cf. LG 45; CD 33; MR 11.
Co-responsibility in the work of formation

78. The aim of formation is, therefore, the maturing of the whole person in a gradual, progressive configuration to Christ, apostle of the Father, according to the plan of life outlined in the Constitutions.

This requires:

- on the part of the Institute, the commitment to discern and foster the vocation of those called to be members, discovering and appreciating the gifts of each person so that all can be used for the benefit of our shared mission, and offering to all the ways and means best suited to their ongoing formation;

- on the part of each Sister, the constant will to deepen the meaning of her call, and to assimilate the Preventive System for the service of evangelisation of young people, in fidelity to the Church, and attentive to the needs of contemporary society.
Guides of formation, Holy Spirit, Mary Most Holy, formators

79. Above all, formation is the work of the Holy Spirit, and as such it requires listening, docility, and collaboration. Our model and guide in this fundamental attitude is Mary, Most Holy, mother and educator of every Salesian vocation.\(^1\) In her we find a living presence, and the help to direct our lives decisively to Christ, and to make our personal relationship with him ever more authentic.\(^2\)

In addition to the person herself, the work of formation involves the community and the Sisters entrusted with a specific responsibility in this field.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Cf. *MB* XII 578.
\(^2\) Cf. *RH* 22.
\(^3\) Cf. *PC* 14; *MR* 14.
The person

80. Each of us has the primary and most direct responsibility for our personal formation. This implies self-acceptance and the ongoing journey of conversion, so that we may respond attentively and faithfully to our vocation, to live pastoral charity with the enthusiasm of the *da mihi animas*, and thus unifying our whole being in the will of the Father.

This requires sincerity with and confidence in our superiors, and an openness to dialogue with our Sisters in the light of God's Word and the values proper to our identity as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

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1 Cf. *MB* IX 688; Maccono, *Santa* II 252.280-281; *MM II* 47.12.
The Sisters entrusted with a specific role

81. The Sisters entrusted with the service of formation will be of one mind in carrying out this gradual, continuous task, with respectful attention to the individual. They will follow the teaching of Mother Mazzarello: it is necessary to study the different temperaments, to gradually instil the spirit of our Congregation; to correct with kindness, without expecting that they will amend their faults all at once; to form them to love of sacrifice and complete detachment from their own will. With prayer, patience, and vigilance, you will succeed in everything.  

Those in authority will entrust this role to Sisters who manifest a profound sense of God, are richly endowed with human qualities, are experienced and enthusiastic in promoting vocations. They should demonstrate a capacity for discernment and animation, competence in and sensitivity to the Salesian educational mission, and openness to the realities of the Church and society.

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1 Cf. MM L 25,2-3.
2 Cf. PC 18; DC 20.
The community

82. The community becomes the primary place for formation when, in a family atmosphere, witness is given to Gospel values and all strive for holiness according to the Salesian style.

It is the task of the whole community to help the Sisters, especially those who are younger, to become part of the community, and to further the maturing of each person’s vocation, directing all efforts toward the mission.

This requires that each person consider herself to be responsible for the atmosphere of the community and live in an attitude of acceptance, dialogue, and apostolic service.

Formation, a unified process

83. The process of formation is ongoing and is carried out through successive, complementary stages.

The period of time that precedes final profession establishes the foundation for that dynamic growth in the identity of the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians that must continue throughout life.

This initial stage is composed of:

- period of assessment and guidance and the postulancy;
- the novitiate;
- the period of temporary profession.

Formation then continues in the rhythm and manner best suited to the circumstances of the individual Sister.
2. Acceptance into the Institute

"Here I am for you called me" (1 Sam 3:5).

Vocational discernment

84. Vocational discernment
and the admission of candidates

to the successive stages of formation
require prudence, prayer,
and open, sincere dialogue,
that help to know the person
and God's plan for her.

The teachings
of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello,¹
and the directives of the Church and the Institute
will be the guiding criteria
for judging the authenticity
of a vocation, and the suitability of the candidate
for life as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

¹ Cf. DB L 24.5.1886; MB XV 364-365; X 598-599; Maccono, Santa 1 347; Cron 1 247.
Acceptance into the Institute

85. The acceptance of a candidate is the responsibility of the provincial.
   It must be preceded by
   the appropriate inquiries and the verification of the conditions required for the eventual valid and lawful admission to the novitiate and to profession according to the Universal Law of the Church and the Law of the Congregation.

   The candidate must have the right intention, and freely choose\(^1\) to seek admission.
   She must possess, at a basic level, those qualities required by the nature of the Institute.

\(^1\) Cf. OT 6; MB VIII 828-829; Maccono, Santa II 151.
3. The stages of formation

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own” (Phil. 3:12).

PERIOD OF ASSESSMENT AND GUIDANCE

Nature and objectives

86. The period of assessment and guidance is characterised by a strong experience of Christian living.

The candidate will deepen the meaning of her baptismal consecration in which the religious consecration is rooted.

She will be initiated into community and apostolic life in the spirit of the Institute and will seek to reach the degree of maturity necessary to freely and responsibly make her choice of vocation.

R 81-84

Admission to the postulancy

87. In order that this stage may be considered adequately completed, the candidate must show that she has discerned her vocational plan and possesses the qualities required by our Salesian life.

R 81-82, 85
POSTULANCY

Nature and objectives

88. The postulancy is the time of immediate preparation for the novitiate. The length of time is established in the regulations.

During this period the postulant will commit herself to deepen her understanding of God's call, and will gradually and serenely make the detachment spoken of in the Gospel. This is indispensable for a true personal encounter with Christ, and a more generous dedication to others.

She will intensify her formation by sound experiences of prayer, community life, and the apostolate, by a more accurate doctrinal preparation, and a progressive assimilation of the spirit of Don Bosco and of Mother Mazzarello.

Admission to the novitiate

89. At the end of the postulancy the young woman should have discerned and given proof of possessing the dispositions necessary for living the vocation of a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. Particular attention should be given to her mentality of faith, her capacity for obedience, participation in community life, and the gift of a call to work with young people.

The postulants will make an eight day retreat, at the end of which they will begin their novitiate.
NOVITIATE

Nature and objectives

90. The novitiate is the period of real initiation into religious life.

Through reflection on the Word of God, the study and vital assimilation of the Constitutions, daily commitment to the practice of asceticism, and the integration of work and prayer, the novice will understand ever more profoundly the requirements of the following of Christ in our Salesian vocation.¹

Through participation in community life and suitable apostolic experiences she will develop a sense of mission.

She will seek to assume the identity of the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and strengthen her sense of belonging to the Institute in the joy of self-giving to God for the salvation of young people.

R 89

¹ Cf. C 1885 XIII 1-5.
Conditions for validity  Apostolic experience

91. The novitiate lasts for two years.
    For valid reasons the provincial,
    with the approval of her council,
    may prolong it, but for no longer than six months.

    The period of novitiate
    must be spent in a house designated by the superior general
    with the consent of her council.

    The novitiate becomes invalid if,
    during the first or canonical year, the novice
    should be absent for more than a total of three months.
    In such cases the novitiate must be repeated.

    In the second year the novice may take part
    in a community and apostolic experience,
    outside of the novitiate house,
    always under the responsibility
    of the novice formator
    and solely for formative reasons.

R 90-91
The novice formator

92. The novice formator is the person immediately responsible for the formation of the novices. She will carry out her task in full accord with the provincial and in communion with her own collaborators. She should possess gifts of intuition, capacity for human relationships, so as to inspire confidence, and will make herself loved according to the spirit of Don Bosco.¹

She should be a woman of faith and prayer, able to discern the workings of God in persons and events, capable of transmitting Salesian principles and love of the Institute in a vital way.²

Her formative work requires adequate preparation in human and religious sciences, knowledge of the socio-cultural and ecclesial realities, and suitable experience in the field of the apostolate.

R 92-93

¹ Cf. C 1885 IX 3; DC 20.
² Cf. C 1885 IX 2.5-6.
Nomination and conditions

93. The novice formator is nominated by the provincial with the consent of her council as prescribed in article 152c.

She must be perpetually professed, and be at least thirty years of age.

She remains in office for three years, and may be re-appointed for a second and even a third term, but not for a fourth consecutively.

Admission to first profession

94. To be admitted to religious profession the novice must have a clear understanding of its nature and value, and possess the necessary maturity to decide freely and sincerely to give herself to God, responsibly accepting the obligations inherent to the vocation of a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians.

Before profession the novices will make an eight day spiritual retreat.

R 94
Duration of temporary profession

95. The religious profession will be made annually according to the prescribed formula for a period of four years, then for two years, after which perpetual vows will be made.

When opportune, the period of temporary vows may be prolonged even to nine years. The decisions relative to this will be made case by case, following an agreement between the Sister concerned and the provincial.

PERIOD OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION

Nature and objectives

96. The period of temporary profession corresponds to the entire period of temporary vows.

It is a very important time of formation for vocational growth and in preparation for perpetual profession.

It seeks to strengthen in the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians the life of union with God and the sense of belonging to the Institute, to gradually introduce her into youth ministry and to continue her specific Salesian formation.

1 Cf. PC 18; ES II 35-36.
Personal and community commitment

97. The period of temporary profession will be spent in a community that offers the possibility of valid experiences in living Salesian life.

The temporary professed Sister will participate in community life, in an attitude of humble and serene availability, renewing each day the offering of her whole self to the Lord for the salvation of young people.

She will learn to value the guidance of her animator and the sisterly help of her community in becoming more capable of fulfilling the ideals of her religious profession in daily life.

The members of the community will seek to bear witness to the richness of their vocation by the example of their own lives and their zeal for the apostolate.

The second novitiate

98. The second novitiate is the period of immediate preparation for perpetual profession.

In an atmosphere of prayer and reflection, and leaving aside her usual occupations, the Sister will review her life in the light of the Holy Spirit to prepare herself better to give a definitive response of fidelity to God in the Institute.

The second novitiate will last for at least two months.
Perpetual profession

99. In the joyful certainty of being called to participate in the educational mission of the Institute, by the ecclesial act of perpetual profession, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians declares publicly that she desires to give herself to God forever in the service of others according to the plan of our founder. Perpetual profession constitutes a radical commitment for life that must guide all subsequent choices and influence every aspect of the Sister’s life.

ONGOING FORMATION

Nature and objectives

100. Religious profession lived in fidelity to God in the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, and as a response to the expectations of the Church and of young people, requires continual self-formation. In docility to the Holy Spirit each of us will be attentive to discern and to make use of every occasion for vocational growth to achieve the fullness of our identity as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The Institute offers the means and possibilities for adequate and progressive renewal and updating.1

R 98-99

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1 Cf. PC 18; MR 14.
The community, focus and place of formation

101. The community is responsible for its own formation and is a place of formation for all. Just as the Church is described as, "holy and at the same time always in need of purification", so too, the community must live in an attitude of continual conversion to meet all the demands of a Salesian vocation.

Nevertheless, through the commitment of each individual member the community, in turn, assumes a formative role. It sets goals and objectives for itself, and periodically evaluates their implementation.

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1 LG 8.
Preparation of Sisters called to a service of authority and formation

102. The specific preparation of the Sisters called to the service of authority and of formation, is an indispensable condition for strengthening vitality and unity in the Institute.

The vocational identity of the Sisters, the apostolic vitality of our mission, and the faithful and dynamic development of our charism require persons who, in addition to possessing the necessary qualities for their role, also feel the urgent need for continual formation and frequent evaluation.

R 100

God's call, the same, yet ever new

103. God's call, the same yet ever new, accompanies us during our whole earthly journey and makes itself felt more strongly and decisively at particular moments.

The difficulties inherent to various phases of life, the trials and sufferings of whatever kind, are all calls from the Lord. God invites us to renew in an ever more conscious way the profound motivation for our choice, to make our response more free and authentic.

Making good use of all that the Institute offers, let each of us learn to appreciate these occasions to reach greater maturity.
4. Fidelity and perseverance

“Our fidelity is founded on that of God

104. Perseverance in one's vocation
calls for the constant vigilance required by the Gospel,
and relies on God's fidelity.
Let each Sister seek to obtain this grace
through fervent prayer
and constancy in her personal commitment.

When fidelity becomes more difficult,
the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
will intensify her humble supplication to the Father
who has called her by name,
and she will confide in her superiors. ¹

The community, for its part, will give the support
of prayer, understanding, and loving-kindness
to the Sister who is uncertain or doubtful.

¹ Cf. I Cor 7:24; MB IX 910-911; Maccono, Santa II 280-281.
Separation from the Institute

105. Permission to be absent from the religious house is granted by the superior general with the consent of her council in conformity with the Law of the Congregation and according to the usual procedure in the Institute.

In cases of exclaustration, dispensation from the vows, and dismissal from the Institute, the norms prescribed by the Universal Law of the Church will be followed.

Every decision of this nature should be preceded by genuine efforts to discern the will of God sought through prayer and the advice of prudent persons. Such decisions will be carried out in uprightness and mutual respect, in such a way that even when membership of the Institute is relinquished, the bonds of charity remain.

Let the superiors provide the Sisters who find themselves in these particular situations with the spiritual and material help suggested by sisterly concern. ¹

¹ Cf. MB XIII 282; XVII 264-265.
Advanced age, a time of particular response to God

106. The constantly renewed response
to the gift of vocation
is such, that even at an advanced age,
though energies are declining,
it still offers
a specific spiritual richness.
This precious time,
accepted serenely, and in abandonment
to the Lord's goodness,
can transform the person
into a witness of God’s unfailing tenderness.
The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
who lives in this deep peace,
welcomes the new generations with kindliness.
She becomes a witness to perennial values,
and in her life,
enriched by wisdom and prayer,
supports and encourages the mission of her Sisters.

R 49

Sharing in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord

107. Fidelity lived in all its fullness,
finds its completion in death,
the final seal of our religious profession,
the moment of total communion with God.

Given to the Father and to our sisters and brothers in Christ,
we await the Lord's coming,
preparing ourselves
with Mary's motherly help,
to share in the Lord’s Paschal Mystery
in a new and definitive way,
in the certainty that comes from the apostle’s words,
"I know in whom I have placed my trust". ¹

¹ Cf. 2 Tim. 1:12.
The Service of Authority in our Institute
1. General principles

“...just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life” (Matt. 20:28).

Authority, sign of unity and service of mediation

108. In the light of faith we recognise that authority, which is a visible sign of unity and communion, carries out a service of mediation in the search for God's will.

It is based on the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, who came to serve, and to give his life for his sisters and brothers in order to lead them to the Father.¹

In our Institute the service of authority is lived in pastoral charity in fidelity to the Salesian Spirit.

Its aim is to promote communion as we grow in our vocation, in such a way, that while expressing the mystery of the People of God in the diversity of gifts and roles, we fulfil the mission the Lord has entrusted to us.

Authority in the Institute shares in that of the Church, which has canonically established it and approved its Constitutions.²

² Cf. MR 13.
The Vicar of Christ, our first superior

109. The Vicar of Christ, the Supreme Pastor of the whole Church, is our first superior with regard to religious life.

Each of us will show him the same love that characterised Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello accepting his teaching, in filial loyalty, obeying him even by virtue of the vow.¹

Let us educate our young people to accept his word and bear witness to it with faith and courage.

R 53-54

¹ Cf. MR 22; MB VI 494.
The bishop, shepherd of the local Church

110. We also express our love for the Church by loyalty to our bishops,\textsuperscript{1} the successors of the apostles and shepherds of the local Church.

Let us faithfully follow their directives and share in the life of the diocese and the parish, working among the People of God in conformity with the specific nature of our Institute.\textsuperscript{2}

\textbf{R 54}

\textsuperscript{1} Cf. \textit{MR} 20.
\textsuperscript{2} Cf. \textit{PC} 2; \textit{CD} 33-35; \textit{MR} 22; \textit{PU} 21.
The rector major, centre of unity in the Salesian Family

111. The rector major
    of the Society of St. Francis de Sales,
    is the centre of unity in the Salesian Family,
    and by means of the faculties
    delegated to him by the Holy See,
    also helps to keep alive our fidelity to Don Bosco.

    Let us correspond to his care
    by gratefully accepting his guidance
    and actively putting it into practice.

R 52

Unity of our Institute in various socio-cultural contexts

112. In view of our one mission,
    our Institute is organised
    in such a way
    as to guarantee unity in the diversity
    of socio-cultural contexts
    according to the mind of Don Bosco. ¹

    The various structures of government
    at world, provincial, and local levels
    respond to this need.

    In them the service of authority
    is exercised
    in communion of spirit and action,
    with the superior general,
    and in accordance with the Constitutions.

¹ Cf. MB IX 573, 575; X 1097-1098.
Loving-kindness, animating principle of the service of authority

113. The animating principle of the service of authority is loving-kindness lived in the Family Spirit that builds mutual trust and a sense of belonging.  

This commits every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians to active and responsible participation, deeply integrating freedom and obedience, creativity and fidelity, subsidiarity and authority, for the fulfilment of her vocation in the Church.

\[\text{Cf. MB VIII 829.}\]
Salesian characteristics of authority

114. In keeping with the words of Don Bosco we consider Our Blessed Lady to be our, "real superior". ¹ Mother Mazzarello also considered her as such.

   Like her, let every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians called to the service of authority live in an attitude of inner poverty and openness to the Holy Spirit. With a motherly heart, let her seek to express Mary's strong yet tender love,² making herself all things to all people.³

   Let her carry out the task of animation and guidance in the spirit of the Preventive System, attentive to the person of each Sister, seeking to create a climate of trust, sincerity, and Salesian simplicity,⁴ encouraging community growth in the apostolic enthusiasm of the *da mihi animas.*

R 108

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¹ Cf. Cron I 309; III 238; Maccono, *Santa* II 280.
² Cf. RH 22.
³ Cf. *I Cor* 9:22; MB XIII 723; XVII 112.
⁴ Cf. *MM L* 17,1.
2. The service of authority
in a worldwide community

“...and you will be my witnesses...
to the ends of the earth”
(Acts 1:8).

THE WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY

Our worldwide community

115. 

Our Salesian vocation
opens us to a universal dimension.
Our Institute
is a worldwide community
called to give witness
of communion
and universality in the Church.

It shares the heritage
left by Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello,
and continues their educational project
in profound unity.
THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

The superior general, bond of union in the worldwide community

116. The superior general is the bond of communion
and the centre of unity in the Institute.

Her service of authority
will be inspired by the principles of fidelity
to our Salesian spiritual heritage
and attention to the needs of the Church
so that the Institute
may reach the goal
for which the Holy Spirit inspired it.

She will carry out her task
of animation, formation, and guidance
in the characteristic Spirit of Mornese.
She will be a mother to all her Sisters
and they will call her by that name.

Authority  Term of office

117. The superior general
has full governing authority in the Institute.
By virtue of her office,
she exercises authority
over all the provinces, pre-provinces, houses, and Sisters,
according to the norms of the Universal Law of the Church
and the Constitutions.

She is elected by the general chapter,
remains in office for six years,
and may be re-elected for a further six.

She may not relinquish her mandate
without the consent of the Holy See.

Requirements

118. In order to be elected superior general
a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians
must be at least 45 years of age,
and perpetually professed for 15 years.

She should have given proof
of a dynamic ecclesial and pastoral awareness,
and of possessing the necessary gifts of mind and heart,
spirit of prayer, discernment,
love for the Institute,
and a capacity for animation in governing.
Election

119. An absolute majority of the votes of the general chapter members present is required for the election of the superior general.

If no Sister obtains an absolute majority in the first, second, or even the third scrutiny, a fourth and last one shall be made in which votes may only be given to the two Sisters who obtained the highest number of votes in the third scrutiny. In such a case the two candidates will abstain from voting.

If both obtain the same number of votes the Sister, senior in profession, will be elected and in the event of equality of profession, the Sister senior in age.
Visiting the Institute

120. The superior general will visit the Institute either personally or through her general councillors, or, in exceptional cases, through other Sisters chosen from outside the general council. The visit has the aim of strengthening the bonds of love,\(^1\) deepening the commitment of fidelity to the Constitutions, and fostering the development of our ministries in response to local needs in the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello.

In both personal and community encounters the superior general will encourage spontaneity in relationships to facilitate constructive, sincere dialogue. She will take an interest in the economic administration in the light of charity, justice, evangelical poverty, and apostolic aims.

\(^1\) Cf. *MB* X 1094.
Responsibilities

121. In addition to the duties set out in the Universal Law of the Church, the superior general has also the following responsibilities:

a. to represent the Institute in an official capacity;
b. to convoke and preside at meetings of the general council;
c. to assign to the members of the general council other duties in addition to those already prescribed by the Constitutions;
d. to verify that the economic administration fulfils its purpose;
e. to confirm admission to temporary and perpetual profession;
f. to transfer Sisters definitively from one province to another;
g. to grant permission to change one’s will;
h. to grant permission to a perpetually professed Sister, who, for particular reasons, wishes to renounce her patrimony;
i. to exempt from the observance of a disciplinary disposition of the Regulations in particular cases, and for just reason, after having heard the opinion of her council;
j. to convoke and preside at the general chapter and present the report on the state of the Institute;
k. to nominate the moderator of the general chapter;
l. to approve the substitution of a provincial or superior of a pre-province who is prevented from taking part in the general chapter;
m. to invite to the general chapter Sisters or other persons competent in particular fields;
n. to promulgate the acts of the general chapter;
o. to present to the Holy See, for due approval,
the eventual changes
to the Constitutions
made by the general chapter.

R 80, R 112, R 9, R 9
THE GENERAL COUNCIL

The general council

122. The general councillors,
in communion with the superior general,
collaborate in the government
and animation of the Institute.

Let them commit themselves
to study the needs of religious life today;
and to recognise the values
present in different cultures,
so that everywhere the Institute may
give a faithful and adequate response
to the mandate received from the Church.

In uprightness and prudence,
and with serene and wholehearted dedication,
they will carry out the duties assigned to them
by the Constitutions and the general chapter,
as well as those received from the superior general.
**Members**

123. The general council is composed of fourteen voting members and the secretary general:

The members with the right to vote are:

the vicar general;

six councillors responsible respectively for:
- formation
- youth ministry
- Salesian Family
- missions
- social communications
- general administration (bursar);

seven councillors to whom the superior general will assign the role of visiting individual provinces or groups of provinces, and of suitably animating any form of collaboration among the provinces.
Term of office Requirements

124. The general councillors are elected by the general chapter. They remain in office for six years and may be re-elected for a second term of six years in the same office. Ordinarily they will reside at the central house of the Institute. To be elected to the general council a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians must be at least 40 years of age and 10 years perpetually professed.

Election

125. The general councillors will be elected in separate ballots that require an absolute majority. If the first and second scrutinies show that no Sister has obtained an absolute majority a third will be held, and the Sister who obtains the most votes will be elected. If two Sisters receive an equal number of votes the procedure prescribed in article 119 will be followed.
The vicar general

126. The vicar general is the foremost collaborator of the superior general in her task of animating the life and dynamic fidelity of the Institute.

She will take the place of the superior general when she is absent or prevented from attending to particular duties. The vicar carries out the tasks entrusted to her by the superior general.
Government ad interim

127. In the event of the death, resignation or deposition of the superior general, the vicar, will assume the government of the Institute for the ordinary administration and, with the consent of the other councillors, she will convocate the general chapter for the election of a new superior general.

This election should take place not less than three months or more than six after the vacancy occurs.

The councillor for formation

128. The councillor for formation animates and promotes the integral, ongoing formation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians with regard to the values and needs of our specific vocation in the Church. She will devote particular attention to the period of initial formation.

The councillor for youth ministry

129. The councillor for youth ministry will animate the apostolic activity of the Institute in all its various forms, always in fidelity to its charism, keeping the needs of young people in mind. She will offer guidance so that in every province true educating communities may be formed, which, in the spirit of the Preventive System, will promote the integral formation of young people in a way that will enable them to become apostles, in the Church and in society.
The councillor for the Salesian Family

129 bis. The councillor for the Salesian Family will offer guidelines to enable the Institute to bring its unique, feminine and Marian contribution to growth in communion and collaboration in the Salesian Family.

She will accompany the Past Pupils Association with particular attention so that its members may live their vocation as lay persons in a responsible and autonomous manner.

She will share with the Salesians of Don Bosco the animation of the Association of Salesian Co-operators and of the Association of Mary Help of Christians.

The councillor for the missions

130. The councillor for the missions has the responsibility of giving impetus to the missionary activity of the Institute among people receiving the Good News for the first time.

She will be particularly attentive to the challenges facing our missions and will take an interest in the missionaries, organising courses of preparation and updating.
The councillor for social communications

130 bis. The councillor for social communications, aware of the influence of this reality in different cultures, will animate the area of social communications in the Institute and will propose guidelines to the provinces.

She will foster connections with civil, religious, and educational organisations that deal with social communications.

She will co-ordinate the production of resources and publications to make the Institute known and to animate it at formative, pastoral, and missionary levels.
The bursar general

131. The bursar general, in dependence on the superior general, and on an understanding with the general council, administers and manages the moveable and immovable goods of the Institute, with transparency, respecting canon and civil law. She will periodically give an account of them to the superior general and her council.

She will co-ordinate and evaluate the administration of the material goods of the different provinces, offering helpful, sisterly advice to the bursars.

Always motivated by charity she will keep religious poverty, communion of goods, and the apostolic needs of the Institute as the criteria and guidelines for her work.

The councillors delegated to visit the Institute

132. The councillors delegated by the superior general to visit the Institute will, in addition to the duties prescribed in Article 120 of the present Constitutions, also have the task of promoting constructive and continuous communication between the provinces and the superior general and her council. They will encourage effective collaboration among the various provincial communities.

Through their service they will seek to offer the general council a better knowledge of the Sisters and of the situations in which our mission is carried out, and thus be able to develop the apostolic work of the Institute, valuing the different cultures in complete fidelity to the Church and to Don Bosco.
The secretary general

133. The secretary general
is responsible for the central archives,
and for the chronicles of the Institute,
registers and general statistics.

She will draw up the minutes
and deliberations of the general council
and the official documents of the Institute.

To further an ongoing knowledge
and assimilation of the Salesian Spirit,
she will carefully preserve
the historical patrimony of the Institute
through documentation.

She is appointed for six years
by the superior general
with the consent of her council.
Her appointment may be renewed.

She takes part in the council
meetings without the right to vote.

Responsibilities of the general council

134. The general council
will meet monthly and whenever,
in the opinion of the superior general,
the interests of the Institute require.

Ordinarily it assists
the superior general
in a consultative capacity.
The superior general must, however,
have the consensus
of her council in the following cases:

a. the convocation
   of an extraordinary general chapter
   when required by just reasons;

b. the appointment of the secretary general;

c. the substitution, until the next general chapter,
of a general councillor
   who has died
   or who is permanently prevented
   from attending to her duties;

d. the choice of visiting Sisters
   when they do not form part of the council;

e. the termination, for serious reasons,
or through necessity, of an assignment
or office of government before the term of office has expired;

f. the change of residence
   of the superior general and her council;

g. the establishment of provinces or pre-provinces,
   the formation of provincial delegations,
   the constitution of communities
directly dependent on the superior general,
   the modification or suppression of the above,
   the confirmation of the change
   of the provincial house,
   or that of a pre-province,
   following the proposal of the superior concerned
   and her council;

h. the appointment of provincials
   and superiors of pre-provinces,
   after previous consultation;
   the extension for not more than 6 months
   of the term of office of a provincial,
   the superior of a pre-province,
   a member of the provincial
   or pre-province council
   or of a local superior;

i. the appointment of provincial councillors
   or councillors of pre-provinces
   proposed by the provincial
   or the superior of a pre-province,
   after previous consultation;

j. the confirmation of the appointment
   of the bursar and secretary
   of a province or pre-province,
   the novice formator and local animators
   presented by the provincial
   or the superior of a pre-province
   and their respective councils,
   confirmation of a Sister in charge of a delegation
   according to Article 161;

k. the approval of decisions
   taken by provincial or pre-province chapters
   and of any appendix
   to the Regulations
   proposed by the provincial
   or the superior of a pre-province
   with their respective councils;

l. the authorisation to convocate
   an extraordinary provincial
   or pre-province chapter;
m. the institution of interprovincial conferences
   proposed by groups of provinces,
   and pre-provinces;

n. the return to the secular state
   of a Sister with temporary vows
   who makes this request;

o. the forwarding to the Holy See
   of a request for the dispensation
   from perpetual profession;

p. granting permission for leave of absence
   from the religious house,
   according to the norms of canon law,
   for a professed Sister who requests it for just motives;

q. an indult of exclaustration,
   for a maximum of three years,
   for a perpetually professed Sister
   who requests it for serious motives;

r. the founding of novitiates;
   the closure or transfer of those already in existence;

s. the authorisation to proceed
   with the opening or closing of houses;
   major changes in ministry
   proposed by the provincial
   or the superior of the pre-province
   with their respective councils;

t. the authorisation to enter into
   contracts, or agreements drawn up
   in the name of the Institute
   after having received the relevant documents;

u. the authorisation to carry out the following transactions:
   ▪ buying or sell immovable goods;
   ▪ renting out immovable goods on a temporary basis
     and in particular circumstances;
   ▪ contracting debts or mortgages;
   ▪ applying for loans;
   ▪ accepting deeds of gift, legacies,
     life annuities or similar deeds;
   ▪ constructing new buildings,
     demolishing those already in existence,
     or making major alterations;

v. to approve
   the administrative report
   presented annually by the bursar general;

For the validity of the council acts,
the presence of at least four councillors is required.

The superior general and her council
also act collegially,
according to the Universal Law of the Church, in studying and eventually deciding in the case of the dismissal of a Sister.

R 130-131, R 103, R 105-106, R 101, R 101, R 89, R 21, R 19
THE GENERAL CHAPTER

The general chapter, a common search for God's will for the Institute

135. The general chapter, the representative assembly of the whole Institute, is both a means for and an expression of unity.

It is a key moment for reflection, evaluation, and guidance in a common search for God's will.

The general chapter requires particular openness to God, in sisterly love, and the collaboration of all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians through their prayer, study, and proposals.

Suggestions may be sent to the general chapter, not only by provinces or pre-provinces, but also by communities and individual Sisters.

In humble attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, the Sisters gathered together to represent all the provinces and pre-provinces will study those challenges relative to the various socio-cultural situations. They will make decisions designed to increase the vitality of the Institute, in fidelity to the founding spirit and the ongoing story of the Church.

Purpose Tasks

136. The general chapter exercises supreme authority over the whole Institute in a collegial, temporary manner and it will take place according to its specific Regulations, taking into account the Universal Law of the Church.

The superior general presides over the general chapter, or, in the event of her absence, the vicar will do so.

The tasks of the general chapter are as follows:

a. to elect the superior general and the general councillors;

b. 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. to review the deliberations
   of the preceding general chapter,
   to confirm, modify or revoke them;

d. to establish norms and adopt
   deliberations of a general nature;

e. to make eventual modifications
   to the Constitutions or to the Regulations.

The deliberations of the general chapter
will always be based
on the Constitutions approved by the Holy See.
Ordinary and extraordinary general chapters

137. The general chapter will be held:

- ordinarily every six years
  and when it is necessary
  to elect a new superior general
  in the cases foreseen in Article 127
  of the present Constitutions;
- and extraordinarily
  when the superior general
  and her council
  judge it to be necessary.

Convocation

138. Except in the cases foreseen
    in Article 127 the general chapter
    will be convoked by the superior general
    one year before its opening,
    by means of a circular letter
    sent to all the communities of the Institute.

    This letter will indicate the purpose,
    place, and opening date of the general chapter.

    The superior who convokes the general chapter
    will appoint a moderator
    who will be responsible for its preparation
    and functioning, according to the prescribed Regulations.
Members

139. The following will take part in the chapter with the right to vote:

   a. the superior general;
   b. the superiors general *emeritae*;
   c. the general councillors, who remain members of the general chapter in progress even if not re-elected;
   d. the secretary general;
   e. the moderator of the chapter;
   f. the provincials, and the superiors of pre-provinces or, if they are prevented from attending for a serious reason, their vicars, with the previous approval of the superior general;
   g. a delegate from each province of not more than 300 Sisters, a second delegate from each province with more than 300 Sisters and a delegate of each pre-province, elected by their respective chapters;
   h. elected by the pre-chapter assembly of communities directly dependent on the superior general.

R 122

Conditions for the validity of the acts

140. At least two thirds of the chapter members must be present for the acts of the general chapter to be valid.

The deliberations approved by an absolute majority of votes of the chapter members present have the binding force of law.
Modifications of the Constitutions and Regulations

141. The approval, with a two-thirds majority vote of the chapter members present, is required for the valid modification or suppression of an article of the Constitutions or the Regulations, or for the insertion of a new article.

For the Constitutions the approval of the Holy See is also required.

The legal status of the deliberations

142. The deliberations of the general chapter will be promulgated by the superior general and will have the binding force of law for all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians unless a later chapter modifies or revokes them.
3. The service of authority in the province community

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling” (Eph 4:4).

THE PROVINCE COMMUNITY

Juridical regions, provinces and pre-provinces

142 bis. The Institute is organised into juridical regions called provinces and pre-provinces. These are canonically established by the superior general with the consensus of her council after due consultation with the communities concerned.

The pre-provinces are constituted with special statutes corresponding to their individual situations. They are equivalent to provinces, except for eventual conditions established by their statutes.
The province community

143. The province community
is a group of local communities
in a particular region
who share sisterly life
and apostolic projects.

In communion with the superior general
and her council,
faithful to the charism of the Institute,
it expresses,
through a particular service to the Church,
the varied richness
of our one vocation.

The province is canonically established
by the superior general
with the consent of her council,
and it is entrusted to the governance of the provincial.

THE PROVINCIAL

The provincial, bond of unity in the community

144. The provincial is the bond of unity
among the communities entrusted to her care
and between these and the centre of the Institute.

Her fundamental task
is to animate the communities of the province
in the spirit of Don Bosco
and Mother Mazzarello,
and to strengthen their capacity to respond
to the expectations of the Church
in the evangelisation of young people.

With this aim in view the provincial
will take special care of the vocations
and the formation of the Sisters.
She will devote particular attention
to the community animators
and will be for all a welcoming, sisterly presence
and a witness to our Salesian identity.\(^1\)

R 107-108

\(^1\) Cf. MB XIII 281.
Authority, Appointment and term of office

145. In virtue of her office, the provincial has authority regarding each Sister and the communities of the province, according to the Universal Law of the Church and the Constitutions.

She is appointed by the superior general with the consent of her council after previous consultation in the province.

Her term of office is for six years, and she may be appointed for a second term in a different province.

Requirements

146. To be appointed provincial a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians must be at least 35 years of age and 6 years perpetually professed.

She should give proof of love of the Church and the Institute, deep inner life and pastoral awareness, be capable of interpersonal relationships, and possess gifts of wisdom and leadership.
Visits to the houses

147. At least once a year, the provincial will visit all the houses in her province, to promote communion in the Family Spirit, fidelity to the Constitutions, and vitality in the apostolic works.¹

She will listen kindly to each Sister and will offer opportune help.

Through sisterly community dialogue she will become acquainted with local situations and needs, in view of a more effective ecclesial presence.

She will examine the economic administration, keeping in mind charity, justice, poverty, and the needs of the apostolate.

R 109-110

¹ Cf. MB X 1094.
Relations with the council and communities

148. The provincial will consult her councillors and value their collaboration, making them co-responsible in her service of authority.

By means of consultation, dialogue, and information, she will encourage the Sisters to participate actively in the life of the province.

R 111

Re-dimensioning of works and new foundations

149. It is part of the responsibility of the provincial and her council to examine the appropriateness of opening or closing of works or houses, as well as major changes in ministry to respond to the local requirements.

Having examined the situations and the possible solutions, the provincial will present the proposals supported by adequate reasons, to the superior general who, with the consent of her council, will give the necessary authorisation as set out in Article 134s.

In each of these cases she should also consult the local Ordinary.

His written authorisation must first be obtained for new foundations.

All decisions taken must always be in keeping with the spirit of the Institute.

R 109
THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

The provincial council

150. The provincial council cooperates with the provincial in the government and animation of the province community, through information, study of the situations, and the contribution of their practical experience.

This role requires from the councillors union of mind and action with the provincial, availability, uprightness, and discretion.

R 113

Members

151. The council is composed of the vicar and a number of councillors proportionate to the needs of the province.

If the provincial bursar and the secretary are not councillors, they will participate in council meetings without the right to vote.

The provincial councillors are appointed by the superior general with the consent of her council, on the proposals put forward by the provincial after previous consultation in the province community.

They remain in office for three years and may be re-appointed for a second consecutive term and, if necessary, for a third.

R 114

Responsibilities

152. The provincial council will be convoked and presided by the provincial, usually once a month but more often if the need arises.

It is their task to study
the actual situations in the province for a better service of animation.

The provincial must have the *consensus* of her council for deciding the following matters:

a. admission to the novitiate;

b. admission to first profession, successive temporary professions, and to perpetual profession, to be presented for confirmation by the superior general;

c. nomination, after consultation in the province, of the novice formator and local animators to be proposed for confirmation by the superior general and her council;

d. nomination of the provincial bursar and the secretary, to be submitted to the superior general and her council for confirmation;

e. definition of the number of provincial councillors;

f. submission of a proposal to move the provincial house, for confirmation by the superior general and her council;

g. proposal to open new houses or suppress those already in existence, major changes in the ministry, to be presented to the superior general and her council for the necessary authorisation;

h. examination and approval of contracts and agreements to be presented with the relevant documentation for authorisation by the superior general and her council;

i. the examination and approval of any proposals to be presented to the superior general and her council for authorisation to proceed with the following acts:
   • buying or selling of immovable goods;
   • renting out immovable goods on a temporary basis and in particular circumstances;
   • contracting debts, mortgages, seeking loans;
   • accepting deeds of gift, legacies,
annuities or similar deeds;

- constructing new buildings,
  demolishing those already in existence,
  or major alterations;

j. authorisation for the houses
   to make purchases involving considerable expense;

k. the examination
   and approval of the annual financial statements
   of the houses and of the province
   before sending them
   to the bursar general;

l. the convocation
   of an extraordinary provincial chapter
   to be proposed for authorisation
   by the superior general
   and her council;

m. the drawing-up of any appendices
   to the Regulations of the Institute,
   after consultation in the province
   and the presentation of the same for approval
   by the superior general and her council;

The provincial council
helps the provincial in a consultative capacity
in the following cases:
1. admission to the postulancy;
2. exclusion, for just cause, from temporary
   or perpetual profession;
3. appointment of personnel to the houses
   and the assigning to the Sisters
   their principal task;
4. nomination of local councillors and bursars
   in agreement with the community animators concerned;
   and other cases indicated
   by the Universal Law of the Church
   and the Law of the Congregation.

The councillors are bound to secrecy
in such matters as may require it.

R 113, R 80, R 80, R 19, R 80, R 102, R 125
The provincial vicar

153. The provincial vicar
is the foremost collaborator with the provincial.

She takes her place during her absence
or any time she is prevented from attending to her office.

She will also carry out any other duties
entrusted to her by the provincial.

To be appointed vicar a Sister
must have been perpetually professed for at least four years.

Should the provincial die,
the vicar will assume the governance of the province
until the superior general with her council
provides otherwise.

The provincial bursar

154. The provincial bursar,
who may also be one of the councillors,
administers and manages
the movable and immovable goods
of the province,
respecting canon and civil laws,
in dependence on the provincial,
and in agreement with the council,
to whom she will periodically give an account
of the economic state of the province and its finances.

It is her duty to coordinate and evaluate the administration
of the movable and immovable goods of the houses
and to prepare the annual administrative report
to be sent to the bursar general.

In her role, let her always act with charity,
prudence, transparency,
loyalty, and apostolic zeal;
give witness to poverty
and trust in Divine Providence,
fostering the communion of goods.

She is appointed by the provincial
in agreement with her council
according to the norms of Article 152d.

She remains in office for three years
and may be re-appointed
for a maximum
of four consecutive three-year terms
in the same province.
The provincial secretary

155. The provincial secretary, who may also be one of the councillors, has the particular responsibility of drawing up the minutes of the council meetings and the official documents of the province. She also has care of the archives, registers, statistics, and chronicles of the province.

She will offer her collaboration to the provincial in a spirit of co-responsibility, prudence and sisterly availability.

She is appointed by the provincial in agreement with her council according to the norms of Article 152d.

She remains in office for three years and may be re-appointed for a maximum of four consecutive three-year terms in the same province.

R 113, 118
THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

The provincial chapter, an assembly for reflection, evaluation and planning

156. The provincial chapter
    is the representative assembly
    of the Sisters of the province.
    It is a medium of reflection,
    evaluation, and planning
    within the province community.
    It is also a means of knowing each other better,
    strengthening unity,
    and the sense of belonging to the Institute.
    The objective
    of the provincial chapter is to study the topics
    proposed for the general chapter,
    to elect a delegate to the general chapter
    and her substitute.
    It may also take into consideration issues
    of particular interest
    for the province.

R 122

Convocation

157. Ordinarily,
    the provincial chapter
    is convoked by the provincial
    in preparation for the general chapter.
    Extraordinarily, it may be convoked
    with the prior approval of the superior general
    and her council,
    when the provincial, with her council,
    judges it to be relevant for the good of the province.
    The deliberations of a provincial chapter
    have force only after approval
    by the superior general and her council.
Members by right

158. The following take part in the provincial chapter by right:

a. the provincial who presides;

b. the vicar, the other councillors,  
   the provincial bursar and secretary;

c. the community animator of each house  
   or, if serious reasons prevent her from being present,  
   the vicar, or in default of this,  
   another Sister of the same community  
   chosen by the provincial;

d. the novice formator.

Election of the delegates to the provincial chapter

159. Members of the provincial chapter by election are:

a. one Sister from each community  
   that numbers at least 5 members;

b. delegates  
   elected by all the Sisters of the province  
   in proportion of one for every 15,  
   or fraction of 15,  
   for those provinces up to 250 Sisters;

c. delegates  
   elected from all the Sisters of the province  
   in proportion of one for every 30,  
   or fraction of 30,  
   for those provinces with 250 or more Sisters.

The election  
of delegates to the provincial chapter  
will be held according to the norms prescribed in the Regulations.  
All the professed Sisters have the right to vote  
but only perpetually professed Sisters can be elected,  
excluding those  
who are members of the chapter by right.

R 119-122
THE DELEGATION

160. (suppressed - 1996)

A delegation within a province

161. Should particular circumstances require,
    the superior general,
    with the consent of her council,
    on the proposal of the provincial concerned,
    may group some houses of a province
    into a delegation.

    The delegation is entrusted
    to a perpetually professed Sister,
    proposed by the provincial
    and delegated by her
    to carry out specific duties.

    The nature of these duties
    and the duration of the appointment
    will be defined in the act of delegation.

162.  (suppressed - 1984)
4. The service of authority in the local community

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matt. 18:20).

THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The local community

163. Each community is assembled in the Lord's name through his loving design for our salvation.

The community lives in a lawfully constituted house organised according to the Constitutions, and the needs of the mission.

The Sisters called there by obedience, will co-responsibly carry out the apostolic commitment of the Institute, in the service of young people, in the local Church.

The provincial with the consent of her council as per the norms of art. 152c will appoint a perpetually professed Sister as animator of each community.

R 123

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1 Cf. PC 15.
2 Cf. MB XII 81-82.606; Maccono, Santa I 398.
THE COMMUNITY ANIMATOR

The community animator, bond of unity among the Sisters

164. The community animator
is the bond of unity among the Sisters,¹
and promotes openness
to the province, Institute, and Church.

She has the primary responsibility of ensuring
that the religious life of the community,
its apostolic activities, and the administration of its goods
are in fidelity to the spirit of the Institute.

She will carry out her service of authority
according to the Constitutions,
in collaboration with her council,
and in frequent, cordial relationship
with the provincial.

Her specific task is
to facilitate the ongoing formation of the Sisters.²

Let her be available and prudent,
capable of speaking
the truth in love.³

She will do her utmost to create in the house
that authentic Gospel atmosphere
in which all feel that they are part of a family,⁴
and willingly collaborate in the community mission.

R 123-124

¹ Cf. MB XVII 192.
² Cf. MR V – Introduction.
³ Cf. MB X 1045; XII 86; XIII 723; XVII 628.641.
⁴ Cf. MB VIII 829; X 1047.1094; XI 428; XVII 266; Maccono, Santa II 162.
THE HOUSE COUNCIL

The service of animation in the local communities

166. In her service of authority the community animator will avail herself of the collaboration of a council composed of the vicar and an adequate number of other councillors according to the needs of the community and of the mission.

When the bursar is not a councillor, she will participate in the council meetings without the right to vote.

At the judgment of the provincial in smaller communities, or those with less complex activities, the function of the council could be carried out by the vicar and/or the bursar with the involvement of every Sister in the community.

Nomination Task of reflection and animation

167. Councillors are nominated by the provincial having heard the opinion of her council in accordance with Article 152.4 and in agreement with the community animator.

They will carry out the duties entrusted to them in a spirit of initiative and sincere understanding among themselves and with the animator.

By their sisterly collaboration and still more by the witness of their lives, let them seek to be a real bond of unity in the community and facilitate coordination for communion.

R 125
Responsibilities

168. The community animator will convene and preside at council meetings ordinarily once a month, but more often if necessary.

It is the task of the council to study the local situation in order to give better service to their Sisters, and for more effective apostolic action.

The community animator must have the consensus of her council in the following cases:

- **a.** the examination and approval of the annual financial report;
- **b.** the approval of the estimates for work to be done, before submitting them to the provincial and her council for authorisation;
- **c.** the proposal for the purchase of goods involving considerable expense to be submitted to the provincial and her council for their authorisation;
- **d.** the proposal of new initiatives or major changes with regard to the mission, to be presented to the provincial and her council for authorisation.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the council to give its consultative opinion for admission to the postulancy, to the novitiate, and to temporary and perpetual profession.

The councillors are bound to secrecy in such matters as may require it.

R 80
The vicar

169. The vicar is the foremost collaborator of the community animator.

She takes her place when the latter is absent, or in any way prevented from fulfilling her duties, and helps her in the ordinary governance of the community.

Her task requires fidelity and diligence, delicate attention, and prudent charity.

R 125

The bursar

170. The bursar is appointed by the provincial in accordance with Article 152,4.

She must be a perpetually professed Sister and may be chosen from among the councillors.

The bursar administers and manages with transparency, the movable and immovable goods of the house respecting canon and civil laws. She will do so in a spirit of charity and poverty, according to the Constitutions, in dependence on the community animator, and in agreement with her council to whom she will periodically give an account to be presented in a suitable way also to the community.

Let her carry out her duties in uprightness, generosity, and detachment, keeping always in mind the needs of the Sisters and the requirements of the apostolate.

R 22, 125, 127-129
Fidelity to the Constitutions
The interpretation of the Constitutions

171. The authentic interpretation of the Constitutions is reserved to the Holy See.

For practical guidance they may be interpreted by the superior general with her council or by the general chapter.

Relationship between the Constitutions and the Regulations

172. The life and mission of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are regulated by the Universal Law of the Church and by the Law of the Congregation.

The Constitutions, the fundamental code of the Law of the Congregation, find their specific and practical application in the Regulations that have prescriptive force for the whole Institute.

Eventual additions to the Regulations may be developed according to the local needs of different provinces, or groups of provinces. They will be included in special appendices approved by the superior general with the consent of her council following presentation by the provincials with their respective councils.

Other norms of the Law of the Congregation are expressed in the deliberations of the general chapter, and in other diverse texts, adopted as such by the competent authority.
The Constitutions, sure path to holiness

173. Since we have been called
to bear witness,
among the People of God,
to total dedication to the Lord\(^1\)
in the work of the evangelisation of young people,
let us faithfully live the Rule to which we pledged ourselves
by the act of our religious profession.

Let us love the Constitutions
as, "the pact of our covenant with God"\(^2\)
a sure guide to holiness,\(^3\)
and a way of life designed to guide and sustain
our earnest desire to live our vocation fully.\(^4\)

We will be encouraged
in our journey of fidelity
by the approval the Church has given
and by the words of Don Bosco,
"Continue to love me in the future
by the exact observance
of your Constitutions".\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Cf. *MR* 14.
\(^2\) *RmA L* 1.12.1909.
\(^3\) Cf. *MM L* 27.9; 67.6.
\(^4\) Cf. *Cron* III 77-78.
\(^5\) *MB* XVII 258.
The Spirit of our Origins
as it was Lived at Mornese

SPRIT OF THE ORIGINS

Great obedience, simplicity,
exact observance of the Rule,
admirable recollection and silence,
spirit of prayer and mortification,
purity and innocence,
sisterly love in word and deed,
such holy joy and cheerfulness
that made the house a heavenly place.

No one thought or spoke of anything but of God
and his holy love,
of Mary most Holy and the Guardian Angel,
and everyone always worked
under their loving gaze,
as though they were there present, visibly
present,
and the Sisters had no other aim.

O, how beautiful life was!1

MORNESE

• ...was always a house full of fervour,
of zeal for the good of souls,
of spirit of sacrifice,
of perfect obedience,
of holy silence,
and of angelic simplicity and cheerfulness.¹

• ...live in poverty,
work much,
pray with fervour,
these were always
the three predominant characteristics in the house.²

¹ Valentini E. (a cura), Mons. Giacomo Costamagna, Scritti di vita e di spiritualità salesiana, Roma, LAS 1979, 204.
² MB XII 283.
The Identity of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
“I shall come
and together we shall sign the great promise
of living and dying for the Lord
under the protection
and in the holy name of Mary Help
of Christians” (MB X 274).

1. The Constitutions refer to the members of our Institute as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (abbreviation FMA), the name chosen for us by our saintly founder. We are also known as the Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco.

   C 1

2. To acquire and deepen our knowledge of the spirit of the Institute, and to grow in our sense of belonging to it, we shall diligently make use of all the historical, biographical sources and studies concerning the Institute, the various publications dealing with our Salesian spiritual heritage, and the circular letters of mother general.

   Those in authority will encourage and promote the study of the language of the founder to make it easier for the Sisters to profit from these sources of Salesian identity. The praiseworthy practice of translating the more important works into the different languages will be continued.

   C 2

3. Ways and means of participating in the various initiatives of other groups of the Salesian Family, and other forms of collaboration will be studied and agreed upon by the general and provincial councils.

   C 3, 61
Our Vocation
as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
1. Sharing in the mystery of Christ
chaste, poor, obedient

CHASTITY

“My dear boys,
you know how much I love you in the Lord
and how much I have given myself completely
to your temporal and spiritual welfare.
Whatever I am or have,
my prayers and labours, my health
and my very life, all of it
I wish to use in your service”
(MB VI 202).

4. In the many interpersonal relationships required by the mission, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians will always express by her demeanour that her whole way of life is consistent with her vocation as a religious educator.

In her manner and way of speaking, she will be both cordial and reserved, being at all times a witnessing and constructive presence.

C 14

5. To live her consecrated chastity in a mature, serene, and fervent apostolic way, in addition to spiritual accompaniment, she will also value the help given for her psychosexual growth.

Let her use her energies with a sense of balance, and profit from the times set aside for relaxation and meeting her Sisters in community.

C 17

6. Aware of her human fragility, let her cultivate an attitude of discernment and asceticism.

In her involvement with the digital world, in the use of information and communication technology, and in the choice of reading material, let her be guided by sound principles of integrity and prudence, making good use of time with a view to personal, community, and apostolic enrichment.

C 17
POVERTY

“...I can assure you
that the Institute will have a great
future as long as you remain
simple, poor, and mortified”
(Cron 1 303).

7. The vow of poverty involves certain juridical requirements in accordance with the norms of the Universal Law of the Church and the Law of the Congregation.

Before making first profession the novice must declare in writing that she fully understands:
- that the relationship she is about to enter with the Institute through her religious profession is not a work contract, but a free and voluntary choice to belong to the Institute;
- that on this account she neither has, nor will have, any right to claim remuneration or social security in payment for her work, even if she leaves the Institute.

C 19-20

8. For any goods she may acquire after profession, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians must make the aforementioned acts of cession and administration, with the permission of the provincial, as set out in Article 20 of the Constitutions.

Following these acts she will no longer have any direct involvement in the administration of her property, and if this has not been entrusted to the Institute, she must give an annual account of it to the provincial.

For any eventual modifications to the above mentioned arrangements, and for the carrying out of any acts of ownership or administration, authorisation must first be obtained from the provincial.

C 19-20

9. In making her will, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians may cede to whomsoever she wishes, all the goods she possesses and those that she may acquire.

This document, which must be valid according to the civil laws of the nation, will be drawn up in duplicate, one copy will be sent to the bursar general and the other kept in the provincial archives.

Any change in this will must have the consent of the superior general.

When a Sister receives an inheritance she must inform the provincial in writing, enclosing a copy of the relevant documents.

Should serious reasons oblige her to ask permission to renounce the ownership of her property, she must make her request, with the motivations for it, to the superior general.

C 20, C 121g,h

10. Should a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians be given the responsibility of making a contract in
the name of the Institute for the acquisition of property, she will, at the same, time take steps to transfer ownership of the property to the Institute.

For the implementation of any administrative act the legal representative of the Institute must have the relevant written authorisation from the competent council: the general or provincial council, as the case may be.

**C 19**

11. Sisters who publish works will first receive authorisation from the provincial, and after having signed a contract with the publishers, will relinquish copyright to the Institute, in the legal form proper to the nation.

To publish works regarding religion or morality, they must obtain the explicit permission from the provincial as required by Canon 832 of the Code of Canon Law.

**C 19**

12. Let each Sister appreciate all that the community provides, and ask in all simplicity for whatever she needs without having recourse to relatives and other persons. She may neither give gifts nor make loans without an understanding with her superior. If money is given to her for the needs of the mission, or for any other necessity, she will use it responsibly and give an account of it to the superior.

This favours the sharing of goods and the dependence required by the vow of poverty.

**C 21-22**

13. Vehicles, equipment, and items for common use should be used in a responsible way, looked after with care and not be considered to be for anyone's exclusive use.

Let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians live coherently the spirit of poverty with regard to journeys, relaxation, vacations, the use of the telephone, correspondence, objects for personal use, and those required for her mission.

When transferring to a new community she will take with her whatever she responsibly considers necessary, on an understanding with the community animator, and following the guidelines drawn up for the province.

**C 22**

14. When the community, in agreement with the provincial, judges that a car is necessary, it must conform to the requirements of religious poverty and be used according to a well understood economy. Let it be registered in the name of the community or province and not in that of an individual Sister, even if she receives it as gift.

**C 23**
15. In the different situations let each Sister and community always bear in mind and put into practice the words of Don Bosco, "In God's name I recommend that you shun the abuse of having what is superfluous. Always keep in mind that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor. Woe to us if we don’t make good use of it!" (MB V 682).

This personal and community attention to poverty will allow us to keep fees and tuition moderate, within the financial means of those who benefit from our mission, thus enabling us to assist and give preference to those most in need.

In this way we express in a practical way that our poverty is at the service of the mission.

C 22-23

16. As an expression of our trust in Divine Providence local communities will not usually have fixed deposit accounts in the bank. The provincial, however, may authorise such an account if she judges it to be necessary.

The fixed deposit accounts must be held in the name of the province, and the money requested by the houses will be sent without delay. Care will be taken to avoid any form of permanent interest-bearing capital.

Bank accounts should not be opened in the name of individuals but in the name of the Institute, and at least two signatures should be required for any valid transaction.

When it is necessary to set up a personal account, the provincial should give written authorisation. The obligation remains to have two signatures to operate the account, unless it is not allowed by civil law. It is necessary that a monthly report on personal accounts be presented to the appropriate bursar.

C 28

17. Let all animators with their communities make every effort to contribute to the provincial fund and send to the provincial the money that is superfluous to the needs of the house. Pensions of every kind will also be deposited in the provincial account. All these contributions will be used to provide for personnel in formation, care of the sick and elderly Sisters, various works and apostolic undertakings, financing of new constructions and the extension of major alterations to existing buildings, in a way that is fair for all communities.

C 25

18. As far as possible each provincial with her council will send a contribution to the superior general for the various needs of the Institute, and will use any surplus money according to the directions of the general council.

Monetary offerings for the missions or for countries in particular need should be forwarded to the centre of the Institute from where they will be distributed fairly.

The communities will also contribute to the charitable, apostolic initiatives of the Church, following the directives given by the province.

C 25-26
19. According to Art. 152i of the Constitutions the provincial must obtain the authorisation of the superior general and her council before proceeding to the purchase or sale of property, before contracting debts or mortgages, or asking for loans. It should be remembered that according to what has been established by the Holy See for individual regions, some of these acts also require the *nulla osta* of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes.

It is also necessary to obtain authorisation before accepting deeds of gift, legacies, life annuities, and such like as well as before beginning new building projects, extensions or major alterations or restructuring.

Movable and immovable goods must always be registered in the name of the Institute.

*C 134u, 152i*

20. Salesian poverty requires that personal and community austerity should be wisely balanced with the functional requirements of the mission. Anything that may even have the appearance of luxury is to be avoided.

It also requires that regular attention be given to the maintenance of buildings and that insurance policies are in accord with the laws of the nation.

*C 23, 28*

21. Before opening new houses, including those in mission territories, the approval of the superior general and her council must be obtained, and the necessary contracts be drawn up with the civil or ecclesiastical authorities on whom the work will depend, stipulating also that the Sisters destined for the work will be covered by insurance.

Accurate inventories must be compiled in all our houses, whether they belong to the Institute or are dependent on other authorities. All agreements and inventories should be regularly updated.

*C 27, 134t*

22. In every community, the administration of all activities and ministries will be unified and entrusted to the bursar who will attend to them according to the Constitutions and Regulations (Articles 127-129). For the more important ministries, separate budgets will be drawn up.

The financial accounts of ministries dependent on outside administration or accountable to civil authorities must be kept separate from those of the community. In these cases, the services of administrative lay staff may be employed.

The person responsible for the ministry must give an account of it to the community animator and her council and, in special cases, to the provincial and her council.

Such reports should be included in a suitable manner in the annual administrative statement of the bursar and should also be shared with the community.

*C 27, 170*
OBEDIENCE

“Obedience unites, strengthens and, with God’s grace, produces astounding results” (MB V 8).

23. Every request concerning obedience will be made in a Salesian atmosphere of mutual understanding and dialogue.

Let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians respond in a spirit of adaptability, both in ordinary, everyday occasions, and in those where the response to God's will is more demanding.

When it is necessary to give an order, "binding under the vow of obedience," it should be expressed by the lawful superior in writing or before two witnesses.

C 31, 33
2. United in community
in the name of the Lord

OUR PRAYER

“Begin each day
praying with all your heart
and working with right intention.
[...] speak much with the Lord.
He will make you truly wise.
(MM L 22,10).

24. In its annual planning, which must be submitted to the provincial, let each community decide on the manner and timetable for its daily prayer so as to co-ordinate them with the requirements of the mission.

Our daily community prayers, celebrated with the creativity allowed by the Church, are: the Eucharistic celebration, Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church, meditation, Entrustment to Mary Help of Christians, Rosary, the Angelus or the Regina Coeli, Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual reading, examination of conscience. The prayer for the Holy Father will be inserted into one of these community acts.

When it is not possible to pray some of these moments of prayer together every day, the days of the week on which the community can participate will be established.

C 47

25. Let the daily meditation and spiritual reading be made in common with the possibility of using individual books.

The community spiritual reading, which usually is of fifteen minutes duration, may be substituted on certain occasions by a Celebration of the Word, the Way of the Cross or different forms of shared reflection.

In addition, let each Sister commit herself to setting aside a sufficient amount of time each day for extra formative reading.

Let the Word of God inspire our personal and community prayer, and our meetings for reflection, discernment and reviewing both in the community, and with our young people and collaborators in the mission of education.

C 39

26. Let each house have a chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, in a place easily accessible to the young people. For them the opportunity of sharing in prayer with the community will be the best school of prayer.

Where it is not possible to have daily Eucharist for the community let the animator arrange for the possibility of celebrating the Eucharist together at certain fixed times.

C 40
27. Let devotion to the Sacred Heart, so closely linked to the mystery of the Eucharist and a living part of our tradition, be celebrated particularly during the annual novena, on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, and the commemoration of the first Friday of every month.

C 40

28. Let the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians hold the sacrament of Reconciliation in great esteem.

The community animators should provide the Sisters with the possibility of celebrating Reconciliation frequently and with due freedom.

Let the ecclesial and social aspect of the sacrament also be used to advantage through participation in community penitential services.

C 41

29. The key moments of the liturgical year, the various feasts and solemnities, and all Sundays, will be prepared for and celebrated in a worthy manner and in forms suited to the community.

Let the Sisters value the liturgical and devotional celebrations of the local Church, and wherever possible, help in the animation of the liturgy in the parishes. Let them also form the young people in this sense.

Let Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church be celebrated with greater solemnity on Sundays and feast days and let them be completed by praying Mid-day Prayer.

C 42-43, 71

30. Let the Marian devotion proper to our Institute be lived according to the liturgical cycle.

The solemnities of the Immaculate Conception and Mary Help of Christians will be prepared for by a novena, and that of the Assumption by a triduum.

Let the season of Advent, the months dedicated to Our Lady, the monthly commemoration of the 24th, and every Saturday be for us and for the young people opportunities for growth in filial love for the Blessed Virgin.

Following the teaching of St. John Bosco let us use all the means and opportunities that present themselves for the spread of devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

C 44, 71

31. Let us honour St. John Bosco and St. Maria Mazzarello on their feast days, prepared for by a triduum, and on the monthly day of commemoration. For these celebrations, as for other feasts proper to the Institute, let us draw inspiration from the directions and suggestions in the prayer book of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

C 45
32. Let the community plan a practical way to live the penitential spirit of Lent and all Fridays of the year. Let them decide upon a spiritual commitment and a community mortification. This may be external, so as to be able to offer some material help to our suffering sisters and brothers in need.

Let our meditation on the Passion of Our Lord be expressed in a particular manner by the Way of the Cross every Friday during Lent. This may be substituted, if necessary, by another form of community prayer.

C 46

33. The annual Spiritual Retreat will last for eight days. Leaving aside all our usual occupations, let it be made in an atmosphere of silence and prayer. This will enable us to review our life through meditation on the Word of God and our Constitutions.

The provincial will:
- study ways of organising the retreats according to specific needs, always, however, retaining the characteristics of Salesian simplicity;
- give a brief talk each day, at a suitable time, on formative Salesian topics;
- be available for all who wish to have a personal encounter with her.

During the retreat:
- let one day be set aside for prayer for vocations;
- another day in suffrage for our deceased Sisters, relatives, and benefactors.

On the last day of the retreat let the Sisters renew their profession together in order to re-enkindle the commitment of fidelity to God which they assumed at their religious profession.

C 46

34. Let each community set aside for the spiritual retreat or Exercise for a Happy Death:
- a half day each month;
- a full day each quarter.

Let these valuable occasions for reviewing one's life be planned in a manner similar to that of the annual retreat, creating the same conditions of silence and recollection. Let our personal evaluation in the examination of conscience of at least half an hour, the Prayers for a Happy Death, and the renewal of our profession in common be valued as efficacious means of re-enkindling our determination to grow in holiness.

C 46

35. The particular suffrages offered in the Institute are the following:
- for a professed Sister or novice, 50 Masses in all will be celebrated by the communities of the province;
- for the provincial, in addition to the aforementioned suffrages, one Mass will be celebrated by each community in the province;
- for a general councillor or the general secretary, one Mass on the part of each community in the Institute;
- for a superior general who dies, whether in office or emeritus, 2 Masses will be celebrated by every community in the Institute;
• for the Sovereign Pontiff and for the rector major of the Salesians, one Mass from each community in the Institute;
• for the bishop of the diocese, one Mass celebrated by each community subject to his jurisdiction.

C 60

36. In all the aforementioned cases every Sister will also offer in suffrage the prayers of one day. For the Sisters of one's own community, the superiors, the Sovereign Pontiff and the rector major, the entire Rosary will also be offered or the complete Office for the Dead will be celebrated.

C 60

37. Upon the death of each of the parents of a Sister, and her brothers and sisters, two Masses will be celebrated in the house where the Sister resides, and the prayers of one day will be offered in suffrage.

C 57

38. The general suffrages are as follows:

• each day the commemoration of the anniversary of the Sisters who died on that date either by reading the necrology or some other practice;
• each Monday prayer for all deceased Sisters;
• annually, in each community, one Mass for benefactors, and members of the Salesian Family after the feast of St. John Bosco; one Mass for the Sisters' parents and relatives after the feast of St. Maria Mazzarello; and one Mass for all the Sisters after the feast of Mary Help of Christians;
• during every Spiritual Retreat and during the general chapter, in the house where these take place, one Mass for all the deceased Sisters, relatives, benefactors, and members of the Salesian Family;
• on the annual commemoration of all the faithful departed the entire Rosary will be recited or the complete Office of the Death will be celebrated.

C 60
OUR LIFE TOGETHER

My dearest daughters,

[...] love one another like good sisters,
have great charity with everyone”

(MM L 25, 7).

39. The characteristic moments of Salesian tradition that promote the Family Spirit are the preparation and celebration of feast days among ourselves and with our young people.

On such occasions let us use prayer, song, music, drama, and games to create that happy educational atmosphere proper to the spirit of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. This makes the fulfilment of duty easy, strengthens the bonds of affection, and renews our commitment to holiness.

C 50, 55

40. Let the Feast of Gratitude be celebrated in the local and provincial communities with the participation of the educating community, since it holds a special significance in the life of our family.

Let us express the gratitude and affection that unites us with the Sisters in authority and among everyone in an atmosphere of prayer, simplicity, and joy.

Let the feast of mother general, the centre of this communion, be celebrated in a suitable manner in every house, as a sign of our love for and fidelity to the Institute.

C 50, 55

41. Let our traditional community greeting *Viva Gesù, Viva Maria*, be the expression of our common desire to give praise to God and advance towards him, together with Mary.

C 50

42. Let each community plan the timetable of the different common acts of the day according to the needs of the apostolate.

Care should be taken to ensure that, at the established times an atmosphere of silence is created, which is the fruit of interior and exterior discipline, and facilitates personal union with God and growth in the virtues necessary for community life.

The silence from the last prayers at night until after morning prayer should be observed with particular care. Let this be a time of more intimate union with God and of sensitive respect for the Sisters' time of rest.

C 54

43. (suppressed - 1990)
44. Community life according to the Family Spirit requires that we come to an understanding with the community animator before leaving the house, either for visits required by charity or for other reasons. On such occasions, let the Sister always exercise due discretion and prudence.

C 33, 52

45. According to the customs established in the province, every Sister will annually be offered the possibility of a suitable period of rest, to be spent in a way that meets the requirements of poverty and religious witness.

C 55

46. Let the relatives of all the Sisters be warmly welcomed with particular attention being shown to their parents.

Visits to our family should be motivated by the criteria of charity, uprightness, and responsibility, and must be duly authorised by the provincial, in agreement with the community animator.

C 57

47. When hospitality is offered to guests let them be accommodated in the part of the house destined for that purpose.

Let every care be taken that the areas reserved for the community are respected.

C 56

48. Because of its international character, the Institute allows for pluralism in dress: the religious habit proper to the Institute (grey, white, black), secular dress, or another habit adapted to the needs of the place.

It is the responsibility of the provincial with her council to evaluate the various situations and take the necessary decisions.

In all cases, let us wear the crucifix that indicates our belonging to the Institute, and in our choice of dress, let us be guided by criteria of religious simplicity and austerity.

C 58

49. Let the presence of Sisters who are ill or elderly be looked upon as a guarantee of God's blessing on the community. The area of the house most suited to the needs of these Sisters will be reserved for them, and, in addition to having their physical wellbeing cared for, let them also have all the spiritual help necessary to live their lives in hope and serene abandonment to God's will.

Where judged opportune, the province may have a house suitably equipped for them.

Aware that they are serving Christ in the Sisters who are ill, let the caregivers carry out their task with attention, delicacy, and prudence.
When a professed Sister or novice dies the community animator will immediately contact the provincial who will notify the other communities of the province.

The provincial will inform the superior general, giving personal details and a very brief biographical profile of the deceased. In turn the secretary general will communicate the news to all the provincials and superiors of pre-provinces so that all the Sisters may offer their suffrages as soon as possible.

The provincial will also have an account written of the life of the Sister and this will be sent to the secretary general without delay.

Let news and information that will encourage the spread of Salesian values, and strengthen the sense of belonging to the Institute be circulated within the provincial community.

Let the province also send to the centre of the Institute news of the more interesting events relative to the communities and mission, so that through the appropriate channels of information the life of the whole Institute may be made known to all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

On the feast of the rector major, together with the whole Salesian Family, the Institute will express in prayer its own gratitude for the good it receives from St. John Bosco's successor, and from the whole Salesian Congregation.

Let us celebrate the Holy Father's feast day as an occasion for rejoicing and for praying for him more fervently.

Let us study the best way of making the Vicar of Christ known and loved in his mission of father, shepherd, and teacher.

Let every community endeavour to deepen its awareness of ecclesial communion by studying and profiting from the documents of the Pope's teachings, and those of the conferences of bishops and religious.

According to the spirit of the Institute and, as far as circumstances permit, let it co-operate in responding to requests made and to the pastoral planning of the parish and diocesan councils and other organisations within the Church.
3. Sent for young people
in the spirit of the *da mihi animas*

**OUR MISSION**

“To do good to the girls
you must always be cheerful;
you must love and respect them all”
(MB XIII 147).

55. Let each community prepare its local plan based on the guidelines offered by the provincial plan and in keeping with the socio-ecclesial situation in which it carries out its mission.

Let this plan be drawn up in a way that favours the vocational growth of the Sisters and the bringing together of all that each one has to offer for the Christian education of young people.

The work of Sisters engaged in specific service for the Church and other forms of pastoral work outside the community to which they belong will also be taken into account in this planning.

C 51-52

56. Pastoral charity urges us to work, by preference, among young people most in need because of material, affective, cultural, or spiritual poverty.

To foster educational continuity we will also devote ourselves to families, and we will work for the advancement and evangelisation of adults in places and circumstances where required.

C 6, 26, 65

57. When the local situation requires, we shall give the support of our pastoral presence in co-educational work.

In this case we shall ensure beforehand that, in addition to the preparation of the Sisters, there is also the collaboration of qualified educators, willing to assume the obligations of our educational system.

On a practical level, care will be taken to ensure that the premises and facilities are adequate.

C 65

58. Let us make sure that our houses are always open and welcoming for young people.

Let us live Salesian assistance in constant availability, especially during recreation and in various leisure activities. This direct contact with young people will enable us to understand better their real situation in order to guide them effectively in living according to the Gospel.
Let us ensure that the formative times proper to Salesian tradition: Good Nights, Good Mornings, personal encounters, outings, and spiritual retreats are relevant and interesting, since they all help to create a family atmosphere.

C 67

59. In all our educational ministries let us be aware of the importance of our choice of lay collaborators. Let us offer them the possibility of a gradual preparation so that they may become co-responsible with us for planning and setting educational goals according to the spirit of the Preventive System.

By preference, let us ask our past pupils and other members of the Salesian Family for this collaboration.

We shall promote frequent meetings with parents/guardians, the primary educators of young people, to ensure unity and continuity of the educational mission.

C 61, 68, 74

60. In the spirit of Don Bosco we shall commit ourselves as educators to pay particular attention to the reality of social communications. It is our duty to acquire a clear formation in this field in light of the Church’s teaching, and to educate ourselves to understand and use the different types of media in view of our work of evangelisation.

C 69

60 bis. The ease of access and use of media and social networks call for a sense of responsibility, austerity, and coherence of life from the FMA.

In the spirit of the *da mihi animas cetera tolle*, we will use them as an opportunity for evangelisation and for our educational mission among young people. We shall therefore always act in fidelity to the Gospel, the Salesian charism, and the teachings of the Church, remembering that even when we act in a personal capacity, we represent the Institute to which we belong.

Before giving interviews that involve our religious family, or taking part in radio or television transmissions, we will come to an agreement with the provincial.

If such transmissions deal with matters involving Catholic doctrine or morality, we shall also adhere to the norms of the episcopal conferences on the subject, in accordance with Canon 831 § 2 of the Code of Canon Law.

C 109, 110

61. By means of a systematic education let us prepare our young people to become critical, free, and discerning listeners and viewers, so that they, in turn, may promote the communication of cultural values from a Christian perspective.

Let us also collaborate with Catholic organisations working in this field in the production and distribution of valid material suitable for the formation of young people.

C 69
62. Faithful to a characteristically Salesian dimension, that of educating to the use of leisure time, let us value drama and the creative arts in general as a response to young people’s need to communicate.

Let us provide opportunities for cultural, artistic, musical and sporting initiatives, using them as formative experiences.

C 69

63. Sensitive to the exhortations of the Church, and faithful to our identity, we will become qualified to carry out our mission as catechists through adequate preparation and constant updating. Let us accompany our young people in a deeper understanding of the Mystery of Christ and his Church, and to take an active part in the life of the parish and of the diocese, by means of unified, systematic courses of catechetics and specific programs of education to faith.

To those who are more open to the needs of evangelisation, let us propose that they qualify as catechists also through suitable courses of formation.

C 70

64. Through the teaching of value education, based on evangelical principles, let us offer young people of other faith traditions the possibility of a formation that respects and develops the human and social values present in their culture and may open for them an avenue of research leading to the acceptance of Christ and his message.

C 66, 70, 74-75

65. It is part of our mission of evangelisation to help young people appreciate popular devotions and prayers as well as liturgical prayer, and to integrate them into their spiritual life as the Church recommends in its teachings.

C 71

66. Following Don Bosco's example let us recognise the educational value of group experience.

By our witnessing presence and effort to animate this experience, let us make it an occasion of personal growth for young people, of deepening their sense of belonging to the Church, and as a means of helping them to be open to meeting Christ, and to apostolic commitment leading to the progressive discovery of their vocation.

Let us encourage membership of associations established in the local Church and volunteering, as well as promoting the development of youth movements characterised by Salesian spirituality.

C 66, 72

67. Aware that Don Bosco wanted his Salesian Co-operators to be a living force in the Church, let us encourage the growth of this association.

Wherever possible let us promote the establishment of Co-operator centres in our houses and make this vocation known to our young people, parents, and all our collaborators.

C 73

68. The whole community will collaborate in animating the Past Pupils’ Association.
Let us continue the formation especially of adolescents and young people, accompanying them by presenting suitable challenges and initiatives to help them develop their personal life plan with a view to evangelisation.

C 72, 74

69. Let each community keep alive its missionary spirit by a constant renewal of apostolic fervour.

To make our young people aware of the need to build God's Kingdom, and to open their hearts to the real needs of their sisters and brothers, we shall co-operate in the various missionary initiatives of the local Church and promote those proper to Salesian tradition.

C 75

70. Let the Sisters who feel called to work in the mission ad gentes make their request in writing to the superior general through their provincial, who will express her opinion in this matter.

Before leaving, let each missionary Sister profit responsibly from the specific preparation offered in conformity with the directives of the Church and the Institute. This formation will be continued in the mission itself, with particular attention being given to the local culture, in which learning the language is a priority.

Sisters who, for different reasons, cannot commit themselves to a lifelong missionary apostolate, may offer their service for a limited time after having made the appropriate request.

C 75

71. In proposing the Christian message in mission areas, the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians will give priority to young people so that they, in turn, may become evangelisers.

She will promote the advancement of women, accompanying them in assuming their fundamental role as mothers and educators, and their responsible involvement in society and the Church.

The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians will pay particular attention to promoting vocations to ensure the continuity of the Church’s work of evangelisation.

C 72, 75

72. Arrangements for the periodic return of missionaries to their homeland will be made by the provincial, in agreement with the general councillor for the missions.

This time will provide an important opportunity for awakening interest in the missions, and will be planned so that in addition to allowing the Sister to have a period of relaxation with her family, she will also have the possibility of renewing her spiritual energies and of suitable updating through an exchange of missionary experiences.

C 75

73. The oratory-youth centre is the work which, more than any other, embodies the Salesian Spirit as
Don Bosco envisaged it. Through it young people are offered a welcoming environment rich in faith, spontaneity, trust, and joyful collaboration.

Let us make of our oratory-youth centres real educating communities. In them the young people will assume co-responsibility for their own integral education and share with us in the work of evangelisation.

C 66, 68, 76

74. Convinced of the important role that the school plays in the life of the Church and in the transformation of society, let us recognise the necessity of creating in our schools an educational environment where the pupils are guided to integrate the Gospel message with human culture. This will help them to form a mature, enlightened, critical conscience enabling them to face the challenges present in today’s world.

In the spirit of Don Bosco, let us promote at every level, the establishment of schools for those most in need: professional and technical, courses for social advancement and basic literacy as required by the local situation.

C 66, 69, 70, 76

75. In our boarding facilities, and other places of education, social work, and human advancement, let the whole community commit to providing a home where the young people can feel the warmth of family life and the witness of Christian values.

In our daily sharing of life with young people let us encourage those values and motivations that contribute to their personal development and openness to Christian and social commitment.

C 66, 69, 76
Our Formation
“I am reassured
by the way our members
are picking up
the true spirit of the Congregation
...a truly heroic selflessness
a generous surrender of will,
and a truly moving obedience”
(MB XII 59).

1. Acceptance into the Institute

76. Before accepting a candidate the provincial will gather all the necessary information regarding her, the family, and the home environment. She will also take into due consideration the opinion of Sisters who know the candidate personally.

Those who are in charge of the inquiry will act with charity, prudence and secrecy.

C 85

77. In order to be accepted into the Institute the candidate must be unmarried and present the following documents:

- birth certificate;
- baptism and confirmation certificates;
- certificates of educational qualifications;
- declaration of freedom from any juridical impediment, if there is no other way of knowing this for certain;
- declaration of general good health including absence of hereditary ailments, physical defects, and psychological disorders. If possible this document should be issued by a trustworthy specialist known to the Institute.

If the candidate is a minor the written consent of the parents/guardians must be obtained.

C 85

78. As evidence of suitability for religious life in our Institute, the candidate must have:

- good health;
- a sincere and upright disposition;
- normal intellectual ability, average educational level, sound common sense;
- a capacity for serene interpersonal relationships and the ability to live community life;
- sufficient psychosexual maturity to provide a firm hope that the candidate will be able to live consecrated chastity;
- inclination towards prayer life, sufficient religious knowledge, and be living a Christian life;
- natural inclination to be an educator according to the mission of the Institute.

C 85

79. (suppressed -1990)
2. Admission into the Institute

80. Toward the end of each stage of formation and before the expiring of vows, the candidate or the Sister with temporary vows will make a written application to the provincial for admission to the next stage or to the profession of vows.

Together with this application, the community animator or novice formator will send to the provincial a report of the aptitudes and vocational maturity of the candidate concerned. This report will be drawn up with the participation of the person herself.

Based on this report, and on the advice of the local council, the provincial will decide:

- with the *consultative opinion* of her council, for admission to the postulancy;
- with the *consensus* of her council, for entrance into the novitiate and the subsequent admission to profession, both temporary and perpetual.

For admission to the novitiate and to temporary and perpetual professions, the provincial will send a report to the superior general and, in the case of admission to profession, she will await her confirmation.

In addition to the superior general, the profession may be received by the provincial or by another perpetually professed Sister delegated for this purpose.

*C 83, 95, 121e, 152a.b., 166, 168*
3. The stages of formation

PERIOD OF ASSESSMENT AND GUIDANCE

81. During this first formative stage, by means of suitable programming of study, prayer, work, and relaxation, the candidate will be helped to gradually participate in a way that will help to develop her sense of co-responsibility and love for daily duty. Particular attention will be paid to all that contributes toward the integral formation of her personality as a woman.

The level of religious education of each candidate will be evaluated, to complete if need be, the basic preparation required for the successive stages.

It is necessary that the candidates be introduced at an early stage to a systematic study of the language of the founder.

C 86-87

82. The whole community will share in the formation of the young women, although with different roles.

The community animator, who has the primary responsibility for their formation, will fulfil this duty especially through weekly conferences and the various opportunities for personal and group encounters.

The Sister who collaborates more directly with her will guide and follow each candidate, helping her to gradually adapt to the new way of life, encouraging her to profit from every opportunity for personal growth.

C 86-87

83. Vacation time and contact with the family will be valued as moments of formation and will be arranged with wise discernment and care, on an understanding with the provincial, keeping in mind the particular family situations of the young women.

C 86

84. During the time of assessment and guidance or earlier if possible, it would be beneficial to propose psychological evaluation to the candidates if suitable methods can be guaranteed and the conditions for carrying it out are favourable.

This will help the young women to get to know themselves better, and will be of value for the formators who will thus be able to offer guidance suited to the needs and capacity of each one.

C 86

85. Ordinarily this stage lasts for one year, but will be flexible according to the specific needs of
the individual candidates. Should a young woman prove unsuited, the community animator will study the situation together with her council and, with the approval of the provincial, will facilitate her return home, having previously contacted her family.

C 87

POSTULANCY

86. For admission to the postulancy, the candidate must be at least 18 years of age.

During this period, the postulants will suspend any studies or work that would prevent them from dedicating themselves intensely and profitably to their personal formation. The postulancy lasts ten months. If there is just cause, it may be extended, but not beyond two years.

Should the young woman prove to be unsuited to Salesian religious life, after having carefully studied the case with the provincial, she will be helped to discern a different vocational choice.

C 88-89

87. The Sister in charge of the postulants will help them, kindly but firmly, in the process of assimilating religious values, and in the gradual detachment from things and from self, so as to be more open to God's will.

C 88-89

88. If the provincial considers it opportune the postulants may spend a short period of time with their families before entering the novitiate.

The entrance into the novitiate will take place with an appropriate rite during which, in the presence of the community, the postulants will receive the medal of Mary Help of Christians.

After due consultation with her council, the provincial of the province where the novitiate is located will decide on the novices' mode of dress.

C 89

NOVITIATE

89. The provincial will devote every care to the novitiate house, for which she is directly responsible.

In order that the house may be suitable for its purpose, she will study with her council the means of providing the most favourable and opportune conditions, and will forward her proposals to the superior general for approval.

The novitiate will constitute a true formation community, in which the relationships of the novices among themselves and with the Sisters have the characteristics proper to the Family Spirit.

C 90-91, 134r
90. During the first year the novices may not be absent from the novitiate house without grave reason, and with the approval of the provincial.

Absences that exceed a total of fifteen days must be made up.

However, the provincial may authorise, in writing, the temporary transfer of the whole group of novices with the novice formator to another house of the Institute chosen by her.

C 91

91. It is the responsibility of the novice formator to arrange with the provincial what form and length of time the community apostolic experience outside the novitiate will take, according to the formative needs of the individual novices or the group.

C 91

92. The novice formator co-ordinates and directs the activities of her collaborators so that all have the same goal. At the same time she will encourage the novices to participate in a way that makes them co-responsible in attaining the aims of the novitiate.

She will make use of every opportunity for constructive dialogue that will clarify and define the values and fundamental requirements of religious life and, in the spirit of the Preventive System. She will value the private encounter as an irreplaceable and typical means of Salesian formation.

C 92

93. At least twice a year she will draw up a comprehensive report on each novice presenting the essential aspects of her personality, after having listened to the observations of her collaborators.

This report will be drawn up with the participation of the novice herself in a climate of mutual confidence and sincerity.

If she is not a provincial councillor, the novice formator will be called to the council meeting whenever matters involving the novitiate are dealt with.

C 92

94. In an atmosphere of calm and honest dialogue the novice formator will be particularly attentive to the novice in the decisive moments of her vocation: admission to first profession, extension of the novitiate, decision to leave, or definitive dismissal. In the latter case she will help the novice to accept the decision, and having come to an understanding with the family she will facilitate the novice's return home and her adaptation to a new lifestyle.

The reasons for dismissal will be recorded clearly and discretely in the registers of the novitiate and of the province. Novices definitively dismissed will not be re-accepted, even in other provinces.

C 94

PERIOD OF TEMPORARY PROFESSION
95. To promote the unity of formation, the provincial will seek to assign the temporary professed Sisters to houses not too far distant from one another. She will organise periodic meetings for reflection on formative issues and for the exchange of experiences.

She will also see to it that the young Sisters are not committed only to study for the whole period of temporary profession.

C 96

96. The temporary professed, actually involved in community life, should be given the possibility of assuming some responsibility in keeping with their personal preparation and their commitments to acquiring professional qualifications.

They will be given a suitable formative accompaniment and the possibility of completing the required studies for their specific theological, educational, and Salesian formation.

They will also be given the opportunity for a guided practical experience designed to offer a more direct participation in the life and mission of the Institute.

The entire formation period of temporary profession will be suitably planned by the provincial and her council.

C 96-97

97. Ordinarily the second novitiate will be made during the last year of temporary profession, and it may be divided into two stages.

Only those Sisters who are making their perpetual vows will be admitted to the final stage immediately before profession.

The parish priest of the place where the Sister was baptised should be informed in good time of the Sister’s perpetual profession. This is necessary for the parish register.

C 98

ONGOING FORMATION

98. It is the responsibility of the provincial with her council to study and draw up a unified plan for the continual and updated formation of all the Sisters. The provincial team will offer the council its contribution to this work.

C 100

99. Within the province, and at the interprovincial level, meetings will be held from time to time for those responsible for formation at different stages, in order to encourage a unified and gradual planning, and to guarantee continuity in the various phases of formation.

C 100

100. The provincial, with the help of her council, will seek to identify persons who possess the qualities suited to assuming roles of formation and leadership. She will provide specific and long-term preparation for them, together with the possibility of adequate experience in positions of responsibility.
4. Absence and separation from the Institute

101. When serious reasons require that a Sister should live outside the religious house for some time, she must make her request to the superior general, stating her reasons. The request must be accompanied by the opinion of the provincial.

The superior general with her council, after having carefully considered these reasons and having weighed the Sister’s situation objectively, will give permission only if it can be seen to be justified and advantageous, according to the norms of Canon Law.

In the case of a Sister with temporary profession, permission cannot exceed six months, in the understanding that the last months before renewal of profession must be lived in community.

If grave reasons oblige a perpetually professed Sister to prolong her absence from the religious house, she will apply for exclaustration. The request should be made to the superior general through the provincial. The superior general, with the consensus of her council, may grant the necessary indult for up to three years. A further extension of the indult is reserved to the Holy See.

C 105, 134p. q.

102. The Daughter of Mary Help of Christians who, after prayer and counsel, decides that she has just reasons for leaving the Institute when the term of her profession expires, will refrain from making the request for the subsequent profession.

In her turn, the provincial having heard the opinion of her council, may for just reasons, refuse the admission of a Sister to the renewal of temporary or perpetual profession.

Having given the Sister all possible assistance, the provincial will evaluate the situation with her, so that the decision may be accepted and carried out in a caring atmosphere.

C 105, 152.2

103. If, for serious reasons evaluated in the light of faith, a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians decides to leave the Institute during the period of temporary profession, she must make a written request to the superior general through her provincial.

The superior general, with the consent of her council, can grant the request in which case the Sister is dispensed from temporary profession and all consequent obligations.

C 105, 134n.

104. Should grave reasons require that a temporary professed Sister be dismissed, the superior general, after having examined the case with her council, will proceed to the dismissal according to the collegial form established by the Universal Law of the Church.

C 105

105. When a perpetually professed Sister considers that she has serious reasons for leaving the Institute, she should ask for a dispensation from the vows only after much prayer and mature reflection. The written request, stating her reasons, should be addressed to the Holy Father and sent through the provincial to the superior general who will forward it to the Holy See together
with her own vote and that of the general council.

The parish priest where the Sister was baptised, will be informed when the dispensation has been received or when a Sister has been dismissed.

C 105, 134o.

106. For very grave reasons the Institute may find it necessary to dismiss a perpetually professed Sister. Before taking this step, the superiors, with charity and firmness, will help the Sister to evaluate in all honesty her manner of living as a member of the Institute, giving her every possibility to clarify matters and offering her suitable opportunities for dialogue.

However, if grave reasons persist, and there is proof of incorrigibility, the superior general after having examined the case with her council, will proceed to the dismissal according to the collegial form established by the Universal Law of the Church.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians bound by temporary or perpetual vows who leave the Institute, or who are dismissed from it, will be helped with care and kindness, but they may not be re-admitted.

C 105, 134
The Service of Authority
in our Institute
“Go not as a superior,
but as a friend, a brother, a father.
Let charity be your word of command...”
(DB XIII 554).

1. The service of authority
   in the province community

THE PROVINCIAL

107. The provincial will maintain a relationship of cordial communication with the superior
general and her councillors, availing herself of their guidance and advice, and keeping
them well-informed.

   Each year she will send to the different central offices the required reports and statistics
   regarding the situation of the province and the houses.

   Should she be obliged to be absent from the province for a considerable time she must
   inform the superior general of this absence.

C 144

108. The provincial, will strive to know each Sister in the province and appreciate her gifts and
talents, creating the conditions that help the Sister to mature in her vocation, particularly
through the assignment of suitable duties.

   It is the provincial’s responsibility to authorise the acceptance of commitments or
   responsibilities outside the Institute.

C 114, 144

109. Each year the provincial will programme her visits in good time and will notify the
province community.

   During her visit she will share the daily life of the Sisters, and together they will evaluate
   the validity of the community plan with a view to its more effective implementation.

   She will take an interest in the house council and will consider the scope of the mission
   and the distribution of work, to foresee, if necessary, any plans for re-dimensioning the
   work.

   She will take into account the organisation of the archives and, in agreement with the
   community animator, will see to it that the library is furnished with books and other
   material suited to the ongoing formation of the Sisters.

C 147, 149

110. At the conclusion of her visit, the provincial will share with the Sisters whatever she
considers being useful in order to guide and encourage the community to grow in its Salesian identity. She will also leave a brief written report in the book reserved for this purpose.

C 147

111. In drawing up the provincial plan with her council, the provincial will bear in mind the pastoral needs of the area, together with the directives of the Church and the Institute. She will involve all the Sisters, as well as the members of the educating community, in different ways, making good use of the collaboration of the provincial team and the community animators.

C 148

112. As far as possible, the provincial will provide for a timely change of house for the Sisters, avoiding leaving them too long in the same house or changing them too frequently.

For the temporary stay of a Sister in another province, her provincial will come to an agreement with the provincial concerned. To effect the definite transfer of a Sister, the provincial must ask for the written authorisation of the superior general.

C 121f

THE PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

113. Having received the agenda in good time, the councillors will prepare for the meetings with prayer and reflection, and they will take part in them with a sense of co-responsibility.

The secretary will compile the minutes and will present them at the next meeting for their approval and signature.

C 150, 152, 155

114. It is desirable that one of the councillors be free from major responsibilities. She could be entrusted with the co-ordination of the provincial team.

C 151

115. The provincial bursar should feel it her duty to deepen her knowledge of the laws pertaining to her role and arrange for an adequate preparation and periodic updating to be offered to the local bursars. Let her be ready to help and direct them in what concerns their specific service.
The provincial bursar will draw up guidelines and procedures, approved by the provincial and with the consent of her council, regarding contracts for the employment of staff in the apostolate and in the communities.

C 154

116. It is also the responsibility of the provincial bursar to manage legacies, wills, and donations made to the houses and the province, as well as the administration of the patrimonial goods of individual Sisters.

Construction projects that are planned or in progress must be under the supervision of the provincial bursar even if they concern buildings already in existence and the work is being carried out under the responsibility of the community animator and bursar.

At least once every three months the provincial bursar will submit to the council a report on the economic and financial state of the province. This report will be presented annually, in an appropriate way, to the Sisters in the province.

C 154

117. The provincial bursar will collect and preserve in the administrative archives all the documents regarding the economic administration of the province and particularly the following:

a. title deeds of purchases, sells, etc.;
b. public or private deeds, contracts of all kinds;
c. documents relating to the establishment or management of institutions, foundations, societies, associations, etc.;
d. periodically updated agreements;
e. updated inventories of the houses of the province;
f. wills of the Sisters;
g. documentation of any inheritance of the Sisters;
h. documents relating to insurance and taxation of each Sister;
i. financial accounts of the administration.

C 154

118. The provincial secretary will ensure that all archival documents concerning the personnel, mission and history of the province are carefully preserved:

a. copy of the FMA Constitutions and Regulations;
b. Acts of the General Chapters; the Cronistoria of the Institute; documentation pertaining to provincial chapters;
c. copy of the circular letters of the superior general, the general councillors, and the provincial;
d. book containing the minutes of the provincial council meetings; a copy of the extracts from these minutes sent to the general council with their replies and authorisation;
e. annual reports on the progress of the houses; statistics regarding the mission; copy of the chronicle of each house and of the province; provincial plans; and community plans of the last six years;
f. copy of the decrees of the Sovereign Pontiff, of the sacred congregations and of the bishops, which concern the province;
g. copy of the documents relating to the houses of the province and especially the negotiations for the opening or closing of houses;
h. register of the personnel of the province, the chronicles and book of customs of the province;
i. personal files and forms of the postulants, novices, and Sisters with the relative documents; forms regarding the admission of the candidates to different stages of initial formation; registers of professions;
j. certificates and diplomas of the teaching Sisters and the relative registers;
k. information regarding the deceased Sisters of the province;
l. letters of importance for the province and the Institute;
m. general directories of the Institute;
2. The provincial chapter

ELECTIONS TO THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER

a) community delegate

119. On the date agreed upon with the provincial or with the superior of the pre-province the elections will take place according to the following procedure:

a. In every community of at least 5 members, one Sister will be elected by secret vote as delegate. The person who receives an absolute majority, that is, more than half the votes of those present, will be elected.

b. If no candidate is elected in the first and second scrutiny, a third will be held and the Sister obtaining a relative majority, that is, more than any other candidate, will be elected. Should two Sisters obtain equal votes in the third scrutiny, the person senior by profession, or in the case of equality of profession, the Sister senior in age will be elected.

c. Following the same procedure another Sister will be elected as substitute for the delegate should she be legitimately prevented from attending the provincial chapter or that of the pre-province.

d. All professed Sisters may vote, including those with temporary vows and those belonging to other provinces or pre-provinces, who are temporarily present. However, only perpetually professed Sisters belonging to the province or pre-province may be elected.

Sisters who for serious reasons are absent from community may take part in the election by sending their ballot in a sealed, unmarked envelope. Their vote will be placed in the urn with the others when the election takes place. The number of ballots should equal the number of scrutinees needed: three for the delegate and three for the substitute (see b. and c.). Sisters who are exclaustrated may neither vote nor be elected.

e. The minutes of the elections will be completed and read immediately to the assembly. They will be signed by all those who have voted and forwarded to the provincial in the way she has indicated.

C 159

b) province delegates

120. For the election of delegates from the province to the Provincial chapter the procedure is as follows:

a. Having completed the election of the delegates for communities with at least 5 Sisters, the provincial will send to all the houses a list of those elected, at the same time, giving the names of the perpetually professed Sisters still eligible for election. Excluded from this list are those who are already members of the provincial chapter by right or by
election, and Sisters belonging to other provinces. Included are the names of the local substitutes and the perpetually professed Sisters who are temporarily absent from the province for legitimate reasons.

b. The number of delegates to be elected is in the proportion of 1 for every 15 or fraction of 15 for provinces with fewer than 250 Sisters, and of 1 for every 30 or fraction of 30 for provinces with more than 250 Sisters. This is based on the total number of Sisters belonging to the province, therefore including the Sisters with temporary vows, the community animators and the other members of the provincial chapter, Sisters who are temporarily absent from the province and those legitimately absent from the religious house.

c. The provincial will send a list of Sisters who are eligible and a sufficient number of ballots, equal in size and stamped, so that each Sister may indicate the names for the required number of delegates. The list of Sisters and ballots will also be sent to the Sisters who are temporarily out of the province or absent from their religious house for lawful reasons.

d. The ballots will be collected in a manner indicated by the provincial, which guarantees secrecy of vote.

e. When all the ballots have been returned, the scrutiny will be carried out by at least three scrutineers nominated by the provincial.

f. Those who receive the highest number of votes will be elected. The cases of equal numbers will be solved according to what is laid down in Article 119 b.

g. The temporary professed Sisters also vote in these elections but they may not be elected.

h. Should it happen that among the provincial delegates a Sister is elected who is already designated as a local substitute, her community will elect another substitute.

i. Should one of the provincial delegates be legitimately prevented from taking part in the provincial chapter, her place will be taken by the Sister, among those not elected, who obtained the highest number of votes.

C 159

121. With the agreement of her council, the provincial may invite other Sisters or competent persons to the provincial chapter so that they may make a valid contribution in the study and discussion of the topics to be dealt with.

These persons may participate in meetings at which their presence is required, but they will not have the right to vote.

C 159

**ELECTIONS DURING THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER**

122. On the day appointed by the provincial or by the superior of the pre-province, all the chapter members by right and delegates, will meet at the place chosen for the provincial chapter to begin its work.
The election of the delegate or the delegates to the general chapter will be carried out according to the norms indicated in Article 119 of these present Regulations for the election of the local delegate to the provincial chapter or that of the pre-province.

In the same way, the substitute or substitutes will be elected. The report of the elections will be sent to the moderator of the chapter together with the list of members of the provincial or pre-province chapter.

When a community is constituted as being directly dependent on the superior general, the registration of members and participation in the general chapter are regulated by its own statutes.

C 139g., 158, 159
3. The service of authority
in the local community

THE COMMUNITY ANIMATOR

123. The community animator is a Sister with at least 2 years of perpetual profession.

She remains in office for three years and may be re-appointed, but not for more than six
consecutive years in the same house, unless she is also novice formator. She may not
remain in office beyond a fourth consecutive term of three years.

The community animator will share the life of the community with the provincial, will
frequently consult her and inform her of the various initiatives. Each year, she will send the
house chronicle, statistics, and other required reports to her.

She will come to an agreement with the provincial before introducing any significant
changes, assuming tasks not pertaining to her role, or commitments to ecclesial or civil
authorities.

C 164

124. She will be responsible for the specific moments of personal and community formation: the
private encounter, the weekly conference, and the Good Night. She will regularly read
mother general’s circular letter and, with the community, will reflect on how to apply its
directives to practical situations and needs.

She will encourage catechetical updating, the study of the documents of the Church and of
the Institute, always with reference to the local situation.

C 52, 164

THE LOCAL COUNCIL

125. The councillors are chosen from among the perpetually professed Sisters.

The vicar and the bursar must be perpetually professed for at least 2 years.

Whenever possible, in the selection of the councillors, in addition to the opinion of the
animator, that of the community should also be considered.

The councillors and the bursar are appointed for three years. Their appointment may be
renewed but should not exceed a third consecutive term in the same house.

In the meetings of the local council, announced in advance with their relative agendas, the
community animator and the councillors, keeping in mind the views of the Sisters, in an
atmosphere of prayer, study and discernment, will make the necessary decisions, valuing
everyone’s resources in order to facilitate the implementation of the community plan.

The animator will inform the community in an opportune way, encouraging co-
responsibility and subsidiarity.
One of the councillors, appointed as secretary, will draw up minutes of the meeting. Once they have been read and signed by the members of the council and the community animator, they will be kept in the archives.

C 167-168

126. The community animator is responsible for the local archives either personally or indirectly through another Sister. It must contain:

a. copy of the Constitutions and Regulations;
b. acts of the general chapters; the Cronistoria of the Institute;
c. copy of the circular letters of mother general, the general councillors, and the provincial;
d. register of the personnel of the house;
e. book of the minutes of the local council meetings; a copy of the extracts from the minutes sent to the provincial council with the relative replies and authorisations;
f. books recording the ordinary and extraordinary visits of superiors;
g. house chronicle, books of customs; the community plans for the last six years;
h. letters and documents from ecclesiastical and civil authorities regarding the house;
i. register of Masses in suffrage for the dead as prescribed in the Regulations;
j. registers pertaining to the various activities of the house;
k. registers of benefactors and persons in authority.

127. Through her service, the bursar shares in the mission of the community. She has the responsibility for the maintenance of the movable and immovable goods of the community, and of foreseeing that all are covered by the necessary insurance.

It is also her task to see to the economic administration and management of the house and to record accurately the movement of money relative to the community and the activities dependent on it. Each year she will draw up a unified report of the economic state of the house to be given to the provincial bursar after it has been revised and approved by the community animator and her council.

At least once every three months, the bursar will give a report on the economic state of the house to the community animator and her council; this will also be presented to the community in an appropriate manner.

C 170

128. On an understanding with the community animator and in accordance with the guidelines and procedures approved by the provincial with the consent of her council, the bursar also has the responsibility of overseeing work contracts, just payment and social security of staff employed by the community.

She will strive to keep herself updated regarding the regulations of the nation dealing with finance, insurance, and taxation.
129. Either personally or through her assistant she will care for the administrative archives in which the following documents must be kept:

- **a.** copies of the deeds of purchase, or sale, etc.;
- **b.** plans, blueprints, authorisations, etc.;
- **c.** copies of agreements periodically updated;
- **d.** updated inventories;
- **e.** registers of various kinds;
- **f.** bookkeeping relative to the economic administration.
4. The interprovincial conference

130. The interprovincial conference is a consultative body. It is instituted with the aim of achieving greater collaboration, in a spirit of communion, to address issues of common interest and to establish an appropriate coordination among the provinces and pre-provinces in a determined region, always recognizing the autonomy of each. The interprovincial conference is constituted for an indefinite period of time.

C 134m

131. The interprovincial conference is established by the superior general with the consent of her council on a proposal by the provinces and pre-provinces concerned.

The statutes, regulations, and any changes to them, require the approval of the superior general with the consent of her council.

The procedures for the possible entry of new members, for a member leaving, and for the division, or the dissolution of a conference are also regulated within the statutes.

C 134m

APPENDIX TO THE REGULATIONS

132. The appendix to the Regulations contains rules drawn up by provinces, or groups of provinces that apply the provisions of the *Constitutions and Regulations* to specific needs of the context in which the provinces operate.

They may also contain provisions related to areas not explicitly considered in the Regulations.

For the drawing up of the appendix, the Sisters of the province or provinces concerned should be consulted.

C 134k, 172
Appendix
Letter of St. John Bosco to the FMA

My beloved daughters in Jesus Christ,

Today, as we celebrate the solemn feast of Mary Help of Christians in Turin in the presence of an enormous crowd of people who have come long distances to kneel as children at the feet of their tender mother, it is a source of comfort to me to express my thoughts to you and to the Institute that bears her name. I remembered the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians this morning at Mass, and I prayed for them.

Among other things I implored the grace that you may always be faithful to your holy vocation, that you may be religious who love perfection and holiness; that in the practice of Christian and religious virtues, by means of an edifying and exemplary life, you may give honour to Jesus Christ, your heavenly spouse, and to Mary, your most loving mother.

I trust that you also prayed for me and that Mary Help of Christians will hear our prayers and will obtain from the Lord all of us the grace that we may live in the holy fear of God, thus saving our own souls and the souls of many others.

Meanwhile, I announce to you that this year the six-year term of the superior chapter of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians comes to an end. Therefore, according to Article VII of the Constitutions, a new election must be held.

God willing, this will take place in the latter half of August on a day during the octave of the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this reason, I invite all the superiors to assemble in the motherhouse of Nizza Monferrato, if possible, before the fifteenth of that month where the election will probably take place.

Since the good of the Institute and the glory of God depend to a great extent upon the election of a good council, and especially, a wise superior general, the electors need to be enlightened in a special way in order to select and vote for those who are most suitable for such important offices.

The electors, therefore, need the Lord to enlighten and guide them so that they fulfil this duty according to his divine will. For this reason I recommend that from the day on which this letter is received until the elections have taken place, every superior shall have the Sisters recite or sing in common the *Veni Creator* in the morning and the *Ave Maris Stella* in the evening.

In addition, I exhort every Sister to offer special prayers in private, especially after Holy Communion, and to make some acts of virtue or self-denial in order to obtain for the superiors the light they need.

Preparing themselves by prayer, the electors should also reflect upon the present needs of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Before God, it seems to me that the Institute needs Sisters who are imbued with the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice that fills them with the desire to work and suffer for Jesus Christ, and for the good of their neighbour; it needs Sisters who are firmly convinced that exact obedience, without criticism or complaint, is the path they must courageously tread in order to attain perfection and holiness; it needs Sisters who can master their own affections and keep their hearts fixed on God alone in order to be able to say together with Saint Francis de Sales, "If I

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knew that one fibre of my heart was not for God, I would tear it out"; Sisters who neither regret having left the world, nor long for the possessions and conveniences they have renounced; Sisters who deem it a privilege to live in a condition of poverty and privation in imitation of their divine spouse Jesus who, being rich made himself poor, in order to enrich people with his grace and to make them heirs of Heaven; Sisters who have no other ambition on earth than to follow Jesus Christ who was humiliated, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross so that they may, thus, praise him surrounded by the angels and saints in the glory of heaven.

It needs Sisters who have a strong physical constitution, good character, and a reasonably cheerful disposition, who desire above all else to become saints, not by doing anything extraordinary but only the ordinary, thus becoming an inspiration to others, especially young people, attracting them to the practice of Christian virtues; finally, it needs Sisters who are, or at least can become, effective instruments for promoting the glory of God in the fulfilment of those responsibilities, and the accomplishment of those activities proper to the Institute.

Now, to have Sisters of this kind it is very important to have at the head of the Institute superiors who are capable of good judgment in order to test and discern vocations among young people before admission to the novitiate and to profession. It is very important that the superiors be the first to possess and practice those virtues that they must instil in their Sisters. It is very important that the superiors love all their Sisters without exception, as their own sisters, as daughters of Mary, as spouses of Jesus Christ. It is also important, that to a patient and kindly love they unite that strong conviction which, when need arises, enables them, without forcefulness, yet without human respect, to prevent transgressions of the Constitutions. This conviction must, at the same time, be discerning and tactful, so that, while safeguarding an ardent spirit of piety and fervent observance of the Rule, does not endanger the health of the Sisters.

Let each superior then, reflect seriously in order to discover which of her Sisters possesses these qualities to a lesser or greater degree, and at the proper time let her vote for those who, in the presence of God and her own conscience, seem most suited for the role they will fill.

I hope that I will again be able to assist at your general chapter, and I pray that God will keep all of you in his holy grace, granting you all, both superiors and subjects, those in good health and those who are ill, the grace of living and serving him faithfully in whatever place or occupation obedience has placed you, so that on whatever day and at whatever hour our Lord Jesus Christ comes to call you to eternity, all of you may be able to reply, "I am ready, my God; take me to enjoy the happiness that, in your infinite mercy, you have prepared for me".

Pray for me and consider me, in the Lord,

Turin, May 4, 1886.

Yours most affectionately,

Giovanni Bosco, priest
Circular Letter of St. John Bosco

My good and dearly loved daughters in Jesus Christ,

I experience great consolation every time I receive your expressions of respect and affection, my good daughters. However, the words of affection which, either personally or by letter, you addressed to me on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year, reasonably demand from me a special word of gratitude for the filial affection you have shown me.

First of all, I must tell you that I am very pleased with you and the eagerness with which you undertake any kind of work, even assuming very strenuous tasks, in order to promote the greater glory of God in our houses, and among the young people whom Divine Providence entrusts to us each day, so that we can guide them along the path of virtue and honour, which is the path to heaven.

You have thanked me in so many ways and with such varied expressions for what I have done for you. You have courageously offered to work with me, and to share with me fatigue, honour, and glory on earth in order to attain the great reward God has prepared for all of us in heaven. You have said that you desire nothing more than to know what I think best for you, that you would accept and carry it out unquestioningly.

These precious words of yours are very pleasing to me and replying simply, as a father, I thank you with all my heart, and I assure you that you would do me the greatest favour if you would help me to save your souls.

You well know, my dear daughters, that I accepted you into the Congregation and that I have always been most solicitous for your good in order to ensure your eternal salvation. Therefore, if you help me in this great undertaking, you will be doing all that my fatherly heart could expect from you.

You can easily imagine the things you must do in order to succeed in this very important undertaking. You must obey the Constitutions, which are a guide for the good of your own souls, and for the spiritual and temporal benefit of your pupils. You have read and studied these Constitutions and they are now the object of your promise and of the vows by which you have consecrated yourselves to God.

Therefore, with all my heart, I recommend that none of you let words of dissatisfaction escape your lips, and still less, expressions of regret for having thus consecrated yourself to God. This would be an act of darkest ingratitude. All that we have, either in the spiritual or temporal order belongs to God, therefore when we consecrate ourselves to him by religious profession we do nothing more than offer him that which he himself has, in a manner of speaking, lent to us, but which really belong totally to him.

Therefore, should any of you withdraw from the observance of your vows you would be acting dishonestly towards the Lord, taking back, trampling underfoot, and desecrating in his presence what you have placed in his hands.

Some of you may say that the observance of your Rule requires too much effort. The observance of the Rule is burdensome only to those who do not observe it willingly or to those who are negligent. But those who are zealous, and are truly concerned with the good of their

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1 Manuale delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, 1908, p. LVIII. LXXI; Cf. Cron IV 281-284.
souls, find in this observance, as our Divine Saviour tells us, a yoke that is sweet and a burden that is light, "Iugum meum suave est et onus meum leve".

And then, my dear daughters, do you expect to go to heaven in a carriage? You have become religious not to enjoy yourselves, but to suffer and gain merit for the next life. You have not consecrated yourselves to God to command others, but to obey, not to attach yourselves to creatures but to practise charity towards your neighbour for the love of God; not to lead a life of comfort but to be poor and to suffer on earth in union with Jesus Christ, in order to become worthy to share his glory in heaven.

Take courage, therefore, my good and dearly loved daughters. You have put your hand to the plough, be firm. Let none of you turn to look back upon the false and treacherous world. Let us keep going. It may demand hard work. It may cost us privation, hunger, thirst, and perhaps, even death. But let us always respond. If we are attracted by the greatness of the reward, we must not allow ourselves to become discouraged by the efforts we have to make in order to merit it. "Si delectat magnitudo praemiorum, non deterreat certamen laborum."

May the grace of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary be always with you and help you to persevere in the divine service until the last moment of your lives. Amen.

Turin, January 6, 1884

Affectionately in J.C.
Giovanni Bosco, priest
I think it useful to bring to your attention some things of practical importance that will help you to understand the spirit that permeates your Rule. They will help you to observe it faithfully and with love. I speak to you with the language of my heart, as I briefly set out what experience tells me is for your spiritual welfare, and the good of the whole Institute. I recommend that you read these words attentively and as often as possible.

The vows

The first time His Holiness Pius IX spoke of the Salesian Society he said, "Vows are necessary in a religious Congregation or society in order that all the members may be bound by ties of conscience to the superior, and that the superior may keep himself and his subjects bound to the Head of the Church, and consequently to God himself". These words are equally applicable to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Your vows then, may be considered as spiritual cords by which you bind yourselves to God. You place in the hands of your superiors your will, all that you possess and your physical and moral strength, that you may all be of one heart and one soul in order to promote the greater glory of God according to your Constitutions as the Church asks of you so that there may be one faith in mind and one piety in deed.

The vows are a generous offering that greatly increases the merit of our actions. St. Anselm teaches that a good act performed by a person without vows can be compared to the fruit of a plant. One who, bound by vows, performs the same act offers God not only the fruit but the whole plant.

St. Bonaventure compares an action done without vows to offering God the interest but not the capital, whereas with vows a person offers God both interest and capital. Moreover, the Fathers of the Church unanimously teach that every action performed by vow has a twofold merit, the merit of the good action itself and the merit of having fulfilled the vow.

Furthermore, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, the profession of religious vows renews baptismal innocence, that is, it places us in the state of grace we possessed when we received the sacrament. The Doctors of the Church compare religious vows to martyrdom, saying that the merit of one who professes the vows is as great as that of one who suffers martyrdom, declaring that what the vows lack in intensity is supplied by their duration.

If, therefore, the religious vows so significantly increase the merit of our actions, rendering them very pleasing to God, we ought to make every effort to observe these vows faithfully. The person who does not feel capable of observing the vows should not make them at all, or should postpone making them until one is sufficiently determined to observe them. Otherwise one makes a foolish and faithless promise which cannot but displease God. If you make a vow to God discharge it without delay, “for dreams come with many cares, and a fool’s voice with many words”, says the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, prepare yourselves well for this heroic consecration, and once you have made it see to it that you are faithful to it, even at the cost of long and painful sacrifice. God tells us, "Pay

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1 C 1885 Introduzione, p. 22-47; Manuale Regolamenti delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice, 1929, p. 1.24-61.
2 Eccl.5:3.
your vows to the Most High”.3

**Obedience**

According to St. Jerome true obedience is the compendium of all virtues. St. Bonaventure says that the whole of religious perfection consists in the renunciation of our own will, that is, in the practice of obedience. The obedient person will be victorious, says the Holy Spirit.4 St. Gregory the Great concludes that obedience leads to the possession and preservation of all other virtues.

Such obedience, however, must be modelled on that of our Divine Saviour, who practised obedience also in things that were very difficult, even to death on a cross;5 should the glory of God require it we, too, should obey, even at the cost of our lives.

Therefore, carry out faithfully the commands of superiors, as well as the Rule of the Congregation and the particular customs of each house. Should it sometimes happen that one fails in obedience, let her humbly ask pardon of the one she has disobeyed. This act of humility will be a most efficacious means of obtaining pardon for the fault committed and of receiving the help of God's grace for the future. It will also be a deterrent from falling again into the same fault.

In recommending this virtue the apostle Paul exhorts, "Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, and will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy, and not with sighing, for that would be harmful to you".6 Note well that when we do what pleases us and gives us satisfaction we are not practising true obedience. True obedience, which makes us pleasing to God and to the superiors, consists in doing willingly all that is commanded by our Constitutions or by our superiors, for as St. Paul writes, "God loves a cheerful giver".7

True obedience consists in submitting willingly even in those things that are very difficult and contrary to our self-love and doing courageously what is demanded of us even at the cost of suffering and sacrifice. In such cases obedience is more difficult, but it is also much more meritorious, and leads us to the possession of the kingdom of heaven, according to the words of our Divine Redeemer, “...the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force” 8.

If you fulfil your vow of obedience in the way I have described to you, I can assure you in the name of the Lord that you will have a truly peaceful and happy life in the Congregation. At the same time I must warn you that from the day you decide not to obey, but to do your own will you will no longer be satisfied with the state of life you have chosen.

If in the various religious orders there are those who are discontent or find community life a burden, observe attentively and you will see this comes from their lack of obedience and their failure to give up their own will. Think about this when you feel discontented and see how you can cure your unhappiness.

**Poverty**

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3 *Ps* 50:14.
7 2*Cor.* 9:7.
8 *Matt.* 11:12.
If we do not abandon the world for the love of God, we shall one day be forced to leave it. Those who abandon the world freely during the course of their mortal lives, will be blessed a hundredfold in this life and will receive an eternal reward in the next. On the other hand, the person who cannot decide to make this voluntarily sacrifice will have to do so at the moment of death. Then it will be without reward but with the added obligation of rendering God a strict account of all possessions.

It is true that your Constitutions permit the possession and use of all your civil rights. However, after a person enters the Congregation, she may no longer administer, nor dispose of anything belonging to her, without the consent of the superior, and then only within the limits set by her. In the Congregation everyone is considered as though she literally possessed nothing, having made herself poor that she might become rich in possessing Christ. Thus she follows the example of Our Saviour who was born in poverty, lived in privation, and died on the cross despoiled of all earthly possessions. Let us listen to what our Divine Master tells us, “None of you can become my disciples if you do not give up all your possessions, sell all that you own, and distribute the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me”.

He told his disciples that they should only possess one cloak and should not be concerned about providing for the necessities of life during their preaching. In fact, nowhere do we read that Jesus, his apostles, or any of his disciples had any personal possessions in land, houses, furniture, clothing, provisions, or the like.

St. Paul clearly states that wherever the followers of Christ go and whatsoever they do, they ought to be satisfied with having only that food and clothing that is strictly necessary, “…if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these”.

For us, all that is over and above the necessary food and clothing is superfluous, and contrary to the religious vocation. It is true that at times we shall have to endure discomfort on journeys, in our work, in time of health or sickness. At times we shall have food, clothing or other things that are not to our liking. It is precisely at such times when we must remember that we have professed poverty and that we must bear the consequences of that profession if we wish to have its merit and its reward. Let us guard against the kind of poverty that St. Bernard strongly censures. He says that there are those who take pride in being called poor, but do not want to bear the consequences of poverty. Others are content to be poor as long as they lack for nothing. Therefore, should our state of poverty cause us some inconvenience or suffering, let us rejoice with St. Paul, who says that he is filled with joy in all his afflictions.

Let us also be inspired by the apostles who were filled with joy on their return from the Sanhedrin because they had been found worthy of suffering humiliation for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is precisely for this kind of poverty that our Divine Redeemer not only promises but ensures the reward of Paradise when he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

Moreover, living in the state of poverty, willingly dwelling in an uncomfortable room or in one that is poorly furnished, wearing poor clothing, consuming plain food, all this does great

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10 I Tim. 6:8.
11 Cf. 2 Cor. 7:4.
13 Matt. 5:3.
honour to the person who has made a vow of poverty because she thus resembles Jesus Christ.
It is also part of poverty not to damage anything, to take care of books, clothing, shoes, etc.,
and to use objects and clothing which are old, mended or somewhat worn without feeling
embarrassed.

**Chastity**

The virtue of chastity is extremely necessary, the great virtue, the angelic virtue, all the other
virtues form a crown around it. Whoever possesses this virtue may apply the words of the Holy
Spirit, “All good things came to me along with her”. Our Saviour assures us that those who
possess this inestimable treasure become like the angels even in this mortal life.

However, this spotless lily, this fragrant rose, this priceless pearl is sorely threatened by the
enemy of our souls, because he knows that if successful in stealing it from us the work of our
sanctification can be said to be ruined. Light will be changed into darkness, the brilliant flame
into dead embers, an angel of heaven will become a demon, all virtue will then be lost.

Now, my good daughters, I believe that I am doing something very useful for your soul by
bringing certain matters to your attention. If you heed what I say I believe I can assure you they
will help in your perseverance in this and all other virtues.

Therefore, bear in mind the following:

1. Do not enter the Congregation unless you have previously sought the advice of some
discerning person who judges you capable of preserving this virtue.

2. Avoid all familiarity with persons of the other sex and do not form exclusive or possessive
friendships with the young people whom Divine Providence entrusts to your care. Practise
charity and courtesy towards everyone, but do not form this kind of attachment with anyone. In
this regard St. Jerome tells us that we should love no one or love everyone equally.

3. Retire immediately after night prayers and refrain from holding conversation with anyone
until after Mass the following morning.

4. Keep your senses under control. The Holy Spirit tells us clearly that a perishable body
weighs down the soul. This is why St. Paul endeavoured to subdue his body by means of
severe discipline, even when his fatiguing labour left him exhausted, "I punish my body and
enslave it".

I recommend that you be especially moderate in eating and drinking. Gluttony and chastity
cannot exist together.

5. Worldly places, persons, and things are great obstacles to the practice of chastity. Avoid
them carefully and keep aloof from them not only physically but also in mind and heart.

I cannot remember ever having read or heard that a religious had gained spiritually by visiting
their home. On the contrary, there are thousands upon thousands who, not convinced of this,
tried it and were bitterly disillusioned. In fact, many became unhappy victims of their
indiscretion and recklessness.

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14 Wis. 7:11.
16 Cf. Wis. 9:15.
17 1 Cor. 9:27.
6. The exact observance of your Holy Rule, especially those articles regarding the vows and the practices of piety, is a means of overcoming every bad habit and is a trustworthy guardian of chastity. The Christian religion may justly be compared to a strong city according to the words of Isaiah, "We have a strong city; he sets up victory as walls and bulwarks".  

Therefore, the vows and the Rule of a religious community are like the outer walls of a fortress. The commandments of God and of the Church form the main wall or rampart of religion. The devil uses every strategy and cunning in order to bring about the transgression of these commandments. In order to induce the religious to transgress them, the devil first attempts to break down the parapet and attack the advance guards, that is to say, the Rule or Constitutions of their Institute.

When the enemy of our souls wishes to seduce a religious and allure a religious into violating the commandments of God, the devil begins by making that person neglectful in very small matters and then in those of greater importance. After this he easily persuades her to violate the law of God, thus verifying that which the Holy Spirit says, "...he who despises small things will fall little by little".

Therefore, my dear daughters, if you wish to be faithful to God's commandments, especially the sixth and ninth, be faithful in the exact observance of your Rule. Your greatest care should be the constant, diligent, and exact fulfilment of the practices of piety, the foundation and support of all religious Institutes. Thus you will live chastely like the angels.

**Fraternal Charity**

It is impossible to love God unless you also love your neighbour. The same commandment which obliges us to love God also obliges us to love our neighbour. In the first letter of St. John the Evangelist we read, "And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also". In the same passage the Apostle warns us that he who hates his brother but claims that he loves God is a liar, "Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars".

When fraternal love reigns in a community, all loving one another and each rejoicing in the good fortune of the other as if it were his own, that house becomes a paradise, and the words of the prophet David are verified, "How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity". However, as soon as self-love takes over or quarrels or disagreements arise, that house becomes a hell.

The Lord takes great pleasure in seeing those who dwell in God’s house live *in unum*, that is, united in the determination to serve God and assist one another in mutual charity. St. Luke praised the early Christians because their love for one another was so great that they seemed to have but one heart and one soul.

That type of criticism which is opposed to charity, is very harmful to religious communities. "A whisperer degrades himself and is hated in his neighbourhood". On the contrary, the religious who speaks well of fellow religious, and knows how to excuse their faults is the source of much good example.

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18 Isa. 26:1.
19 Sir. 19:1.
20 1 John 4:20-21.
21 Ps. 132:1.
23 Sir. 21:31.
Strive, therefore, to avoid every word that in any way resembles destructive criticism, especially when directed against your companions, and even more so against your superiors. The worst type of destructive criticism is to give a bad interpretation to virtuous acts or to say that they have been performed with a bad intention.

Be especially careful not to report to anyone the ill that others have spoken about her, for this at times, is the cause of dissension and rancour that may last for months and even years.

What an account destructive critics in a community will have to render to God! “One who sows discord in a family is an abomination to the Lord.”

Be careful not to give offence to any of your Sisters, even in jest. Jokes which are displeasing to others or offend them, are contrary to charity. You would not like to be ridiculed or made fun of in front of others. Then avoid placing others in such situations.

Strive also to avoid disputes. At times differences of opinion arise over trifles. This may lead to quarrels and insults. Thus fraternal union is deplorably destroyed.

Moreover, if you love charity, strive to be affable and gentle with everyone. Gentleness is a virtue that is very pleasing to Jesus Christ. "'Learn from me', he says, ‘for I am gentle and humble in heart’".

Love endures everything. Therefore, the person who is unwilling to tolerate the faults of others will never possess true charity. There is no one on earth, no matter how virtuous one may be, who does not have some shortcomings. Those persons who wish others to bear with their defects should begin by bearing with those of others, thus fulfilling the law of Jesus Christ, as St. Paul writes, “Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfil the law of Christ”.

Let us come to some practical points. Above all, control your anger, which is so easily roused in times of disagreement. Be careful not to say things that displease others, or to show arrogance. At times uncouth manners are even more offensive than abusive words.

Should it happen that someone who has offended you comes to ask pardon, be very careful not to receive the person brusquely or answer curtly. On the contrary be courteous and show affection and good will.

If it should happen that you offend anyone strive to make amends immediately, and to remove from her heart all feelings of rancour against you. Following the advice of St. Paul, do not let the sun set until you have overcome your resentment, and have been reconciled with your neighbour. Rather, do this as soon as possible, exerting yourself to conquer the repugnance you may feel. Do not be satisfied with loving your fellow religious in words only. Help them, rather, by extending every possible kind of service to them, as St. John, the apostle of charity, recommends, "Let us love not in word and speech, but in truth and action".

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24 Prov. 6:16.19.
25 Sir. 19:10.
26 Matt. 11:29.
28 Gal. 6:2.
29 Eph. 4:26.
It is charity to comply with reasonable requests, but the greatest charity we can have is that of zeal for the spiritual welfare of our neighbour. Whenever the opportunity of doing good presents itself, do not say that it is not your responsibility or that you do not wish to interfere, for such was Cain’s arrogant reply to the Lord, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Each is bound to save his neighbour from harm if it is within his power. God commands each of us to care for our neighbour. Make every possible effort, therefore, to help others both in word and in deed and especially in prayer.

Seeing Christ in the person of our neighbour and remembering that he accepts the good we do to others as though done to himself, are great helps to the practice of charity. He clearly indicates this when he says, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

From all that has been said, you can see clearly how necessary and how beautiful the virtue of charity is. Practise it, therefore, and God will bless you abundantly.

Practices of Piety

As food nourishes and sustains the body, so the practices of piety nourish the soul and strengthen it against temptation. As long as you faithfully and fervently fulfil the practices of piety, you will be at peace with everyone and the Daughter of Mary Help of Christians will be content in her vocation. On the contrary, once she becomes negligent in the practices of piety she will begin to doubt her vocation, and even experience strong temptations.

The history of the Church affords ample evidence that religious orders and Congregations have flourished and successfully advanced the cause of religion as long as they preserved a strong spirit of piety. On the contrary, many religious orders and Congregations have declined, and some have gone completely out of existence once they became lax in the spirit of piety, each member thinking of their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ, as indeed St. Paul lamented that certain Christians did.

Therefore, my dear daughters, if you are concerned with the honour of your Congregation, if you desire its development, if you wish it to flourish for the advantage of your own soul and the souls of all the Sisters, be very careful not to neglect meditation, spiritual reading, the daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament, weekly Confession, frequent and devout Communion, the recitation of the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin, the observance of the little Friday penance, and other similar practices. Even though, taken separately, they do not seem to be of great significance, each of them, however, effectively contributes to your progress on the way of salvation and perfection. St. Augustine tells us that if we want to grow and become great in the eyes of God we must begin from little things.

The most important among the practices of piety are those, which in a certain sense embrace them all, namely the faithful, fervent practice of the annual Spiritual Retreat, and the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death.

Anyone who, because of her work, cannot make this last exercise with the community should make it alone. Similarly, anyone who cannot devote the entire day to this devout practice should devote part of the day to it, leaving aside all work that is not strictly necessary. All

31 Gen. 4:9.
32 Cf. Sir. 17:12.
33 Matt. 25:40.
34 Phil. 2:21.
should at least observe this rule:

1. In addition to the usual morning meditation, a half hour meditation or a conference should be arranged for the evening on one of the four last things or some point of the Rule should be the subject of the meditation or conference.

2. A monthly review of conscience should be made, and a more accurate Confession than usual, remembering that it could be the last of your life. Holy Communion should be received in the same spirit as if it were to be your Holy Viaticum.

3. You should reflect for at least a half hour on the progress or regression you have made in virtue during the preceding month, especially with regard to the resolutions made during the Spiritual Retreat, and the observance of the Holy Rule. Suitable resolutions should then be made.

4. All, or at least some of the Rule of the Congregation, should be read during the day.

5. On that day it would be helpful to choose a special saint as protector for the coming month.

I believe the salvation of a religious is ensured if she approaches the sacraments and attends to matters of conscience once a month as if she were about to leave this life for eternity. Therefore, if you are concerned with the honour of your Institute, if you desire the salvation of your soul, observe your Holy Rule. Be exact even in minor points, because the person who fears God, neglects nothing that can contribute to God's greater glory.35

**The private encounter and its importance**

Confidence in superiors is one of the things that most contributes to the effective development of a religious Congregation as well as to the peace and happiness of its members.

If subjects possess this confidence they will open their hearts to their superiors, and by means of this sharing find relief from their inner sufferings. Their anxieties about the fulfilment of their duties will be eased and the superiors can take the measures necessary so that unpleasant situations may be averted and discontent avoided. Through these confidential talks the superiors become aware of the physical and moral strengths of their subjects, and consequently entrust them with those responsibilities for which they are suited. Furthermore, should any abuse begin to creep into the community, the superior will be in a position to discover and correct it. These are the reasons why it is established that each Sister will confer with her superior at least once a month. Regarding this, the Constitutions tell us that each Sister should make known simply and accurately her external faults against the Holy Rule, the progress she has made in virtue, the difficulties she encounters, and whatever else she feels she should make known in order to receive counsel and encouragement.

The main points to be discussed during the private encounter are the following:

1. health;
2. studies or occupations;
3. whether or not she is able to fulfil all her responsibilities, and the diligence with which she undertakes them;
4. whether she has sufficient time to fulfil the practices of piety and the diligence she shows in this;

5. the manner in which she prays and meditates;
6. with what frequency and devotion she approaches the sacraments, and the benefit derived from them, especially as a help in the struggle against her predominant passion;
7. how she observes the vows, and whether she has any doubts regarding her vocation. It is to be noted well, however, that the private encounter concerns external matters only and not those for Confession unless the Sister wishes to speak of these things for her own spiritual advantage;
8. whether she experiences any inner preoccupations or disturbance, or feels coldness towards any of the Sisters, and whether she has confidence in her superiors;
9. whether she knows of any abuse which can be corrected, especially if there is a question of a possible offence against God.

St. Francis de Sales had this to say in regard to the private interview:

"Every month each one should open her heart to her superior briefly and concisely, in all simplicity and confidence she will reveal her sentiments with the same sincerity and candour with which a child shows scratches, bruises, and insect bites to her mother. Thus, rather than an account of the virtues she has acquired, or the progress she has made in the spiritual life, each Sister shall reveal her shortcomings and failings regarding piety, virtue and the spiritual life, manifesting both temptations and inner sufferings, not only to receive consolation but also to humble herself.36

Those who fulfil this practice piously, spontaneously, and faithfully will experience great joy. Such a practice in itself implies something of the holy spiritual childhood that Our Lord recommended so highly, and from which true peace of soul is derived and preserved."

Superiors are warmly recommended never to neglect receiving the Sisters for such encounters. Every Sister should know that if, in all sincerity and humility she gives a good account of her spiritual life in the private encounter, she will find in this practice a spiritual comfort and a powerful aid to her progress in virtue. Furthermore, the whole Congregation will derive great benefit from this practice.

Above all, I recommend that you be most sincere in all that concerns your vocation. Do not hide from your superior anything in this regard. Of all matters, this is the most important because the whole course of one’s life depends on it. She who hides doubts about her vocation, or decides to leave the Congregation without first seeking counsel and the opinion of her spiritual guide, is most unfortunate and may thereby risk her eternal salvation.

The first reason for the importance and necessity of being sincere with the superiors is so that they may govern and direct their subjects more effectively. It is the Superior’s duty to govern and to direct, because this is the responsibility that has been given to her, this is what it means to be a director or a superior. However, if the superior does not know her subjects because they do not make themselves known to her, it will be impossible to guide them and to help them with advice and suggestions.

The second reason that strengthens the preceding one, is that the more information the superiors have regarding all that concerns their subjects, the greater will be the wisdom and love with which they are able to help and protect them in various difficult situations and dangers that they may encounter from time to time in certain places.

The third reason for the importance of sincerity and trust in the superiors is so that they may

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36 Temptations against chastity should never be manifested in the private encounter.
better arrange and provide whatever is beneficial to the whole Institute, for whose honour and welfare, together with each of its members, the superiors are bound to care.

When a Sister makes herself known to the superiors, giving them a complete account of herself, the superiors, keeping in mind the Sister's reputation and without compromising her in any way, may provide for the general good of the Institute. On the other hand, if she does not manifest her difficulties to the superiors, she runs the risk of exposing her honour and soul to possible danger and perhaps also compromising the reputation of the community that depends on her own.

How happy and content is the religious who has complete trust in her superiors and makes them aware of all that disturbs her. When such a religious is given some responsibility, she may place all her trust in God who will help her and free her from any problematic situation. "Lord", she may well say, "I did not take this responsibility upon myself nor did I choose to be here. On the contrary I have explained my inadequacy and my lack of spiritual strength to shoulder the burden. It is you, O Lord, who have put me here and commanded me to assume this responsibility: you, therefore, will make up for what is lacking in me". With St. Augustine, such a one may say with confidence, "Lord, grant me that which you command, then command of me whatever you will". It would seem as if the religious obliges God to grant her all that he demands of her.

On the other hand, what consolation can that religious have who does not reveal herself and neglects to make her weakness known? Neither God nor obedience is responsible for the difficulties she may encounter. It is rather, her own will that induces her to put herself forward to assume responsibility. She is like an intruder who has been neither invited nor sent, and things cannot go well with her.

**Doubts about one's vocation**

She who consecrates herself to God by means of the holy vows, makes a precious offering of herself, one that is most pleasing to the Divine Majesty.

However, the enemy of souls, aware that by making vows the religious frees herself from his treachery, attempts to disturb her with a hundred and one lies in order to induce her to turn back and pursue the precarious path of the world. Chief among these delusions is the raising of doubts with regard to her vocation. This is followed by discouragement, tepidity, and very often, a return to that world she has so often recognised as treacherous, and which she had left for the love of God.

My dear daughters, if you are ever assailed by this dangerous suggestion you must immediately respond that you entered the Congregation because God granted you the precious gift of a vocation, and that if this appears doubtful to you now, it is a temptation. You may, perhaps, have brought this on yourself, nevertheless you must reject it and struggle against it, recognising it as a suggestion from the devil.

Often the agitated mind tells the doubtful person, "You can do more good elsewhere". In such a case she must reply immediately with St. Paul, "Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called".  

St. Paul, moreover, entreats us to live courageously and unalteringly in that vocation to which

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37 *I Cor. 7:20.*
each is called, "I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness".38

If you remain in your Institute, and observe your Rule exactly, you may be sure of attaining salvation. On the contrary experience teaches that, for the most part, those who have left the religious life have found themselves sadly disillusioned. Some regretted this step and could no longer find peace; others exposed themselves to serious danger, and some even became a stumbling block and source of scandal, greatly risking their own salvation and that of others.

I strongly recommend that you make no decision while your mind and heart are disturbed by doubt or by passion, for as the Holy Spirit tells us, such decisions cannot be God's will, "…the Lord was not in the earthquake".39

In such a situation I urge you to open your heart sincerely to your confessor or to your superiors and follow the advice received. Do whatever they suggest and you will certainly not make a mistake because Our Saviour has committed himself to speak through the advice of the superiors, when he assures us that their counsel comes from him, "Whoever listens to you, listens to me".40

**Five faults to be avoided**

Experience indicates five faults that could be compared to moths that undermine religious observance and ruin Congregations, namely: a restless desire for reform, individual selfishness, destructive criticism, neglect of duty, and forgetfulness that we are working for God.

1. Fly from the restless desire for reform. Concern yourself with observing your Rule rather than improving or modifying it. When a revision of the Rule is necessary or useful, the responsibility is not yours but belongs to those who have the authority to make such a revision. Your only responsibility is to observe the Rule and thus merit a reward from God.

2. Renounce all egoistic selfishness. Do not seek your own personal advantage, but zealously work for the good of the whole Institute. You must love one another and help one another by means of good advice and prayer. You must promote the honour of your Sisters, not as an individual concern, but as a noble and true heritage for all.

3. Do not be destructively critical of your superiors nor disapprove of their directives. If something that you believe to be either materially or morally harmful, should come to your knowledge, humbly make it known to your superiors. God has given them the responsibility of caring for the persons and things entrusted to them. It is, therefore, their responsibility alone to give an account of their direction and administration.

4. Let no one neglect her personal responsibilities.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians form but one body, that of the Congregation. If all the members of this body attend to their individual responsibilities, everything will proceed in an orderly manner to the satisfaction of all. If they do not, there will be disorder, confusion, disagreement, discord, and in the end, the whole Institute itself will be ruined.

Let each Sister, therefore, with zeal, humility, and great confidence in God, fulfil the responsibility entrusted to her. No one should be dismayed if some painful sacrifice is asked of

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38 Eph. 4:1.
39 1 Kings 19:11.
her, but rather, she should find consolation in the knowledge that her efforts are valuable to the Congregation to whose welfare she has consecrated herself.

5. In the fulfilment of every responsibility, in all your work, in your troubles and disappointments, never forget that, having consecrated yourselves to God, you must work for him alone, and from him alone await your reward.

God gives great importance to the least thing done in his holy name, and faith tells us that, in his own time, he will repay us abundantly. If you do this you will enjoy the good fortune of being numbered among the prudent virgins whom Jesus Christ tells us in the Gospel, were found with their lamps burning and filled with oil, and who were thus able to go to meet the bridegroom and celebrate their eternal nuptials with him. "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look, here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him'. And those who were ready went into the marriage banquet."41

Turin, Feast of the Immaculate Conception
December 8, 1884

Giovanni Bosco, priest

41 Matt 25:6-10.
The Preventive System in the Education of Young People

I have been asked several times to express, either orally or in writing, some ideas about the Preventive System that is in general use in our houses. For want of time I have not been able until now to comply with such requests. Since I now intend to print the rules of the house which, up to the present time, have almost always been observed by way of tradition, I believe it is opportune to present them together with a brief commentary on the Preventive System. This, however, will merely be an outline of a pamphlet on the subject which, if God gives me life to finish, I am preparing for the purpose of giving you some assistance in the difficult art of educating young people.

Therefore, I will tell you in what the Preventive System consists, why it is to be preferred, its practical application, and its advantages.

I - Characteristics of the Preventive System and the reasons why it is to be preferred

In the education of youth there have always been two systems, the Preventive and the Repressive.

In the Repressive System the superior makes known the rules and regulations to the pupils, then, through vigilance, he endeavours to discover transgressors in order to inflict, where necessary, the deserved punishment. In this system the words and aspect of the superior must always be severe and somewhat threatening, and he himself must avoid any familiarity with his dependants.

In a system such as the Repressive the superior, in order to uphold his authority, must rarely go among his subjects and when he does, it must be, for the most part, only to punish, or to threaten them. This system is easy to enforce, requires less effort, and is useful in the armed forces and, in general, among mature adults who are capable of knowing and remembering the law and other regulations.

The Preventive System is different, I would even say, the opposite. It consists in informing the subjects of the directives and regulations of an Institute, and then supervising in such a way that the pupils are always under the vigilance eye of the superior or the assistants. These, like so many loving fathers, speak to the pupils and guide them in every event. They advise and correct them kindly. This may all be summed up as a united effort to make it practically impossible for the pupil to transgress any rule.

This system is based entirely on reason, religion, and loving-kindness. Therefore, it excludes all drastic punishments, and also tries to avoid even minor ones. Hence, this seems to be the preferred system for the following reasons:

I. The pupil who has been advised beforehand does not become discouraged over his faults, like those pupils would who are merely reported to the superior. Neither does he become angry at corrections or at threatened or inflicted punishment, because he finds that these friendly, foreseeing warnings appeal to his reason. In this way the pupil is usually won over, he realises the need for punishment and almost desires it.

II. The most important reason is the inconsistency of young people that leads them, in a moment, to forget the disciplinary rules and the punishment threatened. A child often makes himself culpable and deserving of punishment without being aware of it because he completely

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1 MB. XIII 918-923.
forgets both the rule and the consequences of breaking it. In fact, if a friendly voice had reminded him he would certainly not have transgressed.

III. The Repressive System may prevent disorders but it rarely improves offenders. We know from experience that young people do not forget the punishments inflicted on them, but for the most part, retain a certain bitterness and a desire to throw off the yoke or even take revenge. At times it seems that they are not paying any attention, but those who deal closely with them know how terrible the memories of young people can be. They easily forget punishments administered by their parents, but not so easily those they received from their educators. There have been instances where, in advanced years, brutal revenge has been taken for punishments justly inflicted upon them when they were students. On the other hand, the Preventive System makes the pupil a friend who looks upon his assistant as a benefactor who advises him, desires his good, and wishes to save him from all regret, punishment, and dishonour.

IV. In the Preventive System advice is given in such a way that the educator can speak heart to heart with the pupil during his student days, and afterwards as well. Having won over the pupil, the educator is in a position to influence him, to warn him, advise, and correct him, even when he is already employed, or occupies a position of authority in civil service or the business world. These and many other reasons would make it seem that the Preventive is to be preferred to the Repressive System.

II - Application of the Preventive System

The practice of this system is entirely based on these words of St. Paul, “Caritas benigna est, patiens est... Omnia suffert, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet” (1 Cor 13, 4-7). Love is patient and kind; love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things. It follows, therefore, that only a Christian can successfully practise the Preventive System. Reason and religion are the means that the educator must use constantly. He must instruct others how to use them, and must practise them himself if he wishes to be obeyed and to attain his aim.

Consequently, the superior must be completely dedicated to the pupils under his care. He must never take on commitments that distance him from the fulfilment of his responsibilities towards them. In fact, he ought to be among them always during their free time, unless they are sufficiently assisted by others.

The teachers of academic and practical subjects and the assistants, must be known to be morally irreproachable. They should avoid like the plague every type of disorderly or unhealthy affection for the pupils, and should remember that the deviation of one member can compromise the whole educational Institute. The boys should never be left alone. As far as possible, the assistants will precede them to the places where they are to gather, and will remain until other assistants replace them. They should never be left unoccupied.

They should be given full freedom to jump, run, and make as much noise as they please. Gymnastics, music, recitals, drama and outings are very efficacious means of maintaining discipline and at the same time benefit both morality and health. Care must be taken, however, that the content of the entertainment, the people who frequent it and the addresses given are not objectionable. St. Philip Neri, the great friend of youth, used to tell everyone, “do just as you please, as long as you do not commit sin”.

Frequent Confession and Communion and daily Mass are the pillars on which an educational institution must rest. This is especially true where one does not intend to enforce discipline by means of threats and punishments. Never oblige the young people to frequent the sacraments but encourage them, and make it easy for them to do so. On occasions of spiritual
retreats, triduums, novenas and sermons, as well as in catechetical instructions, stress the beauty and greatness of that religion which provides, in the sacraments, such an easy means of benefiting society, of finding peace of heart and attaining salvation. In this way young people, spontaneously attracted to the sacraments, will approach them willingly and will draw great benefit from them. The greatest care must be taken to prevent questionable books, friends, or other persons who engage in unhealthy conversation from entering the house. A trustworthy and responsible doorkeeper is a treasure in an educational Institute.

Every evening, after the customary prayers and before the pupils retire for the night, the superior, or someone in his place, shall address a few affectionate words to the pupils. He will give them some advice or instruction concerning what they should or should not do. These exhortations should be based on matters that are of interest in the Institute or in the world in general. The superior's talk, however, should never last longer than two or three minutes. This talk is the key to morality, good order in the house, and the success of education.

We should avoid like the plague the opinion of those who wish to postpone the First Communion of children until they are much older, by which time, for the most part, the devil has already taken hold of the heart of the young person and their innocence has been incalculably damaged. It was customary in the early Church to give little children the Consecrated Hosts which remained after the distribution of the Easter Communion. This shows that the Church desired that children be permitted to receive Holy Communion at an early age. When a child knows the difference between bread and Consecrated Bread, and shows he has received sufficient instruction, no further consideration need be given to his age and the Heavenly King should be permitted to come and reign in his soul. The catechism recommends frequent Communion; St. Philip Neri counselled that it be received weekly and even more often. The Council of Trent clearly declared it highly desirable that every Christian should receive Holy Communion whenever he assists at Mass. In order to draw greater benefit from the august and divine Sacrifice, this communion ought not to be merely spiritual but rather, sacramental.

III - Advantages of the Preventive System

Some may say that this system is difficult to practise. I wish to point out that as far as the pupils are concerned, it is easier and is also more pleasing and beneficial to them. As far as the educator is concerned it does present some difficulties, which, however, become somewhat less burdensome if he gives himself to his work zealously. The educator is a person consecrated to the good of his pupils, and consequently, must be ready to face every difficulty and to make any effort in order to achieve his aim that is the social, moral and intellectual education of his pupils.

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2 Not long ago a minister of the Queen of England, who was visiting one of our schools in Turin, was shown a large hall where about five hundred boys were studying. He was amazed to see such a large number of young boys without anyone assisting them, working in perfect silence. His amazement increased when he learned that in the course of the whole year there had been no cause for complaint of the least inconvenience, or reason either to inflict or to threaten punishment.

“How do you manage to obtain such silence and such discipline? he asked, and, turning to his secretary said, "Write down all that he says.”
- Sir, the Director replied, you cannot use the means that we use.
- Why?
- Because they are mysteries revealed only to Catholics.
- What are they?
- Frequent Confession and Communion, and fervent assistance at daily Mass.
-You are right, the minister answered. We do not have such means. But can’t they be substituted by something else?
- If the means which religion offers are not used, one must have recourse to threats and the cane.
-How right you are! How right you are, religion or the cane. I must say this in London.”

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In addition to the advantages previously stated, I add the following:

I - The pupil will always feel great respect for the educator, and will remember with gratitude the formation given, looking upon his teachers and the other superiors as so many fathers and brothers. For the most part, wherever these pupils are in later life, they prove to be a consolation to their families, useful citizens and good Christians.

II - Whatever the character, the temperament, and the moral status of a pupil at the time of admission, his parents may be sure that their son cannot become worse, and it can be said with certainty that he will always make some improvement. Moreover, certain young people who for some time had been the cause of grief to their parents and had even been refused admission to reformatories, educated according to these principles, changed their ways, developed good qualities, and began to lead decent lives. At present many of them occupy places of respect in society, having become the support of their families and a credit to the place where they live.

III - Should any pupils who have already acquired bad habits, enter the Institute, they will find it impossible to do any harm to their companions. Those with good character cannot come under their bad influence because there will be neither time, nor place, nor opportunity for this to happen, and since we presume the assistant is present, he would quickly remedy the situation.

A word about punishments

Which rules are to be kept in mind when administering punishment? As far as possible never use punishment. When it becomes necessary, keep the following in mind:

I - If the educator wants to be respected by his pupils, he must first make himself loved. Once he has done this, the mere omission of some token of kindness is sufficient punishment, and will inspire a resolution to improve. Furthermore, such a punishment gives the pupil courage and never humiliates him.

II - Among young people, punishment is anything that is used as a punishment. It has been noted that for some a look of reproach is more effective than a slap. Praise for something well done and reproof for neglect of duty are already reward or punishment respectively.

III - Except in very rare cases, corrections and punishments should not be administered in public, but rather, in private and well out of the hearing of fellow pupils. The educator should also employ the greatest discretion and patience in order to help the pupil by means of reason and religion, to recognize his fault.

IV - The use of any form of corporal punishment such as shaking the pupil, making him kneel in an uncomfortable position, pulling his ears and so forth, must absolutely be avoided, because this is forbidden by civil law, incites the pupils to anger, and is demeaning to the educator.

V - The superiors will see to it that the rules, the established rewards and punishments are well known, so that the pupil will not be able to use the excuse that he did not know what was commanded or forbidden.

If this system is practised in our houses I believe we shall be most successful in our educational work without finding it necessary to have recourse to beatings or other drastic punishments. I have been dealing with young people for about forty years, and I do not remember ever having used any kind of punishment and, through God's help I have always obtained not only what was imposed as a duty but also what I simply desired, and this from the very boys whose cases previously appeared hopeless.
Giovanni Bosco, priest
From the Regulations for the Houses of the Society of St. Francis de Sales

**General Articles**

1. Anyone who exercises some office of authority or has some responsibility for assisting the young people whom Divine Providence has entrusted to our care has the duty of warning or counselling any young person in the house whenever there is reason to do so, especially when it is a case of preventing an offence against God.

2. Let everyone make himself loved if he wishes to be respected. He will achieve this end if, by his words and still more by his actions, he shows that his concern is totally directed towards the spiritual and material welfare of his pupils.

3. When assisting use few words and much action. The pupils should be given the opportunity to express their ideas freely. However, be careful to rectify and correct those expressions, words, and actions of the pupils which do not conform to Christian standards.

4. Young people usually show one of the following character types: good, average, difficult, bad. It is our serious obligation to find a way of bringing these diverse characters together in order to do good to all and avoid the possibility of one harming the other.

5. Regarding those whom nature has endowed with a good character, once the rules have been explained to them and they have been recommended to observe them, a general vigilance should be sufficient.

6. The majority of young people fall into the category of those whose character may be classified as average. These are somewhat inconsistent and inclined to be indifferent. They can be greatly helped by, but frequent, recommendations, advice and counsel. They must be encouraged to work by means of little rewards, and by being made to feel that they are trusted, without, however, neglecting supervision.

7. The greatest effort and concern must be directed towards the third category, the difficult and undisciplined. There will probably be one such pupil in every fifteen. Every superior must do his best to discover these and to inform himself about their past. He must show himself to be their friend, letting them speak much but speaking little himself. His exhortations should take the form of brief examples, maxims, short stories, and the like. Such pupils should never be out of the educator's sight, yet they must not be allowed to feel that they are not trusted.

8. When a teacher or assistant assumes responsibility for a group of pupils he should immediately look for those who belong to the third category. Should any of them be missing from the group he must send someone to find them under the pretext of having something to say to them or some recommendation to give them.

9. Whenever it is necessary to give any of these a reproof, some advice or a correction, it should never be done in the presence of their fellow pupils. In speaking to the entire group, however, the educator can always relate incidents involving examples of approval or reproof. In this indirect way the anecdotes will convey the lesson to the pupils who need it.

10. These are the preliminary articles of our Regulations. But patience, untiring efforts, and much prayer are absolutely essential for everyone, for without these even a good regulation is useless.

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Giovanni Bosco, priest
St. John Bosco's Letter from Rome on the State of the Oratory

My Dear Children in Jesus Christ,

My thoughts are always with you whether I am near or far away. I have only one desire, and that is to see you happy in time and in eternity. This thought, this desire urges me to write this letter to you. I feel, my dear ones, the burden of being so far from you, and not seeing you is more painful than you can imagine. I wanted to write last week, but continual occupations prevented me from doing so. Nevertheless, although there are only a few days left before I return, I want to anticipate that return among you at least by letter since I cannot do so in person. The words I write are those of one who loves you tenderly in Jesus Christ, and who has the duty to speak to you with the freedom of a father. You will allow me to do this, right? I know you will pay attention and put into practice what I am about to tell you.

The Oratory before 1870

I have already told you that you are the one, continual thought in my mind. Now, a few nights ago as I was in my room and while I was getting ready for bed, I began to say the prayers my good mother taught me.

At that moment, I don’t know whether I was overtaken by sleep or distraction, I seemed to see before me two men who once had been boys at the Oratory.

One of them approached me and greeted me affectionately, saying:
- Oh, Don Bosco! Do you know me?
- Yes, of course I know you, I answered.
- And do you still remember me?, continued the man.
- I remember you and all the others. You are Valfré and you were at the Oratory before 1870.
- Tell me, the man went on, would you like to see the boys who were at the Oratory during my time?
- Yes, I answered, let me see them. That would please me very much.

Valfré then showed me the boys, all with the same stature and age as they were at that time. It seemed to me that I was at the old Oratory during recreation time. It was a lively scene, with much movement and happiness. Some of the boys were running, others were jumping, and still others who were helping their companions. In one place the boys were playing leapfrog; in another, prisoners; while in still another, there was a ball game in progress. A short distance away a group of boys were listening to a priest telling stories, while still further off, a cleric was playing action and guessing games with some boys. There were songs and laughter everywhere! Everywhere priests and clerics could be seen surrounded by happy, laughing youngsters. One could see that cordiality and confidence reigned between the boys and their superiors. I was enchanted by the spectacle.

Then Valfré said to me,
- You see, familiarity leads to affection, and affection leads to trust. It opens hearts and the young people reveal everything without fear to their teachers, assistants, and superiors.

1 MB XVII 107-114.
They become frank in the confessional and outside of it, and show themselves willing to obey any order given from those by whom they feel loved.

The Oratory in 1884

At that moment the other past pupil of mine, who had a white beard, approached me and asked:

- Don Bosco, would you like to know and see the boys who are now at the Oratory?

The speaker was Giuseppe Buzzetti.

- Yes, I replied, because a month has passed since I last saw them.

And he pointed them out to me. I saw the Oratory and all of you at recreation, but I no longer heard singing or shouts of joy. One could no longer see the lively activity of the former scene.

In the actions and faces of many young people one could read boredom, sulkiness, weariness, moodiness, and a mistrust that brought pain to my heart. It is also true that a good number were running, playing and behaving in a happy, carefree manner. But I saw many others who were standing apart, leaning against pillars, a prey to discouragement. Others were on the stairs, in the corridors or on the balconies situated on the garden side. These boys were obviously trying to avoid the general recreation. Some were in groups walking slowly up and down. They were talking in an undertone, and from time to time looked furtively and suspiciously around. Occasionally there were bursts of laughter but this laughter was accompanied by such glances as to make one not only suspect, but actually believe that St. Aloysius would have blushed at finding himself in such company. There seemed to be unwillingness, even among those boys who were taking part in the games, and they showed clearly that they took no pleasure in the recreation.

- Do you see your boys? said my past pupil.
- Yes, I said with a sigh, I see them.
- How different they are from what we were in our time, this past pupil exclaimed.
- Sad to say, that’s true, was my reply. How much apathy there is in this recreation!
- This, said my companion, is why there is so much coldness in many in approaching the Sacraments, the neglect of the practices of piety in Church and elsewhere, and remaining unwillingly in the place where Divine Providence showers every good for the body, soul, and mind on them. This is why so many fail to respond to their vocation, where open ingratitude is shown towards Superiors and where dark secrets and murmuring take place with deplorable consequences.

A wise love made visible

- I understand and I believe all this, I replied, but how can I reanimate these, my dear boys so that they may return to their former liveliness, cheerfulness and openness?
- With charity!
- With charity? But are my boys not loved enough? You know well that I love them! You know how much I have suffered and tolerated for them for a good forty years, and how much I still suffer and bear for them. How many hardships, humiliations, opposition, and persecution I have endured to give them bread, a home, teachers, especially for the health of their souls! I have done all that I could do for those who were the objects of my life’s affection!
- I am not speaking of you!
- Of whom, then, are you speaking? Of those who take my place? Of the directors, prefects, teachers, assistants? Can’t you see that they are martyrs to study and work? How they are
wearing themselves out for those whom Divine Providence has entrusted to them?
- I see and I know, he answered, but this is not enough. The most important element is missing.
- What’s missing then?
- That the boys are not only loved, but that they know they are loved.
- But don’t they have eyes in their heads? Don’t they have a spark of intelligence? Don’t they see that all that is done for them is done through love?
- No, I repeat, it is not enough.
- Then what is missing?
- That being loved in those things that please them, by sharing even in their childlike inclinations, they learn to see love in those things that are not naturally pleasant to them; for example, discipline, study, mortification. They learn to accept these things with enthusiasm and love.

*Lack of assistance during recreation*

- Explain yourself better!
- Observe the boys at recreation.

I looked, and then replied:
- What in particular should I be looking for?
- You have been educating boys for so many years and still do not understand? Look closer! Where are our Salesians?

I looked closer and noticed that very few priests and clerics were mixing with the boys, and still fewer took any part in their games. The superiors were no longer the life of the recreation. The greater number of them were walking up and down, talking among themselves, paying no attention to what their pupils were doing. Others watched the recreation in progress without giving a thought to the boys. Some assisted from so far away that they could not see who was misbehaving. There were some who did warn them with a threatening gesture, but this was very rare. There were some Salesians who wanted to join the groups of boys, but I noticed that these boys tried studiously to distance themselves from their teachers and superiors.

*Family-like friendliness with the boys especially in recreation*

Then my friend resumed the conversation saying:

- In the early days of the Oratory weren’t you always to be found among the boys, especially at recreation? Do you remember those happy times? We seemed to experience the joy of heaven. It was a time we always remember with love, affection was the rule and we had no secrets from you.
- Certainly! Those days were happy ones for me. The boys approached me with great enthusiasm, they were eager to speak to me, to listen to my advice and to follow my counsels. Now you can see that I have to meet more people, deal with more business affairs, and the state of my health is also an obstacle.
- True, but if it is impossible for you, why don’t your Salesians imitate you? Why don’t you insist that they treat the boys as you treated them?
- I do speak, to the point of remaining breathless, but unfortunately many don't feel able to bear the fatigue of times past.
- And so, by neglecting the lesser they lose the greater and this is the cause of their fatigue.
They must love what is pleasing to the young and the young will love what is pleasing to their superiors. This is the way to lighten the burden. Here is the cause of the change in the Oratory, and the reason why a number of young people have lost confidence in their superiors. In bygone days hearts were open to the superiors, and the boys loved them and obeyed them promptly. The superiors are now considered as superiors and are no longer thought of as fathers, brothers, and friends, so they are feared rather than loved. Therefore, if you wish to form one heart and one soul, for the love of Jesus that fatal barrier of mistrust must be broken and friendly confidence must be allowed to replace it. Then obedience will lead the pupils as a mother guides her little child, and the peace and cheerfulness of the early days will once again reign in the Oratory.

- Then how can this barrier be destroyed?
- By family-like friendliness with the boys, especially at recreation. Without friendliness it is not possible to show affection, and without this manifestation confidence is not possible. Whoever wishes to be loved must show that he loves. Jesus Christ made himself small with the small and bore all our infirmities. He is our teacher of friendliness! The teacher seen only in the classroom is only a teacher, but if he participates in recreation with the boys he becomes a brother.

One who is seen preaching from the pulpit can be said to be doing no more or no less than his duty, but the word spoken at recreation is the word of one who loves. How many conversions have been brought about by a word unexpectedly whispered into the ear of a boy while he is taking part in games?

**Having genuine love for young people**

One who feels he is loved, loves, and he who is loved can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence establishes an electric current between the young and their superiors. Hearts are open, needs are made known and defects are revealed. This love makes fatigue, weariness, discomfort, and ingratitude, the faults and negligence of young people bearable for their superiors. Jesus Christ did not crush the broken reed nor quench the smoking wick. He is your model. Then one will no longer work for self-glorification; neither will anyone inflict punishment for the sake of vindicating offended self love. There will be no more withdrawing from assistance through jealous resulting from fear of the popularity of others; there will be no criticism because of the desire to be loved and esteemed by young people to the exclusion of the other assistants. This gains nothing but contempt and hypocritical flattery. There will not long be those who loses their hearts to creatures, paying court to them and neglecting all the others. There will be no more belittling of the strict and important duty of assistance, for the love of personal comfort; neither will there be any abstention, because of human respect, from correcting those who need it. Where there is true love only the glory of God and the good of souls is sought. Once this love begins to weaken, things will no longer go well. Why replace charity with the coldness of a regulation? Why is it that the superiors are drifting away from the rules of education laid down for them by Don Bosco? Why should the system of preventing disorder, of loving watchfulness, gradually be replaced by a system that is less arduous and quicker for the one who commands? A system where rules are enforced by punishments causes unpleasantness and breeds hatred. If the established rules are not thus, those in authority are scorned and serious disorders consequently arise.

**The superior must be all to all – The superiors should be relentless only in cases of immorality - Observance of the rules - Cheerful presence**

This is what happens when friendliness is missing. If then, you want the Oratory to regain its former happiness, revive the system that was practised vigorously in those days. The superior must
be all to all, always ready to listen to any complaint or doubt of the young people. His eyes, like those of a father, must be wide open during assistance, and his heart set only on seeking the spiritual and material good of those entrusted to him by Divine Providence.

The hearts of the young will then no longer be closed and certain destructive, secretive behaviour will disappear. The superiors must be relentless only in cases of immoral behaviour. It is better to run the risk of sending away an innocent person than to keep one whose behaviour causes scandal. The assistants should make it a strict duty of conscience to refer to the superior all those matters that could in any way be an offence against God.

Then I questioned him:

- What is the primary means that can be used to hasten the return of family friendliness and the love and confidence of the early days?
- The exact observance of the rules of the house.
- Nothing else?
- The most pleasing part of a meal is a cheerful presence.

End of the first dream - Another dream - Advice to the young - Live in God's grace

As my former pupil finished speaking I continued to observe that recreation with increasing displeasure. The weariness came to the point that not being able to bear it any longer, I shook myself and regained consciousness.

I found myself standing at my bedside. My legs were so badly swollen and painful, that I could no longer stand. It was already very late, so I got into bed, resolved to write these few lines to my dear sons.

I do not want to have such dreams because they tire me too much. The following day I ached all over and longed for bedtime. But I was scarcely in bed when the dream continued. I saw the playground before me with the boys who were now at the Oratory, and beside me stood the same past pupil. I began to question him:

- I shall certainly tell my Salesians all that you have told me, but what must I say to the Oratory boys?
- Tell them to recognise how much the superiors, teachers and assistants work and study for love of them, because if it were not for their good no one would undertake such sacrifices. Tell them to remember that humility is the source of all tranquillity; that they must bear with the defects of others since there is no perfection in this world but only in heaven. They must also stop grumbling because this makes for a cold heart, and above all, they must strive to live in God's holy grace. He who is not at peace with God is not at peace with himself or with others.
- Are you telling me that some of my young people are not at peace with God?
- This is the primary cause for discontent among others of which you are already aware, and for which you must provide a remedy. There is no need for me to tell you more about them. In fact, no one is distrustful unless they have a secret to keep unless they are afraid that their secret will become known because this would bring shame and disgrace upon them. At the same time, if the heart is not at peace with God, it is restless, in anguish, intolerant of obedience, and easily becomes irritated and considers everything to be wrong. Since it has no love it judges that it is not loved by the superiors.

Confession and firm resolutions - Pray and make good resolutions
- And yet, my dear friend, don't you see the frequency of Confession and Communion at the Oratory?
- It's true that Confessions are frequent, but in many cases firm resolutions are seriously lacking. The young people go to confession, but they continually confess the same faults and the same bad habits, disobedience, and neglect of duty. This may continue for months and perhaps years. Some continue in this way until they reach the fifth year in the secondary school.
Confessions such as these are either useless or worth very little. They do not bring peace of soul, and if the young people making these Confessions were to be called to God's tribunal in such a state it would be a very serious matter indeed.
- Are there many of these among the boys of the Oratory?
- Few, in comparison with the great number of boys in the house. Look!

And he pointed them out to me. I looked, and one by one I saw those boys. But in those few I saw things that grieved my heart. I don't want to put these things down on paper but on my return I shall speak of them to those concerned. Here, I will only say that it is time to pray and make firm resolutions, not only in words, but also with actions, and to prove that Comollos, Dominic Savios, Besuccos, and Saccardis still live among us.

**Remind everyone that they are children of Mary Help of Christians**

Finally, I asked one more question:
- Have you nothing more to tell me?
- Preach to everyone, great and small, that they must always remember that they are children of Mary, the Most Holy Help of Christians. It is she who has brought them here to draw them away from the dangers of the world. She wants them to love one another as brothers, and to give glory to God and to her by their good behaviour. It is Our Lady who provides bread for them and the means to study, working wonders and obtaining endless graces for them.
Let them remember that they are nearing the vigil of their Holy Mother’s feast, and with her help the barrier of mistrust must be brought down. It is the devil who has managed to raise this barrier between young people and their superiors, and he hopes to use it to bring about the ruin of certain souls.
- And will we succeed in removing this barrier?
- Yes, certainly, provided that all, big and small are ready to make some little acts of self-denial for the love of Mary and to put into practise what I have indicated.

Meanwhile, I continued to look sadly at my boys. Seeing those whom I saw on the path to eternal perdition, I felt such pain in my heart that I awoke. There were many more very important things I saw and would like to tell you, but time and the propriety of the moment do not allow me to do so.

**Conclusion**

To conclude: Do you know what this poor old man who has worn himself out for his dear boys is asking from you? Nothing more than taking into account the changing times, a return to the happy early days of the Oratory.
The days of affection and confidence between the young people and their superiors; the days of consideration and tolerance toward one another for the love of Jesus Christ; the days of simple, open hearts; the days of charity and true happiness for all.
I need you to console me by giving me this hope and the promise that you will do all that I desire for the good of your souls. You are not sufficiently aware of how fortunate you are to have been taken in at the Oratory. Before God I declare to you that it is enough for a young person to enter a Salesian house for him to be taken under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin. We must, then, come to an agreement. Let there be charity in those who command and charity in those who obey, so that it may be possible for the spirit of St. Francis de Sales to reign among us. Oh, my dear children the time is approaching for me to detach myself from you and depart for my eternity.

(Secretary's note: At this point Don Bosco stopped dictating. His eyes filled with tears, not of regret but of ineffable tenderness. This showed itself in his face and in the sound of his voice. After a few moments he continued). Therefore, I want to leave all of you, priests, clerics and my dear boys, on the path to God, where, he himself desires you to be.

To this end, the Holy Father, whom I saw on Friday, May 9, sends you his heartfelt blessing. I will be with you on the feast of Mary Help of Christians before the picture of our loving Mother.

I want this great feast to be celebrated very solemnly, and let Frs. Lazzaro and Marchisio arrange something to make you happy in the refectory as well. The feast of Mary Help of Christians should be a prelude to the eternal feast which we will celebrate together one day when we are all united in paradise.

Rome, May 10, 1884

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Giovanni Bosco, priest
Mementos given by St. John Bosco
to the First Missionaries

1. Seek souls and not riches, honour, or recognition.
2. Treat everyone with charity and the greatest courtesy but avoid unnecessary conversations and familiarity with persons of the other sex or of questionable behaviour.
3. Make only those visits that charity and necessity require.
4. Except for very weighty reasons, do not accept invitations to dinner, and when it is necessary to do so, see that you do not go alone.
5. Take special care of the sick, the children, the aged, the poor, and you will merit God's blessings and the good will of others.
6. Show a deferential respect to all civil, religious, municipal, and government authorities.
7. Respectfully greet any dignitary you may meet.
8. Show similar courtesy towards ecclesiastics or members of religious Institutes.
10. Love, revere, and respect other religious orders and speak well of all of them.
11. Take care of your health. You must work, but only as much as your physical strength permits.
12. Let the world see from your clothing, food, and living quarters that you are poor. Thus you will become rich in the eyes of God and gain influence over the hearts of all.
13. Among yourselves, love, advise, and correct each other, but never harbour any envy or rancour one towards anyone. Rather, consider the good of one, the good of all. Likewise the sorrow and suffering of each person should be looked upon as everyone's and let each of you do all in his power to eliminate, or at least alleviate the suffering of others.
14. Observe your Rule and never neglect the monthly Exercise for a Happy Death.
15. Each morning entrust all the work of the day to God, especially Confessions, classes, catechetical instruction, and preaching.
17. Encourage young people to approach the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion frequently.
18. In order to foster vocations for the Church promote: 1. love of chastity; 2. horror for the opposite vice; 3. avoidance of bad companions; 4. frequent Communion; 5. with young people practice charity, loving-kindness, and gentleness.
19. In relationships and in disputed matters, listen to both sides before making any judgment.
20. In fatigue and suffering do not forget that a great reward awaits us in heaven.

Amen.

1 MB XI 389-390.
My dear and beloved children in Jesus Christ,

Before leaving this world for eternity I must fulfill an ardent duty towards you and so satisfy the ardent desire of my heart.

First of all, I thank you with the deep affection of my soul for the obedience you have given me, and for all the work you have done to sustain and promote our Congregation.

I leave you here on earth, but only for a short time. I hope that the infinite mercy of God will enable us all to meet one day in the happiness of heaven. I will await you there.

Do not grieve over my death. This is a debt we must all pay, but afterwards, every fatigue sustained for the love of our Master, the good Jesus, will be greatly rewarded.

Instead of weeping, make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain strong in your vocation until death. Watch, so that neither the love of the world, nor the affection for your family, nor the desire for a more comfortable life induce you to make the great mistake of profaning the sacred vows and thus betraying the religious profession by which you were consecrated to God. Let none of us take back what we have given to God.

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions.

Your first rector is dead, but our true superior, Jesus Christ, will never die. He will always be our master, our guide, our model, but remember that he, in his own time, will also be our judge and the reward of our fidelity in his service.

Your rector is dead, but another will be elected who will care for you and your eternal salvation. Listen to him, love him, obey him, and pray for him as you have done for me.

Farewell, dear children, farewell. I shall wait for you in heaven. There we shall speak of God and of Mary, the Mother and support of our Congregation. There we shall eternally bless this, our Congregation, the observance of whose Rule will have powerfully and efficaciously contributed towards our salvation.

Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum. In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum.

Giovanni Bosco, priest

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1 MB XVII 258-259.
Conference of St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello on Poverty

Up until now we have been poor and we have often felt the consequences of poverty, even bread was scarce at times; but we were no less ready at work because of this. Rather, with even greater ardour, each has fulfilled the task entrusted to her. The spirit of our revered Father, Don Bosco is ours too, and in all of us the spirit of the poverty of Jesus is still alive and generous. But now, our work is expanding, indeed it will assume greater proportions and more work will be done among the girls.

Little by little all this will bring great changes in the life of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. I won’t be around to see it, but you will see improvements being gradually introduced. You will wear less threadbare, less mended habits. Your food will be better and more plentiful. You will have meat every day and all the bread you want, wine, coffee and milk in the afternoon, and coffee after dinner when needed. In short, you will have all that is to be had in a family in comfortable circumstances. The schools, workrooms, and living quarters will be better than they are now, and you will have better equipment to help you carry out your apostolate with the girls. You will have not only what is necessary, but also what is useful.

But, my dear daughters, God forbid that this should lead to the loss or our good spirit, the spirit of Don Bosco, the spirit of Jesus. For heaven's sake, my daughters, even in the midst of the comfort the Congregation will offer you, be poor in spirit, using what is given to you and provided for your use, without attachment to the things themselves. Use them, but always be ready to leave them when obedience requires this from you. Use them with your spirit ready to accept the consequences of not having them, or of not being the best quality. For heaven’s sake, Sisters, in the midst of greater comforts, continue to love, really and practically, the poverty that our Redeemer taught us, the spirit that has been so well demonstrated by our good father, Don Bosco.

I am speaking to all of you, but especially to those who will later go far away, and to those in the various houses here in Italy. There might well be no one to call you to order, and thus, unwittingly, you could soon find yourselves well off the right track.

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1 Cron III 265-266.
Conference of St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello
at the end of 1880

The proverb says, ‘new year, new life,’ this should not be a dead letter for us. You see, my dear Sisters, how often death comes to visit us; it could come for me, for any one of you. Let us get to work seriously.

God forbid that we become Sisters in name only, as Don Bosco says, but let us act at all times as good religious. Let us not seek satisfactions. We have left the world and we mustn't live as people of the world do, but as Our Lord wants us to live. Let us be careful not to bring the world into religious life, either by our manner of speaking or by our lack of mortification. Let worldly people enjoy themselves; their enjoyment will be short-lived. Let us pity them. For us, instead, our delight should be in suffering, in sacrificing ourselves always for the love of God.

Let us be careful about little things, little defects, and never make peace with them. Remember, we shall have to account to God for everything, good and bad. Let us ask God for the grace of feeling keen remorse for our failings. Thus we shall confess them with greater sorrow and do our penance in this world.

Let us always remain humble before God and others. Let us not think that we alone are capable of doing anything.

Let us pray and act in everything as if Our Lady were at our side, as indeed she is, though we cannot see her.

Let us willingly make our contribution to the community recreation. This is the time when can judge if a Sister has prayed well that morning and made her practices of piety well.

Now I want to share with you a great fear that I have. You see, my dear Sisters that we now live like ladies of leisure in comparison with our way of life at the beginning of the Congregation. A good number of postulants are entering, some even with a small dowry. We have a large number of boarders, almost all of whom pay something. For many of you, who in the past have known hunger, this is a period of well-being. In fact we have now, besides bread and soup, a good main course and some fruit as well. We have a beautiful house and a lovely chapel. We are opening several houses, and almost always without much anxiety for the necessities of life. But what benefit would all this be to us if, as a result, we were to lose our good spirit or grow cold in fervour? I fear that a comfortable life will weaken fervour, and that the desire for an ever more comfortable life will even enter the house of Nizza, and that each may build a little world within her heart, far more dangerous than the one she has left. This is my great fear! God forbid, God forbid, Sisters! [...] Let us truly love and practise religious poverty, so dearly loved and practised by our Lord Jesus, by our Mother Mary, and by St. Joseph, our bursar and special protector. Do not let us be overcome by the dangers of comfort and wealth. Let us continue to live united in charity with the fervour and the true spirit of poverty that was the crowning glory of the first years of Mornese, and the quickest means of attaining that sanctity acquired by so many Sisters who have already preceded us into eternal glory, as their enviable deaths would lead us to believe.

This is already a large house, yet it will be extended on all sides (Don Bosco says so and he is a saint. Who could doubt him?). We are already very numerous but many more will come, many postulants including wealthy young ladies. The houses will multiply beyond all expectation.

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1 *Cron* III 298-301.
However, if we want the Lord to bless us and our Institute and to continue to give us his divine help, we must observe holy poverty, increase our fervour, and have no fear of mortification, even that which we voluntarily embrace. Let us remember that we have a vow of poverty, that we must consider ourselves poor, and that each of us must advance in the spirit of poverty if she wishes to become a saint. If not, worse for her, and what a disaster for the entire Congregation.

Religious life is, in itself, a life of sacrifice, renunciation, and privation. Community life and work already impose mortifications on us ... is that enough? No, no! A good Sister is not content with what circumstances bring, but finds the means of doing more for the love of God, of souls, and of her own soul. There is mortification of the mind, the will, the heart, the senses. There is obedience and humility that can ask much of us, even if no human eye sees or human ear hears. My Sisters and daughters, poverty and mortification, obedience and humility, observance of the Constitutions and chastity are all virtues so united among themselves as to be one. As long as we are poor in spirit, and do not seek to gratify ourselves in food and other things, we shall have many other virtues, and then the Congregation will survive and flourish in beauty and strength. If we are holy Sisters, Providence will not fail us, but will become more and more abundant, so that we can do even more good.

If we want to become saints (and who does not? Let anyone who does not, stand up!) we must practise all these virtues. We vowed it at the altar and our guardian angels have written it in letters of gold to remind us of it often, and to put it before us at the hour of death.

Let us be genuine Sisters, and let the New Year be for all one of new life!
Words of His Holiness Paul VI to the FMA

First of all, we extend our greetings to Mother General, and in greeting her we greet the whole of this beautiful family of religious and daughters of the Church.

Dear daughters in Christ, we are truly happy to welcome you, sorry only that the time available is not as long as our heart would wish. You will know, however, how to interpret the joy we feel at this moment; our gratitude, our hopes, the admiration we have for your religious family, and how, seeing you assembled here, we seem to see nothing less than the panorama of the whole Church, because you are to be found in nearly every part of the world. For all this we rejoice together with Our Lady, the Help of Christians.

Beloved daughters in Christ, with a heart filled with fatherly emotion, we offer our greetings to this numerous and representative delegation of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians gathered here to give testimony of their loyalty and devotion in this, the centenary year of the foundation of their Institute, which we must call glorious.

Before speaking to you here and thinking of the immense throng of Sisters who, at this moment, are united in spirit with you and whose eyes are turned to this place as to the focal point of the Church, we turn our thoughts to all the Sisters who have preceded you. A hundred years ... how many generations! How many Sisters have passed through your Institute! How much example, how much work and fatigue, how much merit and beauty of soul God has permitted to be seen on this earth, and then called to himself! These good Sisters have finished their pilgrimage and I am sure that they have reached their heavenly homeland where they form a crown for Our Lady.

We send our greetings also to these souls, while at the same time offering a requiem so that if it is still needed the Lord may quickly grant total peace to all of them, and we, although we lack the means of ascertaining this, rejoice in the communion of saints. If we had the capacity of grasping the deep meaning of things, the underlying spiritual reality, we would feel ourselves to be in a great company, to be as it were, surrounded by an immense army of beautiful, pure, holy souls who are here at this moment to celebrate the centenary of your spiritual family.

This gathering recalls to mind the great and well-deserving ranks of your Sisters who on every continent, spend their lives happily in humble, generous service. This, too, is something we have observed on the faces of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, an expression of calm, but real joy, happy and ready to respond to the needs of the Kingdom of God, to help the Church for the good of souls.

Thinking of the role your zealous religious family carries out in the Church, there comes to mind a host of reflections and sentiments, but to express them properly would require much more time than the limits of this audience permit.

So many duties weigh upon us and set limits to the time at our disposal but as we said before, it was our intention to show our affection and esteem in this meeting with you, although so brief. We would like each of you to be able to say, "The Pope has been thinking of me".

We desire, however, that our first words be of gratitude to God.

Truly, we thank God at this moment that once again, in looking at all of you here, he has been pleased to show us, to let us touch something of his presence in history, and in the life of humanity. You are the work of his hands, and you have all responded to his designs of mercy and salvation. Let us all thank him together for this past century: Thank you, Lord! Te Deum Laudamus! for the beauty of this gathering.

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Now we can only see fragments, shadows, but one day we shall see how splendid, and how rich in the wisdom, mercy, and action of God's presence was the phenomena of your religious family. Therefore, first we give thanks to God, and then to each and every one of you for the comforting spectacle, so rich and promising, which your religious family presents today on this significant occasion.

We cannot say that a hundred years is enough for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians! How many are needed? A thousand? ... That is to say, we must extend our thoughts, our thanks, also to all the vocations that are still to come. Isn't that so? You will certainly receive them as Sisters, as pupils and then, even as mothers.

In you we see the uninterrupted continuity of the marvellous flowering of an ideal of charity and of zeal.

You can all embroider, can't you? And what happens when after weeks, months and even years you finish your embroidery? You hold it up and say, "Look! See how beautiful it is!" You spend your time taking one stitch, then another, a little pattern and then, at a certain moment the design begins to unfold and be seen in all its beauty and significance.

And so it is today. For a moment we unfold the plan of your history, and we see that in the course of a hundred years a truly beautiful design has been drawn up, a design of God's Providence, of goodness, of love of God, of salvation of souls. Let us rejoice together in all this!

Let us think back to August 5, 1872, to the moment in which it began to flower through the work of St. John Bosco and St. Maria Mazzarello, when the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Mornese offered their young lives to God, and began their apostolic journey along the pathways of the world.

In the course of a hundred years, this little seed has germinated and grown in a prodigious manner. Like a majestic tree that now spreads its branches throughout the world, the ardent zeal of the children of Don Bosco has spread everywhere. How many reasons have we then, my dear daughters, for extending our congratulations to you. May you be blessed!

Your progress, your evangelical witness, your generous apostolic dedication, give honour to the Church.

It is clear, however, that the celebration of such an important event in the history of your Institute should not be limited merely to looking back to its glorious past. We must look at the present moment. And here the discourse which we could make would be particularly significance, namely, to identify in a few words the phenomena of the spiritual life, of religious life at this time of contradiction, difficulties, tumult in the society in which we live. Then we would be able to take stock and see in what kind of world we are living after a hundred years.

It would indeed have been extremely interesting, but we think you already make this meditation every day. We say this, because each day you endeavour to understand more clearly your duty, your role, your difficulties, the possibilities the Lord offers you. Then, even though your horizon may be limited, you know the present moment and you watch with honesty and diligence over the scene which the Lord opens up to you in following your vocation.

We must also look ahead. Many times during our work we raise our eyes and we look ahead; isn't it true? Where are we? What are we going to do? What is happening now? What will tomorrow bring? ... We become prophets, at least in a questioning way if not in the form of genuine prophetic statements. We are not only permitted but we are urged by the Lord to fix our eyes on the future.

"Lift up your heads and see!" says the Lord in one of his exhortations: *elevate capita vestra*. You
too must lift up your eyes and look ahead. We don't know for sure what the future will bring, but we can have an idea of the tasks, the responsibilities, and the way to follow, in the days ahead.

Will your Congregation know how to respond to the call of the Church in the troubled times that we are now experiencing?

You can feel the beat of our heart in this. What a momentous time for the Church! You know this already. If you have had even the slightest contact with people, with young people of this present age, you are concerned, What kind of people are they? What kind of a generation? What times are these? But who could do more than we do to sow good thoughts, resolutions, teaching?

Then there comes the overwhelming wave of diversions, of worldly pursuits, the dissipation of our times. Your heart also is surely concerned. You can imagine how the Pope’s heart feels when he looks out at this really stormy scene.

We are in a boat, and the boat of the Church will never sink, of this we are sure. But even Peter, and he was a fisherman, was afraid on the day when the storm was on the lake, and Jesus ... Jesus was sleeping! That sleep has always amazed me. Jesus who was asleep in the midst of the storm, and the disciples saying to him, "Wake up, or we perish". Jesus arose and, with a divine, commanding gesture, he rebuked the wind and there came a great calm. Then, turning to his disciples he asks, "Cur timetis? Why are you afraid?" as if to say, "I am here, even though I am asleep, you must not fear the things around you because he who is with Christ is with life, is with God, is with victory over all the opposition and difficulties that may arise on our path".

Therefore, will your Congregation be capable of responding to the expectations of the Church during these troubled times?

I would like each of you to answer in the silence of her heart, "I will do all in my power". What are the means by which the original vitality of the vigorous seed planted by your holy founders may continue to flower in all its fullness?

My dear daughters, there is only one answer to these questions and it is contained in a single word. We have no time to waste in seeking to reply to the innumerable questions, difficulties, problems and anguish of this present moment. There is but one answer that explains the extraordinary fruitfulness of the past, and infallibly ensures the vitality of your Institute in the future: holiness.

If you are holy, there is little more to say. It means that you make certain that the inner life is given pre-eminence in the midst of all your exterior activity which too, is most useful, in your educational, charitable and missionary works, without fear that in this way your apostolic dynamism is in any way diminished, or that you are prevented from dedicating yourself completely to the service of others.

Many people create contradictions saying that praying is a waste of time that it takes up our attention, that it distracts the mind. It is not true.

To pray means to replenish our being with new energy, ideas, motives, strength, and inspiration. God's presence makes our poor human activity capable of becoming something higher, something really great. It means to love poverty, the spirit of sacrifice, the cross, and it signifies as well, the particular duty on your part of reproducing in your life of piety, and in the apostolate the example of the adoring and active love of Mary most Holy, the Help of Christians.

Oh, how we would love to see preserved among you in all its original freshness, this distinctive Marian characteristic that constitutes the outstanding, unmistakable mark of the spirituality of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians everywhere.
You have the privilege of belonging to a religious family that belongs completely to Mary, and owes everything to her.

Is not your Institute the living monument by which Don Bosco wanted to honour Our Lady, as a sign of his unfailing gratitude for the many blessings received from her, and as a symbol of hope for all the graces his work needed, a work so complex and difficult, one could say, a work paradoxically disproportionate to the means available?

Yes, my daughters, as long as you learn from Mary to direct everything to Christ, her Divine Son; as long as you keep your gaze fixed on her who is God's masterpiece, the model and ideal of every consecrated life, and the support of every apostolic heroism, the wellspring of generosity and dedication, of inner life and fervour, of holiness and grace, which has made you such valuable collaborators with Our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of souls, will never dry up in your Institute.

This is what the Church expects from you. And it isn't just a word you know, my dear daughters in Christ. The Church expects much from you. In fact, it expects more today than yesterday because the sacrifice demanded today is greater and more event. To be a religious, to wear the religious habit, and be in the midst of young people and in the midst of the works is not as easy today.

There have always been difficulties, but as you well know the generosity, dedication, capacity for suffering, resistance, patience and wisdom demanded even from us today is greater than that of yesterday. Therefore, in the name of Christ whom we have the mission of representing, although unworthily, we ask your dedication, your sacrifice, your total gift to Mary Most Holy for the glory of Christ Jesus.

This is what the Church expects from you. Do not disappoint its expectations, but respond over and above its hopes.

If only we were able to console the hearts of Christ and of Our Lady in this way; giving more than what is asked of us, but that more which defines holiness, going beyond the ordinary. It is this that Our Lord really expects from us, even though he may not say it or says it as an advice and not as a precept.

Our prayers are with you. These are few, but sincere, words and we shall pray for you. Our prayer will be to ask Our Lord through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady, to grant you eternal rewards for what you have done until now, to give you constant generosity in the present moment and an ever-increasing wealth of apostolic fruits in the future.

We would never want it to happen, as has in certain religious families, that the temperature of your spiritual ardour should drop, the capacity for sacrifice slow down, the strength of enthusiasm and implicit faith in your particular mission diminish. Instead, we desire that you always be people overflowing with enthusiasm, apostolic zeal and joy.

May we, at this point, repeat our Lord's words? “Optimam partem elegistis!” You have chosen the better part, treasure it! Our thoughts and affection will be with you.

Now we want to interpret the thanks also of those who never thank you; that is, we thank you for the good you have done for so many people, for the Church, for the glory of the Kingdom of God and for society. In the name of all these people whom you have benefited we say, "Thank you, dear daughters. May you always be happy". May you be blessed; and remember that nothing is lost, nothing is lost! History moves on, many things will be forgotten in time, but the work done for the Kingdom of God is written on his heart and remains. One day you will find there the reward of
your dedication to the glory of God.

Our apostolic blessing goes with you; may it reach every corner of the earth where a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians is to be found, even in the most remote regions ... in Patagonia ... Through the goodness of God may this blessing reach every corner of the world: and may it bring with it the echo of the hymn that I want to hear from you, Salve Regina!

You will receive a little holy picture on which one of our prayers to our Blessed Lady has been printed without the permission of the ecclesiastical authorities, but with our permission.

Special Audience
Centenary of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

July 15, 1972
Words of His Holiness John Paul II to the FMA

My dear Sisters,

While I express thanks to your new Mother General for the beautiful words she has addressed to me in the name of all, I greet each of you who have come to visit the Vicar of Christ, on the occasion of the General Chapter XVII, an important landmark for the life of your Institute. From it, in fact, should come your new Constitutions which, after the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities, will be for you the secure guide for the realisation of your religious ideals in this society that is opening onto the horizons of the third Christian millennium.

1. From the time of the community of Mornese, and the heroic promising beginnings of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a long road has been travelled, a road marked by trials and sacrifices, but also crowned by consoling and precious fruit for your family and the entire Church, fruits for which we wish to thank God from the depths of our heart. The two hundred or so Daughters of Mary Help of Christians that St. Maria Domenica Mazzarello left at the time of her death, the centenary of which we celebrate this year, have become more than seventeen thousand, scattered over sixty-two nations, on every continent; and in the course of a century the number of houses has grown from twenty-six to almost one thousand five hundred.

In the light of these facts, the words uttered by Monsignor Giuseppe Sciandra, Bishop of Acqui, on the occasion of the first profession ceremony on August 5, 1872 have a prophetic ring today, "There is a chain of circumstances that clearly shows a special Providence of God for this new Institute".

Today you carry out your apostolate for young people in every sector of formation, through different types of schools, even at university level, and also in mission fields, and all in harmony with the aims of the founding charism. Faced with such a vast complex of works, born from the inspiration of Don Bosco and the fidelity and obedience of a young woman of humble origins and little learning, but rich in the Holy Spirit; while on the one hand, it comes naturally to assert that the finger of God is present in such phenomenal growth, on the other, it challenges your responsibility before the young people of today, in their problems and in their hopes. In other words, you are called upon to assure the continuity of your mission, aimed at also involving the children of this generation in the marvellous adventure of a life lived according to the Gospel, a mission which demands from you a heart full of joy.

2. This joy is one of the outstanding characteristics of the Salesian educational charism, assimilated in its entirety by Mother Maria Domenica, with absolute fidelity and personal intuition. She, in fact, was constantly concerned about the happiness of her daughters almost as though it was the main proof of their holiness, and she used to ask each one frequently, "Are you happy?" This is the joy that Jesus promises to his followers, the joy always recommended by St. Paul, (cf. Phil 1:4; 4:4) and which he has declared to be one of the first fruits of the Holy Spirit, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy ..." (cf. Gal 5:22).

This attitude of happiness is rooted above all in a deep sense of faith, in which the predominant idea is the presence of God as he who loves and saves us, and as a father who is ever caring for our wellbeing. If we fail to deepen this inner contact with our Heavenly Father, who soothes all our fears, doubts and anguish, and who helps us to overcome them, it is useless to think of joy of heart, much less to express it. The result would be a forced, unconvincing attitude.

From the fullness of this contact with God, from a convinced spirit of faith, which finds practical
expression in constant adherence to the Church and her teachings, you will draw the deepest motivations for your Salesian joy, and also the capacity for discernment of situations, and above all, of the hearts of young people, an intelligent and supernatural discernment that has characterised, beyond doubt, the educational mission of Don Bosco and Mother Maria Domenica.

3. Speaking of this educational mission, I would like to dwell for a moment on the well-known Salesian Preventive System, epitomised in three words, "reason - religion - love". Respect for the needs of reason and religion, that is, a trusting attitude when faced with the natural and supernatural values of the person, is certainly basic to any educational project. Due to lack of time, I shall add a word only on the third characteristic of the Preventive System, that is, of love, or, to express myself in Don Bosco's words, "loving-kindness".

This is not only the cornerstone of his educational method, one can say it is the main source of its inspiration. Being a reflection of and participation in the fatherhood of God, Salesian "loving-kindness" has its source in the heart of Christ and its model and inspirer in Mary Most Holy. It is ardent zeal for the complete salvation of young people; it is pastoral attentiveness that is extremely respectful of the person; it is affective power capable of winning hearts, which according to the Salesian spirit, has a decisive role in the educational process.

Bringing the demands of this loving-kindness to a practical level, what immediately appears to be central is respect for the talents of young people, that is, their gifts and the direction in which the Lord is leading them. This requires an attitude of profound homage and respect for God's work, and deeply-rooted faith in him.

This trustful respect inevitably leads to the second very important stage, that is, to make oneself loved. So that our care for young people may touch their hearts it is necessary that we lead them to accept us, that we face up courageously to what we are and realise that as such we shall be received. If one doesn't obtain this acceptance by young people all one's zeal in working with them risks being a failure, without the desired fruit, because you will never arrive at the next stage, which is to make oneself listened to and obeyed.

To succeed, therefore, it is imperative that the young people see that your life bears joyful witness to the values that you believe in and which they wish to share. This is a duty which we cannot shirk, nothing worthwhile is transmitted to the young, no lasting good will result if we don't make sure that our way of life is consistent with our consecration. And speaking of this I would draw our attention also to the importance of external witness, which includes our words, demeanour, and the habit itself, as the sign of a mission and of belonging.

A young person needs models that appeal to her sensitivity and, as I have already indicated, encourage her to listen and obey. This is a profound need of our young people even if often it is repressed and not admitted. They want to be guided towards a challenging formation through faith in those who hold up these ideals in life.

The other reflections that could be derived from the deepening of this theme I leave to your own discerning intuition, while I ask Mary Most Holy, the Help of Christians, so much loved by you, to suggest them to you and plant them in your hearts. To her I entrust all your family, which Don Bosco desired as a living monument of love of Our Lady, and I beg her to protect you in every moment of your growth and extension throughout the world.

As a pledge of those fervent wishes, I give you from my heart my apostolic blessing.

Special Audience
Centenary of the Death of St. Maria D. Mazzarello

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December 12, 1981
During these days you have been focusing your attention on the theme, “To be a home that evangelises with young people today”, which is most appropriate in the present social and ecclesial context, characterised by so many forms of spiritual and material poverty. Today we do indeed suffer from poverty, but also from a lack of love and good relationships.

In such a context, you can grasp in a special way the fragility of the people to whom you dedicate yourselves with loving commitment, according to the spirit of Don Bosco and in the footsteps of Mother Mazzarello. You are called to offer to all the message of the Gospel that is summed up in the Father’s merciful love for every person.

The fundamental guidelines for the life of each Sister and every community are emerging from your Chapter work. First, the commitment to let yourselves be guided by the prospect of going out, of setting out on the path towards the many areas of geographical and existential frontiers, with preferential care for the poor and those suffering from different forms of exclusion. There are so many of them!

You are also aware of the need to undertake appropriate paths of change and of pastoral conversion, thus transforming your houses into places of evangelisation, where young people especially may become involved in your mission. This means creating an environment of co-responsibility that fosters the journey of faith for individuals and personal adherence to Jesus, that he may continue to attract every one. In this way young people are formed to become agents of evangelisation for other young people.

I cannot help but encourage you to go forward with enthusiasm in this line of action that the Holy Spirit is suggesting to you. Open your hearts to welcome the inner movement of God’s grace; broaden your view, broaden your view in order to recognise the most authentic and urgent needs of a society, and a generation that is changing.

Be a prophetic witness and educational presence everywhere, through the unconditional acceptance of young people, facing the challenge of an intercultural environment and identifying forms of approach that render your apostolic work effective in a context, that of young people, permeated by the virtual world and especially by new digital technologies.

To do this we need to always place Christ at the centre of our existence. We must let ourselves be formed by the Word of God that enlightens, guides, and supports. We must nourish the missionary spirit with persevering prayer, with adoration, by wasting time before the Tabernacle.

At the same time, you are called to bear witness to an ideal of sisterly communion among you, with the sentiments of mutual acceptance, bearing with the limitations and appreciating the qualities and gifts of each person, according to Jesus’ teaching, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

I want to repeat some advice that I gave recently to another group of religious: unity. Never, never let there be envy, jealousy, among you. Do not allow these things! And unity in the home. The greatest danger is terrorism in religious life: it has entered, the terrorism of gossip. If you have

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1 Pope Francis began his discourse in a very spontaneous way saying, “Mother Yvonne offered thanks for the audience, but it would not have been possible without her persistence! I don’t know if this Superior General knows how to govern, I really don’t know, that’s your business, but she knows how to knock at doors, and loudly, I assure you! I thank you, Mother, for what you said. And allow me to be persistent too, thinking of Patagonia... I’ll say no more!”
something against a Sister, go and tell her to her face. But never this terrorism, because gossip is a bomb that you throw into a community and you destroy it; unity without the terrorism of gossip. This unity, as you well know, requires a serious path of formation, which also includes updating in human sciences that can help you in your mission. You are asked, in fact, to know how to listen with openness and understanding to those who turn to you for moral and human support, to know how to interpret the situations in which you work in order to bring the Gospel message into that culture. In this regard, the mission *ad gentes* offers you an exceedingly vast field in which to offer a loving gift of yourselves.

In the course of your chapter meetings, you reflected on your daily apostolic work that brings you into contact with the joys, expectations and suffering of the people: on playgrounds with children, in classrooms with students, with young people in real cities or virtual neighbourhoods, in the marketplaces with young women. You meet with reality and ever new problems that challenge you. May you be missionaries of hope and joy for all, testifying to the values of your Salesian identity, especially in the field of encounter, a fundamental aspect of your charism. It is an ever fresh and life-giving source from which you can draw the love that revitalises passion for God and for youth.

May the inevitable difficulties, which you encounter on the way, not dampen the enthusiasm of your apostolic action. Rather, may the example of St. John Bosco and St. [Maria] Domenica Mazzarello inspire you to contribute even more enthusiastically to the new evangelisation with your work in the field of education and schools, of catechesis and the formation of youth for the apostolate.

Dear Sisters, you know how much the Church esteems consecrated life. Indeed, it is at the very heart of the community and a decisive element for her mission, to which consecrated life offers a specific contribution through the witness of a life totally given to God and neighbour.

With the motherly help of Mary Most Holy, whom you venerate under the title of Help of Christians, may this be the commitment of each of you and of your Congregation as a whole!

With this wish, I impart to you and all your Sisters my heartfelt apostolic blessing. And I ask you to pray for me and not to forget Patagonia! Thank you.

*Special Audience*

*General Chapter XXIII members*

November 8, 2014
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