



# Salesian Youth Ministry

Frame of  
Reference

Salesian  
Youth Ministry  
Department







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Salesian  
Youth Ministry  
Department



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# Introduction



The Second Vatican Council was an event of great importance in the life of the Church. It marked the beginning of a long process of reflection which found new life in the great Council constitutions. The Church, as a community of believers, finds power in the Word and in its sacramental liturgical life, especially in the Eucharist, to be a sign of hope and joy for the world. The work of the **synods** and the **Apostolic Exhortations** continued to nourish that process. The Apostolic Exhortations *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Catechesi Tradendae*, together with the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and the *General Directory for Catechesis* gave further vigour to the Church's evangelising mission.

Immediately after the Council, the Congregation became deeply committed to reading the signs of the times and responding with generosity and pastoral creativity to new needs and demands. While rethinking its mission in recent decades, **the Congregation has done serious work in updating its understanding of Don Bosco's Preventive System**. It has also reflected seriously on the Salesian Community as both object and subject of evangelisation. Special attention was given to the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC), with a clear vision of its Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP), a project that defines the evangelising and educative identity of every form of Salesian work.

The Congregation has also tried to engage in spiritual research and provide answers to questions on the meaning of life through Salesian Youth Spirituality, practised by a vast movement of people.

During these same decades the **Youth Ministry Department** has accompanied Provinces with systematic ongoing leadership and animation. The aim of this was to increase the knowledge and practice of the Congregation's pastoral model which has its roots in our Constitutions (31-39).

During this ongoing work of animation the Department found clear and solid support in **the teaching of the Rector Majors** who gave their

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reflections in a continuous and systematic way, offering wise leadership in this process of evangelisation and education.

The effort to assimilate, clarify and carry this process out needs to be reinforced on the pastoral front so that it may continue to grow. There is clearly a deep desire on the part of those involved in pastoral ministry to respond more effectively to the needs of young people.

It must be acknowledged that this present edition of the *Frame of Reference* is in continuity with previous editions. An effort has been made to enrich it with the wisdom derived from the Church's reflection over recent years. The present edition is the result of a journey that began in the communities and matured in the various provinces.

We have here a rich vision of our Salesian pastoral patrimony, enriched and enlightened by the Church's Magisterium in response to the challenges of today's world. It is a consistent synthesis, a positive interpretation of the story of young people, with its source in Christ, **a synthesis ever more conscious of its charismatic patrimony and pastoral identity.** Every Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) should receive this manual as a gift and responsibility. It should then be translated into a Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP) which gives every sector of activity and every work a clear plan for evangelisation and education which follows common lines of planning for what Salesians do today.

The *Frame of Reference* is an instrument offered by the Youth Ministry Department to shed light on and give direction to the pastoral work of every Provincial and Local EPC; to guide the pastoral activity of Provincial and Local Youth Ministry Delegates and their teams, in order to contribute to the formation of all Salesians and educators who share responsibility for the Salesian mission.

**Fabio Attard**

*General Councillor for Youth Ministry*  
Rome, 8 December 2013



# Foreword to the Third Edition

The 26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salesians (2008) decided, in its 6<sup>th</sup> guideline, to: Let the Rector Major with his Council encourage, through the competent Departments, a deeper understanding of the relationship between evangelisation and education in order to put the Preventive System into practice, and adapt the frame of reference for youth ministry to changing cultural circumstances (GC26, 45).

Immediately following GC26 the Youth Ministry Department began a process of consultation to achieve this aim. Initially, all Study Centres in the Congregation were consulted as also National Youth Ministry Centres and Ongoing Formation Centres, as well as Salesian experts in this scene. Their contribution served as a basis for drawing up an instrument intended to solicit reflection on the part of all the communities in the Congregation. After this wide-ranging consultation, the Department received a report from every province on the process they had carried out. The diversity of topics and the different nuances of these reports coming from every part of the Congregation, were studied by the team that drew up this present edition. It is meant to lead to a systematic presentation of the various elements that make up Salesian Youth Ministry.

The text is intended as a guide and instrument of formation. It is in continuity with what was contained in previous editions but it tries, at the same time, to gather together the new educational and pastoral demands and the cultural and ecclesial challenges of today's world.

The publication of a new edition is an opportune time to emphasise once again the central role young people play, especially those most in need; they are at the heart of Salesian Youth Ministry. The text recalls this charismatic choice in the early pages (**Chapter 1**). The approach we have chosen is to reflect on how the Salesian Congregation has understood, or better, how it has felt its commitment to young people from Don Bosco's time to the present day.

The structure and basic contents of the second edition (2000) have been enriched and developed by a more ample theological, spiritual and

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charismatic reflection (**Chapters 2 and 3**). Particular attention is given to the diversity of contexts coming from the multicultural and multi-religious era in which the Congregation exists today.

Special attention is given to two particular aspects in **Chapter 3**: first of all, the understanding of the relationship between evangelisation and education, and secondly the Preventive System as a formative programme, a spirituality and an educational methodology.

The new edition is enriched by an updated presentation of Salesian Youth Spirituality and by programmes for education to the faith that correspond more closely to the actual situation of young people today (**Chapter 4**).

**Chapter 5** outlines the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) in a detailed manner and contains a new section which describes “the heart of the Salesian educator”.

The Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP) is presented with its essential elements in **Chapter 6**. Strictly linked to the SEPP, this edition presents some directives for better attentiveness to a culture of vocation, suggestions for animating missionary and voluntary service and guidelines for social communication.

**Chapter 7** offers practical guidelines for the activities and works of Salesian Youth Ministry: services and works in different Salesian environments that can have a strong educative and pastoral influence. This chapter has been restructured considerably in the light of new social and cultural situations and the new Salesian reality.

**Chapter 8** presents a way to approach various pastoral instruments, how they are to be understood and applied within a systematic Salesian Youth Ministry. Pastoral planning at local, provincial and interprovincial level is explained so that it can more easily be put into practice.



The graphics are meant to help with the interpretation and study of the text and encourage reflection in common by all pastoral workers. A privileged place is given to the Word of God and there are references to Salesian sources. These constitute a theme that runs throughout the text. They are presented in 'text boxes' that enrich every chapter. All the quotations are taken from documentation listed after this foreword. Special attention is paid to the language of the *Constitutions and Regulations*, and to the Magisterium of the Church and of the Rector Majors.

For a clearer and more logical reading, the text is divided into three parts, always respecting the structure of the individual chapters. Each chapter can be read on its own as part of a formation programme, or chapters can be taken up in a different order from the one proposed here.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who over these past few years have accompanied this process with their prayers, reflections and suggestions. In a particular way I would like to thank Miguel Angel Garcia Morcuende, who closely followed the preparation and drawing up of the text, and also Rafael Borges, Mario Olmos and Robert Simon who participated generously in reviewing the text.

It is incumbent upon us to express our heartfelt gratitude to all who, with their precious but hidden work of translation, have ensured that the pastoral reflection of the Congregation can reach all parts of the world. Their generous service is a true and proper ministry which is ever more appreciated.

# Documentation



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- ***24<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco. "Salesians and Lay People: Communion and Sharing in the Spirit and mission of Don Bosco"*** (1996).
- ***25<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco. "The Salesian Community today"*** (2002).
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## Abbreviations

<b>AGC/ASC</b>	<i>Acts of the General/Superior Council of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco.</i>
<b>C.</b>	<i>Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis of Sales</i> (1984).
<b>EPC</b>	Educative and Pastoral Community.
<b>GC</b>	General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco.
<b>IUS</b>	Salesian Institutes of Higher Education.
<b>OPP</b>	Overall Provincial Plan.
<b>PSEPP</b>	Provincial Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan.
<b>R.</b>	Regulations of the Society of St Francis of Sales.
<b>SEPP</b>	Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan.
<b>SYM</b>	Salesian Youth Movement.
<b>VTC</b>	Vocational Training Centre.





**EVANGELISING AND EDUCATING:  
OUR APOSTOLIC IDENTITY**



**FROM CHRIST THE EVANGELISER  
TO THE EVANGELISING CHURCH**



**INHABITING THE LIFE AND CULTURE  
OF TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE**

# PART

# ONE

This first part contains the outlines of a renewed vision of Salesian Youth Ministry starting from a theological and anthropological approach. Some keys to interpretation of the text are given to help with the communication of the Good News in a way that it can be received by young people in harmony with their expectations.



# INHABITING THE LIFE AND CULTURE OF TODAY'S YOUNG PEOPLE

## CHAPTER



*“He had compassion  
on them ...  
and he began to  
teach them”*

*(Mk 6: 34)*



*The Lord made clear to Don Bosco that he was to direct his mission first and foremost to the young, especially to those who are poorer. We are called to the same mission and are aware of its supreme importance: young people are at the age when they must make basic life-choices which affect the future of society and of the Church. With Don Bosco we reaffirm our preference for the young who are “poor, abandoned and in danger”, those who have greater need of love and evangelisation, and we work especially in areas of greatest poverty”*

[C. 26]



*Look, she said... Here is your field, here is where you are to work”*

[Memoirs of the Oratory, Introduction]

The first chapter is of an inspirational nature. As well as giving youth ministry a positive slant on the youth situation, it opens it up to all the young people's expectations, even those that are hidden and unconscious. Only by inhabiting their world can we come to really appreciate its potential. We need to abandon any form of ministry that is turned in on itself, and open our gaze with hope, always keeping in mind young people who are weakest and most at risk. New cultural paradigms and the challenges thrown up by different contexts call for specific attention and challenge the very meaning of ministry and of being Church. In this chapter we would like to focus on the motivation that drove Don Bosco and the Congregation during and after his time in their commitment on behalf of young people.

## 1

# Here is your field, here is where you are to work

At home with his family and in the Becchi where he lived John Bosco undoubtedly spoke the Piedmontese dialect used by ordinary country folk. And it is our belief that Mary, the woman of majestic aspect in the dream at the age of nine must have used this same dialect when she spoke in a dream to young John. In the dialect of the time, in the words Mary used to point John to his future field of action, *it is not altogether accurate to use the verb "work" ("here is where you are to work"). It is more likely that the word Mary used meant to plough: "here is the field you are to plough."*

We are sons of a ploughman, and this is confirmed for us by the fact that the Salesian charism has a power in itself which sustains Salesian youth ministry. **It is the virtue of hope.**

The ploughman does not look back, nor does he measure his work by immediate results. In Piedmont the ploughman had to contend with rough stony ground, the cold soil of autumn still frozen solid at the start of spring. The ploughman does not have the vision of the sower nor the joy of the reaper. He has only hope and the certainty of the future that he can visualise in bloom, even though at the time of ploughing he sees only hard work and the sweat of his brow.

These are the virtues of anyone who wants to be an evangeliser and educator of the young. We have no time to waste. We cannot stand on

the road and contemplate the past, looking over our shoulder. Neither can we expect to see the result of our labour straight away. We need to hope, look to the future and know how to nurture the certainty in our hearts that what we are doing will bear much fruit, the fruit of holiness, the fruit of *good Christians and upright citizens.*



*"In those things that are for the benefit of young people in danger or which serve to win souls for God, I push ahead even to the point of recklessness"*

(BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS 14, CHAPTER 28)



We Salesians look at young people the way the ploughman looks at the field he is working in, with the tenacity of the farmer and the temerity characteristic of our founder when he saw that **his projects were from God**. Our eyes and our minds are on the present as the place of hope because now is the time of the young people. It may not seem so but the ground we are working on is already rich in holiness. All it needs is to be properly cared for.

## 2

## Love for young people and a desire for contact with them

For Don Bosco as a young priest from the country, his arrival in Turin in 1841 meant the discovery of a youthful world that was new to him and quite unexpected, very different from what he had been used to. On the one hand, there were many boys and young men

who converged on the capital of the State of Savoy in search of work and a future. On the other hand, Don Bosco discovered a more dangerous aspect of society, harsher and more cruel than what he had known at the Becchi or even in the small town of Chieri.



*"It is enough that you are young for me to love you very much"*

[COMPANION OF YOUTH. INTRODUCTION 'TO YOUNG PEOPLE']

**Don Bosco found himself catapulted into a new world** where there was no shortage of problems — social, economic, political and religious. There was a growing anti-clericalism. People of the upper classes, and many also in the Church, felt that these young people were not and never would be capable of civilised living. Many of them were illiterate, ignorant, given to robbery and crime, and they did not practise their religion. There was only one solution — the juvenile prison known as the *Generalà*.

Don Bosco **looked at this situation with a different perspective** under the spiritual and pastoral guidance of Fr Cafasso. He saw not just prisoners but possible future upright citizens, not just street boys but boys who could become good Christians. He saw the chimney sweeps and

other youthful workers as future saints, pillars of Church and society, now and in the future.

This is the great value of hope which is capable not only of loving (like charity), but of loving *what will be in the future*, not only of believing and knowing (like faith), but *knowing the future and believing in it*.

**Don Bosco's way of seeing things is marked first of all by empathy and love.** He was able to walk in the boys' shoes. During his years of formation he had learned to become the kind of priest who was close to young people, capable of empathy, of establishing immediate contact. He was able to feel with the young and ordinary people. The pastoral model that Don Bosco intuited, experienced and practised, under Mary's guidance, was that of a kindly priest – no fool, no hail-fellow-well-met, but one who makes you feel at ease right away, because you feel loved immediately for who and what you are.

Don Bosco's pastoral work, his decision to start with the young and his creative planning were not based on simple sociological research into the problems of society, nor on a psychological belief in the innate potential of the youthful stage of life, not even on the pure philanthropy of someone who is moved to action by unease at the situation of the people around him.

**Don Bosco was moved by the heart of the Good Shepherd** who sees a flock lost and astray, feels deep compassion and sets about preaching the Word to them, giving them something to eat to nourish both body and spirit for this world and for eternity. "As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things" (Mk 6:34).

The pastoral activity of the Congregation is, therefore, marked by a profound ability *to find ways of making contact, of getting close to the young and sharing life with them*. We go in search of the people to whom we are sent, and find them wherever they are, in the place where they are physically, in the things they are interested in (cf. C. 38). Like the Good Shepherd, the Salesian lets himself be moved by the confusion felt by those to whom we are sent and by their desires. He adapts himself to them, praying to the Holy Spirit for the gift of compassion, modelled on the meekness of the heart of Jesus (cf. GC20, no.100).

To do this, our pastoral activity must be done in a way that is professionally correct, making use of every help offered by the sciences and human wisdom. Above all, however, it must be guided by our **contemplating the youth situation through God's eyes**, a way of looking at things that Don Bosco had all through his life,

starting from the dream at nine and lasting right to the end of his life. It demands prayer, entrusting our work to Mary, obedience to the Church, conforming our desires and sentiments to those of Christ: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).



*"Let the superiors love what the young people like, and the young people will love what the superiors like"*

[BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS 17, CHAPTER 3]

### 3

## Discernment by educators and believers

*Contemplation enables us to see things in all their depth.* We are all familiar with Don Bosco's dreams where he describes his own work and the events of the Oratory as a struggle, sometimes even a bloody struggle, between good and evil, or better, between the devil and Jesus and Mary.

These scenes are not only studied from a pedagogical angle as a metaphor for the formation of the boys who were listening to Don Bosco in his Goodnights at Valdocco. They are also the understanding of one who contemplates life through God's eyes. The struggle between Jesus and the power of evil is ongoing – a struggle that has been won definitively (this is the basis of our optimism and hope) but is not yet finished.

Our pastoral activity is part of this ongoing struggle **for the freedom of young people from the very real slavery and the real evil which is sin**. Sin manifests itself in many ways – personal sin, the sin of the Church community, the sinful structures of society. Sin oppresses the

human person and obscures the horizon of salvation towards which they are already walking and which awaits them in Paradise.

It is in this struggle that our pastoral ministry takes place, addressing all its implications – spiritual, material, political, social, economic and legal – so that young people may attain to a life fully *worthy of God and the happiness intended for them*.

The Salesian takes on the task of listening to, observing and discerning the circumstances of sin in this world with a sense of responsibility (cf. C. 18) and with optimism and joy (cf. C. 17). He makes a daily effort, through personal and community action, to make use of all that can help to realise his mission – a happy life here and in eternity for all young people, even for those furthest away.

This is why, like the ministry of the Good Shepherd who gathers his sheep and leads them to rich pastures, **Salesian ministry is both evangelisation and education**. It aims to transform the entire life of the young person. It seeks to listen and to know in depth the situation in which we live, in order to transform it in accordance with God's design (see Chapter 3).

In this way, the Salesian mission in the mind of its Founder coincides with the whole person and the whole world. Don Bosco's *missionary zeal* cares for the whole person in all aspects, personal and social, and for all the young people of the world. It is here, right at the start of the Congregation, that the decision was born to reach out to young people in the situations and places where they are to be found, to share the Gospel with them.



## 4

## Communion with others in love

We bring about in our works the Educative and Pastoral Community. In it and through it we Salesians are **signs and bearers of the love of God for young people** (cf. C. 2, 47).

This dual reference point sheds light on and gives meaning to our mission.

In the first place, our mission takes place in the context of Christ's own mission. He came that they might have life, and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10), not any life, but his own life. He is the life and the truth that lights up the way to reach it (Jn 14:6).

The divine life which Christ incarnates and makes visible on earth, and bears witness to by his death on the cross, is the very life of God, the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a single movement of communion and love.

We are therefore, first of all firmly convinced that the ultimate purpose of our mission in the Church and the world is to **offer young people, especially the poorest of them, the very life of Christ**. This is a life of relationship, love, Trinitarian communion with the Father, who is the ultimate goal of our existence and the source of our happiness in time and in eternity.

Young people can find the true meaning of their lives only in full communion with God, the Trinity of love, in the form of the Son who became man. This means fulfilling in the concrete circumstances of their daily lives, the truth that God has in store for them – the fullness of life and happiness.



*“Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission”*

[CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI 32]

This personal fulfilment cannot be achieved alone. Right from the beginning it is rooted in the Trinitarian communion which characterises us as human beings, children of God. The human being is created in the image of the Son and is created for communion. Fostering this spirituality of communion is the educational principle in all the settings where the human being and the Christian are formed (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 43). This is why our mission is not primarily about organising works and projects but about giving life to **Educative and Pastoral Communities which reflect here on earth the Trinitarian community of heaven where we are called to dwell.**

We are certain that the love of God which we bring to the young develops in their lives through joy, mortification and the sacramental life which combat the sins of individualism, loneliness and self-sufficiency. We are called to communion in love with one another. We carry out our mission in community and we try constantly to give life to communities that live here on earth as God wants us to live in eternity.

## 5

## Salesian Youth Ministry is the primary expression of the Salesian mission

The Salesian Mission, which sets the tenor of our whole life, specifies **the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families** (cf. C. 3). It is expressed in practice in the projects and works, the educational environment, the places of formation and evangelising activities which all come under the title of 'Salesian Youth Ministry'.

Salesian Youth Ministry does not, however, exhaust the abundance of the mission of the Congregation. The mission is, in fact, a theological reality strictly linked to the very vocation of the Congregation and of each of its members. However, the mission can only be expressed through

specific activity. Youth Ministry is the primary and typical expression of the mission.

It is pastoral because it is, in the first place, a *multifaceted expression of an ecclesial community* in which, alongside our lay collaborators, the community of consecrated Salesians is present as the animating nucleus (cf. GC25). Together they make up the community of the Church in a particular place distinguished by the Salesian charism which, in turn, expresses its evangelising mission through the educative and pastoral works undertaken from time to time.

It is youthful because *young people, especially the poorest of them, are at the centre of all our activity*. We go in search of young people in the real situation of their lives, with their resources and difficulties. We try to discover the challenges presented by the cultural, social and religious contexts in which they live. We dialogue with them and, through a pedagogy of accompaniment, we invite them to undertake a journey that leads to a living community encounter with Jesus Christ (cf. GC20, no.360).

Finally, it is Salesian because it finds its principal point of reference in *the charism of Don Bosco, following the inspiration of the educative love of the Good Shepherd*. It finds expression in preventive education, based on love and trust, and always ready to dialogue. These qualities constitute the criterion of genuineness and the yardstick for planning and activity.

As the expression of ecclesial ministry in the style of Don Bosco, **Salesian Youth Ministry** sees evangelisation as its most urgent activity. Its most basic task is to invite all young people to live their lives as Jesus lived his, so as to get to know Jesus gradually, live their humanity to the full, and play a full and responsible part in building the kingdom of God in the world.

Salesian ministry is no different from that of the Church and is therefore an evangelising ministry. *It is characterised by a style of educative intervention and is a ministry carried out through the work of education.*



*"We must have as our primary aim the care of youth, and any occupation that distracts us from this is not good"*

[BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS 14, CHAPTER 11]



The people to whom we are sent first are the young people whom Don Bosco describes as the most delicate and most precious portion of all humanity and the delight of the Lord. The category “youth” inevitably suggests a stage in the age and growth of the individual, but it is not used here in a psychological or sociological sense. Youth is not to be understood only as a particular stage through which one passes with a view to becoming a “good Christian and upright citizen” in the future. It is to be taken in two ways:

- on the one hand it can be thought of only as part of an individual's entire life, and cannot be understood except in relation to the age which precedes it and that which follows. It is part of a person's growth to adulthood;
- on the other hand, we need to focus on what is unique to this stage, and which must be experienced in order to pass on to the next without missing out on something important.

The stages of an individual's life do not follow one another in such a way that the new one simply means the end of the previous one. Youth represents a fundamental expression of human existence, a characteristic way human beings develop, part of their journey from birth to death. It is a way of feeling and a way of behaving in relation to the world.

In this way we discover that youth and the stage of adolescence that precedes it are **the most precious part of humanity** because they are the stage in life when people discover themselves, and recognise the emergence of freedom

as a task. It is the task of accepting the truth of who they are, marked by divine vocation and solidarity with others. It is the age for understanding and choosing their mission in life so that, after a trial period in which the individual visualises him or herself in various different possible future identities, he or she can take the first step in moving from a provisional choice to a definitive decision about life. This is the age when fortitude becomes the cardinal virtue *par excellence*. It is the stage of idealism when reality is challenged in the



*“At the present time, youth is the most delicate and most precious part of human society, on which the hopes of the present and the future are founded”*

(INTRODUCTION TO THE REGULATIONS OF THE ORATORY OF ST FRANCIS OF SALES)

*“Remember, young people, that you are the Lord's delight”*

(BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS 3, CHAPTER 53)

name of the memory of their fathers and the strength of their choice for what is true and good. It is the time for courage in the mission, time to “cast their nets” on the promise of an authoritative word.



*Our fundamental task is then to “propose to the young with courage and joy that they live their lives in the way Jesus Christ lived his”*

[GC26, NO.36]

Salesian Youth Ministry engages in all this, not only on behalf of young people, but together with young people. Don Bosco was the first Saint to found **a Congregation not only for young people but with young people**. He valued, in a way previously unheard of, the unique part that young people could play and involved them actively in the adventure of their religious and human development. This is why Salesian ministry is essentially youthful, not only because we see young people as the beneficiaries of our ministry, but because they play an active part in it.

Their involvement is not blind. We overcome the generation gap and any tendency to paternalism in the ministry by engaging in a family style that involves honest and open dialogue and a shared educative responsibility. It values the responsible contribution of every member of the community, in proportion to their maturity. We are also aware that it is impossible for young people to play an active part in their own growth and relationship with God unless they are involved in the pursuit of holiness.

Finally, precisely because ours is a youthful ministry it is always, at one and the same time, both evangelisation and education. It is a method of evangelising that invites young people to live their lives in the way that Christ himself lived his. It also aims at the all-round development of the person, which is precisely what we mean by education.

Salesian Youth Ministry is therefore a systematic activity of the Educative and Pastoral Community which is motivated by a charismatic mission. It seeks to enable young people to grow to maturity, in a religious vocation, and to communion with Jesus Christ in the Church. Christ is seen as the one who gives the fullness of life and is the basis of this fullness. It helps young people, by means of educational activity, to become “upright citizens and good Christians”.

## 6

## Increase the number and improve the quality of the places where we encounter young people

Salesian Youth Ministry is by definition attentive to the signs of the times. Young people are not always the same. Their age and circumstances change. It is part of nature. For this reason, Salesian Youth Ministry is not afraid to *change its models and structures. It is in a constant state of pastoral conversion.*

The contexts in which we move are characterised by complexity and contradictions. This is a given fact that needs to be taken into consideration explicitly, more so now than ever before.

The religious experience of young people is **varied and even contains contradictory elements**. They have one experience after another and faith is not the pivot that gives meaning to their plan of life. For many young people, the Christian message is received sporadically. There is some continuity in catechesis or liturgical celebration, or through some Church initiative, but it does not impact much on their experience. It does not speak to the young in a way that influences the real problems they face in life. Sometimes the Christian message presupposes, if not an explicit interest in the faith, at least an openness to the religious dimension of life or an explicit questioning of the meaning of life. Many young people, however, are caught up in the difficulties they face in everyday life. They are concerned about immediate problems. They are in a different place, not only physically, but especially mentally. This leads to indifference in relation to faith. It should be noted however, that this indifference is towards the way the message is proposed and should not be seen as a complete rejection of faith, or of the presence of God, or the good news that gives hope and meaning to life.

This complexity is not limited to the world of the young. The Salesian Congregation is now firmly established on a global level. It is experiencing a fruitful and creative tension between fidelity to its identity and the way

it needs to express this in the very different and complex circumstances we find ourselves in.

It is in this varied situation of globalisation and structural change, which is not just superficial, that we Salesians are called to rediscover the force and the roots of our identity. We need to contemplate our pastoral projects in faith and incarnate our youth ministry with greater truth. Then our invitation to faith will be strengthened with new and up to date ways of proclaiming the good news of the Gospel.

## 7

## Twofold Fidelity

Love for Don Bosco nowadays means being aware that we have to evaluate our pastoral activity to ensure that it is always guided by a twofold fidelity. We must be **faithful in listening to the feelings of young people**, to their deep desires, the cultural climate in which they live and in which we want them to be active participants and not just passive consumers and recipients. We must also be **faithful in listening to the Church**, to its evangelising mission. We must be able to live its mission in the present, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, not just applying formulas from a past that is behind us, but as a truth that is forever new and fruitful, that renews us constantly and leads us to union with the Spouse (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 4).

In other words, we must live on common ground, in harmony with the young. This means being faithful to the kind of *assistance and sharing our lives with the young* which Don Bosco spoke about in the *Letter from Rome* in 1884. What is important is not just physical presence but also spiritual, cultural and



emotional closeness. This is not paternalism but an awareness of how young people live. It implies a strong desire to be close to the young in an educative relationship that helps them to discover the newness of God and his call, and to express and live the vocation of the Church in a way that is always new.

This twofold fidelity to the world of the young and the mission of the Church demands that we increase the number and improve the quality of the places where we meet the young people of our day. It also means that we need to discover, experience and propose new ways of listening to the young, sharing our faith with them and offering them the gospel. This is the pastoral conversion demanded of us today. Herein lies the pastoral creativity (cf. C. 19) which we Salesians cultivate in our works and programmes. This conversion is a **process of evaluation and a new beginning of our ministry, starting from fidelity to the world and to the Gospel**. It is not something static, but eminently innovative and missionary.

Here is the heart of the *New Evangelisation*. The Church takes up again the missionary mandate of the Lord Jesus. He has sent the Church into the world so that, guided by the Holy Spirit, it may bear witness to the salvation received and make known the face of the Father who is the first agent in the work of salvation. It is not only a renewal, a change of model or a new plan, but a real and proper conversion. It is a journey of holiness, a battle against sin and a constant effort to be ever more fully conformed to Christ the Good Shepherd.

We, Salesians and lay people, have been gifted with a charism and are called as an Educative and Pastoral Community to proclaim the Good News. We are particularly challenged by the urgency of the *New Evangelisation* which is a task for the whole Church today. This urgency motivates us to find, in renewed fidelity to our charism, a new apostolic thrust, a new urge to make contact with young people and, above all, to look again at our pastoral ministry. We want to become ever more effective in proclaiming the Gospel, in working for the coming of the Kingdom of God, and the formation of good Christians and upright citizens in the present and in the future.







# FROM CHRIST THE EVANGELISER TO THE EVANGELISING CHURCH

## CHAPTER



*“...To gather into  
one the children  
of God who are  
scattered abroad”*

*(Jn 11:52)*





*We, the Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), form a community of the baptized. Submissive to the bidding of the Spirit we are resolved to carry out the Founder's apostolic plan in a specific form of religious life: to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor. By carrying out this mission we find our own way to holiness"*

[C. 2]



*...to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn 11:52). The words of the holy Gospel which tell us that our Divine Saviour came from heaven to earth to gather together all the children of God scattered in different parts of the earth, can be applied literally to the young people of our day. They are the most delicate and precious portion of human society, on which we found our hopes for a happy future ... This was the mission of the Son of God. This alone can be his holy religion ... When I gave myself to this part of the sacred ministry I intended to consecrate my every effort to the greater glory of God and the good of souls. I intended to work to make good citizens on this earth so that one day they might become worthy dwellers in heaven. May God help me to continue thus until the last breath of my life"*

[Introduction to the Regulations of the Oratory of St Francis of Sales]

An updated presentation of Salesian Youth Ministry requires reflection not only of a charismatic type but also of a theological nature. Youth Ministry as an activity of the ecclesial community demands of us a deep theological and ecclesiological study. This chapter expounds three basic convictions: Jesus Christ, the evangeliser who proclaimed communion with God and communion between people (fraternal love), is the full revelation of God as a community of love. The Church is the mystery of Communion and mission, animated and sustained by the Spirit of God. The Salesian Congregation shares the Church's evangelising mission, with a specific option for the young.

## 1

# Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, is the complete manifestation of God's love

The precious text of our holy founder (see above), as well as pointing out the holistic nature of Salesian education which aims, through the Preventive System, to form “upright citizens and good Christians”, also clearly shows **the theological profundity of the mission entrusted to him by God**. This continues to be our mission in new contexts very different from that in which Don Bosco lived and worked. We are called “to be in the Church signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor” (C. 2).

The love of God is made fully manifest in Jesus Christ. We read in the first letter of St John: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us – that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:1-3a). In this sense, **Jesus is the prophet par excellence**, unlike the prophets of the Old Testament, through whom in many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers (cf. Heb 1:1). He is the Word of God through whom God communicates in a definitive manner with all the men and women of the world.

The love of God manifest in Jesus Christ is the Good News *par excellence* given to all people, the *euanghèlion*. This love also constitutes the fullness of every man and woman in their situation. Jesus gives this love through communion with God, especially through forgiveness of sins, and through communion with all people, in the “new commandment”: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35).

Jesus communicates **the Love of God which leads to the salvation of all with nobody excluded**, but with a special predilection for those who are

socially or religiously marginalised, for different reasons: the poor, the sick, especially lepers and those afflicted with an evil spirit. Even those who are furthest from God, public sinners (tax collectors and prostitutes: cf. Lk 7:36-50; Lk 15:1-3). Similarly, he shows great kindness and tenderness towards children, of whom he says: "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mk 10:15).

This manifestation of the Love of God for all men and women is not just a promise that will be fulfilled in the future. Jesus reveals the Love of God through his salvific signs: "he went about doing good" (Acts 10:37-38).

On the other hand, all who experienced the Love of God through the word and action of Jesus Christ, those most in need in their different situations, themselves became evangelisers: the sick, the poor, the despised Samaritan woman, even the man who was possessed by a legion of devils (cf. Mk 5).

Jesus himself described his mission with the **image of the Good Shepherd** (cf. Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:4-7; Jn 10:1-8), "who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving" (C. 11).

As a Good Shepherd, Jesus always has a missionary concern. "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." (Lk 4:43-44). "And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (Jn 10:16). The Good Shepherd



*Poverty refers directly "to their social and economic situation; abandonment implies the 'theological note' of lack of support through the absence of adequate mediation of God's love; and danger refers back to a determining phase of life, adolescence, the time of decision after which habits and attitudes formed can be changed only with great difficulty"*

(FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, AGC 384, "LOOKING AT CHRIST THROUGH THE EYES OF DON BOSCO")



*"Jesus Christ made himself little with the little ones and bore our weaknesses. He is our master in the matter of the friendly approach"*

(LETTER FROM ROME, 1884)

loves all his sheep but has an almost disconcerting predilection for the one that is lost, displaying his tender solicitude by searching for it till he finds it, and his *loving-kindness* by rejoicing as he carried it on his shoulders: "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing" (Lk 15:5).

The most profound meaning of the Incarnation of the Son, sent by the Father "through the work of the Holy Spirit" which **finds its full realisation in the Paschal Mystery**, the death and resurrection of Jesus, is precisely this: to reveal the divine love to us "to the end" (Jn 13, 1ff.) in order to gather together in unity all the men and women of the world. "For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility ... for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:14.18).

## 2

## Jesus reveals to us the Mystery of God, a Community of Love

Jesus not only reveals the love of God for us, but the true face of God, who is in himself a **Communion of Love**. The Father gives himself to the Son by generating him, and together they breathe the Holy Spirit. This is the heart of the Christian faith.

This communion of love is not only manifested to all people by the Son, but is really shared with them through the action of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It constitutes the basic duty of every Christian: to build in our world the Kingdom of God which is a Kingdom "of justice, love and peace". I pray "that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).



## 3

## The Church, called to continue Jesus' mission

This is the *raison d'être* and the fundamental mission of the Church: to continue the mission of Jesus Christ, with the light and the power of the Holy Spirit, to make visible the God who is Love, and to build communion with Him and among all men and women. Nobody is excluded but "the least" are privileged, in different situations in space and time in history. This continuity is described in the New Testament, in the writings of John, with a phrase that is quoted twice: "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18; 1 Jn 4:12). The first time it refers to the mission of Jesus: "the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known", but the second time it transfers this mission to the community of believers in Christ: "if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."

The Church is, in its deepest essence, **"a mystery of communion and mission"** (*Christifideles Laici* 32): the continuation of the Mission of Jesus Christ, by proclaiming the Love of God for the building of the communion and community of the sons and daughters of God. The experience of the Church is the experience of communion with God and with men and women.

It is a community sustained by the Spirit, where *faith*

*is lived in community (koinonia)*

*is reflected and becomes consistent witness (martyria) is celebrated (liturgy) is transmitted in service and pastoral action (diakonia)*

*is translated into attitudes of life (spirituality)*

Its community dimension is seen and realised at different levels. It has its proper goal in the eschatological fulfilment of Communion of love with God, and of people among themselves, which is the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Here on earth, the privileged instrument of this love and the place where it is made real is the Church community, a communion of love which is being built every day. It is, at the same time, an instrument of indispensable ministerial service for the realisation of the Kingdom

through its work of evangelisation and catechesis, the celebration of the Sacraments, the experience of fraternal life in community, ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, and its work for human development which leads to the overcoming of all discrimination and marginalisation.

Therefore, **the Church is essentially missionary**. Its primary duty is to bring the good news of Christ to every people and culture. This mission of the Church sets the tone and the very identity of the Christian community. The task received from Christ to evangelise all peoples is not just “something to be done”. It is part of the very nature of the Church and expresses the Church’s identity. This is beautifully stated in one of its liturgical texts:

*To make of all the nations one single people, which has as its end your kingdom, as a condition the freedom of your children, as its law the precept of love* (ROMAN MISSAL, COMMON PREFACE VII).



## 4

# The Salesian Mission

**The Salesian charism is a participation in the universal mission of the Church**, and an experience of the Spirit, a gift of God given to the Church and to humanity through Don Bosco. It has its own distinctive characteristics:

- *the people to whom we are sent: to ‘unite’ young people;*
- *predilection for “the poorest, those abandoned and in danger”: those who are far from God, marginalised from the*

*human community, most in need of an experience of the love of God;*

- *a style of its own which favours loving-kindness (educative love that makes young people grow and creates a relationship) and a sense of community (family spirit) to overcome loneliness and exploitation;*
- *our privileged means which is education and the experience of the Educative and Pastoral Community, “a living experience of Church and a revelation of God’s love for us” (C. 47).*

## 5

## Mary, Mother and Teacher

“All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus.” (Acts 1:14). The motherly presence of Mary in the first community, at the centre of the ‘brothers and sisters’ of Jesus, has continued down through the centuries. She is “the motherly face of the Love of God.” She leads us to Jesus, so that all men and women of the world may **become sons and daughters in the Son**. As at the wedding at Cana, her concern and motherly predilection is for all those “who have no wine” (Jn 2:3). And in particular for the many young people who cannot find meaning in their lives because they do not feel loved by God. They are marginalised because of their socio-economic condition, their lack of employment, their family situation, or their need for affection. By making us their companions of the journey, “the Virgin Mary is present in this process as a mother. We make her known and loved as the one who believed, who helps and who infuses hope” (C. 34).





# EVANGELISING AND EDUCATING: OUR APOSTOLIC IDENTITY

CHAPTER



*“Give me this water,  
that I may not thirst”*

*(Jn 4:15)*



*Our mission is a sharing in that of the Church, which brings about the saving design of God, the coming of His Kingdom, by bringing to men the message of the Gospel, which is closely tied in with the development of the temporal order. We educate and evangelise according to a plan for the total well-being of man directed to Christ, the perfect Man. Faithful to the intentions of our Founder, our purpose is to form 'upright citizens and good Christians'”*

[C. 31]



*This system is based entirely on reason, religion and [above all] on kindness”*

[The Preventive System in the Education of the young]

# Fullness of life and the happiness of

human beings is the ultimate purpose of the plan of God. The Gospel of Christ shows great trust in humanity. It demands that we pay attention to the unique reality of every person and their willingness to accept their vocation and destiny in Christ, the perfect man. The Gospel proposes the good news (the person of Christ) who invites everyone to share in Christ's sonship, the foundation of the freedom and dignity of every person. Don Bosco educated and evangelised by carrying out a project of holistic development. He saw education as the growth of the person, with all the means necessary to assist the person. Evangelisation inspires people to the fullness of life offered in Jesus and enlightens them in its pursuit, always respecting the developing conscience of each person. Finally, regarding the choice of field of ministry, we are sent to the poor, especially the poorest, and to ordinary class environments, where we seek to humanise and evangelise the culture.

## 1


# Fullness of Life and the Happiness of every Human Being

Developing as a person is a daily task linked to the joy and struggle of existence. At times it can be a *particularly difficult undertaking*. We have the sense of having to invent a path not yet mapped out for ourselves (and by ourselves). The journey is never in a straight line but is marked by ups and downs, by times of satisfaction and times of frustration, and by hopes and disappointments. This task often remains a web of situations and experiences without ideal points of reference or much concern for consistence and unity.

In this sense the present context causes a new unease, not a passing one but ongoing. Together with the **constant change that characterises society and culture** there is also the **weakness of the institutions** that accompany young people in this situation. A responsible attitude on the part of the Salesian educator and a well-planned project are therefore urgent and important.

The words of Pope Paul VI when he said that the rupture between faith and culture is the drama of the present time, have not lost any of their relevance (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 20). Present-day culture, no longer homogeneous, influences young people in its complexity and fragmentation. With its many enticements and its virtual nature it leads to a consumerist understanding even

in the emotional area. It leaves young people amidst a jungle of desires, in the face of the harsh realities of economic and existential crisis.



*“We believe that God is awaiting us in the young to offer us the grace of meeting with him and to dispose us to serve him in them, recognising their dignity and educating them to the fullness of life”*

[GC23, NO.95]

Alongside these hard realities there is **incredibly precious capacity and potential in everyone’s heart** that can lead them to do great things. Each man and woman can discover their precise direction in life if they

reflect on their lives and ask themselves about the meaning of life. Where do I come from? Where am I going? How do I want to get there? Who do I want to go with? In our deepest humanity we discover the *fullness of life, in the young person and in the educator*, for it involves both of them.

In interpreting people's life experience we see the need to be loved, the sense of gratuity, and the desire to be valued and appreciated as one is, not depending on the achievement of objectives or results. We see that a wrong direction in life is a problem of meaning, a *problem with one's life plan*. This means that it is incumbent upon us as educators to identify what is worth spending one's life on and giving one's life for others. We need to see young people not as containers to be filled but as individuals to be accompanied. We help them to be themselves and to discover the beauty of their own vocation.

In our way of thinking as Christians we regard the project of life as a response to a vocation, a call from God who arouses, sustains and strengthens the freedom of the young, making them capable of corresponding with freedom and joy to their own identity and mission.

The fullness of life in the Gospel not only opens the young to the dignity of the human person, but also makes them free and sustains their ability to give a responsible and mature response to God. **Human life is to be seen in terms of vocation.** This calls for great openness to the Spirit, and a sense of responsibility in taking on the duty of a faithful response. "Responsibility" means literally accepting the beauty of "responding".

Young people are involved in measuring up to this responsibility. This means allowing themselves to be challenged by new experiences, going beyond themselves to meet new situations where they will rediscover themselves at a deeper level. It is in this context also that they will meet the invitation to the faith and reply to their life project. Young people are the object of God's call. They play an active role in listening to it and responding, and in this sense they are "responsible".

Awareness of vocation is the way to understand life and freedom truthfully. It is only when freedom takes on this task, and goes beyond one's own ego, that it enters the sphere of love, and begins to do good also for others. In a word, **vocation is loving**, self-giving, making of oneself a gift which witnesses to a new culture. Vocation is a response in love. Any life project which is born from a vocation is a gift to be given that transcends one's own ego.

## 2

## Directed to Christ, the perfect man

## 2 1

### ENCOUNTERING JESUS CHRIST AND INTEGRATING LOVE FOR LIFE

Faith shows us that our life-project and the transcendence of the person recall us to Christ, in his historical condition as the one true New Man. We Salesians are a community of the baptised and we are present in the Church and in the world with a task, a vocation and a particular *raison d'être*: **to invite everyone to live life as Jesus lived it** and to show that following Christ leads to the fullness of life. We ask ourselves – how can we proclaim the Gospel in a way that it will challenge people to maturity and the fullness of life? In what way can human desires be compatible with Jesus Christ?

Jesus, an expert in humanity, interacts via his message with all our human desires. Jesus shows a great trust in humanity and sees signs of goodness and the presence of God there. Jesus takes human needs seriously and the need to be happy in mind and body, in the vast world of relationships and the experience of love. He knows what is in the human heart, the desire to be reconciled with one's deepest being, often shattered, and that this does not have to be merited but is given out of goodness and love. It leads to a radical empathy, in the etymological sense of the world, as evoked by *Gaudium et Spes*:

*The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts* [GAUDIUM ET SPES 1].

Jesus' Gospel is laden with humanity, made up of gestures and words of welcome, of mutuality and listening. In terms of Christian anthropology this implies an awareness of the intimate correlation between the



richness of the humanity of every person and the human experience of Jesus. It is founded on the Incarnation of Christ. Human life, even in the poorest and most wretched conditions, becomes worthy of the divine, in imitation of Christ, the place where God becomes present. It is a call to

grow into full communion with God through the gift of self. Through the Incarnation, **Jesus of Nazareth is the only way available to us to know the mystery of God and of the human person.** The world of God and that of mankind are not far apart and incommunicable. God and man are in full dialogue, beginning with Jesus Christ, the best interpreter of the truth of the human person.



*“Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is”*

[CARITAS IN VERITATE 78]

The mission of Jesus is manifested in the context of incarnation and inculturation. The Incarnation, as the greatest expression of inculturation, is not a secondary fact, but the way chosen by God to make himself known. God’s revelation is transmitted through the Incarnation. The Church’s mission, guided and sustained by the mission of the Holy Spirit, has been fulfilled and is fulfilled in categories of time and space, by inculturation in the lives of people. The **New Evangelisation is accomplished by inculturation of the faith.** This implies the choice of three strategies: new evangelisation through catechesis and liturgy (evangelising by catechesis); new evangelisation through the integral promotion of peoples, by the poor and for the poor, at the service of life and of the family (evangelising by promotion); an evangelisation committed to penetrating the environments of urban and non-urban culture (evangelising by inculturation). In this age of New Evangelisation our youth ministry must seek at the same time to catechise, promote and inculturate (cf. Fr Pascual Chávez, AGC 407, “Salesian Youth Ministry”). If New Evangelisation is not translated into human promotion and inculturation it will not be authentic and will not cause the energy of faith to mature in history.

The mystery of Christ in his Incarnation, Death and Resurrection is the full revelation of humanity and of the immense greatness of every human person. For this reason **the Church can be the interpreter of human nature** and can be an expert in humanity. It need have no fear of entering into the terrain of human life. In Christian anthropology, the centrality of the human person does not conflict with the primacy of God and is



understood in the light of God's initiative. The awareness that we live immersed in God's gift of salvation and that we are "new creatures" (Rom. 8) is what gives unity to our existence.

Christian belief in life and in the human person, in reason and the capacity for love, is not the result of naive optimism but comes from that "trustworthy hope" (*Spe Salvi* 1) that is given to us by our *sonship in Christ*. It gives foundation to human dignity and liberty and the ability to love and be loved. It allows the person to live in an authentically human way in conformity with human nature and vocation. Christ occupies the most intimate space in humanity. "By the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, [Christ] fully reveals man to man himself" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22), and makes him aware of his highest vocation.

Youth Ministry enables young people to discover the depth of their own experience and to grasp the religious appeal to full communion with Jesus Christ. Gradually *Jesus Christ becomes the central person to whom reference is made in all life's decisions*, attitudes, choices, actions and behaviour. Today we encounter different pedagogical models permeated by positive values that make no reference to Jesus Christ and, consequently, lack a complete perspective of the human person to guide the individual towards the goal of salvation as new life and full maturity as a human being.

Salesian ministry, wherever it takes place, always includes the proclamation of Christ and solicitude for the salvation of the young. Our predilection for the young "gives meaning to our whole life" (C. 14). This solicitude is always our primary intention and desire in every educational and pastoral initiative. It is gradually made explicit according to the capacity of the young people to receive it. This is Don Bosco's apostolic project: "to be... signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor" (C. 2).

**We want them to hear the voice of God the Father, and come to know Jesus Christ.** We are convinced that the offer of the Gospel brings unexpected power to the building of one's personality and to the integral development that every young person deserves. It is a pedagogical process that takes into consideration all human forces. It offers young people the conditions that make every response an act of freedom. A sense of realism and patience are attitudes that respect the personal situation of each young person, from the weakest to the strongest, from those who are furthest from faith and the Church to the closest.

## 2 2

## ORIGINALITY AND BOLDNESS IN DON BOSCO'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Don Bosco's pedagogy explicitly insists on the authentic religious purpose of life in an educational process positively oriented towards Christ and enlightened by his message. It integrates faith and life which is nourished by the power of faith. It is fundamental to recognise that Don Bosco's pastoral concern is always part of the process of humanisation which promotes the integral development of the young person. It includes the discovery of one's life-project and a commitment to transforming the world in accordance with God's plan for each young person.

**The originality and boldness of the call to youthful holiness is an intrinsic part of Don Bosco's educative approach.** It is a holiness that meets the profound aspirations of young people (their need for life, expansion, joy, freedom, a future, etc.). It is a way of holiness which the young people experience gradually and realistically as a life of grace and of friendship with Christ. It means the fulfilment of their most authentic ideals. "Here we make holiness consist in being always cheerful" (St Dominic Savio).

## 3

## Evangelise and educate through a project of holistic development

## 3 1

### THE UNDERSTANDING OF EVANGELISATION

Evangelisation in practice becomes a vehicle and expression of the **clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus**. It communicates his message, his way of life and the salvation wrought by God, for all, through the power of the Spirit. The Church's reflection on evangelisation persuades every believer to become an evangeliser who can proclaim the richness, depth, unity and diverse expression of that message. From this perspective evangelisation, in its broadest sense, implies:



*“Evangelisation means not only teaching a doctrine but proclaiming the Lord Jesus by word and action, in other words, becoming an instrument of God’s presence and action in the world”*

[DOCTRINAL NOTE ON SOME ASPECTS OF EVANGELISATION, 2]

► working for the *extension of the kingdom and its values* among all people. This, in turn, involves action and service of people for social justice and human rights, the reform of unjust structures, social progress, the fight against poverty and the structures that give rise to it.

► *bringing people gradually to share gospel values and ideals:*

the rejection of violence and war, respect for every person, the desire for freedom, justice and fraternity, overcoming racism and nationalism, affirming the dignity and value of woman.

► *an effective participation in the forums of the modern world and in the great areas of human suffering:* among exiles, refugees, migrants, the new generations, emerging peoples, minorities, areas of oppression, of misery and disaster, the development of women and children, safeguarding the environment, international relations and the world of social communications.

**Evangelisation involves many aspects:** presence, witness, preaching (as an explicit proclamation), call to personal conversion, formation of the Church, catechesis – but also inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, education, preferential option for the poor, transformation of society. This complexity and diversity of expression is authoritatively stated in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (no.17) and very well described in *Redemptoris Missio* (nos.41-60):

*Evangelisation, as we have said, is a complex process made up of varied elements: the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative. These elements may appear to be contradictory, indeed mutually exclusive. In fact they are complementary and mutually enriching* (EVANGELII NUNTIANDI 24).

This broad vision of evangelisation confirms the first task of the Salesian mission: *the total well-being of the person, according to the needs of the many concrete situations* (cf. C. 31). Working in this field, inspired by the love of God and for the sake of the Kingdom, is evangelisation. The Salesian understanding of evangelisation is motivated by a holistic concern. It is followed by an educative concern for the growth of the person in all aspects. Education is the human activity where we present the Gospel and where it acquires its typical shape. This anthropological approach leads us to understand better how the different areas of Salesian education are happily marked by a wholesome humanism and transcendent dimension.

## 3 2

## THE RELATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND EVANGELISING ACTIVITY

The goal of Salesian Youth Ministry is to help every young person to construct his or her personality with Christ as the fundamental reference point. As this reference to Christ becomes progressively more explicit and is better internalised, it helps the young person to see all history in Christ, to judge his or her own life in the light of Christ, to decide and to love like Christ, to hope in accordance with Christ's teaching, to live in Christ in communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit (cf. GC23, nos.112-115). A true and real missionary conversion demands that Salesian Youth Ministry discover and live **this profound and unbreakable relation between educational activity and evangelising activity**.

## A

### *The educational implications of Christian anthropology*

Beginning with education does not mean that we follow the anthropological approach as if in a kind of 'secularisation' of the evangelising mission. Neither does it mean that we move away from the theological aspect and basis. We think of *education in the light of the history of salvation*. Post-conciliar theological reflection looks at faith in the approach to education, for example, when treating of the primacy of the Kingdom of God or the process of salvation in the context of the Church and its pastoral activity. It recognises situations in people's lives as theological places, and urges that they be read in the light of faith.

The centrality of the person in Christian anthropology has educational implications. Education is taken in its widest and most comprehensive sense *as the growth of the person and a collection of interventions* that help to make the person aware of his or her identity, to embrace everything good that the Creator has put in it, and to be open to meaning and to mystery. Examining the question of education is a matter for everyone, not just Christians. The decision to consider education as part of pastoral ministry is becoming ever more urgent because of the **centrality of education as a privileged means of service to people.**

Education releases all a young person's potential, intellectual ability, emotional capacity and will power. By taking care of young people the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan is to accompany and educate them in the widest sense, helping them to discover their reasons for living and to grow in every way.

The inescapable starting point is meeting the young people "where they are", in the conditions in which they are living, listening attentively to their questions and aspirations, and recognising the potential for growth that is in each one.

Seen this way, education of the young is not an optional manifestation of charity or just one sector of our mission. It is the way we must go. **The educational concern which is part of our youth ministry** seeks to begin with the story of the young person's life and recognise the action of God there through our ministry.

From all this it follows that **cultural and pedagogical interventions in the service of the young are necessary.** If education puts young people at the centre, looking after the different aspects, then structures and institutions are a response to the needs of the young people to whom we are sent (cf. C. 26). We recognise the valuable contribution of all educational activity in educating to the faith. Their task is to sustain and mediate the process of salvation.

Not all educational models offer this valuable contribution to the process of evangelisation. We depend on an education that is in keeping with the practice of the Kingdom, seeking to give the fullness of life to all, within the perspective of the fullest possible humanisation. We recognise ourselves in a way of doing things that never becomes an absolute, nor does it



make absolutes out of the strategies, content or tools it employs. It manages the educational process in an open way, with an outcome that cannot be foreseen and cannot be manipulated, because it deals with the freedom of the person and the action of God in the life of every person and in the life of the community and its institutions.

Education to human and Christian maturity evokes the pedagogical perspective more immediately. It is a help in promoting the Gospel *with a realism that is educative and pedagogical*.

### **B** *The Gospel, radical inspiration*

The purpose of educative action is different from that of evangelisation. Each has its own aim, methods and contents. We should be able to distinguish them and also join them together harmoniously. Both work for the unity of the young person.

They are **two complementary ways of caring for the young. They come together in their intention to “generate” the new person.** They collaborate fully in the all-round growth of the young person. Ministry works on the human aspect and at the same time in the area of faith.



*“Their (Salesian) charism places them in the privileged position of being able to give due weight to the role of education in the field of the evangelisation of the young. Without education, in fact, there is no deep and lasting evangelisation; there is no growth or process of maturity; there is no change of mentality or of culture. Young people have within them a deep desire for a full life, for genuine love, for constructive freedom; but often, sadly, they are betrayed in their expectations which are not fulfilled. It is essential to help young people to make good use of the qualities they have within them, such as energy and positive desires; to give them projects full of humanity and gospel values; to encourage them to take their place in society actively, through their work, their involvement and their commitment to the common good”*

(LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI TO FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA, RECTOR MAJOR S.D.B. ON THE OCCASION OF THE 26TH GENERAL CHAPTER)

### » *Evangelisation in dialogue with education*

Evangelisation takes place on the human terrain it occupies and it regenerates the daily life of the young people and their need to make sense of all that happens in their world. By releasing all the educative potential of the message of Christ, evangelisation leads to maturation in

human life and growth in freedom. By helping people to reach the fullness of life, education is fundamental in the development of the person and is of interest to all who care about the good of the human person. The Christian message is part of the work of education and offers a way of thinking that favours true and integral growth. **Evangelisation interacts with education.** It allows the Gospel of Jesus Christ to be heard, which is a necessary condition if the truth is to be accepted.

We bring an educational focus to the task by endeavouring to make the Gospel message meaningful *in real life terms*, by getting it to measure up to, interact with the real problems a young person has and, more generally, with the whole question of meaning. Since education is a process and is called to constantly adapt to changes in the individual and in culture, it has to let people feel that it is a gradual thing and helps in how courses and approaches are planned. It also has to play a positive and critical role with regard to certain approaches to evangelisation which can be naive and too abstract. And it ought to encourage a pedagogical awareness which is essential to good pastoral planning, that human values are fundamentally positive ones, even though impaired by sin. Ministry allows itself to be questioned by young peoples' experience; by recognising the deeper questions in their heart, it permits faith and Gospel proclamation to enter into fruitful dialogue with them.

### » *The Gospel as radical inspiration*

On the other hand, the key point is the Gospel, its guiding function and its radical inspiration. **It is a message that interprets life in greater depth than any other.** Evangelisation has a power that challenges. It is not something added on. The Gospel becomes part of the way of thinking of the structural unity of one's personality. Its operating and evaluating criteria refer to Jesus Christ. A service of education that aims intelligently at the holistic formation of the young is not afraid of being challenged continually on the meaning and the reasons for evangelisation.

Educational activity is rooted in Jesus Christ. *It does not just take him as a model, but prolongs his presence in history.* It finds its total meaning and reason in the message of Jesus Christ. Moreover, it finds in the Gospel help for maturation in freedom and responsibility. The Gospel is its guide in the search for identity and meaning. It enlightens the formation of conscience and presents itself as a sublime model for the authenticity of love. It offers the clearest guideline for engagement in the social dimension

of the person. The Gospel inspires the criteria for judgement, guides the basic choices in life, sheds light on ethical conduct in private and in public, governs interpersonal relationships, and gives direction for working and living. The dignity of the person is enhanced by interaction with faith. In meeting the good news, the human person reaches the highest point as the image of God, which reveals the transcendent destiny of life and sheds new light on all human rights.

**This is a holistic proposal:** education is enriched if it is inspired by the Gospel from the very beginning. From the outset, evangelisation recognises the importance of adapting to the evolving situation young people find themselves in. Educational activity is ultimately geared towards enabling in each young person a personal encounter with God, guiding this process towards being open to God and conforming to Christ, the perfect man. This perspective overcomes the problem, which is mainly methodological, of *when and how to proclaim the Gospel*, and how to integrate all the dimensions of the Educative and Pastoral Project with concrete situations and the process of education.

### **C** *The Good News in the variety of cultures and religious traditions*

**The Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project has shown itself to be of great relevance in the most diverse contexts.** It has already shown its value in diverse religious traditions, in multicultural contexts and in secularised environments. Today however, in societies that are extremely pluralist from a cultural and religious point of view, it is evident that the Christian elements of the Preventive System cannot always be explicitly displayed. These need to be interpreted and adapted, emphasising a wholesome humanism as the basis of all education. A fully-integrated humanism of this kind is open to the religious and ethical dimension which gives due importance to the knowledge and esteem of the cultures and spiritual values of the different civilisations.

What is needed today is to have a good knowledge of the treasure we possess and be able to apply it in different contexts in harmony with modern sensitivities. The need for education challenges us to offer an all-round education which aims at *forming the whole person and every person*.

Religious freedom helps the exercise of the human faculties by creating the necessary pre-conditions for a holistic development of the person in every dimension (cf. *Caritas in Veritate* 11).



Because of their missionary vocation to universality, Salesian works are encouraged by the presence of different faiths and religions to engage in greater dialogue with other spiritual and religious traditions. It is not a question of renouncing our own identity and our missionary mandate, and even less of assuming a fundamentalist mentality. Religious pluralism presents an opportunity for a better understanding of our Christian identity. Indeed, in this sense, *an awareness of one's own identity is an essential premise for any serious dialogue*. A purely secularist understanding is to be avoided, and likewise any kind of rigidity that is not open to other religions. These two attitudes hinder the true testimony of believers in civil and political life.

## 4

## Choice of a field of apostolate

## 4 1

### THE YOUNG, ESPECIALLY THE POOREST, ARE OUR DECISIVE DETERMINING OPTION

#### A *A strong, constant love for the poorest*

Don Bosco directed his work decisively towards youth. He decided consciously to make himself available to welcome boys and young people at risk. This choice became the **criterion for his work of evangelisation for their complete liberation**. His priority for “*the young, especially the poorest among them*” - these are Don Bosco's words – is also our decisive choice (C. 6, 26-29, 41; R. 1,3,11,14,15, 25,26; GC20, nos.45-57).

Don Bosco made a gospel choice to become poor with the poor. He took on the poverty, including the material poverty, of the Son of God, in order to reach out to those who were most in need. The streets and squares became his workplace, the field or playground his meeting place and the place where he proclaimed the Gospel. He welcomed young people without exception and

without prejudice, recognising and valuing what was in their hearts (their dreams, their difficulties and their challenges). He walked with them, adapting himself to their pace. **For him, every meeting with a boy was a time for dialogue, leading eventually to an encounter with faith.** That, quite simply, is the terrain where the invitation to faith is revealed as a resource of life with the potential for the fullness of life.

The poorest young people wait to be welcomed and have their aspirations taken seriously, to know that their deepest desires will find an outlet. Don Bosco's attitude is of someone who accompanies and does not substitute or invade, has no prejudices and does not feign trust, one who walks with the young, supporting and animating them.

Don Bosco regarded poverty that was a cause of corruption and debasement as being the very opposite of the liberating poverty of the Son of God. In his mission of caring for souls, he was willing to pay the price and to leave all (*Da mihi animas cetera tolle*). He abandoned himself and his own comforts in order to be totally committed to his boys, to be close to them, to be poor with the poor. This is why **he built his life-plan to meet the needs of the young**, especially the poorest and those in most danger, to help them to gather the richness of life and its values, and to equip them to live with dignity in this world, and make them more aware of their eternal destiny (cf. C. 26).

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Don Bosco was acutely aware that he was called by God to a unique mission in favour of young people. *Without them Don Bosco would be unrecognisable.* "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life" (C. 14). Signs from above, his natural aptitude, the advice of prudent people, personal discernment, circumstances that happened providentially, all combined to convince him that God, who had enriched him with outstanding gifts, was asking him to devote himself totally to the young:

*I have promised to give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys* (C. 1).



*"I was horrified at seeing crowds of young men, between the ages of 12 and 18, all healthy, robust, and intelligent, but idle, flea-ridden, and in need of spiritual and material food"*

(MEMOIRS OF THE ORATORY,  
SECOND DECADE 1835-1845, NO. 11)

The present urgency of the *New Evangelisation* calls for the same missionary spirit that Don Bosco had in his pastoral ministry, a missionary spirit that leads us wherever the needs and demands of young people are not being cared for.

## **B** *Poverty compromises the education and growth of young people.*

This Salesian field of ministry gives us a way of looking at the situation and interpreting it from the point of view of young people. We are sensitive to

the conditions that favour their education and evangelisation, and also those that place them at risk. We are attentive to their positive aspects, their new values and their capacity for change. **All forms of poverty block or destroy the educative resources of the person and compromise the growth of young people as children of God.**

Every young person carries in himself or herself signs of the love of God in their desire for life, their intelligence and their heart. Believers are called upon to be concerned about all the forms of poverty, new and old, and to find new ways of responding, in solidarity and sharing, to overcome them.

In this context, evangelisation and education mean *welcoming, letting young people speak, helping them to find themselves and accompanying them with patience* on a journey to recover values and trust. This decisive choice is an essential part of Salesian spirituality which claims to be the redeeming power of pastoral charity, and declares its desire and



*“The youth are particularly dear to us, because they, who are a significant part of humanity and the Church today, are also their future ... We want to support them in their search and we encourage our communities to listen to, dialogue with and respond boldly and without reservation to the difficult condition of the youth. We want our communities to harness, not to suppress, the power of their enthusiasm; to struggle for them against the fallacies and selfish ventures of worldly powers which, to their own advantage, dissipate the energies and waste the passion of the young, taking from them every grateful memory of the past and every profound vision of the future. The world of the young is a demanding but also particularly promising field of the New Evangelisation ... Young people’s active role in evangelising first and foremost their world is to be recognised”*

(MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD 9, 13<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 7-28 OCTOBER 2012)

determination to “save” those who are abandoned by all. It is a love that finds ways of responding quickly and immediately to the pain of young people and pledges to give them life and hope. This basic task of the Church and of the Congregation is the nucleus of the proclamation of Christ’s Gospel (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 32).



*“Now is the time for a new “creativity” in charity”*

(NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE 50)

Proclaiming salvation to the poor is the sign *par excellence* of the Kingdom of Christ, and is the most profound component of our educative and pastoral mission. A relationship with Jesus and his Gospel is a gift to be offered to all. It is the source that satisfies their thirst and search for meaning. **Christ is given to the poor and needy. We cannot delay the gift of their meeting with Him.**

Our preferential option for the young, especially the poorest of them, leads us to poorer areas where they live (cf. C. 29). In poor areas we are called to bring a family spirit of understandings and daily contact in our apostolic work.

4 2

## HUMANISATION AND EVANGELISATION OF CULTURE

### A *Fidelity to the Gospel and fidelity to culture*

The proper purpose of education and of any true cultural activity is to liberate young people, making them conscious of their own rights and duties, aware of the vicissitudes of their time, and capable of self-determination and collaboration for a more human society. In this way, education produces culture, opens it up and enriches it. This process becomes a reality not only by bringing new ideas, impulses and energy to society, but especially by forming **courageous people, capable of critical reflection and a wholesome way of life.**

Evangelisation is not just conformity to the values of the Gospel, transmitted by the Founder; it is also an encounter with culture. The



*“For the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind’s criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation”*

[EVANGELII NUNTIANDI 19]

*“The word ‘culture’ in its general sense indicates everything whereby man develops and perfects his many bodily and spiritual qualities; he strives by his knowledge and his labour, to bring the world itself under his control. He renders social life more human both in the family and the civic community, through improvement of customs and institutions. Throughout the course of time he expresses, communicates and conserves in his works, great spiritual experiences and desires, that they might be of advantage to the progress of many, even of the whole human family”*

[GAUDIUM ET SPES 53]

indispensable cultural commitment implies *meeting the new demands of life that culture generates*, demands that test the realism of our Christian proposal and confirm our capacity for dialogue. It requires, therefore, an adequate knowledge of the complexity of the cultural and socio-political situation. Discernment must be exercised in reformulating our Christian experience in relation to the concrete historical situations in which it is to be practised. In fact, evangelisation of culture represents the most profound and most global form of evangelisation in any society.

**The world of the young is the place *par excellence* where the typical cultural trends of our society are first seen.** This calls for attentive discernment and the ability to grasp deeply the problems posed by the changes that are occurring. It is urgent to understand their cultural situation, with its values and limits, its experiences, language and symbols. These are the elements that form their mentality and sensitivities. The challenges are not a problem or an obstacle, but positive ones which call for a courageous intervention. The activity of the Congregation in the field of culture is complex,

as said earlier. It can no longer be understood as a single homogeneous cultural world but needs to be seen in a perspective determined by a plurality of situations. Numerous factors come together to result in a

cultural approach that is ever more fragmented and in continuous rapid evolution. We list a few of them:

- ▮ the different situations of poverty and social exclusion: poverty and exclusion lead more and more often to dependence on drugs, deviancy and violence;
- ▮ the situation and the understanding of the family, with consequent human and ethical problems;
- ▮ questions regarding life and its capacity to transmit values;
- ▮ the affective and emotional sphere, and the area of feelings, as well as questions relating to the body, are greatly influenced by the cultural climate;
- ▮ educational systems and the quality and integrity of formation they offer;
- ▮ the digital culture which favours and sometimes causes constant rapid changes of mentality, customs and behaviour;
- ▮ one of the most complex and fascinating aspects of contemporary society: the multi-cultural and multi-religious identity of peoples;
- ▮ the anthropological premises underlying sociological and educational decisions;
- ▮ currents of thought that insist on denying the transcendent, and misconceptions of the relational structure of the human person and of the relation founded on God.

### **B** *Cultural challenges cut across all pastoral experiences*

*The priority attention given to culture cuts across all pastoral experiences, and reveals challenges for all – for believers and non-believers, for people who belong to the Church and for those who do not belong, for young people and adults. These are challenges that are part of life itself, in its poverty and riches, in its dignity, in its gifts and appeals, which affect everybody and hold promise for everybody.*

The Salesian educator engages seriously with this culture, sees the signs of the presence of God in it, and the call to renew our approach to pastoral ministry, and to renew its language and attitudes. From this perspective, evangelisation is sensitive in responding to dialogue. Positive **concern for cultural values and institutions becomes a priority, and the anthropological sciences are seen as having a specific contribution to offer**. This dialogue is enriching because it has the capacity to blend into one the specific contributions of the various disciplines. This is a vast field that needs to be known. There are many rich values and also some

counter-values in it. Taken in its entirety it profoundly influences our way of thinking and acting and the way of life of individual people, families and social institutions.



*“We were given a sign that on the threshold of the new millennium, in these new times, these new conditions of life, the Gospel is again being proclaimed. A new evangelisation has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in reality it is the same as ever”*

[JOHN PAUL II, HOMILY DURING MASS AT THE SHRINE OF THE HOLY CROSS, MOGILA, POLAND, 9 JUNE 1979]

*“Through the Church, the Lord Jesus is calling us to a new evangelisation: new in ardour, methods and expression”*

[JOHN PAUL II, ASSEMBLY OF CELAM, PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI, 9 MARCH 1983]

Like Don Bosco, **we show a particular interest in the world of work** (cf. C. 27). He had a far-reaching concern to give the younger generation adequate professional and technical competence. It is worth noting how concerned he was to lay ever more emphasis on education to civic responsibility and growth in personal dignity. He was interested in social education which not only receives its legitimacy from Christian faith but is reinforced and strengthened by it to an incalculable extent. Through work and a proper use of resources, the “upright

citizen” is fulfilled as a person and contributes to the common good. This is an approach that is rooted in a gospel vision of the human person committed for the good of all.

Our educational establishments are called to be *centres that radiate the culture of life* to families, to different groups, to the surrounding area and to society. The New Evangelisation will express its newness in a renewed

zeal for the witness of charity, in finding new ways of proclaiming Christ joyfully, in convinced forms of intelligent dialogue on issues of culture with young people and all those who are waiting in different ways for the good news – *euanghèlion* (cf. C. 30).



*“In fact, the call to the new evangelisation is first of all a call to conversion. Indeed, through the testimony of a Church ever more true to its identity and more alive in all its manifestations, people and nations around the world, will continue to meet Jesus Christ”*

(JOHN PAUL II, ASSEMBLY OF CELAM, SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 12 OCTOBER 1992)







**SALESIAN EDUCATIVE  
AND PASTORAL PROJECT:  
OPERATIONAL TOOL**



**EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY:  
MAKE THE HOUSE A FAMILY  
FOR THE YOUNG**



**THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM:  
A SPIRITUAL AND EDUCATIONAL  
EXPERIENCE**

# PART

# TWO

The three chapters of this second part study the choices to be made in Salesian Youth Ministry, and the proper Salesian way of carrying out the mission of evangelisation. The charismatic source is the Preventive System that inspires the Educative and Pastoral Community and its operational plan is the Educative and Pastoral Project.



# THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: A SPIRITUAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER

IV

*“I came that they may  
have life, and have it  
abundantly”*

*(Jn 10:10)*



*Under the guidance of Mary his teacher, Don Bosco lived with the boys of the first Oratory a spiritual and educational experience which he called the “Preventive System”. For him this was a spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of a God who provides in advance for all his creatures, is ever present at their side, and freely gives his life to save them. Don Bosco passes this on to us as a way of living and of handing on the gospel message, and of working with and through the young for their salvation. It permeates our approach to God, our personal relationships and our manner of living in community through the exercise of a charity that knows how to make itself loved”*

[C. 20]



*The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St Paul who says: ‘Love is patient and kind; love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things”*

[The Preventive System in the Education of the Young]

# Don Bosco's

God-given vocation for the mission of salvation of the young, especially the poorest, involves many people and groups in a common spirituality and a shared educational and pastoral method which is the Preventive System. It is the source and inspiration of a concrete and original way of living and implementing the Salesian mission which we call Salesian Youth Ministry. In this fourth chapter, the educative and pastoral approach will gradually take shape, starting from its guiding principle which is pastoral charity. The centrality of pastoral charity offers a real prospect of renewal for the pastoral care of young people. It is therefore the criterion and pivot of pastoral planning at all levels. The Preventive System, in so far as it is a project of holistic education, comprises essentially two aspects. It is a project of Christian life (Salesian Youth Spirituality) and a practical pedagogical method.

## 1

# The Salesian mission is enlightened by Don Bosco's practice

## 1 1

## THE SALESIAN SPIRIT IS INSPIRED BY THE STYLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Don Bosco saw the original purpose of his mission clearly: to reveal to poor young people the love of God for them (cf. C. 2, 14). He understood **the underlying principles of a pastoral style appropriate to this purpose – that of the Good Shepherd**. The biblical quotation that opened Chapter 1 of the text offers an eloquent icon of the experience of Valdocco: the lost and hungry crowd and the compassion of Jesus.

The Salesian spirit, inspired by the style of the Good Shepherd, is the hallmark of our spirituality and our educational and pastoral action. This spirit is embodied in the first place, in Don Bosco. *He and the mission derived from him are our historic and charismatic point of reference.*

Don Bosco gave his entire life for young people in a **closely-knit project of life**: his priestly life and his educative work, his multiple relationships and his profound interior life, were all oriented to the service of young people, a service that helped them to grow, making them the agents of their own life project:

*He took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young (C. 21).*

God continues to call *many others to continue this mission of Don Bosco for the young*. Among them are Salesian religious (SDB) consecrated by God, gathered and sent into the Church as signs and bearers of God's love to the young, especially the poor. We share the mission of Don Bosco with other groups of the Salesian Family, according to their specific vocations and their lifestyle. It is a vast movement of people and groups, men and women in different situations, who constitute the Salesian Movement. The Salesian mission finds its lasting

criterion for discernment in Don Bosco and his Valdocco experience (cf. C. 40). It has grown further, bringing together many individuals and groups in a common spirituality to share in the same educative-pastoral mission for the integral development of young people, especially the poorest.

1 2

## THE EMBODIMENT OF THE “SALESIAN SPIRIT” IS THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM

### A *The implementation of Don Bosco’s pastoral, spiritual and pedagogical programme*

Don Bosco’s mission and project of life are expressed in a style of life and action which we call the Salesian spirit. **The most characteristic embodiment of the Salesian spirit is the Preventive System.**

The Preventive System connects us to Don Bosco’s soul and to his attitudes and evangelical choices. Salesian practice has the implementation of **the pastoral, spiritual and pedagogical project of Don Bosco as its point of reference and the measure of its authenticity.** The originality of his spirit is linked to the implementation of the Preventive System. It is a successful system which serves as a model and inspiration for people today who are engaged in education in the different continents, in multicultural and multi-religious contexts, a model that demands of everyone a continuous reflection to encourage more and more the centrality of young people as beneficiaries and protagonists of the Salesian mission (cf. Fr Pascual Chávez, AGC 407, “Salesian Youth Ministry”).



*“I would like to give a sermon myself, or a conference, on the Salesian spirit that must animate and guide our actions and conversations. We must make the Preventive System really our own. There should be no severe punishments, no humiliating words, no stern reproaches in the presence of others. In the classroom, there should be only words of kindness, charity and patience. Use no biting words, and do not ever strike the pupils, even lightly. Make use of negative punishments, and always try to ensure that they are warned in advance so that they become our friends more than before, and do not ever leave on bad terms with us”*

[DON BOSCO’S LETTER TO FR JAMES COSTAMAGNA, AUGUST 10, 1885]



The word “system” suggests an integrated experience that is complete in itself, a well coordinated collection of activities that constitute a dynamic pedagogy. In the Preventive System, in fact, we can distinguish some expressions which are closely related to each other. The **guiding principle** is pastoral charity which creates a particular spiritual attitude in the person. It is made up of a threefold dynamic:

- **a pastoral thrust:** it inspires an educational project of holistic development (see Chapter 4, 2);
- **a spirituality** of Christian life – Salesian Youth Spirituality – (see Chapter 4, 3);
- **a practical pedagogical methodology** inspired by the “oratory criterion”, which guides the concrete choices and activities employed (see Chapter 5, 3).

## **B** *The guiding principle is pastoral charity*

Education, for Don Bosco, involves a special attitude of the educator and a set of interventions based on a strong belief in love, reason and faith. At the centre of his vision is “pastoral charity”. The aim is always to seek **the spiritual welfare and the salvation of the young, and their all-round well-being** (*Da mini animas*).

The Preventive System finds its source and its centre in the experience of the love of God who provides in advance for all his creatures, is ever present at their side, and freely gives his life to save them (cf. C. 20). Don Bosco had a deep faith in the *goodness and fatherly mercy of God*. His choice of St Francis of Sales as a model for his workers and as the protector of his congregation is proof of this.

This experience leads us to see *God in young people*: God gives us the grace of encountering him in the young and calls us to serve him in them. It is an experience that recognises their dignity, renews our faith in their capacity for doing good and educates them to the fullness of life (cf. GC23, no.95). In this approach, care is taken to train the young people to play an active role in the work of evangelisation.



Salesian Pastoral charity has another more precise characteristic that defines it even better – it is *educative charity*. It displays a passion for education, but also good judgement, common sense and balance, as well as affection and respect for adolescents and young people. This attitude is the result of the belief that every life, even the poorest, most complex and precarious, carries in itself the mysterious presence of the Spirit, the power of redemption and the seed of happiness (cf. GC23, no.92).

A synthetic expression, the “**primacy of educative charity,**” reflects the love which is able to create an *educational relationship*: it is expressed in a way that helps the adolescent or young person to open up, to discover the richness of life, and to grow. Because of a lack of education, adolescents are sometimes lacking in courage, and do not have the words and thoughts to express themselves. The charity and love of the educator becomes the way of communicating God’s love to them. This love of God extends even to the poorest and the least, the most humble, the ones who have most difficulties. It is the expression of a fatherly wisdom that prepares them to face life.

**C** *The Preventive System involves the educator and the community to which he or she belongs*

The Preventive System is an **experience that is both spiritual and educational, intimately united** to constitute the reference point and the face of the Salesian Family in the Church. It can be defined as the authentic

spirituality of our apostolic action. To separate the pedagogical method of Don Bosco from his pastoral concerns would destroy both of them.

*The Preventive System involves the whole person of the educator and the community to which he or she belongs together with the young people. It has its own way of thinking and feeling, a way of life and activity, that inspires and characterises its whole existence.*

The Preventive System in practice involves activity that is at the same time both pedagogical and spiritual, and always open to the Gospel of Christ. This is the “methodological criterion” of the Salesian mission for the accompaniment of young people in the delicate process of growth in their humanity and in faith. Salesian spirituality breathes and acts in the educational field as an original way of introduction to the Christian life. It is organised around experiences of faith, and choices based on gospel values and attitudes that make up *Salesian Youth Spirituality*.

Salesians find their identity in fidelity to this pedagogical heritage (the Preventive System) and its continuous updating. The goal of the project is summarised in the well-known formula “good Christians and upright citizens”, by which Don Bosco wanted to “form builders of the city, and men and women of faith.” In Don Bosco’s mind these two terms were to be taken together to form an indivisible whole.

## 2

## The Preventive System as pastoral zeal

### 2 1

### AN ALL-EMBRACING EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

**The Preventive System inspires an educational project** for the all-round development of young people in different contexts as part of the work of evangelisation. At the same time it highlights the human richness and the essentially religious heart of the system, based on *reason, religion and loving*

*kindness* (in italian “*amorevolezza*”). The Preventive System becomes a method for action, characterised by reason, reasonableness of requests and rules, flexibility and persuasiveness. Religion is understood as the development of the sense of God present in every person and an effort to bring to the young the beauty of the good news. Loving kindness, which is at the heart of educational love, evokes a response from the young and helps them to grow.

## 2 2

## THE DUAL ROLE OF PREVENTIVE EDUCATION

The practice of the Preventive System comprises two inseparable activities, albeit with different nuances. It aims to meet *the basic needs of young people* (food, clothing, shelter, safety, labour, physical and mental development, social inclusion, a minimum of values) and to give life to a more *systematic educational activity for the social, moral and religious training of the individual*. In fact, Don Bosco’s intention in starting the Oratory was to provide a charitable and educational institution.

This dual purpose is still relevant. There is a strong commitment to **social welfare as part of the Salesian educational project**, as well as the promotion and growth of the **cognitive, emotional, ethical and spiritual aspects** of the individual.

## A

### *The Preventive System and disadvantaged young people and their rehabilitation*

The question of rehabilitating disadvantaged young people brings us back to Don Bosco, who visited the prisons and went on the streets and into the workplace to look for boys in need. Even after the opening of the Oratory, Don Bosco was helping boys infected with disease in the hovels and alleyways of Turin. He sent his Salesian missionaries to young people who did not have a safe place that allowed for their proper human and social growth.

Today, in an era of “educational emergency”, the preventive approach can achieve satisfactory results. Christian humanism, on which the Preventive System is based, is a response which is educational and pastoral and at the same time provides social assistance. **“Educational**



*“Therefore we have to move forward in the direction of an updated re-affirmation of the “socio-political-educational choice” made by Don Bosco. This [means] the forming of a social and political conscience that then leads to the making of one’s life a mission for the common good of society with a constant reference to the inalienable human and Christians values and rights”*

(FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, AGC 415, “LIKE DON BOSCO THE EDUCATOR”)

**charity” cannot fail to be “social charity”.** Evangelisation is always closely integrated with human development and Christian freedom. The commandment of love is a single commandment with two poles of reference, God and neighbour.

The profound transformations that have occurred in today’s complex society show a *more complex phenomenon of the “youth situation”*, and in particular that of young people whom Don Bosco called “poor, abandoned and at risk”. Many young people have

serious problems from the point of education and re-education. Many are affected by poverty and economic, social, cultural, emotional, moral and spiritual marginalisation. When all these forms of poverty come together, as frequently happens in developing countries, as well as in large cities in most developed countries, we can see the extent of the youth problems which urgently demand educational intervention. **Preventive education seeks to ensure that such conditions do not arise.**

Faced with serious situations of injustice and violations perpetrated against human rights in our societies, Don Bosco’s charism and his educational system urge us to get to work both personally and collectively. A renewed impetus in prevention must transform, by means of education, structures of poverty and marginalisation, especially where minors are concerned. We have the possibility of offering prevention which fosters their good: **educational interventions which strengthen the integrity of fundamental** civil, cultural, religious, economic, political and social **rights**.

We also need to set up communities which are capable of proposing basic values once more, values probably absent in the early years of life. “The liberating education” of the Preventive System seeks to accompany young people already affected by negative conditioning: situations which make them poor from a socio-cultural, economic, moral, spiritual and religious point of view (cf. GC20, no.61). Salesian prevention, then, is expressed

through many concrete choices: it responds to needs in any context. This practical pluralism on behalf of needy youngsters is an expression of the wealth of Salesian education, *where the experience or the recovery of affection is fruitfully combined with reason and religion.*

**Don Bosco's preventive experience becomes a system involving assistance, education and socialisation.**

Educating means preventing, in all its possible meanings. Education is expressed through acceptance, giving back a voice, and understanding. To educate means helping individuals to rediscover themselves, and to patiently accompany them on their journey of recovering values and self-confidence. It means reconstructing reasons for living through discovery of the beauty of life. Educating also means a renewed capacity for dialogue but is also a proposal full of interests, firmly anchored in what is the most fundamental of approaches: involving young people in experiences that help them grasp the meaning of daily effort, offering them the basic tools for earning a living, making them capable of acting responsibly in every circumstance. Educating requires that we understand the juvenile social problems of our time (cf. Chapter 1).

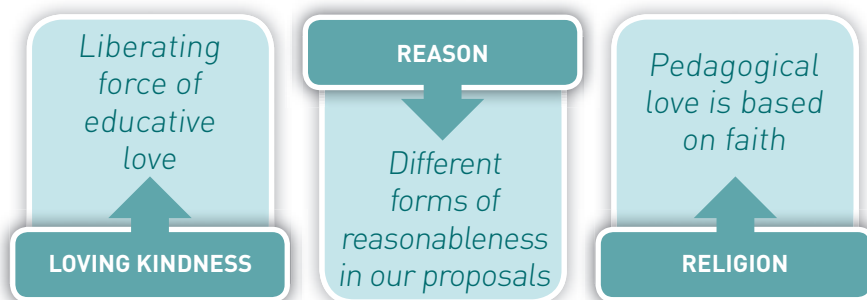
## **B** *The art of positive education*

The preventive approach is expressed positively in a formative educational project:

*The art of positive education by putting forward what is good through appropriate experiences which call for the involvement of the pupil and are attractive because of their splendour and lofty nature; the art of producing growth in the young persons 'from within' by appealing to their inner freedom to oppose external conditioning and formalism; the art of winning the heart of young people so as to inculcate in them a joyful and satisfied attraction to what is good, correcting deviations and preparing them for the future by means of a solid character formation* [JUVENUM PATRIS 8].

The formula 'reason, religion and loving kindness', which summaries Don Bosco's system, is understood as the **fundamental inspiration of an educational project for the all-round development of the person.** It

aims to provide a full answer to the question of the evangelisation of youth. Educative love, in Don Bosco's method, is divided into three attitudes: love and friendliness, love and reasonableness, love and faith. The Preventive System becomes a formative and educative project, a set of elements that together make up a single approach based on *loving kindness, reason and religion*.



## » The liberating power of educative love

Educative love is above all **a genuine human love**: the principle of the method is *loving-kindness*, expressed as a love that helps the person to grow and brings about a cordial relationship. Here we have the great insight of Don Bosco: the liberating power of educative love. In contact with educators who nurture deep passion and loving kindness, young people feel encouraged to express all that is good in them, and learn to make their own the religious and cultural experience that they encounter. Pastoral charity, the centre and soul of the Salesian spirit, recalls some basic attitudes. First of these is the importance of personal *relationships*. For Don Bosco, educative love is both spiritual and emotional. It is a love that flows from the will, which prompts the educator to search only for the good of the student, totally forgetting himself or herself. By virtue of this love, the educator is motivated strongly to action and the spirit of sacrifice. Thus, the spiritual dimension of educative love shows itself in warmth and affection. The cordial love consists mainly in truly wanting to love the other as a person. Mature love is at the same time characterised by desire and affection.

Friendliness is well described by Don Bosco in the *Letter from Rome* in 1884, in relation to a situation of crisis that had arisen in his institutes.

He expounds what he considers essential in the educational relationship. Based on his own experience, he tries to make us understand that the love of will with the total commitment of the educator is certainly something good and valuable. But it is insufficient. It does not produce results if the young people do not feel loved or if love does not become the language that blossoms into friendship and cordiality. Teachers who give themselves entirely for the good of young people but fail to let them feel that what interests them is the good of the young, will bear no fruit in the lives of these young people. What matters most in love is not what one does but the attention one gives to the young person. **A spontaneous encounter, freely engaged in, has real meaning and gives meaning to all other values.**

### » *The different forms of reasonableness*

Don Bosco's educative love is also a reasonable love. Don Bosco attached a lot of importance to this. **Educative love must be reasonable**, and this is to be seen in many different forms: the reasonableness of the demands and the rules, not based on sentimental or emotional motives; flexibility and common sense; understanding, dialogue and patience, starting from the concrete world of young people; realism and a spirit of initiative, naturalness and spontaneity; sensitivity to what is feasible in practice; an appeal to personal conviction.

His is an educational activity that on one hand helps young people to develop their talents and to be active and enterprising at work, and on the other hand teaches them not to rely on themselves alone and to avoid intellectual ambition and pride. Reasonableness allows the educator to offer the young people values that are good in the present situation and allows the young to be real individuals. A rapidly changing society where judgement and critical sense are essential, presents a magnificent terrain for education based on reasonableness.





It helps young people to evaluate things with critical sense and discover the true value of earthly reality, respecting the autonomy and dignity of the things of this world.

### » **Educative love is based on faith**

Educative love is illuminated by *faith*, **developing the sense of God that is inherent in every person and in the effort of Christian evangelisation.** For Don Bosco, reasonable love is nourished from a deep root. Young people are individuals called to the fullness of life, communion with God and neighbour. Don Bosco believed that without this perspective the educative proposal loses its force and meaning. The educative love of the Salesian is a *symbol of God's love for the young*.

Don Bosco, religious founder, father of orphans, mature educator, dreamer and daring entrepreneur, intuitive promoter of educative pastoral initiatives is understood in the light of the two dynamic nuclei of his vocation: on the one hand a natural warm and affectionate attitude towards young people; and, on the other, the unconditional gift of self to God in response to a mission.

Religion in the Preventive System is that of the Good News, the Gospel, the Beatitudes, of Jesus who considered his disciples as friends, not servants, the same Jesus who calls upon everyone to seek the kingdom of God and its righteousness. He is with us and works with us every day until the end of the world. The religion of the Preventive System is that of the ordinary people. It is simple and goes straight to the essential: "love of God and love of neighbour."

More concretely, it is *the religion St Francis of Sales' humanism*. He had learned from God to be loving, kind, capable of patience and forgiveness. In the Incarnation of the Lord we are all called by the Son to holiness: that is, to live according to the Gospel in every condition of life, in every moment, in every situation, in every age.

More profoundly, it is religion lived in the Spirit that helps to discern in time the signs of *his presence and the will of God*. He is the source of optimism; it does not allow us to fall into pessimism or feel defeated by our own difficulties.

*In secularised contexts* where the culture seems incapable of speaking about God, the Father of Jesus Christ, we need to educate to a sense of transcendence and the big questions of meaning posed by life and death, pain and love, without hiding the light that comes to us from our faith (cf. GC23, nos.76, 77, 83).

In the contexts of *the great monotheistic religions and traditional religions*, the first educational dialogue will be with the laity who are close to us to identify, together with them, the grace present in these religions. We seek to encourage prayer and an appreciation of the fragments of the Gospel and educative wisdom to be found in the culture and in the life and experience of young people (cf. GC23, nos.72-74, 86).

## 3

## The Preventive System as a proposal of spirituality

The formula “reason, religion and loving kindness,” sums up pastoral charity and is the soul of the Preventive System. It spells out the educational plan of integral formation and is the only practical method that the educator needs to use. It also reveals the essential features of a spirituality to be continuously rediscovered, experienced, and renewed (cf. Fr Egidio Viganò, AGC 334, “Salesian Spirituality for the new evangelisation”). Salesian Youth Ministry is rooted in a living spirituality that nourishes the faith of the educator and prompts him or her to seek God by serving the young.

Spirituality is a re-reading of the Gospel, capable of unifying the gestures and attitudes that characterise Christian living. **At the root of Salesian Youth Ministry we find a spirituality suited to our time.** It is based on the experience of God in the context of everyday life. It is a journey of holiness, a specific project of life in the Spirit.

There is a basic Christian spirituality that flows from the message of the Gospel, but there are also different types of Christian spirituality that respond to different historical situations. These are especially charismatic



*“Our educational ministry must ‘point out to everyone this ‘high standard’ of ordinary Christian living’”*

[NOVO MILLENNIO INEUNTE 31]

and come from an experience of the Triune God on a personal or community level. In the Church’s history, some gospel values have been particularly emphasised by various Founders, always faithful to the Word of God, and enlightened and guided by his Spirit.

Consequently, we can speak of a Salesian spirituality: a **charismatic spirituality** that enriches the whole Church with a model of Christian life characterised by a concrete path to holiness. It is an **apostolic spirituality** because, led by the Spirit, we are sent to collaborate in the mission of the

Father who gives redeeming efficacy to our educational and evangelising activity among the young and at the same time unifies our entire existence as its central inspiration. Finally, it is a spirituality that makes young people the evangelisers of other young people.

Therefore, this spirituality is *not reduced to a set of psychological or therapeutic practices* aimed at ensuring the well-being of the person. In these practices ‘spiritual life’ is no more than a subjective, inward feeling. It is something completely private and personal. We can see the influence of many philosophies and ideologies that deny the revealed contents of Christian faith and are presented as an alternative to it. They deny the transcendence of God as a personal being. They do not confront the reality of sin or consider the necessity of grace and salvation by Christ. They believe that “salvation” is achieved by man by his own efforts, and Jesus Christ is just one of many manifestations of the divine that have passed in human history under different names.

By contrast, Salesian Youth Ministry offers a spirituality that facilitates and promotes a **unified vision of life**, indicating the close link between the freely given gift of God, the joy of Christ and the freedom of life in the Spirit.

## 3 1

## SPIRITUALITY IS FIRST OF ALL LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

**A** *The primacy of God's freely given gift*

Spirituality is first of all life in the Spirit. The initiative comes from him alone. Everything begins with God – his freely given gift, the initiative of his love and the encounter with Jesus Christ.

**The spiritual life has its source, its centre and its goal in God, the Mystery of Love.** We can understand the spiritual life as tasting the love of God, living an experience of friendship and intimacy with Him and recognising that we are sent by him on a mission to young people. The same dynamic discovery of love and the call to witness to it are at work in the young people.

God is the unifying centre of our life, the source of our fraternal communion and the inspiration of our action. Living *in the presence of God* means cultivating a deep and constant relationship with God, being filled with his love and sent to the young. It means accepting the signs of His mysterious presence in the demands and expectations of the men and women of our time.

**B** *The encounter with Christ*

The centre of the spiritual life is the experience of the Christian faith, **the encounter with Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God.** Being rooted in Christ and conformed to Him is a gift and, at the same time, the goal of Salesian Youth Ministry. Listening to the Word, the liturgy, the life of the sacraments and the gift of self in service to others are all important in the Christian life and in pastoral action.



*«Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction»*

[DEUS CARITAS EST 1]

## C *Life in the Holy Spirit*

The spiritual life consists in accepting that our existence is formed by the Spirit through the action of grace. **In this relationship of love** we can assert **the primacy of grace, and at the same time, the free and conscious contribution of man.** The human being cooperates by listening and being available and docile. His desire is to meet with the Lord. He prays for this meeting to take place, and contributes, in his life, to the mission.

The spiritual life is a dynamic that develops over time, involving all the dimensions of the human being, with its own rhythm and its own moments of growth and trial.

3 2

## AN ORIGINAL WAY OF LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE: SALESIAN YOUTH SPIRITUALITY

### A *Salesian spirituality, a concrete expression of pastoral charity*

Pastoral and educative charity is the heart of the Salesian spirit. The Preventive System is truly **a spirituality for everyone – for Salesians and lay people involved in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco and for families and young people.** In his own pastoral and teaching experience, Don Bosco has shown us the path of holiness for young people, and demonstrated its validity with admirable results.

Don Bosco's secret of success as an educator is his intense pastoral charity which united inseparably in him the inner force of *love of God and love of neighbour*, making it capable of joining his work of evangelisation and his educational activity together as one. Salesian spirituality is the concrete expression of pastoral charity and therefore constitutes a fundamental element of pastoral ministry. Salesian spirituality is the source of evangelical vitality and the soul of pastoral charity. It is the principle of inspiration and identity, and the criterion that guides all our work. We need to be convinced and become present-day promoters of his pastoral wisdom. A lived spirituality is precisely the attitude of committed believers. It is not an escape from reality, but a frontier spirituality that demands research, initiative and courage. In a word, it is a spirituality of realism.

**All this is called the “oratorian heart” in Don Bosco.** It implies fervour, apostolic zeal, the use of all our personal resources, searching for new ways of intervening, ability to resist in times of trial, the willingness to start over after failure, and far-reaching optimism. It implies concern that comes from faith and charity, and it finds in Mary a shining example of self-giving (cf. *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no.29).

## **B** *Salesian Youth Spirituality in practice*

**It is a spirituality suited to young people, lived with young people and for them, designed and built upon the experience of the young.** Its aim is to generate a Christian way of living that is feasible for people of our time, living in today’s situation. It is suited to all young people, especially the poorest among them, but it is capable at the same time of pointing to higher goals for those who have made more progress. It encourages young people to be active among their companions and in the place where they live.

This spirituality is linked to the Preventive System. It is *the fruit of the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan* offered to all who are involved in the *Educative and Pastoral Community*, and leads them to a journey of greater commitment. The following elements penetrate one another. Each of them represents an aspect of what is contained in the all others: life, Christ, the Beatitudes, the Church, Mary, and service of others. They are points of reference to be reflected upon and they form a unity in the whole of Christian living.

### » *Daily life as the place of encounter with God*

Salesian Youth Spirituality considers daily life as the place of encounter with God (cf. C. 18; GC23 nos.162-164; GC24 nos.97-98 ; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, nos.27-28, 34). At the basis of **this understanding of everyday life and the positive evaluation of life** is our faith and continued understanding of the Incarnation. In Salesian spirituality we allow ourselves to be guided by the mystery of God who by his Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, affirms his saving presence in all human reality.

The daily life of the young person is made up of duty, relationships, leisure, the tension of growing up, family life, developing skills, prospects for

the future, requests for assistance and aspirations. It is this reality that needs to be taken, *understood, deepened and lived in the light of God*. According to Don Bosco to become a saint you must do everything you have to do well. He considers fidelity to duty in everyday life as a guide to progress in virtue and as a sign of spiritual maturity. This is practical realism centred on daily life. It implies a religious sense of duty at all the different moments of the day.

For everyday life to be lived as spirituality we need the *grace of unity* that helps to harmonise the different dimensions of life around a heart where the Spirit of Love dwells. The grace of unity opens the individual to conversion and purification, especially through the power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is a privileged means. It ensures that through work and contemplation the heart is kept free, open to God and given to others, especially the young and the poor.

**Don Bosco was inspired by St Francis of Sales.** His spirituality was simple because it concentrated on the essential, popular because it was open to all, attractive because of its human values and for all these reasons, particularly helpful in educational ministry.

Among the **attitudes and practices** of everyday life to be lived profoundly under the guiding action of the Spirit we could mention:

- ▮ life in one's own family;
- ▮ love for work or study, cultural growth and educational experience;
- ▮ being able to relate moments of strong experience with the ordinary events of life;
- ▮ a positive critical vision of the time we live in;
- ▮ accepting responsibility for one's life and a plan for a spiritual path of growth in the efforts of everyday life;
- ▮ discovering one's vocation in life and being able to pursue it.

## » ***A paschal spirituality of joy and optimism***

The most important truth of the Christian faith is that the Lord Jesus is risen. Eternal glory is our ultimate goal, but even now it has become a reality in the body of Jesus Christ. *Salesian Youth Spirituality is paschal and eschatological.*

**The most deeply rooted desire in the heart of the human person is the pursuit of happiness.** Joy is the noblest expression of happiness and, together with celebration and hope, is characteristic of Salesian spirituality. The Christian faith is, by vocation, a call to radical happiness, and a promise of the gift of eternal life. It knows no boundaries of space or time, and there are no limits to the aspirations of joy. The discovery of the Kingdom and the encounter with Christ become *the happiness of the human person*. These things, however, are not an achievement, but a gift: God is the source of true joy and hope. Joy certainly has a real pedagogical value but it is, first and foremost, a theological value. Don Bosco sees it as a sure sign of the life of grace.

Don Bosco understood that commitment and joy go together, that **holiness and happiness go hand in hand** and he made this clear to young people. Don Bosco is the saint of joy and his young people learned this lesson well. It is summed up perfectly in an expression that was typical of the oratory, “sanctity consists in being always cheerful.” (cf. GC23, 165). Salesian Youth Ministry proposes a path of holiness that is simple, cheerful and serene (cf. C. 17; GC23, nos.165-166; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no.33).

Seeing joy as an act of the Spirit, the source and fruit of commitment, involves fostering certain **attitudes and practices** in young people:

- in an atmosphere of sincere, friendly, fraternal relations where the young experience the joy of being loved and are encouraged to participate;
- being able to express themselves freely in youthful celebrations and in youth group meetings;
- admiring and enjoying the good things the Creator has placed in our way - nature, silence, achievements attained through sacrifice and solidarity;
- the grace of accepting suffering and the cross, as a sharing in the Cross of Christ.

### » ***A spirituality of friendship and personal relationship with the Lord Jesus***

Salesian Youth Spirituality brings the young into an encounter with Jesus Christ and enables them to form a relationship of friendship with Him. It is nourished



on trust, in a living bond, and in faithful adherence. **Many young people have a sincere desire to know Jesus** and seek an answer to questions about the meaning of life that only God can give.

Friend, Teacher and Saviour in Salesian Spirituality are the names that describe the central role of the person of Jesus Christ in the spiritual life of young people (cf. C. 11; GC23, nos.167-168; GC24, 61; *Charismatic Identity of the Family Salesian* nos.24, 36). It is interesting to remember that Jesus is presented by Don Bosco as *friend* of the young – “Young people are the delight of Jesus,” he used to say. He also presented Jesus as a *teacher* of life and wisdom, a *model* for every Christian, the *Redeemer* who gave his life even to the point of death, out of love and a passion for our salvation. Don Bosco saw Jesus in the little ones and the poor. He often used to quote the Gospel passage: “I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40).

Here, by way of example, are some of the **attitudes and practices** that can help young people to become more like Christ:

- ▮ sharing in the faith of the community that lives in the memory and the presence of the Lord and celebrates it in the sacraments of Christian initiation;
- ▮ the pedagogy of holiness that Don Bosco taught through reconciliation with God and with our brothers and sisters in the sacrament of Penance;
- ▮ learning personal and community prayer, and meditation designed to help the young to grow in love and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Salesian Prayer is simple and suited to all. It is deeply rooted in everyday life;
- ▮ a systematic study of faith, enlightened by reading and meditating on the Word of God.



*“We need to help young people to gain confidence and familiarity with sacred Scripture so it can become a compass pointing out the path to follow”*

(VERBUM DOMINI 104)

## » **An ecclesial and Marian spirituality**

**A good experience of Church and an adequate understanding of it are distinctive marks of Christian spirituality.** The Church is a spiritual

communion and community that becomes visible through gestures and agreed ways of acting and working. It is a service to mankind. It is not like a sect that cuts itself off from people, and sees good only in its own works. It is the place chosen and offered by Christ, in time and space in our history, for us to encounter him. To the Church he has entrusted the Word, Baptism, his Body and Blood, the grace of forgiveness of sins and the other Sacraments, the experience of communion and the power of the Spirit that move us to love our brethren. We need a more responsible and courageous sense of belonging to the particular and universal Church. In fact, one of the treasures of the rich tradition of the Family of Don Bosco is precisely filial fidelity to the Successor of Peter, and of communion and collaboration with the local Church (cf. C. 13; GC21, nos.96, 102; GC23, nos.169-170; GC24, nos.62-64, 91-93; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no.26 ).

The **attitudes and practices** to be fostered are therefore:

- ▮ the concrete environment of the Salesian house as a place where one experiences a fresh, friendly, active, image of the Church capable of meeting the expectations of young people;
- ▮ groups and, above all, the Educative and Pastoral Community, which unites young people and educators in a family environment around a project of holistic education of young people;
- ▮ participation in the local church that unites all the efforts of fidelity of Christians in a visible communion and in service that can be seen and experienced in a concrete territory;
- ▮ respect for and trust in the universal Church, practised in the relationship of love for the Pope, awareness of situations in which the people of God are limited in their desire to practise their faith, and in awareness of the thought and achievements in the various fields of the saints and other significant Christian personalities.

**Salesian Youth Spirituality is a Marian spirituality.** Mary was called by God the Father, by the grace of the Spirit, to be the Mother of the Word and to give Him to the world. The Church looks to Mary as an example of faith. Don Bosco certainly looked to Mary and we are called to imitate him in communion with the Church (cf. C. 34, 92; GC23, 177; GC24, nos.68, 188; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, nos.11, 37).

We believe that, through the motherly intervention of Mary, the Holy Spirit raised up St John Bosco to begin the Salesian work (cf. C. 1). She showed

Don Bosco his field of action among young people, guided and supported him constantly and is present among us, continuing her mission as Mother of the Church and Help of Christians (cf. C. 8). Mary was a living presence in the Oratory of Valdocco, as inspiration, guide and teacher. Dominic Savio, Michael Magone and many other young people did not contemplate Mary as an abstract ideal or a simple object of worship and devotion, but as a *living active* person. Her presence filled the house and made them feel and experience the closeness of the love of God. Salesian Youth Spirituality encourages a simple, confident reliance on the maternal care of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

She is also recognised as the *Mother of God and our Mother* and as the Immaculate one, full of grace, totally available to God. We see in her a holiness which is Christian life lived with consistency and integrity. She is the *Help of Christians* in the great battle of faith and in building the Kingdom of God, the one who protects and guides the Church. She sustains and supports Christians in the faith, and was considered by Don Bosco as “the Madonna for difficult times.”

In Mary Help of Christians we have a *model and a guide* for our educational and apostolic action. We speak of her with love and admiration and propose her as a model for our imitation. We join in celebrations in her honour and in memory of her messages. She is our Mother and teacher in all our formation. We call upon her in prayer in a special way, meditating on her actions and words in the Gospel (cf. C. 84, 87, 92; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no.37).

### » **A spirituality of responsible service**

Life is lived as an encounter with God, a journey of identification with Christ, and commitment to the kingdom. The Church is perceived as communion and service where everyone has a place and where the gifts of all are needed. This leads to a conviction that **life is lived as a vocation of service** (cf. C. 7, 19, GC23, nos.178-180; GC24, nos.94-96; *Charter of the Charismatic Identity of the Salesian Family*, no.35).

This is widely reflected in the experience of Don Bosco as a young apostle. Starting from the dream at the age of nine, he understood and lived his life as a vocation. *He heard and responded with a generous heart to an invitation*: go among the young to save them. Don Bosco invited his young people to a practical exercise of love of neighbour. Salesian Youth

Spirituality is apostolic: we are convinced that we are called to collaborate with God in His mission with dedication, loyalty, trust and total availability. We are called to a real commitment to doing good, depending on our own social responsibilities and the material and spiritual needs of others.

Responsible service implies certain **attitudes and practices** which can be grouped around four areas:

- ▮ openness to reality and human contact: Don Bosco wanted his boys to become “good Christians and upright citizens.” For a young person today, being an upright citizen entails promoting the dignity and rights of the individual in all contexts, living with generosity in the family and preparing for family life on the basis of mutual self-giving that fosters solidarity, especially with the poorest. It means developing work skills with honesty and professional competence, promoting justice, peace and the common good in politics, respecting creation and promoting culture (cf. GC23, 178);
- ▮ serious commitment to discovering one’s life plan;
- ▮ gradual growth in maturity, progressive choices and consistent service to the Church and all people. This responsible service is developed through witness of life and is expressed in many areas: educative and pastoral and cultural animation, voluntary and missionary service;
- ▮ promptness in dealing with new situations and ability to sacrifice less important things for the sake of higher values.

Salesian Youth Spirituality aims to help all young people in their vocational journey to discover the meaning of their lives, in truth and in dialogue with God.

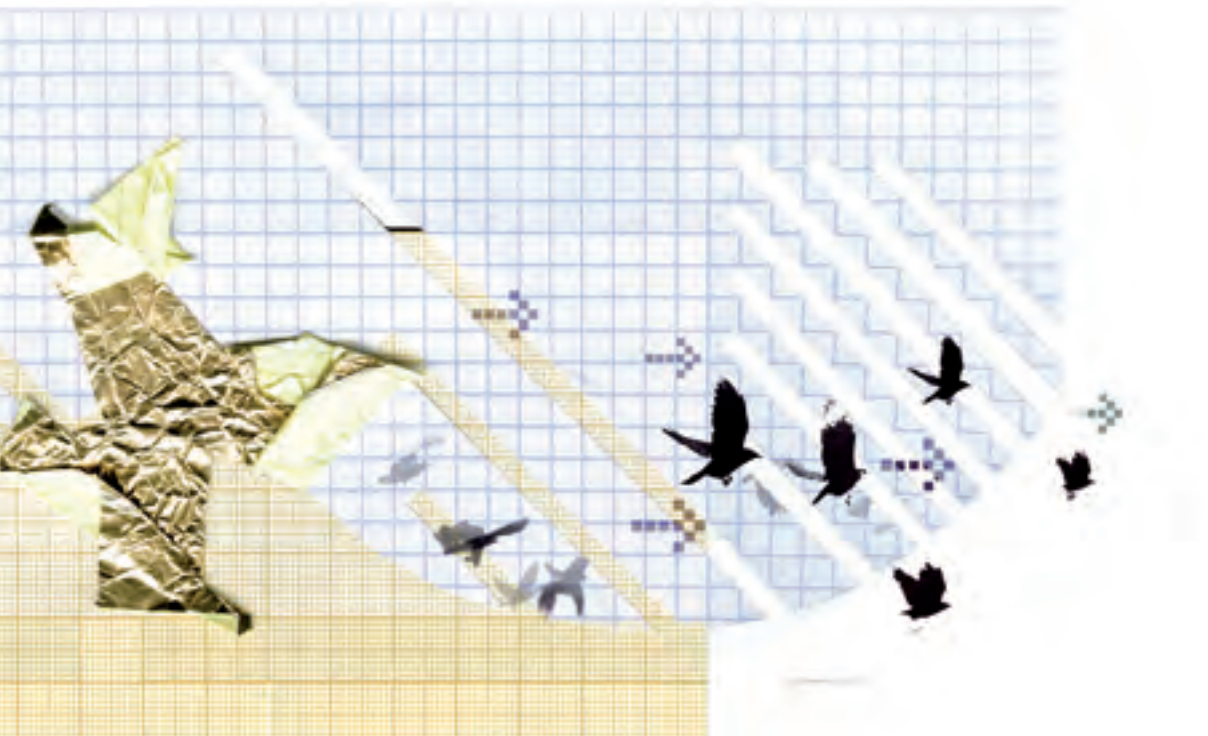
### **C** *Planning programmes of education to the faith*

Spirituality is not just a formula but an experience of life. **We need to translate the theory into practical programmes of structured learning, in gradual stages**, suited to the condition of the young people who are to implement them (objectives, attitudes, knowledge, concrete commitments and experiences) with some clearly defined content. The Salesian Congregation has indicated *four areas of human and Christian maturity*: human identity, the encounter with Christ, a commitment to the Kingdom and membership of the Church (cf. GC23, nos.120-157).

Don Bosco was the originator of an “easy” way of holiness for young people with his educational and pastoral system. He created an environment suitable for their growth as human beings and as Christians. He was able to *personalise and customise the educative plan for each young individual*. It is enough to look at the biographies of Dominic Savio, Francis Besucco and Michael Magone and it will be clear how the path to holiness was the same for all three as far as the educational programme was concerned, but wisely adapted to the different circumstances of each of them.

What do we mean by drawing up practical programmes? Here are some **practical criteria** for the faith journey:

- ▮ *flexibility* that overcomes all forms of rigidity in structures. The programme must be suited to children who live in different personal and environmental situations even though the goal is always kept in view. It means devising programmes that are open, presenting the full message in a manner and form appropriate to the various ages and cultural conditions and the specific spiritual needs of the young people;
- ▮ *continuity* (the opposite of improvisation) and a *gradual approach* (the opposite of a mentality that wants everything



here and now). This implies prudence and patience. In this way the programme takes on the character of an introductory path which encourages the young and involves their freedom in accomplishing the steps and taking on the responsibilities that all education requires. The content is proposed and gradually internalised. The essential and fundamental goals of human and Christian growth must be presented at each stage;

- *orientation towards* the achievement of formative outcomes: journeying towards the goal of “good Christian and honest citizen”, trying to consolidate lasting values, attitudes and basic skills. This means being *practical and specific*, that is, adherence to reality in order to discern the adequacy of the proposals and interventions through demonstrable results;
- *overall unity* for the holistic development of the personality of each individual by harmonising human development and Christian faith. It means unifying three mutually enriching factors that lead to a rich personal Christian unity. Educating good Christians and upright citizens demands therefore that the entire educational programme and each individual stage are geared to developing all aspects of the young person.

*The pedagogical approach of the method, closely linked to the content and dynamics, is important.* The focus on interpersonal and communication styles is subject to the objective and content. Priority must be given to the forms most suitable to young people, flexible forms that give ample space to a systematic study and creativity. There are some very important “points of no return”, based on reality. Salesian educators cannot ignore the main features that characterise contemporary young people and deeply affect their lives and their experience of religion. Otherwise there is a danger that our proposals become inadequate and ineffective. Youth Ministry is authentic if it is characterised by flexibility and creativity.

In this sense, the method is also the message. Young people require a style of Christian proclamation that is proactive, able to establish proper communication and to give space for creativity and the linguistic nuances of today. The real situation of young people and the quality of objectives and content to be communicated, demand that the following **methodological criteria** be taken into consideration:

<b>Concreteness</b>	Young people appreciate and welcome concrete steps, and effective action. Everything that is done must be seen, remembered, appreciated, evaluated and verified in practice in daily life.
<b>Symbol</b>	The young people's capacity for symbolism must be developed, and the ability to communicate and enter into communion with ideas that cannot be expressed in a single concept. This requires sensitivity and creativity. Some experiences cannot be expressed in words but only in ritual and gesture (greetings, holiday, the sign of peace ...) The symbolic dimension is needed to enter into communion with the Mystery of God already present in everyday reality. In this sense, liturgical, catechetical and experiential language, must be used harmoniously.
<b>Narrative</b>	Rather than argument, proof, justification or belief, young people prefer a story, especially a real life story. It encourages them to get involved in the narrative. Use of the techniques of the gospel, like the parable, is essential, and more credible. We need to be able to tell our own story and the story of our faith journey. We have to convey "what we have seen and heard."
<b>Internalisation</b>	For the journey of faith to be effective, the experiences and activities must be internalised and valued by the young person (in head, heart and hand). They must be able to put words on their experiences by sharing and communicating, so that it leads to choices and change.

**Experience**

Start from experience, encourage experience, return to the experience, try to understand the experience. The experience of one's own life is the main educational resource, completed and stimulated further by new experiences during the educative process. Experience is also about consolidating or overcoming whatever is encountered in life. It must be accompanied, reflected upon and understood if it is to become part of the personal fabric of life, and not just a simple accumulation of events.

**Participation  
and taking  
responsibility**

Young people need to take responsibility for their own life. They must learn to believe in their own capacity to grow and change. They want to be considered and consulted. We must be prepared to take risks and give them responsibility, according to their situation and their capabilities. There is no growth in maturity without responsibility, no trust if they do not feel trusted. They are not the object of our interventions but the subject of their own lives.

**Personalisation  
and social  
development**

We must take into account the level of freedom the young person has reached and employ a legitimate educational pluralism that respects the different situations in which young people live. We must be flexible, think about each one as an individual, and try to help his or her personal growth. This personal development takes place in relation to others, it happens with others (in a group) and through others. Each one gets to know himself or herself in relation to others, in relation to history and to the world. Growth takes place through relationships.





**EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL  
COMMUNITY:**  
MAKE THE HOUSE A FAMILY  
FOR THE YOUNG

CHAPTER

**V**

*“Jesus himself drew  
near and went with  
them”*

*(Lk 24:15)*



*Don Bosco wanted everyone to feel at home in his establishments. The Salesian house becomes a family when affection is mutual and when all, both confreres and young people, feel welcome and responsible for the common good. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and daily forgiveness, the need and joy of sharing everything is experienced, and relationships are governed not so much by recourse to rules as by faith and the promptings of the heart. This is a witness that enkindles in the young the desire to get to know and to follow the Salesian vocation”*

[C. 16]



*You cannot have affection without this familiarity, and where affection is not evident, there can be no confidence. If you want to be loved, you must make it clear that you love”*

[Letter from Rome, 1884]

# Salesian Youth Ministry requires

agreement of purpose and conviction on the part of all those involved in the planning and implementation of the Educative-Pastoral Community. In this chapter we shall examine the community identity, how it works, the style of shared responsibility and the way it is animated. The community is called to invest in the figure of the Salesian educator. In trying to discern and renew each activity and work, we look to the Salesian style, the “oratory criterion” that connects us with the practical insights of the charism (our way of living together in communion) which have become part of our shared patrimony, and are applicable to all contexts where Salesians operate. Importance is given to the way we offer signs of the Gospel in everyday life, and the way we cultivate authentic relationships and communication.

## 1

# Salesian Youth Ministry: a community experience

## 1 1

## COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE IN THE SALESIAN SPIRIT AND MISSION

### A *Communion at the service of the same mission*

**Evangelisation is always an ecclesial activity.** The first key element for realising Salesian Youth Ministry is the community involving young people and adults, parents and educators in an atmosphere of family, so that it becomes an experience of the Church (cf. C. 44-48; R. 5). It implies a communion whereby the *different gifts and services* are seen as complementary. There is mutual reciprocity in the service of the same mission (cf. GC24, nos.61-67). Evangelisation is the fruit of a mission that is shared between consecrated members and lay people, who join forces in cooperation in sharing their gifts, despite the differences of formation, different tasks, different charisms and different degrees of participation in this mission. It is community in which all, religious and laity, are active agents in the evangelisation of individuals and of cultures (cf. *Christifideles Laici* 55-56; GC24, no.96).

This community is the **subject and, at the same time, the object and scope of our educative and pastoral activity**. It is called the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC). It is our way of being Church and our pastoral ministry in the Church. Education and evangelisation are the result of convergence of people, initiatives, qualifications, implemented in a shared project which involves shared responsibility (cf. C. 34; GC21, nos.63, 67; GC24, no.99). Salesian Youth Ministry is not just the action of individuals but a coordinated project of different initiatives, the result of a shared search for understanding and sharing of the gifts of all. It calls for collaboration in research and planning.



## **B** *The Salesian way of being present among the young*

From the early days of the Oratory Don Bosco formed around him **a community – a family in which the young people themselves were the key players**. He created a youthful environment in which the values of the Preventive System were embodied. There were well-defined spiritual and pastoral characteristics with clear objectives and a convergence of roles designed to suit the needs of the young people. The Salesian Congregation and the Salesian Family were born from this community. In Don Bosco's mind the Salesians, with their life in common, are the centre of communion and participation for all the educators who make their contribution to the project and the spread of the charism (cf. GC24, nos.71-72, 75).

In remembering the beginnings at Valdocco we see not only the pastoral heart of Don Bosco but also his ability to involve others: church, hostel and playground become part of the educational reality thanks to the contribution of religious, priests and lay people. *The Preventive System pays attention to personal relationships, but attaches importance also to community.* His method is intensely "communal". The EPC is the Salesian way of animation in every context to achieve Don Bosco's educational mission. It is not a new structure in addition to other management bodies and existing ways of participation in different environments or pastoral works, nor is it only a way of organising the work or a technique of participation.

The Salesian house is meant to be *a home that is welcoming* towards young people, *a place where they are happy to be.*

With the EPC we want to form, wherever we are present, **a com-**

**munity of people geared to the education of the young,** that can become

an experience of Church for them and can open them to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. The EPC (C. 47; GC24, no.156) is therefore:



**community:** because it involves young people and adults, parents and educators in a family atmosphere. The thing that unites us is not work or efficiency, but a set of values of life (educational, spiritual, Salesian ...) that form a shared identity willingly accepted by all;

**educative:** because it gives first place, in all its projects, relationships and organisations, to concern for the integral development of young people. By this we mean the development of their potential in all aspects: physical, psychological, cultural, professional, social, religious and spiritual;

**pastoral:** because it is open to evangelisation, it walks with young people on their journey to encounter Christ and creates an experience of church where young people experience human and Christian values in communion with God and with others.

### **C** *The EPC involves many people in the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project*

**The EPC demands a new mature sense of belonging and a new mentality,** a new way of thinking, judging and acting, a new way of confronting problems and a new style of relationships—with young people, and with educators and pastoral workers. It is a community made up of concentric circles with young people at the centre as the key reference point (cf. C. 5). *The Salesian community* is the guarantor of Salesian identity, and the core of communion and participation. *Families* are the agencies first and foremost responsible for the education of young people. *Lay people* are responsible in various ways as leaders and collaborators. Among them, members of the Salesian Family who work in our settings bring a special contribution that reflects the peculiar features and the richness of their vocation.

**The most significant pastoral initiatives form a network.** All members of the EPC work together at different levels in drawing up the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan (SEPP) which is the centre of convergence of all activity. All cooperate in the same educational process, enriching each other in a shared process of formation (cf. GC24, no.157). The formative experience involves agreed criteria, agreed goals and intentions, initiatives

that have been planned together (co-responsibility, discussion, research, evaluation). The SEPP helps in coming to a shared understanding of the Gospel and of culture, of faith and life (cf. *GC24*, no.96 )

### **D** *The EPC and family*

As has been said, the EPC is a centre that welcomes the greatest possible number of people interested in the human and religious aspects of the area. One clearly identified pastoral challenge is to achieve a fuller sharing with **the family, which is the primary and indispensable educational community**. We recognise that the family is the basic cell of society and the Church. Despite all its difficulties, the family is esteemed by the children because there they receive the affection they need and cannot do without. For parents, education is an essential duty, connected to the transmission of life. The role of the family is irreplaceable and inalienable and comes before the educational role of anyone else. It cannot be delegated or substituted (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 36).

The emergence of counselling centres in support of education to help with family problems, run by both lay people and religious, is an interesting and promising development. The same can be said of groups that help parents in educating their children to the faith. The EPC is committed to making parents aware of their educational responsibility, in the face of new emerging patterns of education. It pays particular attention to accompanying young couples and actively involving them in the EPC. It is necessary for Salesians and lay people together to make a careful community discernment, in order to identify and respond to the most urgent problems of the family, making use of all the resources available. A greater involvement of the family in the SEPP is needed.

### **E** *The EPC as a meaningful experience of the Church in a particular area*

**Every Salesian work has an extraordinary educational potential because of its widespread penetration in the local area.** The Salesian mission is not identified with and is not reduced to the Salesian community and Salesian work. However, the Salesian house is necessary as a meeting place and training place for the vast movement of people who work for the young, inside and outside Salesian structures, in the Church and in the institutions of civil society (cf. *GC24*, no.4). The EPC, when properly



understood, is *open to and collaborates with all those working for the promotion and training of young people* in the area. It works in solidarity with former students, and with young people and adults in the area it serves. As an agent of pastoral care it lives and acts in the Church and in the world (cf. C. 47), and is a significant presence in both.

- **The service offered by the EPC is integrated into the pastoral care of the local church.** The SEPP is inserted in the pastoral plan of the diocese or region. The work of the EPC is coordinated with that of other Christian forces working for the education of young people. It expresses its belonging to the Church through appropriate gestures proportionate to the level of faith reached by the EPC.

*By bringing its specific contribution to the community of the Church,* the EPC enriches the local Church with the gift of Salesian Youth Spirituality, Don Bosco's educational system and the vitality of the Salesian Family and Salesian Youth Movement. This can be done by being actively involved in the Parish or area Pastoral Council. We offer our professional contribution as educators of the young and we make suggestions or proposals to serve the educational and pastoral mission of the Church on behalf of young people.

- **It operates as a centre of unity for the existing social forces in the area,** and helps them to be integrated into the situation in which they live. It maintains a mutually enriching dialogue with these forces and participates in the formation and human and Christian education of young people, collaborating with other organisations working for the same purpose (cf. GC21, nos.17, 132; GC23, nos.229-230, GC24, 115).

Being *a centre of communion and participation*, the EPC is like a spiral whose core radiates sensitivity and responsibility out to the periphery, seeing to communication and the search for meaning (cf. GC24, nos.49, 114, 135). It makes the Salesian presence significant, with its educational and pastoral identity. It becomes a place of welcome and a gathering place, a sign of communion and participation, and works for the transformation of the surrounding area (cf. GC23, nos.225-229; GC24, nos.173-174).

- It works as an agent of transformation in the area.** It is not only present through its members who live the area, but it participates in “the commitment of the Church to justice and peace.” (C. 33). It works to change situations which are contrary to Gospel values (cf. C. 7). Its educational and pastoral competence may be called upon to respond to problems affecting young people (cf. GC24, no.235). It is *present in the human contexts* in which the young people live, especially the marginalised and the excluded. It is attentive to the factors that have most influence on their education and evangelisation, discerning there the signs of the saving presence of God. It participates strongly in *cultural debate and educational processes* through the various forms of group activity, voluntary service and social cooperation, bringing an original educational proposal for the creation of a mentality and a social conscience and civic and Christian solidarity, and for the evangelisation of the prevailing culture.

The dynamism of the EPC will bring the community to evaluate critically what is happening around and will encourage the committed Christians in the area.

- It is a Church presence in multi-religious and multicultural contexts:** Salesian Youth Ministry is practised also in contexts of cultural and religious pluralism, with a significant presence of lay people of different cultures and beliefs involved in our mission. For this reason, it must always be *open to dialogue and collaboration* with different religious traditions, promoting the integral development of the person and openness to the transcendent. This points to the need for a deep inculturation of our pastoral ministry. The Preventive System is the basic criterion for this collaboration: “With those who do not accept God we can journey together, basing ourselves on the human and lay values present in the Preventive System; with those who do accept God and the transcendent we can go further, even to welcoming their religious values; and finally, with those who share our faith in Christ but not our membership of the Church, we can walk still more closely on the path of the Gospel.” (GC24, no.185) For this reason it is important that Christians in the EPC live in fidelity to their vocation and the evangelising mission of the Church according to the Salesian charism (cf. GC24, nos.183-185).

## 1 2

**ANIMATION OF THE EPC**

The EPC is not a ready-made structure or institution but a living organism that exists in so far as it grows and develops. For this reason we should pay attention not only to the organisation but, above all, to developing the life of the EPC. Every EPC must **ensure the promotion and care of the many different ways of animating and accompanying the people**. This is why we can speak of *an original Salesian style of pastoral accompaniment*. We support people at different levels, through the general environment of the EPC, groups, personal relationships and personal guidance.

**A** *An accompanying environment*

First of all, we aim to provide accompaniment by creating an educational environment, where young people feel at home and there is an atmosphere of support. Ideas and feelings are shared and there are educational activities which prepare them to make choices and be committed. The environment which an EPC offers in a Salesian work must be understood first in its more external and operational aspects, that is, **in its organisation and coordination**. It offers good quality information and communication both internally and externally. It involves everyone's efforts in the educational process. It respects the roles, functions and specific contributions of the different vocations. It provides space for participation in the drawing-up, implementation and evaluation of the SEPP together. It values the educational and pastoral objectives, the content being offered and the achievements of the various participants.

In order to mature, the young person needs to establish **an educational relationship with, and to identify with, different adult figures in the EPC**. Each of these people gives his or her own contribution and leaves a lasting impression of their personality and their own expertise. The EPC must ensure open relationships with people who foster personal relationships between the world of adults and young people, relationships that go beyond the purely functional and foster fraternal relations of respect and interest in people. This is the basic principle of Salesian assistance.

Finally, the environment must encourage the constant commitment of **quality ongoing training and formation** at different levels, spiritual, Christian and Salesian. The EPC is not only the subject but also the object

of Youth Ministry. For this reason, we must ensure training and formation for all. Our educative and pastoral ministry must be designed not only for young people but should also inspire formation programmes for adults (Salesians and lay people together) which, in addition to allowing them to live “for” young people, will help them grow “with” them, enabling them to march in step with the younger generation.

### **B** *Group Accompaniment*

All those forming part of an EPC come into contact with a single proposal for life and spirituality. Somehow they walk along a single route which involves **various educational and religious activities**. Group activity is one of these. In groups people are accompanied, always taking good care of individual differences or different stages. An effort is made to meet the diverse interests of the people, treating each one in a unique way. Different levels of belonging are blended on a personal level in a form of active learning, which makes use of experiment, research, active participation, and the discovery of new approaches. All these are a sign of vitality. They allow young people to develop the values which appeal most to their cultural sensibilities. Groups can be for young people the place where their expectations come into contact with the proposals of value and faith. They become involved in the discovery of values, and assimilate them in their lives.

They help young people to find their identity more easily and to recognise and accept the diversity of others, an essential step if they are to mature in the *experience of community and Church*.

Group accompaniment helps young people **to develop the sense of belonging** to the EPC. Each group must recognise its involvement in a larger group which is the EPC. The groups become proactive and offer an experience that avoids the danger either of feeling lost and anonymous in a large crowd, or the loneliness of being closed in on self. As the group gets stronger internally, it interacts positively with the EPC, sharing its proposals, insights and expectations, and encouraging affective participation in its activities and symbols.

### **C** *Personal accompaniment*

There is yet a third task, which is to **accompany each of the members of the EPC in his or her human and Christian growth and personal choices**.

This means that the person is encountered with his or her individuality, “face to face”, even when part of a group. Don Bosco’s pedagogical praxis has always included the *word in the ear*, a personal dialogue even in the group. His is an educational method that is based on relationship. The goal of the *one by one* part of the educational journey is personal authenticity.

The life of the members of the EPC is not limited to the environment or the group, even if this experience is crucial. *Meeting and dialogue have a value and a particular function.* The dialogue is an opportunity for pastoral intervention, as we see in the encounter of the boy John Bosco with Fr Calosso or the meeting between Don Bosco as a priest with Bartholomew Garelli. The Salesian approach is intended to evoke the young person’s active collaboration and this is critical to the educational process, because of the possibilities, choices and personal experiences it creates. It encourages the search for underlying motivations for living. It requires clarity at the precise moment. It evokes the desire for dialogue and discernment, and promotes the internalisation of daily experiences in order to decipher the messages to be learned. It enables the young person to face confrontation and make critical judgements, to seek reconciliation and regain inner calm, and leads to a growth in personal and Christian maturity. The timing of these choices and these experiences is not the same for all and neither are the situations and decisions in which the young people find themselves. Accompaniment is an educative and pastoral service to individuals. It enhances their personal life and *life is the central theme of all educational and spiritual dialogue.*

The EPC provides many opportunities for personal communication. **There is a single goal which can be reached in a great variety of ways, in different circumstances and interventions.** The informal and spontaneous moments of sharing are the most frequent, but others are more organised and these also are indispensable. Among these, *spiritual direction* is particularly significant. It serves to strengthen the faith as life in Christ and an understanding of the meaning of life. It assists young people in discerning their vocation in the Church and in the world. It helps them to grow constantly in spiritual life and holiness.

Young people feel the weight of the multiplicity of proposals that are around, and the inner struggle to sift through them all for the sake of their growth. They want a space where they feel loved but know that their freedom is respected, space where they can breathe, question, exercise responsibility, where they can find support as they patiently get to know and

accept who they are. In a very strict sense, they are looking for **educators and guides, capable of offering personal accompaniment**.

The EPC must provide opportunities and possibilities for face to face dialogue. We cannot turn a deaf ear to their request for this space. This means ensuring that there are **times and places** where personal communication can take place without hindrance or haste. Care for the personal dimension provides oxygen for the EPC, creating opportunities for each one to check his or her own life and become aware of where life is leading them. There is an ever more urgent need for *people ready to listen* and respect confidence, without ever intruding on the intimacy of conscience.

People are needed who have the gift of listening and accept the educative responsibility of assisting young people, particularly in their efforts to grow. Walking alongside each young person, helping him or her to discover the way, is a human experience and a faith experience that leave an indelible imprint.

1 3

### A SPECIFIC SERVICE OF ANIMATION: THE “ANIMATING NUCLEUS”

Salesian animation of the EPC involves intervening to ensure the organisation, coordination, educational objectives and content, pedagogical guidance, the training of individuals who take part, and strengthening of the distinctive Salesian character of the work. **All of these are necessary and together they make up the overall animation of the EPC as a group.** The diversity of tasks and roles and responsibility of all facilitate the achievement of the objectives (cf. GC24, nos.106-148).

#### **A** *A group of people in mutual enrichment*

All components of the EPC, Salesians and lay people, participate in its animation but **some have the specific task of promoting the contribution of all** and the responsibility of the largest possible number of members, taking care of the quality and coordination of the animation and paying particular attention to levels more immediately concerned with the Salesian identity and quality of education and evangelisation. With their charismatic witness, these people constitute the “animating nucleus” of the EPC.

The human heart is a small organ compared to the rest of the body but it is capable of getting blood, and therefore life, to all parts of the body, though only if all the “valves” are working in harmony to achieve this end. Similarly, the animating nucleus is a group of people composed of Salesians and lay people who identify themselves with the mission, the educational system and Salesian spirituality and together assume **the task of convening, motivating, and engaging** all who are involved in the work, in order to form with them the educational community and to realise together the plan of evangelisation and education of the young.

It should be emphasised that the *Salesian religious community* (cf. C. 38, 47, R. 5), with its spiritual heritage, its educational method, its relationships of fraternity and shared responsibility for the mission, is the point of reference for the pastoral identity of the animating nucleus: “The Salesian community plays the role of the charismatic point of reference from which all take their inspiration” (GC25, no.70). The religious community alone is not the animating nucleus but is an integral part of it. Lay people who work in a Salesian work where there is no religious community must ensure, in whatever way they can, that there is open participation and real responsibility in the organisation and management, and in all the functions that belong to the animating nucleus.

**The EPC Council is the body that animates and coordinates the implementation of the Educative and Pastoral Project.** It is the first place for the exercise of shared responsibility between Salesians, lay workers, parents and young people. It works through reflection, dialogue, planning and review of planned initiatives (cf. GC24, nos.160-161, 171). Being a coordinating body for the service of the unity of all who are involved in the local project, it cooperates with all other agencies that act within the EPC. It belongs to the Provincial with his Council to decide on the criteria for the composition of the council, its competence and level of responsibility, in coordination with the House Council of the Salesian community (cf. GC24, no.171). This question is treated fully in Chapter 8, 2.1/d.

## **B** *New organisational models*

The 26<sup>th</sup> General Chapter (no.120) recognises that there is **a plurality of models of management of works** at present in the Congregation. Some works are managed by a Salesian community which is the animating

nucleus of a larger Educative and Pastoral Community. There are activities and works entrusted entirely by the Salesians to lay people, or started by lay people, and recognised in the provincial project (according to the criteria set by GC24, nos.180-182). There are other modes of management which cannot be reduced to a single model in which there is still a relationship between the local community and one or more works, and there are pastoral or activity sectors managed entirely by lay people. Obviously, such situations require new organisational models. Where there is no Salesian community the animating nucleus, made up of lay people, is inspired by the three criteria of identity, communion and significance of Salesian ministry and is implemented under the responsibility of the Provincial and his Council (see Chapter 8, 2.2).

## 2

## The Heart of the Salesian Educator

We have identified the people in the EPC with whom we build this experience. Now, we have to think about the person of the educator, the image that should inspire him or her, and the attitudes to be cultivated. We will look briefly at the heart of the Salesian educator who, in whatever field of activity, is true to the model of educator and evangeliser left to us as legacy by Don Bosco.

## 2 1

### AN INNER APOSTOLIC SPIRIT IS ESSENTIAL

## A

#### *Enter more deeply into the Gospel*

The essential “inner apostolic spirit” leads to a **greater awareness of what it means to be an educator and pastor** and the demands this makes. It means growing into a fuller and deeper knowledge of Christ, the Good Shepherd, and developing an authentic experience of faith through one’s daily work.



Only a *person with an interior life* has the ability to listen, to distinguish the apparent from the authentic, to be open to the needs of others and allow himself or herself to be touched by them. This interiority reaches its culmination in the person who is “full of God,” who lives and walks “in the presence of God,” who has discovered God who reveals himself in the history of daily life and, in a special way, is revealed in the history of the children and young people we serve.

To make a greater impact it is not enough just to have more people or better means. What is needed, above all, is to be better disciples of Christ, *to enter more deeply into the Gospel*. The force of attraction that motivates all educative and pastoral action comes from pastoral charity, that is, from a vocational wish to be of service to the Gospel. This basic choice permeates the consciousness of the educator to the extent that all his or her activities, whatever their nature, take on a gospel motivation (cf. Ez 34:11-23, the true shepherd). Really competent people who are able to combine an interior Salesian gospel way of life with their own rich humanity, are able to see their commitment to education as an aspect of their mission. Without special care of the interior apostolic life of the consecrated members themselves, and that of lay people and young people, we will not have real evangelisation. It is pastoral charity rooted in the heart which becomes the living centre of the Salesian spirit.

## **B** *The first form of evangelisation is witness*

Moved by this apostolic interior life, the evangeliser is aware that the good news lies not only in the truth that is proclaimed but, above all in the witness and conviction of the one who proclaims it (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 42).

The Salesian educator bears witness, not to seek to be imitated, but to show the possibility of a life leavened by the gospel and thus help each young person to come to personal understanding.

**In proclaiming the gospel to the young, a witness needs to be able to live his or her faith among the young in a way that can be seen.** Youth ministry requires not only teachers open to



*“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers (I said last year to a group of lay people) and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses”*

(EVANGELII NUNTIANDI 41)

the illuminating power of the gospel, but also witnesses who speak of God, because they are accustomed to speaking with God.

Every educator must strengthen, in a conscious way, his or her motivations of faith. It sometimes happens that some other educational contribution, even if given in collaboration with the ecclesial community, does not flow from motivations of faith. It is important that the service we offer comes from a sincere desire for life and promotion of life. The educational journey touches the heart of the person (in the biblical sense) and, in the Christian sense it is a journey of spirituality, life in the Spirit of Christ, nourished by faith in its fullness.

## 2 2

## SALESIAN CHARISMATIC IDENTITY

The charismatic identity sheds light on the life project. Don Bosco made **education his life-choice and the reason for everything he did**. His vocation as an educator gradually matured and it became his specific way of being a citizen, a Christian and a priest. Then, as now, the Preventive System needs people who make education their life-choice. Education becomes the unifying concern of their personal life and the inspiration and driving force of their activity, their office and their personal roles. Don Bosco used to say:

*Take note of what I am. I am all for you, day and night, morning and evening, all the time. I have no other aim than to gain your moral, intellectual and physical well-being. For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life* (CHRONICLE OF THE ORATORY OF ST. FRANCIS OF SALES).

By continually studying and re-proposing the theoretical and practical framework of the Preventive System, our Salesian legacy becomes an educational, moral and spiritual competence, deeply rooted in *interior dispositions*: the desire to respond to the call for help that comes from the young; the willingness to dedicate our time, our energy, our knowledge and our skill for the welfare of the young; the ability to continue with perseverance in a systematic way, in spite of difficulties and disappointments,

in pursuit of the welfare of every individual. Evangelisation today cannot be lived in any other way. It cannot be entrusted to people without courage, who are permanently dissatisfied and pessimistic. The vocation and passion for education must take first place.

2 3

## ANIMATION IS THE BEST FORM OF EDUCATION

### A *Priority is given to the person in the growth process*

The Salesian educator favours **the practice of animation to bring people to listen to Jesus and accept him**. The model is the encounter on the road to Emmaus: the missionary approaches the young person, and meets him or her with an attitude of *listening* and *welcome*, *proclaiming* the Gospel and offering to accompany the young person (cf. GC20, nos.360-365; GC23, nos.94-111). Animation helps people to make the good news their own and assists them in the development of their conscience. It makes them aware of the motivations that drive their options and their critical thinking skills. It encourages their active involvement and makes them responsible agents in their own education. The aim is to bring about a sharing of values, criteria, objectives and the various processes of Salesian Youth Ministry. It aims to deepen the vocational identity of the educators, by increasing communication and sharing among all, and by encouraging shared responsibility. It fosters coordination, complementarity and the collaboration of all in a shared project.

### B *The active presence of educators among the young*

This implies **an effort to be where young people live and meet**, establishing a relationship with them that is personal and, at the same time challenging and liberating. It needs a commitment by adult educators to share with young people by meeting them, listening to them and giving them witness. This requires the physical presence of the educator in the manner that Don Bosco called “assistance”, understood as accompaniment, being close to the young, animating them, paying attention to everything that happens, being ready to intervene at the right time, giving them an example. There is a very telling scene in the life of Don Bosco which highlights the contrasting attitudes of priests – some of

them polite but aloof and distant, and others with the paternal attitude of the elderly priest Fr Calosso:

*There were many good priests who worked for the good of the people, but I could not make friends with any of them. It often happened that I would meet the parish priest and his assistant somewhere along the road. I would greet them from afar. They approached me politely, but they only responded to my greeting, and continued on their way. Several times, I was bitter to the point of tears, and I used to say: 'If I were a priest, I would not behave like that. I would try to get close to the young people. I would give them good advice. I would speak kind words to them'*

(MEMOIRS OF THE ORATORY, FIRST DECADE 1825-1835, NO.4).

This original style of education is based on some fundamental beliefs that are at the same time precise operational choices. Young people need contact with educators if they are to develop the energies they have within them. The educators must cultivate the *loving kindness* taught by Don Bosco. It is their duty to be open to all young people and to every young person, not minimising their educational expectations, but offering everyone what they need, "here and now". This decision implies accepting the young "where they are" respecting their freedom and level of maturity, gradually awakening their potential and opening their lives to new perspectives, through different educational and religious measures.

Hence, *mature and loving Salesian fatherliness* is an essential part of Salesian education in the present-day world where young people are often more and more "orphaned" and alone. According to witnesses of his life, Don Bosco had a fatherly kindness expressed in countless acts of goodness. He used to give small gifts, write friendly letters, show little gestures of concern, offer words of comfort and encouragement – little acts of kindness that people kept fondly in their hearts. Fatherhood, godly and human, is defined in terms of giving life. There is no way of giving life without somehow, giving of self as a sign of gratitude. We can say that generating life always involves a dying of some kind. For educators, this is never a loss of life, but is always finding oneself again in a better life. In addition to dedication and generosity, loving kindness that reaches out to all is a requirement for paternity. Young people need not only to know that they are loved, but also to feel that they are regarded with kindness!

**They have, in fact, a “right” to touch the fatherhood of God in the lifestyle of educator.** The educator’s way of thinking, speaking, feeling and behaving, should reveal the loving kindness of God.

24

## PASTORAL INTELLIGENCE TO GIVE LIFE TO THE SEPP

### **A** *Read the present youth situation from an “educational perspective”*

We need urgently to give a pastoral and cultural qualitative boost to the SEPP. We need **adequate preparation to enable us to carry out our mission to the full**. Our formation should aim at multiple conversion of heart, mind and pastoral action. This results in a change of heart and a new understanding of the ministry itself.

The call to *read the present youth situation from an educational perspective* demands that we cultivate an acute awareness of the urgency of educational and pastoral care as seen in the signs of the times. This means identifying the emerging values that appeal to young people: peace, freedom, justice, communion and participation, the promotion of women, solidarity, development, ecological issues, the plurality of cultures, peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups, and a commitment to oppose any kind of exploitation of children and the new forms of slavery. As servants of young people, we are called to evaluate the events and currents of thought of our time that most affect the human person.

### **B** *A patient commitment to change and formation*

As educators with the awareness that we are also mediators, we are asked for a *patient commitment to change and rethinking* in many respects. We have the task of designing faith journeys that are able to make use of the different ways of communicating that are available today to connect with the situation of young people. We need to find ways of proclaiming the gospel that are incisive, vital and clear, and to develop educational strategies for the evangelisation of cultures. Life becomes a continuous lesson, an opportunity to reflect on the educational experience, a journey

marked by creativity, and a readiness to evaluate instead of being satisfied with what we have always done and simply repeating the same thing over and over again.

**Formation is an attitude of mind and heart**, and a willingness to learn from life for the whole of one's life. The person is intelligently active and ready to learn. This attitude cannot be improvised. It does not come from nothing. It is a consequence of our vocation as educators.

Formative programmes that focus only on content or the acquisition of skills and techniques have been shown to be insufficient. We are becoming more and more convinced of the importance of the educator being involved with his or her whole person in the task of education. Communication skills and education must be firmly rooted in the educator's own identity and be part of a real personal journey. It is possible to have all the information, and to have mastered all the most modern methodologies and teaching procedures, to have all the resources and a professional approach, but these are not enough. The process of professional training of Salesian educators ultimately *brings into play the educator's own identity and the gift of his or her testimony*. The educator is a model with whom the young identify by imitating the path of his or her personal growth. The vocation to the service of education requires the ability to question oneself and allow oneself to be questioned on one's deepest convictions, motivations and expectations. Self-knowledge takes away fear and strengthens one's identity.

Every time we *examine our mission and vocation as educators*, we become convinced of the need to make it more suitable. We feel encouraged to develop a whole *new range of cultural, pedagogical and pastoral skills*, such as ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and dialogue with non-believers, the use of social communication and participation in public debate.



## 3

## The Preventive System in practice: the Salesian style of education

## 3 1

### DON BOSCO'S ORATORY, CRITERION FOR ALL OUR WORKS AND ACTIVITIES

**A** *The “oratory criterion”, inspiration and model for our activities and works*






*“When we think of the origin of our Congregation and Family, we find first of all a community, which was not only visible, but indeed quite unique, almost like a lantern in the darkness of night: Valdocco, the home of a novel community and a pastoral setting that was widely known, extensive and open ... Such a community gave rise to a new culture, not in an academic sense but in that of a new style of relationship between youngsters and educators, between laity and priests, between artisans and students, a relationship which had its effect on the area and on the city itself ... All this had as its root and raison d’être the faith and pastoral charity, which tried to create from within a family spirit, and led to a deep affection for God and our Lady”*

(FR JUAN VECCHI, AGC 373, “THIS IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME”)

**The Valdocco Oratory brings us back to the original experience of the Salesian mission.** Don Bosco, together with his collaborators and the first Salesians, embodied in the oratory that particular charism or experience of the Spirit who raised up in the Church our original form of apostolic mission among the poorest young people. So, today, referring to the Valdocco Oratory is not a historical exercise, simply looking back to what occurred there with Don Bosco. It is the way for us to return to our origins, to the source that inspired our work and activities (cf. C. 41), and to verify the fidelity of our educational-pastoral activity.

Don Bosco’s Oratory in Valdocco is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works (C. 40):



-  This return to our origins has as its goal the “oratorian heart,” which is characterised by a **concern for the poorest youth and ordinary classes**. This zeal is an expression of the salvific will of God embodied in the figure of the Good Shepherd, and it is directed first towards poor youth in the various forms of poverty in which they find themselves.
-  It requires a change in pastoral perspective: *young people come before the works!* Their needs require that our institutions and activities be rethought, rewritten and reordered, if we are to be faithful to the mission entrusted to us “to be signs and bearers of God’s love” (C. 2 ).
-  Secondly, in reference to the “oratorian heart,” we practice a **typically Salesian educational method** of sharing and communion which gives a specific style to our works. It is the heritage of the Salesian Family that consists not only in a wealth of experience in Valdocco but as an identity that results in a style. The practice of this method creates a family atmosphere and determines the initiatives that are necessary for each young person to grow in a warm and welcoming atmosphere (home) marked by happiness (playground), where he or she can develop all their potential, acquiring new skills (school) and embark on an explicit faith journey (parish).

*“It was on those occasions that I realised how many were brought back to that place because they were left to themselves. Who knows, I said to myself, if these young men had a friend outside, who would take care of them, assist them and instruct them in religion on public holidays, would they not be able to stay away from ruin, or at least would it not reduce the number of those who return to prison? I shared this idea with Don Cafasso, and with his advice and insights I started to look for a way to do so by entrusting them all to the grace of God without whom all efforts of men are in vain”*

(MEMOIRS OF THE ORATORY,  
SECOND DECADE 1835-1845, NO.11)

The oratorian heart characterises our ecclesial charism, ensures the quality of our educational work and renews our pastoral activities, in line with the various cultural forms and with the various experiences of faith and religion in which young people live.



## B General indicators for discernment and renewal

The “oratorian heart” is not only the goal and form of Salesian educative-pastoral activity, but also becomes the **fundamental criterion for discernment and renewal of our activities and works**. If our work is to merit the description given by Don Bosco to his work, we must measure it, first of all, against Don Bosco’s basic criteria.



*“Don Bosco lived a pastoral experience in his first Oratory which serves as a model; it was for the youngsters a home that welcomed, a parish that evangelized, a school that prepared them for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves. As we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works”*

(C. 40)

*A disposition of listening and of obedience to the Spirit is absolutely fundamental if we are to be faithful to the mission and the people for whom our work is intended. He is, in fact, the one who supports and accompanies our mission, and directs and renews it. By submitting to his action and inspiration we walk the path of Don Bosco who, docile to the Spirit, gave a lasting response to the situation of young people. If we are to be renewed, we must be consistent in our ability to read and discern. This demands *attentive listening to the socio-cultural reality of young people*.*

The exercise of discernment is of fundamental importance. It is the starting point from which Salesian Youth Ministry seeks to formulate an appropriate response to today’s challenges. Discernment involves knowing how to ask appropriate questions, to examine the signs of the times wisely, and to evaluate carefully the different options. Then, docile to the Holy Spirit, we try with an understanding heart and a strong will to put into practice the kind of activities that will make Don Bosco present and make the work he started fruitful in our day.

3 2

## WAYS OF SHARING LIFE AND COMMUNION IN THE SALESIAN STYLE

**The Preventive System is so tied to the Salesian style that it constitutes its most characteristic and expressive embodiment.** The

Preventive System as a concrete method of education not only facilitates educational and pastoral action, but is also the content of what we try to teach. Its most significant aspects have been identified as **home, parish, school and playground**. These are images that do not indicate determined environments, spaces and places, but rather a series of experiences that are offered to the young.

The diverse experiences of these four images add up to an indivisible and inseparable unity. It presupposes various forms of action in response to the youth situation, and therefore none of the four can be overlooked.

### **A** *A home that welcomes (the experience of family spirit)*

The experience of “home” creates **an environment of confidence and familiarity**.

As in a family it is essential that each member care for the others.

In a Salesian environment this

care is shown in many different ways and young people feel that they are listened to and understood. Values are transmitted through witness and accompaniment by educators who love and are loved. An unconditional welcome to young people when they arrive for the first time makes a huge impact. They are able to see that their most important needs are respected and that they are being offered an appropriate response.

This experience of “home” in the family spirit is a distinctive feature of our educational method. **Salesian assistance** consists in an attitude of empathy and friendly welcome, the desire to bring young people to Christ and a willingness to meet their concerns.

It is only in this loving and meaningful relationship that young people feel they can enter into dialogue, albeit slowly, and that values can be shared. In this climate, all the key conditions necessary for the young to mature in all aspects and dimensions can develop.



*“Act in such a way that everyone you talk to becomes your friend”*

[BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS 20, CHAPTER 8]

## **B** *A parish that evangelises (religious experience and pedagogical journey)*

The experience of the “parish” is built on two main pillars: in the first place, the belief that **every young person has in his or her heart the desire for God**, the desire for a full life, the unifying perspective of faith; secondly, a series of initiatives suitable to young people, with the goal of helping them to discover and follow their vocation.

On this foundation our evangelising activity aims at creating an environment where faith is lived daily with spontaneity and normality, as exemplified above all by the EPC. It is an environment where the essential dimensions of the Church are made explicit, according to the Salesian charism. This leads to “Koinonia,” whose ultimate expression is the EPC, whose members live the values of the Kingdom and call others to take an active part. A key element is “Liturgy” or the Christian celebration of daily events. It reaches its highest point and fullest expression in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist and Reconciliation. Another important element is “Diakonia,” which means a willingness to serve in educational and promotional activities, far beyond ordinary assistance. Finally there is “Martyria,” which means witnessing the values of the Kingdom to the world in deeds of charity, with formative initiatives that prepare young people and educators to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

All this is developed in the EPC within a *pedagogical journey* of gradual education in the faith that helps young people to discover their own vocation and follow it according to God’s plan (see Chapter 4, no.3.2).

## **C** *A school that prepares them for life (holistic growth through education)*

The experience of “school” is characterised by providing the resources necessary to ensure that **every young person develops the skills and attitudes essential for life in society**.

In every educational space, formal or informal, the educator must seek and find *the way that leads to the welfare of each young person* so that he or she can mature fully.

The young person is the one who is *first responsible for his or her own growth and maturity*. The educator will accompany the young on their journey by offering them the experiences necessary for the harmonious development of their personality, in a way of life founded on respect and dialogue, for the formation of a critical conscience and a sense of commitment.

**D** *A playground to meet up with friends and be happy  
(the pedagogy of joy and celebration)*

The experience of the “playground” is a natural environment where young people can form and deepen friendship and trust. The playground is understood as the place of education to happiness and joy. It encourages **values and attitudes of confidence**, and a suitable place for the care of each young person, for the little word in the ear, where the relationship between educator and young person helps to overcome the formalism associated with other structures, roles and environments.

In this sense, **the experience of the playground is a call to change from formal structures**, and leave the walls within which we work, to make every place where we meet young people an environment rich in educational and pastoral proposals. It means a more decentralised approach, meeting young people in informal places such as the streets. The focus is not only on the personal relationship but also on enhancing the dynamics of informal groups.

In the context of leisure activities, the new virtual meeting places and social networks are actually spaces where there are no strangers. We must be able to be present with the young wherever they meet.



*“Here we make holiness consist in being cheerful. We try to avoid sin, which is the great enemy who steals God’s grace and peace of heart, to fulfil our duties exactly, and to be faithful to the practices of piety. Start today and write as a motto: ‘Servite Domino in laetitia’ – we serve the Lord in holy joy”*

[LIFE OF ST DOMINIC SAVIO, A PUPIL OF THE ORATORY OF ST FRANCIS OF SALES, CHAPTER 18]



# SALESIAN EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PROJECT: OPERATIONAL TOOL

CHAPTER

VI

*“Put on the new nature  
created in the likeness  
of God”*

*(Eph 4:24)*





*Don Bosco has handed on to us his Preventive System as a means for carrying out our educational and pastoral service. "This system is based entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness." Instead of constraint, it appeals to the resources of intelligence, love, and the desire for God that everyone has in the depths of his being. It brings together educators and youngsters in a family experience of trust and dialogue. Imitating God's patience we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth as human beings and as men of faith"*

[C. 38]



*When we got firmly settled at Valdocco, I gave my full attention to promoting the things that could work to preserve our unity of spirit, discipline, and administration... what was being done at the Oratory"*

[Memoirs of the Oratory, third decade 1846-1856, no.6]

**We believe** in education and we challenge ourselves to plan our procedures in its regard; youth ministry comes into being when education is translated into concrete educational processes. The effort to plan, by means of the SEPP, keeps alive our willingness to be actively present amongst the young. By following the four dimensions we are helped in developing the personality of the young Christian through a systematic variety of proposals and a broad understanding of youth ministry which is open to everyone. In the end there are certain choices which run through all of Salesian ministry.



## 1

## A planning mentality

In a constantly changing world where society becomes ever more complex, theological and ecclesiological reflection endeavours to accompany the various educational models in different contexts and ever more diverse pastoral experiences. “Pastoral charity” is part of this complexity and “pedagogical intelligence” never ceases to urge on and animate what we do each day. The Christian community grows in its desire to exercise its educational responsibility for the young in a convinced manner. The world of the young demands a renewed commitment to constancy, continuity and where we act in consort. It requires that everyone think in terms of intervention but around a unified proposition which is neither individualistic nor fragmented. This makes it essential that there be a project capable of continuing the “tradition” while at the same time blending in what is new so that we are not constantly starting from zero every time there are new people responsible for events or new members in the team. **It becomes essential for us to understand the contribution of reflection and pastoral planning.** Don Bosco himself understood the need in his own time to give order and system to every pedagogical activity.

Those engaging in the youth ministry field should be aware of the journey they are undertaking, where they are to begin from and the goal they are aiming at. They should acquire familiarity with the entire process of education that comes into play in concrete terms. **Planning is an attitude of mind and heart before being something we do concretely.** Planning is a process more than a result; planning is an aspect of ministry more than one of its activities along the way; planning is a process of involving and unifying strengths.

To do otherwise is to risk introducing superficial and ineffective interventions. Drawing up a plan sounds like just “one more thing to do”, a preliminary theoretical activity we have to suffer, a tribute we must pay to current guidelines.

On the contrary: our plan has the merit of being a “map” and *reference* which codifies our departure and arrival points. A project or plan is not

just technical planning nor some vague collection of ideas. It is a map which guides our passion for education and our service to those who are the most delicate. It will be important to keep it in mind in developing the various processes. Drawing up a plan does not mean burying creativity nor does it mean we have the solution to every problem; it means valuing our resources and being open to likely solutions.

## 2

## The Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project

## 2 1

### SEPP AS A SALESIAN APOSTOLIC PROJECT

## A

*The SEPP is already part of our history and an operational tool*

The SEPP is planning mentality made concrete, something that should guide the unfolding of the mission through various works. The SEPP is part of our history and operational tool that guides how Salesian Youth Ministry is carried out (cf. *R.* 4), and the factor of inculturation of the charism (cf. *GC24*, no.5). **It is what guides the process of growth of the provincial community and the various EPCs within it in their efforts to incarnate the Salesian mission in a particular context.** The SEPP is equivalent to a practical manual offering direction and continuity to ministry and ensures that works have unified aims and directions.

If the primary purpose of the SEPP is to lead the Province and local communities to work with a *shared mindset and with clear criteria and objectives*, it also makes shared management of pastoral processes possible. The project or plan is codified in a text which must be understood and acted upon.

## B Basic characteristics

Since the SEPP is an operational expression of Salesian Youth Ministry, it ought to respond to its basic characteristics which should specify all the aspects and elements which make it up, common **themes running through it which ensure that it is Salesian**.

» ***The core of the SEPP is the young person as an individual, especially if he or she is poor***

The principle focus of attention for all the dynamics of Salesian Youth Ministry is **the young person in all of his or her dimensions** (the body, intelligence, feelings, will), **relationships** (with self, others, the world and God), **from the twofold perspective of the individual who plays an active role in history** (collective promotion of and involvement in transforming society). It has an eye to *the unified nature of the existential energy which is human growth* to the point of encounter with Jesus Christ, the perfect man, seen as the supreme meaning of our existence (see Chapter 3).

The SEPP *orients and guides an educational process* in which the many interventions, resources and actions are intertwined and organised in service of the gradual, holistic development of the young person. The SEPP realises the values and attitudes both of the Christian proposition of Salesian Youth Spirituality and the methodological principles of Salesian pedagogy, that is, of the Preventive System: which pays *prior attention to the poorest young people and those in greatest difficulty*.

Contact with the real situation of young people needs to be constantly born in mind: a situation forever in flux in an ever-shifting culture. The SEPP should always view it not in terms of simple end or aim but as a theological 'locus'. Such is the common thread running through all dimensions and aspects of pastoral activity and the SEPP.

» ***Its community nature***

The SEPP, before being a text, is **a community process which tends to generate a real confluence of criteria, objectives and common guidelines in the EPC**. Given that it is a process of mind and heart it avoids scattered activities and instead gathers them up in a synthesis

and at a point of educational convergence. It creates and strengthens the awareness of the common mission in the EPC and creates deeper understanding of the educational and pastoral vocation which needs to be shared and constantly evaluated. The SEPP, then, is an identifying and planning aspect of the EPC which in turn centres on educational and pastoral activity (cf. R. 5).

Planning not only helps to orient and constantly evaluate pastoral activity so that it can be even more inculturated and conscious of the challenges; **planning also becomes a process of community identification**, an even more urgent task given that we are called to educate to the faith in the circumstances of the New Evangelisation. The EPC is asked to reflect on its own identity and its operational plan. A new scenario implicates it in a particularly challenging task: proposing pathways appropriate to the specific circumstances in which young people find themselves.

» ***Openness to the area in which the Salesian work is located, and its impact on it***

We cannot consider the SEPP today merely in reference to what is going on inside the Salesian work; all institutions, especially educational ones, are part of a much broader system of relationships they must deal with and interact with. Consideration needs to be given to the repercussions Salesian activity has outside the work considered as **a centre of aggregation and an agent of educational transformation**.

The need for effective evangelisation challenges the EPC to run smoothly, following the **logic of an educational alliance** open to support from the local area. Focusing on this service of coordination and blending of activity implies being seriously committed to moving beyond pure management of our own works and services: it requires a shift from the simple but careful implementation of activities which have been developed internally to a communicative, engaging capacity where typical values of Salesian mission and spirituality are concerned. It means extending dialogue to other educational, social and religious institutions at work in the same area, opening up through modern technologies which can help us build relationships and establish an effective dialogue with a broad range of spokespersons for thinking that has an impact on the lives of the young.

## 2 2

## THE SEPP AS A DYNAMIC AND HOLISTIC PROCESS

A *An articulated understanding of Salesian Youth Ministry*

The SEPP is the focal point around which the doctrinal and operational strategies of the Preventive System converge. The Salesian apostolic project in all its dimensions finds its roots and most accurate description in the *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales*, nos.31-39: "Our pastoral educational service."

Salesian pastoral and educational activity is **a dynamic process that unfolds in certain fundamental dimensions** as integrating and complementary aspects. It is an anthropological, pedagogical and coherent spiritual frame of reference for accompanying young people in the delicate process of their growth as human beings in the faith.

The SEPP, in its organic unity, integrates these different aspects and elements of Salesian ministry in a unique process aimed at a well-identified goal. This process has **four fundamental aspects to it which are mutually linked and complementary to one another. We call them "dimensions"** (cf. C. 32-37; R. 6-9). These are the vital and dynamic content of Salesian Youth Ministry and they point to its end purpose. Each of them has a specific objective that distinguishes it while being at the same time intimately connected to the others. They are not stages organised in rigorous succession, but are integrated in the unified dynamic of a young person's growth.

There are precise anthropological, educational and theological reference points underlying this arrangement: growth implies an intertwining of human maturity and the Christian meaning of life in the logic of the journey. The dimensions **are referred to in every activity, work and service**. This is why we consider them as running through all of the SEPP.

B *The meaning of the four dimensions*

These dimensions can be understood as inter-communicating **vessels that not only refer to one another ideally but nurture one another**. Although in any description they seem to follow one after the other it is worth noting that they form a whole, a unity: each lends its own specific

nature to the whole but also receives direction and certain original features from the others. They are inseparable and present themselves in reciprocal manner such that one cannot develop without explicit reference to the others. The logic behind them is that of *system*, where the dynamics of one element provokes adaptation in all the others.

This unity and correlation needs to become explicit through the objectives and strategies of the SEPP in every work in the Province, with the assurance that the individual steps and interventions are part of a unified process of human and Christian development which respond to the question: **what kind of young person should we be promoting** for him or her to become an “adult in the faith”? Keeping in mind cultural and local diversity which conditions the Christian model and requires important integrations, the dimensions aim at defining the young person’s Christian identity in the Church and in contemporary society.

The way the dimensions are spelt out comes from a *notion which respects the complexity of personal development* and a plan that looks to the individual’s salvation in all respects, concerned with the divine and human dynamics that are in fact intertwined in the history of the world.

This systematic synthesis expressed through the dimensions is what gives Salesian Youth Ministry its specific character:

**the dimension of education to the faith** (cf. C. 22, 33, 34, 36; R. 7, 13): implicitly or explicitly, every pastoral plan sees to guiding young people towards an encounter with Jesus Christ and transforming their lives in the light of the Gospel;

**the educational and cultural dimension** (cf. C. 31, 32; R. 4, 6): we encounter young people where they are at, encouraging the development of all their human resources and opening them up to the meaning of life;

**the dimension of group and social experience** (cf. C. 35; R. 8): we make possible a developing experience of being in a group to the point where young people discover the Church as the communion of believers in Christ, so they can develop an intense sense of belonging to the Church;

**the vocational dimension** (cf. C. 34, 35, 37; R. 9): we accompany the discovery of the individual’s vocation and life plan or project in view of a commitment to transforming the world according to God’s design.

These four dimensions taken together constitute the internal dynamics of Salesian Youth Ministry: they are a framework of specific choices that can help us to develop appropriate educational proposals with young people in their concrete circumstances.

These four dimensions, all in balance, allow us to put forward a systematic variety of proposals and have a broad understanding of youth ministry open to everyone. Ministry to the adolescent and older youth unfolds in practice through multiple but *holistic interventions* (due to the diverse circumstances of youth, but always aimed at the whole person). When young people are strongly influenced by their social and cultural circumstances and we are functioning within educational institutions which have specific ends, we need to develop approaches that take on board the concrete situations (young workers, young school students, young people who are marginalised in some particular way) but always from the point of view that the young person and his or her experience of life are at the centre.

Having defined the meaning and substance of the SEPP it will be possible to give broader attention to how it can be developed (see Chapter 8).

## 2 3

### THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF EACH DIMENSION AND THE ESSENTIAL CHOICES IT REQUIRES

#### A *The dimension of education to the faith*

##### » *Its specific nature*

Evangelising the young is the first and fundamental purpose of our mission (cf. *R.* 7, 13). Our project is aimed decisively at young people reaching full maturity in Christ (cf. *C.* 31) and their growth in the Church, ensuring that **education of the religious dimension is central to personal development** (cf. *GC23*, no. 160).

Evangelisation brings the Good News of Christ to every level of humankind so as to renew people from within (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 18). Right from the moment of first proclamation of Jesus we aim to accompany young people so they can pass through the door of faith so that, during their

life, they may acquire “a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel” (*Porta Fidei* 8) and discover the intrinsic joy of faith.

The development of a mature faith often requires more time today and a community involvement that goes beyond a strictly catechetical one. To accompany the Christian journey and adherence to faith, we speak in terms of *initiation*.

Don Bosco passed on a passion for salvation of the young through **his constant involvement in simple, essential catechesis adapted** to the circumstances, age and culture of the young and linked with other educational and recreational offerings by the Oratory. Salesian catechesis does not happen as the end-point of a preparatory course but is implicitly at the heart of initial encounters and explicitly part of everything we offer. Don Bosco did not make a distinction between first proclamation and catechesis, but when he met a boy he immediately found a convenient moment to invite him to embark on a journey of Christian life. If catechesis is not tackled as an integral part of young peoples’ lives it remains foreign and incomprehensible to them. They put up with it but then abandon it in the future.

## » *Some specific choices*

1 Fostering the **development of the people’s religious dimension**, be they Christian or belong to other religions. The aim is to give this dimension deep roots, purify it and open it up to a desire for a further journey of faith. We help young people through the various things we offer them, to experience the typical attitudes of religious experience: wonder, contemplation, being open to mystery, doing things without asking for something in return. The first challenge is to instigate the desire for further research and little by little show the reasonableness of the act of faith.

Play, dialogue, discussion, encounter *are what life*, its problems, hopes, expectations, is grounded in. This is the good soil of experience. Here we need to be companions on the journey with young people, sharing their laborious development as they measure the depths of their experience in life. For them this soil or grounding is necessarily their development, what they need to do in order to build their identity. They are not lacking in enthusiasm for this.



- 2 Arousing, accompanying and plumbing **the experience of faith** as personal attachment to Christ which leads to viewing life through Jesus' eyes. It is important to develop a systematic **approach to education to faith**. Those who understand the process of human development of the teenager and youth are aware that to integrate faith and life requires considerable educational attention.

We try to approach young peoples' experience especially by *getting started on a rethinking of the content of proclamation and catechesis*. Experiential or anthropological catechesis, which features tackling the range of human problems as its content and dimension, is expressed by a twofold and complementary idea:

- ▮ proclaiming faith in a *meaningful way*, through all the experiential wealth of the Christian message;
- ▮ helping faith to mature as an attitude capable of inspiring and organising the entire process of *human development, strengthening* our attachment to the Lord through personal encounter with the educator and spiritual direction (cf. GC23, nos.173-175).

- 3 Getting young people to **begin participating actively and consciously in liturgy** especially by **celebrating** the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist,

- ▮ helping to prepare them by means of a welcoming environment and friendship that encourages them to open their hearts;
- ▮ seeing that celebrations lead to a real personal relationship with Christ for the beauty and depth they communicate;
- ▮ fostering personal commitment to living out what has been celebrated in everyday life;

- 4 In a world dominated by haste, the seeking of immediate pleasure and pragmatic efficiency, it is urgent that we create appropriate settings for the young that encourage an encounter with God through **practices that lead to inwardness**: *personal and community prayer, being open to mystery, contemplation and silence, active encounter with the shared and lived Word*. This approach to the Word and formation activity aimed

at integration through daily community prayer are extremely important. Young people are always more sensitive to a prayerful reading of the Word of God in the form of *Lectio divina* when the biblical text is broken down into appropriate language strictly connected with their life and by talking about who God is so that who they are can also be revealed.

- 5 Offering young people gradual experiences of **service and apostolic involvement** that help them to personally bring about an integration of faith and life for them, so that according to their possibilities they become witnesses for and evangelisers of their peers. We are talking about a faith that encourages and examines the processes whereby people and groups grow and develop in a more human way following the model of Jesus Christ.

*The social dimension of charity* belongs to the education of individuals to be socially and politically committed to justice, to building up a more human and just society by discovering the fully evangelical inspiration for doing so (cf. C. 32; R. 22). An increasingly mature adherence in faith becomes sincere service of mankind. Proposing and witnessing to solidarity gives credibility to Gospel proclamation because it is an expression of human potential; this is already proclaiming the new life in Christ, and showing that the Gospel is meant for human beings, that the Church has something crucial to say about life, dignity, hope and the future of mankind. Don Bosco educated young people to the moral virtues of the upright citizen.

## **B** *The educational and cultural dimension*

### » *Its specific nature*

The educational and cultural dimension is intimately related to the dimension of education to the faith. **Education is the place and also the means for offering the Good News of the Gospel**, the message which takes flesh in real culture and calls for gradual processes of absorption which are in harmony with the young person's capacity for growth to maturity (cf. C. 31). Education requires that we begin from where young people are really at and then develop strategies that guide them towards holistic development.

The pastoral outlook is not directed exclusively by the religious question and relationship with faith and the Church. It is open to all of experience: it taps into all the hopes and efforts of growth, building our lives together

with others, fitting into society, work. The invitation to faith, on the other hand, is linked to human growth to maturity and its purpose, because that is where it makes sense to believe. The pastoral outlook, therefore, is overflowing with educational focus, **with the exercise of an educational wisdom guided by faith.**

### » *Some specific choices*

Seeing to the educational and cultural dimension of pastoral activity means giving pride of place to certain precise practical matters:

**1 Helping young people build a strong identity.** In a fragmented world bent on what is immediate, marked by relativism and lack of principle, we Salesians believe that the Pastoral and Educative Project can help young people form strong personalities (cf. Mt 7:24-27). We help them to overcome their difficulties. We need to see that *there is a convergence of all educational activities aimed at forming a unified personality: an operational choice where all contributions come together to strengthen one another, in harmony with aspirations and properly ordered educational dimensions.*

We see young people through Jesus' eyes and we help them to:

- ▮ form a moral conscience and a capacity for ethical discernment so they can make responsible and properly motivated judgements;
- ▮ grow in autonomy so they can tackle life in a coherent and responsible way;
- ▮ acquire a rich legacy of values/virtues shaped by the Gospel (cf. C. 32).
- ▮ look to credible reference models recognisable in educators who take Jesus the Good Shepherd and Don Bosco as their primary reference (cf. C. 11, 21). The quality of these real life models has a strong impact on the journey of adherence to Christ.

**2 Accompanying young people in development and growth to maturity in their **emotional and affective world.**** This is a world that finds it difficult at times to express itself, despite the fundamental role it plays. Affections and feelings are criteria and guide for relationships

We look after this aspect of things:

- 3 Promoting a culture inspired by Christian humanism.** This rich legacy offers a different view of the world and mankind. We encourage the positive development of our culture in unity of faith and life:

- ▮ by creating a culture of solidarity and involvement which leads to overcoming difficult situations by struggling against any kind of injustice;
- ▮ by fashioning an educational proposition out of the many social communication programmes, aimed at developing a Gospel mentality.

**4 Working for human development and professional competence as human beings,** so that young people can fit into the working world as well-qualified citizens. Being professional means that a person's work is done with greater competence and real satisfaction, while being aware of limitations and respectful of what others do. It means being aware of one's own contribution to social development.

There is also a need to form stable *attitudes and structures in young personalities* (self-esteem, socialisation, participation, autonomy, solidarity, responsibility, willingness), which allow them to act as free individuals with a leaning to critical understanding of the situation and supportive communion with others.

**5 Helping them reflect on the reasonableness of their faith** and on the contribution Christianity has made to building up the society in which we live, by nurturing an intelligent interpretation of the Christian message:

- ▮ an education to attitudes which underpin openness to God (knowing how to be recollected; greater and better awareness of personal limitations and possibilities; having a sense of wonder, appreciating the good, the great and the beautiful that can be found in and around oneself);
- ▮ a critical and appropriate religious formation which enlightens the mind and strengthens the heart;
- ▮ an attitude of openness, respect and dialogue amongst the various Christian confessions and for the plurality of religious expression;



## C *The social experience dimension*

### » *Its specific nature*

**One of the most important pedagogical insights of Salesian Youth Ministry is to be found in social experience.** Don Bosco saw the group as an educational presence capable of increasing the range of things we can do. As a young man he himself had grown up in the *Society for a Good Time* while he was attending school at Chieri, and this was a group experience for him. Sodalities, societies, conferences, each in their own way and given the interests their members had and what they wanted to achieve, came into being at the outset of the Oratory and, from 1860-1870 became part of the boarding schools and other residential arrangements.

This dimension is a fundamental feature of Salesian education and evangelisation (see Chapter 5, 1.3/b).

The Preventive System demands an intense and lively setting of participation and friendly relationships enlivened by the animating presence of the educators. It encourages all kinds of constructive and group activities which are a concrete initiation into community, civic and ecclesial involvement (cf. C. 35; R. 8).

### » *Some specific choices*

The development of this dimension in the circumstances described above requires certain choices:

- 1 Building up a **family environment** by means of appropriate and strategically planned activities, where there is an experience of a sympathetic pedagogy, display of relationships and affection: an atmosphere of confidence in which what is being offered as education and evangelisation is credible and can be assimilated because of the intensity of personal relationships and the atmosphere of shared joy.
- 2 Opting for the **group** as the privileged setting in which the Salesian idea of the group can be offered: the variety of groups open to all young people who are the real key players, and which express the diversity of pedagogical directions our ministry can take. This criterion implies further things to focus on:

- creating many possibilities and open and welcoming settings according to the diversity of interests of the young people and their different stages in life, beginning from the circumstances in which we find them, and respecting the rhythm of development possible for them;
- looking particularly to formation groups and groups intent on Christian commitment. This is the crowning achievement of group experience;
- constantly preparing and forming educators and leaders;
- offering strong experiences of shared life and living (retreats, camps, special days) which confirm and relaunch the idea of coming together for the Christian and social value of being in a group;
- getting the Educative and Pastoral Community to reflect on and review the running, educational effectiveness and activities involved in youth groups.

### 3 Educating with the heart and style of animation. The style of animation means:

- a way of thinking about the human being that recognises him or her as being capable because of inner resources of being committed and responsible for processes which concern the human individual;
- a method that looks at what is positive, at the wealth and potential every young person carries within, and proposes some activity to develop that;
- a style of journeying with the young that suggests, motivates, helps them grow in daily life through a relationship which is liberating and also genuine;
- the final and overall aim of ensuring that each one is fully restored to his or her *joie de vivre* and the courage to hope.

Animation has a real human face: **the animator or leader**. This person has a precise and fundamental role. Although the role varies in

particular situations according to the type of group, we can spell it out this way. The animator/leader:

- ▮ encourages the formation of groups and their ongoing research, reflection, activities and ideals;
- ▮ helps the group, through his or her competence and experience, to overcome crises and develop personal relationships in its midst;
- ▮ offers the youngsters a critical point of view and helps them explore further, enabling them to express their ideas, desires and what they have discovered;
- ▮ facilitates communication and connections amongst groups in the local Educative and Pastoral Community;
- ▮ accompanies individuals in their process of human and Christian development.

4 The youth group should lean towards **being part of society and the Church** according to each one's vocational choice. Seen this way Salesian group experience should foster:

- ▮ preparation and accompaniment that helps a young person take part in social life assuming moral, professional and social responsibilities, and cooperating with whoever is working to build a society more worthy of the human being;
- ▮ being an active part of civil life by promoting the various associations which are at the service of the common good in society;
- ▮ playing an active part in the church community by helping young people to have a sincere love for it as a communion of all believers in Christ and the universal sacrament of salvation.

Local groups take their bearings from the *Salesian Youth Movement (SYM)*: individuals, youth groups and associations who retain their autonomy but see themselves as part of Salesian spirituality and pedagogy, either implicitly or explicitly make up the SYM (see Chapter 6, 2.5).



- 5 Creating a **community of young adults** which allows them to look after their Christian life and sharing. They are places in which life is shared, God's will is discerned in listening to the Word, where they celebrate, pray and take on pastoral involvement in the various ecclesial contexts that the members are part of.

Youth communities are a special place for vocational discernment and offer young adults a valuable aid for discovering, day by day, the faith they have professed, celebrated, lived and prayed (cf. *Porta Fidei* 9).

## **D** *The vocational dimension*

### » *Its specific nature*

Inviting young people to consider their vocation should be part of the entire process of education and evangelisation. **The three earlier dimensions converge on this one, the ultimate horizon, reference point for our ministry.** The aim is to accompany each young person as they go about discovering their vocation, which is the place where the individual responds to the free and unconditional love that God has for him or her. The vocational dimension shapes the first and ultimate objective of Salesian Youth Ministry.

### » *Some specific choices*

- 1 Generating attitudes of availability and generosity, that prepare young people to hear God's voice, and accompanying them as they formulate their **plan of life**. Taking care of vocations means a true and proper journey of accompaniment as they make fundamental choices in life, helping them to deal with their own story as a gift and to accept that there is a vocational perspective to life.
- 2 Building up a **community of believers where the experience of faith is visible and credible**: communities that are warm, sympathetic, profound, committed and open to all young people who are seeking their destiny in life. The Christian life journey requires a community context (ecclesial) which is lively, attractive, able to support the choice of faith and help interpret it in relationship to daily life: an educational setting then, involving significant witnesses who live their lives as vocation.
- 3 Opting for **personal accompaniment** which allows for the mature growth of young peoples' vocational choices in a personalised way, and

tries to reach out to individuals in a differentiated way, relevant to their inner experience, their situation and the community's just requirements. Therefore it is essential for the EPC and SEPP to have concrete proposals of place and time for accompaniment, encounter and personal dialogue with groups and families to bring about internalisation and personalisation (recollections, retreats etc.) and for systematic spiritual direction (see Chapter 5, 1.3/c).

- 4 Finally, there is a strong need for the invitation to consider vocation to be **part of the overall process of education to faith**, as the point of convergence for all educational and evangelising efforts. Our ministry can be revitalised to the extent that it makes the vocational dimension explicit: where life is rediscovered as gift, a "being for" in a liberating and fascinating perspective when viewed against the surprising and magnificent designs God has for us. This process supposes:
  - ▮ a vocational discernment offered every young person according to age and circumstance, that helps them discover God's gift, their personal resources and exploit these God-given gifts as part of the generous response to the call;
  - ▮ exploring vocation as an issue through the various stages along the journey of education to the faith, especially in teenage and early adulthood years while at the same time offering experiences of freely given service to the needy;



*"All ministry, and especially youth ministry, is radically vocational in nature: the vocational dimension is what naturally inspires it and is its natural outcome. Therefore we need to abandon the reductive notion of vocational ministry which is only concerned with looking for candidates for religious or priestly life. On the contrary, as said before, vocation ministry should create appropriate circumstances for every young person to discover, take up and responsibly follow his or her vocation. The first condition, following Don Bosco's example, consists in creating an environment which experiences and passes on a true "culture of vocation", that is, a way of conceiving of and tackling life as a freely received gift; a gift to be shared in the service of the fullness of life for everyone, overcoming an individualistic, consumeristic, relativist mentality and a culture of self-fulfilment"*

(FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, AGC 409, "COME AND SEE")

- a clear and explicit invitation via meetings, testimonies, experiences, information on the various vocations in so many areas of life (engagement, marriage, ministerial priesthood, consecrated life);
- a deep spiritual formation through initiation to prayer, listening to God's Word, frequenting the sacraments, liturgy, devotion to Our Lady; active participation in the life of the ecclesial community through apostolic groups and movements considered as special places for growth in vocation and as a Christian; the possibility of direct contact with some religious communities and experiences of explicit vocational discernment.
- the personal invitation to follow a vocation, providing a well-focused and gradual discernment; looking after vocations to the Salesian charism in a special way, in its many forms through *discernment, and cultivating the seeds of a Salesian vocation* to consecrated or lay life that are found in the young.

Let us sum up the four dimensions of Salesian Youth Ministry in the following scheme:

**education to faith** (1) not possible unless it becomes an educational and cultural process (2) involving the relational and social dimensions of the individual (3) who only at this moment can discover and orient his life towards its fulfilment (4);

**the educational process** (2) will not come to maturity, meaning it will be without a true anthropological point of reference, unless inspired by a notion of man enlightened by evangelisation (1); nor will it achieve its proper objective unless the individual is involved, taking account of all his or her relationships (3) and the aim of fulfilling one's life through a precise plan which gives it direction (4);

**the personal and group relationships** in which we live (3) are mere physical contiguity unless incorporated into full personal and cultural development (2), or unless they are part of a plan of life and seen as essential to self-fulfilment, (4) or unless they are loving relationships as defined in evangelisation(1);

**the vocational dimension** that guides the whole process (4) is incomprehensible without reference to Christ (1), unless it impacts on the relationships in each one's life (3) and unless it becomes the meaning and end of our cultural and educational formation (2).

## 24

## CHOICES CUTTING ACROSS ALL OF SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY

The SEPP fosters development of an active faith through educational and pastoral tasks that are found throughout and are anchored in our charism:

### A *Animating apostolic vocations*

In continuity with issues indicated in the vocational dimension, vocational animation finds its undeniable place in accompaniment of the choice of apostolic vocation.

**Educational guidelines help in discovering one's identity, and facilitate the decisional process through a plan of life based and built upon Gospel values.**

### » *Living in a culture of vocation*

The continuity of the process of animating apostolic vocations is accomplished through a specific vocational programme. Within this we focus on listening, discernment, real world evaluation of personal suitability for a possible call to special consecration.

The differentiated approaches we take in guiding someone in his or her vocation should be done on the basis of the **vocational signs that seem to be showing up as part of the person's development.** When a young person begins to identify what his personal vocation is, this should not be understood as a point of arrival but as a point of departure for ongoing development in this vocational choice. The value of a vocational culture is that it understands



*“The contents of a vocational culture concern three areas: anthropological, educational and pastoral. The first refers to the way of conceiving of and presenting the human being as vocation; the second looks to facilitating how we offer values that are conducive to vocation; the third focuses on the relationship between vocation and objective culture and draws conclusions from it for our vocation work!”*

[FR PASCUAL CHÁVEZ, AGC 409, “COME AND SEE”]

vocation in its broad sense as a call to life, dignified work, various services and involvement: it is a culture that then leads some people to reflect on the possibilities of opting for the priestly or consecrated state of life.

### » *Called to life and faith*

“Vocation” begins with a call to life, continues through a call to faith, and arrives, through various responses, at a call to consecrated life. In this sense, we accompany those who, in a good process of development to maturity in their individual vocational dimension, consider the possibility of God calling them to a life of special consecration. We give particular attention to the nature of the call: **a spiritual journey configured as a gradual growth in awareness of the demands of a vocation that requires conversion and gift of oneself in a life of loving dedication to God.**

The EPC, accompanying all young people in their human, Christian and Salesian development, also offers occasions and appropriate forms of serious reflection on the possibility of one giving one’s life over totally to the service of God.

The spiritual guide who is needed for any vocational process, helps apostolic vocations particularly to discern their motivations and the requirements of this vocation. This process allows a young person to make a **calm, personal, free and well-motivated decision** while having experience in a community where he is formed according to the charism to which he is called, growing in understanding and gradual conformation to it.

### » *Vocational animation is at the heart of the SEPP*

The SEPP should be decisive in offering pastoral activity which is able to give rise to and identify apostolic vocations to special consecration. **Every SEPP should respond appropriately to young people who are seriously asking themselves about the possibility of a Salesian apostolic vocation.**

In inviting people to discernment, those who animate apostolic vocations are careful to see that aims and methods are approached gradually.

The pre-adolescent and adolescent stages are a preparation for decision-making at an older stage. These are opportunities for building identity as

a human being and a Christian and they prepare people for discovering and holding to their vocation. It is a good opportunity for youngsters to discover how they can play an active role through some specific calling in the Church, Congregation or world: a **discovery that can come about through an explicit invitation.**

This gradual approach allows them to *tackle life as a call and then translate that into a personal plan of life.* By going back over insights and vocational aspirations hidden in earlier stages of life they can shift from a general availability to a more specific one where they are ready to give of themselves.

In these various processes – to making more mature decisions in life, guidance in spiritual life and discernment of a vocation – we need to guarantee the inner freedom that assists people in their growth to a fully mature vocational decision. Attention ought to be given to freeing them from all the likely cultural, emotional, social factors which might condition them so they can genuinely accept responsibility for a radical life commitment.



*“Fostering consecrated vocations demands certain fundamental choices: constant prayer, explicit proclamation, a courageous invitation, careful discernment, personalised accompaniment. We should be committed to daily prayer in our communities and should and involve young people, families, lay people, Salesian Family Groups. Proclamation entails making good use of the many opportunities which present themselves over the liturgical year. Inviting and discerning require a warm closeness which gives rise to confidence and allows us to recognise the signs of a vocation which a young person can show. Accompaniment requires us to help the young intensify their spiritual life, take part in suitable forms of apostolate, have an experience of community, get to know the Congregation, assess their motives and take the necessary steps which lead to a decision”*

[GC26, NO.54]

## **B** *Mission animation and various kinds of volunteer activity*

The dimension of education to the faith finds continuity in mission animation and various kinds of voluntary activity, and should be maintained and developed. **An openness to a missionary vocation and charitable**



*“At Don Bosco’s Oratory the young people and adult collaborators had an experience of living and working together with him for the education and salvation of youth. This charismatic and community lived experience, the nucleus of Salesian spirituality, throws light on the project of Salesian Voluntary service”*

(THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT  
IN THE SALESIAN MISSION, NO.33)

**social involvement through the volunteer movement are mature expressions of education to faith and evangelisation of the young.**

Mission animation does not happen as an isolated factor, but in continuity with the identity of every Christian and community, as their natural ‘flourishing’. On the other hand, it is presented as a radical and clear expression of an identity which is *capable of motivating the community* towards apostolic activity. Common characteristic

and significant event are two things to highlight: missionary animation that strengthens faith, and faith that leads to missionary commitment towards everyone especially those in most need. This is why we need to think of missionary animation as an element that enriches the various dimensions in the SEPP: human and personal development, mature faith development, the process of deciding on a vocation.

### » **Don Bosco’s missionary heart**

Don Bosco understood the enormous *spiritual energy* and extraordinary *apostolic impetus* that the missionary ideal gave rise to in his boys. He understood this and employed it zealously and intelligently. He spoke to his boys about the mission and missionaries, kept them informed about their various activities, their needs, got them to pray for them, encouraged them to play their part in his dream for the missions.

Mission animation and voluntary service today encourage the missionary to share and the volunteer to adopt a vocational view of life: *as a gift freely received, to be shared as service to all.*

Mission culture becomes a lived reality when fundamental attitudes and values of the Salesian charism are acquired. They are values that Don Bosco inculcated in his boys and his Salesians: a preferential love for very poor young people, the desire to participate in Christ’s redeeming mission and renewal of the world.

## » *Ours is a missionary Congregation*

The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* in general presents three kinds of evangelising activity: “specific missionary activity” amongst people who do not yet know Christ; “pastoral care” of the Christian faithful; and “offering the Gospel once again” in countries with an ancient Christian tradition by which have become secularised.

The boundaries between these three are not clearly definable; certainly these activities are not exactly the same, but nor do they mutually exclude one another. On the contrary they are intercommunicating; and specifically missionary activity (*ad gentes*) also means the first and specific expression of all evangelisation: “Without [the mission *ad gentes*], the Church’s very missionary dimension would be deprived of its essential meaning and of the very activity that exemplifies it” (*Redemptoris Missio* 33-34).

**The missionary commitment *ad gentes* is an integral part of the Salesian charism.** Vocations to the missions have been cultivated in the Congregation from the very beginning, as the keenest and most generous expressions of the Salesian vocation. Today too, mission animation and the Salesian missionary volunteer are expressions of a missionary spirit and the spirituality of the Salesian Congregation.

The Salesian missionary and volunteer are involved in a project of life based on Gospel values, serving people in difficulty: they promote proclamation of the Gospel, human rights, solidarity, justice and peace.

The values that mission animation and voluntary service defend and promote are values that are part of the Salesian spirit: disinterested service; community spirit and oratorian style; interculturality; solidarity, and a clear and preferential option for the least, especially the poor and those on the fringes of society; critical and responsible involvement in society in order to build up the Kingdom.

## » *Zeal for the missions comes from the mystery of God*

For the mission and volunteer service it is essential **to cultivate a spiritually solid interior life.** This allows us to discover God’s presence and action in ourselves and others, and proclaim it: a spiritual life that strengthens awareness of our responsibility to evangelise, and is involved in activity for the good of others. Spiritual life generates attitudes of



service and freely giving of oneself, and it gives us the courage to dream, and strongly desire the good of others.

The Church's missionary dimension is *rooted in God's Trinitarian existence*: the Word sent by the Father, through the mystery of his Death and Resurrection, gives us the fullness of life as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Sharing this message of fullness, this good news, this *euanghèlion*, with all peoples is the Church's mission.

Mission animation and voluntary service offer people the possibility of involvement and work for the **coming of God's Kingdom in the various contexts of the Salesian mission**.

Missionary activity is not primarily based on human abilities, even though their role is important. *The Holy Spirit is the active agent in the Church's mission*: He calls, enlightens, guides, gives value and effectiveness. The missionary and volunteer live out their vocation when they are obedient to the action of the Spirit.

## » Voluntary service and missionary activity

**The Salesian missionary volunteer movement proposes Gospel values through the witness of disinterested and supportive service** in education and socio-political involvement that reaches out to family, work, culture.

Salesian voluntary service emerges from daily experience substantially embracing important areas: culture, social welfare, free time, development cooperation, group leadership, education to faith, formation of catechists and pastoral agents.

Voluntary service in its various forms, more than being an act of spontaneous and passing generosity, is a mindset that accepts the significance of testimony that has the highest moral and social value. It is specified by certain critical elements: apostolic interiority which features the spirit of the *da mihi animas*; the central role of Christ the Good Shepherd, who demands that the missionary volunteer have a pedagogical and pastoral attitude in relating to those to whom he or she is sent; a commitment to education, a characteristic feature of our Salesian charism; a sense of belonging to the Church; joyful work; the Marian dimension which sees missionary and voluntary activity as participation in the ecclesial motherhood of Mary Help of Christians.



Finally, it is important to recognise **the manifold initiatives and diversity of experiences** which identify with or make reference to the missionary spirit of the Salesian Family: direct contact and meeting up with missionaries; information concerning the numerous missionary activities (news, publications, audiovisuals, opportunities to finance small projects); mission animation material prepared with pedagogical intent and didactic criteria; mission groups; formation topics for various groups and Christian communities; knowledge and study of Church documents relating to the missions; taking part of the Church's various mission days.

## **C** *Social Communication*

### » *Social communication flows through all Salesian presences*

Social communication fills the world and determines the way human beings coexist. It is therefore of close interest to the vocation of the Salesian educator working in promotion and evangelisation. and it is, therefore, *a specific dimension of the Salesian charism* (cf. C. 43). **It was something essential for Don Bosco; his appeal to every educator, and something fundamental to the Church and world today.**

Don Bosco made his tireless activity in social communication a constitutive element of what it means to be an educator and apostle of the young and of all people. We have learned from Salesian tradition that social communication is not simply a collection of tools or material means to use; instead it is *part and parcel of any Salesian presence* involved in educating and evangelising be it through specific activities or through the various kinds of activity that influence popular culture and promotion of appropriate social forms. And harking back to Don Bosco:

*I ask and beseech you then not to neglect this most important part of our mission* [CIRCULAR LETTER ON SPREADING GOOD BOOKS, 19 MARCH 1885].

## » **Communicators by vocation and mission**

As Salesian educators today we should, in all of our multifaceted apostolic and educational activity, express our firm resolve to be genuine communicators. Communicators, then, *by intimate vocation and by our mission as educators*.

**Our quality as educators and evangelisers demands that we be qualified communicators.** Communication fosters charismatic communion and mobilisation of the mission. We are especially interested in *interpersonal communication* between adult and young person, laity and religious, those well endowed with experience and those who are taking their first steps in life, and amongst all those who have gifts to share. The Preventive System entrusts the effectiveness of our education principally to direct face-to-face encounter: encounter in confidence, friendship, lending an attentive and interested ear. So we need to cultivate *the ability to manage relational dynamics*: the quality of interactions can negatively or positively condition the formation of personality; educational attitudes and styles have an influence on emotional states and very often determine behaviour.

The Congregation's reflection reveals a consolidation of beliefs concerning communication as it is understood in broad terms and opens up to **a new and more systematic praxis in the field of social communication** (cf. *The Salesian Social Communication System*). From this view of communication we can understand its primary purpose: communion and progress of human society (cf. Fr Egidio Viganò, AGC 302, "The challenge of the media").

We are passing through a phase, a period of profound technological and cultural revolution; information and our way of making use of it is being digitalised. Everything is now happening on the Web and the younger generations ("digital natives", "cyberkids", "click generation") have gained a high capacity to access technology and to use it competently.

Technology is a *liberating tool, one of empowerment* for young people; but it poses a question for education: the approach to technology is an important step in *the growth process and for affirming one's identity*. The media influence the development of young peoples' personalities, their choice of basic values, their attitudes to God and man. They invite us to

reflect on what is aesthetically and morally excellent in forming the young and on the impact media have on education.

### » ***Social communication in the SEPP and at the service of evangelisation***

Promotion of communication occurs also through projects aimed at creating communicative processes which are part of the SEPP. We avoid focusing only on activities and isolated works. We need practical guidelines in our Pastoral and Educative Projects and communication planning on how to act in this sector:

- **formation to the critical and educational use of Social Communication media** (cf. GC24, no.129) and **new technologies**. Educators and young people need to understand the changes that are taking place, how media and cultural industries function. Critical sense, strategic spirit, self-control, secure and effective use, sense of where the limits lie, and respect, civic sense, autonomy and *problem solving* abilities are not necessarily abilities that teenagers or older youth have simply because they were born and grew up amidst monitors and keyboards or by the fact that they know how to use them. It takes serious competence to know how to use media in the “digital continent”: offering clear objectives for appreciating creativity; acquiring an emancipated and critical attitude to messages, and being aware of their influence, to then be able to express themselves through them by a command over the languages and technologies. The significance of media communication goes directly back to what media express in words and images, to the question of why we use them and the aims of transmitters and receivers involved in the process of communication. There is a need then for a critical exploration of the conceptual elements contained in the signs that media use;
- **involvement in production of messages and content aimed specifically at the young**, using all the means available to us. Social Communication is increasingly an educational presence, shaping ways of thinking and creating culture. The challenge for the future will be educating to new media, but also carrying out *educational and pastoral activity by means of new media* especially where new generations are concerned. Its

sharp effectiveness and ever more massive presence make Social Communication a true and authentic alternative school for very large sectors of the world's population, especially youth and ordinary people (cf. *GC21*, no.148). The relationship between *Social Communication and evangelisation* or, more practically, between the use of languages and Social Communication media for the Gospel and our apostolic style of "evangelising by educating", has a profound impact on Salesian activity. It means not only educating to media, that is to a critical interpretation of media messages, but also evangelising through media. Thus we open up a vast field of initiatives for our teaching, educational and cultural activities, for Christian animation of youth groups, for catechesis, for prayer;

- appreciation of social communication as a **new vital setting for young people to come together** (cf. *GC25*, no.47). Technologies of communication alter our sense of belonging and the way we come together inasmuch as they create more communities that users are part of, using devices that are ever more connected to the lives of young people. The activities offered and requested are those of *listening, recognising, responding, being with and acting with*, in a situation that points to the possibility of experiences (maybe new or different ones) that offer mutual trust as an antidote to improvisation by the consumer. These new 'vital settings' like *social networks* encourage focus on the stories of young peoples' lives which we find in their own accounts of themselves and in the way they rework their experiences, with the possibility of helping them to orient themselves and make choices;
- **promotion and appreciation of all forms and expressions of communication** (cf. *GC24*, no.129), like music, theatre, cinema, television, photography, comics, multimedia and other artistic expressions with clear educational and evangelising scope. We need to provide leadership in these situations of communication so that they are not just ever broader settings for free expression and creativity, but also encourage *a taste for beauty* in all expressions (visual arts, music, poetry, literature, dance, theatre). Educating to beauty means involving the entire sphere of sensitivity and emotion, imagination and creativity, ability to express one's sensations and feelings and understand

how others express them: we put in place a gradual enrichment of our own legacy in this regard and in the emotional area. Education to beauty also means forming to the understanding and use of various languages like icon, music and poetry.

## 25

## THE SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

Movements are made up of those who, **in the great and unique “movement” of the Church**, live out their Christian, ecclesial, missionary experience ... by taking part in a particular charism. Young people from the SYM live their ecclesial vocation and mission according to the charism of Don Bosco. In fact since 2004, the SYM has been included in the *List of International Associations of the faithful* (Pontifical Council for the laity).

*The SYM is not an association but is made up of young people who belong to various associations or groups animated by Salesian Youth Ministry.* Not being an association its doors are open to everyone, since its service is directed to the Church and all young people. This does not stop us from witnessing to Christ, sharing the Mystery with other young people who share the same faith, a joyfully proclaiming it to whoever has not yet heard it. The SYM shares in the Salesian charism and is an expression of it amongst young lay people.

Social activity, group activity, the community-based activity of Sodalities were an almost spontaneous experience in Don Bosco's life, **given his natural leanings as a very social being and to friendship**. Don Bosco, guided by his insight into the soul of the young person, discovered the great opportunity that groups and associations offered: so adapting himself to the various needs of his boys he created a whole range of social opportunities for them.

Group activity for the young was essential to Don Bosco's preventive and popular approach. It was an absolutely important opportunity for education and ministry and for young people to be active in their own right. Groups and associations of various kinds, then, are “what young people can do”, though backed by adults who encourage the young group members to come to the fore and take up responsibility for how things are run.

Through all the many kinds of group and youth associations there are, we aim to ensure a quality educational presence in new areas where young people band together and lead them in the direction of a significant experience of ecclesial life.

### **A** *The identity and nature of the SYM*

The SYM is identified by two elements in particular: on the one hand, **reference to Salesian Youth Spirituality and Salesian pedagogy**; on the other, **the links between groups and associations** so that they can mutually cooperate in the task of formation according to what is laid down by the Salesian educational and pastoral approach:

- ▮ the SYM unites young people from very different groups, associations and sectors animated by Salesian Youth Spirituality, following Don Bosco's proposition regarding education and evangelisation: it is a youth movement inspired by Don Bosco, conceived of *not just as an "organisation", but as a kind of spiritual energy with a common nucleus of Gospel values* that gives rise to apostolic initiative and enthusiasm for life. Therefore the identity of the SYM is Salesian Youth Spirituality (see Chapter 4), *invitation to holiness in ordinary daily life*. This is the kind of holiness achieved by Dominic Savio, Laura Vicuña and so many others in the Salesian Family;
- ▮ *groups are the primary element of the SYM*, where young people meet and help on another as they grow. We should bring already existing groups together in a Provincial network and include new ones coming into being. So the first focus is not on the kind of group it is. The SYM sees the value of any kind of group: from sports groups to artistic ones; from those that are simply about coming together to those that prefer some specific activity; from service groups to prayer groups or those that take up an explicit response to the Church and the Christian message; from those focused on things that are of most interest to teenagers to those ready to tackle the demands of faith; from those who are on the fringes of the Christian community to those whose sense of belonging to the Church is very much stronger. Since they communicate with one another, they are a network where they all

share a common educational value. This bond between groups comes into play in the sharing of Salesian values and where there is some coordination of common initiatives, significant occasions for dialogue, discussion, Christian formation and youthful expression (cf. *GC23*, nos.275-277). So we are talking about a *reference Movement* where each group retains its own specific character but is united with the others by a range of common elements.

### **The SYM is a youthful, educational world movement:**

**youthful**, because young people are the true leaders in the educational development of the movement, accompanied by their educators, in their own responsibility as part of the unique pastoral plan for the local area;

**educational** because it is offered to all young people so they can play their distinctive part in their human and Christian growth, with a missionary outlook which also looks far afield, with a willingness to make an impact in their local area and in society and be part of and supportive of the local Church;

**world** because, beyond each individual group, it can be found all around the world in very different cultural contexts.

So the reference point for the SYM is all young people active in or living in places where there is a Salesian presence, at a whole range of levels of involvement. The “heart” of the movement is undoubtedly the young *leaders, the youth leaders* who have clearly and decisively accepted the Salesian educational and evangelising invitation and whose life is a witness to other young people. The task of animation has been presented in this chapter (point 2.3. “The dimension of social experience”). The young SYM leaders are the focus of special attention by the SDB, FMA, the Cooperators and other adult members of the Salesian Family who guide and accompany them.

### **B Preferential fields of activity for the SYM**

The SYM activities are all based on the young person and has a preference for the following fields of activity:



- ▮ education and evangelisation, accompanying young people to the fullness of Christian life through positive and supportive settings (concrete alternative models of Christian living), which breathe confidence and familiarity;
- ▮ social and ecclesial life, encouraging young people to become actively involved in the Church's life;
- ▮ personal and/or community apostolic involvement, voluntary service to others and offering a Salesian interpretation of daily life in the light of the Gospel;
- ▮ socio-political involvement, especially in civil institutions that promote youth initiatives;
- ▮ communication and sharing processes (information, news, experiences) and also common gatherings at various levels, as possibilities exist.

### **C** *The visibility of the SYM and how it is run*

Although the range of groups is so different, the following are essential issues for animation:

- ▮ the SYM is made visible through *the various* local, provincial, national and intercontinental (depending on the level and degree of development and make-up of networks) coordination teams; through *community participation in various Church gatherings* be they diocesan, national or world, such as World Youth Day for example; through *meaningful representation in civil institutions* which draw up policies affecting the young. this is why it is important to set up an information and linking network amongst the various groups and associations in the SYM and also between them and other groups or associations in the Church and the local area;
- ▮ besides the meetings and other activities of individual groups in the MGS, the Movement sees that certain other opportunities are powerful moments for young people to come together:

provincial, national, international and world meetings, liturgical opportunities and celebrating Salesian feasts, leadership formation. *Youth gatherings are characteristic feature of the SYM*, as significant occasions for communication between groups and for spreading messages and values regarding Salesian Youth Spirituality.

- though levels differ and each one has its own specific character, SYM members identify in a special way with Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello. *Therefore there is a need to plan a Salesian invitation to formation* which can be offered the various groups and associations as a point of reference for their own formation plan, and within the overall context of the Salesian Family;
- the Province, in coordination with other Salesian Family presences in its area, will see the *Movement is considered within the general context of the SEPP*, in which the Youth Ministry Delegate and team are seen as the promoters of the SYM as a youthful expression of the Province's ministry.





**SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY**  
ANIMATION STRUCTURES



**ACTIVITIES AND WORKS**  
OF SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY

# PART

# THREE

For Salesian Youth Ministry to happen a wide variety of things are needed: personnel, structures, activities, material resources and programmes which need to take their direction from the objectives, content and strategies of the Educative and Pastoral Plan. By the conclusion of this document we attempt to show the concrete way of structuring and organising the different components of educative and pastoral praxis in order to guarantee its identity and consistency with the aims and systematic nature of the plan. This third part is the “operating model”.



# ACTIVITIES AND WORKS OF SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY

CHAPTER

# VII

*“I have chosen you ...  
that you may bear  
fruit”*

*(Jn 15:16)*



*We carry out our mission chiefly in such works and activities as make possible the human and Christian education of the young, such as oratories and youth centres, schools and technical institutes, boarding establishments and houses for young people in difficulties. In parishes and mission residences we contribute to the spreading of the Gospel and to the advancement of the people. We collaborate in the pastoral programme of the particular Church out of the riches of our specific vocation. In specialized centres we make available our pedagogical and catechetical expertise in the service of the young. In retreat houses we provide for the Christian formation of groups, especially of young people. We dedicate ourselves also to every other kind of work which has as its scope the salvation of the young”*

[C. 42]



*On that evening as I ran my eyes over the crowd of children playing, I thought of the rich harvest awaiting my priestly ministry. With no one to help me, my energy gone, my health undermined, with no idea where I could gather my boys in the future, I was very disturbed. I withdrew to one side, and as I walked alone I began to cry perhaps for the first time. As I walked I looked up to heaven and cried out, ‘My God, why don’t you show me where you want me to gather these children? Oh, let me know! Oh, show me what I must do!’”*

[Memoirs of the Oratory, second decade 1835-1845, no.23]

**We propose** some reflections on the most important features of the works and services in which one carries out the Salesian Youth Ministry outlined in the Educative and Pastoral Project. First of all there are the most organised and traditional works: the Oratory-Youth Centre, School and Vocational Training Centre, the Salesian presence in Higher Education, the parish and sanctuary entrusted to the Salesians, and the works and the social services for youth-at-risk. Then there are other works and services through which we reach out to young people and respond to the new challenges they pose. Many of these new educational and pastoral presences among young people can be carried out also in the traditional services; it would be a sign of the effort at their renewal and pastoral advancement.



## 1

## An ordered and systematic ministry: unity in diversity

The various activities and interventions in youth ministry are carried out with a single purpose: the all-round development of the young and promotion of their world, overcoming a fragmented youth ministry project. This is achieved **by converging around the over-all purpose, the criteria for action and the preferential choices made in pastoral work** to create unity and interrelation among them.

Such a convergence is demanded by the young person to whom the various proposals are directed; by the Educative and Pastoral Community, which must share the ultimate goals and the lines of action, and by the need for complementarity between the multiplicity of activities, experiences and pastoral models.

This ordered and systematic unity of Salesian Youth Ministry is accomplished through:

- **the Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan**, which at various levels defines the criteria, objectives and processes that orient and foster convergence in the Educative and Pastoral Community and unity in practice of the multiplicity of activities, interventions and persons;
- **an organisation of animation and pastoral governance of the province and works** that guarantees communication and coordination of all aspects of Salesian life focused on the objectives of education and of evangelisation of the young (cf. GC23, nos.240-242).

## 2

## The various sectors and activities

We use the term **sector** to indicate the educational and pastoral structures in which the Salesian mission is carried out following a specific educative and pastoral proposal (cf. *Glossary*: Pastoral or Activity Sector). Each of them creates its specific atmosphere and relationship style within the Educative and Pastoral Community. A Salesian apostolate may include multiple sectors which complement each other for a better manifestation of the Salesian mission.

## 2 1

### THE ORATORY-YOUTH CENTRE

## 2 1 1

#### *The original nature of the Salesian Oratory*

**The Oratory of St Francis of Sales at Valdocco was the first established apostolate, the one that inspired all the others.** The educational environment initiated by Don Bosco in the Oratory was a pastoral response to the needs of adolescents and older youth especially the neediest, in the city of Turin. It offered them healthy recreation, together with catechism, elementary education and employable skills for life. Don Bosco knew how to provide Christian formation to young people who were faced with pressing educational challenges.

Don Bosco's personal touch initiated at the Oratory originated an **effective praxis which was to be the lasting criteria for prevention applied down through the years:**

- ▮ from a **basic catechism lesson to a presence and participation in the life of the young** with special attention to their needs, problems and opportunities;
- ▮ from a part-time festive (weekend) oratory to **a full-time home** extending throughout the week through personal contacts and other complementary activities;

- from the teaching of catechetical content to a **systematic educative and pastoral programme**, the Preventive System;
- from services thought out for the young to a **family style presence of educators in the midst of the young** in their recreational and religious activities;
- from a referential institution for adults to **community living with young people**, youthful involvement, a community open to all;
- from the primacy of the program to the **primacy of the person and of interpersonal relationships**;
- from a parish focused on worship and devotion **to the missionary impulse of a youthful community** open to young people who neither know nor find any reference in that parish.

This enthusiasm of **the Preventive System** aroused in young people the **desire to grow and mature**, **passing from the immediate needs of entertainment and education to more systematic and deep commitment to human and Christian formation**. They learned from their involvement in activities how to **take a leading role** in activities, be **animators** in an educational environment **at the service of their companions**.

**Don Bosco's Oratory** is at the very origin of all the Salesian work and constitutes **its prototype**. It inspires all the different evangelising projects and services of the Salesian mission (cf. C. 40).

The historical development and spread of Don Bosco's work **has not changed the basic principles** nor the characteristics of the Salesian Oratory. However, **new socio-educational scenarios and the phenomena that mark the situations of youth, necessitate renewal**. There is a new concept of leisure, a much-valued reality in our society as a space open to all sorts of social and cultural experiences **which enhance social relationships and develop personal skills**. **New educational environments and stake-holders have emerged** which are open to youth empowerment.

In a situation where free time for the young is filled with many activities and often also by civil institutions with substantial resources, the Oratory welcomes requests for activities with an oratorian heart, in style and in quality,

convinced that in time and with the cooperation of families, our educational aims will be successful. The Salesian Oratories have been able to adapt to new situations, in different ways, also assuming different names. In some contexts, the term “**Oratory**” means a programme, weekday or weekend, designed especially for children and pre-adolescents, but also open to a broader group, promoting various forms of leisure and religious gatherings. A “**Youth Centre**” means a structure, especially for adolescents and older youth, open to all, with specific aims of growth to full maturity, pursuing group dynamics for a human and Christian formation. By “Oratory-Youth Centre” we should understand not just an oratory but also a commitment to more mature young people (cf. C. 28; R. 5, 7, 11-12, 24; GC21, no.122).

Many works of the Congregation are currently Oratory-Youth Centres which carry out various educational projects with a greater number of beneficiaries, capable of involving and arousing interest in the young. **They take on many forms and characteristics depending on the diverse geographical, religious and cultural sets of circumstances.** There are, for example, evening oratories, mobile presences for youth-at-risk, area or neighbourhood oratories well connected with each other, oratories that offer unemployed and marginalised young people the opportunity to gain basic education and thus prepare themselves for some work; there are yet others that try to rehabilitate young people faced with serious social dangers.



## *The Educative and Pastoral Community of the Oratory-Youth Centre*



### *The importance of the EPC of the Oratory-Youth Centre*

Wherever it exists, the Oratory-Youth Centre is organised as an EPC made up of the young, their leaders, families, co-workers and the Salesian community. **Everyone feels called to active participation and shared responsibility, according to each one's role.** Like Don Bosco with his youth and his collaborators at Valdocco, it calls for making every Oratory-Youth Centre a real home with a well-defined family atmosphere, a shared SEPP and an adequate accompaniment of groups and individuals.

The Oratory-Youth Centre is a welcoming space open to a wide variety of children, adolescents and older young people, especially those most in

need. It has a **social influence and impact in the area**. At the same time, it is an **educative and pastoral space** specially adapted to **welcome and care for persons**, beyond purely functional relationships. The **Salesian educator**, from the first meeting, knows how to **engage in a personal dialogue with the young to motivate and involve them more and more**, gradually challenging them to **share responsibility** in all activities and in the group processes they take part in. **Youth empowerment** has been a characteristic in the EPC of the Salesian Oratory-Youth Centre since Don Bosco's time.

The **EPC in the Oratory-Youth Centre** experiences the life of young people; it **shares their worries**, their **problems and expectations**, and opens up spaces where it can **be with them and engage itself in their world**. Managed in a **flexible and creative way**, it is able to adapt to the diversity and spontaneity typical of an oratorian education. It is certainly an educational presence and significant pastoral reference in the world of the young.

## **B** *Membership of the EPC of the Oratory-Youth Centre*

**Young people are at the heart of the Salesian Oratory-Youth Centre EPC.**

They are at the **centre of its choices and its future plans**. This means that young people **should be accompanied to be able to judge and decide on matters that affect them**. They are made aware of the opportunities offered them for this purpose and that they have access to the necessary resources. They are **part of the overall** organisation of the Oratory-Youth Centre, in consonance with the **educational aim**, while respecting the levels of decision-making bodies.

The **Salesian Oratory-Youth Centre EPC** is a work-in-progress and needs people who will animate its project, help **align its educational initiatives**. **Youth leaders** imbued with the Salesian charism take up the educational proposal of the Oratory-Youth Centre and actively put it into practice.

Animators/leaders are educators who **walk with the young**, **dialogue** with them and know how to firmly and enthusiastically **propose new goals of personal maturity**. They have themselves experienced an animating educational process, a process that responds to **a vocation and plan of life that makes them grow as individuals**. They are conscious, whether inside or outside of the Oratory-Youth Centre, that they are animators and leaders and therefore **live by the values they are proposing**. They are aware that the life of the Oratory-Youth Centre depends largely on them:

for their **guiding and organising role** and for the fact that they are called to be a **dynamic force in the life of the oratory**. Therefore, they must be the **object of special attention, support and care by those in charge of the Oratory-Youth Centre**.

The **service** of animation is developed in the **style of a free and voluntary service**. Given the circumstances of the locality, there may also be a need to **formalise roles** so the Oratory-Youth Centre **functions better** and with a greater focus on its young people.

The Oratory-Youth Centre and its project are addressed not only to the young, but also to **the Salesians** who actively represent but at the same time benefit from their pastoral service. For this reason, all the Salesians of the house and not only those in charge have a specific function of animation in the Oratory-Youth Centre. This puts the Salesians in a position to **establish the same relationship that Don Bosco had with the young through witness of fraternal communion and openness of heart**. The religious community also offers **experiences of faith and prayer shared with the young**: initiatives to experience processes of lifelong learning together, active participation in the development and regular evaluation of the local SEPP. Reference to the Province SEPP should always be guaranteed for presences and works of the oratory which are managed by lay people.

Typical of oratory ministry is the **guidance given to responsibility we share with adults who share an environment of friendship with the young**, and educational experience of life and the experience of family and community. Their **constant presence** is an element of stability and an important witness of maturity in the multifaceted life of the Oratory-Youth Centre. The most important **amongst the adults** are those with specific functions of animation, such as **parents** and **family representatives** or **members of the Salesian Family**.



### **The **educative and pastoral proposal** of the Oratory-Youth Centre**

The proposal of the Oratory-Youth Centre becomes a reality through formation programmes related to the interests of young people. Every young person, choosing from the possibilities of participation that are offered, can progress in the most appropriate way according to his or her own situation and level of maturity.

Greater attention should be paid to the ever present **risk** of focusing the dynamics of the Oratory-Youth Centre **almost exclusively on recreational and cultural activities** which are part of the Salesian educational ministry. It demands that we **rethink the identity of the Oratory-Youth Centre** and **recreate the original educative and pastoral methodology**.

### **A** A process of **evangelisation**

**The Oratory-Youth Centre proposes a Christian view of life and has the young person as its objective.** Ours is a Christian proposal of education with *Salesian Youth Spirituality as its throbbing heart*.

Our faith in Jesus Christ opens us to a Christian outlook on life, speaks to us of the way of life that is to animate the Oratory-Youth Centre. In this pastoral sector the young can gradually discover an environment rich in evangelical values which guides them to the experience of faith in the practice of everyday life. They are offered different possibilities depending on the age of the recipient, gradual and personalised educational and faith programs, celebrations of faith, the sacraments. They are educated to getting involved as Christians where they live according to their vocation and how their life project in the Church and in society has developed.

The Oratory-Youth Centre **is a work of mediation between the Church, urban society and youth** which provides research and contact with young people. As a ministry on the frontier between the religious and the civil field, between the secular world and the church, it offers educational and evangelical responses to pressing needs and challenges, especially those affecting the least in society. It is a Salesian environment, favouring the group experience of the young with a Christian identity, into which everyone is welcome.

**The Oratory-Youth Centre is a privileged place for the animators.** This is where they **live their faith personally and in community**, with an attitude of openness to **serve those most in need**. The same opportunity is given to the children and to older youth: by their example and witness they challenge families and other young people who have distanced themselves from the life of the Church.

## B A Salesian style of education

In the Salesian educative environment of the Oratory-Youth Centre the constant reference point is the Valdocco Oratory. It reminds us of the **profound unity of our educational and evangelising project** and it encourages us to practise those most fundamental attitudes that give it life: educational sensitivity and passion for evangelisation.

The **preventive criterion** promotes positive experiences, motivates and tries to respond to the aspirations and the deepest interests of young people. The following elements, therefore, are to be highlighted:

- ▶ the Oratory-youth centre is **open to all young people, especially the poorest and those at risk**, who are often not able to integrate themselves in other structures or educational initiative;
- ▶ **personal accompaniment** sensitive to their deepest desires: *reason, affectivity and the search for God*;
- ▶ **an atmosphere of joy and celebration** which favours **optimism** and a positive outlook on life;
- ▶ **animation as an educational option** which is realised through the **active presence of educators** among the young, in **openness** to everyone and to every youngster in particular, in the liberating **power of love** and education, **trusting** in the individual and in the positive energies inherent in oneself;
- ▶ **creativity and the spirit of innovation** which transcends routine, indifference or conformism;
- ▶ **the sense of duty and responsibility** concretised in **personal commitment and service to others**. The Oratory-Youth Centre explores new avenues and pastoral methods to **respond to the pressing needs of the numerous young people** without, however, forgetting **deeper formation processes** for those who are open to a more **engaging commitment**.

There is consolidation of the unique experience of Don Bosco's pedagogy in the educational field. It offers **varied well-thought out invitations**



to **groups and associations** to serve the interests of the young people around whom it is organised: spontaneous groups, led by born leaders and inspired by their immediate interests; associated groups, with specific training programmes of various kinds: sports, culture, socio-political engagement, ecology, social communications, deeper religious formation, missionary experiences, internal animation, volunteering.

### **C** *An education **integrated within society** to **transform** it*

The Oratory-Youth Centre EPC is part of and open to the local Church and the social milieu. It is a living cell of society and the Church, a community of faith and life. Through our dedicated work of education and the involvement of youth in these processes we collaborate mainly for the renewal of society, beginning **from local contexts and extending to other environments and structures**.

Therefore, **in imparting education we pay special attention** to:

- ▮ **sensitivity to everything around us**, overcoming the negative impact of conformism and indifference;
- ▮ the ability to *analyse the situation and **re-awaken attitudes of service and solidarity*** by taking up initiatives that help us discover the unhealthy social impact of the area on the young;
- ▮ the **value of the family** and the **contribution** that young people can offer;
- ▮ **"open door"** opportunities and **availability** of the **structures** (in consonance with the aims and objectives of the centre) for useful activities that benefit the local area;
- ▮ **ever-widening involvement in the neighbourhood**, city or the state and country, an active and critical engagement regarding the social conditions in which we live. The oratory community knows how to dialogue and network with existing institutions in its relationship with the neighbourhood.

The Oratory-Youth Centre, being a **presence of the Church**, calls for an effective shared responsibility in the various structures of participation (the parish pastoral council and/or region council) and adapts the SEPP in keeping with the diocesan pastoral plan. Since the Oratory-Youth Centre is a Salesian pastoral presence in the world of the young, all its educative and pastoral programmes are particularly significant: it brings the Church closer to young people and promotes their evangelisation within a shared pastoral mission (see this Chapter 7, 2.4.4/b).

### **D** *An experience of **vocational maturity***

Certain dynamics come into play in the wonderful aspect of individual formation which the pedagogy of education and accompaniment in the Oratory-Youth Centre should encourage. **The local Oratory-Youth Centre SEPP envisages the service of accompaniment for all young people.** Spiritual direction cultivated through prayer, the pedagogy of the personal project of life, gradually matures one's discernment for the choices to be made: stable commitment to others, the role parents play, conscious exercise of one's profession, other ministries and apostolic services of the Church. Accompaniment of past Oratory-Youth Centre members is also important in view of their integration into social life and the life of the Church.

The Oratory-Youth Centre promotes a *culture of vocations* through volunteer experiences: holidays, mission camps, classes for children and older youth, support and solidarity in the neighbourhood community, caring for the environment and other similar proposals.

## **2 1 4** *Systematic pastoral animation of the Oratory-Youth Centre*

### **A** *Main interventions of the proposal*

- 1 The Salesian Oratory-Youth Centre is a home open to every teenager and young person in the area: **a physical point of reference.** The educational environment is the result of a series of significant contacts, real names of real people and their histories, and of the quality of human relationships. "The oratory environment" is not only the result of an open-door policy for the young or that they have everything at

their disposal. The value of the Salesian Oratory-Youth Centre is that it educates through personal accompaniment of the individual who undergoes processes of growth and is the target of educational and pastoral initiatives.

- 2 **Salesian assistance** is the genuine closeness, affection and effectiveness of the educators for young people in places where they come alive, including outside the Oratory-Youth Centre: it is the Salesian way of encouragement and pedagogy as we carry out our mission. The active and animating presence of the Salesians and their lay collaborators among the young is an excellent form of education and evangelisation (GC24, no.131).
- 3 **The many proposals, activities and experiences** that characterise Salesian ministry in the Oratory require a coordinated and unified animation. Some of the fundamental criteria for this are aimed at promoting various activities, formation groups according to their age and interests, and youth groups as part of the Salesian Youth Movement.

The oratory is a manifold and varied offering (sports, recreational, cultural, social, and ecological) which responds to the most significant aspects for the developmental process of the young and where they most come alive. So among the more specific activities of the Oratory-Youth Centre there will be games and sports, be spontaneous or organised, and everything that concerns culture, music, theatre and social communication, in their varied expressions; hikes and tourism for youth, camps, field trips, activities of solidarity and of a missionary character.

It is important to involve young people in the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities through various groups and committees. It is good that all the activities be well-articulated and coordinated so they can develop their inherent educational possibilities in the young. Everything must be consistent with the objectives envisaged in the Oratory-Youth Centre SEPP.

It is necessary to coordinate times, resources and educational approaches at the Oratory-Youth Centre together with those of other sectors of the Salesian presence.

- 4 **The quality of systematic formation** comes from dedication and continuous effort at educational qualification, both Christian and

Salesian, of individuals and resources. Only under these conditions can young leaders assume responsibility. Formation programmes for leaders, leaders' camps, courses, retreats, gatherings and other formative activities on such themes as education, culture, Salesian, must be connected with daily life experiences.

## **B** *Structures of participation and responsibility*

Everyone shares responsibility for animation but some specific roles can be highlighted.

### » *Local animation*

The **local Oratory-Youth Centre Coordinator** ought not minimise involvement and shared responsibility of other members of the Centre but rather encourage them, opening channels for their own development. The Coordinator will be a Salesian or a lay person with a vocation to work competently among the young, someone who is sympathetic towards them. The Coordinator will demonstrate apostolic spirit, an ability for personal and deep relationships with others in the team, a stimulating presence among the young, creativity and a determination to renew proposals and infuse enthusiasm. The Coordinator will keep the team working together and will show interest in their growth in faith.

In line with the Salesian community, the Coordinator promotes the SEP which is developed, implemented and evaluated with the EPC, animates educators working in the Oratory-Youth Centre and the various groups and commissions, promotes collaboration with other like-minded players of the locality and the Church, guarantees the insertion of the Oratory-Youth Centre in the local parish community.

The **leadership group**, an integral part of the EPC, is a point of reference for young people. Educators at the Oratory-Youth Centre include group leaders, sports coaches and workshop instructors. As educators they work closely with each other and continue their own formation.

Animation processes are also coordinated through other formation bodies. Among these is the Oratory-Youth Centre Council or **EPC Council** (cf. GC24, no.161). Its composition and functioning respond to dynamic

criteria which ensure continuity and are in line with the directives of the Provincial and his Council (cf. GC24, no.171).

*Its main responsibilities are to evaluate and promote the annual pastoral project on the basis of the main demands of the youth and the guidelines of the local SEPP; to coordinate the various educational aims and objectives of associations and groups, and ensure coordination and integration between the different pastoral initiatives; to promote Salesian associations, the sharing of information and coordination among various groups and associations; to maintain a close relationship with the locality and with all those who work for the education of the young, encouraging appropriate and adequate response to situations of marginalisation and risk. Commissions in the Council and under its control, may be set up, with specific responsibilities for sectors of activity.*

The Oratory-Youth Centre plan should encourage **participation arrangements for families**. Therefore, according to local need for coordination, the families of those frequenting the oratory also share responsibility. Leadership roles for young people are always to be encouraged.

Along with the SEPP, there are elements of local organisation to be found in **practical statutes and/or rules/regulations**. These specify on whom the institution depends and the Centre's legal representation; the individual in charge, appointed by the above-mentioned institution; other membership bodies and their competence, both of the individuals and collectively; the relationship between these bodies and leadership by the Salesian work, as well as relationship with families and civil and Church bodies.

## » Provincial / national animation

The **Provincial Commission** which accompanies the Oratory-Youth Centre is part of the Youth Ministry leadership in the Province. **The Coordinator and members of this Commission ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of the Provincial Educative and Pastoral Plan of Oratory-Youth Centres in accordance with the provincial SEPP.**

For a good overall animation network there is **need for teamwork among the various Provincial commissions**: Oratory-Youth Centres, Schools, Parishes, Salesian Youth Movements (SYM), Vocation Ministry,

Mission Animation and Volunteer Services, Social Communication. The **Provincial Formation Commission** ensures that young Salesians involved in running and animating the Oratory-Youth Centre as their apostolate are also accompanied.

It is particularly important to have a *Planning and Development Office in the Province* involved in animation and coordination of this sphere of the Salesian mission of the province, in order to ensure sustainability of the project in collaboration with the Provincial Delegate for Youth Ministry.

**At the national level**, where there are two or more Provincial commissions for the Oratory-Youth Centre, they should coordinate and operate according to a shared project and be part of broader networks. The Oratory and Youth Centre apostolate is not confined to one or other neighbourhood around town. Networking calls for an extensive coordination involving settings where decisions affecting youth policy are taken or discussed: the public forum, the work scene, child and other youth organisation (those which foster education, social activity, training and promotion of volunteer services, socio-cultural animation, leisure experiences).

## 2 2

### THE SALESIAN SCHOOL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE (VTC)

#### 2 2 1

#### *The original nature of the Salesian school and VTC*

The Salesian **Vocational Training Centre and the school** came into existence in Valdocco to meet specific needs of youth and integrate them within **an overall project of education and evangelisation of the young, especially those most in need**. Motivated by a desire to ensure their dignity and their future, Don Bosco set up trade workshops, at the same time, helping his youngsters find work and entering into contracts for them with a view to preventing exploitation. The Salesian Brother vocation enriched and enhanced this service.

This is the matrix of the current VTC which is concerned with promoting the human, Christian and professional formation of the young. This proposal responds to the predispositions, abilities and perspectives of



*“It was Don Bosco who sent his sons to the state universities with possibilities to learn secular subjects. Don Bosco had very clear ideas on the unity of the human person and, consequently, the need for an integral education. He knew, in fact, that a pastoral action, at the same time, formed honest citizens and good Christians. In this sense, he saw the school as a providential moment of formation”*

[CG20, NO.234]

many of them who at the end of their basic training, **wish to get a job**. Vocational training is an effective tool for holistic human development and an effective preventive measure for youth problems, as well as promoting Christian leadership in society and development in the business world.

Ever attentive to the needs of the young, Don Bosco extended his commitment by developing the Salesian school. **He sensed that the school was an essential tool for education**, a meeting point between culture and faith.

We consider the **school as a privileged cultural mediation in education**; an **institution for the formation of personality** which we cannot do without because it conveys a concept of the world, the human person and of history (cf. *The Catholic School*, no.8). The school environment has developed considerably in the Congregation in response to the needs of the young people themselves, of society and of the Church. It has become a movement of educators firmly established in the school area.

There are also **Pre-Vocational Training Centres** with a special set-up and varied proposals: career guidance, education and training, updating, upgrading, integration and social and work reintegration, promotion of social-minded enterprise. They contribute to the personal success of each individual and cater to a wide range of target groups: young people in their compulsory schooling stage, young people and adults seeking employment; young people in problematic situations or school drop-outs; migrants or apprentices. These include a highly personalised opportunity to facilitate re-entry into formal schooling or to be initiated into work. In fact, this pre-vocational training includes a series of provisions **designed to make individuals aware of the working environment and prepare them to better confront their subsequent entry into the new occupation**.

Some provinces offer the **service of a boarding school for boys** attending schools/VTC. The **boarding schools** have a residential facility that allows the students to stay through. It is a conducive environment for study in a climate of peaceful coexistence. The boys are **constantly accompanied** by a team of educators. The **figure of the educator is of great importance in such institutions: assisting and counselling students during the hours of study and recreation; sharing meals with them and accompanying them during the day.** In some cases, the educator **takes care of the human and cultural formation which sustains their daily study.** The daily programme is well-planned to ensure school attendance, study, recreation, wholesome sports and spiritual activities.



## *The Educative and Pastoral Community of the Salesian school/VTC*

### **A** *The importance of the **EPC of the Salesian school/VTC***

In the decades between the end of the twentieth and **early twenty-first century there was a shift** from an institutional educational model to a community educational model, **from a model where education was delegated to certain consecrated people** (religious, teachers) **to a model of active participation by everyone involved in the educational process.** The **EPC is the new body with responsibility for education and the new educational environment.** *Unity of purpose and conviction* on the part of all members makes the working of the SEPP easier and more effective in Salesian schools and VTCs.

We recognise the value of the vocational training centre and the school as **areas where** the *Gospel enlightens culture and allows itself to be challenged by it.* It creates a successful **integration between the educational process and the process of evangelisation.** This **integration** provides an important educational **alternative** in the face of the cultural, ethical and religious **pluralism** of society. The socio-political and cultural reality, the new guidelines for renewal of schools in different countries and likewise within the schools themselves, present new challenges and complex difficulties. **Concrete well-developed criteria and strategies are needed to help the SEPP develop so that it can deal with such complexity.**



## **B** *Membership of the Salesian school/VTC EPC*

### **The students are the primary players in the formation process:**

They participate in a creative way to develop and implement it at through its various stages; they **grow in relational skills** through their schooling and formation. By responding to the explicit need for young people to **receive a serious cultural and vocational preparation**, the Salesian school/VTC **urges them to think about the meaning of life**. The Salesian school/VTC **sets forth the roadmap**, the **activities and initiatives** which respond effectively to that concern.

In the words of Don Bosco, **educators create a "family" together with the young**, a youthful community **wherein the interests and experiences of young people are the basis of everything** that comes under the heading of education. The **teachers not only teach, but "assist", work, study and pray together with the pupils**. They are **willing to be with the young**, capable of **empathising with** them and their problems: **"Teachers in the classroom and brothers in the courtyard"** (Don Bosco).

Among the educators, we include *the teaching staff*, Salesians and lay who are fully involved in an educational and pastoral role, according to the Salesian project and according to their professional competence:

- ▮ the **choice of the laity** is the manifestation of a careful and thoughtful decision that **demands balance, seriousness and integrity of life**: lay people who **assume their educational commitment joyfully**, and are **open to the pedagogical aims of the Salesian school or VTC**. They have **professional competence**, are **interested in systematic updating**, and **take an active part in planning, implementation and evaluation processes**. Their **professional touch** enhances **interpersonal relationships** and is characterised by a **fundamental ethical dimension**, understood as a **personal testimony** that helps students **imbibe values**. Lay teachers **contribute their experience of lay Christian life** which they **express culturally and professionally** in their **life choices, knowledge and activities**, including **various parallel and extra-curricular activities**;
- ▮ in turn, *religious teachers* testify to their experiences as consecrated individuals, stimulating new ways of confronting

culture and education according to a Christian outlook on life, humanity and history.

The **administrative and ancillary staffs** contribute to education through the care they exercise for the school or VTC, their style of relationships and the proper functioning of logistic and organisational detail.

**Parents**, directly responsible as they are for their children's growth, dialogue with their educators; they play a personal part, through various opportunities for dialogue with the school/VTC in planning and evaluation, and planning leisure activities.

Don Bosco's Preventive System is inspired by the family and is practised in a family atmosphere. It is part of our schools and our VTCs, serving as model of relationship and growth for parents in their dialogue with their children.



### *The educative and pastoral project of the Salesian school/VTC*

The Salesian school/VTC are **two related structures of systematic formation with their own characteristics**. There is no true Salesian school that does not aim at preparing the young for work. Nor is there a true Salesian VTC which does not take into account the systematic development of culture. The educator's task is the art of thinking about the contents of his/her teaching from the point of view of the holistic development of the young and their personal growth.

It is appropriate here to briefly recall some essential features of the educative and pastoral practices that make the Salesian school/VTC an excellent means of formation, a valuable factor in development of the people and a setting for effective evangelisation.



### *Inspiration from Gospel values and an invitation to faith*

The urgency of evangelisation in our educational institutions is to be underlined. We are part of the VTC and Catholic school scene with the pedagogical legacy we have inherited from St John Bosco, enriched by its successive development (cf. GC21, no.130).

It is necessary for every educational institution offering an educational service to **remain open to shared values in the contexts** where it is present. This fosters openness and a deeper appreciation of religious and transcendent experiences. It re-considers the Gospel message as it comes into contact with the variety of languages and the questions arising out of the local cultures. Therefore:

- **all the activities are enlightened by the Christian conception of life of which Christ is the centre** (cf. *The Catholic School*, no.33);
- it directs **cultural content** and the whole educational **enterprise** according to a **vision of humanity, the world and its history inspired by the Gospel** (cf. *The Catholic School*, no.34);
- it **fosters** the sharing of **pastoral and educational values** expressed especially through the SEPP (cf. *The Catholic School*, no.66);
- it **fosters** Catholic identity through the **testimony** of teachers and the presence of a **community of believers** giving life to the process of evangelisation (cf. *The Catholic School*, no.53).

## **B** **An efficient and quality education**

**Among the many ways through which evangelisation takes place, we Salesians give preference to those processes in which the educational experience is acknowledged**, where its well-defined processes are assured. In a very general sense, education is “**planned**” (specific **aims**, defined **roles**, adequate **experience**) and a **team effort** (EPC). With this in mind, Salesian schools/VTCs **offer an educational and cultural proposal of quality in which:**

- ▮ the **dynamics of teaching and learning** are based on a **solid educational base**;
- ▮ **continuous critical attention** is given to the phenomena of **culture, work and social communication**;
- ▮ it offers a **well-ordered pedagogical and methodological approach** that **fosters** in the young the **discovery of their project of life**;

- it has a developed human and Gospel outlook on work, which is not understood as merely something to be done as part of social organisation, but as a privileged form of communication, self-expression, self-fulfilment, of ever new interpersonal and social relationships, and a personal contribution to the good of the world in which one lives and works;
- it guarantees a continuous updating of the vocational qualification and of the Salesian identity of all members of the EPC through systematic processes of ongoing formation;
- it encourages an appropriate pedagogy and a planned educational activity by ensuring a close relationship between educational, teaching, and pastoral goals.

It is a duty to ensure formation to a professional mind-set, where young people are involved in an overall process of education in which, in addition to work-related skills, they also learn the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship; where they experience social behaviour inspired by cooperation, individual responsibility and solidarity; where they increase their knowledge of culture; where they mature in their sense of identity so they can integrate themselves into the social and civil fabric.



## C Salesian pedagogy

The Salesian school/VTC reaches its goals through **Don Bosco's style and approach to education** (GC21, no.131). The following elements in practice provide the typical features of our educational centres:

- animating, guiding and co-ordinating things in **an oratorian way**, thus making the institution a **family where the young feel "at home"** (C. 40);
- emphasising **personal relationships in education based on trust, dialogue and the presence** (assistance) of the educators among the young;
- taking on board the **integrity of life of the young**, where educators share their interests and promote leisure activities like theatre, sports, music and art;
- preparing them to **responsibly assume active citizenship** in family life, civil society and the Church community.

## D Social function and care for those most in need

The educational programmes are open to **joint ventures with other partners** or agencies and can be coordinated by the school/VTC. Educators accompany **the integration of young people into whatever situation they face**, in collaboration with **like-minded educational and formative agencies**. The **full inclusion of young into their locality and their taking up responsibility** represent a goal in their journey of receiving an **all-rounded education** in the Salesian school/VTC. Our schools/VTCs aim **to contribute to building up a more just society worthy of the human being**. For this to happen:

- they seek to establish themselves in **the more working-class** localities and **preference** is given to the **young who are most needy**;
- they **reject all discrimination or exclusion**;
- they give **priority to accompaniment for all** rather than selection **of the best**, as a criterion;



- ▶ they promote **systematic social formation** of their members;
- ▶ they endorse the idea of a **just inclusion of young people into the working world** and seeing them receive educational support while maintaining a systematic contact with the world of business;
- ▶ they become **centres of animation and cultural and educational services** for the betterment of the environment, with special emphasis on curricula, specialisations and programmes which **meet the needs of youth in the locality** (cf. GC21, nos.129, 131);
- ▶ they **show empathy and solidarity**, making people and local structures available, offering development services open to all, and they collaborate with other educational and social institutions;
- ▶ they encourage our **past pupils** to have a significant presence in the world, where they are active and purposefully involved in cultural, educational and professional dialogue locally and in the local Church.

*"A Salesian school should be for poorer people: this should be reflected in its sitting, its culture, its curriculum and its choice of students. Services to meet local needs should be provided, such as courses for cultural and professional training, literacy and remedial programmes, scholarships and other initiatives"*

[R. 14]



## **Systematic pastoral animation of the Salesian school/VTC**

### **A Main interventions of the proposal**

- 1 In the **Salesian tradition** people, time, space, relationships, teaching, study, work and all other activities interact in a **climate of peace, joy and commitment: this is the educational environment.**

*Educational relationships* need to be based on reasonable demands, the value of daily life and on educational accompaniment. In addition to the attention given to study, research and work, it is important in educational terms to respect and look after tools, equipment and the facilities where scholastic and professional life unfolds. This is part of the sense of belonging.

The playground is an inescapable and central factor for the Salesian school/VTC. It is not just a place for activities and initiatives, but also a time for building personal relationships through animation, games and sports. Every Salesian school/VTC is called to safeguard times and places where students can meet. The EPC guarantees assistance of young people in the spirit of Don Bosco.

- 2 The organised content of various disciplines is offered as knowledge to be acquired, truth to be discovered, techniques to be mastered, answers to deep-seated questions, values to be acquired. This is aided by how clearly know-how is presented, the teaching approach, and above all the underlying cultural ideas being presented.

This means that, on the one hand, we give importance to human experience underlying the different disciplines, helping young people to grasp, appreciate and assimilate the values inherent in the facts presented and explored, and on the other, that interest is shown in universal culture, through expressions of the different peoples and the heritage of values shared by all humanity.

We need to be absolutely careful that we avoid the risk of a scientific-technological shift playing down or even excluding reference to the fundamental values which are the foundation stone of knowledge. Values education, ideals and research are some of the educational aspects that form the backbone of an all-round education.

The central problem of the school is its cultural setting or approach: its holistic reflection of the human person. In the daily life of the classroom or the laboratory, it offers a complete anthropological vision inspired by Christian humanism.

Teachers of the various disciplines introduce the students to a lively and vital encounter with their cultural and professional patrimony in

dialogue with **Christian humanism**. In this context, particular attention is given to **choice of textbooks and other teaching materials**.

Educators in the Salesian school/VTC set up **formative programmes** imbued with the contribution of Christian and Salesian humanism and issues central to the overall growth of the young: the **formation of conscience, education to affectivity and socio-political education** and specifically, **religious formation**. We believe that the religious dimension should be presented in the overall context of the knowledge which forms the basis of the formation of children and the young.

In fact **the teaching of the Catholic religion** considered as an essential element of education, is part of the **school curricula** of many nations. With awareness of issues relating to the Christian formation of young people, there are processes for periodic planning and evaluation to improve the teaching of religion, *an important opportunity for cultural education*. The teaching of religion in schools must aim at proposing what is for believers the object of faith. Its ultimate **aim is to form people in a habitual religious way of thinking**, that is, on events that punctuate the human being's religious experience. The school offers a systematic and critical understanding of religious facts, as it does with all other cultural facts, through educational discussion aimed at a systematic and critical understanding of religious affairs in human experience. It is a teaching that **helps young people to discover the religious dimension of our humanity and seek the ultimate meaning of life**. It offers **guidance towards a choice** that is conscious and free for a challenging and coherent life. It offers an open and positive view of Christian teaching and its explicit proclamation. It fosters critical and positive dialogue with other areas of knowledge and with other religions. It reawakens the desire for ongoing education to the faith in the Christian community.

- 3 As a **teaching method** we choose a **personalised approach to what we offer by way of education, and mutual collaboration**. Hence, active teaching which **develops a capacity for discovery in students and develops habits of creativity and autonomous cultural growth**; an interdisciplinary approach whereby the different subject areas are complementary; evaluation of students' development processes, their **capacity to learn and do research**, **not just** look to **final results**.



- 4 Holistic education means rounding off school and training curricula with **other complementary, freely chosen activities which support them**. The Salesian school/VTC provides ample room for leisure activities (artistic, recreational, sports, cultural), leaning in the direction of a *school which also occupies out-of-school hours*.

The Salesian school/VTC makes room for, **promotes and accompanies different groups** (study-research, cultural, recreational, artistic, community service, volunteer services, Christian growth, vocational guidance, Christian commitment), recognising that **they are a special form of education and evangelisation**. Some schools/VTCs provide opportunity for informal meetings, dining rooms, music rooms etc. Yearly planning should set aside specific times for taking part in such activities.

It is very much part of the Salesian tradition to maintain contact with *our past pupils*, young people who have attended our schools/VTCs. We need to **find the best ways for them to be involved as individuals are as a group**.

One of the pillars of the identity of the Salesian school/VTC is a **clear and comprehensive spelling out of explicitly evangelising occasions**. The educative and pastoral proposal is translated into experiences and activities which are dear to the Salesian tradition:

- ▮ short **daily encounters** for everyone or for groups (the “**Good morning**”, words of welcome) inspired by the “Goodnight” practised by Don Bosco with his boys at Valdocco. The “Good morning” is a **time for prayer and a wise interpretation of life** which gradually encourages them to look at things from a Christian point of view;
- ▮ over the school year **both staff and students** are offered **formative and spiritual experiences**. These are preferably linked to the important seasons of the **liturgical year** and became favourable opportunities for **growth in faith** and evaluating one’s life in relation to the Christian message;
- ▮ faithful to what Don Bosco did with his boys at Valdocco, each school/VTC should **plan specific moments of prayer**

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*and celebration.* Pupils belonging to other Christian denominations and other religions may also take part as opportunities for cultural integration and to become familiar with religious traditions of the country in which they live. The Eucharist and celebrations of the liturgical time or of local practices and traditions are an integral part of the educative and pastoral invitation. Special attention ought to be paid to times for celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation, which should find a place in the annual programme;

- time should be allotted during the school year *for celebrations and coming together*: opportunities for gratitude, education to shared responsibility and also a sign of belonging. On such occasions, the *families and other components of the EPC should be actively involved*. Special emphasis ought to be given to celebration of Salesian feasts, opportunities for *growth* in *family spirit* and a *sense of gratitude*.

- 5 Young people who attend the Salesian school/VTC often *find the family atmosphere there attractive*. It is important, in animating the EPC, for educators to be always available for **personal encounter with students**. Taking into account the different developmental stages of the students, let *educators in any sector offer quality time and space for personal encounter with the students*, for review the progress each has made and to look ahead.

*All the educators* should be *available for a personal chat*, but some of this group should be especially dedicated to this service to the young. *Psychological guidance* is an important service.

- 6 **Formation and updating of teachers** are great opportunities for every educational institution and for those who work there. There is always a need for *formation and updating our teachers* in a way *that links faith, knowledge and life*, other than in *method* and their *disciplines*. *It is this which marks out the Salesian school as being professionally competent*. Therefore, the *formation* of teachers should see to *good professional pedagogy* and *Salesian educational style*, *Christian spirituality in practice*, teachers who stand out for their *human and welcoming quality*. Greater attention should be

given in their *formation to education as a ministry* within the specific dynamic of the school.

Initiatives at local as well as provincial level should be regularly planned, in the context of a *Provincial formation plan for teachers which address their needs*, paying particular *attention to the formation of newly inducted teachers*. These *courses, days of reflection and formation*, where the teachers of the Salesian school/VTC are expected to participate, will involve them in a process which *includes an understanding of Don Bosco and the Preventive System*. There should also be *sharing concerning practical aspects of method and teaching in the Salesian tradition*.

- 7 All the components and interventions that make up the school/VTC SEPP should be *part of the broader and overarching Educational Project*, in line with government legislation. **SEPP pastoral planning** expresses and defines the identity of the school, *explaining the Gospel values which inspire it, translating them into practical and precise terms*. The SEPP is the criterion for all choices and interventions (school programme, choice of teachers and textbooks, lessons plan, criteria and evaluation procedures). *It highlights the pastoral intent animating the entire EPC, which is decisive in all the elements and articulation of the school/VTC.*

As educational institutions, our Salesian centres are part of an historical context and defined by national laws which define the system of organisation and teaching, ordinarily recognising and endorsing our *aims and objectives* for the school/VTC, our *principles and the values* that characterise them. *The SEPP is our "identity card"*. It is here that the *charism inspiring our educational service is presented* (the original motivation must continue to enlighten our work today): the *concept of holistic education*; the *EPC as our model of the educative community*; our *values of reference*; our *educational method* and *preferred options* in any given circumstance.

The *identity of our Salesian school* as written up in the local SEPP will *constitute a common programme* for all the students of the school and each individual class. The SEPP, which lays out explicitly evangelising activity in pastoral planning is fully consistent with

the culture of the educational curriculum (educational choices and teaching in general); it is also consistent with the wider extra-curricular and organisational offerings, together with management proposals (formation programmes, activities, educative initiatives, organisation and management of structures, personnel and school resources). Pastoral activity is not isolated but permeates the entire work of education.

## **B** *Structures of participation and responsibility*

### » *Local animation*

Structures of participation and shared responsibility are designed to create ideal conditions for ever greater communion, sharing and collaboration among the different components of the EPC. The aim is to implement the Educative and Pastoral Project and see to growth in collaboration between teachers, pupils and parents. These structures vary according to the country and its school legislation. This is why every province should define concrete and appropriate organisation procedures, internal functioning and responsibilities in its schools/VTCs, keeping in mind the following elements:

- ▮ first, the **EPC Council for the School/VTC**, in accordance with the provisions of each province, is a body which animates and directs all Salesian activities through reflection, dialogue, planning and review of all educational and pastoral apostolates (GC24, nos.160-161, 171);
- ▮ secondly, **the teaching body** is responsible for planning education guidelines in terms of proposal, discussion, decision and evaluation in accordance with the Educative and Pastoral Project. Every school/VTC also ensures the teaching body has certain structures: *commissions* (or teams or working groups) and *departments* (or different disciplines) with a view to planning, programming, and implementation of educational initiatives;
- ▮ finally, the **Pastoral Team**, directed by the pastoral coordinator, provides leadership for evangelising activities, keeping in mind

their **effective integration into the educational process**. The criteria for the composition of the Team are agreed upon at the local level. Some **students are also members** of the team.

### » **Provincial / national animation**

The organisational structures envisaged for Salesian schools/VTCs exist at provincial, national and international levels. They can be **civily recognised legal entities**. This network of cooperation at different levels constitutes an active presence in the school and vocational training system, interacting with the production sector, and public and private entities for research and development in vocational training, other social partners and trade unions, as well as with other national and international bodies interested in educational processes and work policies.

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## **SALESIAN PRESENCE IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION FIELD**

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### ***The original nature of Salesian presence in Higher Education***

**Salesian presence in the Higher Education field is relatively recent.**

Although the first higher education institute goes back to 1934 (St Anthony's College, Shillong, India), an awareness of the importance of this level of education and the development of the Salesian presence in it was realised only during the final decades of the last century, with substantial numbers of people from the middle and lower classes worldwide getting access to higher education.

The Salesian Higher Education presence has grown in number and quality due to the process of reflection and networking of our universities which the Rector Major, Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, initiated in 1997 as a service of the Generalate for the Provinces and the institutions themselves (cf. Fr Juan Vecchi, AGC 362, *"Documents and news: A service for Salesian Universities"*). This service is provided by IUS and its general coordination, representing the willingness of the Salesian Congregation to guide and improve development of this new type of presence among the young. As

a result of the process carried out the Salesian Congregation amended Article 13 of the Regulations, recognising that **presence in higher education is part of its mission**:

*The school, vocational training centres and institutions of higher education promote the integral development of the young through the assimilation and critical revision of the culture and education of the faith in the Christian transformation of society* (R. 13; CF. GC26, NO.122).

Salesian presence in this field today is quite vast and diverse. We operate through management and promotion of *academic centres* – under the direct responsibility of the Salesian Congregation or in shared responsibility with other church institutions – management and animation of *colleges and hostels for university students*, and the presence of many Salesians with managerial, teaching, research responsibilities or who provide leadership in chaplaincy or similar ministry in institutions of higher education, be they Salesian, Church or Civil.

Reflection on and guidelines for the Salesian Congregation's presence in higher education affects the institutes, colleges and university residences under its responsibility in a particular way, since these are structures that allow the development of a more systematic educational and pastoral proposal with the Salesian charism at its core.



### **Salesian Higher Education Institutes**

Under the title of Salesian Institutes for Higher Education (IUS) we have **a range of higher level study and tertiary sector centres** of which the Salesian Congregation is title-holder and is responsible, directly or indirectly. The different social conditions and education systems of the countries where they are ensure that the centres present great diversity not only in management procedures but also from the point of view of academic degrees conferred and the types of courses offered: university, university study-centres, polytechnics, colleges, faculties, institutes, colleges or specialisation centres.

There are several reasons for IUS coming into being: the concern to offer and guarantee higher education for Salesian religious;

transition to higher education as a natural result of the growth and evolution of middle and senior high schools known for their academic excellence and education; the need to continue to accompany young people at a time in life when they are making fundamental decisions about their future, and providing university access for young working class people (cf. *Identity of Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, nos.3, 19). Taken together, they reflect the belief that we are able to offer society something of quality through our higher education centres enriching it with mature individuals, competent professional and active citizens.

**The nature and purpose of this type of Salesian presence has been defined by these institutions themselves** through the already mentioned process of reflection and networking. This made it possible for a series of documents to be developed and then receive approval from the Rector Major and his Council. These now constitute the framework of the IUS: *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education* (Rome, 2003) and *Policies for the Salesian Presence in Higher Education 2012-2016* (Rome, 2012). While the former defines the identity and nature of this type of presence, the latter lays down concrete operating guidelines for the development of institutes in a given period.

IUS institutes are defined as “institutions of higher learning that have a **Christian inspiration, and a markedly Salesian Catholic character**” (*Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.14). Assuming the scientific tradition and the academic structure of the university, they offer educational values according to the Salesian charism at this level, thus they are higher education institutes with a specific identity, both within the Church and society.

IUS seeks to be “a Christian presence in the university world confronting the great problems of society and culture” (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae* 13) as part of the Church, given that the Salesian Congregation’s presence is “characterised by their preferential option in favour of young people from the lower classes, by the clear Salesian identity of their academic communities, by the Christian and Salesian orientation of their institutional project, and by their educative and pastoral goals” (*Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.18).

IUS — as is every Salesian presence — is under the responsibility of the Province, which promotes supports and gives these institutes a specific function within its OPP. Each IUS institute is a significant presence of the Province in the service of the mission and of the other types of Salesian presences in its region.

### **A** *The Academic Community in Salesian Institutes of Higher Education*

#### » **Importance of the Academic Community**

As such it has its own institutional academic and management autonomy in accordance with the mission and purpose assigned to it by the Church and the Salesian Congregation (cf. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* 12; *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.21), as well as the specific scope assigned by the Province and shaped by its statutory acts and regulations.

The IUS academic community is a party in the Salesian mission, just as the EPC is in other Salesian settings and works. Its members share responsibility for developing of a comprehensive educational program for young people and act responsibly to meet the needs and expectations of the society they are part of.

The community is configured according to the values of Christian humanism and the Salesian charism set out in the Institutional Project. As noted by “*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*”, “the source of its unity springs from a common dedication to truth, a common vision of human dignity and, ultimately, from the person and message of Christ” (no.21).



*“Every IUS, as an institution for higher education, is an academic community composed of teachers, students, and administrators. In a systematic, critical, and proactive way, it promotes the development of the human person and of the cultural heritage of society, through research, teaching, higher and ongoing education, and diverse services offered to local, national and international communities”*

(IDENTITY OF THE SALESIAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, NO.15)



## » *Members of the Academic Community*

As indicated by the reference documents, the academic community is made up of various members, Salesians and lay people, who cooperate and share responsibility for the achievement of institutional objectives. To achieve its goal, the academic community requires of each of its members:

- identification with the charism and the Salesian educational method, shown especially in the Preventive System of Don Bosco;
- focus on the circumstances of young people and an ability to relate to young university students;
- identification with and commitment to the Institutional Project. This presupposes and requires ethical, professional consistency on the part of every member of the academic community. This consistency is both theoretical and practical, with the values and principles contained therein;
- the skills needed to perform one's duties in the university;
- compliance with the respective functions and roles assigned to each member of the community (students, teachers, management, administrative and ancillary staff);
- care for and promotion of an environment in which the human individual is central, and in which dialogue and cooperation are the basis of the educational method.

Educators and all members of the academic community employ their personal qualities and skills in order to achieve the educational and pastoral goal (cf. *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.31): each individual employs his or her respective skills in the specific assigned task within the academic community. The academic community needs:

- **lecturers** furnished with the professional, pedagogical and social skills, whose academic work, be it research or teaching, is consistent with the values of the Gospel;

- **students** ready to learn and develop as **human beings, who are committed to and share responsibility for the cultural, scientific and social values** promoted by the Institutional Project;
- **administrative and ancillary staff** who a **vital support to the institution through their work** offer and thereby contribute to the formation of the young university students;
- the **Management, Salesians and lay people**, who are able to articulate the **challenges and responsibilities** of the university and lead the community in developing and **carrying out the Institutional Project**.

In order to achieve its mission and obtain quality results, according to the aims and objectives of the university's **Catholic and Salesian identity**, **each IUS institute should ensure the management and development of its staff**, especially its **teaching and managerial staff**. This implies careful **selection, training and support** to ensure identification with and commitment to the Institutional Project (cf. *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.29).

## **B** The **Institutional Project**

As an institution of higher education, **each IUS institute should carry out research, coordinate teaching, and disseminate knowledge and culture**. Each one, however, does it "through an appropriate *institutional project* — cultural and scientific, educative and pastoral, organisational and normative — which addresses the needs of the local situation, and thus applies and gives shape to the identity described above" (*Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.26).

The **Institutional Project** specifies the way in which the institution



*"Religious Orders and Congregations bring a specific presence to the Universities. By the wealth and diversity of their charism - especially their educational charism - they contribute to the Christian formation of teachers and students"*

(PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY AND IN THE UNIVERSITY CULTURE, II, NO.1)

contextualises the Salesian charism in response to the needs of the national higher education system and the circumstances in its neighbourhood. The mission and local context of each IUS institute gives it its own particular character, accordingly, amidst the institutes of higher education in the same local area.

In addition to clearly defining the nature, mission and institutional goals, the Project sets out the options and criteria for research, selecting disciplines and training areas and methods of transmitting knowledge and culture. In line with the Overall Provincial Plan (OPP), it evaluates the choices to be preferred locally, sectors and social areas to encourage in consonance with the Salesian mission and the needs of the local Church of which it is a significant presence in the university field. **The Institutional Project is a true constitutional charter that guides the life of the whole institute.**

Development and practical application of the Institutional Project are realised progressively through a series of tools and procedures. These ensure that orientation, direction, management and operation are in accordance with the specific identity of the institute (cf. *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.28). First, the *Strategic Plan and the Operational Plan* that accompany the gradual realisation of the Institutional Project. These define strategic objectives, goals, action plans and identified resources; institutional evaluation and accreditation, such as orderly procedures to ensure continuous improvement of the institute and actual achievement of objectives and purposes as indicated in the Educative and Pastoral Plan. Finally, the Institutional Project determines the organisational structure and the body of laws (statutes and regulations) that characterise university life and institutional culture.

### **C** *The educative and pastoral proposal*

As has already been stated, “the Institutional Project of each IUS is guided by a clear educative and pastoral purpose, according to the characteristics of Salesian pedagogy and spirituality” (*Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.24). This goal becomes an educational and pastoral proposal addressed to all members of the academic community, particularly the students, in the desire to have an educational and cultural impact in society and the Church (cf. *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, nos.24, 31).

The educative and pastoral proposal is at the heart of the Institutional Project and is to be developed through the different processes and actions through which the institute carries out its functions of research, teaching and service to society. It is based on the Christian concept of the person and oriented according to Salesian values and pedagogy (cf. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* 49; *Identity of the Salesian Institutions of Higher Education*, no.22). In agreement with these principles, the educational and pastoral proposal promotes:

- ▮ a Gospel-inspired concept of the human being, putting the individual and his/her dignity at the centre of things;
- ▮ a constant quest for truth in the light of the Gospel, which puts knowledge at the service of the individual and society development;
- ▮ a vision of education that prepares people capable of critical judgement, with a comprehensive understanding of reality, the result of interdisciplinary knowledge and its integration;
- ▮ an understanding of professional life guided by an ethical conscience and open to responsibility and service to society;
- ▮ a dialogue between culture, science, and faith that can enlighten life in a Christian way thus promoting the inculturation of the Gospel.

The purpose of the educative and pastoral proposal is also manifested in **the desire to have an educational and cultural impact** on society and in the Church. It is achieved through a commitment to understanding society and its transformation, especially in those aspects that affect the situation of young people (cf. *Policies of the Salesian Presence in Higher Education from 2012 to 2016*, no.41). The social context is a constant reference point for the life and activities of the institute and is the testing ground for its educational proposals. It is a constant challenge for its relevance and significance.

This service is developed through scientific research, the study of contemporary social and human problems, critical analysis of culture, the promotion of the common good and social justice according to the principles of the Church's social teaching. It is also promoted through formation of men and women capable of assuming responsibility and commitment to service in the Church and in society.

## **D** *Systematic pastoral animation of Salesian Institutes of Higher Education*

The educative and pastoral proposal is put into practice and implemented in the various areas of the life and activities of the institute. It is particularly evident in its educational climate, its holistic approach to student formation, in the attention and pastoral care it offers members of the community.

1 A key element of Salesian pedagogy is the **educational climate**. This is an abundance of stimuli and quality personal relationships that give currency to a set of values which make educative and pastoral activity possible. In Salesian educative praxis this demands:

- family spirit characterised by a welcoming attitude and availability for personal encounter;
- fraternal relationships where mutual respect, friendliness, and readiness for dialogue are evident;
- that the life of individuals and organisation of the institute reflect, in practice, the values proposed (solidarity, justice, freedom, equality, etc.);
- an environment rich in educational experience and initiative, which encourages growth in individuals;
- promotion and accompaniment of groups and involvement through representative bodies;
- readiness to make room and physical structures available for encounter, communication and relationships between people.

2 The **proposal of holistic formation** is expressed through academic activity and the complementary initiatives that make up university life. To the extent that research, teaching and professional practice are carried out uniformly, a contribution is made to the creation of a structure of thought and development of policies, attitudes and skills that provide an all-rounded education for students. The wholeness and integrity of this proposal offers students the necessary personal growth

and cultural, scientific and professional preparation to ensure they achieve fullness of personality and a place in society.

The complete nature of the Institutional Project therefore requires special attention to the following components:

- ▶ development of an educational model integrating the values and principles of the Christian and Salesian humanistic vision, learning theories and methods, and the necessary teaching methods and resources;
- ▶ a curricular model that helps develop criteria and basic human attitudes, knowledge and skills relating to professional development and the range of skills that prepare individuals for life, professional work and their inclusion in society;
- ▶ a rigorous and scientific research model, curricula and contents of teaching, open to a transcendent vision of the human person and of life;
- ▶ interdisciplinary dialogue between different academic subjects including those of an ethical, religious and theological nature, to help students gain a comprehensive view of reality;
- ▶ the offer of a range of specific subjects of an ethical and religious nature in the curriculum at a scientific and pedagogical level, of equal academic value with other disciplines in the curriculum.

### 3 Complete human development offered by way of formation requires that **each individual receive pastoral attention and accompaniment.**

This complete approach means integrating the different dimensions of the person with transcendence and openness



*“Pastoral ministry is that activity of the University which offers the members of the university community an opportunity to integrate religious and moral principles with their academic study and non-academic activities, thus integrating faith with life”*

[EX CORDE ECCLESIAE 38]

to God. This implies developing a model of formation and ministry that:

- ▮ ensures the orientation and accompaniment of the individual in integrating the different dimensions of human, Christian, professional and social development;
- ▮ explicitly proclaims Jesus Christ and his Gospel, while accompanying those who freely wish to follow a path of Christian growth and maturity, through programmes of education in faith, liturgical and sacramental celebrations, and by helping them be part of and experiencing a community of faith;
- ▮ create the possibilities for dialogue and spiritual direction as a means of accompaniment for members of the community in their journey of faith and the deepening of their Christian calling;
- ▮ propose opportunities for reflection on the circumstances of youth today and on social, intercultural and inter-religious situations;
- ▮ offer formation proposals, services and tools which focus on young people in response to the situations and challenges posed by their status as university students;
- ▮ encourage experiences of Christian commitment and solidarity through community or volunteer services for the poor and needy;
- ▮ make places and structures available for coming together and growing as Christians: places which are welcoming, open to everyone for fellowship, reflection and prayer.

Pastoral ministry is something that runs across all processes and areas of activity in Salesian Institutes of Higher Education, guiding and reinforcing them. Proper organisation is needed to animate this, and means appointing people to carry out it such responsibility, develop appropriate activities, and see that services of individual pastoral accompaniment are managed efficiently.

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**University residences**

The expansion of higher education systems in different countries, considered necessary for economic and social development as well as for consolidation of democracy, has meant significant access to higher education for young people from middle and lower classes. This has led to an increase not only in the number and types of higher education institutes, but also in **service facilities and hospitality which are essential to guarantee access to young people living away from study centres.**

The growing need to ensure that these young people **receive hospitality, and, above all, a positive human, Christian and professional experience,** has encouraged Salesian communities to create a variety of facilities for young college students away from home. In accordance with the higher education systems and the socio-economic circumstances of each country or region, they have developed university or college residences, either as separate structures close to the centres of studies, or integrated within the campus of Salesian institutes of higher education or within institutes run by others.

*University colleges*, unlike traditional boarding schools which are mainly residential, are centres outside the university structure that welcome students and offer them a formation programme. Many such colleges are the result of a restructuring of the Salesian mission and openness to the new needs of young people, especially in cities known for their great and traditional university structures. In these cases there has been a shift from the initial offer of board and lodging, made possible by renovation of existing buildings, to the development of proper environments that offer a complete human, Christian, academic and professional experience.



*“Structures are often lacking for welcoming and supporting them and for community life. Many of them, transplanted far from their family to a strange town, suffer from loneliness. In addition, contact with the professors is often limited, and the students find themselves without guidance in face of problems of adjustment which they are unable to solve”*

(PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY AND IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE, I, NO. 1)



University colleges, as separate structures from the university campus, are generally associated with a Salesian work which also involves other sectors (Oratory-Youth Centre, School, Parish, etc.) all of which are integrated under the guidance of the Salesian community responsible for the work. Its management is generally entrusted to a Salesian or layperson, accompanied by other staff.

*University residences* which take in students, are structures belonging to an institute of higher education. They are generally found within the campus and as well as offering accommodation and a supportive setting where students can live and study, allow them to engage in experiences on-campus, enjoying a whole range of academic services (library, areas of study and consultation) and formation opportunities (activities and programs of a cultural, sporting, religious and social nature) provided by the institution.

In addition to extracurricular activities carried out within the university, the residences offer students their own formation programmes – personal growth, spiritual, social and cultural development – integrating the value of the experience of living and sharing a project together with the services already offered on campus.

### **A** *The **Educative and Pastoral Community** for university residences*

#### **» The importance of the **EPC** for university residences**

Inasmuch as these are Salesian educational presences, colleges and university residences are called on to promote a community which offers a formation programme and provides an educative and pastoral type of accompaniment.

In this kind of presence the **EPC** is made up of all stakeholders: Salesians and laity, managers, and young college students involved at various levels in animating the life of the community and in achieving its objectives.

#### **» Members of the **EPC** in university residences**


The organisation of the various services and achievement of the residence's educational objectives require involvement and shared responsibility of different members:

- ▮ **the Rector and the Salesian community** are responsible for the management and animation of the whole work or university institute as well as the residence that accommodates the students;
- ▮ **the one immediately in charge, Salesian or lay person**, who ensures guidance and management of the college or residence in the name of the community, and accompanies the formation programme;
- ▮ **tutors or educators** who in various ways are part of the community experience at the college or residence (counsellors, psychologists, administrators, chaplains, etc.);
- ▮ **students** who play an active part in their growth and formation, taking on specific roles and tasks in the life of the college or residence, according to their specific capacities and possibilities.

Building up such a community requires its members to engage in opportunities for communication and formation. It is particularly essential to promote student involvement in the life and animation of the college or residence through groups, advisory bodies or assemblies.

The Salesian community in particular is called upon to ensure a constant presence in the environment and life of the college or residence, providing young people with its testimony and the opportunity to experience that family spirit which Don Bosco so desired in all his houses.

## **B** *The **educative and pastoral proposal** in colleges and university residences*

 **College residences** not only offer students a welcoming place where they can live and study, but also **an offer of formation that allows them to grow as individuals, professionals and citizens**. These structures find direction through the SEPP, where **objectives, reference personnel, contents, method** and **timing** are defined.

The SEPP is the tool that brings together the various elements of this experience, the community and formation aspects that colleges and



*“In response to the demands of university culture, many local Churches have taken appropriate action in various ways... Stimulus for a university pastoral action that is not limited to a general and undifferentiated ‘pastoral action for youth’, but which takes as its starting-point the fact that many young people are deeply influenced by the ‘university environment’. It is there, to a great extent, that they have their encounter with Christ and bear their witness as Christians. The aim is therefore to educate and accompany the young people, enabling them to live in faith the concrete reality of their milieu and their own activities and commitments”*

(PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY AND IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE, II, NO.3)

university residences offer to the young. As such it is a single proposal which integrates responses to their needs, demands arising from the experience of studying at the university, and values of Salesian spirituality and pedagogy.

Drawing up such a SEPP requires deep knowledge of the circumstances of young people and the peculiar dynamics that characterise university studies and subsequent employment. Special attention needs to be given to the transition from family life to the university environment and the need to develop new relationships and learn to live with other people. The same attention is given to adapting to the needs and the methods of university study, and the ability to integrate scientific and professional training with one's life and faith beliefs.

The educative and pastoral proposal contained in the SEPP provides a path of growth aimed at full human development, the formation of a Christian vision of life and a professional life open to solidarity. It brings together different dimensions needed to ensure a holistic educational experience for young people, among them being the following:

- ▮ human growth oriented towards full maturity, involving the ability to handle life in an autonomous and responsible way;
- ▮ the value of interpersonal relationships, living together and of service to others;

- growth in personal responsibility for study and formation;
- growing ability to reflect, discuss and be committed to the pursuit of truth;
- development of a notion of professionalism open to solidarity in the service of the most needy;
- spiritual growth through gradual awareness and experience of a personally and communally lived faith;
- discovering one's vocation and drawing up a project of life at the service of God in the Church and in society according to Gospel values.

### **C** *Systematic pastoral animation in college and university residences*

Opportunities and experiences need to be offered students so they can put their educative and pastoral experience into practice. Of particular relevance are the following dimensions:

- 1 **a life-inspiring environment** in an atmosphere of acceptance and family spirit that encourages serious commitment to study from the perspective of an all-rounded individual formation. To this end many colleges and residences offer a variety of settings in addition to accommodation, to support study and personal growth: chapel, study rooms and computer facilities, TV rooms, recreation rooms, meeting rooms, dining room, sports grounds, etc.;
- 2 **times and places for communal sharing**, in which they learn to live together and share an experience of community;
- 3 **personal accompaniment and guidance** (vocational, professional, work-related) that helps young students to live and integrate their different learning experiences;
- 4 **shared formation programme** for the year, which encourages personal, social and cultural development. Cultural experiences and

contact with social situations are also offered to help with ethical awareness, responsibility and solidarity, especially towards the most needy in society. These experiences lean towards volunteer services as a life choice which reinforces growth as human beings and good Christians;

- 5 a **faith formation programme** based on the values of Salesian Youth Spirituality, through **spiritual direction and prayer occasions**, reflection on the Word of God and celebration of the Sacraments.

Where it is possible, the educative and pastoral proposal of the college or university residence should be in tune with campus ministry initiatives of the local Church offered through its various offices and agencies.

## 2 4

### PARISHES AND SHRINES ENTRUSTED TO THE SALESIANS

## 2 4 1

#### *The original nature of the Salesian parish and shrine*

Don Bosco's apostolic zeal for the poorest youth of Turin led him to create **a parish for young people without a parish**. During his time, Don Bosco accepted seven parishes. In 1887 he wrote a regulation on the proper functioning of the parish. He touched on issues that most concerned him: the priority of attention to the young especially the poor, and the identity of the Salesian parish priest who served in communion with the bishop and the diocesan clergy:

*The sick, the poor and the children are the subjects of special concern (of the parish priests)* (RESOLUTIONS OF THE FOURTH GENERAL CHAPTER, 1886).

Many years later, GC19 stated that the parish is the place for "an exemplary care of the youth community" (GC19, IX, no.3), and GC20 stated that "we find in the parish ministry vast possibilities and favourable conditions to fulfil the true purpose of our mission and, in particular, for the "education of poor and abandoned youth" (GC20, no.401). GC21 saw the parish as a work that allows us to position ourselves among young people in view of evangelisation in the style of the SEPP (cf. GC21, no.135). GC21

confirmed the priority of youth ministry and defined the characteristics of the Salesian parish (cf. GC21 nos.136-141).

In 1984, with the final approval of the renewed *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis of Sales*, the parish was explicitly recognised as one of the sectors in which we fulfil our mission: “We carry out our mission also in the parishes; in this way we respond to the pastoral needs of the particular Churches in those areas which offer us adequate scope for service to the young and to the poor” (R. 25; cf. C. 42).

**The option for young people in the parish entrusted to the Salesians is not exclusive or discriminatory, but a preferential option.** This option is a precious gift for the mission in the whole ecclesial community.

2 4 2

### *The Educative and Pastoral Community of Salesian parishes and shrines*

A

#### **The importance of the EPC of the parish and shrine entrusted to the Salesians**

The parish is the first communal instance in which the Church carries out the mission entrusted by Jesus in a well-defined socio-cultural context. *It is a large community of baptised believers*, “portion” of the universal Church, within the dynamics of diocesan ministry. The Christian community is the place where communion is experienced; the believer finds a home there.

Being a **community of communities**, the parish creates a



*“The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience”*

[GENERAL DIRECTORY FOR CATECHESIS 257]

broad weave of human relationships that fosters communion and fraternity – a “spirituality of communion” (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte* 43-45).

## **B** *The **members of the EPC** of the parish and shrine entrusted to the Salesians*

The EPC of the parish entrusted to the Salesians takes up a common mission involving responsibility shared by the largest possible number of people (cf. GC24, no.18) focused around a pastoral plan. It is **a community of believers** which by **promoting membership in a family atmosphere**, welcomes a conscious, clear and shared participation of various vocations, charisms and ministries, mutually complementary in diversity.

The parish is entrusted to the **Salesian religious community**, which accepts the pastoral guidelines of the diocese, offering the wealth of its pastoral charism, creating a team of leaders around the parish priest with a view to ministry. It promotes the development and implementation

of the SEPP in the parish and is responsible, in collaboration with the parish priest and his team, for formation and spiritual animation of the faithful. It accompanies the members of the Salesian Family who are the first collaborators in development of the project.

The religious community (cf. R. 26; GC21, no.138) is *part of the animating nucleus of the Salesian parish* and assumes a clear role (cf. GC24, no.159). It bears witness to the primacy of God, visibly manifested in its fraternal life and practice of the evangelical counsels through moments of prayer, meetings, social gatherings and sharing the testimony with the laity of the parish community. It is a portion of the pastoral project that



*“When the Salesians are called by the Bishop to the pastoral care of an area or sector of God’s people, they assume, before the Church, the ‘stimulating work to build – in full shared responsibility with the laity – a community of brothers, gathered in charity, for the ‘listening to the Word, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper and for the ‘announcement of the message of salvation’”*

[GC20, NO.416]

*“The responsible agent of the Salesian parish, that which gives it life, is the religious community”*

[GC21, NO.138]

gives space to the different skills of the confreres, participates in the life of the parish, taking an interest in the stories of people, especially young people.

The **Rector of the Salesian community** has a special responsibility in the parish as spiritual leader of the religious community and the one primarily responsible for the apostolic activities of the community. He looks after unity and the Salesian identity of the entire work and encourages the confreres as they carry out the parish pastoral plan (cf. *R.* 29). He is a member of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The **parish priest**, pastor of the community, is responsible for the immediate parish mission entrusted to the Salesian Congregation by the Bishop. For the Christian community he is the representative of the Bishop but also of the Salesian Congregation. True to the educative and pastoral mission, he holds Don Bosco to be his model in the evangelisation of young people and the people of God.

The Salesian parish priest is called to welcome, listen, accompany and form the parish community. He presides over the parish community, taking on responsibility for implementing the pastoral plan in communion with the Rector, the Salesian community and the Pastoral Council.

The parish community promotes and accompanies the diversity of vocations, encouraging the **laity to take a significant role** in the evangelising mission. The parish community is strengthened through the experience of *assemblies, associations, small communities and movements* who exercise greater commitment on behalf of all. The Salesian parish animates the various ecclesial groups, with special attention to proposals by the Salesian Family and the Salesian Youth Movement.

The parish community considers the **young people to be members of the EPC in their own right**. This charismatic presence ensures **attention to adolescents and older youth, with a positive interest in their world, their concerns, experiences and expectations**. Our preference for youth



*“The Educative and Pastoral Project is a rich synthesis of content and methods; a process of human development and also of evangelical proclaiming and of deepening of the Christian life”*

[GC21, NO.80]



characterises the shape of parish pastoral ministry, which is dynamic, enthusiastic and offers evangelical ideals.



### ***The educative and pastoral proposal of the parish entrusted to the Salesian community***

The parish is immersed in a world which is undergoing profound and rapid change. Its mission is a unified though complex reality and hence requires an Educative and Pastoral Plan (cf. GC21, no.140).

#### **A** ***A centre of evangelisation and education in the faith***

The *Acts of the Apostles* is one book of the New Testament which helps us understand more than the others that life in the early Christian communities was not easy. The sharing and spreading of the truth about Jesus Christ took root in them and was consolidated. In Chapter 2, verses 42-46 we read a passage that can really accompany the life of every parish community:

They remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles.	Evangelisation and Catechesis
They lived together as brothers.	Testimony of charity
They went as a body to the Temple every day	Prayer
They met in their houses for the breaking of the bread.	Liturgy

The parish entrusted to the Salesian community offers everyone a *systematic proposal of evangelisation and education in the faith* (cf. GC23, nos.116-157). It promotes first proclamation to those who are far away, and offers ongoing programmes and gradual education in the faith especially for families. The parish is *a community where one can experience the values most characteristic of Salesian spirituality*: the joy of daily Christian life, the hope that sees the positive in people and situations, and promotion of communion.

The parish community cultivates human relationships, ensuring that people and groups feel *recognised, accepted, included*. Our ecclesial communities represent the appropriate place for daily Christian experience.

The community *commits itself, then, to everyone*, and in particular, to *the weak and needy* so they may grow in faith and maturity. It not only welcomes everyone seeking religious meaning in their lives, but also offers compassion and support to those who are tempted to distance themselves. Aware of this, the parish is positively challenged by those who consider themselves as indifferent or non-believers.

It is a missionary and evangelising community. *The Word of God and the liturgy* sustain the faith life of its members. It promotes communication of the Christian experience. The parish community puts the Eucharist at the centre of community life, and celebrates the sacraments of Christian life in a meaningful way, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The parish entrusted to the Salesians nourishes devotion to Mary Help of Christians. Don Bosco's Madonna is to be considered as a very active presence encouraging us to follow Jesus better: "Do whatever he tells you" is our Mother's invitation. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians unites us within the universal communion of the Church.

## **B** *A Church presence which is open and fully part of its locality*

The parish is the face of the Church. **It is the point of reference in its locality which makes the Church visible in everyday life.** It is where Christians experience and live out faith, hope and charity nourished by the Word of God and the celebration of the sacraments. The parish is *"the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters"* (Christifideles Laici 26).

The parish community is the significant focus for the various ecclesial communities and groups that exist within it. It is an open



*"In parishes and mission residences we contribute to the spreading of the Gospel and to the advancement of the people. We collaborate in the pastoral programme of the particular Church out of the riches of our specific vocation"*

[C. 42]

community *collaborating with other parishes and communities* and with other social and educational agencies in the area which provide for the human and spiritual growth of its citizens.

Engaged in a *dialogue with the various cultural environments*, the parish helps everyone to develop values, criteria and patterns of life according to *the Gospel*, through a presence based on trust (given and received).

The parish carries out its mission in communion with the local Church and the Bishop, with the other parishes and diocesan pastoral organisations.

### **C** *A Community with a missionary outlook*

In fidelity to Jesus, the parish believes that the Kingdom of God has the poor as its beneficiaries and privileged target. Therefore, its pastoral, evangelical nature should reflect **the preferential option for the poor and needy**. This implies, first of all, the appreciation of the faith and wisdom the poor show, and it implies their accompaniment.

The parish entrusted to the Salesians assumes as its fundamental choice and criterion the **existential unity of Evangelisation, human development and Christian culture**. We proclaim the Gospel and the person of Jesus in intimate relationship with the history of the people, their problems and their possibilities. In the desire to heal less than human situations we are guided by the value of human fullness the individual finds in God. Development of evangelisation in the parish calls for spreading of the Gospel and developing the people (cf. C. 42). If we consider pastoral activity in its entirety as diffusion of the Gospel, this idea cannot be confined to mere administration of the sacraments.

The parish is encouraged to be a welcoming place, one of hope for everyone, especially for the tired, disinherited, marginalised, sick and suffering. Thus, in close dialogue and cooperation with institutions within parish boundaries, it strongly promotes the protection and promotion of their human rights and shares their concerns and aspirations.

### **D** *Clear option for the young and for working class people*

Youth ministry should be considered the dimension that most characterises parish life. This is the particular contribution the Salesians offer as an enrichment

to the mission of the particular Church (cf. C. 48; R. 26). **Our preferential choice of a youthful dynamic in evangelisation is, therefore, the special attention we give to young people.**

The preferential option for the young, especially the poorest, immerses the entire parish in a *particular kind of activity and a particular educational approach*. We encourage experiences that make young people evangelisers of other young people. The priority of youth also involves the duty of creating awareness in the *diocesan community* of the problems and needs of youth ministry. The Salesian parish can help provide examples of educational approaches for parish contact with young people.

The parish is a community that accompanies the faithful in their vocational choices, especially the young. Accompaniment of young people requires considerable effort. This service helps them personalise faith, listen more profoundly to God and mature in their Christian life understood as vocation. The parish *guides and accompanies various vocations in the Church*. It offers young people a specific invitation to religious life, priesthood or a committed lay vocation. Prayer for vocations is continuously fostered in the parish community and its various groups and movements.

The Salesian parish is of a *broadly accepting popular nature*. The evangelisation of popular culture requires constant attention to the many ways this manifests itself. Evangelisation is contextualised and integrated into the life of the people, through consideration of their history, tradition and culture, customs and roots.



*“The parish entrusted to the Salesians ought to reproduce today this charismatic experience of Valdocco and make it an enriching contribution to the pastoral service of the local Church. For this reason it has certain charismatic features which are the foundation of its own life and mission”*

(FR ANTONIO DOMENECH, AGC 396, “GUIDELINES AND DIRECTIVES: THE IDENTITY OF THE PARISH ENTRUSTED TO THE SALESIANS”)



## **Systematic pastoral animation in the parish**

### **A Main interventions of the pastoral proposal**

The parish is an **evangelising community**; it brings first proclamation to those who are estranged from it and catechises them, taking them as they are as

the starting point. It would seem appropriate to recover **certain principles inspired by the Christian catechumenate** (RCIA) as a pedagogical element and basis for education in the faith. The catechumenate seeks to evangelise in the four main areas of growth in faith found in the Church's experience (cf. *General Directory for Catechesis* 147): the personal dimension, the community dimension, the liturgical and celebrative dimension, and total commitment to evangelisation. These four dimensions can assist in proper programming of interventions with young people, ensuring the completeness and integrity of the Christian experience.

- 1 The parish **creates and offers gradual and diversified programmes in faith education**, particularly for young people and families, without reducing catechesis to simple preparation for the sacraments (cf. GC23, nos. 116-157). These processes help start families off in the faith education they offer their children, set up processes for baptismal catechesis, and education in faith programmes for engaged couples that might later give rise to family group programmes.

**Catechesis** in all its forms should transmit *an adequate and relevant summary* of the Christian message and, above all, integrate personal experience in the process of maturity and growth. It seeks to encourage and accompany gradual commitment to Christian life.

**Christian initiation** is based on experience, community relationships and on the testimony of life. Therefore, the parish entrusted to the Salesians offers many lively and creative pastoral processes and initiatives, processes which allow for personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It is urgent for Christian communities to offer meaningful experiences and accompany people in search of faith at its various stages: understanding and listening to the Word of God (introductory courses on Sacred Scripture, preaching, *Lectio Divina*), the experience of personal and shared prayer (schools of prayer), participation in liturgical celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments, further exploration of the faith, appreciation of the wealth of popular piety, and missionary-oriented youth ministry experiences in rural and urban areas. All this should be accompanied by reflection, good communication as well as silence and contemplation.

- 2 Another parish activity is to encourage membership of groups in the **Church**. For this purpose the parish fosters **group movements, youth**

**communities and Salesian Family Groups**, among others. There is also a need to co-ordinate these groups with the Salesian Youth Movement and the invitation to Salesian Youth Spirituality. Group experiences should be able to lead to open and integrated Christian communities.

- 3 **The parish is a community that practises liturgy and the sacraments: celebrating them with dignity and beauty.** Care is to be taken that liturgy is in close contact with life, trying to use a language that is understandable and accessible, expressed in a simple way through songs, gestures, stories, testimonies and symbols. For a celebration to be alive it is important to get everyone to be actively involved its preparation and implementation.
- 4 By fostering growth of an active faith the parish educates to the **social dimension of charity**, building a culture of solidarity. Thus, it recognises and encourages the commitment of members of the parish community to being involved in social and charitable activity, and in civil and political life. It supports the promotion, formation and accompaniment of voluntary services and missionary work.

A Church community working with other organisations on behalf of the poor needs to exhibit concrete and visible gestures of a modest lifestyle and one which is open to generosity and solidarity through actions which manifest the values of the Kingdom. Preference is to be given to acts of solidarity of a more lasting kind.

- 5 The parish community is to **become a formation centre for lay people who are dynamic and committed**, above all for pastoral leaders of young people. A priority that keeps the future of the Church community in mind is the **development of appropriate formation courses for a variety of categories**, in particular those with responsibility for education: catechists, adults (or mature older youth) who are prepared to lead groups. A creative and dynamic approach cannot be truly fruitful unless practised by catechists who have themselves been well formed.

All this calls for the parish community, Salesians and lay people, to offer *space and time for analysis and reflection* on pastoral activity for youth and adolescents.

## **B** *Structures of participation and responsibility*

### » *Leadership in the local parish community*

**The parish assembly and groups** are instruments both of communion and lay involvement in the life of the community. They are opportunities for shared responsibility. Their identity is strengthened through the preparation and implementation of a Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan for the parish.

Parish ministry is given a *unified and articulated* shape in the Educative and Pastoral Plan. This plan helps the parish forge effective collaboration in its pastoral mission to *teach, sanctify and guide* everyone. Parish structures strengthen communion, convergence and complementarity amongst people, activities and other things focused around the Educative and Pastoral Plan.

**The parish council** is an advisory, operational pastoral team by nature (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 536). It includes representatives of the various sectors and groups in the parish. In accordance with the *Code of Canon Law* and the guidelines of the Church, the parish council fulfils the functions that GC24 presents for the EPC (cf. GC24, nos.160, 171). This pastoral team is essential for animation of the parish. It is presided over by the parish priest, led and accompanied by him along with other Salesians in the community; the team is made up of priests assigned to the parish, representatives of the various sectors of parish life, and other members whom the parish priest is free to appoint.

Its functions are defined in the statutes and these are: to analyse the situation of the parish and its members, offering an evangelical response to the challenges encountered; to offer the SEPP to the parish assembly, implementing it, and evaluating it periodically; to study and approve the regular parish budget; to ensure the formation of the pastoral workers in the parish.

**The committees and working groups** are teams that, in accordance with the SEPP, provide leadership in various areas of activity. Among these the *youth ministry commission or leadership team* is particularly important. It is coordinated by the assistant parish priest, or by a Salesian/lay person responsible for the Oratory-Youth Centre (cf. GC20, no.432).

*A Finance Council is also mandated for the parish.* The criteria for its composition include competence and administrative efficiency. Its members should be experts in finance and of upright conduct. Its juridical role is purely advisory: advising the parish priest in the administration of the goods of the parish. The chairman of the finance council is the parish priest, as its “proper pastor” (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 515, 519). The parish priest is responsible not only for sacraments, liturgy, catechetics and charitable requirements, but also for administration. He is the legal representative (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 532) and sole administrator (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 1279).

The Finance Committee has its own statutes which define the nature, characteristics, objectives, composition, powers, functions of the members, work patterns, relationship with the Parish Council and the duration of its tasks.

When a parish is one of a number of other sectors in a given area (Oratory-Youth Centre, School, Social work, Boarding house, Hostel), through dialogue it fosters along with them **a special collaboration for unified pastoral ministry within a single mission**. For the Oratory-Youth Centre the parish is a reminder that there is a converging pastoral plan involving the local area and the local Church, based on the different responsibilities of the two sectors. Unified pastoral activity is spelt out through mutual relationships and the fact that they are different projects help us provide a better response to quite a few special situations in the Congregation: Oratory-Youth Centre in a Salesian parish; Oratory-Youth Centre in diocesan parishes; Oratory-Youth Centre in presences with multiple sectors.

The Oratory-Youth Centre Council, in its entirety or through well-chosen membership, has representation within the parish pastoral council to guarantee the unity of evangelising activity. In quite a number of provinces it has been laid down that the director of the Oratory-Youth Centre is the associate pastor for youth ministry.

### » **Provincial / national animation**

The parish priest is appointed by the Provincial and presented to the local Ordinary to be of service to the local Church, in communion with the Bishop, the *presbyterium* and the other parishes. He seeks coordination with other parishes in the Province and the Youth Ministry delegation in



the Province. The guidelines of GC19 and GC20 (cf. GC20, no.441) require **co-ordination of the parishes to be fostered** in all our Provinces.

The parishes depend on the dioceses in which they are located but are entrusted to the Salesian Congregation to respond to the pastoral needs of particular Churches (R. 25). Because of its membership in the local church, the Salesian parish incorporates the pastoral guidelines of the diocese and those of the Provincial SEPP in its own SEPP.

A **Provincial Commission** headed by a co-ordinator ensures Provincial accompaniment and support for parish communities in their implementation of the parish SEPP. Both the coordinator and the Commission are part of provincial Youth Ministry bodies.

The Coordinator and members of the Commission have the following functions:

- ▮ raising awareness of Salesian communities so that they pay more attention to the parish where they are located;
- ▮ promoting reflection on and improved understanding of the identity of the Salesian parish in relation to the ecclesial and social situation around them;
- ▮ responding to the pastoral challenges of the Church in local churches and shrines where the mission of the Province is carried out;
- ▮ ensuring the development, implementation and evaluation of the SEPP in parishes and shrines, offering parish communities guidelines that can help them live out their Salesian identity;
- ▮ fostering communication and collaboration amongst the different parishes of the Province;
- ▮ supporting ongoing formation of Salesians and laity who share responsibility for parish ministry, through meetings and courses;
- ▮ convening regular meetings of parish priests, pastoral councils, catechists, diaconal teams, health apostolate and youth ministry.

There needs to be **teamwork with other Provincial commissions: Oratory-Youth Centre, Salesian Youth Movement, Vocation ministry, Mission animation, Social Communication**. The Provincial Formation Commission ensures formative accompaniment for students of theology, especially deacons, in the exercise of their ministry. They are part of the actual running of parish ministry.

The dynamics and work of provincial coordination are supported by **national leadership and coordination**, according to circumstances and contexts. Its function is primarily to promote reflection and deeper understanding of the Salesian identity of the parish through development and updating of the educative and pastoral proposal. It seeks to facilitate communication among provinces to share experiences and challenges. A common practice in different situations around the Congregation is to promote updating and training of parish priests through national organisation (formation, retreats, and courses of specialisation). Moreover, along similar lines, it is possible to convene meetings for reflection on a national level, conscious of the fact that there is a variety of groups involved in our parishes (catechists, pastoral councils, youth leaders, committees, groups).

## 2 5

### WORKS AND SOCIAL SERVICES FOR YOUTH-AT-RISK

#### 2 5 1

#### *The original nature of works and services for youth-at-risk*

As he went through Turin's streets, Don Bosco saw the dangers faced by needy youth and responded to their difficulties and poverty by opening new types of pastoral services. As soon as he entered the *Convitto*, Fr Cafasso entrusted him with the task of visiting the prisons where, for the first time, he encountered and witnessed the alarming and the unfortunate conditions of many young prisoners. His encounter with these young prisoners had a deep impact on him – it touched him, disturbed him and moved him to reflect on what needed to be done.

**He considered himself sent by God to respond to the cries of the poor and the young.** His insight told him that it was important to give an immediate response to their problems and **above all to prevent the causes through a holistic educational approach**. This is why he first of



*“With Don Bosco we affirm our preference for the young who are poor, abandoned and in danger, those who have greater need of love and evangelization, and we work especially in areas of greatest poverty”*

[C. 26]

all sought to take upon himself the care of orphaned and abandoned youth who came to Turin in search of work, their parents being unable, or uninterested in caring for them.

*We too encounter children, teenagers and older youth living in conditions of social exclusion, and we do so with Don Bosco’s zeal. Social exclusion is to be understood in the broader sense which goes beyond the mere*

economic meaning usually intended by the traditional concept of poverty. It also refers to limited access to education, culture, housing, work, lack of recognition and achievement of human dignity and the fact that they are often disbarred from exercising real citizenship. We believe that the most effective form of response to this difficulty would be preventive action in its many forms.

The option for poor youth and those abandoned and at risk, has been at the heart of the Salesian Family and its life from the time of Don Bosco till today. **A great variety of projects, services and facilities for poor youth**, with the choice of education as inspired by the Salesian preventive criteria, has sprung from this.

Urged on by our awareness that social exclusion is on the increase, we acknowledge the need to ensure that *Don Bosco’s system of education is practised*, so that young people can overcome difficulties and marginalisation, imbibe an ethical understanding of education and personal development and be socially and politically involved as active citizens. We want to see young people educated and the rights of the minors defended in the struggle against injustice and for building up peace.

**Poverty and exclusion are on the rise day by day even to the extent of tragic dimensions.** It is a poverty that harms the individual and the community and especially the young to the point where it becomes a structural reality and global way of life. Our model is the Good Samaritan, “the heart that sees” and saves.

Situations of poverty and social exclusion have a strong social impact and, unfortunately, they tend to persist. We cannot remain indifferent in the face

of all this. It urges us to put *immediate short and medium term responses* in place (cf. GC21, no.158; GC22, nos.6, 72; GC23, nos.203-214), so that by overcoming injustice and social inequality, we will be able to give the young opportunities to build their life in a positive way and be able to fit themselves responsibly into society.

Many of these works and services offer a **new pedagogical and Salesian model** and, therefore, require professional competence, specialised programmes and collaboration with civil and religious institutions. An overview of these works is offered here:

- works for **street children**: school-home, day care centres, family homes. Along with these are residential resources for young homeless people. There are reception centres for refugees and displaced persons, young drifters living on the streets, on city outskirts, youngsters who have “no one”, abandoned or orphaned;
- services for **young people with special needs**: minors under protection orders or in the penal system; prisoners; child soldiers; children exploited by sex tourism and abuse; **young people who need special education due to physical and mental disabilities**;
- attention to **immigrants**: literacy; **psycho-pedagogical support at school**; legal advice to regularise their situation; **contributions to social and professional skills**; participation and integration in context;
- reception and accompaniment for recovery and rehabilitation: drug addicts, kids with behavioural problems, HIV-AIDS;
- **alternative educational services for coping with the problem of school failures**: socio-educational projects; professional training workshops for pre-employment; **additional classes for scholastic reinforcement**; socio-professional workshops; courses for training the unemployed; **educational support programs**;
- integration in poor neighbourhoods and cultural activities in fringe areas; activities which take in and accompany victims of violence, war and religious fanaticism;
- centres which give attention and support to education by the family; **services addressed to young people who suffer because**



they come from dysfunctional families, families without a home or in non-standard accommodation;

- specific services for promotion of women: literacy, responsible parenthood, health education and hygiene.

Taking up our charismatic and preferential option for the poor and needy is something that **runs through the entire systematic animation of the Salesian Family**. The Provincial Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plans should guarantee this commitment in all our works and presences. Our main work is to prevent and address possible situations and needs of young people in any situation or context, especially through works and services which give specific attention to poverty and social exclusion. This is a typical feature of Salesian Youth Ministry.



## *The Educative and Pastoral Community in youth-at-risk presences*

### **A** *The importance of the EPC in youth-at-risk presences*

Don Bosco offered abandoned youngsters a true family in the Oratory where they could grow and prepare for life; therefore he considers the community experience as very important.

In works and services which respond to youth problems the EPC takes its own particular shape and our understanding of this has grown. The Congregation has accumulated criteria over recent years which need to be considered if we wish to consolidate this institutional commitment. This well-ordered and complete educational service is a **real missionary option of acceptance and family presence among young people at risk**. Attentive to the individual, it accompanies them as they try to be part of the community by supporting their rights and helping them be committed to justice and the renewal of society. It promotes a culture of solidarity according to values inspired by Church's social teaching (cf. C. 33).


### **B** *Members of the EPC in youth-at-risk presences*

The **educators share a close and friendly relationship with the young**, through familiarity and loving Salesian presence (loving-kindness). The educator **not only works for poor youth but in communion and solidarity**

with them. This is expressed through strict but flexible interdependency an educational 'agreement' based on mutual consent.

**The team of educators** is chiefly responsible for drawing up, implementing and evaluating the local SEPP. The joint responsibility of educators and young people in this project is an essential feature and one which is characteristic of Salesian pedagogy. This community experience becomes a **school of experience for the young people themselves**. They see themselves as helping to educate their peers, with whom they share the same development processes. It prepares them gradually for future roles of service as educators in the work itself, in their families and in society.

Insight, personal experience and personal good will are not enough to carry out a pastoral and educative activity of a certain quality. The people involved need to be ready to:

- ▮ ensure strategies and interventions in the SEPP that continuously strengthen the motivations and values guiding institutional choices and those of every educator;
  - ▮ have the necessary preparation for carrying out a project which is professionally competent and of quality, faced with the complexity of the situation;
  - ▮ ensure professionalism based on seeing this as a vocation, even more so in the case of educators dedicated to this service, who need to be experts in education and in humanity;
  - ▮ cultivate a profound understanding of the youth situation and the cultural processes generated by social exclusion and marginalisation;
- 
- ▮ further their study of the Preventive System in relation to everyday life, through ongoing formation in the social dimension of charity;
  - ▮ adopt the viewpoint of the Church's social teaching and Human Rights;
  - ▮ manage lengthy educational and recovery processes in an efficient way, at the same time seeing to good organisation and management, as well as seeking and managing resources.

The enterprising involvement of educators and young people on a daily basis requires cooperation from **professionals**: **sociologists**, **psychologists**, doctors, lawyers, **pedagogues**, social educators. These kinds of works are developing the very best kinds of **volunteer service experiences**. Equally important are connections and regular dealings with **family members** and **other institutions or groups in the area** working in the same field.

Living with young people in such a precarious and fragile situation requires *a personal as well as an institutional conversion* on the part of the **Salesians and the lay people with them**. Situations of need, the many faces of suffering, vulnerability, hardship and exploitation are a challenge for the Salesian educator and can question his or her ordinary activities, the profound sense of gestures which are usually taken for granted. These faces and stories urge us to be concrete and immediate, and bring to bear all our expertise and passion, creativity, spirituality and hope and without seeking recompense.

The Salesians, on the one hand, offer an austere witness of solid presence and education among the young people, who feel accompanied and sustained by such a profound faith in God the Father who wants everyone “to have life and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10), while at the same time they acquire ever deeper understanding of their surrounding circumstances and its mechanisms. Lay educators, on the other hand, represent a model of life for the young people, centred around the nuclear family lived in a responsible manner. They are professional in their educational interventions and are witnesses to a life inspired by the Gospel of Christ.

2 5 3

### *The **educative and pastoral proposal** for youth-at-risk presences*

The specific educative and pastoral project for these presences and social services on behalf of young people at risk determines **the identity of the proposal and serves as a guide to the service offered by the educators**, which responds to the requirements and need for professional quality and the awareness they have that theirs is a vocation as spelt out in the Salesian pedagogical model.

A

### *The evangelising inspiration*

All our educational commitment is inspired by the Gospel and is oriented to open the young people to Christ, the one who “spent his life doing

good" (Acts 10:38). In these works and services, at times *our intervention needs to be an immediate response to basic survival needs* (food, water, medical care, shelter in a family environment) so the young can grow in an independent manner, overcoming the constraints of dependence. Having achieved this first goal, the intervention then tends to assure them of all the other resources they need to live in a dignified and secure way. Don Bosco's formula, "upright citizens and good Christians" means responding to all the needs of "abandoned" youth from an ordinary human perspective.

The witness of the educators and the EPC, the environment of acceptance and family, the safeguarding and promotion of personal dignity and its values are a first form of **proclamation of Christ and fulfilment of salvation in Him**: liberation and fullness of life.

It is an educational activity that offers young people an invitation to interior growth by paying special attention to the *religious dimension of the individual*. This is a fundamental factor in prevention and becoming more human. It is also a solid support which offers hope to young people who are suffering the dramatic consequences of poverty and social exclusion.

**For us, evangelisation means being close to them, sharing with them, helping them be more human, offering them an invitation.** It is a process, and even when it does not become a Christian invitation of the same intensity for everyone, it is nevertheless a first and authentic form of evangelisation. Jesus became one of us to make us more human and he calls everyone to follow him.

Therefore, the SEPP of every educational community should offer young people experiences and programmes that awaken the spiritual dimension of life in them and help them discover Jesus Christ as their Saviour (cf. GC26, nos. 105-106). **This proposal of evangelisation should be fully integrated into the educational process** through a simple, personalised pedagogy, one which is strictly and gradually connected with daily life.



*"The source of our inspiration is always the pastoral charity diffused by the Spirit in baptism and in the call to the Salesian life: but the seeking out, contact with and the sharing of the life of the poor youngsters are the 'providential circumstances', the indispensable mediation in the beginning and practical development of our mission"*

(FR JUAN VECCHI, AGC 359, "NEW POVERTY, SALESIAN MISSION AND SIGNIFICANCE")



We need to **protect and develop this religious awakening** in the young through *patience and perseverance*, helping them discover the goodness in them, be aware of their dignity and their desire to change themselves. The specific forms of support and action that we share with the young are the following: helping them **deal with the question of the meaning of life** (what is the meaning of my life? what kind of person do I want to be?); being with them at celebrations and for important events in their family, social, and religious life; offering them values that will guide their religious search and promote the freedom of faith, thus presenting the Christian humanism of the Gospel of Jesus as Good News. We also invite them to experience acceptance within the Christian community and by its members. We propose simple but meaningful religious experiences and gradual acceptance of commitments and responsibilities.

## **B** *A holistic and systematic educative proposal*

It is very important to help them restructure and **unify their interior** world through **process of identification**. We live at a time of fragmentation, and interior unity can only be achieved through **vital contact with individuals and institutions with a strong sense of identity**, but also respectful of diversity and freedom. **Therefore we educate through conviction and motivation in personalised relationships** expressed by a **welcoming attitude and**

**dialogue, respect and unconditional acceptance**. Every educator is a **positive role model** to be identified with and a point of reference in the personal growth process of the young. In short, our presence "among" the young should awaken interest and identification in them.

This situation necessarily requires an **animation which is both communal and family-like**. Its nucleus, the Salesians and every lay educator, carry out this important task. Young people at risk, the majority of whom come from a far from ideal environment, need to **discover a family atmosphere**



*"Poverty and emargination are not a phenomenon which is purely economic in nature, but a reality which touches individual consciences and challenges the mentality of society. Education is therefore a fundamental element for their prevention and suppression, and is also a more specific and original contribution which we, as Salesians, can provide"*

(FR JUAN VECCHI, AGC 359, "NEW POVERTY, SALESIAN MISSION AND SIGNIFICANCE")

which offers them favourable conditions for adequately restructuring and re-orienting their lives. Above all, **offering them a family environment where there is a chance to relate with positive adult** reference points, breaks the barrier of distrust and awakens a true desire for education.

The essential element is the **development of a critical attitude to self and one's environment** with renewed criteria for such analysis. Cultural and technical skills and above all **acquisition of good work habits** open up the way for young people to be **incorporated into a family environment, work and social life**.

This complete formation, which covers all *their experiences and dimensions of life*, places emphasis on all their resources in a continuous and systematic way. It facilitates their sense of responsibility. It is a proposal aimed at every young person, called as he or she is to **develop every aspect of their life – personal, family, socio-cultural, environmental, socio-political, ethical and religious**.

### **C** *The choice of the preventive criterion*

Prevention is an educational approach that surmounts problems by preventing their **negative effects**. It is also a **systematic social form of intervention** that is not reduced to short-lived assistance. It remedies exclusion by working on its causes. It is not only about direct education of the individual but also creating a new social mentality at a cultural and political level for the common good and on behalf of human rights.



*“The educational power of the Preventive System is also shown in its ability to salvage lost youngsters who have maintained points accessible to good”*

[GC22, NO.72]

Our **educative proposal**, even though it is often a response to an emergency, **always includes assistance and social protection**. The preventive criterion ensures the pedagogical conditions for rebuilding a dignified life, and avoids things becoming worse. One basic element in all this is **pedagogical accompaniment** of the young as they grow up. It aims at **making them autonomous, able to take up responsibility for themselves**.

Sometimes the personal circumstances they are in require *re-education and improvement*. Don Bosco offers a system which is more than satisfactory in helping to re-educate young people trapped in delinquency or who have been excluded from society. Pedagogy today recognises “resilience” as an individual’s or group’s ability to make progress, to move on in life from destabilising events or difficult and traumatic life circumstances.

The Salesian project offers *group pedagogy* as an experience which can help young people *relate spontaneously and freely with one another*. These youngsters, who tend to be “gregarious” and easily led, find the group to be a determining factor in their education and as they develop their personalities.

## **D** *The social and political perspective*

The Salesian response to youth exclusion is also necessarily a *social and political one*. These works and services should promote a culture of the ‘other’, of moderation, peace, justice understood as respecting the right that everyone has to live a dignified life.



*“What is wanted is a work of ‘social animation’ which will give rise to changes of vision and criteria through gestures and actions... It is a matter of promoting a culture of one’s neighbour, of sobriety of life... of availability and free sharing, of justice understood as attention to everyone’s right to a dignified life and, more directly, to the involvement of persons and institutions in a work of broad intervention, and of acceptance and support for those who have need of it”*

(FR JUAN VECCHI, ACG 359, “NEW POVERTY, SALESIAN MISSION AND SIGNIFICANCE”)

Educational activity in these works and services helps young people to prepare themselves to engage in this field. At the same time, it fosters **a new way of thinking which helps to transform the social situation**. We need to understand the struggle against poverty and social exclusion as a structural challenge. Ongoing reflection on poverty and exclusion, and the influence it has on the young, especially in the family, implies that there has to be systematic collaboration among the various educational institutions working in this area. Our charism invites us to take a careful look at the cultural categories of the

young, of poverty, minority groups, so we can contribute to building a new human world order, even from the fringes of history.

This requires ongoing analysis of local situation, identifying the precise challenges to the SEPP and hence the relevant processes and specific interventions needed. There is growing awareness of our need to *network with other institutions* in drawing up policies which tackle education, family, youth, urban living etc, so they can help prevent and overcome structural problems. It is urgent for Provinces to strengthen their presence in competent civil platforms so they can follow up youth-related policies and offer reflections and make interventions in legislative processes.

Every EPC is carried out within the Church and in the social setting we are in. **We are striving to foster a culture of solidarity according to the Gospel of Jesus.** The pastoral care of children, teenagers and any young people at risk requires real participation and commitment for it to deliver justice and peace (cf. C. 33). By involving everyone responsible, we become a prophetic voice for building a society worthy of the human being.



## *Systematic pastoral animation in social work*

### **A** *Principal interventions of the proposal*

- 1 New forms of poverty among the young should find a response in all our works and services in the Province. **Co-operation and complementarity of the various Salesian works** in a given territory and our unified service in promoting and educating the young, strengthen and multiply forces and improve the effectiveness of each sector. Hence we need to focus on provincial and local projects dealing with youth crises and various forms of poverty and social exclusion, ensuring they have clear objectives, goals and educational approaches which are capable of preventing and overcoming these problems. It is high time for us to set up a *network of information on various topics, presences, programmes and activities*.
- 2 The SEPP of a presence explicitly dedicated to social service for young people at risk plans policies and strategies which offer gradual approaches to **attention and accompaniment**.

- *approaching, being interested in and knowledgeable about the situation of the young*, sharing their interests and leisure time, welcoming them unconditionally from the outset;
- carrying out pertinent interventions of *recovery/personal rehabilitation* helping them to recognise their situation so we can then offer them the possibility of healing and living more positively (cultivating appropriate attitudes of healthy relationship with self and others);
- knowing what their religious beliefs are, so that religious experiences can encourage them on their spiritual journey and help them personally assimilate educative, religious and evangelical values;
- helping them discover and experience the *God's loving presence and fatherliness* in their lives, creating conditions for personal, patient, trusting and confidential dialogue;
- starting out with *small commitments* so they can move on to greater responsibilities. When young people get involved in civic events and celebrations or have group experiences of solidarity, this gradually leads them to more stable commitment.

**3** Prevention, as we have seen, is not only a method of healing problems and preventing their consequences, but also of creating the conditions that ensure each young person can develop to full potential. It is important to **offer open areas with a wide range of possibilities and initiatives**, especially social activities like music, theatre, sports, art, outings, ITC (information technology and communication), and where individuals are valued for their innate qualities. These are significant approaches to recovery and preventive action and in the context of an overall project, they encourage personal accompaniment of every young person.

**4 The struggle to overcome social exclusion implies planned, mutually supportive teamwork**, helping a variety of social agents to converge on the issue: the neighbourhood or surrounding area, institutions, entities or groups and wherever there is acknowledgement that situations of exclusion or crisis exist. The aim is to create a new mentality, a culture of solidarity in society where all the actors involved work together on education, family, youth policies that have an impact on the life and conditions of the young.

## **B** *Structures of participation and responsibility*

### » *Local animation*

To tackle the speed of fundamental change in our society, the entire EPC needs to commit to searching for an effective response to situations of youth poverty around us and creatively implement **rapid processes of coordination so particular projects can be carried out.**

In every community of the Province and its works, attention to young people in difficulty needs to be developed via an analysis of the culture and mentality proposed in its SEPP. **The local community should include pointers to this need in developing its SEPP:** openness to the local situation and the young; reinforcing a systematic planning mentality which includes the criteria and requirements of educative and pastoral work for those most in need; attention to dynamics and approaches in the work that can avoid exclusion; group and activities which get young people involved; quality process in education and other programs, taking into consideration the circumstances of those intended to benefit from them.

Specific works aimed at educating young people at risk have acquired a large number of criteria and interventions specific to their management. As for every Salesian work, it requires an educative and pastoral presence with proper *management and administration* of financial resources.

**The project needs to be sustainable** in terms of human, administrative, pedagogical and financial resources. It is important for all sectors to seek legal advice through appropriate channels. This latter point needs greater study involving all the works and services of the Province and in collaboration with other institutions in the area.

Young people play an active part in these structures and leadership bodies too – they play an active part in their own formation in view of their inclusion within family and society.

### » *Provincial / national animation*

There is increased awareness and sensitivity in Provinces, as well as reflection on and commitment to young people on the fringes of

society. It is no longer an isolated sector identified with just one or two works or individual initiatives. **Our focus on the very poor is becoming an institutional sensitivity expressed in the provincial SEPP** on the basis of which each EPC encourages particular attention to poverty and exclusion while gearing its specific services towards work for young people at risk. The SEPP, consistent with its choices, policies and strategies in favour of the poor, should see that its work leans towards systematic animation and networking, collaborating at all levels with the Salesian Family and other Church and civil bodies.

The basic principles guiding Provincial leadership and animation should emphasise formation and systematic pastoral animation:

- ▮ the *social and political formation* of Salesian educators, religious and lay, and of the EPC as a body, so they can all appreciate the complex reality of poverty and exclusion in which the young find themselves. This helps them draw up approaches and programmes appropriate for the young and for the educators (consecrated/lay, reference people/family members);
- ▮ only through *reflection and systematic evaluation* can the work be consolidated; planning, evaluation and renewed planning of processes leads to better quality.

The **Provincial Coordinator** of works and services for young people at risk should be a member of the Provincial Youth Ministry team. In some countries or provinces there is a provincial/national commission accompanying the development of Salesian works in this area as a preferred charismatic option for the entire mission. In other places

this coordination is taken up by one of the Salesian civil organisations (an association, federation or other) that plans and implements activity on behalf of the young, especially fringe youth, those at risk and/or socially excluded.

For animation and coordination of this sector special emphasis and particular importance should be given to the **Provincial Planning and Developmental Office** (PDO). This office helps the Province in its strategic planning as it seeks to finance these projects. It is very important that this be a joint effort with the Provincial Youth Ministry Delegate so that these projects are seen to be part of the Provincial SEPP and at the same time encouraging systematic planning and evaluation of objectives of the local SEPP.

## 26

### OTHER WORKS AND SERVICES IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS

**New situations and new opportunities for youth to come together** have come to light for the Salesian world. These are *educational activities, services or works* responding to new needs and requirements of the young and they offer appropriate responses to questions about education and education to faith. Among these we can list: *vocation ministry programmes* (aspirantates, live-in community experiences, vocational discernment centres). There are also specialised programmes for Christian and spiritual formation (retreat houses, youth ministry and catechetics centres), leisure time groups and services like the Italian *Tempo Libero ed Animazione Socioculturale* [*leisure time and socio-cultural animation*] schools, sports, tourism, musicals and theatrical performances. There are other media-based activities, and mission animation groups, all led by the respective Social Communication and Missions Departments.

These new presences take the form of a project rather than a structure. They respond and adapt to changing needs with a certain freedom of action and inventiveness. They employ the kind of communication which is part of the natural setting for young people today, independent of fixed structures. This approach makes it relatively easier to involve young people who are aware that things are in their hands. These are an expression of a **new kind of presence in the world of the**



**young and can be effective tools for responding to education and evangelisation needs.** They are experiences offering a pastoral opportunity which we can work at along with other groups of the Salesian Family.

These new spaces and formats are exposed to *dangers that potentially reduce their effectiveness for education and evangelisation*: individualism in the way they are dealt with, weak identity that lacks clarity, they can be both temporary and precarious and make it difficult to achieve continuity for educational purposes. So it would be appropriate to identify some conditions and criteria that need to be fit in with our traditional presences within the overall Province plan. Here are some examples:

- openness to the basic principle of discernment and renewal: every activity and work of ours is “a **home** that welcomes, a **parish** that evangelises, a **school** that prepares them for life and a **play-ground** where friends could meet and enjoy themselves” (C. 40);
- being **clear as to our educative and pastoral aim** (cf. C. 41);
- **keeping a community dimension**; the EPC is always the subject of the mission (cf. C. 44);
- **integration within the Provincial project** involving constant interaction and collaboration among the various educative and pastoral works and services of the Province (cf. C. 58).

### **A** *Experiences or services of animation and vocational guidance*

In an effort to find new approaches to vocation ministry, new *experiences and services of animation and vocational guidance* have come into use (**welcoming communities, live-in community experiences, vocational discernment centres**). These offer the young opportunities for a concrete experience of the Salesian life and mission for a fixed period of time, where they receive accompaniment and care as they explore their calling in a more systematic way.

It is important that these activities guarantee:

- a *Salesian community* which is open and welcoming and that offers significant vocational witness to the young;
- *experience of fraternal life and Salesian mission*;
- **systematic accompaniment** for each individual's process of vocational maturity;
- close contact and *collaboration with other communities* in the Province and with those responsible for vocation ministry as laid down by the Province Plan;
- collaboration with other vocation ministry centres in the *local Church* and with other religious institutes.

## **B** *Specialised services in Christian formation and spiritual animation*

Over the last ten years, various initiatives and services for Christian formation and education in spirituality have come into being: **retreat experiences, schools of prayer, retreat houses, ministry and catechetics centres**. These services are a new form of Salesian presence among the young, and today are seen as necessary and even urgent.

*Retreat and spirituality houses or specialised centres for pastoral formation and catechetic* are based on the following criteria:

- a *team of SDBs* and other members of the Salesian Family, organising and working in these houses not simply as a place of hospitality but as a community or a team of individuals who welcome, accompany and share a spiritual experience with the young;
- a *precise programme* of spiritual pedagogy, with different proposal and levels according to the various needs of the groups, this way overcoming a simple and sporadic experience by presenting a precise programme of initiation and spiritual depth;

- ▮ special importance given to the *pedagogy of prayer* and listening to the Word of God and participating in the sacraments according to the values of Salesian Youth Spirituality; above all taking care of the aspect of initiation and accompaniment to help the young have a truly spiritual and personal experience;
- ▮ offering every young person the *possibility of a personal talk* with a Salesian or other leader during their stay or even having follow-up accompaniment;
- ▮ a *vocational theme* to help young people orient their life towards the Lord and His plan of salvation for them.

There are *other pastoral services* offered outside the Salesian presences, be they in the local church (such as the services of an SDB working for diocesan vocation ministry; an SDB working in Youth Movements in places where there are no Salesians) or in other places (such as teacher formation). These pastoral services should take on in agreement with the Provincial and in accordance with the Province SEPP.

### **C** *Leisure time services*

**Various activities during leisure time:** *sport, tourism, culture, music, dance and theatre*, are concrete places where the young meet to satisfy their own interests. These are present in all our works. These educative experiences today have considerable *social and preventive relevance*. It is a new way of recreating the same oratory environment that Don Bosco started at Valdocco, where the *playground was a privileged place in all his educative and pastoral activity*.

The Salesian world has a great variety of *groups and associations* with different initiatives. They are ways of implementing the Salesian educative and pastoral proposal with a huge variety of approaches, organisational forms and number of participants.

We can point to some common elements in these which are a feature of their identity, such as the *group and associative experience being a privileged educational opportunity* and one which is essential for full human maturity.

There is our *active presence in the local area* by offering something that is free from consumer overtones, and then there is the *approach which is typically that of Don Bosco*: animation, involvement and the active role that young people themselves play.

### » **Salesian sport – its educational value**

Active encouragement of *sporting activities in Salesian houses* is a known fact and takes place in a variety of ways. **Sport is**

**recognised as a value in the Salesian education system; an activity for every age and context.**

A careful interpretation of *Salesian sport and its value for education* allows us to present certain common elements amongst all the variety of ways we offer it:

- ▮ *sport is for ordinary people*, it is not only for the elite; everyone has the right and opportunity to play sport;
- ▮ *sport makes us more human*, increases potential for growth in a young person so long as it promotes 'clean play' and interpersonal relationships and respect for each other; sport brings young people and adults together and creates a more spontaneous rapport than a other occasions for education like the classroom or workshop;
- ▮ *sport is preventive* in that it promotes a healthy way of life. We are especially careful to see that we offer sport to children and young people at risk because of their age or where they live, or their family situation, or their low academic standard;
- ▮ *sport has a clear playful dimension*: without lowering the competitive side of things, in the right measure competition



*“The Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, such as the media of communication, various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools”*

[GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS 4; CF. GAUDIUM ET SPES 61]

helps balance out success and failure; it welcomes and brings together all the members of the group, including the less gifted, with the same aim;

- ▮ *sport as an integral part of the SEPP*, bringing together a wide variety of people with common objectives; for this to happen we need to form and accompany sport leaders;
- ▮ *structured and organised sport*, considered as part of the SEPP with the help of youth members: sports leaders, parents and others.

### » ***Various forms of artistic expression (music, song, dance, theatre)***

Right from the outset the Salesian oratory included music and theatre as **values belonging to the way young people express themselves**. As was the case for Don Bosco today too the Salesians continue these activities, offering theatre and music as art forms accessible to the young and as a means of communicating positive messages.

Recognising the strong educational values involved here, Salesian works promote these forms of expression while taking the following aspects into consideration:

- ▮ they have their *own unique way of being near* to the young and their situation, interpreting it through language, symbol, expressions of beauty; they result in ideas, feelings and emotions; they highlight fundamental aspects of human experience that are difficult to understand through any other form;
- ▮ they are a unique contribution to development of *intellectual, creative and expressive skills*, facilitating concentration, discipline and constancy in young people;
- ▮ they offer a *privileged space for interpersonal relationships*: their various expressions give rise to socialising and collaboration ... besides being very amusing;

- they are one of the *privileged means for evangelisation, proclamation and expression of the Good News*: music and art make room for celebration and festivity, and our concern for it;
- they have an *aesthetic and ethical value*: they lead the spectator to contemplation, admiration, critical ability and flexibility of judgement. This is why Salesian pedagogy is always attentive to these initiatives, fully aware that in many places our educational goals can only be achieved through non-formal activities.







# SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY

## ANIMATION STRUCTURES

CHAPTER

VIII

*“I am among you as  
one who serves”*

*(Lk 22:27)*





*The apostolic mandate which the Church entrusts to us is taken up and put into effect in the first place by the provincial and local communities. The members have complementary functions and each one of their tasks is important. They are aware that pastoral objectives are achieved through unity and joint brotherly responsibility. The provincial and the rector as promoters of dialogue and teamwork, guide the community in pastoral discernment, so that it may accomplish its apostolic plan in unity and fidelity”*

[C. 44]



*This little Rule brought this notable advantage: Everybody knew what was expected of him, and since I used to let each one be responsible for his own charge, each took care to know and to perform his appointed duties”*

[Memoirs of the Oratory, third decade 1846-185, no.6]

# The animation

and coordination of pastoral work are carried out on different levels: local, provincial, interprovincial and international. In drawing up the pastoral plan which gives details of its intended commitments, the EPC needs to select the necessary means and determine the concrete steps to be taken to avoid going ahead without due, thoughtful consideration. We are suggesting a practical method for drawing up the SEPP.

## 1

# A structured and well-organised youth ministry

*Pastoral activity* is the Church at work and is carried out as an act of communion: “the apostolic mandate which the Church entrusts to us is taken up and put into effect in the first place by the provincial and local communities” (C. 44). It is through the Province that, in a given area, the Congregation organises and animates the life of communion and the carrying out of the mission. It is through the **Province community that the union of the local communities among themselves, with other Provinces, with the world community and with the Church is achieved.**

The pastoral activity of each local community has its origin in this arrangement, and is organised in the context of the life and apostolic project of the Province (cf. C. 157). *The pastoral activity of each local community is related to a threefold concrete reality: the life and action of the local Church, the circumstances and options of the Province and the situation of the young and people in general in the area in which it is located.*

Any guidelines and pastoral decisions resulting from a careful assessment of the concrete situation are the means chosen to *respond with ardent love and pastoral intelligence* to the challenges and expectations of the young.

## 1 1

## PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUTH MINISTRY

### A *Province level structures for government and animation*

With due regard to what is laid down in the *Constitutions of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales* concerning the organisation of the Provinces and the functions assigned to the Provincial and his Council (cf. C. 161-169), **each Province makes its own arrangements for its mission in a given territory.**

The ever-increasing *complexity of situations* in which people are living, and the *great variety of areas* in which we are asked to offer our contribution make

us aware of the need to be ever more attentive to God's specific call in these various different situations. The province community, together with the communities, individual confreres and lay collaborators, are called on to face up to the situation of the young people to whom God is sending us. As we accompany them in pastoral and educational ways, our reflection and discernment will lead us to identify some key challenges; these will force us to concentrate on some fundamental options and encourage us to plan our pastoral activity.

As we shall see later, the choices and guidelines depending on the circumstances and development of the Province are determined and indicated in the first place in the **Overall Province Plan (OPP)**, the fixed point of reference for the government and animation of the Province. Other things which concern, for example, the life and activity of the people involved in pastoral work are matters regarding the formation of the Salesians and lay people who collaborate in the mission. **Local communities need to take the OPP into account in organising their life and the carrying out their mission.**

Reference to the choices made by the Province as expressed in the **Salesian Educative-Pastoral Plan of the Province (Province SEPP)** is fundamental for carrying out pastoral work. The SEPP indicates the major choices and provides guidelines for carrying out youth ministry in all the centres of the Province, irrespective of the sector and pastoral animation setting (cf. Glossary: Pastoral Animation Setting) being animated.

The Provincial with his Council has the **prime responsibility for the animation and the pastoral government of the Province** (cf. C. 161). On him and his Council rests the fundamental task of governing the life and pastoral activity of the Province as defined in the SEPP: indicating according to the situation, the objectives to be attained, the priorities to be pursued, the strategies to be adopted and the available resources. Therefore, the Provincial Council is a **body engaged in reflection and pastoral decision making**. The Youth Ministry Delegate, through his involvement with the Provincial Council, has a more specific role entrusted to him in so far as he is **directly engaged as animator and promoter of province decisions and guidelines**.

The choices and guidelines of the Province are directed towards the development and organisation of a series of **structures for animation** and service which **support and accompany the activity of the local communities**.

These structures for animation and service provide a focus and means of support for the ordinary pastoral activity of the communities and local works, as well as for their constant updating. Continual pastoral reflection is necessary in all sectors and pastoral animation settings.

## **B** *Salesian communities and works at local level*

At local level communities and works ought to respond to two major challenges: in the first place, the increasing multiplicity of situations and needs which we are being called upon to address; secondly, the complexity of procedures, which requires a better prepared and essential educational and pastoral focus on individuals. Both of these situations can produce a tendency in communities and works towards breaking things down into sectors and a lack of an ordered structure. In the face of these dangers, **a change of mentality and way of working** in pastoral activities is needed in the Salesian communities and in members of the local EPC.

Just like the Province community, the local community is called upon to live and act with a clear planning mentality, a mentality that leads it to identifying the priority areas it should pay attention to and making the fundamental choices that should guide peoples' lives and activities in various sectors of the work.

Pastoral work finds its principal point of reference in the local SEPP. The SEPP indicates the guidelines for carrying out youth ministry in all the sectors and areas of the work. The SEPP provides for the cohesion and the articulation of the four dimensions which characterise the Salesian educative and pastoral project (see Chapter 6). The Rector and his Council have primary responsibility for the government and pastoral animation of the work. In their hands lies the fundamental responsibility for the coordination and organisation of youth ministry. They should foster procedures leading to involving people, identifying priorities, allocating resources and initiating reflection.

It is the primary responsibility of the Rector and his Council to organise reflection and pastoral praxis. The local coordinator is the first and direct animator, which involves coordinating youth ministry as he promotes its systematic nature and formulation through local structures and organisation.

## 1 2

## A SPECIAL WAY OF CARRYING OUT APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY: PASTORAL ANIMATION

A particular feature of Salesian Youth Ministry is **animation**, in the deepest sense of the word: “**giving a spirit, a soul**” to things. Salesian animation, therefore, is not only something technical and functional: **it is spiritual, apostolic, pedagogical** and finds its source in pastoral charity. *Animating is more than managing, running and organising works and sectors.* The necessary human abilities and skills for the task are not neglected but are preconditions. However it is **important that pastoral sensitivity comes before the efficiency of the organisation** in the order of priorities.

**Animation** is a **form of contemplating, thinking, feeling and acting** which is characteristic of someone who has taken on a particular responsibility for government, and who, independently of that role, is involved in pastoral activity on behalf of the young.

### A Characteristics of **Salesian animation**

This special way of undertaking pastoral work has been **handed down to us by Don Bosco**. It is a *particular way of being present and accompanying*



*the young and his closest helpers* that he had practised as he lived out the mission entrusted to him by God. This particular style is practised and developed as it is applied in various contexts and settings.

**Animation** in Salesian Youth Ministry **implies first of all the involvement of people, relationships and procedures.** This presupposes:

- **involvement** of **as many people as possible**, of Salesians in the first instance but also of everyone involved **in pastoral and educative activities**;
- motivation and a deeper sense of **identification with the values, criteria and objectives** of the Salesian pastoral project;
- **continuous accompaniment**, so as **to achieve** the uninterrupted and overall unity of the **Salesian pastoral project**;
- **planning and implementation of processes** which have an influence on the lives and **development of the young**;
- unity and communion in a **shared project**;
- taking care to **foster exchange of information and communication**, promotion of **collaboration, creativity** and a **sense of belonging**;
- the urgent **need for constant reflection** on the situation of the young, and on pastoral praxis so that it corresponds to their expectations.

## **B** *Principles and criteria for animating procedures and structures*

### » *Links with Province governing and coordinating bodies*

In order to foster **close collaboration among the different works and services** in view of unity, it is necessary to:

- ▮ ensure that there is convergence and clear expression in the OPP of *choices made regarding animation and government in the Province*;
- ▮ **maintain clarity of vision** regarding the *all-permeating nature of Salesian pastoral activity* in the SEPP, **through its four dimensions**

articulated in the different sectors which are mutually integrated and complementary;

- *ensure coordination and collaboration among the various sectors* of the Province animation process (Formation, Salesian Family, Economy, the various sectors of Youth Ministry, Communication) to guarantee unity in pastoral activity according to the objectives of the SEPP;
- implement a process of *systematic reflection* and consideration of the *differences between the real situation and the determined objectives*: a continuous process of study, reflection, decision making, *planning and assessment*;
- *give support* to the activities of the *Salesian religious communities* and the *EPC rather than* to be directly involved in *organising matters*. This encourages wide-ranging participation *and shared responsibility* (a sense of community, team work, appropriate and sufficient provision of information).

## » *Involving communities, confreres and the EPC*

The *purpose of animation* is to promote and maintain active shared responsibility. **All confreres, together with lay people in the EPC, are involved in studying and drawing up criteria and making pastoral decisions, as well as implementing them.** This is why, rather than undertaking a large number of activities, priority needs to be given to the *guidelines, proposals and information* provided for the benefit of communities in carrying out their responsibilities. The following become strategic factors:

- ensuring consistency of local communities *in number and quality* (cf. GC24, nos.173-174);
- *accompanying* communities and those responsible for the different pastoral areas at first hand and systematically, above all where they find greater difficulty in their mission of animation;
- giving due attention to *communication and sharing* between communities and pastoral operators;



- ▶ promoting a *sense of belonging*, the assimilation of common criteria and objectives, collaboration and mutual improvement;
- ▶ following up especially significant opportunities in pastoral animation with particular care, such as the process of drawing up and evaluating the local SEPP, specifying pastoral roles and responsibilities in educational and pastoral animation teams, planning training sessions for pastoral workers, etc.

## » Formation for the mission

The response to God's call in the service of the young implies fidelity to the process of formation in order to strengthen the mentality and pastoral approach in the light of the Salesian charism. Pastoral formation requires **Salesians and lay people to be accompanied in order to give greater depth to their educational vocation and to update them in their practical skills**. For this reason, as well as the study of the model of Salesian Youth Ministry as presented in the *Frame of Reference* for Salesian Youth Ministry, it is necessary to offer procedures for pastoral reflection and pastoral *mentoring*.

The current situation demands that there be **common formative experiences: for Salesians, lay people, young co-workers and members of the Salesian Family** (cf. GC24, nos.138-146). Here are some important areas::

- ▶ there needs to be a systematic and sound formative project in the *initial stages of Salesian formation* through a systematic and gradual study of the model of Salesian Youth Ministry, as well as guidance in practical pastoral experiences which help young confreres to adopt the mindset of a unified ministry and style of animation and planning methodology. It is necessary to **ensure a gradual initiation into Salesian Youth Ministry** "on the ground", with good practices, and with a sound accompaniment. Formation ought help combine reflection with pastoral activity and avoid improvisation, superficiality, compartmentalisation and a generic approach;
- ▶ **specific formation** should be offered to teachers, leaders, coaches, social assistants and catechists to qualify them as educators and pastors; **specific preparation** should be provided for personnel engaged in the various sectors of Salesian Youth Ministry (a provincial formation plan for personnel as envisaged in the OPP);

special care should be given to the area of pastoral and educational studies with theoretical, practical and experiential specialisation;

- attention should be given to *spiritual accompaniment*, an increasingly vital issue for the young. This recognised need requires from us that we ensure the provision of formation courses that will prepare Salesians and lay co-workers to become pastors and educators capable of discernment and guidance;
- processes of *ongoing formation* should be re-enforced, making good use of the cultural and pastoral talents of *Salesians and lay people* in a renewed commitment to culture, study and a professional approach, studying *Salesian Youth Spirituality in depth*, in order to live it, present it and share it (GC24, nos.239-241; 257); taking advantage of moments of community life which constitute the ordinary way for its ongoing formation on a daily basis.

## 2

## Local animation and coordination

### 2 1

### A SALESIAN COMMUNITY AS THE ANIMATING NUCLEUS OF A SALESIAN WORK

The effective role the Salesians play varies according to the number of confreres and their functions. It is up to the Provincial and his Council to decide which precise model of the EPC should be implemented (cf. GC24, no.169). The following are some of the essential forms of animation:

#### A *The SDB community*

The religious community (SDB) which lives, safeguards, reflects on and constantly develops the charism of Don Bosco, performs a specific animating role with regard to the EPC. The spiritual heritage of the

religious community, its pedagogical practice, its fraternal relationships and spirit of shared responsibility in every situation represent *the guiding model for the pastoral identity of the animating nucleus* (cf. C. 47; R. 5). Therefore the Salesian community is called upon:

- *to provide the witness of religious life*, demonstrating: the primacy of God in life; total dedication to the mission of education and evangelisation; the joyful testimony of one's life and attention given to developing the Salesian vocation in young people and co-workers; the apostolic contribution of so many young Salesians, since being "closer to the rising generations, they can provide inspiration and enthusiasm; they are ready to try new solutions" (C. 46). The life of someone who has reached an elderly age becomes, through his living fidelity to God, a gift and revelation of the more mature aspects of a vocation. The elderly or sick Salesian is always more conscious of still having a future role to play, not yet having fully completed his missionary task. He continues to bear witness to the fact that without Christ nothing has value nor gives joy to a person's life nor to living with others;
- *to safeguard the Salesian charismatic identity* through a close and significant presence among the young, and a readiness to make personal contacts; taking care of the genuine nature of the SEPP in all its activities; providing the overall view of the Salesian presence, promoting inter-personal relationships and collaboration between the various works involved in it;
- *to be a centre of communion and participation* which brings lay people together to share the spirit and the mission of Don Bosco, and collaborate with the different groups already in existence in a faithful manner;
- *to take the primary responsibility for spiritual, Salesian and vocational formation* (cf. GC24, no.159), actively participating in the processes of formation.



*"The type we are dealing with here which ought to lead to the implementation of provincial plans for re-location and re-dimensioning is one in which the Salesian community is present in sufficient numbers and in quality to animate, together with some lay people, an educative community and project"*

(FR JUAN VECCHI, AGC 363, "EXPERTS, WITNESSES AND CRAFTSMEN OF COMMUNION")

Taking on this task of animation means that the Salesian community has to give further consideration to its own position, and its **role as a religious community within the EPC and to the educative-pastoral process**. In the past, the Salesian community assumed responsibility almost exclusively for the educational work and the surrounding environment, helped by lay people when they were needed; today it is called upon to invite lay people to join in, share responsibility with the community, and carry out its specific role within the EPC.

The cultural background of people (lay and youth), their sensitivities, their way of thinking and approach to life, provide the vital potential and essential approach for a new interpretation of the Gospel.

The Salesian community, becoming more and more aware of this new working model, assumes its own specific responsibility as a significant part of the animating nucleus of the EPC.

## **B** *The SDB Rector*

Responsibility for the pastoral animation of works and activities through which the Salesian mission is carried out in any given place is particularly that of the local Salesian community and primarily that of the **Rector and the local Council**.

As the one responsible in the first place for the EPC the SDB Rector *animates the animators and safeguards the over-all unity of the project*:

- ▮ in agreement with the Provincial and in harmony with the province plan he cultivates the charismatic identity of the SEPP;
- ▮ he promotes formation programmes;
- ▮ he sees to it that the integrity and unity of Salesian pastoral ministry are assured in all the activities and works;



*“The Christian lay person is therefore a member of the Church in the heart of the world and a member of the world community in the heart of the Church”*

[PUEBLA CONFERENCE, NO.103]

- he implements the criteria for bringing together and training the lay people, involving them and especially the Council of the EPC and/or of the work, helping them to share responsibility; he maintains links between the Salesian community and the EPC (cf. GC24, no.172).

### **C** *The local community Council*

**The House Council assists and collaborates with the SDB Rector** in his responsibilities as the one primarily responsible for the EPC. In clarifying the necessary link between the House Council and the other bodies playing their part in the EPC, it would be well to follow certain particular criteria, in addition to those provided by the *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis of Sales*:

- **taking part** as members of the Council of **the EPC**, collaborating directly and actively **in the processes of reflection and decision making**;
- following up the **decisions regarding** things that directly concern **Salesian identity**, the formation and bringing together of lay people;
- always encouraging the appropriate **sharing of ideas between the community and the various bodies of the EPC**; discussion and respect for the exercise of responsibility of the members.

### **D** *The Council of the EPC and/or of the work*

The Council of the EPC and/or of the work is the **body which animates and coordinates the Salesian work** through **reflection, discussion, planning and reviewing educative and pastoral activities** (cf. GC24, nos.160-161, 171). Its function is to **foster coordination** in the service of unity of the Salesian project where there is a Salesian work, or where the EPC of the various sectors operate in more complex works. If there is just a single EPC there will be just one EPC Council which coincides with the Council of the work. **If**, on the other hand, **there are as many EPCs as there are sectors of the work**, **each one will have its own Council**, and the Council of the work will be made up of representatives of the EPC Councils. The **EPC Council** does not take the place of the various bodies

of the EPC **nor over-rule them** with decisions in matters for which it is not competent, but rather **it should help them to**:

- ▮ **ensure the integrity of the project** as the practical expression of the planning process and of the activities of the various sectors;
- ▮ **feel a shared sense of responsibility** for its being drawn up, implemented and assessed;
- ▮ have a clear **desire for communion** and service of common needs;
- ▮ be **attentive** to the needs and overall **demands of the youth scene**;
- ▮ foster links and mutual collaboration, especially in the more wide-ranging services such as formation of educators;
- ▮ maintain communion and collaboration with the various groups of the Salesian Family working in the same territory.

It is for the Provincial and his Council to determine the **criteria for the EPC's composition** and **set out its competencies, levels of responsibility and links with the Council of the local Salesian community** (cf. GC24, no.171).

### **E** *The local **Youth Ministry coordinator and team***

It is possible, where it is seen to be necessary, to **have a Coordinator of Salesian Youth Ministry with a team**, for local pastoral animation, as well as individuals responsible for the different sectors and pastoral animation settings which make up the work. It is also possible, **where the complexity of the work requires it, to have a Pastoral Coordinator for each sector** and setting of the work.

The **local coordinator with his team, plans, organises and coordinates the pastoral activity of the work**, according to the **objectives set out by the local SEPP and the guidelines and criteria of the Council of the EPC** and/or of the work, **always working closely with the Rector**. This role demands ability in human relationships and in coordination. In practice it involves the **following tasks**:

- collaborating with the EPC Council in order that *the fundamental features of Salesian Youth Ministry* form part of the local SEPP, are put into practice and evaluated;
- he coordinates the implementation of the local SEPP through practical planning for the different sectors of the pastoral activity of the work for which he is responsible;
- he takes care of the coordination and integration of the different educative and pastoral activities, ensuring that they are complementary and are directed towards education to the faith;
- he promotes initiatives for the formation of those engaged in the pastoral work according to the guidelines of the province plan;
- he ensures good relationships and the collaboration of the Salesian work with the pastoral work of the local Church and with other educational bodies in the locality.

It is for the Provincial or the Rector, according the practice of the Province, to appoint the local coordinator, Salesian or lay person, and in the case of the latter, to determine the nature of the relationship with the Salesian community.

## **F** *Other bodies and roles of animation and government in the EPC*

Participation and shared responsibility require various bodies for animation, government and coordination in the EPC: **teams that are set up in conformity with the SEPP and available resources.** In defining their profile it is necessary that on the part of the Salesians and people the following are ensured:

- the complementary nature of different roles and functions in the EPC;
- their relationship with the SEPP, whose human and religious perspectives they need to adopt, together with their educational view of the situation, the style of their presence in working with the young, the objectives, methods and strategies needed to attain all this; the advice for their development as Salesian educators (human maturity, educational competence, Salesian

identity, the witness that inspires them in Christian values) through an ongoing process of personal and communitarian formation;

- an active presence among the young to help them to form a group, accompanying them in the process of human and Christian development, and fostering an openness to the educational, cultural and ecclesial context.

In agreement with the Provincial and his Council, the areas entrusted to the responsibility of lay people in each work should be specified; so too the areas of their competence in taking decisions, the relationships of the various bodies and the forms of shared responsibility with the Salesian community and with the Province (GC24, nos.125; 169).

## 2 2

### OTHER ANIMATION MODELS FOR THE EPC IN SALESIAN WORKS

#### **A** *Salesian works managed by lay people with a community presence*

In those works in which the main responsibilities are undertaken by lay people, the Salesian community, when it is greatly reduced in numbers, ensures the Salesian identity and coordination within the Province with the assistance of the Province itself (GC26, no.120); a Salesian can be involved in roles of pastoral animation, formation and accompaniment of the staff; bringing together and providing for the training of lay co-workers according to the criteria proposed by GC24, no.164, as far as possible involving members of the Salesian Family.

#### **B** *Works managed by lay people as part of the Salesian Province Plan*

For an activity or a work managed by lay people to be considered as forming part of the project of a Province two essential conditions need to be fulfilled: criteria of identity, communion and significance of Salesian activity need to be achieved, and it needs to be accompanied by the Provincial and his Council (GC24, no.180; GC26, no.120).



Therefore, in carrying out its responsibility, the Province offers animation and government opportunities to these works and their EPC, similar to those for the EPC in which a Salesian community is present:

- a Provincial visitation;
- an evaluation of the local project (SEPP);
- contact between the lay Director of the work and the Provincial;
- a delegate of the Provincial takes part from time to time in the EPC Council;
- an EPC Council is set up;
- a serious process of formation in Salesian identity is organised, involving the lay people concerned;
- assistance is given to lay people who have roles of animation and responsibility in the EPC;
- stable links with a neighbouring Salesian community or with the Province animation centre, especially with regard to charismatic and pastoral service (cf. GC24, no.181).

## 3

## Animation and coordination at province level

## 3 1

### THE PROVINCIAL AND HIS COUNCIL

Three distinct but inseparable levels of responsibility can be identified in the Province service of pastoral animation:

- **the level of government:** the Provincial with his Council takes the fundamental decisions as the one primarily responsible for animation and for the pastoral government of the Province (cf. C. 161);

- **the level of pastoral unity and guidance:** the Provincial Delegate with his team cultivates the organic unity of pastoral activity in the Province and its direction according to the Province SEPP (cf. GC23, no.244);

- **the level of practical coordination:** Commissions, Provincial Offices and Consultative Committees see to the coordination of pastoral activities in the various sectors and pastoral animation settings, according to the different dimensions of the SEPP (cf. GC26, no.113).

There is interaction between these three levels, which complement each other. Ensured in a special way in the second level, the Salesian identity of pastoral activity is determined and coordinated in the other two.

3 2

## THE PROVINCE YOUTH MINISTRY DELEGATE AND TEAM

A

### *The Youth Ministry Delegate*

The Provincial “will appoint a delegate for the youth pastoral sector, who will coordinate the work of a team which will ensure the convergence of all activities on the objective of education to the faith, and render possible practical communication between the provinces” (GC23, no.244).

**He is the Provincial’s delegate and works in agreement with him and with the Provincial Council.** His first contacts are the confreres, the Salesian communities and the EPC. He is not the one in charge of the initiatives nor of a single area, but the one who ensures a structured pastoral operation in the Province and pays attention to all aspects. Normally he dedicates himself full-time to Province pastoral animation. It is convenient for him to be a member of the Provincial Council, where he normally represents pastoral issues and concerns. In his role:

- he helps the Provincial and his Council *in the formulation of the SEPP* and of common pastoral directives and guidelines;

- he coordinates the *functioning of the Provincial youth ministry team in collaborative fashion* and helps each member to carry out his task;
- he *supports the local communities* in their pastoral planning, implementation and assessment, attending to the development of the four dimensions of the SEPP in their various sectors;
- he keeps in contact with the those who have roles of responsibility for *guiding their activities* according to the unified plan of the SEPP;
- he directs the joint community projects proposed in the SEPP;
- he sees to the realisation of a *structured educative and pastoral formation plan* for confreres, lay collaborators and young leaders;
- he keeps in *close contact with members of the Salesian Family* who are working in the Province, with the *local church*, and with the *Salesian Youth Ministry Department*.

## **B** *The Province Youth Ministry Team*

The Provincial Youth Ministry Team collaborates directly with the delegate as he carries out his tasks. **It is important that those in the Province responsible for the various sectors, and eventually pastoral animation settings, are in the team**, so that together they can ensure that the various pastoral programmes and procedures in the Province and communities are animated in a well-balanced and united manner. It is important that those responsible in the Province for Vocations, the Missions and Social Communication also play their part in the team. Among its tasks are:

- *to collaborate* with the Delegate in his responsibilities;
- *to foster* the presence and interconnection of the dimensions of the SEPP in the different works, sectors and pastoral animation settings of the Province;
- *to lead* communities towards an interdisciplinary view of pastoral problems and a combined effort to resolve them.

This requires that team members have specific theoretical and practical training, time for reflection and discussion, competence in making contacts and coordination, with the ability to motivate and a specific plan of work based on the SEPP, following the priorities laid down by the Provincial and his Council.

### **C** *Those responsible at Province level for sectors and pastoral animation settings and their teams*

For the guidance and animation of the different sectors and settings of Youth Ministry in the Province the Provincial appoints **a representative usually assisted by a group**.

It is the responsibility of those responsible for a sector:

- ▮ *to help the EPC* of these sectors and pastoral animation settings to customize the Province guidelines for youth ministry in line with the SEPP and the working plan of the Youth Ministry Delegate and his team,
- ▮ *to study and reflect* on their educational and pastoral aims, on the real situation, problems and forward planning.

It is important that those responsible for the different sectors and pastoral animation settings of the Province *work together systematically* in collaboration with the Provincial Youth Ministry Delegate; that the members of his team in order to have a shared vision undertake a coordinated implementation of the SEPP and of Province Planning; that they ensure structured unity in the Youth Ministry of the whole Province.



## 4

## Inter-Province animation and coordination

There are **organisations for contacts and for coordination** at the service of the pastoral planning and animation of a group of Provinces: interprovincial teams for Youth Ministry, national or regional Youth Ministry delegations, national centres for Youth Ministry. These organisations or teams are set up and directed by the respective Provincials in a group of Provinces or a region, counting on the close collaboration of the Youth Ministry Department.

The actual situations vary but the following should be considered common criteria:

- ▮ to offer a form of coordination at this level that responds to the problem areas of a youth situation which is becoming much more extensive and complex;
- ▮ to develop a more open and commonly held mentality in the Provinces, fostering solidarity and an exchange of gifts in the context of Youth Ministry, facilitating the circulation of pastoral experiences and models;
- ▮ being a service of support, animation and subsidiary coordination, it should not take on tasks which others in the planning process can and should undertake;
- ▮ the priority of education to the faith expressed through educational programmes and activities is also reflected in the organisation of structures of animation (cf. GC23, no.245);
- ▮ all coordinating bodies should be structured in a convergent, integrated and organic manner, avoiding both undue focus on sectors and bureaucratic centralisation.

**The Provincial Youth Ministry Delegates of the various Provinces in a Region or group of Provinces** (*National or Regional Delegation, interprovince team for Youth Ministry*) should meet regularly so as:

- ▮ to reflect together on the youth situation and the challenges present in the context of the provinces with a view to *formulating joint criteria and guidelines* for the pastoral animation of the nation or region;
- ▮ to coordinate *joint collaboration between the Provinces* on common issues such as the formation of educators and animators;
- ▮ to foster the sharing of experiences, materials, initiatives and projects;
- ▮ to provide a type of *combined and unified presence and action* in the Church and in the national and regional territory.

**National or Regional Centres for Youth Ministry** are to be found alongside National or Regional Delegations or interprovincial Youth Ministry teams, that is, bodies for reflection and animation created by a provincial conference or group of provinces at the service of Youth Ministry in the Region or Nation in order to:

- ▮ foster and develop *studies and research* on current Youth Ministry problems;
- ▮ collect and compare the more important *Salesian and Church experiences* in the area of Youth Ministry;
- ▮ *make known and disseminate* these reflections and experiences;
- ▮ put itself *at the service of the provinces and the local church* to animate the process of planning and programming, especially for the training of Youth Ministry practitioners;
- ▮ to operate according to the *priorities of the Congregation* and the Youth Ministry Department, of the Provincials' Conference and the Province Delegates.

## 5

## Animation and coordination at world level

Services, activities, initiatives and works aimed at the education and evangelisation of youth find a unifying focal point in the **Youth Ministry Department**, with the General Councillor for Youth Ministry and his team.

According to the *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales* (C. 136), his role is to animate and give direction to educational activity and to assist the Provinces. In practice:

- he offers encouragement in taking things forward, provides motivation, presents an overall view, pays attention to cultural awareness and spiritual depth, fosters an educational dimension in the aims and programmes and technical support, promotes reflection on the criteria and pressing issues, and an exchange of experiences;
- he also tries to encourage Salesian Youth Ministry to be involved in the Church, following up its proposals and directives and offering our specific contribution;
- within the General Council he provides a pastoral and youth viewpoint, following up and specifying the orientation of the general programming of the Rector Major and his Council: maintaining working relationships of support and cooperation with other sectors especially Formation, the Missions, Social Communications and the Salesian Family;
- he collaborates with the Regionals in unifying and organising activities in the different Provinces according to their situations and needs.

His animating role is addressed to the following individuals or groups as a priority:

- Provincials and their Councils;
- Provincial Delegates for Youth Ministry, their teams and those responsible for particular sectors;
- other animation groups at regional level.



## 6

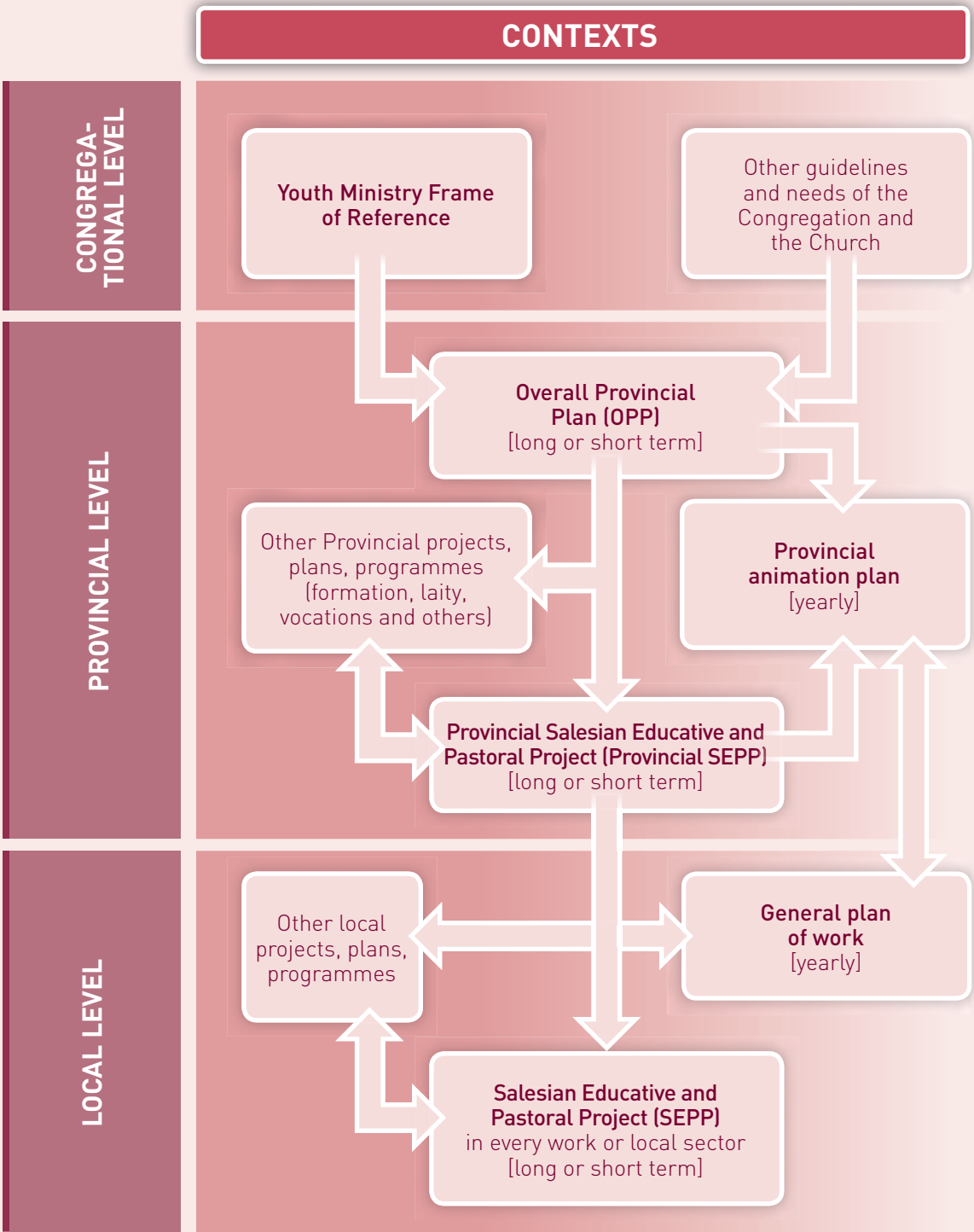
# Pastoral Planning

## 6 1

### THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL PLANNING

Pastoral planning involves different practical levels with a variety of procedures and documents. Ours is meant to be a **methodological proposal offering means for the planning process of youth ministry**. They are means which result from the reasoned choices made.





The various documents indicate **some theoretical and practical differences**, even though they can be employed in an overlapping way. They are not simply alternatives, but constantly influence and support each other in practical ways.

**The Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference**, with other documents of the Congregation and of the Church, indicates the collection of directives, guidelines and the wide-ranging basic background according to which pastoral activity of the Salesians and the Church operates.

They are texts which provide inspiration for the whole Congregation, propose points of reference for a very varied range of pastoral action in different times and places.

Provincial plans such as the *Overall Province Plan* and the *Province Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan*, and those at local level such as the *local Salesian Educative and Pastoral Plan* are more practical and contextualised, even though they are still concerned with general principles. These documents point out the guidelines of the Congregation and Church, giving them a more practical aspect. It is up to the *Planning Programme* to draw up detailed and more specific practical applications.

It seems appropriate to draw attention to the simplicity of the projects and planning procedures: texts which are *simple, clearly expressed and practical in their application*. It is to be hoped that they contain few pages and have a practical tone, and that they correspond to real priorities. We need to be careful that these documents do not become a “rag-bag” collection of copious reflections or voluminous references. Clarity of expression means that the structure of the document is immediately understood.

Quality in planning is not a response to demands that are solely organisational and project-related. Quality in planning is **an expression of discernment** and shows that one is listening, observing and examining the signs of the times through God’s eyes. In fact we are convinced that pastoral planning is not thought up in a theoretical situation but is nurtured by a profound and serious discernment process in the Spirit who is the soul and inspirational source of every mission in the Church. Therefore these two processes of discerning and planning need to be kept in mind.

There are different ways of carrying out personal and community discernment, (“see, judge, act”, “God’s call, situations and action plans”, “review of life”), which require well-prepared conditions and attitudes. These are some of

the procedures that help in seeing and interpreting the pastoral situation in the light of the Word of God. The way they are used should be evaluated according to circumstances and contexts.

## 6 2

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DETERMINING THE TYPES OF DOCUMENTS TO BE PREPARED

### A *The Salesian Youth Ministry Frame of Reference*

**This is a systematic synthesis of Salesian Youth Ministry:** a guide-book for reflection, planning, programming and evaluating Salesian Youth Ministry. It provides an overall view of all the characteristics which identify the Congregation's Salesian pastoral activity. It points out the direction to be followed in carrying out the Salesian mission. It answers the questions: Who are we? What do we want? Where do we want to get to? What do we propose?

**The *Frame of Reference* sets out, for Church and society, the essential features of the Congregation's pastoral activity.**

Known and shared in the EPC, it is a basic point of reference that establishes the nature of belonging, determines the common commitment, draws out the best from people by providing appropriate formation, promotes an atmosphere of collaboration and co-responsibility.

### B *The Overall Provincial Plan*

This is a **strategic plan of animation and government which regulates development and continuity of the decisions of the Province** (cf. GC25, no.82). It is a practical means with the scope of coordinating and directing the educational and pastoral resources in the Province towards a given end. It is not presented as a rigid scheme. The OPP is concerned with fundamental aspects: *a careful observation of the situation* in which one is called to act; *the central options* that ought guide the development of the Province; *the priority fields of work* over the next few years; *the operating criteria* that ought guide the different projects; the general lines to be followed in the *preparation of personnel* and for *economic and structural development*.

GC25 indicated who are responsible for the production of the OPP: "In the next three years the provincial community, through its various organisms will

study, draw up and evaluate the Organic Provincial Plan" (GC25, no.82). The Provincial and his Council with the help of a working party (GC25, no.84), will guide and direct a process of study, of drawing up and of evaluation of the OPP, involving the communities and in a special way the Rectors. In the light of C. 1, 2, 171, and of R. 3, 167, it would be appropriate for the directives and the fundamental choices of the OPP to be studied and approved by the Provincial Chapter.

These official elements (long or medium term) ought to take practical shape in the various *plans or projects*, according to the important sectors in the life of the Province: the formation project; the lay project; the annual financial budget and income and expenditure accounts; local community plans. **Among these projects, the one needing the greatest development from the point of view of the mission is the SEPP, in connection with the sector for educative and pastoral activity.** The afore-mentioned projects are not procedures added to the SEPP but contribute to and carry out important aspects of it.

On account of their nature, the functions of the OPP and of the Province SEPP are distinct from every other document, in particular from the *Province Directory*, a normative text entrusted to the Provincial Chapter (cf. C. 171). This set of regulations contains special norms as required in issues at Province level. The *OPP* and the *Province SEPP* in their nature, purpose and contents are distinct from the *Province Directory*. They are concerned with planning and programming; they are independent documents and do not form part of the *Province Directory*.



## **C** *The Salesian Educative and Pastoral Project*

**This is a the general action plan which guides the carrying out of the educative and pastoral process in a specific province and local context** and directs each initiative and resource towards evangelisation (cf. *R.* 4; cf. *GC26*, no.39). It is a response to the question: What needs to be done and how do we arrive at the proposed objective?

A SEPP, being more concrete than the *Frame of Reference*, is operative for a fixed period of time, “long or medium term” with regard to the situation in which the Province or the Salesian work finds itself. The goals or purposes proposed, the areas of activity indicated, the working guidelines it selects, indicate the practical process to be pursued.

The *Constitutions of the Society of Saint Francis of Sales* refer to this apostolic project in broad terms (cf. *C.* 31; 44), to which also various articles of the Regulations refer (cf. *R.* 4-10; 184). Therefore there is a correlation between the Provincial SEPP and the SEPP of a particular work:

- ▮ *the Provincial SEPP* sets out the Province’s programme for 3–5 years. It indicates the objectives, strategies and common practical educative and pastoral aims that will guide the pastoral activities of all the communities and works. It serves as a point of reference for their planning and as an educative and pastoral yardstick during this period. It is the starting point for the drawing up of the SEPP for every local work or sector;
- ▮ *the SEPP of every local work or sector* applies the guidelines of the Provincial SEPP to the local situation. It is the project that is directly put into operation in each work (with just one sector) and in every sector (in a complex work). In this latter case the SEPP of the Salesian work which has **two or more different sectors** is an important element for bringing together and unifying the objectives and shared practical guidelines in the work. It responds to two fundamental factors:
  - *the coordination of all the sectors and, eventually, pastoral animation settings of the work* with the corresponding series of criteria, methodological options, organisational and structural arrangements;

- the summoning, the constitution, the formation and the functioning of the *EPC of the different sectors*.

All the structural elements (facilities, educational and pastoral programmes, time tables, calendar) and the personnel (individual or collective groups) are organised so as to achieve the objectives, for a period of about three years. Joint responsibility for this task is taken on by all the members of each of the EPC (cf. GC23, no.243), but is especially followed up by its Council.

GC23 proposed that in its revision of the Provincial SEPP, among other things, every Province should translate the faith journey into a **practical process suited to those for whom we are working and the contexts in which we are operating** (cf. GC23, no.230): faith journeys, educational, vocational and Christian initiation projects for the young. The practical process is a well-ordered series of stages or educational steps (each with its own style and time-scale, with methods to be employed and people or groups to be directly involved) through which the objectives set out in the SEPP are achieved. The practical process means that the project becomes operative in a given period of time, and that it is adapted to the different individuals to whom it is addressed. In this process the objectives become progressive steps, the means adopted being a well-ordered series of opportunities and experiences (see Chapter 4, 3.2).

## **D** *The different practical expressions of the SEPP*

We are called to translate and develop the SEPP into practical processes, plans and programmes. Among these we can mention: the *Province animation plan and the General plan of the work*. Some Provinces use these terms or others to express the same things.

**The Provincial animation plan is the annual application of the Overall Provincial Plan (OPP) and the Provincial SEPP, according to the following scheme** (in general terms):

- ▮ the general objective for the year, as the basic framework within which the animation programme of the Provincial Council is developed;
- ▮ the specific objectives for each pastoral sector and provincial animation setting: these represent the application of the general

objective as aims, targets to be reached, arrival points on which all efforts during the year should be focused;

- D procedures and activities for the animation and the coordination of the pastoral sectors and provincial animation settings, specifying those involved, their specific tasks and a time scale:
  - Community and Formation,
  - Educative and Pastoral Mission,
  - Salesian Family,
  - Social Communication,
  - Economy,
  - Others;
- D an evaluation scheme for an effective assessment of the real achievement of the aims proposed;
- D organisational chart of the Province, meaning the graphic representation of the general organisational structure of the Province;
- D Provincial calendar with all the Province engagements for the year.

A gradual process is proposed through these annual planning arrangements which put the OPP and the Provincial SEPP into effect, with a systematic



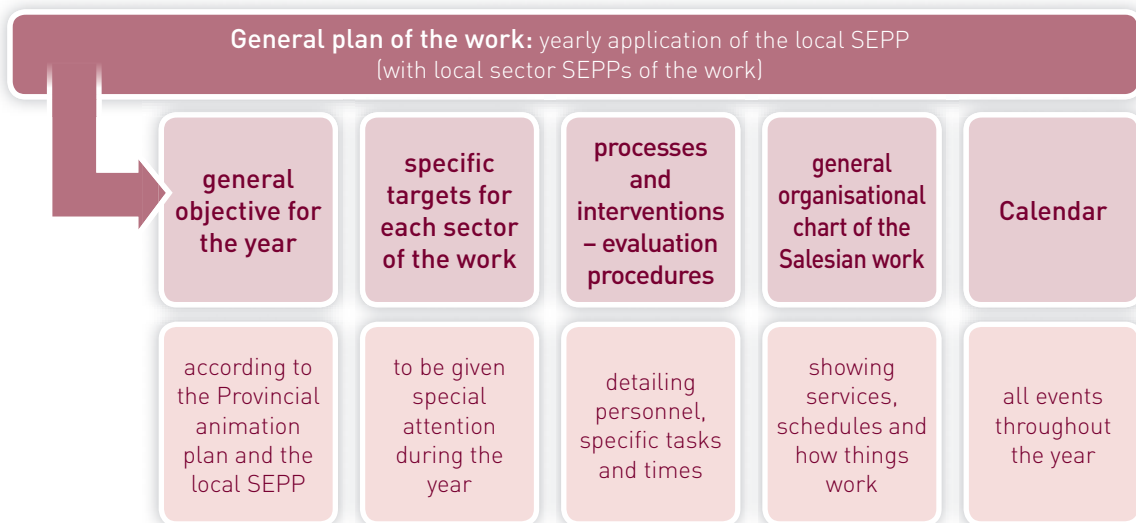


assessment carried out by the EPC of each of the works. The programme is drawn up each year. It is used in all the works of the Province as a point of reference in the drawing up of the General Programme for each work.

***The General plan of the work is the annual application of the SEPP of the work (or in some cases the individual SEPP of the different sectors and pastoral animation settings within the work).*** In general terms it follows this pattern:

- ▮ general objective for the year, as the basic framework within which the animation programme of the Provincial operates;
- ▮ specific objectives for each sector and, eventually, pastoral animation setting of the work: these represent the application of the general objective as aims, targets to be reached, arrival points on which all efforts during the year should be focused;
- ▮ procedures and activities of the EPC of the various sectors and, eventually, pastoral animation settings according to the dimensions of the SEPP, specifying those involved, their specific tasks and a time scale;
- ▮ an evaluation method for an effective assessment of the real achievement of the aims proposed;
- ▮ organisational chart of the work, that is the graphic representation of the various bodies of animation and government, with some indication of the services, time scale and functioning:
  - common to the whole work,
  - specific for each sector and, eventually, pastoral animation setting;
  - calendar with all the engagements for the year.





## 6 3

## GUIDELINES FOR DRAWING UP AND ASSESSING THE SEPP

### A *Stages in drawing up the SEPP: a dynamic proposal*

It is a project aimed at being realistic and effective, with a continuous process. Starting from an initial situation it moves towards the aim it sets itself through objectives to be attained. It should be drawn up in a gradual way. **The SEPP lays down a process in three stages which are successively reconsidered, developed and improved.** The possibility remains for adapting the educational plans to the changing situations in which the work is taking place.

In the process of drawing up the plan the *EPC should constantly refer to the Frame of Reference*, both for an enlightened analysis of the situation and for discerning the main challenges. It does so especially to identify the objectives which ought to guide pastoral activities in the direction of the aims indicated in the *Frame of Reference*.

### » *Analysis stage*

- 1 *Careful observation and knowledge of the situation in the locality and of the "type" of young people living there: people, situations, resources,*

problems, tendencies, possibilities. This cannot be done on a once for all basis. It requires the ability to use previous as well as newly acquired information. It is necessary to employ communication, acquired experience, educational networks, a sense of shared responsibility.

- 2 *Educative and pastoral interpretation of the situation*: trying to understand the reality on a deeper level, with the desire to bring about improvements. The situation needs to be seen for what it is, while avoiding making hasty judgements either positive or, more often, negative ones. The interpretation takes place in the light of the fundamental elements of the Salesian mission and the Preventive System.
- 3 Identifying a vision for the future with *precise options* (four or five at the most); in the case of the *Provincial SEPP*, *the options apply to all the works and to all the sectors*; in the case of the *local SEPP*, to the local sectors. In both cases it is important that these specific options arise from the analysis of the situation and its educative-pastoral needs.

## » **The planning stage**

- 1 Translation of the precise options into *general objectives* that are considered the most important, urgent and possible. These objectives lead on to clear proposals taking into account the people in the EPC and the innate effectiveness of the *four dimensions* of youth ministry.
- 2 Proposal of some *procedures* through which the general objectives can be put into practice and become operative.
- 3 Setting out practical courses of action, that is *activities that are precise, gradual and verifiable*. In these the following are clarified: the group aimed at (*for whom?*); the responsibilities of the different individuals or teams (*by whom?*); the employment of the resources available and the time scale (*how and when?*).

## » **Assessment of the project and any change of plan**

Assessment of the project makes it possible to objectively measure its impact on the real situation. It evaluates the results in the light of the proposed objectives. It uncovers new possibilities or the needs that emerge and determines the new steps to be taken.

For an overall assessment of the SEPP, there are some aspects not to be overlooked:

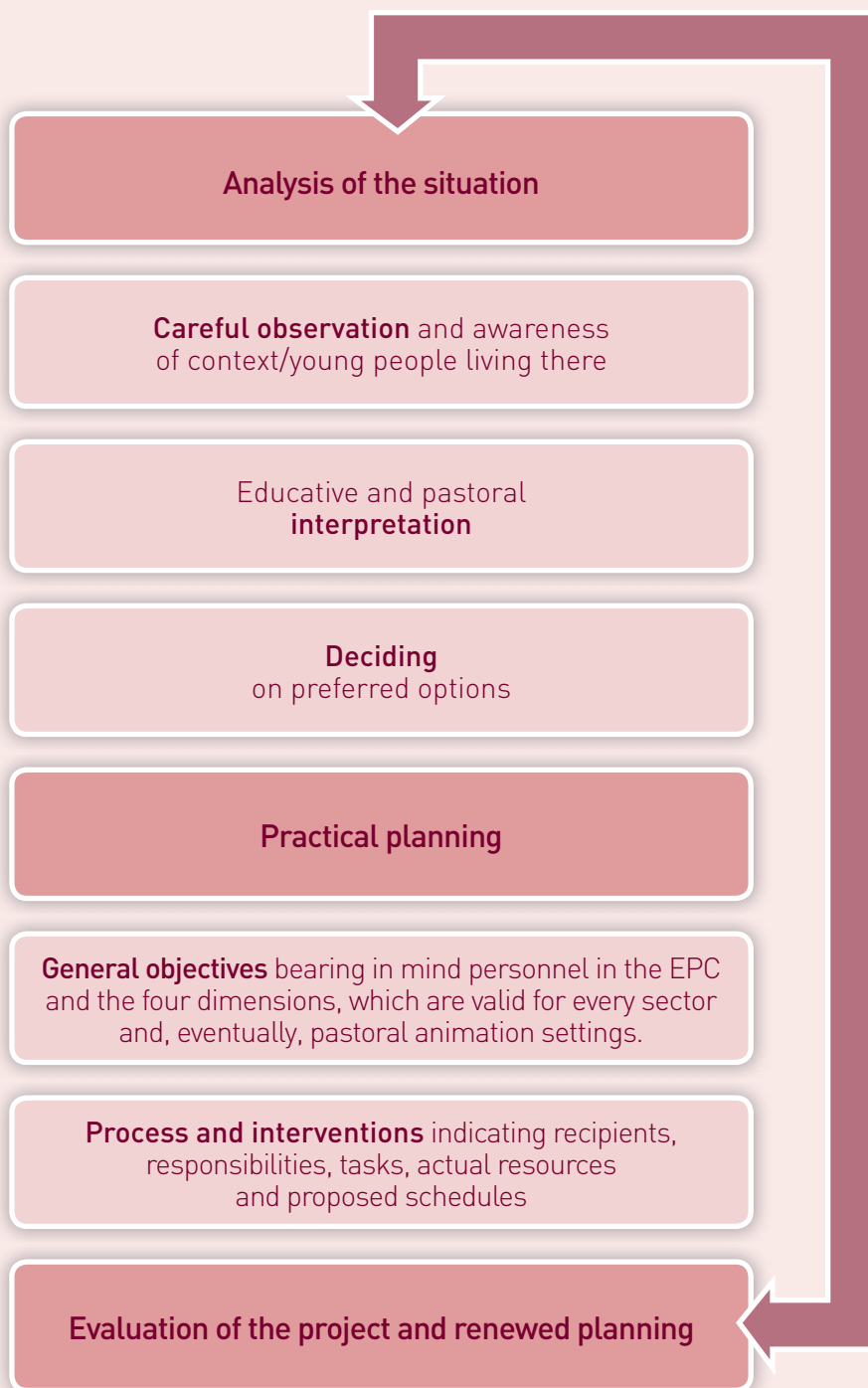
- ▮ involvement of the various interested parties - *individuals, groups and teams*. Those making the assessment of the Province SEPP are the Provincial Chapter, the Provincial with his Council and the Provincial Youth Ministry team;
- ▮ the creation of a *real* educative and pastoral *process*. It should not be limited to examining the results, but rather to reawakening the individual and community maturing processes, encouraging, improving and providing motivation for better results;
- ▮ the use of *precise and measurable indicators* in the light of which it will be possible to assess the results obtained and see how they have been achieved. Trial and error are part of the process: it is possible to learn from the examination of a mistake but an unexamined error can lead to discouragement and lack of progress;
- ▮ the carrying out of an *analysis of the causes* – *personal, structural, organisational* – that have helped or hindered the process, and the adaptation of the objectives to new situations and possibilities.

## **B** *Fundamental Criteria in the drawing up or revising the SEPP*

As has already been pointed out, the purpose of formulating a SEPP is not the production of a new document to put into the hands of workers so that they may know it and put it into practice, but rather to help the EPC to operate with a shared mindset and clarity of vision regarding objectives and criteria: a planning mentality of shared responsibility.

Rather than being a document, the SEPP is a **community thinking process which concerns involvement, clarification and identification**: it is aimed at creating a working consensus in the EPC, in this way avoiding fragmentation of activities.

Of fundamental importance is *the progress made together and the methodology behind it*. Three criteria need to be pointed out:



- a) A constant process of discernment with a genuine and courageous prophetic quality.** Pastoral planning is not a merely technical undertaking, nor is it a simple spiritual activity, but mediation. Those who are drawing up, implementing and assessing a SEPP need to do so in a constant attitude of discernment and listening to God's plan. It is the Lord who indicates the path to be followed and provides us with points of reference: *focus on the practical reality of the times and of history* (avoiding proposals that are abstract or unrelated to the situation); *the centrality of the young person*; close attention to the *universal outreach of the Salesian educative and pastoral project* (understood in terms of the four dimensions) the ever present aspects of our *educative and pastoral praxis* – the Preventive System and Salesian Youth Spirituality.

Therefore in the face of educative and pastoral challenges it is necessary to avoid two attitudes which could jeopardise the Salesian mission: first, becoming constrained by a plan that is static, rigid and anonymous and second, treating the youth ministry project as though it were like commercial, economic or political projects and thereby betraying the educative and pastoral spirit of the SEPP and its evangelical nature in offering salvation to the young in Christ.

- b) Collegiality** i.e. the combined involvement of all the members of the EPC engaged in the project. The motivations, objectives and process should be clearly expressed. An open, ongoing discussion should be encouraged in examining the problems and the situations. The contribution made by each one should always be given due consideration. A real working team is thus created which is able to provide animation for lengthy and complex procedures.

Every true Educative and Pastoral Project is *a communitarian effort, the result of collaboration*. The Provincial SEPP involves all the communities and works of the Province. The local SEPP engages the EPC in carrying out the construction, implementation and assessment.

It is necessary to involve in special way *the members of the Salesian Family* who are working in the same territory (cf. GC24, no.125): at Province level by means of meetings of the Provincial bodies (Provincial Youth Ministry team and/or the Provincial Council) with representatives of the various groups of the Salesian Family in the

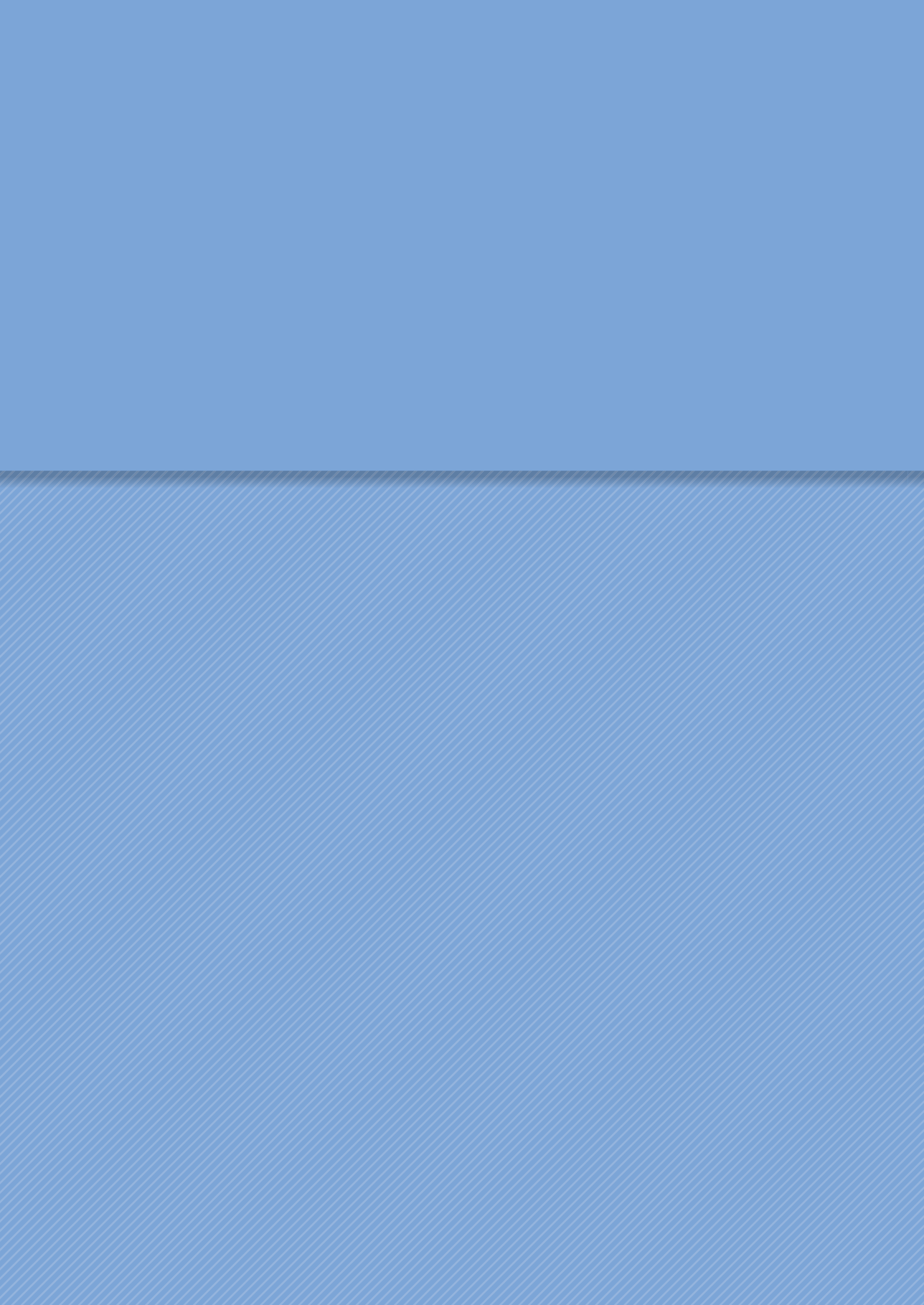
Province; at local level through dialogue among the local consultative committee of the Salesian Family, the SDB community and the EPC Council.

To create the interest and involvement of all the EPC in this process it is useful to set up an *animating group* which challenges and motivates, and helps to overcome difficulties. It also points out the methodological procedures which foster the participation of all the groups and organisations of the EPC according to their responsibilities and possibilities. It offers the opportunity and the materials needed for reflection and study. It comes to and formulates conclusions to be presented to the group. At Province level, this group could be the Provincial Youth Ministry team – expanded with extra skilled and qualified members; at local level it could be the EPC Council or the pastoral team.

- c) **Communication;** through the sharing in the planned procedures on the part of those engaged in the youth project as both providers and recipients. Together with this open attitude, there is an urgent need right from the start to be clear about the *various levels of participation* (discussion, decision-making, and implementation) and *those with the responsibility* for them. In this process the SDBs and the laity have an experience of communion and sharing in the spirit of Don Bosco in his mission. All those taking part in the EPC follow a process of discernment taking an active part in the search for the objectives and the procedures of the SEPP (GC24 nos.119-120).

The complexity of the organisation should not overshadow the educative and pastoral spirit which underpins it. Every activity is a part contributing to making the whole clear and evident: the education of the young for life and for an encounter with the God of life.

Setting to work to produce a plan, implementing it and being capable of revising and changing it is not a sign of superficiality nor of complicating matters. Rather it is a sign of maturity in educational affairs, of a specialised service constantly ready to change in order to promote life in a constantly changing society. It shows a capacity for being realistic, for love and respect for the young. It is being consistent with the educational decisions taken and which they expect and deserve. **It is the successful achievement of a process of educational cooperation which is the result of a pedagogical journey, in the long run the most fruitful of all human endeavours.**



# EPILOGUE







*The Salesian spirit finds its model and source in the very heart of Christ, apostle of the Father. Reading the Gospel we become more aware of certain aspects of the figure of the Lord: gratitude to the Father for the gift of a divine vocation offered to all men; predilection for the little ones and the poor; zeal in preaching, healing and saving because of the urgency of the coming of the Kingdom; the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving; the desire to gather his disciples into the unity of brotherly communion”*

[Constitutions of the Society of St Francis of Sales 11]

## PRAYER TO DON BOSCO

Father and Teacher of Youth,  
Saint John Bosco,  
obedient to the gifts of the Spirit and open to the circumstances  
of your time  
you were for the young, especially the smallest and the poor,  
a sign of God's love and predilection.

Be our guide on our journey of friendship with the Lord Jesus,  
so we may discover in Him and in His Gospel  
the meaning of our lives  
and source of true happiness.

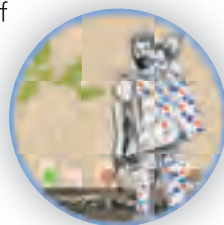
Help us to respond generously  
to the vocation we have received from God,  
to be in daily life  
builders of communion,  
cooperating enthusiastically,  
in communion with the entire Church,  
building up the civilisation of love.

Obtain for us the grace of perseverance  
in living a high measure of Christian life,  
according to the spirit of the Beatitudes;  
and guided by Mary Help of Christians,  
may we one day be together with you  
in the great family in Heaven. Amen.

## COMMENT ON ILLUSTRATIONS

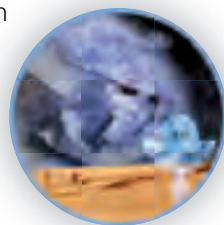
### » *ICON 1*

The scene of Jesus with the Apostles is followed by the scene of Jesus with the crowd: life is made up of these encounters. The Lord presents himself to us as a shepherd. Here we see a young person in the Salesian mission. This sheep has found someone who does not despise him. There is an invitation: stay with Jesus and draw on him for God's love and compassion. This is a beautiful thought, like a miracle, a central idea. What it offers people firstly is compassion. His gaze picks up the tiredness, lost moments, the struggles of his sheep (below). His life is given for the good of his sheep, his words are spoken to accompany them with. The person comes first for him, the state of health of the heart, deep down. The first thing the disciples learn from Jesus is to be moved by his divine action. Deep heart-felt emotion: a divine and deeply Salesian feeling! This emotion is a correct response, one which does not go away, like the four seasons (the four trees below). We inhabit the life and culture of the young in order not to deprive them of our compassion.



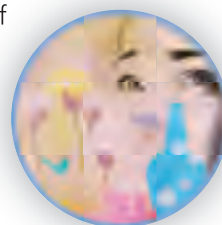
### » *ICON 2*

Jesus prayed for his disciples and for everyone who believed in him, in any age or place (sky filled with stars). So he prayed for people in our own age, including for our young people. People in the desert, tired after walking under the sun, not knowing where they are going, their faces lined with the effort, sorrow, tiredness ... People who search him out because they want to listen to him. Young people looking for real repose, needing words of salvation, eternal words, words that last ... are walking towards the Lord (the chalice, between heaven and earth). God's hands are wide open to gather and hold his lost children. It is up to support their hopes, helping them to experience God's providential action. He is a wind of communion that pushes us towards one another.



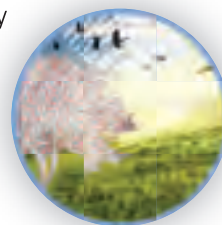
### » ICON 3

Jesus crosses Samaritan territory, a stranger amidst a people of a different tradition and religion. His very freedom in doing so arouses thirst and it is he himself who offers a jug of water. Jesus reaches out to the woman's deep thirst offering something more by way of beauty, goodness, life, a new springtime: "The water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside, welling up." To be truthful God has been the inexhaustible source of new life since the beginning of time, since earthly species were created (deer), sea (fish) sky (bird). Jesus' gift to the Samaritan woman is that she can rejoin the true source and herself become a source. This is a beautiful image. The woman from Samaria with clear eyes, happy, calm, filled with goodness. She does not appease her thirst by drinking her fill but by quenching others' thirst. She brightens up by brightening up the lives of others; receives joy through giving it. Becoming a spring of water is a beautiful life project for any evangeliser: welling up and spreading hope, acceptance, love.



### » ICON 4

There is no other word like 'life' in any language for powerfully summing up what the human being most aspires to. 'Life' is the sum of all good desires and is at the same time what makes them possible, acquirable, and lasting. Is not the story of young people marked by the search for something or someone able to ensure life for them? But what kind of life? God's life "in abundance", which surpasses all aspirations that can arise in a human heart, just as sunset lights up the fields. Life is a place in God's hands, like sparrows who nest in the leafy branches of the trees. New life radiates out on every area of young people's human experience: family, school, work, daily activities and leisure time. It begins to flourish here and now. Pastoral charity is a sign of its presence and growth. A large crowd of Salesian educators spend themselves every day generously, creatively and competently to foster life amongst the new generations.



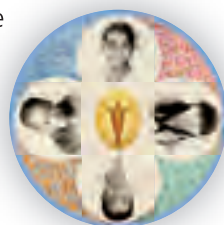
## » ICON 5

Jesus joins the two disconsolate disciples from Emmaus on their journey. He recognises his own anywhere in the world. He accompanies them, “walks by their side”... The Lord comes to us in our daily wanders. He changes hearts, eyes and everyone’s journey. Don Bosco is in the background: how many there were who tasted the wonders of an encounter with him that turned their lives around! The Lord also asks that we Salesian educators have the courage to get out on the road, be companions on the journey, not just the outer one (walking with them), but also the inner one (listening to them). Every Salesian presence crosses path of the young people in the world, dreams of making the Salesian house a family for them. So it takes an Educative and Pastoral Community to call each one by name, and it is measured by the quality of human relationships established.



## » ICON 6

Christ has taken on our clothes: the joys and sorrows of the human being, his or her hunger, thirst, tiredness, hopes, disappointments, all our anxieties, including death. And he has given us his ‘clothes’ too, the gift of his new being: “put on the new self, created in God”. Prior to being our decision, our becoming a new self is God’s work. But it takes planning and commitment to hand on a living faith. The Educative and Pastoral Project is but a tool of ministry and responds to two great objectives (educating young people as human beings and in faith) through the four dimensions which integrate and enrich the whole person. It enables the individual to be reborn from within, like the corolla with its petals forms into a unique flower. Each young person (of any age or circumstance) has within a treasure of light, an inner sun, the image and likeness of God which is within us. Salesian Youth Ministry is none other than the joy (a child’s smile is so beautiful!) of freeing up all the light of the Risen Lord.



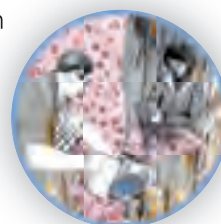
## » ICONA 7

"I have chosen you". This call is precisely what guarantees our apostolic effectiveness, the fruitfulness of our service. We are patient, trusting farmers, but we must examine where and how we bear fruit. God takes care of things like no other in this sown field, this little garden of our works: he works, prunes, we feel his hands at work each day. He looks to fruitfulness; not giving life means already dying. The tree of our apostolic works is renewed, life is multiplied. The seed goes where the wind blows, far from clamour and noise, and is planted in the furrows of history and of peoples. New educational and pastoral presences are born so that the Salesian mission can have much more energy than might seem, much more light and many more divine seeds. It is a volcano of life: the bud becomes a flower, the flower fruit, and the fruit gives seed.



## » ICON 8

"Like one who serves". Serve: a nice but demanding word. In these words we see a genuine, real and concrete image of animation and coordination of pastoral activity. Shared responsibility gives concrete shape to communion, involves exercising spiritual discernment, listening to one another, sharing, mutual witness until, given each one's responsibility, a coordinated and systematic proposal matures.. Educative and pastoral activity is not made up of disconnected efforts, but everything is part of a shared plan, appropriate choices and formation processes. Salesian youth Ministry brings all its energies into play and with its particular dynamics accompanies the ways of animating.



## GLOSSARY

- » **ANIMATING CORE:** a group of individuals who identify with the Salesian mission, educational system and spirituality and jointly take on the task of calling together, motivating, involving everyone concerned with a work, making up the educative community together with them and carrying out a project of evangelisation and education of the young. The religious community, as the point of charismatic reference (cf. GC25, nos.78-81) is not the complete animating core in itself but one of its integral parts; indeed it needs to be capable of an expanding dynamic which finds various ways and means of involving everyone who wishes to contribute to the Salesian work. There is only one animating core for the entire work, since it is not a “governing structure” in itself. It can coincide with the Council of the Work and/or the EPC Council, depending on the complexity of the work and the various sectors.
- » **COUNCIL OF THE WORK:** this brings together the religious community (or at least its governing representatives: rector and local council) and the individuals principally sharing responsibility for sectors of activity. Animated by the same charism and being part of the same mission they take charge of ensuring that the gift and service of the Salesian charism in all its significance is offered in a particular neighbourhood or area. They jointly share the various responsibilities that arise from managing all the sectors of a work, and they meet not only to organise, decide, and govern but also to be formed and create opportunities for reflection.
- » **COMMUNITY COUNCIL or LOCAL COUNCIL or HOUSE COUNCIL** (cf. C. 178): made up of confreres from the community and has the task of collaborating in animation and government with the rector who calls it together and presides at it. It is up to the Provincial with the consent of his Council, and after listening to the opinion of the local community, to determine which sectors of community activity should be represented in the Council.
- » **DEPARTMENT** (cf. C. 133; R. 107): the Departments are the collection of services of animation in each of the Sectors into which the administration of the *Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco* is divided. Each Department comes under the responsibility of a Councillor who functions as Department head.
- » **EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY (EPC)** (cf. C. 47; GC24, nos.149-179): the Salesian way of animating, showing leadership in every educational circumstance intended to realise Don Bosco’s mission. It is not a new structure added to other kinds of management and involvement in works

or pastoral sectors, nor is it just organisational management or a technique for getting people involved. It is a set of individuals (young people and adults, parents and teachers or educators, religious and lay, representatives from other church and civic institutions and can also include representatives of other religions, men and women of good will) all working together to educate and evangelise young people, especially the poorest of them, in Don Bosco's style. This set of individuals is one of concentric circles, depending on the degree of shared responsibility individuals have for the mission.

» **EPC COUNCIL** (cf. GC24, nos.160-161; 171-172): the body which animates and coordinates the implementation of the Educative and Pastoral Plan or Project. Its function is to foster coordination and shared responsibility amongst everybody concerned, as a service of unity for pastoral planning within a Salesian work or the EPCs of the various sectors of more complex works. If there is only one EPC then there will be a single EPC Council which is also then the Council of the Work. If there are as many EPCs as there are sectors then each has its own council, and there will then be a Council of the Work made up of representatives of EPC Councils.

» **GENERAL PLAN OF THE WORK:** annual application of the SEPP of the work (or possibly of individual SEPPs for the various sectors and settings of a work). The Council of the Work draws this up with collaboration from the EPC Councils of the various pastoral sectors.

» **OVERALL PROVINCIAL PROJECT (OPP):** This has a range of other names in English, such as Provincial Strategic Plan (PSP) and it is in fact a strategic plan of animation and government which controls the development and continuity of decisions made by the Province (cf. GC25, nos.82-84). It is a practical tool aimed at coordinating educational and pastoral resources in the Province towards a particular end. It is also a point of reference for all projects and plans of communities and works.

» **PASTORAL SECTOR:** refers to the educational and pastoral structures in which the Salesian mission is carried out, according to a specific educational and pastoral proposal. Each of these sectors in its own way creates a climate and employs a style of relationships as part of the Educative and Pastoral Community. The sectors are as follows: The Oratory-Youth Centre; the school and Professional Formation Centre, (what we would often term, in English, the Vocational Training Centre and could include the pre-vocational training centre and hostel accommodation); higher institutes of education (possibly academic



centres, colleges – in the North American understanding of this term – and university student residences); parishes and shrines entrusted to the Salesians (may include public churches); various social service works for young people at risk. A Salesian work may well comprise further sectors working together to better express the Salesian mission.

» **PASTORAL ANIMATION SETTING:** refers to the multiple activities or educative and pastoral arrangements to be found across all our works and the more traditional sectors indicated above. By way of summary we can indicate: animating vocation ministry, especially for apostolic vocations; animating missionary and various kinds of voluntary work; youth ministry recommendations with regard to Social Communication. The Salesian mission is also carried out through certain other significant settings like the Salesian Youth Movement and various fields of specialised activity at local or provincial level, as we find in Chapter 6: services of Christian formation and spiritual animation, or groups and leadership services in the leisure time area.

» **PROVINCIAL ANIMATION PLAN:** the yearly application of the Provincial SEPP drawn up each year by the Provincial Council, with collaboration from the works. Serves as a provincial point of reference for drawing up the annual general plan for the works.

» **PROVINCIAL ANIMATION SETTINGS:** field or area of activity in a province or work. The fundamental settings for provinces are as follows: Youth Ministry, Formation, Salesian Family, Economy and Social Communication. We can add to these the variety of areas in which each of the above is expressed.

» **PROVINCIAL DIRECTORY** (cf. C. 171): a prescriptive text which the Provincial Chapter draws up and revises. The principal scope of the directory and its detailed set of norms is to promote and guarantee the charism and Salesianity of each work in the provincial community.

» **SALESIAN EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PROJECT (SEPP)** (cf. GC24, nos.5, 42): general action plan guiding educative and pastoral processes in a determined provincial and local context. It directs each initiative and resources to achieving the Salesian mission. It has a “long or short term” lifespan (3–5 years), in reference to the circumstances of the Province or Work. The objective of the SEPP, then, is not only that of defining content regarding the various sectors or settings at provincial and local level, but also that of defining the dimensions of sectors which make up the various SEPPS. The drawing up of

the SEPP, and thus of the SEPPs for sectors, firstly has the objective of being a support in planning the mission of the entire provincial or local EPC.

» **SALESIAN EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PROJECT FOR EACH WORK OR LOCAL SECTOR:**

applies the guidelines of the Provincial SEPP to the local situation. It is the immediate working plan for each work (with just one sector) and for each sector (in a complex work). In this latter case the SEPP for Salesian works with two or more sectors becomes an important tool for convergence and unity of objectives and common action guidelines for the work. It responds to two basic aspects: (1) coordinating all sectors and pastoral animation settings of the work and the consequent set of criteria, methodological choices, organisational and structural guidelines and (2) summoning, constituting, forming and getting the EPC of the work and its sectors to function.

» **SALESIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT (SYM):** made up of groups and associations who recognise themselves in and are raised in Don Bosco's and Mother Mazzarello's Salesian spirituality and pedagogy. While maintaining their individual organisational structure in practice, together they ensure an educational presence of quality, especially in new areas where young people socialise. The SYM is a movement of "youth for youth", defined by reference to a common spirituality and communication between groups which ensures that messages and values are shared. It brings together young people who can be very different from one another in spiritual terms – from those for whom spirituality is a seed yet to sprout to those who consciously and explicitly accept the invitation to Salesian apostolic involvement.

» **SALESIAN PROVINCIAL EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL PROJECT (Provincial SEPP):**

defines procedures in the Province and indicates objectives, strategies and common educative and pastoral action guidelines which align the pastoral activity of all works, sectors and pastoral animation settings. It serves as a point of reference for their planning and as an educative and pastoral evaluation tool over this period.

» **SALESIAN YOUTH MINISTRY FRAME OF REFERENCE:**

is a tool (set of basic inspirations and action guidelines) offered by the Youth Ministry Department to enlighten and guide the pastoral process for each Provincial and local EPC. It guides the pastoral activity of each Provincial and local Youth Ministry Delegate and their teams. And it contributes to the formation of everyone – Salesians, educators – who share responsibility for the Salesian mission.

