

acts

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Father Egidio VIGANO'

ACT OF ENTRUSTMENT OF THE CONGREGATION TO MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS, MOTHER OF THE CHURCH

Summary

A **News items:** 1. Death of Father Renato Ziggiotti.

2. Beatification of Bishop Luigi Versiglia and Father Callisto Caravario.

B **Act of Entrustment of the Congregation to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church.**
On the threshold of a new phase in the life of the Congregation — The significance of this religious act — In the trusted hands of Mary Help of Christians we prepare to enter the Third Millennium — Courageous missionaries for the young — Educating for sanctity — Why the term **entrustment**? — Confidence and hope.

C **Appendix**

Rome, 31 May 1983

A Dear Confreres,

Two events call for mention in this my three-monthly letter to you: the death at Albarè (Verona) on 19 April of our saintly Rector Major emeritus and 5th Successor of Don Bosco, Father Renato Ziggiotti; and the beatification of Bishop Luigi Versiglia and Father Caravario, proclaimed by Pope John Paul II at St Peter's on 15 May.

1. *Father Renato Ziggiotti* will be duly commemorated by me in a mortuary letter in a very short time; but I also wish to pay a brief homage to him here, as we recall his twelve years as Superior General that marked the close of a difficult and

unique period in the history of our Congregation. After a lengthy period of leadership as rector, provincial, prefect-general of studies and vicar of the Rector Major, it fell to his lot to guide our Family to the close of a cultural era that embraced the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the proximate preparation for Vatican II; this latter stage was already experiencing the dawn of a new epoch with all its contestations and misunderstandings that foreshadowed the events, the tensions and the upsets of 1968.

In his guidance of the Congregation Father Renato Ziggotti always displayed a deep understanding of the permanent values of the salesian vocation. In a time of disruption he was a source of unity for confreres and communities; when so many looked to the future rather than the past, he insisted on the knowledge and love of our Founder Don Bosco as an indispensable frame of reference for our journey into the future; in a time of doubts and identity-searching, his life testified to his deep and determined convictions, his spirit of sacrifice and unflagging dedication, his indestructible sense of God, his filial devotion to Mary, his deep and enthusiastic concern for the young, for vocations, for formation, his humility (that bade him relinquish the helm to others), his never-failing cheerfulness and happiness. Father Ziggotti was indeed a true witness to the permanent values of the salesian vocation.

We thank God for having given us a confrere of such sterling character and stature, whose docility to the Spirit of the Lord enabled him to guide the Congregation along the path of unity and fidelity and thus prepare it to meet head-on the pressing exigencies of a new era.

2. *The beatification of our first two missionary martyrs* has added to the Salesian Family a valuable new ecclesial dimension. This was evidenced by the profound and inspired homily of the Holy Father and also by the learned, well-documented and stirring address by Archbishop Antonio Javierre, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, during the solemn commemoration of the two Blessed Martyrs held in the great hall of our Pontifical University. The beatification has given proof of a further basic dimension in the holiness of Don Bosco's sons: they now see martyrdom as a goal that is intrinsic to the spirit of *da mihi animas* (which Don Bosco defines as a "martyrdom of charity and sacrifice for the good of others").

Our Founder frequently insists that "the first step to be taken by anyone who wishes to follow God is to deny himself, take up his cross and follow his Saviour".¹ In a letter to all his salesians in 1867 Don Bosco, who seldom found it necessary to explain his thoughts, added one of his rare clarifications: "In other words, a member of our Society does this when he expends all his energies in the sacred ministry, in instructing, or in other priestly work — to the point of death, even a violent death, in prison or exile, through fire, water or the sword".² By the shedding of their blood the two martyrs sealed their love of predilection for the young. As the Holy Father said, "It is always for his witnessing to the faith that a martyr is put to death. This can also be verified by a moral action that finds in the faith its principle and reason d'être. In such a case there is an implicit and indirect witnessing to the faith which is no less real (indeed in a certain sense it is more complete)

1. John Bosco: *Il cristiano guidato alla verità ed alla civiltà secondo lo spirito di S. Vincenzo de' Paoli*, 1848, p. 139.

2. *Epistolario* of St John Bosco (ed. by Ceria): SEI 1955, vol. I, p. 464.

insofar as it has its origin in the very fruits of the faith, i.e., its works of charity".³

3. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16-17 May 1983.

Further on in his homily the Holy Father places an extraordinary prophetic importance on the martyrdom of our two confreres: he says, "The martyrdom of the two *Beati* bears the same relationship to the foundations of the Chinese Church as Peter's martyrdom bore to the founding of the Church of Rome. Hence we must understand the testimony of their love and service as a sign of the deep harmony between the Gospel and the highest values of the culture and spirituality of China. In such a witness as they gave one cannot separate the sacrifice offered to God and the self-donation made to the people and the Church of China".⁴ And so the Holy Father expresses the hope that the joyous beatification ceremony should create, strengthen and further a fruitful dialogue between the Gospel and Chinese culture, all to the advantage of that vast nation.⁵

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

Thus it is that we now feel a close ecclesial bonding not only to our missionary commitment in general and to *Project Africa* in particular, but also to the Church's expectations regarding continental China. My dear confreres, we must be convinced that the Lord is asking far more from us than what we are actually doing according to the limited resources at our disposal. Indeed this is really the case, for God always engages us in his work beyond the extent of our resources. And it is fitting that this should be so, for we must feel that we are really in his hands, supported by his power and urged on by his Spirit so that we may participate ever more actively in this hour of the Church's expansion. And our participation will grow and grow, provided we resist the temptation to

cocoon ourselves within our present achievements and become immersed in petty calculations of our resources. Our calling bids us have a practical confidence in the efficacy of the risen Christ and his mother, to be convinced that our spiritual Family originated in magnanimity and was nourished by an interior strength from on high. We have our Founder's encouraging words, "Let your work be without limit".⁶

6. MB XIII 288.

Don Albera used quote St Francis of Sales: "Let us entrust ourselves to Mary's protection, *let us set our hands to mighty things*; if we love her ardently, she will obtain for us all we desire".⁷ Our salesian vocation has had a century of experience that bids us set our hands to mighty things.

7. Fr Albera's circular letters to salesians, Turin, 1965, p. 286.

It is on this very matter of our special extrustment to Mary Help of Christians that I offer you a few thoughts in view of our increasing future commitments.

B **Act of Entrustment of the Congregation to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church**

In some respects one could say that the forthcoming General Chapter will mark the end of the process of postconciliar identification required of us by the Church and demanded by the new cultural era that coincides with the preparation for the Third Millennium of the Church. As was always the case with our Congregation's origins, there must be the clear and indispensable intervention of Mary in all that we initiate.

On the threshold of a new phase in the life of the Congregation.

The Chapter's task of completing the text of the Constitutions and Regulations, besides being a point of arrival (as I pointed out when convoking GC22),⁸ will be above all an authoritative revitalising of our salesian vocation in the Church: "GC22 should lay the foundations of a more intensely genuine salesianity" in confreres and local communities and in big-hearted apostolic responses at provincial and world level. We hear in our hearts the grand words of our salesian forebears, "Set your hands to mighty things".

8. v. ASC 305.

However, we can only do this if we have entrusted ourselves to the protection of our Mother as did our Father, Don Bosco. Thus it seems to me opportune (and several confreres have requested me to do so) to invite you all, on the occasion of the forthcoming General Chapter, to make a solemn Act of Entrustment of the whole Congregation to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church.

The spiritual retreat that precedes the official opening of the Chapter will conclude on Saturday 14 January 1984, and the the capitulars in the name of the provincial communities and representing all the confreres of the whole Congregation, will make a special Act of Entrustment to Mary. I invite the local communities and all individual confreres to unite themselves with this Act by making it in every house. Each provincial with his council should work out the best way to prepare for and carry out this ceremony in each and every local community. We should make a fitting preparation for this event and endeavour to appreciate its spiritual and salesian impact: we are turning to Mary to

help us revitalise our salesian vocation on the threshold (as the Pope calls it) of the Advent of the Third Millennium.

The significance of this religious act

It purports to be a gesture of faith and hope. We make it in a context of future planning, for GC22 is more than a projected point of arrival: it is base-camp marking a point of departure — to work harder, to aim higher, to forge ahead.

In the first place our Act of Entrustment to Mary Help of Christians will be very much a *community affair*, involving the Congregation insofar as it is a worldwide community and a single communion of souls with one identical spirit and mission in all provinces and houses. This great gathering we intend to confide to the motherly guardianship of Mary, to her care, to the undertakings she is concerned with, to her powerful intercession, to her maternal competence for leading all to Christ. May Mary, “to whom we owe everything”, help us grow in unity and increase our fidelity to our Founder by our opportune adaptation to the multiplicity of modern situations.

By its very nature this community act implies that the Act of Entrustment be also a *personal act* of each confrere. Each salesian must experience within himself the will to abandon himself with confidence to a person so trustworthy, a mother so influential in the divine economy of salvation.

Let us entrust our Congregation and every one of its members to Mary: with her we form a living part of the Church of whom she is Mother, Help, and Model; with her we share generously in the Church’s mission in the world, particularly

among the young; she will help us as we work together with updated efficiency to witness to and build up the Kingdom of Christ and God among the young.

Such a trusting submission carries with it a clearer and more conscious vision of our special sacramental and religious consecration. It will thus help us increase our fidelity. There is a very real relationship and a practical linkage between our Christian and religious life and the ecclesial function of Mary, and in our Act of Entrustment we mean to consider this more constantly and attentively, appreciate its beauty, and carry out its mission. She will teach us to achieve daily in its varied ways that résumé of our salesian spirituality so well summarised in the prayer we recite to Mary Help of Christians each morning after our meditation. This prayer has a great significance for us. When we recite it we place ourselves under the motherly protection of Mary, we entrust ourselves to her and ask for the gift of fidelity, renewing our self-oblation to the Lord in our commitment to the youth apostolate, from which derives our vital and practical method of holiness.

(NB: *The prayer referred to is the one that should be recited in all provinces and houses; its official text is printed in the appendix to this letter.*)

Our Act of Entrustment to Mary is also a pledge to increase our attitude of sonship, which is what Christian life is all about: we are sons of God; and also sons of Mary, Mother of the Christ-God. Our sonship implies a genuine relationship of spiritual kinship, a lifegiving relationship of grace, that guides our freedom to increase in Gospel obedience — “through Mary to Christ; we

are sons in Christ the Son”.

To entrust ourselves to Mary, to belong more consciously to her, does not in any way lessen our freedom; rather does it assert that true area of freedom we have very specially chosen — our family environment so favourable for achieving Christian maturity and the proper development of self respect.

Some saints have even spoken of slavery to Mary; they do not mean to lessen or take away our free initiative, but to stress incisively the sense of total belonging (as is so well expressed in John Paul II's *Totus tuus*) that becomes love in its plenitude and an affirmation of sanctified freedom. For many years in our novitiates and houses of formation the practice of this total abandonment to Mary was presented as optional, but in practice was almost universally accepted as quite the ordinary thing to do.

Our Father and Founder Don Bosco used suggest a declaration of sonship to Mary to help us towards a greater awareness and enthusiasm in entrusting ourselves to our heavenly Mother. In 1869 he wrote for the *Catholic Readings* a small pamphlet for the Association of Devotees of Mary Help of Christians recently founded by him. In the booklet he proposed an *Act of filial acceptance of the Blessed Virgin as mother*.

The formula he used for this act was a prayer of entrustment that directed the person's attention and petition to Jesus Christ, “first principle and ultimate goal”; in his testament from the cross Jesus willed “to the Apostle St John the qualification and title of son of his mother Mary”. Then Don Bosco's prayer directs the devotee's request directly to Mary, that he “may belong to her” as a son, “possess her as a mother”. In fact, the sup-

pliant "entrusts" himself to her kindness, "chooses her" for his mother and begs her "to receive" him. He "makes a total and irrevocable donation of his whole self" to her; he "places himself completely" in her hands, trusting in her "motherly protection".

This prayer formula proposed by Don Bosco expresses admirably the real significance of the gesture of entrustment, and also its basic requirements and commitments. It is an act of faith that renews the baptismal awareness of sonship. The formula itself is a witness to Don Bosco's ecclesial insight and has proved eminently suitable for later development along the lines of postconciliar marian renewal.

The pledge of sonship propagated by our Founder emphasises the devotee's free approval and solicitude for Mary's special function as mother, his trusting submission to her, his filial willingness to be guided, his sureness of receiving adequate help, and his marian devotion that directs him totally to Christ in order to live better and more fully the riches of his mystery.

The date and contents of this marian text composed by Don Bosco suggest a natural connection between the act of filiation and the distinctive name he gave to his sisters, the *Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, whom he wished to show an exemplary filial trust in the Help of Christians. In article 4 of the renewed FMA Constitutions we read, "We are a religious family that *belongs completely to Mary*. Don Bosco desires that we be a *living monument* of his gratitude to the Help of Christians and asks that we be the expression of his gratefulness throughout the ages. We are aware of *Mary's presence* in our lives, and we entrust ourselves totally to her".

In the trusted hands of Mary Help of Christians we prepare to enter the third millennium

Don Bosco's devotion to Mary was perfected in the apostolic contemplation of her as the Help of Christian people and Mother of the Church in the varying events of history throughout the centuries.

Our share in the mission of the People of God gives pride of place to the youth apostolate, and thus highlights in Mary her motherly concern for the young, the cultural problems of education, the care of vocations, her apostolic sensitivity for the planning of a new society and a more dedicated Christian community.

* Placing ourselves in the hands of Mary Help of Christians and Mother of the Church, requires that we be loyal friends of the Pope and his bishops, attentive to their magisterium and pastoral guidance, seeing them as qualified mediators between Christ the Head and his Body the Church; it demands that we be sensitive to the needs of the universal and local Church, that our collaboration be energetic, generous and practical, and that for this purpose we have updated and reformulated our criteria regarding identity and communion.

The Act of Entrustment should bring down on the Congregation Mary's special help in our renewal of this important characteristic of particular loyalty to the Pope and the bishops: it is Don Bosco's legacy to us and in these times it has need of sincere and selfless witness. Our spiritual and pastoral life must evince a genuine esteem for the peculiar charism of discernment in our shepherds; we must refer to it continually and attentively;

after all, our pastors are appointed by Christ and helped by his Spirit to guide the People of God through the difficult situations that belong to human progress. We must ask the Help of Christians to assist the Congregation in strengthening and developing this important ecclesial principle.

* Our trusting abandonment to Mary also requires that we intensify a virtue of which she is a shining model and an inexhaustible source — I refer to *kindness*, that fine quality of the heart, that joyous simplicity, that “systematised kindliness” that is a sort of fourth vow for us, and which our Founder very fittingly meant to be included in our name “salesian”. It constitutes a special style and pastoral criterion that must permeate all our apostolic activity, our way of living in community, our dialogue, the adaptability of our approach, our friendly attitude. Thus it is not enough that we love our young people: we are moved to cultivate a spirituality that makes us loved by them — in a word that splendid and fruitful *family spirit* that Don Bosco called the *Preventive System*. GC21 has urged us to revitalise this invaluable heritage. Mary will help us to live it ever more intensely as a praxis that promotes and harmonises all the elements of our salesian spirit.

* Furthermore, under Mary’s motherly protection, we shall be conscious of her insistent invitation: as Mother of the pilgrim Church she urges us to *labour apostolically* to build up the Father’s Kingdom of Christ.

We shall ponder anew and sound the depths of our rich and distinctive spirit of *da mihi animas* — which makes us see God from a unique point of

view; Don Bosco translates this into a practical way of life that demands a programme of total self-donation and is admirably expressed on the salesian escutcheon, *Work & Temperance*.

Let us be confident that Mary, who was the inspiration of our salesian work, will help us imitate the virtues of Don Bosco and redouble our efforts as an expression of our apostolic zeal and religious asceticism that make our lives a daily sacrifice offered to God for the salvation of man.⁹

9. v. Const. 42, 49.

Courageous missionaries for the young

As God's People make their pilgrim way through history, Mary's zealous concern is shown by her intrepid help in the conflict between good and evil; she makes it convincingly clear that the Catholic Church is the "seed and the beginning of the Kingdom of Christ and God", sent to announce it and set it up among all nations.¹⁰

10. LG 5.

We know that the title *Help of Christians* refers to times of great difficulties and trials, public perils, serious problems for the faith, and significant battles for the social freedom of believers. In his booklet on *The marvels of the Mother of God under the title of Help of Christians*, Don Bosco writes that devotion to Mary as our Help, and Mother of the Church, means "invoking her rather for grave and imminent perils threatening the faithful than for private needs. Today (Don Bosco continues) it is the same Catholic Church that is being assaulted — in her functions, her sacred institutions, her head, her teaching, her discipline. She is attacked because she is the Catholic Church, the cradle of truth, the teacher of all the faithful".¹¹

11. Turin 1868

When we entrust ourselves to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, we must evince the courage and constancy of prophets and peaceful champions: such was Don Bosco in the midst of the insecurities and complexities of his times. He did not see the Help of Christians as a militant Madonna; she was no religious camouflage for political ideologies. Nor was she a kind of substitute for fear and non-involvement. Mary stood for deep practical and urgent concern in man's affairs — even to the point of risk. In every situation our faith must be courageous, our love creative and our patience persevering, so that we become indomitable defenders and announcers of the Gospel truths, and faithful and indefatigable collaborators of the Pope and his pastors.

The Collect of the new liturgy of Mary Help of Christians' feast expresses very well the courage and combativeness that our entrustment to her should develop in us: "Grant O Lord that your Church may always have the *strength to overcome in patience and love* all her interior and exterior trials so that she may reveal to the world the mystery of Christ".¹²

12. v. LG 8.

Our strength is the *power of the Holy Spirit* so often stressed by Scripture and the Liturgy. It is a spiritual energy, at first sight imperceptible, humble and almost hidden — but very real and utterly invincible, fearless of all enemies and inspiring the courage to announce the Gospel and bring it to fruition in all situations. What matters is that we be aware of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us and live in union with him. It is from this *interior life* that we derive the daring and constancy born of *patience* and are able to face and *overcome* all kinds of difficulties; from it too

we draw increased creativity and adaptability for pastoral action that will overcome not only any obstacles, not only disputes arising from ill-treatment or arrogance, but *all interior and exterior trials*. Indeed these days the Church is troubled by quite a few *interior trials* of an ideological and disciplinary nature that weaken her identity and are capable of causing deviations in her total fidelity to the mission of Christ on earth. Still, as the Pope said at Fatima, "No sin in the world can ever overcome love".

Giving ourselves with confidence to Mary means that we guarantee to battle daily against all spiritual superficiality that deprives us of the *power of the Holy Spirit*; that we make every effort to display in religious harmony with its pastors the most explicit loyalty to the unique and often not understood pastoral mission of the Catholic Church: to this must our lives be dedicated with perseverance; for this must we labour untiringly; to this must we give courageous witness; for this must we fight the battle of the Gospel.

Educating for sanctity

Furthermore, we commit ourselves to Mary so that we may achieve more thoroughly and efficaciously our pedagogical services to the young. Mary, *Mother of divine grace*, guided Don Bosco to become *the great modern prophet in training the young for sanctity*.

It was my good fortune in early April to be with five hundred young French pilgrims who were visiting our salesian "holy places". As they meditated and prayed they proclaimed the Becchi hill

as the *mount of the youthful beatitudes*. What a perceptive and accurate definition of our distinctive charisma.

Under Mary's inspiration we salesians have a daring and pressing commitment in the Church: to proclaim to the People of God the Gospel-call to the young, appealing to them to live lives of practical holiness. We must be able to do more than show this is possible: by our pedagogy we must produce living witnesses of youthful holiness as did Don Bosco with Dominic Savio and so many other young people at Valdocco.

We entrust ourselves to Mary that she will intercede and obtain for us a deeper understanding and a practical application of the solid principles of that "sacred pedagogy" which our Founder employed to produce the educative surroundings and the spiritual atmosphere of the Oratory Apostolate.

Our mission and primary responsibility demand that we spread within the Church an inspirational spirituality for the young; indeed by our heritage we have the exacting task of *educating for sanctity*, or in other words announcing the Gospel to today's young people and helping them grow in the mystery of Christ and in the life of his Holy Spirit. This task of ours is sublime and far from easy; it demands spiritual depth, sensitivity to the future, harmony with the Holy Spirit and a convinced sense of communion; we must share in the hopes of our pilgrim Church which has renewed her holiness and dedication in preparation for the third millennium of its active leavening of man through the centuries. The world has an urgent need for this inspirational spirituality of ours, and we must never be numbered among those lacking in enthusiasm or competence in proclaiming and practising

13. v. Pope's invitation to youth for the Holy Year: in appendix.

it according to updated and genuine pedagogical principles.¹³

This is exactly our specific mission. Let us then commit ourselves in confidence to the Help of Christians in the certainty that our gesture is consummately salesian.

Why the term ENTRUSTMENT?

Before Vatican II we used to speak of an "act of consecration to Mary". However, the Council has since clarified the true theological significance of the term *consecration* (although current usage of this word still includes meanings that are less theologically correct). From Vatican II the Church has used the term with greater precision.¹⁴ To describe better our relationship with Mary, our patroness and collaborator with Christ for the Kingdom, Pope John Paul II has preferred the word "entrustment" (*affidamento*) — which includes our affection, self-oblation, willing service, our filiation, "free servitude", trust and reliance.

In fact, on 8 December 1981, in the basilica of St Mary Major, Rome, the Holy Father commemorated the 1550th anniversary of the Council of Ephesus and solemnly "entrusted" the entire human race to the holy and powerful Mother of God.

One may well ask what difference there is between an *act of consecration* and an *act of entrustment*. The terminology has been changed because of a deeper understanding of the two concepts. Vatican II saw *consecration* as an act performed by God, a force that comes from him and

14. v. for instance, also the formula for our religious profession; v. Const. 74.

seals a divine design assigned by him to one who is called; a person *is consecrated* by God through the Church.¹⁵ When the Council speaks of people making a response to their consecration it prefers the expression "they made a *total offering* of their lives to the service of God" (*mancipaverunt*), and that "they have committed themselves within the Church by self-oblation" (*sui ipsius donatio*).¹⁶

When speaking of rediscovering the values of perpetual profession, we already discussed this particular aspect:¹⁷ by our religious profession we *offer* ourselves, and God through the Church *consecrates us*. It is enough to consider what happens in the sacramental consecration of Baptism (and for that matter, Confirmation and Holy Orders) to understand this difference in the two forces or impulses: one descends (the consecration) and the other ascends (the self-oblation). St Cyril of Jerusalem says, "You were consecrated when you received the sign of the Holy Spirit". Then he adds, "Christ was not anointed with oil or any other material unguents, but the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit... who is called 'the oil of gladness' because it is he who is the author of spiritual gladness".¹⁸

We would do well to have very clear ideas about this theological view of *consecration* coming from God, and *self-oblation*, *self-offering*, *self-entrustment*, that comes from ourselves. Consecration is achieved by God through his Church and belongs essentially to Baptism, Confirmation and diaconal and priestly Orders; and also to religious profession, which is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration expressed in its plenitude and characterised in a special way¹⁹ by an imprint or seal of the Holy Spirit in the act of self-oblation when

15. v. LG 44: the religious is **consecrated** (**consecratur** = passive); by God (a Deo) is understood; v. **Schema Constitutionis Dogmaticae de Ecclesia**; Modi - V - Caput VI, **De Religiosis**, p. 7, Resp. ad 24.

16. v. PC 5.

17. v. ASC 295, p. 18 et seq.

18. St Cyril: **Catechesis**
21. **Mystagogics** III 1-3,
PG 33, 1087 1091.

19. v. PC 5.

commitment is made to the evangelical counsels.

The Fathers of the Church justly call the Holy Spirit the *Seal*, for through him the Father anointed Christ at his baptism,²⁰ and after him anoints and signs all Christians.²¹

On the other hand the *Act of Entrustment to Mary* made by us who are already consecrated in religion by the Holy Spirit means that we aim to foster, defend and develop our genuine Christian, religious and apostolic consecration with further enlightenment and new awareness. It is not a mere superficial and transitory act of devotion, but a confirmation and revitalising of all our baptismal and salesian commitment.

The Act of Entrustment adds nothing to our actual consecration, but it renews it, elucidates it, guarantees it and increases the fruitfulness of what already exists; it brings to light our consecration's hidden bonds with Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of the Church. She does indeed exercise a subordinate saving role in the world²² and so we have confidence in the motherly help she gives to Christians. The consecration effected by the Holy Spirit has links with Mary that derive from the very economy of our redemption; it is in this divine economy itself that Mary is associated with Christ as the new Eve to the new Adam; "the Church does not hesitate to make open profession of this subordinate role of Mary, and it constantly experiences and recommends it to the earnest attention of the faithful, so that they may be encouraged by this motherly help and may strengthen their bonds with Christ the Mediator and Redeemer".²³

We should fail seriously if we allowed our-

20. John VI 27; Acts X 38.

21. 2 Cor I 22; Eph I 13; IV 30.

22. LG 62.

23. LG 62.

selves to be ignorant or neglectful of such a very real marian relationship.

Our *baptismal* sonship is bonded also to the motherhood of Mary as “type of the Church”;²⁴ and the Act of Entrustment we make highlights our distinctive filial awareness of this.

24. LG 63 64.

By *Confirmation* we become mature and daring witnesses, and our courage is joined to the strength of Mary, full of the grace of the Spirit;²⁵ our Act of Entrustment serves to intensify what is demanded of us in this regard.

25. LG 65.

The service of *Holy Orders* is also linked with Mary, “Mother of the Eternal High Priest of the New Covenant, Queen of Apostles, and Help of presbyters in their ministry”.²⁶

26. PO 18.

By our *religious profession* we commit ourselves to the *sequela Christi*, which is united to Mary, “Mother of the Eternal High Priest of the Christ’s first and closest disciple, “whose life constitutes a rule of conduct for all”²⁷ and proclaims in a special way its transcendent values.

27. PC 25.

Finally our own *salesian vocation* with its distinctive spirit and its mission is historically associated with Mary; as our Founder says, she is its inspiration, mistress and guide. Our Act of Entrustment thus recognises her motherly intervention and looks to her continued and active presence.

Indeed our Act of Entrustment recognizes and confirms all the profound and vital bonds that unite us with Mary, as christians, as religious and as salesians. With full awareness we proclaim our close relationship with her, we perfect the very consecration by which we have been signed by the Holy Spirit with the seal of Christ, we are more fully aware of our spiritual bonds and the grace of our christianity and salesianity; we aim at a

more sensitive union and a more enlightened fidelity. We are sons who grow and attain a greater maturity of mind that enables our relationship with our Mother to become more personal and conscious, and hence more stable and profound.

Confidence and hope

My dear confreres, our solemn Act of Entrustment to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, is replete with significance and vision. It will make us more deeply aware of salvation-history, reinvigorate our lively fidelity to our salesian vocation, put our immediate future into Mary's motherly hands. It will help us to solve and overcome with God's help the problems and difficulties that belong to this hurtling period of history; stir us to generous efforts in apostolic initiatives; and above all deepen our sonship in the Spirit, our interior life, contemplation, prayer, asceticism, brotherly charity, reconciliation, appreciation of the values of suffering, and indeed improve the whole spiritual and pastoral environment of the community.

In our trusting abandonment to Mary we shall make "continual progress in faith, hope and charity, and seek out and follow the divine will in all things".²⁸

O Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Church, Inspiration and Guide of the Salesian Family, with motherly insight you fathom the hearts of all our confreres, you enlighten and safeguard their apostolic consecration; you understand and further the educational and pastoral apostolate confided to them; you look with sympathy on their limitations, weaknesses and sufferings; you

28. LG 65.

love the young people entrusted to each one of them as a gift of predilection; we beg you, Holy Virgin Mother of God, powerful helper of the Pope, the bishops and all their co-workers, place under your special patronage this humble and hardworking Society of St Francis of Sales; with filial confidence we solemnly confide ourselves to you; and you who instructed Don Bosco, teach us to imitate all his virtues.

With this prayerful attitude, dear confreres, let us prepare ourselves for the forthcoming General Chapter that is so important for the future of our Congregation and all the Salesian Family.

With sincerest greetings in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Don E. Viganò". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized script.

Father EGIDIO VIGANÒ
Rector Major

C - APPENDIX

1. *The salesian's daily prayer to Mary Help of Christians*

Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin, Help of Christians, Mother of the Church,
foundress and support of our Congregation,
we place ourselves under your motherly protection,
and faithful to our salesian vocation
we promise to work always for the greater glory of God
and the salvation of souls.

With trust in your intercession
we pray for the Church,
for our Congregation and the Salesian Family,
for the young, especially those most in need,
and for all men redeemed by Christ.

You were Don Bosco's teacher;
show us how to imitate his virtues,
especially his union with God,
his purity, humility and poverty,
his love for work and for temperance,
his kindness and his whole-hearted service of others,
his loyalty to the Pope and to the bishops of the Church.

Grant, O Mary Help of Christians,
that we may serve God with fidelity and generosity until death.

Help us to come at last to the endless joy of life together
in our Father's home in heaven. Amen.

2. POPE'S INVITATION TO YOUTH FOR THE HOLY YEAR

(The Holy Father spoke to the young people from the balcony of the Milan Cathedral)

I welcome with great pleasure this television link-up with various nations, and I make use of it to *invite the youth of all nations and continents* to take part in the special jubilee activities scheduled for them in Rome from 11 to 15 of April next year.

Who can appreciate the breadth and depth of Christian hope better than you young people! You are learning in the present how to build a future that will be more just for mankind.

Who more than you can feel the need of Someone who sets man free from the many effects of the evil that is within him and that defaces so much of his life and activity!

The aim of the great youth rally in Rome that is organized especially for you, my dear young people, is this: that you may lift up your eyes to Christ who has freed us from sin and evil; that you may place before him the failings of fragile nature together with the certitude of our Saviour's victory. It will be a grand meeting for prayer, sharing, dialogue and joy — in a word, a meeting that will put you in contact with truth and life and that will obtain for one and all activity and peace; a meeting that will help you become builders of new forms of life more in keeping with mankind today, and above all more suitable for mankind tomorrow, in other words for yourselves.

(Osservatore Romano, 30 May 1983, English edition)