

acts

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF ANIMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION

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1. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

THE PAST-PUPILS OF DON BOSCO

Introduction. - Article 5 of the Constitutions. - The «education received». - 17 years with Don Bosco. - Don Rinaldi, inspirer and organizer. - Past-Pupils «of Don Bosco». - The values of salesian education. - Different degrees of assimilation of these values. - Some ways in which Past-Pupils can take part in Don Bosco's mission. - The task of salesian communities. - Vital importance of spirituality. - Conclusion.

Rome, Solemnity of St Joseph, 19 March 1987

My dear confreres,

I am glad to be able to pass on to you a special greeting and the apostolic blessing of the Holy Father. On Friday 13 February in fact, the Rector Major and his Council were received in special audience by the Supreme Pontiff. It was our desire to thank His Holiness for what he has granted us in connection with the centenary celebrations of '88, and in particular for the Apostolic Brief regarding the special "Year of grace" and his promise to come to Turin in the first half of September 1988.

The audience took place in a family atmosphere and with a friendly conversation during which we were able to note once again the Pope's concern for the young, his profound admiration for Don Bosco, and the fatherly esteem he has for our Congregation and the whole Salesian Family. He rejoiced to hear of the number of the Family's com-

ponent groups. Among the comments he made about the members and their activities, he reminded us that we are "charismatics of youth", and as we took our leave of him he repeated with a smile that we must be so especially in the present time of cultural transformation. The audience proved to be a significant anticipation of the spiritual and ecclesial depth with which we hope to commemorate the event of the centenary.

This encouraging encounter also marked the end of the plenary session of the General Council, which on 1 December had begun a period of work lasting more than two months. Among other things, we were able to examine and approve more than 40 provincial chapters, and it was consoling to note the serious and practical manner in which the provincial directories had been drawn up. I am more and more convinced of the Lord's love for us, and that he is with us as we lay solid foundations for a better future.

We shall prepare ourselves to express, all together, our gratitude to God our Father by an act of particular significance. On 14 May 1988 (as stated in this edition of the Acts, p. 42) we shall renew in our provinces and houses our religious profession. The date is a Saturday in the month of May, and marks the anniversary of the salesian profession made by Don Bosco and his first chosen young men of Valdocco. On that day the Congregation will feel itself spiritually renewed and ready to face up to the new times with the same enthusiasm and same creative daring of its founder. Let us take note of this at once, and set about preparing for it both individually and as communities.¹

¹ Cf. AGC 319

Article 5 of the Constitutions

The Strenna of this year (and I hope you have made my commentary on it the subject of your meditation) invites us to intensify the community and activity of the Salesian Family so that it may approach 1988 (and beyond!) as a real "Ecclesial Movement" of missionaries of the Young. The various consecrated Groups in the Family already have their texts and subsidiary aids, born of the conciliar renewal, which can lead them to greater authenticity. More recently the Cooperators have drawn up the new text of their Regulations of Apostolic Life, of which I hope — dear confreres — that you all have a copy. You have also been already encouraged by one of my earlier circular letters to make a serious effort to gain a good understanding of Don Bosco's thought in their regard and to take up both as individuals and communities the responsibility for their animation.²

² Cf. AGC 318

I would like now to reflect more deeply with you on *the importance of the Past-Pupils*, the nature of their Association and the particular reason for their participation in the Family, and hence in Don Bosco's mission.

I consider this a matter of no little importance in the renewal of our Congregation. Every confrere needs to reflect on it, and provincial and local communities are invited to review and relaunch in a practical manner the responsibility they share for the animation and revitalization of this immense and promising Association.

The heart and activity of the Salesian cannot be circumscribed by the walls of his own house. The thoughts I now put before you may be considered as a deeper treatment and development of what I

have already said in the circulars on the Salesian Family³ and on the Laity.⁴

³ Cf. AGC 304

⁴ Cf. AGC 317

Our point of departure and reference can be art. 5 of the Constitutions, which states that the Past-Pupils form part of the Salesian Family. The reason for their membership is given as "the education they have received"; in reality this education gives rise in them to different levels of participation, some more closely linked with the salesian mission in the world, and some less so. The recent "Guide to the Salesian Constitutions" notes that "past pupils are particularly prepared, precisely because of the education they have received, to assume a responsibility in collaborating for the attainment of the objectives inherent in the salesian plan". The 'choice of the Gospel' made by many of them "is not an alternative to the title of 'education received', but rather a special expression of it: it is not therefore a separate title applicable to a kind of new group".⁵ I think that what is stated by art. 5 needs further careful consideration on our part; it will serve to remind us certain practical obligations we must not overlook, and which require of us clarity of vision and awareness of our responsibility.

⁵ Guide to the Constitutions, Italian edition p. 115

The "education received"

The title of Past-Pupils to membership of the salesian Family "by reason of the education they have received" is dense in content with many fundamental qualities. It prompts us to make a wide-ranging examination of conscience with regard to our educational and pastoral activity. A glance at the history of our origins will show us how important this is, by pointing out the bonds that arise

from an authentic salesian educational system.

The Past-Pupils' Association had no direct "founder". Don Ceria tells us that it was born "like one of those things that arise from spontaneous natural causes";⁶ it sprang from the family spirit of the preventive system at the Valdocco Oratory. Don Bosco himself has written that his style of education "makes the pupil a friend", and enables the educator to speak to him in the language of the heart, not only while he is at school *but later on as well*, even when the former pupil is in employment, civil service or business.⁷ It is an educational method which has led to profound changes in behaviour (Michael Magone is an example), which has led to the heights of sanctify (Dominic Savio, for instance), and a permanent communion of ideals and feelings with the educators all through life (and that is where the Past-Pupils come in). The atmosphere of living together, of happiness, friendship and development breathed by youngsters of different cultural origins and social conditions, has the power to create between educators and pupils a kind of spiritual relationship with bonds of mutual esteem, affection and ideals of life which endure in time.

"The boys felt themselves loved by Don Bosco, not just as simple pupils but as sons, and because of this there arose naturally in them, when they grew up, the thought of going back to their father's house. And this spontaneous return continues to take place to the schools and houses where is sown this 'homing instinct' felt by former pupils, and where the spirit and method of Don Bosco is still to be found. The Past Pupils' Movement was not therefore something started up by the educators as an association for school-leavers for group activities

⁶ E. Ceria, *Annali I.*, 715

⁷ "The preventive system", in appendix to *Constns. and Regs.*, p. 248

with a selected membership; it "grew up on its own" with a charismatic vitality at its beginnings.⁸

⁸ Cf. U. Bastasi, "Guida organizzativa del Movimento Exallievi di Don Bosco", Turin 1965, p. 8

17 years with Don Bosco

The Past-Pupils Group began to take on a certain consistency even during Don Bosco's own lifetime. Its beginning can be assigned to Don Bosco's feastday on 24 June 1870. On that occasion a dozen or so former pupils came together officially under the leadership of the genial and generous Carlo Gastini, who always looked on the Oratory as his second family. They set about finding more members and then formed a commission for the better organization of future annual manifestations of their affection and gratitude.

In this way the feast increased in scope from year to year, becoming a triumphal expression of grateful appreciation. After some years it was found necessary to divide the manifestation into two sections or meetings: one on Sunday for the lay past-pupils, and another on the following Thursday for those who had become priests; the latter became quite numerous and to them the good Father continually recommended the care of the young.⁹ Little by little, especially after Don Bosco's death, they became further subdivided into local groups, unions and societies, and it was Don Philip Rinaldi who eventually got them organized efficiently in a practical form.

⁹ Cf. BM 14, 402-404

The period from 1870 to 1888, i.e. the 17 years during which Don Bosco was directly in touch with them, provide us with a great deal of food for thought; they enable us to see more clearly the meaning of their title to membership of the Family

“by reason of the education they have received”.

We know what a great love Don Bosco had for his pupils; when they had finished their schooling he never forgot them, but followed them up, helped them, invited them back, welcomed them, encouraged them, guided them still, admonished them if necessary, and was concerned especially for their spiritual good. In one of the numerous encounters with them, he said: “I see that quite a number of you have lost your hair; in others it has turned grey and your foreheads have become wrinkled. You are no longer the boys I once loved so much, but I feel an even greater love for you now than I did then, because your presence here today tells me that you still have firmly rooted in your heart those principles of our holy religion that I taught you and that they guide you in your life. And then I love you more than ever because I can see that your heart is still given to Don Bosco... (and I can tell you) that I in turn am all yours, in my thoughts and in all I do. You were once only a little group, but that group has grown, has increased enormously, and will grow greater yet. You will be a light shining in the midst of the world, and by your example you will teach others how they must do good and detest and avoid evil. I am sure you will continue to be Don Bosco’s consolation”.¹⁰

On another occasion he said to them: “My dear sons, one thing I recommend to you above all else: wherever you may be, always conduct yourselves as good christians and upright citizens... Many of you already have a family. Give your children the same education you received from Don Bosco here at the Oratory”.¹¹

Canon Berrone tells us that “in those meetings with his former pupils Don Bosco always urged

¹⁰ MB 17, 173-174

¹¹ BM 14, 401

them to keep the Oratory spirit alive in society, and many of them availed themselves of the opportunity to seek his counsel".¹²

¹² BM 9, 428

In 1883, during his visit to Paris, after he had spoken about his educational method he answered a question by a person who expressed doubts about the perseverance of the young artisans once they had left the Oratory and gone into the army or the world of work: "At Turin", he said, "there are many who come to confession on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings. And then in the Italian army it is well known that those who come from our workshops practise their faith; in fact, the others call them the 'Boscós'. You can find them at all levels in the army".¹³

¹³ MB 16, 167

On 26 July 1884, he recommended to his former pupils, almost as though leaving them a legacy: "Wherever you are, wherever you go, always remember that you are sons of Don Bosco, sons of the Oratory... Happy you will be if you never forget those truths I tried to engrave on your hearts when you were youngsters".¹⁴

¹⁴ MB 17, 489

In the other salesian houses too, those of recent foundation, the same communion of life, stemming from the education received, was observed. We read, for instance, that in Montevideo under the leadership of Don Lasagna, who took the spirit of the Oratory there, quite a number of youngsters "either when they went home for holidays or after leaving the college, set up real festive oratories in their own houses"; and in this way there gradually came into existence an organization of oratories presided over by a past-pupil Dr Lenguas, with a small body of Regulations which bore the interesting title: "Festive oratories of Montevideo managed by Past Pupils of the Collegio Pio".¹⁵

¹⁵ BM 13, 125

During the years of direct contact with Don Bosco there were two particularly significant initiatives regarding his former pupils.

The first was in 1876, when Don Bosco finally launched the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators after long years of planning and experiments. He gave great importance to his tiring work as the Founder and he invited the more committed ones among his former pupils to join this Pious Union. In one of the yearly manifestations of the former pupils following that date Don Bosco said: "The suggestion to involve each of you in the development of the work of the Salesian Cooperators is an excellent idea, because the Cooperators are sustainers of God's works by means of the Salesians... it is a work designed to shake people out of the inertia in which so many christians are bogged down, and spread the energy of charity".¹⁶ An so in 1877, as Don Favini writes (in "Don Bosco e gli Exallievi"), "the Cooperators were referred to officially for the first time; and since former pupils vied with each other in joining the Pious Union (as appears from a letter of Canon Anfossi: BM 13,475), they were probably among the leaders" (in the manifestations of the Past Pupils too).¹⁷

The second was in 1878: Don Bosco suggested to his former pupils the setting up of a "Mutual Help Society" to meet difficulties that might arise: "I suggest that you do not benefit just yourselves alone, but reach out in emergencies to some of the well-behaved students who have left the Oratory, or to your former companions, or to everyone here present".¹⁸ Carlo Gastini, leader of the former pupils, immediately set to work to organize such an association, using as a basis a set of regulations for a mutual aid society that Don Bosco had already

¹⁶ MB 18, 160-161

¹⁷ U. Bastasi, *op.cit.*
p. 235

¹⁸ BM 13, 582

drawn up and published in 1850 when he started such a scheme for the young workers at the Oratory.¹⁹

¹⁹ BM 13, 583

Don Rinaldi, inspirer and organizer

After Don Bosco's death his former pupils continued their annual manifestation around the person of Don Rua, making of the feast of the Rector Major a great demonstration of gratitude, and when on 1 April 1901 Don Rua recalled Don Philip Rinaldi to Turin from Spain (where he had been provincial) to take on the important office of Vicar General (or Prefect General, as it was then called), the various groups of former pupils found in him an extraordinary animator and a very efficient organizer.

During his twenty years as Prefect General Don Rinaldi managed to bring about a reorganization with humble discretion, arranging matters so that it seemed that the main architects were the former pupils themselves or one of the collaborators working with him. In this way he was able to give an organic structure to a movement based on affection, gratitude and ideals of living, which made of the "education received" a living and dynamic force.

In 1906 he founded among the past pupils of Turin the "Don Bosco Circle" which quickly developed into one of the best salesian dramatic societies, and served as an example for similar organizations.

In 1907 to a confrere leaving for Spain, he said: "Look after the Past-Pupils: they are our crown; or, if you prefer it, they are the reason why we exist, because being an educational Congregation it is clear that we educate not for school but for life.

²⁰ U. Bastasi, *op. cit.*
p. 20

Now the true life, the real life, begins when they have left our houses".²⁰

To his work of animation Don Rinaldi added his far-sighted realization of the need for an organization, and suggested practical ways of bringing this about. On 25 June 1909 he put forward the idea of an international confederation, and to promote it he made use of the well-deserving "Commission of Don Bosco's Former Pupils" which, from the time of Gastini, had been organizing the annual manifestations at Valdocco. The structure was formally inaugurated in the first international Congress of Past-Pupils in 1911, as a Federation of the many local unions, circles and societies. Until then they had been called "Former Pupils" ("Antichi Allievi"); from that date onwards they were known as "Past Pupils" ("Exallievi") a name Don Rinaldi had already begun to use earlier.

By June 1912 it was already possible to organize an "Administrative Council" and nominate the first President in the person of Prof. Piero Gribaudo. "It was said, not without justification", commented Don Ceria, "that this was something quite new in the history of pedagogy".²¹

²¹ E. Ceria, *Annali I.*
712

During those years Don Rinaldi, who was also confessor of the Sisters and zealous animator of their Oratory for girls, was also concerned with the organization of the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, so that they too might grow and eventually be structured as a Federation.

As Rector Major he took a constant interest in the functioning and vitality of the Union of Past Pupils, and was distressed to discover that not all the confreres had understood its importance. For this reason he earnestly recommended it to the care of provincials and rectors: "There are some",

he said, addressing a gathering of 25 provincials and 300 rectors at Valsalice in 1926, "who think that the organization of the Past Pupils is a useless work, and so they do not bother about it. I want to remind them that the Past Pupils are the fruits of our own labours. In our houses we do not work for a pay packet, or to ensure that the youngsters remain good only while they remain with us, but to make them good christians. And for that reason this Organization is an ongoing work: through it we want to bring back those who have gone astray; ... we have sacrificed ourselves for them and our sacrifice must not be lost".²²

²² ASC 36, p. 518

Chevalier Arturo Poesio, in a deposition in connection with the cause for beatification, declared: "Once in a meeting of Past Pupils, hearing that the latter were in difficulties as to how they could meet the whole cost (Lire 1,500) of their ceremonial meal, which he enjoyed very much, without putting a strain on the finances of the local Institute, the Servant of God declared that if a salesian house had only 1,500 lire to its credit, he would gladly approve the spending of the whole lot on the meal for the Past Pupils, because no sacrifice would be more satisfying to his heart if it helped to bring together around him his beloved sons".²³

²³ Cong. for Causes of Saints, 'Positio', Rome 1972, p. 32

Don Ceria observes: "If was said very forcibly, but in all truth, that Don Rinaldi 'shaped and formed the Past-Pupils Movement through his genial intuition and wanted it to be a dynamic and living force doing good in the world by its work'".²⁴

²⁴ E. Ceria, «Vita del Servo di Dio Sac. Filippo Rinaldi», SEI Turin, p. 252

Dear confreres, I have tried to emphasize, albeit briefly, the work and thought of Don Rinaldi because his figure comes to life again in our hearts at the present day, with the hope we have that soon he will be beatified. It was said of him by Don Fran-

cesia (who lived close to our Founder for so many years) that Don Rinaldi had everything of Don Bosco except his voice. He was a most faithful and fertile disciple of the Father, with a deep intuitive understanding of his greatness of heart and soul, and that of the latter he developed some precious seeds which had not yet germinated. We well know, for example, the story of the Don Bosco Volunteers; that of the Past Pupils is equally clear.

Arturo Poesio stated in fact: "Don Rinaldi's eloquence was simple and spontaneous and at the same time fatherly and convincing. Only once did I hear him speak with an aspect and language of authority, and that was when he declared in his capacity of Rector Major of the Salesian Society, that the Organization of the Past Pupils must be considered as being one of the "new families" which Don Bosco had the merit of causing to spring up in the Church, as was said in the Collect proper to the Mass of the Saint".²⁵

²⁵ 'Positio', p. 28

May Don Rinaldi help us by his intercession to promote today, in a Church renewed by Vatican II, the auspicious Association of the Past Pupils as a dynamic Group of the Salesian Family.

Past Pupils "of Don Bosco"

It is a fine and stimulating thing to note that the name given to those who have been pupils in our Houses is not "Salesian" Past Pupils, but Past Pupils "of Don Bosco". This I consider to be a choice which, though formulated for the first time at the Oratory and then continued everywhere in time and place, provides us at the present day with a concrete programme. As we have seen already, the

Past Pupils were born, so to speak, by spontaneous generation through the "education received" from Don Bosco and his first collaborators. It was an education that forged living bonds and would always want to be expressed solely in the name of him who had inspired and developed it through the donation of his heart and through his pedagogical brilliance, and who had concentrated all his talents and extraordinary personal qualities in passing it on to his followers: "that you are young is enough to make me love you very much; for you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life".²⁶ Indeed Don Bosco dedicated himself to the education of the young with all the sensitivity of his oratorian heart: "with firmness and constancy ... in the midst of difficulties and fatigue: 'he took no step, he said no word, he took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young'".²⁷ His pupils experienced this personally, and felt growing in themselves the bonds of sonship, of gratitude, of witness to the values contained in his loving work of education.

²⁶ Cf. C 14²⁷ Cf. C 21

It is in him that we find the original secret and the pedagogical riches of an education that creates family ties.

In the First Past Pupils Congress of 1911, it was decided to erect a monument to Don Bosco in the square in front of the Basilica at Valdocco. The monthly periodical "Federazione", which began publication in 1913, coordinated the collaboration and enthusiastic support of numerous men and women Past Pupils who appeared in the subscription lists without specific distinction.²⁸ It proved difficult to make a final selection from among the 62 sketch plans that were submitted for the monument. Finally that of the artist Gaetano Cellini was chosen,

²⁸ E. Ceria, *op. cit.*, p. 254

and the first President of the Past Pupils, Prof. Gribaudi, explained the reason; he wrote: "A monument in the meadows of Valdocco could not possibly portray Don Bosco without children around him. That is how we had seen him; that is how he always was. I myself, though I was only ten when I entered the Oratory, was amazed to see the crowds who surrounded him and held on to his hands as he crossed the playground. We crowded around and were happy if we could just touch his hand; and he used to smile at us with those dark lively eyes of his... That was Don Bosco, our father, the father of all us boys".²⁹

²⁹ E. Ceria, *op. cit.*,
p. 256

Because of the first world war the inauguration of the monument was delayed until 23 May 1920. The event was an apotheosis, with three international Congresses of Cooperators, SDB Past Pupils and FMA Past Pupils being held at the same time, representing no fewer than 23 different countries.

Whoever goes to Valdocco and looks at the great monument cannot but think of the living and worldwide significance of the "education received" in Don Bosco's works.

To speak today of "education received" as a title to membership of the Past Pupils in the Salesian Family means to call to mind once again the charismatic conditions of the origins and to dwell on the way they have been prolonged and homogeneously developed in more than a hundred years.

We find ourselves therefore contemplating a title to membership which forms a genuine part of the Founder's charism. For a better understanding of its nature and to clarify its practical and organizational requirements in the present cultural and ecclesial circumstances, one must refer back to the preventive system.

The values of salesian education

Education is not the same thing as a simple introduction to the environment and culture proper to a society; it is more than that. It is certainly true that at the present day one must take into account the profound process of human evolution which is in progress in both the World and in the Church, with its resulting problems, some negative and some positive. Among negative problems are a pluralistic relativism, doctrinal and ethical confusion, totalizing political tendencies unjust economic situations, conflicts and antagonisms, laicism and atheism, the family crisis, emargination and the new forms of neglect of the young. On the other hand there are the positive aspects: a new growth in human values stemming from the signs of the times, the courageous ecclesial perspectives opened up by the Council, the great commitment to a new evangelization, a more concrete sense of solidarity and peace, an efficacious desire to provide space for a civilization of love, etc. All this is an indication of the tremendous need to enlighten man's freedom and provide a better formation of it from his youth.

The period of history in which we are at present living gives primary emphasis to education, but at the same time raises numerous problems concerning its purposes, content, methods, means and institutions. A renewed concept of education is urgently needed, one that is concrete and to the point, not abstract and generic; one that is all-embracing from a human point of view, and up to date in line with the requirements of each country; one that is concerned about formulating objectives and strategies in the light of a genuine vision of an-

thropology and faith; one that is directed to the attainment of a mature and proper freedom through processes of growth appropriate to age and existential conditions; one that is capable of critical discernment as regards the development of the individual, so as not to be blinded by popular ideas and ideologies; one that will liberate effectively from oppressions and embargoes; one that is realistic and creative, and hence open to continual self-appraisal which helps to develop through it a plan of life.

This is not the place to go more deeply into a sector with vast and complex problems. But if we want to relaunch the Past Pupils in such a way that they are not merely people who have passed through our schools but a true Group of the Salesian Family, we must return to Don Bosco's preventive system, to discern its great principles and deepen our understanding of them in the light of future perspectives; only in this way will the title to membership of the Past Pupils "by reason of the education they have received" be something living and fruitful for them.

The preventive system is considered to be one of the components of Don Bosco's charisma; in this sense it has been analysed in depth in our postconciliar work, and especially in the GC21.

Education is for us like a road along which our salesian apostolic consecration moves. We evangelize "by educating"; we promote culture "by educating"; we play our part in the commitment to justice and peace "by educating"; we promote the development of the individual "by educating"; we contribute to the building up of the church "by educating".

The GC21 told us that the preventive system

“does not indicate only a set of contents to be transmitted or a series of methods or procedures for communicating them. It is not pure pedagogy, nor is it solely catechesis. The preventive system, as it has been lived by Don Bosco and by his followers, is always like a rich synthesis of contents and methods; of processes of human development and also of proclamation of the Gospel and of deepening the christian life. In its goals, in its content and in its actual implementation it brings to mind at once the three words by which Don Bosco defined it: reason, religion, kindness”.³⁰

³⁰ GC21, 80

This group of three words will go down through the centuries. What we have to do at present is rethink their application in the light of the different cultures in which we work, but with our eyes always on Don Bosco's Oratory as the model from which we draw inspiration.

Let us look rapidly, therefore, at some suggestions, which already seem very obvious to all of us, but which challenge our educational renewal with respect to the relaunching of the Past Pupils and the concrete purposes of their Association.

— In addition to its basic connotation of “common sense”, the term “reason” evokes at the present day the idea of the different anthropological disciplines which go to make up the so-called “educational sciences”, to whose deeper development and teaching are dedicated two salesian faculties in Rome, that of the UPS and the “Auxilium” of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The different cultures and the changes stemming from the signs of the times call for new competence in educators and the ability to constantly revise the practical applications of the educative project. The humanistic outlook in its overall content, the formation to free-

dom in the pursuit and preservation of what is good ('preventiveness'), the authentic concept of love and an objective view of sexuality, the presentation of ideals in which life appears as mission, the responsibility for being professionally competent, introduction to the world of work, a correct moral conscience, the sense of solidarity, family and political aspects of life, the realities of the temporal order with respect to their authentic lay condition, the dignity and role of women, the broad horizons of justice and peace, introduction to the promoting of human values in collaboration with all men of good will, adequate self-discipline in life, etc.; these are all concrete challenges to today's educators if their pedagogical activity is to be really in accordance with «reason».

— The term "religion" for Don Bosco represented an absolutely indispensable component of education. In the central nucleus of every culture religious values are always to be found; even a hypothetical atheistic culture would have at its centre as the stimulation of its structure the negation of God. In Don Bosco religion is the motive and thrust behind all his work of education. For him religion meant, in fact, the Catholic Faith; he educated to the Gospel of Christ by the pedagogical promotion and maturing of the baptismal option of his boys. At the present day Vatican II has opened up broad frontiers of renewal in this regard, which demand of us who are educators a new and robust competence in evangelization and the teaching of catechism. There is an urgent need for us to take up this prophetic legacy left us by the Council. In particular, the term "religion", as well as implying an updated ecumenical sensitivity between non-Catholic Christians, requires in the case of many of

us a direct knowledge and appreciation of those non-christian religions which are practised in numerous areas where we have educational centres. Openness to what is transcendent, the search for truth about God, the pedagogy of prayer, the value of celebrations in different cults, the meaning of human brotherhood, the sacredness of life, an ethic and spirituality of behaviour, a concrete manner of ascetical practice, the gratuitous gift inherent in living and working, the particular values and also the defects of popular religious practices etc., are all of them important aspects of an educational system which sets out to form to practical freedom. In this field too the educator has the delicate but indispensable task of being on the alert to detect objectively and prudently eliminate certain superstitious attitudes and religious and cultural taboos unworthy of human dignity and in evident contradiction with salvation history.

— Finally, the term “loving kindness” (Italian: “amorevolezza”) indicates that emotional involvement which constitutes one of the most characteristic aspects of the educational method of Don Bosco. It implies the creation of an educational environment permeated by the family spirit, by mutual confidence, easy dialogue, joy and friendship; by a life together, not only with regard to scholastic matters but also in the great variety of possibilities for the use of free time: sport, theatre, music, group activities, initiatives in the fields of social service and the apostolate, etc. in other words it implies that “oratorian atmosphere” through which educational work becomes for the young what the Oratory was: “a home that welcomed, a school that prepared for life, and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves”.³¹

In such an atmosphere one can foster and accompany initiatives in which the youngsters themselves are the protagonists in group activities which give added sense to free time and make it useful and attractive.

The formation of a similar "educational environment", in which friendly relations develop between educators and pupils, is without any doubt the element which most ensures the birth and growth of those bonds of affection and life (almost of kinship) which, when the stage of youthful education comes to an end, will stay on in the lives of the Past Pupils; this is the main reason why they continue to feel that they belong to Don Bosco and to his family.

Different degrees of assimilation of these values

Art. 5 of the Constitutions speaks of the "education they have 'received'". To have frequented a salesian work is not sufficient to make one a Past Pupil in the real sense of the word.

In the phrase 'Past-Pupil', the word 'Past' is ambiguous. If it simply implies the condition of one who when young frequented a salesian work and then left it as one might leave a hotel, or because disenchanted about it, it would not serve to indicate the nature of the Association and its membership of the Salesian Family; it would signify no more than a group of former companions (which might be numerous or otherwise) for which the Association might provide in some way for the development of some educational values which had not been properly developed in the earlier days and had subsequently been suffocated by the cares and problems of life. On the other hand what the word

'past' really implies in this context, when linked with 'pupil', is the reality of the assimilation of very many educative values, their maturing, and hence a continuing attitude of "ongoing formation" which goes on all through life. That is precisely the characteristic nature of the Association.

The Past Pupils come together and constitute the Association because they feel the bonds of gratitude and think that together with the Salesians they can update the "education they received" and make it fruitful.

Evidently the assimilation of the values will admit of differences in degree and method according to the receptive capacity of each member.

More specifically: the values of "reason" and "religion" can be developed in different situations with a certain pluriformity; but at the level of "loving kindness" there should be a uniformly intense degree of presence in every salesian work, and in this way it becomes a yardstick for measuring the fidelity to the preventive system on the part of the Salesians and their collaborators in the individual works. I really cannot understand how there can be a salesian work which does not look after its Past Pupils; the history of the Oratory at Valdocco is far different from this.

The fact that there are different ways and degrees of participation is expressed in the Constitutions themselves, when they say in art. 5 that "the bonds of membership are closer when they (the Past Pupils) commit themselves to take an active part in the salesian mission in the world".³²

³² C 5

It is important to note in the first place that every Past Pupil is in relationship with the Salesian family through his Association; for him too (as is the case for the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary

Help of Christians, and the Cooperators) it is a question of a commitment which he personally assumes: that of joining the Association, and thus acquiring a full of membership of one of the "instituted" groups".³³

His own "instituted Group" is an Association which has as a basic characteristic common to all its members the "education received" and the intention to make it fruitful.

The "closer bonds" of membership will be expressed in practice in different ways, because the "salesian mission in the world" may be lived and shared in a variety of religious situations and according to personal convictions which may be objectively different, provided that in the group of Past Pupils there remains the real foundation of common values through the "education they have received".

In the Associations' Statute it is said that they "intend to consolidate the bond of friendship which binds them to their educators and unites them among themselves, and to preserve and develop the principles which were at the foundation of their formation, so as to express them in authentic life commitments;³⁴ and in connection with the World Confederation it is stated that "it has for its purpose that the members preserve, deepen and put into practice the salesian educational principles they received".³⁵

As such, therefore, the Past Pupils Association presents a specific characterization all its own "with out ethnic or religious distinctions".³⁶ For this reason it is not easy to define at World Confederation level the possible variety of degrees of "closer" participation in the salesian mission; later we shall give some examples of ways in which it has been lived in practice.

³³ Guide to the Constitutions, Italian edition p. 114

³⁴ Statute, art. 1

³⁵ Statute, art. 3

³⁶ Statute, art. 1, d

Here it seems important to point out the life of the Association proceeds from the base, or in other words from the local Unions or Centres where the members know each other and have a more concrete and homogeneous concept of the "education received", and can therefore decide what in practice is implied by "a closer participation in the salesian mission" in their own territorial environment and their own religious, social and cultural condition of the Past Pupils varies from one place to another. Any tendency to 'over-structure' at higher levels may turn out to be counterproductive. The most incisive and appropriate form of animation is linked in the first instance with the vitality of local groups. It is there above all that attention must be given to the strategy of meetings above and of ongoing formation. The life of local Unions is more easily perceived by the members, and is more deeply felt.

Certainly an adequate organization at provincial, national and world level is not only useful but is also necessary; its purpose however, is to serve, animate, make suggestions, stimulate, support (and sometimes even provide) the initiatives of the individual local Unions, so that they may be able to express in a practical and fruitful form the "education they have received".

Today, in the aftermath of Vatican II, some light can be thrown on the meaning of a "closer" participation in the salesian mission by ecumenical guidelines,³⁷ by an opening up of dialogue with non-christian religions³⁸ and by activities of service to mankind with the involvement also of non-believers of good will.³⁹

A particular aspect, emphasized by the GC21⁴⁰ is that of Catholic Past Pupils "who have made the

³⁷ Cf. "Unitatis redintegratio"

³⁸ Cf. "Nostra aetate"

³⁹ Cf. Institution of Secretariate for Non-believers in Roman Curia

⁴⁰ Cf. GC21, 69

choice of the Gospel". Their "closer" participation brings them nearer to the Salesian Cooperators. It is for this reason that they are invited to join the Cooperators: the community, say our Regulations, "should help those who are more sensitive to salesian values to develop in themselves the vocation of a Cooperator".⁴¹ Nevertheless the two Associations are specifically different one from the other. That of the Past Pupils has its own physiognomy, linked with the communion and initiatives stemming from the "education received".

The Cooperators' Association is not in itself an alternative to that of the Past Pupils; it constitutes rather a centre of spiritual and ecclesial referral for those who have made the gospel option. Past Pupils who are Cooperators generously make their own, as convinced "laymen", the objectives of their own Past Pupils' Association and place at its disposal the riches of the grace of Christ in the spirit of Don Bosco to bring to fruition among their fellow members and their former companions the "education they received".

And so the assimilation of the values of the preventive system presents a whole range of possibilities for a more or less close participation in the salesian mission in the world. As far as our own communities are concerned, extraordinary importance attaches to the interest shown by provincials and rectors (and their delegates) in providing the animation that will ensure the fidelity of the members to the purposes of the Association and to the genuine inspiration of Don Bosco. We must all be able to recall and imitate the understanding, the willing acceptance, the dedication and the initiatives of our Founder and of Don Rinaldi. This is not an easy task; it needs competent and persuasive

⁴¹ R 39

people who are able to deal with mature men, and who have a clear and updated grasp of the preventive system.

**Some ways in which Past Pupils
can take part in Don Bosco's mission**

As we have seen, the title to membership by reason of education received is not something superficial imposed from without, like gold plating on metal. It is a vital reality of gratitude, of communion and of intentions in the light of that same educational plan of the past lived now in new experiences of life, work and study, and in personal and social perspectives.

The nature and activity of the Association is intrinsically linked with this title to membership. Its vast horizons must be capable of discernment without confusing it with either the Cooperators' Association or any independent secular association, thus distorting its identity.

In what way then can the Past Pupils' Association share in the life and activities of the Salesian Family? Let us try to give some orientative guidelines starting from its history and its present-day reality.

— A first way is that of showing practical concern for the “*ongoing formation*” of the members. This is a task inherent in that “education received”, in so far as all education (especially at this time of cultural change) needs to grow and make itself adequate to meet the new needs in a continual and modern way. The statute of the World Confederation declares that the Past Pupils intend “to preserve and develop the principles which were at the

⁴² Statute, art.1,b

foundation of their formation, so as to express them in authentic life commitments",⁴² and that "they see the Rector Major as the figure of Don Bosco himself and recognize him as their leader; they desire the assistance of the Salesians for an ongoing, incisive and adequate spiritual education".⁴³

⁴³ Statute, art.1,c

In this area there a very concrete setting for a service of animation on the part of our communities and confreres for the benefit of the Past Pupils. If we are able to programme initiatives in ongoing formation and make them function successfully, it will serve to strengthen the quality of local Centres and Unions and of provincial federations for participation in the mission.

— Another activity proper to the Association is that of giving effect to the exhortation made by Don Bosco himself to his early former pupils: to "*remain united and help each other*", not only with respect to strengthening the organization and functioning of the Association,⁴⁴ but also as regards mutual help given to individuals in need, and especially in the matter of maintaining helpful contacts with former companions who "are not enrolled in a particular local Centre are not effective members of the Confederation, but they are considered as still belonging to the Don Bosco Past Pupils' movement".⁴⁵ For this reason it is desirable that their names be kept in an appropriate register so as to keep their memory alive and try to involve them in activities of formation and doing good.

⁴⁴ Cf. Appendix to Statute 5,1

⁴⁵ Appendix 2

This is a natural field of expansion for the Association in which particular help can be given by confreres who have known the former pupils now remaining at a distance.

— Another important task of the Association concerns the *family life* of individual members. This presupposes a knowledge and defence of the rights and duties of the family in society. The Statute states that the Past Pupils undertake to promote and defend the leading values of the human family,⁴⁶ which at the present time is passing through a period of crisis. Within their own families they have the possibility, as Don Bosco himself suggested to them, of practising the educational methods they learned during the time of their own education.

⁴⁶ Cf. Statute, art. 3,a

Here we have another modern challenge which will enable us to assess the extent of the pedagogical commitment, now and in the past, of our educative communities. How is the preventive system applied, so that later it can be extended into future families of the pupils? What preparation do we give to young people to prepare them for marriage? What kind of programme is there for formation to love? How do we meet the requirements of a proper sex education? what kind of marriage ethics do we put forward? How do we emphasize the sacredness of life? etc. These aspects bring home to us the urgent need for a practical approach to *pastoral work for families* to be planned and realized (in harmony with youth pastoral work) in our houses according to the possibilities inherent in the type of our educational presence.

We may recall the penetrating observation made by a Bishop in the Synod of 1980 on the family; I spoke of this in an earlier circular, when I remarked that “the theme of the family is not just a discussion topic; it is a privileged vantage-point for more practical and intelligent thinking in our overall pastoral project, in line with God’s master-

⁴⁷ AGC 299, p. 8

plan".⁴⁷ Hence our plans for youth pastoral work and the concrete educational projects of the provinces and houses must always give due attention to this strategic aspect. What the Bishop said was: "The family is something small in itself, but there is within it a potential energy greater than that of the atom. Starting from the comparative individual insignificance of millions of humble families the Church can relaunch the power of love needed to make herself the sacrament of unity among men".⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Bishop Francis J. Cox: (14 Oct. 1980)

If the essence of all education is to lead people to love, the whole of the Church's pastoral work (and therefore ours as well) must converge on making the human family become effectively "the school of love". Let us help the Past Pupils to render salesian education efficacious within their own families!

— A further commitment characteristic of the Association's activity is that of giving priority to the big problem of the *education of youth* and of taking part in it. The Past Pupils themselves declare that "in the light of the urgent problems of youth at the present day, (the Association) strives to realize, to the maximum extent possible, activities designed to interest young people in the various fields of social and political action; it encourages their initiatives and helps them to assume responsibility at every level".⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Appendix 5,2

We are all aware of the urgency of this problem and the need for promoting multiple initiatives for collaboration in finding a solution, even on a limited scale. The problem is a universal one; it is met with all over the world, even in different kinds of youth conditions. Fortunately Don Bosco's spirit is universal too, and is found living and working in

every continent: one and the same spirit, in the same mission, but in a plurality of cultural, social and pastoral situations. In respect of which values for the benefit of youth should the Past Pupils commit themselves?

In fidelity to Don Bosco's charisma they should be able to analyse the urgent needs of the young in respect of the three dimensions of the preventive system. In the sphere of "reason", this includes problems concerning human values; in that of "religion", those relating to faith and a spirituality of life; and in that of "loving kindness", questions concerning method in the light of the deterioration frequently noted in the schools sector and especially in the spheres of the family and of love: there is indeed an urgent need to throw some light on the criteria for the application of a valid educational method.

This is a commitment which opens up a vast panorama of possible ways of intervening.

It is evident that here too a revision is needed of the whole programmes of our educative communities and the present significance of our works as regards the giving of a practical response to the challenges presented by the world of youth. In this way it will be possible to give better direction to the initiatives of the Past Pupils, so that they strengthen or complete our own interventions and even, according to the practical needs in the area concerned, reach some combined and integrated plan of action by the whole Salesian Family working there.

— Another objective which the Past Pupils' Association suggests is "*the defence and promotion of the values inherent in the human person and respect for man's dignity*"; and "*the fostering of a higher level in the cultural, social, moral, spiri-*

⁵⁰ Statute, art. 3,a

tual and religious fields, in line with the education received".⁵⁰ In the Appendix added to their Statute (to guide its application), the Past Pupils refer more explicitly to this so characteristic social and cultural area: (the objective is) "to stimulate a deep and sound *social and political preparation* of the Past Pupils, more urgently needed now than ever before, which does not stop at theory but goes also into the duty of fulfilling one's political duties as a good citizen, to practical commitment in the social sector, the creation of associations with a mutual help character, etc"; and "to prompt apostolic and social activities, with particular regard to the commitment for justice, peace and brotherhood".⁵¹

⁵¹ Appendix 5,d,c

To the above must be added the immense importance that attaches at the present day to *social communication*, and the way in which its various means (and even the most sophisticated of them) can be exploited and shaped for good by quite a number of Past Pupils who have become particularly competent in this sector.

This objective too presupposes an "education received" of particular clarity and quality with respect to the proper structuring of the temporal order. Vatican II and the social teaching of the Church's magisterium have opened vast horizons of renewal for educators, which call for competence and continual updating. Dear confreres, we need to take a long hard look at the way we educate in the whole of this sector, not indeed to get involved in party politics but to put efficaciously into practice the important art. 33 of our Constitutions. We have to promote justice and peace "by educating"; and in educating we must bear concrete witness to our preferential love for the poor. We are called to carry out a "liberating education",

drawing on the practice lived by Don Bosco the Church's living magisterium. The Past Pupils await clear guidelines from us in this regard.

— The Association's sharing in Don Bosco's mission also implies the intention to step up *active communion with the whole of the Salesian Family* and with each of its component Groups, both at directive world level and also at provincial and local level with the communities and individuals present in the same neighbourhood. The title to membership by reason of the education received provides an easy linkage between the Association and all members of the Family, but especially with the three Groups founded by Don Bosco himself: the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Cooperators.

The renewal of Don Bosco's charisma is a call to the Past Pupils at the present day to intensify in a practical manner their bonds of participation and communion with these three Groups in particular, in ways which will vary according to the nature and role of each of them.

This intention of theirs should be continually recalled to mind and facilitated by our animation.

Art. 5 of the Constitutiones assigns to us Salesians, "by the will the Founder", the far from easy responsibility of "preserving unity of spirit and fostering dialogue and fraternal collaboration, for our mutual enrichment and greater apostolic effectiveness".

Unfortunately there are still some confreres who have yet to change their attitude in this regard and to consider this as one of the "major aspects on which we must concentrate our attention and our practical efforts"; as the Rector Major, Fr Luigi Ricceri, said in presenting the Acts of the SGC: "It

is a matter of urgency to give back to our communities the sense of their being a nucleus powerful enough to animate and invigorate other spiritual and apostolic forces (those of the Salesian Family!); these in their turn will enrich us (i.e. our communities) with great spiritual and apostolic advantages".⁵²

⁵² L. Ricceri, SGC, p. XIX

The cultivation and intensification of the relations between the Past Pupils and ourselves in the first place, and then with the other Groups (especially the Cooperators), is a task that will be delicate at times but one that is very fruitful and will make it possible in practice for our Family to appear, in each area, as a living and incisive "ecclesial Movement", in line with the suggestion of this year's Strenna.

A good sign of the Past Pupils' efficacious intention to carry out this policy is the mutual agreement they have come to with the Association of the Past Pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the realization of a single common International Congress in November 1988, for the solemn commemoration of Don Bosco.

— A final task of some consequence is that of *getting in touch with pupils who are nearing the end of their school career*, and explaining to them the advantages of joining the Association. The influx of new blood is something sought after by the Past Pupils because they want to be a group which is "perpetually young"; "this will be possible if the Association is continually reinvigorated by the thousands and thousands of young people who come out of salesian schools and other works".⁵³

⁵³ Appendix 1, b

This praiseworthy and vital task implies for the Past Pupils themselves a practical dedication to promoting an involvement pleasing to the youngsters, but it also calls for an intelligent and agreed

arrangement for directing the older pupils towards the possibilities of further salesian growth in those groups of our Family most in keeping with their intended life-plan, and in particular (in the majority of cases) to the Past Pupils' Association.

And so the manner in which the association participates in Don Bosco's mission in the world is a matter of no little consequence. The possibilities are numerous: we have touched on seven of them. Participation of this kind constitutes a practical proof of membership of the Salesian Family, which will become "closer" in proportion to the degree of commitment shown in the concrete activities already indicated, without excluding levels of other kinds which may extend to ecumenical areas, inter-religious dialogue, or simple human good will.

The task of salesian communities

The reflections we have made so far are an invitation to provincials and rectors, but also to individual confreres, to review their own sensitivity, their own personal work and that of the communities, and the validity and efficacy of the services we offer to the Past Pupils. We need to think deeply about art. 39 of the Regulations.

We can distinguish two complementary facets of our responsibility: that which concerns the quality of the education we impart in our various works, and that which is directly linked with the life and activity of their Association.

— The first aspect (the quality of education) has already been substantially dealt with as we considered the various activities realized by the Association. Here it will not be out of place to empha-

size once again the clear idea of Don Bosco and Don Rinaldi: that the Past Pupils represent in the world the fruit of our labours. The education given in our various works is entirely directed, in a practical social and ecclesial manner, to the mature life of an upright citizen and honest christian. We work therefore with the object of forming authentic Past Pupils; we foster a kind of education which will guarantee their later membership of the Salesian Family. To prescind from this would mean that we considered Don Bosco's preventive system out of date.

— The second aspect is that of promoting and animating the Association itself. If we think of the very large number of our former pupils, if we are convinced (because we have proof of it every day) that the legacy of Don Bosco's, spirit is very much alive at the present day and doing a lot of good, if we look at the huge and growing mass of needy youngsters towards whom our Founder felt that he had been divinely entrusted with a special mission, we shall feel compelled to seek out and galvanize all the forces available in the Salesian Family, and in the latter there is no doubt that the Past Pupils constitute a mine of rich possibilities. There is here a providential salesian potentiality which must be developed in each of the sectors of activity mentioned earlier.

We may add here as well the invitation to foster the "*volunteer movement*" (especially among young Past Pupils) with its many perspectives, some of them of a missionary nature.

But it is a question of being able to dialogue and foster communion of spirit and intent with an Association of mature individuals, which is of its nature a factor extending salesian education, and which

has an admirable in-built possibility for collaboration and the preparation of new and beneficial initiatives. To this end our communities must be aware of, and know how to turn to advantage, valid future perspectives, which means that they must be open and welcoming communities, available and prepared for dialogue.

In drawing up programmes for the animation and ongoing formation of the confreres, time and means of sensitization should be provided which will involve them in getting to know and put into effect the guidelines of the recent General Chapters in this respect.

The provincial in particular should consider it important to appoint a provincial delegate who is qualified and suitable in other ways. He should plan meetings of rectors of a kind that will lead the latter to a clear understanding of their communities' responsibility for animation and action, and will help them to select (if need be) local delegates who will be able to interpret and translate into practice this duty of every community. It goes without saying that the task of the delegates is not to substitute those responsible for animation (who remain the provincial, the rector, and the community as a whole), but to act as interpreter for them in their desire to give effective realization to the underlying policy. It will be a good thing too to promote a respectful and practical dialogue with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in respect of rapport with the association of their own Past Pupils.

The provincial and the rectors, within the ambit of their own areas of responsibility, should make good use of the possibility of periodic consultations to review the realities of life in their area, and to

plan activities of common interest, especially for the good of youth.

As you can see, dear confreres, this task which stems from a mandate given us by the Constitutions, reminds us once again that the identity of a salesian community does not require that it do every thing itself, but rather that it be a true "animating nucleus" of a large number of other apostolic and social forces.

Vital importance of spirituality

The Strenna for 1987 brings home to us the need for fostering and making fruitful some "leading ideas" which can enable the Salesian Family to be seen as an ecclesial Movement with an incidence on history. Without an interior mystical energy no one will become involved and we cannot be either "missionaries" or "charismatics" of the young.

If a salesian community is to become in reality an "animating nucleus", its members must have a rich interior life, it must be vibrant with spirituality, and as a community it must breathe a new pentecostal atmosphere. We refer to this nowadays as "*youth spirituality*", because it is totally oriented to the education and evangelization of the young, but before that it is above all proper to the adult members of our Family, so that they may bring to life in themselves an educative fatherhood. We have a brief but authoritative description of it in Chapter II of our Constitutions which presents "the salesian spirit of Don Bosco".

It is a question of a special style of being disciples of Christ, a characteristic way of living in his Spirit. It implies an attentive and meditative listen-

ing to the Word of God, like that of Mary; a frequent eucharistic and penitential meeting with Christ. It is an experience of faith, hope and charity which transforms the daily round. It is an eschatological sign of the "power of the resurrection"⁵⁴ in harmony with the fresh energies of youth. It is an uncontainable passion for the kingdom ("da mihi animas") in active collaboration with the Pastors of the Church. It is a love capable of self-giving in sacrifice. It is joy and optimism, without losing sight of the reality of sin and evil. It is flexibility as regards work, and temperance in family simplicity. It is a spontaneous means of communication of one who has sanctity at heart and wants to pass it on to others, especially the young.

In the last General Chapter (GC22) we declared war on spiritual superficiality; in 1988 it is our intention to absorb interiorly the new text of our Rule of life and to relaunch in our lives our salesian Profession. The whole Salesian Family, and in particular the Cooperators and Past Pupils, are waiting for us to infect them with Don Bosco's living and beneficial spirit; the young ask us for an attractive spirituality they will find satisfying, and the simple but powerful dynamism of a holiness for everyday life which will penetrate the monotonous reality and hardships of the ordinary daily existence and the occasional more difficult and exacting demands, with the life-giving transcendence of the Beatitudes.

A spirituality of this kind is needed in every culture, and it contains rich and vital elements which can be shared also with non-catholic christians, with members of non-christian religions, and even with non-believers of good will.

The experience of more than a century of the vi-

talities of Don Bosco's spirit and the concrete results of his educational system in every continent, provide a valuable stimulus for us in our intention to become like the Founder, true "charismatics of youth".

Dear Confreres, I must bring this letter to an end.

With all our heart we want to see Don Rinaldi beatified as soon as possible. He was the great inspirer of the Past Pupils' Association, and certainly watches over it from heaven.

Let us all invoke from God, the source of everything that is good the "gift" of the official recognition of his salesian holiness; it will be something significant and beneficial for the young and for all our Family, but especially for the Don Bosco Volunteers and the Past Pupils.

In these coming months, may Mary Help of Christians present to the Father this our insistent prayer:

"O Lord, in the Venerable Philip Rinaldi, the living image of Don Bosco, you have given new strength and greater extension to the charism of the Salesian Family. Glorify this your servant, and make us to be his generous imitators in our ability to animate many valid missionaries of the young!"

May Don Rinaldi intercede for us, for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, for the Cooperators and, in a particular way, for the Don Bosco Volunteers and the Past Pupils.

With my affectionate greetings, as we approach 1988.

Don F. Viganò