

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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and Government
of the Rector Major
and his Council
for the period 2002-2008

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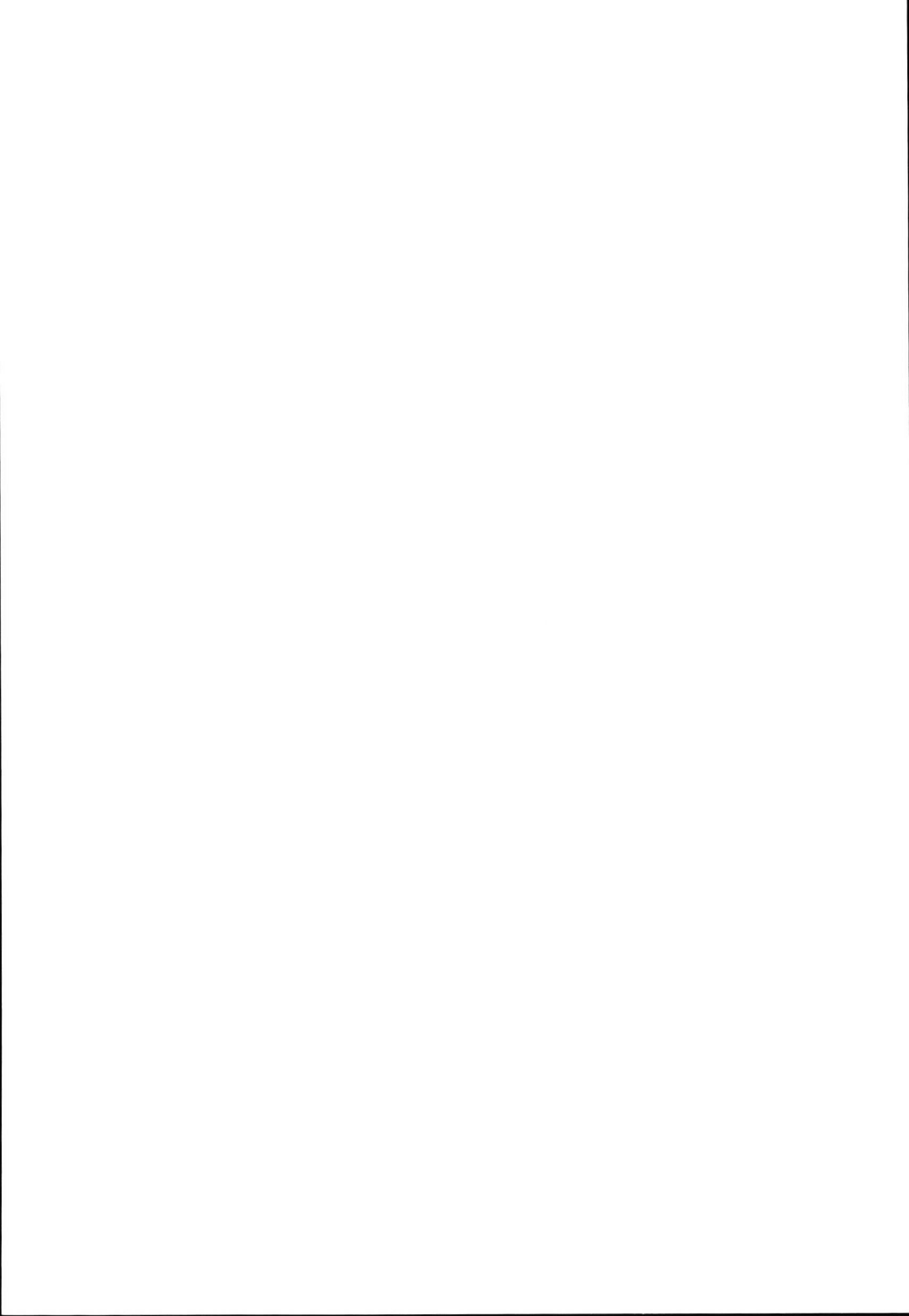
PRESENTATION

Origins of and reasons behind the Project

The need for a Project

Priority of animation and main lines of action

Our Six-Year Plan



Rome, 8 December 2002
Solemnity of Mary's Immaculate Conception

My dear confreres,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the *Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year period 2002-2008*. The Project represents the six-year plan the Congregation will follow in this period between the GC25 and the GC26. In this it continues along the lines of the preceding planning, and at the same time introduces the innovations offered us by the 25th General Chapter.

In my closing address to the Chapter I said that we must now pass from “paper to life”. This was obviously a reference to the Chapter Document, which must be made operational in the life of the communities to which it has been consigned: they in fact are its subject and it is addressed to them. And it is well to know, from the information coming in from the Provinces, that truly stimulating initiatives are taking place in every part of the Congregation so as to become familiar with it, take it up and apply it.

The *Project of the Rector Major and his Council*, which has now been finalized, has the purpose of converting the Capitular Document into a program of animation and government, in order to provide the Rector Major and his Council with a means for stimulating, following and verifying the process of renewal launched by the General Chapter.

Origins of and reasons behind the Project

Six years ago, on the personal initiative of our late lamented Fr Juan Vecchi, a structured program was drawn up covering the Council as a whole and not just by sectors; it was published

not as a simple instrument for coordinating the work of the Councillors but in an attempt on the one hand to enable every confrere to know in what direction the Congregation was moving, with what choices, objectives, strategies and actions, and on the other to give greater unity and effectiveness to interventions of government.

But the initiative of my predecessor must not be considered as simply a good idea. He himself, in presenting it, said that he had gleaned from the capitular assembly an insistent request for a greater structural unity among the interventions of the Councillors, both Departmental and Regional. The programming, therefore, was meant to be a precaution against the real danger of fragmentation in the carrying out of the service of the Rector Major and his Council. Moreover the programming of six years ago became part of the planning mentality that the Congregation had so much encouraged as part of the new model for youth pastoral work, in the knowledge that nowadays evangelization, education, formation and government have an indispensable need of clarity of purpose, of definition of objectives and of the path to be followed; the goals must be clearly identified as also the procedures that trigger the practical means to attain them.

Little by little all the Provinces, at different speeds, adopted this planning mentality, which is neither a form of pastoral snobbishness nor the transfer of a practice from the world of economics and politics to the religious life and to educative or pastoral work. The new pastoral model has emerged precisely to meet the challenges presented by the current context in which our life and mission have to be carried out. It is a context characterized by an ever greater fragmentation, requiring the rebuilding of its components through an integration of the educative and pastoral community, and by a whole variety of proposals which need a plan to determine their choice and priority, place them in order according to specific objectives and the steps necessary to attain them. Planning, in fact, is simply an incentive to work together.

In this way we have passed from making a simple calendar of activities, when cultural changes were very slow and society seemed more monolithic and uniform, to projects and programming. There may still be, perhaps, an occasional community that finds it difficult to understand why such a change is necessary, and resists working according to a project. But the development of this planning mentality is becoming always more common and natural: indeed, it could hardly be otherwise.

The programming of the past six-year period, the first of its kind at the level of the General Council, was so successful that many Provincials took it as a model and reference for their own planning. This was a very positive development, because it achieved a real identification with the six-year plan on which the Congregation itself was engaged. And it is our hope that in the present period, which has just begun, it may become the common practice in the Provinces. Little wonder then that the capitulars expressed so positive an assessment of the experience and explicitly asked that it should continue. This means that the new project for the six-year period 2002-2008 gives practical effect to a request of the GC25, and endorses the reasons which led Fr Juan Vecchi to introduce it six years ago.

The need for a Project

You may have already noticed that we have preferred to use the term *Project* instead of that of *programming*. There is no real opposition between the two; it is rather a question of different and complementary ways of planning.

This supposes in the first place a *frame of reference*, which is provided for us by the Constitutions, which are rightly called the “Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco”. They contain the replies to the questions: “Who are we? What have we been called to do? What are our criteria of reference for organizing our life and mission?”.

The task of the *Project* is to give concrete form to that ideal framework in a particular context and for a definite period, responding to the questions: "What do we want our priorities to be? What are we trying to achieve? By what means? Through what interventions?"

Programming, on the other hand, specifies the "who, how, when, and where of the realization of the project". Without it everything remains just a declaration of intent.

In our case, having a six-year plan means that we recognize our vocation as part of God's plan to be realized in time and in down-to-earth contexts, always for the benefit of the young.

After all this, I would like to share with you the **advantages** I find in having a Project. We can see how enriching this experience is, how involving, how demanding it can be, because it is not just something technical. In effect we are seeking the growth of persons and the renewal of communities, and not only their apostolic effectiveness: this is always the underlying and ultimate goal. We want the sense of belonging and of responsibility in all our confreres to grow, called as they are not to be spectators but protagonists; in this we see our principal means and our guarantee of success.

Drawing up a Project means **developing communion**. Its elaboration obliges us to look *together* at reality, to assess it using common criteria, to make together those choices that we think should have priority, to devise a practical plan for making them concrete. In this way the confreres share with each other the values, motivations and choices which inspire the life and mission and build true communion of hearts and minds. Few things create community so well as sharing in a project! Drawing it up is not a task only for experts, even though the presence of some of these may be useful and even indispensable, but it is the task of all who have an interest in the matter. The more the work is left to only a few, the less will it be taken up by the others. The more everyone is involved, the more will the project become a common one.

The drawing up of a Project is already to some extent an **act of government**, because it makes us face *reality*, the

challenges we have to cope with, and the energies to be fostered in the Congregation. Evidently we cannot solve every problem or realize to the full all the elements of change, which require time, the setting of priorities and deadlines. But we have the unavoidable responsibility of carrying out what has been entrusted to us as our mission. We find ourselves therefore obliged to make a choice about the areas to which we must give priority.

The realization of a Project is also **animation**, because in drawing it up we have to decide not only on the main priorities but on the people with whom we shall be directly dealing: those to whom our efforts are directed, and what kind of interventions we have to make to reach the objectives. Evidently the Rector Major and Councillors must work for the animation of all Salesians, but especially of the Provincials and the organs of government in the provinces and houses. These are the ones, in fact, who must work at local level for the realization of the salesian life and mission for the benefit of the young.

The drawing up of a Project is even a way of **verification**, because projects do not arise spontaneously but form one phase of a long process, which begins with an assessment of what has been done already and of what still remains to be done. Above all, a project must be translated into a program which determines such items as those responsible at each stage, times and places for the realization of objectives, and provides some clear indicators for measuring whether the aims have been achieved and to what extent. It may be that this part of the verification process is sometimes omitted, because some may wonder whether projects which deal with the growth and maturing of individuals, such as evangelization, education and formation, are capable of verification. My reply is that they are. It all depends on the parameters applied for the purpose.

Priority of animation and main lines of action

The present Project is prompted by the working guidelines of the GC25, but also by the report on the state of the Congre-

gation presented to the capitulars, and by the Rector Major's closing address. We have first of all found a convergence on the main *priorities* on which we must focus our attention, that is: the primacy of God, the visibility of community and fraternity, the renewed effectiveness of the salesian presence, and formation. We have therefore specified the *objectives* to be achieved in each of the priority areas, the *procedures* we intend to set in motion, and the particular interventions to be made.¹

In this way we reached the formulation which can be synthesized as follows:

1. Primacy of the spiritual life of the community

(GC25, Guidelines from scheme of work 2)

Goals to be reached:

- Restore the **central place of God** in personal and community life.
- Ensure that the **spiritual life of the community** is at a **high level**.
- Make **legible** the community witness to the radical following of Christ.

2. Witness of the community to communion and fraternity

(GC25, Guidelines from scheme of work 1)

Goals to be reached:

- Create in the community a **family experience**, rich in human values and dedicated to the service of the young.

¹ In the various parts of the Project:

- By **priorities** are meant areas of particular attention during the six-year period, without excluding animation and government in continuity with the previous period.
- By **objectives** are meant goals to be reached, corresponding to the priorities indicated.
- By **procedures** are meant the means for attaining an objective, the ways or stages for reaching a goal.
- By **interventions** are meant actions to be taken, prompted and stimulated by the General Council in the Provinces and communities.

- Ensure the **conditions** that make the community experience viable and effective.
- Make every community a **house and school of communion** in the EPC, the Salesian Family, the local Church, and the neighbourhood.

3. Renewed effectiveness of the salesian presence among the young

(GC25, Guidelines from scheme of work 3)

Goals to be reached:

- *Bring the community to accept and **share life with the young**, especially the poorer ones among them.*
- *Create a **new kind of presence**, that will be attractive and positive for young people.*
- *Enable the communities to provide **personal follow-up** for the young, and **suggest vocational choices** to them.*
- *Redefine the structures of animation and government at all levels, and make sure they function well.*

4. Formation: personal and community commitment

(GC25, Guidelines from scheme of work 4)

Goals to be reached:

- Enable and motivate every confrere to undertake a **formation that lasts a whole life time and involves his whole person**, as a response to the gift of his vocation.
- Make of the **community the privileged setting for the human and vocational growth** of every confrere.
- Enable each confrere and the community to grow in **identification with Don Bosco and his apostolic project**.
- Ensure the **personal study and community assimilation** of the five sets of guidelines in the schemes of work of the GC25 and the Ratio.

These priorities of animation and main lines of action find their respective applications in the different Departments and in each of the Regions. As Rector Major I shall try, in periodic dialogue with the Councillors, to verify that the Project is

known and applied, and as a Council we shall make two evaluations, one midway through the six-year period and the other at its end, looking ahead to the GC26.

Our six-year plan

That, dear confreres, is our six-year plan. It will keep all of us busy during the next six year period. I hand it over to you with the great hope that it will be received, studied and taken up as a proposal and point of reference for your own programming at provincial and local level.

In its first draft it had already been presented to the Provincials and various groups of confreres and members of the Salesian Family for their observations, suggestions for improvement, and especially so as to involve everyone.

The *Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year period 2002-2008* is now a Congregational Project that will help us to strengthen our charismatic identity and our common vocation.

It is a *pastoral project*, in the sense that all our consecration is apostolic and therefore takes account of those to whom our mission is addressed: young people. They need Salesians who are like Don Bosco “deeply human... and just as deeply a man of God” (C 21), who are able to create a family atmosphere in our houses and works, who find their happiness in being in the playground among the youngsters, who are always seeking their spiritual, professional and pedagogical renewal.

The *Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year period 2002-2008* stems from the determination to be faithful to the salesian vocation, lived as a dynamic process. Hence it is a real and effective means of ongoing formation. A fundamental part of the Project, in fact, are the various procedures, those which foster renewal, maturing, and conversion of mind and heart.

As Salesians we have in the Constitutions our *Project of Life*, rightly called by Fr Egidio Viganò our *Rule of Life*. As Sale-

sians we also have from this moment a *six-year plan* to which we have to give effect, and to this we intend to commit ourselves with generous responsibility.

In an attempt to underline this aspect, I recall Don Bosco's words: "If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions", because they evoke the words of Jesus: "He who loves me, keeps my word". This shows us that the most authentic communion that exists between persons is love, but this cannot be reduced to mere affectionate feelings; it is made visible through the sharing of a common project and becomes credible in its realization.

Let us strengthen our affection and communion as we make our pilgrimage together.

I entrust to our Blessed Lady the success of this Project. May she be our Teacher and show us how to embrace God's plan in our life and to model it on God's design.

Gaspar Chániz V.