

acts

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of the Salesian Society
of St John Bosco**

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**Project of animation
and government
of the Rector Major
and his Council for the
six-year period 2008-2014**

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PRESENTATION

What is specific and essential in the Project

Structure of the Project

A Project at the service of charismatic
identity and of apostolic passion

By way of conclusion



Rome, 8 September 2008
Birth of the B. V. Mary

Dear Confreres,

After the publication of the documents of the 26th General Chapter, «*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*», I am happy to present to you the **Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council for the six-year period 2008-2014**. It is intended to translate into operative terms what was decided by our Chapter Assembly. Starting with the letter convoking the GC26 it was said that we wanted a Chapter that was to be not so much doctrinal as especially programmatic. In fact the Chapter document has adopted a scheme which, starting from God's call made known to us through the Constitutions and the reflections of the Church and of the Congregation, might throw light on the situation in which we are living in reference to each of the proposed five key issues in order to discern what procedures to set in motion to make changes and what courses of action to follow to respond always better to the will of God, to the needs of the young and to the expectations of the Church.

The GC26 is a genuine *navigation chart* that ought to guide the Salesian Congregation not only until the next General Chapter, but also to the celebration of the bicentenary of the birth of Don Bosco. The Chapter document and the subsequent Project of animation and government represent our commitment to a spiritual re-birth and a renewed apostolic zeal, so as to arrive at the jubilee of 2015 with spirits well disposed.

The document «*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle*» has carefully identified the different subjects called to put it into practice:

the individual Salesian confrere, the community, the Province, the Rector Major and his Council.

The specific and essential aspects of the Project

From this perspective, the Project that I am presenting to you refers basically to the objectives, procedures and lines of action assigned to the Rector Major and his Council. This helps our role of animation and government of the whole Congregation to be better seen, while the task of making their own project at the service of the communities and of the confreres is left to the Provinces.

I won't repeat the reasons behind the drawing up of a Project of animation and government for the six-year period. I think they are well-known from what I wrote six years ago (cf. AGC 380, pp. 9-17). Perhaps I might suggest that you read those pages again. We only need to remember that today more than yesterday evangelisation, education, formation, government require a planning mentality to overcome the danger far from imaginary of our activity being fragmented, and a clear project to carefully define priority areas, the goals to reach, the procedures to be used and the interventions to be made.

Our Project is in continuity with the two previous ones, because we are aware that a change of mentality requires quite a long time and cannot be completed in a six-year period. But also because basically it is always a question of the same effort in dynamic fidelity to God's original design for the Congregation and to the plan of life of the Salesians as Don Bosco indicated in the Constitutions. Naturally the pressing needs are different, depending on a multiplicity of factors, which explains the reason for the decisions that are made each time.

Structure of the Project

The current Project is in three parts: 1) the priorities of the Congregation for the six-year period 2008-2014; 2) the

application of the Project to the individual sectors; 3) the application of the Project in the individual Regions. Even though in drawing it up we have based ourselves mainly on the document of the GC26, we have also taken into account the closing address of the Rector Major and the proposals made by the Regions in the last two days of the Chapter, as also those presented to the Councillors for the mission in the meetings with the various Regions.

In choosing the priorities in the Council we decided unanimously to take the five key issues of the GC26 as the Rector Major summed them up in his closing address and present the keys for reading them: *warming the heart of the confreres, a missionary spirit and new frontiers* (cf. Chapter Documents, pp. 135-142). Nevertheless out of respect for the text of the Chapter and to avoid any confusion, we have preferred to use the terminology adopted in the Chapter.

So we arrived at the following formulation of the priorities to be adopted:

1. Returning to Don Bosco to start afresh from him

Goals to be achieved:

- Being committed to knowing and loving Don Bosco, returning to the young and rediscovering the significance of *Da mihi animas cetera tolle* as a programme of spiritual and pastoral life (GC26, 8.13.19).

2. Urgent need for evangelisation and vocation ministry

Goals to be achieved:

- Putting encounter with Christ in the Word and the Eucharist at the centre of our communities, in order to be authentic disciples and credible apostles and to witness with joy to the beauty of a consecrated life, totally dedicated to God in the mission to the young (GC26, 32.61).
- Seeing to a more effective integration in every setting of education and evangelisation, following the logic of the

Preventive System (*GC26, 41*).

- Inculturating the process of evangelisation in order to give a response to challenges in regional contexts (*GC26, 46*).
- Creating in the Congregation a real vocational culture that helps bring to maturity a commitment to the Kingdom of God and life projects (cf. *GC26, 65*).
- Recovering Don Bosco's understanding about the complementarity and the specific nature of the two forms of the one Salesian vocation, and seriously committing ourselves to the promotion of the vocation of the Salesian Brother (cf. *GC26, 74*).

3. Simplicity of life and new frontiers

Goals to be achieved:

- Giving credible witness to evangelical poverty lived personally and as a community in the spirit of *Da mihi animas cetera tolle*, that develops a culture of solidarity with the poor and allows us to make courageous choices on behalf of the more needy youngsters and those at risk (*GC 26, 86.90.105*).
- Re-launching the Salesian charism in Europe (*GC26, 108*).
- Creating new forms of more flexible presence and reviewing the model of management of works for a more effective educative and evangelising presence (cf. *GC 26, 100.112*).

The second part presents the application of the priorities of animation and government to the various sectors, which have focused on their implementation in the main areas of animation in their own fields. To the Departments specified in the Constitutions – Formation, Youth Ministry, Salesian Family, Social Communication, Salesian Missions, Economist General's Office – we have considered it appropriate to add a section on the subject of fidelity and religious discipline, responding in this way to the positive reaction of the Assembly to this subject.

The third part takes the priorities and applies them to the individual Regions. Here therefore there are only the objectives

more specifically related to each of the Regions and the corresponding interventions.

Taken as a whole, the planning shows the hierarchical and functional structure of the Congregation, with priorities that are valid for the whole Congregation, areas of transversal animation specific to each sector and the contextual application to the single Regions.

A Project at the service of charismatic identity and apostolic passion

If the whole of the GC26 has as its secondary theme “charismatic identity and apostolic passion”, the Project aims to make clear above all our *identity*; therefore the first priority is that of the “return to Don Bosco to start afresh from him”. Going to the source of our charism and of our identity represents for us the desire not only for fidelity to the past, but also for a commitment to finding the way ahead for the future. It is well known that in organisations identity is seen as the central and determining factor for vitality and success. Also for us, the soundness and the intrinsic strength of our own identity ensures the sustainability in time and the continuing significance of the Congregation. Along these lines the “invitations” provided by the calendar, such as the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Congregation in 2009, the centenary of the death of Don Rua (2010), the three years preparation for 2015 represent powerful stimuli that ought to involve all the confreres and all the structures.

It is from the identity that there takes shape the *mission* with which we want to respond to the demands of the confreres, the collaborators and those for whom we work, respecting the specific cultural features of the various countries and places and at the same time encouraging the spirit of initiative, so as to make all the protagonists co-responsible partners of the Congregation.

The return to Don Bosco in order to start afresh from him, the urgent need to evangelise and the new frontiers give us the

idea of the future path which the entire Salesian community is committed to pursuing. Warming the hearts of the confreres – as I said in my closing address at the GC26 – means proposing a mystagogical process, an authentic spiritual journey in the three “places” of spirituality, of community and of mission. The urgent need for evangelisation means seeing the whole world as mission territory, well aware, however, that there can be no authentic evangelisation if it does not reach the heart of a culture. The new frontiers, finally, represent the world of marginalisation and of disadvantaged youth, by which we are challenged and to which we are being called, having clearly before us the criterion of preference: “giving most to those who have received the least,” with the imperative of going outside the walls and finding new ways to oppose the evil that chokes the life, the process of reaching maturity and self fulfilment, the happiness of the young, having a specific educational project based on the whole area of human rights. In other words, the time has come to give fresh impetus to the service we offer through our educative apostolate, which implies that change of mentality to which the procedures to be implemented refer, and re-focusing on those to whom our work is addressed.

Like Don Bosco we need to be attentive and perceptive readers of history, to make our own his apostolic vision, his courage in undertaking activities that were transforming and not merely palliative. All this will be possible, as it was for Don Bosco, on condition that we have minds and hearts full of passion. As you can see dear confreres, our fundamental *assets* continue to be our personal resources, in other words each one of you, each one of us.

By way of conclusion

In addition to the joint Project the Councillors have drawn up their own programme indicating the “who, how, when” as regards the various interventions and providing assessment criteria so that we can translate into our lives everything that

we took on board at the General Chapter as the expression of the will of God on behalf of youngsters especially the poorest and most needy.

As a Council we have set ourselves to carry out two assessments, one halfway through the six year period and another at the end – also in view of the GC27.

It seems right to say that in the drawing up of the Project we have also taken into account the deliberations of the GC26 that deal directly with the General Council: the coordination of the three Regions of Europe, the assignment to the Vicar of the Rector Major of the animation of the Salesian Family for another six years, the need for formal coordination of the Departments for the mission, and we have also fixed the date for the assessment of the structures of animation and central government of the Congregation (cf. Chapter Documents, nn. 115-118).

My Dear Confreres, I conclude recalling that the GC26 wanted to inflame the heart of each and every Salesian with the spiritual and apostolic passion of our beloved Don Bosco. Presenting you with the Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council, I only want to encourage you to take it up and to see that it does not become a letter that kills but a spirit that gives life.

I entrust to the Madonna, on the feast of her Birth, the success of this Project. May she open us up with generosity to God's plan and teach us to model our lives on that of her Son, who came not to do his own will but that of his Father.

Affectionately in Don Bosco,


Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva
Rector Major