

I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Turin. March 1971.

My dear confreres and sons,

In the last issue of the *Acts* I gave you news of the beatification of Father Rua in 1971 and I said I would return to the subject later. That is the purpose of my present letter and I fulfil it not merely as a duty but through a sense of great joy at being to treat with you on this matter, since this event is rich in significance for our Family and indeed for each one of us.

Don Rua's Cause has been a slow and laborious one, during which every item and aspect of his life was thoroughly — I might even say severely — scrutinized. Now, at this moment in the life of the Church when our Congregation is engaged in the process of seeking genuine renewal, our Founder's first successor is to receive the ecclesial seal of sanctity. This seems to me to be a loving and bountiful gesture of Providence offering us this gift of great price; at the same time it is a warning and a reminder of those perennial and essential values that are at the root of all Christian life and especially religious life.

A recall to sanctity

Let me state clearly that Don Rua's beatification is a recall to our fundamental vocation to sanctity. In saying this I anticipate an objection that could arise in certain quarters — but, I hope, not among you, my dear confreres. Isn't it out of place, even anachronistic, to speak about sanctity today?

Admittedly the word « sanctity », with all its implications, seems to have disappeared from so much so-called religious literature. Nevertheless it cannot be expunged from the life of the Church and still less from the life of consecrated religious. To do that would be to obliterate the word, with all its values and obligation, from the Gospel

itself and from the constant doctrine and life of the Church which inherits and fulfils the Gospel message.

But there is more to be said than that. In our very own times, more than two thousand Fathers of that same Vatican Council II that « flung open the windows of the Church » did not by any means delete sanctity in its documents. How could they without betraying their mandate? On the contrary, they re-studied and re-established the teaching of the Gospel, of the Apostles and of the unbroken line of the Fathers of the Church, recalling the entire People of God to its primary vocation to sanctity. That call, in fact, consists in living the Gospel, the whole Gospel — a life that in itself is a marvellous form of witnessing.

At the Council a certain bishop had this to say: « In the United States the only Gospel many atheists came into contact with was the Sisters they met in hospitals. The impact of this « Gospel » — neither read nor preached but seen in action — was attested by the curiosity aroused in them to get to know more about those women dressed in white. That first curiosity led on to wanting to hear about One who was still unknown to them and in whom these good women believed so much as to consecrate their lives to Him, giving up everything that life, beauty and ease could promise them so as to dedicate themselves to the service of others. What a marvellous way to start constructive dialogue with those who are far away! ».

Even a mere glance at the documents of Vatican II cannot hide the recurring summons to pursue holiness addressed to even the most diverse ranks of God's People. To bishops, workers, contemplatives, missionaries, married people, priests and religious — to all alike the Council documents recall the necessity of sanctity, indicating always the ways and means thereto. Let us refer to at least some of these conciliar statements.

Lumen Gentium affirmed clearly and solemnly: « All the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect » (*L.G.* 11). In another passage the same Constitution expresses even more forcefully this commitment of the simple but genuine Christian: « All of Christ's followers, therefore, are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfilment of their proper state » (*L.G.* 42).

Professionals of holiness

What of us consecrated religious? The Church of the Council declares us professionals in that following of Christ, that conformity to Christ which consists substantially in holiness and which consequently renders us capable of witnessing to the sanctity of the Church by imitating the poor and obedient, virginal and praying Master. Here again *Lumen Gentium* says verbatim: « Religious should carefully consider that through them, to believers and non-believers alike, the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clearer revelation of Christ » (*L.G.* 46).

If we desire to be bravely sincere then we must recognize that the fundamental problem, nay the very *raison d'être* of the religious life is the sanctity of its members. The primary and palpable purpose of those so-called structures and of the persons who exercise authority in religious life is precisely to make the path of holiness easier for those in their care. A spiritual writer gives this interesting definition of the exercise of authority in religious life: « To command means to help the religious do the will of God, in other words to become holy » (*Padre Anastasio, Ascolto di Dio*).

It is on these evangelical and conciliar lines that so many souls in the Church of God move and work even today. True, they don't seek notice, they find little space in newspapers, but their presence is none the less real, none the less effective their action. A careful and attentive look reveals them, however, and they provide faith and hope in the midst of so many signs that could lead one to think of a humanism which, according to one writer, one might identify rather with firsthand diabolism.

Providentially such souls are found in all ranks of God's People, among those who have the highest responsibilities in the Church's hierarchy, among humble religious and hidden apostles, among layfolk dedicating themselves through a sense of dutiful Christian commitment to the difficult tasks of social and political progress, among unassuming workers, among those who often endure acute daily suffering, and even among men immersed in business affairs who do not allow themselves to be imprisoned or contaminated by them — all these convey a sense of justice and evangelical charity.

Two modern examples of holiness

Among the many names we could mention I would like to dwell on two: Pope John and Cardinal Bea. We can speak tranquilly about these not merely because they are known to all but also because we are no longer restricted by that sense of respectful reserve which is natural when talking of the living. These two great figures were our contemporaries; there was a big difference between them but both, we may say, thirsted after holiness. Convincing proof of this was not merely their exteriorly impressive lives but, more so, their interior spirit.

Whoever reads Pope John's *Journal of a Soul* and Cardinal Bea's *Diary* finds himself confronted by two giants of living holiness in our very own times. Indefatigably and with youthful ardour, even in old age, they multiplied their activities for the Kingdom of God; they systematically nourished themselves by simple, filial contact with God, ceaselessly polishing and purifying their human personality to conform it as much as possible with that of Him who represented the vivid and thrilling ideal of their lives, Christ Our Lord.

Following the life of Joseph Roncalli one sees on almost every page, we might say, of the *Journal of a Soul* his obvious and constant preoccupation concerning his personal sanctification. Take, for example, this extract during his retreat for his 80th birthday in 1961: « I am very far from attaining this holiness in fact, although my desire and will to succeed in this are whole-hearted and determined ». In order to bring his will to bear upon actual practice he then quotes and applies to himself some excerpts from a precious little booklet by the great Anthony Rosmini — great not only intellectually but perhaps even more so for the holiness of his life:

« Reflect on this thought, that sanctity consists in being willing to be opposed and humiliated, rightly or wrongly; in being willing to obey; in being willing to wait, with perfect serenity...; in acknowledging all the benefits you receive and your own unworthiness; in feeling a great gratitude to others; in respect for others and sincere charity; in tranquillity, resignation, gentleness; in the desire to do good to all and in unceasing work... » (Stresa, 1840. *La perfezione cristiana*).

With extreme simplicity and naturalness Pope John adds: « I find

it comforting to note that these are simply the applications of my own special motto, which I took from Baronius: *Oboedientia et Pax*. Jesus, You are always with me. I thank You for this doctrine, which seems to follow me wherever I go ».

I think it impossible to gauge Pope John accurately merely by those unforeseeable and courageous gestures of his that were so pregnant with goodness; one needs to know also the source of nourishment from which he constantly drew in his ever-firm determination to get close to Christ, his Model — in other words, his actual efforts after personal holiness.

I mentioned Cardinal Bea and it is interesting to read what he said to Fr. Schmidt, his private secretary who also edited his *Diary*.

When he was elected President of the Secretariate for Christian Unity the Cardinal had already turned eighty but that did not prevent him from making numerous journeys in Europe, four to the United States and one to Constantinople. In the first nine months of 1962 alone he gave twenty-five interviews to the press, radio and television. At the Council he read four official reports, besides speaking on nineteen occasions in his personal right as a Council Father. After his election as Cardinal he presented 260 different publications to the press, including eight books that have been translated into four or five other languages. Here certainly we face a man of extraordinary activity, all the more amazing on account of his age. After his death the discovery of his regularly kept *Spiritual Diary* brought to light and revealed the source of the marvellous energies of this man who was one of the central personalities of the Council.

The notes he made on his life and on his understandably arduous spiritual progress were written with sincerity, constant diligence and humility, revealing spiritual depth and richness, with an unwearying concern and daily effort to approach Christ his Model. He never tired of repeating to himself before God that in the midst of the vast work confronting him each day, the determining element was to be a profound care for his spiritual life — not merely for his own salvation but also for the success of his apostolic activity. Repeatedly he remarks that apostolic action is the more deep-rooted the more intimately it is linked with Christ, whose docile instrument he must be.

Other ideas arise constantly in his *Diary*, e.g. Christ must be the centre of his life, but for him the love of Jesus signified also the

constant effort to become Christlike and this above all in genuine love of neighbour, in humility and in serene acceptance of the Cross.

Don Bosco's message

Dear confreres, here we are faced with a perennial reality which unfortunately all too often today is either ignored or, worse, twisted.

The most fervid activity is truly successful and a real apostolate only when it is the projection of our love for Christ. Jesus, for the apostle, is at once the source, guide and goal of his whole life: this substantially is sanctity. Thanks be to God, even today we have in the Church — and, even if in different forms and situations, in our own Congregation — not a few souls who are energetically living this divine urge which is in practice the fulfilment of the Council's exhortation to us religious: « As they seek God before all things and only Him, the members of each community should combine contemplation with apostolic love. By the former they adhere to God in mind and heart; by the latter they strive to associate themselves with the work of redemption and to spread the Kingdom of God » (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 5).

But for us as faithful sons it is natural to want to hear what our Father says about sanctity. Don Bosco has indeed something worthwhile saying.

At the dawn of the Congregation Don Bosco said to Don Rua, who was the first Novice Master at Valdocco: « The first aim of our Society is the sanctification of its members. Let each one impress this well on his mind and heart, starting with the Superior General and right down to the last confrere. No one is necessary in the Society. God alone must be the head, the absolutely necessary Master ».

As you see, on this point our Father speaks with a clarity and decision that leave no room for doubt. Nevertheless it is well to recall that Don Bosco was no mere die-hard, fearful of change, a severe ascetic of mediaeval monasticism. He was a man consumed by dynamic, untiring and enterprising zeal for the good of his neighbour, but precisely on this account he understood, and desired his sons to realize that the point of departure and arrival for everyone who enters, lives and works in the Congregation, is God. As he himself clearly repeated on numerous

occasions and confirmed by his own example, all this is identified with the sanctification of the members of the Society.

Don Rua's reply

At this stage we may ask how Don Rua responded to this precise programme of sanctification given him by Don Bosco. The reply is given us by people who knew him well and who were at the same time experts regarding holiness.

Before quoting authoritative judgments passed after his death on Don Rua's sanctity I would like to recall the observation of Mama Margaret on young Michael Rua in the early heroic days of the Oratory. Speaking to Don Bosco she said: « John, all the boys here are good but Rua excels them all ». This judgment was to hold good throughout Don Rua's life.

The great Archbishop Andrew Ferrari of Milan, whose own Cause for beatification is in progress, often repeated that if the ancient custom of public proclamation of sainthood by the voice of the people still held, he himself would at once have taken the initiative regarding Don Rua.

Cardinal Cagliero (a man not so easily pleased), who lived alongside Don Rua for so many long years, could say of him at the Process: « In Don Rua there was no such thing as *I* or *my*, but only God ».

Finally, Fr. Rinaldi testified thus at the Process: « Pius X spoke with great veneration to me of Don Rua, whom he knew well, and concluded by saying that Don Rua was a wise man, emphasizing the word and adding, « He was a saint! ».

But what were the features of this sanctity now recognized by the Church, what aspects can interest us who live at a period so greatly different from the one in which Don Rua lived and worked? I shall select a few which seem particularly relevant.

« Ineffable goodness »

The Milan daily *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of 6 June 1902 gave this portrait of Don Rua: « Going on for 64 years of age, he is tall and thin, with the face of an ascetic, radiating inexpressible gentleness and

kindness. His voice is slight and modest, recalling that of the Founder who in his simplicity knew how to seek the most delicate fibres of his heart and make them vibrate. He is a man of ineffable goodness and of extraordinary activity ».

When hardly twenty-eight years old, Don Rua was the Rector at Mirabello and Fr. Cerruti later declared: « I always remember his indefatigable industry, that fine and delicate prudence of his in governing, his zeal for the religious and moral, the intellectual and physical welfare of the confreres and boys. I still recall so vividly the, I shall not say fatherly but maternal charity with which he nursed me when I fell ill in 1865 ». Especially in that last sentence of that early portrait I feel there are aspects of Don Rua's sanctity which are much valued by modern spirituality, elements that obviously presuppose others that are perhaps less noticeable but even more essential.

That « ineffable goodness » inherited from the Father and mentioned by the newspaper was always preserved and became ever more obvious and impressive as Don Rua gradually took over the government of the Congregation. There were innumerable witnesses to this, people most worthy of trust who often gave their testimony under oath.

Professor Piero Gribaudo of the University of Turin, who enjoyed great familiarity with Don Rua, declared: « His greatest affection went out to the lowly, whom he treated exactly as he did persons of high rank. It even appeared that the more lowly a person was the more courteously he treated him » (Process, pp. 654-703).

Among so many facts about this « ineffable goodness » I would like to quote two that seem to me to be significant.

In our archives we have 115 letters written by Don Rua all in reply to other letters sent him over the course of some years by a poor confrere who was sick and depressed. What is most impressive about them is the fact that each reply was written with an exquisite charity that disregarded all his previous letters. Not much effort is needed surely to appreciate all the patience, understanding and goodness in him that could only arise from a charity that was deeply lived.

The other episode reveals an obvious and delicate understanding and a loving condescension that only an exceptional mother could have for a child who asks for something beyond the limits of all discretion. A certain cleric could not succeed in composing the words of a hymn he was supposed to sing on the feastday of his Rector, Fr. Guidazio.

He got the incredible idea of writing to Don Rua, the Superior General, asking him to compose urgently a hymn metrically adapted to the music already in hand! A few days before the feast the cleric received the hymn so boldly commissioned from the Rector Major. Each one can draw his own conclusions.

We can understand therefore how Don Rua could declare to the Salesians in the Argentine immediately after the death of Don Bosco: « The great charity which infused the heart of our beloved Don Bosco of holy memory animated his example and words and sparked off the love which God placed in mine so that I felt galvanized by his love. Hence if in succeeding him I have not inherited the great virtues of our holy Founder, I feel that Our Lord has granted me his love for his spiritual sons... I consecrate all my days and all the moments of each day to you... And so I pray for you, think of you, and act on your behalf as a mother does for her only child ».

Extraordinary activity

The other aspect of Don Rua's sanctity which I wish particularly to bring out is that extraordinary activity mentioned in that Milanese newspaper.

It seems incredible that a man of his fragile frame and of such delicate health could stand up to such intense and vast daily activity, interesting himself in the widest range of Salesian apostolate, promoting and actuating enterprises which at that time appeared extraordinary and daring. His example is a valid intimation and spur to us also today not to tarry in static and sterile forms of activity which obviously do not respond to the needs of souls.

The mainspring of all Don Rua's activity is to be found above all in the teaching and example of Don Bosco which he absorbed over the long years spent at his side. Don Bosco repeated in word and work: « Not penance and discipline, but work, work, work ».

Needless to say this spirit of work propagated and exemplified by Don Bosco is an element of sanctity linked with prayer. The Acts of the XIX General Chapter speak very meaningfully in this regard, stating: « Prayer and work are the two joined hands which must never be separated, still less opposed. Jesus Himself has given us the example

in this ». Don Rua had assimilated the Salesian asceticism of work really well.

As a young Salesian he himself had come close to death on account of overwork and on that occasion the good Father said to him, « I don't want you to die: you still have much work to do ». Don Bosco was right, and who could measure from then onwards the bulk of Don Rua's incessant work and his innumerable achievements? Even beyond the government of a Congregation still in its infancy Don Rua found time for many other enterprises.

Whilst busying himself above all as spiritual guide of the confreres through his edifying circular letters and numerous meetings, he gave his attention also to the Oratories (for which he had inherited Don Bosco's love), the Missions, the Cooperators, the Past Pupils, and to all sectors of the Salesian apostolate.

Not content with all this activity he somehow managed to undertake numerous journeys in order to meet his sons in their actual field of work. He was called the « salesman of charity » and in the course of twenty years covered many thousands of kilometres. How much indeed those journeys cost him! He never got used to the sea travel (one long torment for him), the wearying nights endured as a third-class passenger of the poor trains of those times, the continual changes of bed, food, uses and customs which gave his fragile body unimaginable fatigue and suffering.

Sensitivity and openness to the problems of the times

Allow me to mention some of the enterprises which demonstrate Don Rua's open-mindedness, sensitivity and dynamism.

He promoted and organized six congresses for the Salesian Cooperators, starting with the international gathering at Bologna. On that occasion the *Civiltà Cattolica* said: « The international Congress of Salesian Cooperators at Bologna has been a splendid example of religious industry and the Salesians deserve praise for knowing the times and how to work in them, having chosen the poor and the workers as their apostolate ». For the first time in the history of such congresses correspondents of sixty newspapers were present: 39 Italian, 4 Spanish, 7 Austrian, 4 French, 1 German, 3 Swiss, 2 English.

Perhaps few Salesians, particularly among the younger generations, know the great and practical interest Don Rua took in the workers and their problems. He was on very friendly terms with Léon Harmel, a great leader in the workers' movement in Europe at that time. At Valsalice in 1891 Don Rua welcomed 4,000 workers who, under Harmel's direction, stopped off at Turin to pay homage at Don Bosco's tomb before going on to Rome. In a speech at their lunch that day he brought out the conspicuous place that labour and the Christian worker held in the life of Don Bosco, expressing his own lively admiration for their social efforts. That these words of his were not mere facile compliments can be proved by one fact among many.

During the last years of the nineteenth century and the first of our own, Italy went through difficult and sometimes very grave times on account of the social and labour disturbances taking place in the newborn industrial society. At Turin in 1906 the labourers in the big Poma textile factories went on a strike that lasted several weeks and gravely harmed the workers themselves. The two sides could not reach an agreement and Don Rua, a personal friend of the director, set himself to the task of using his influence until finally, on Sunday 10 July, after a long meeting he was able to announce to all the workers that a reasonable and advantageous settlement had been arrived at by both sides and work could be resumed next day.

Regarding workers it is worth recalling the fine efforts Don Rua made to help and direct Cesarina Astesana, a great social worker in Turin. Avoiding any effort to make himself a substitute trade-unionist or mob-instigator he acted always as a priest, a wise counsellor and a Christian guide to the leaders of the workers' movement. On the social front Cesarina Astesana fought against three enemies: Sunday work, excessive hours of labour, grossly inadequate wages. Behind this great trade-unionist stood Don Rua, offering prudent advice and even economic aid.

The wellspring

In the midst of his intense and extraordinary activity, and often surrounded by grave difficulties, Don Rua had to confront complex problems and situations that were frequently extremely painful. One

might ask, then, how ever he found time for all this enormous mass of work and enterprises without becoming exhausted, maintaining instead that serenity of his attested to by so very many witnesses. I think the reply can be found in this affirmation of Fr. Francesca: « Don Rua found his rest in prayer ». One could perhaps go further and say that in prayer and contact with God Don Rua found not only rest but also renewed strength to practise daily that motto of Don Bosco's, « I seek souls, and souls alone » — a programme adopted one hundred per cent by his most faithful disciple.

Actually, in spite of varying shades and characteristics, the dynamism of the saints always has one only source of energy: faith. They have a faith that sees the Invisible, the supernatural, and brings about continual communion with God. This communication is a colloquy, inflamed by charity until it explodes into that unquenchable thirst to give oneself to one's neighbour, in order to bring him along to Him whom one loves and to whom one has vowed one's life explicitly through love.

That was precisely Don Rua's case. Only when one sees how impregnated his life was by the supernatural can one explain all the dynamic force of his unwearying activity and its success. Within the compass of this letter it is not possible to exemplify and document all this fully, but whoever commendably reads the biography of Don Rua will see at once the truth of what I have said.

« The Pope's Priest »

I think it would be a serious omission to say nothing about an aspect of Don Rua's sanctity that seems to me to be intimately bound up with his spirituality, with the very source of all his activity as a Salesian, priest and superior. If in fact it is true that, following his Father's example, Don Rua found in the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin the strength and assurance to be able to respond with serene and joyful generosity to the call that each day resounded in his heart, it is no less true that in his daily life he saw and found in the Pope the clear light and guide of all his action.

Don Rua always looked to the Pope with the eye of faith but ever, like Don Bosco, with the heart of a devoted and faithful son.

Providence reserved for Don Rua even more than for Don Bosco very hard and even heroic trials to prove this loyalty and docility. During his rectorship the Holy See issued various decrees that seemed to strike at the very roots of certain traditions in the Congregation that were considered important and characteristic of our spirit. Don Rua felt deeply the blow caused by these unexpected arrangements but in spite of his grief he at once became a champion of obedience to the dispositions of the Holy See, inviting the Salesians, as true sons of the Church and of Don Bosco, to accept them serenely and with faith.

In 1959 in front of the caskets of Don Bosco and St. Pius X in St. Peter's Square, Pope John defined Don Bosco as « the Pope's priest ». In an autographed letter to our dear Fr. Ziggotti the same Pontiff affirmed: « One cannot fully understand the spirit that always animated Saint John Bosco if one forgets his very special devotion to the Chair of Peter ». Even in this Don Rua reproduced the spirit and likeness of his Father, for he was another Don Bosco.

St. Pius X, who unwittingly put the faith and obedience of Don Rua to the test, was able later (24 July 1914) to say of him to Mgr. Salotti, defender of several causes of beatification: « Don't forget Don Rua. I find in him all the heroic virtues that make a saint. Why are the Salesians delaying in starting his Cause? In him we are confronted by a great Servant of God! ».

But to round off this papal re-affirmation of what Don Bosco himself thought of Don Rua, I would like to recall your attention precisely to the constant attitude of Don Bosco, Don Rua and all their successors concerning the Pope and the Holy See, their obedience based on faith and love translated into humble but heartfelt service. That attitude is the irreplaceable prerogative transmitted by Don Bosco to the Congregation and to all his sons.

In these times of easy but not always logical contestation and criticism in the Pope's regard, we who feel and boast of being heirs of our Father's spirit should feel ourselves committed to being filially docile and faithful to the teachings and directives of the Pope. Let us state clearly that any different or — worse — any critical attitude would be not only foreign but completely opposed to our spirit and definitely un-Salesian. Don Rua gave magnificent example of this, born of suffering, proving once more that when obedience is accepted in a spirit of faith it always ends in triumph.

Don Rua's invitation

But now we must conclude.

At the beginning of this letter I said that the beatification of Don Rua comes to us at this juncture in our history as a gift and as a warning. Precisely in view of our impending Special General Chapter it is our duty and in our true interests to evaluate both the award and the message implicit in Don Rua's being raised to the altars.

Even though Don Rua lived in an environment and in an historical and cultural climate different from our own, that is no excuse for disregarding the message. As a modern writer, Carlo Snider, says, the spirituality of our times, even though differing from the past, does not reject sanctity (*Osservatore Romano*, 1-2 February 1971). The Christian of today knows that in the lives of the saints « God vividly manifests to men His presence and His face » (*Lumen Gentium*, 50). Snider continues: « The man of today looks to the saint not only for the stimulus of example but also for the support and evidence of a witness of life and action analogous to what he himself as a Christian must render each day of his earthly life to God, the Church and men ». That statement is true for every Christian and especially binding on religious and Salesians.

Precisely in view of our Special General Chapter I feel we should take note actively of the reality to which the image of Don Rua's Salesian sanctity recalls us. At the beginning of his rectorship, in outlining his objectives to the Salesians, he expressed the complete loving commitment he felt towards each of them and concluded: « One thing alone I ask of you: Become holy! ».

My dear confreres, we can be assured that both Don Bosco and Don Rua would say the same thing to us today. The first and ultimate aim of our Congregation is, and should be in fact, our sanctification in harmony with all the other objectives, means and modes of apostolate to which we are called. The vitality, nay the very life itself of the Congregation is subservient to and ultimately bound up with the presence of holiness in it. An echo of the sentiments of Don Rua and Don Bosco can be found in those of Paul VI: « The Church needs your sanctity ». Such appeals can be neither ignored nor underestimated.

Let each of us, in his own rôle of responsibility, pray and work towards ensuring that the Special General Chapter recall the message

of our Father and of his first successor — the message of the Church itself — and then give full and effectual response to it for these our own times and the future. This will be the reply of the very soul of the Congregation renewed. Without it, all the fine work done before and during the Special General Chapter risks nullification. May God assist and comfort us in order that this animating force may happily materialize in the Assembly of the Congregation.

I send you my affectionate greetings in the Lord.

Fr. L. Ricceri
Rector Major

P.S. From various provinces I have received replies to the invitation to prayer in preparation for the Special General Chapter, and I thank God and those responsible for the many fine ideas adopted. Very many of our bishops, the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the President of the Don Bosco Volunteers have also replied with fervent generosity to the request for prayers. The whole of our great Family is mobilized spiritually! Whilst awaiting word from the other provinces, I would like to express sincere thanks to all, confident that these prayers will be intensified with the approach of the Chapter.