

Casa Generalizia

Rome 4 December 2004

Dear SDB, FMA and members of the Salesian Family:

On behalf of members of the General Council presently in plenary session, I wish to greet you and to welcome all of you in this Seminar on Salesian History in the East Asia – Oceania region of the Salesian Society.

I am very glad that all SDB provinces (except Oceania which I visited lately) of your Asian region are represented in this Seminar, which I consider important for the on-going reflection on the life and apostolate of the Salesian Society today.

I am also happy that the other members of the Salesian Family (the CSM by the Venerable Vincenzo Cimatti and Fr. Antonio Cavoli [1937], the SIHM by Bishop Gaetano Pasotti [1937], the DQM by Fr. Carlo della Torre [1954], and the SAL by St. Luigi Versiglia [1936]) are participating and sharing their own respective Salesian histories regarding their beginnings. Definitely, their contribution will reveal how rich our Salesian history is, and how extensive it has become.

Even the participation of the DBV reveal how Don Bosco's charism, in the consecrated Christian faithful living in the world, has been imbibed and continues to make history among the lay in your promising Region.

That your Salesian History Seminar coincides with the China Province's preparation for its centenary is a further reminder to us all that we cannot neglect to know our roots and our past. The Salesian apostolate in China, so very fruitful and promising, could not but "spill over" to the other countries around her.

We cannot become indifferent to our history; otherwise, we risk losing a part of our being Salesians. The Seminar you are inaugurating should help in going back to our roots; it should challenge us to a serious reflection on the present and the future of the Salesian presence in East Asia-Oceania. For when you think of the beginnings of the Salesian presence in East Asia-Oceania, you delineate what could help to make your present apostolate among the young more actual and more relevant, and thus assuring your continuity and future.

In my last circular letter (#387 October-December 2004 "I Give thanks to God each time I remember you" [Phil. 1:3]), I presented the Western European Region of the Salesian Society, endeavouring "to make you better acquainted with the history of this Region". Your seminar is one way of making me, as well as all the Salesians and members of the Salesian Family, acquainted with your regional history which cannot be considered inferior to the rest of our Salesian History. Definitely, you will also discover something "spectacular" in the development of the Congregation in your Region. And that which is "spectacular" will reveal to you the presence of the Mystery and the Lord of History in the journey of the Salesian Family in your part of the globe.

Your seminar should help us not to get bogged down with the past. Instead, with the knowledge of the past, the Salesians should be enlivened and provoked to offer to the present young new responses as Don Bosco did, inventing and creating in order to meet their needs. Essentially, it will not be the structures that you will recall, but "Salesian educators defined by a charism" and who became pioneers in the establishment of the Salesian tradition in East Asia and Oceania.

I shall pray for the success of your Seminar, imploring the Immaculate Virgin Help of Christians, in whose novena we find ourselves, to guide and lead you to the discovery of her Son's constant intervention in your history. In a few days time, we shall remember the birth of the Oratory, the primordial work of Don Bosco. May your Seminar lead you to affirm and to constantly remember that our Salesian Family had made history and will continue to make history in as much as we remain faithful to our Founder. Would that our Salesian History teach us this!

Fr. Pascual Chavez V. SDB (Rector Major)

Istituto Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice

Rome, 3 December 2004

To the Participants of the Seminar ACSSA Hong Kong

Dear Participants,

At the start of the Seminar on “the beginning of the Salesian Presences in East Asia – Oceania” I wish you a fruitful encounter also on behalf of our Mother General, Mother Antonia Colombo and the entire General Council of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The Seminar takes place at the beginning of the centenary celebrations of the Salesian (SDB) presence in China. I congratulate you for this happy initiative which allows you to reflect together on the history of the Salesian Family in East Asia-Oceania.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians ventured out into this part of the world in 1922 after the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Institute on the insistent request of the Salesian Confreres who recognized the need of their presence and work among young girls and women. The power of the Holy Spirit opened the way for the Salesian charism to become a gift for the young people of Asia and Oceania and since then it has experienced abundant fruit.

Re-reading history brings into evidence the incarnation of God’s Project through the decisions and actions of persons and of communities who responded to the ever-changing needs of young people. Creativity is, in fact, one of the salesian characteristics

May the experience of the seminar become a renewed reason for continuing the journey in every country of Asia and Oceania thus deepening inculturation and inter-religious dialogue. May it make our educative mission ever more effective.

For us, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the challenge of the education of women in the diverse contexts where we work remains an open question. As members of the Salesian Family we are responsible for fostering the growth of the charism, enriching it through profound dialogue with diverse cultures and sharing it in the Church with other religious congregations and with the laity. The Salesian Family has much to

receive from Asia and Oceania. I believe that the reflections of the seminar will help our discernment today regarding the future of christian and religious life in these regions of great hope and profound expectations in which we are called to live the “da mihi animas” with great passion for God and for humanity, especially for young people.

May Mary Help of Christians, Mother of all humanity and of all ages, bless you and sustain your passionate search for signs for the building of God’s Kingdom.

Sr. Yvonne Reungoat FMA

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SALESIAN PRESENCE IN
EAST ASIA – OCEANIA
Hong Kong, 4 December 2004

Dear brothers, sisters, friends and members of ACSSA:

From far away Spain, I wish to be present in the inauguration of your Seminar with the title “The Beginning of the Salesian Presences in East Asia – Oceania”, in order to extend to you my welcome and my greetings.

Your Seminar constitutes a new and important advancement in the work of research on the history of the Salesian Family, as traced out from the International Congress celebrated in Rome last November 2000. It is the third of a series of international and continental meetings programmed for the years 2003-2004. The first seminar, European, was celebrated in Vienna, and the second, Latin American, took place in Argentina. Today, you are inaugurating in Hong Kong the third, which is Asian.

The choice of Hong Kong as seat of the Seminar wishes to be the contribution of ACSSA to the centennial celebrations of the Salesian presence in China. It is ACSSA’s way of joining you in thanking God for the fruitful apostolate realized in China during the past hundred years, a work confirmed by the Church when it declared officially the sanctity of the Salesian martyrs, Versiglia and Caravario.

The content of the previous two seminars has been oriented to prepare the coming International Congress, whose theme is “Salesian Education from 1880-1922. Instances and Actuations in Diverse Contexts”, and which hopefully will be held in early 2006.

The first round of seminars had aimed to verify the sources of documents and the situation of the archives. This was followed by the study of the orientations which were sent from the centre of our Congregations to the numerous foundations in the various continents. The answers of inculturation by the pioneers of the Salesian presences existing today, have put to light the essential and the permanent of our charism, as well as the flexible and the ductile. These flourishing presences witness to the generous giving of the Salesians to the children and to the young in their distinct poverties.

This could also be the wonderful aim of this Seminar which you inaugurate today and which we consider important. The Salesian pres-

ences in East Asia – Oceania are indeed very near in time and very varied in their contexts. But they are also full of hope, as they continue to count on the help of the Lord and the protection of Mary.

In the name of the all the members of ACSSA, I send this greetings of welcome and congratulations to you who come from countries so far. I express to you my most sincere appreciation for the valuable contribution of a greater knowledge of our Salesian history, which undoubtedly will be the fruit of your Seminar.

Seville (Spain) 4 December 2004.

Sr. Maria Fe Nuñez Muñoz FMA
President - ACSSA