

EVALUATION OF THE SEMINAR

27.11.2008

1. Organization of the Seminar

This evaluation focuses more on the content than on the methodology.

The seminar helped to improve knowledge of the situation as far as content is concerned, which was very interesting. The papers dealt with the implantation of the Salesian charism in difficult contexts and difficult periods. As such the material is of much value for the future.

The papers presented a wide vision of the Salesian reality. The seminar was a good occasion to share and to update knowledge of the various countries of the region. The papers are very valuable in content, a real eye-opener on the nature and richness of the Salesian charism as it branched out, took roots and keeps growing in different socio-political and religious contexts of Asia.

The seminar provided a platform to share with others the fruits of one's personal study. These seminars should not remain merely an academic exercise, but should also serve as a formative factor. The talks should touch the heart, inspire and encourage; should provide the reason for our being here, for our being Salesians. It should, however, be kept in mind that it is not a seminar on spirituality, but history.

The challenges were not sufficiently stressed in the papers and the time was too short. Very few speakers explained how the Salesians reached or failed to reach the goals.

The material presented was of different standards: some raw, some half-baked, some cooked. Nevertheless even this raw material is a contribution to historians for whom it would prove useful. We should, on the other hand, be also realistic: the papers were the product of beginners, who are making the first steps at entering an archive, collecting and reading the documents, reflecting and organizing the material found in order to find out what history teaches us. Hence we should not be discouraged if no major findings are arrived at – these are just the initial efforts!

During these seminars on future occasions ACSSA could also provide guidelines on how to do this job better. There could be some input of a methodological nature or on historiography.

The contributions should not be limited to experts. Limiting the number of papers will also reduce the richness of the seminar. More people should be given chance to produce something, even if the results are of varying levels. The seminar should be an occasion to encourage more people to do research.

The only negative point is that the papers had to be rushed through while being presented, offering no time for assimilation. A solution would be to limit strictly the number of pages of each paper in the future. The seminar was also deficient in the 'question-answer' or discussion part, which should be emphasized more. Hence, when organizing future seminars, also moments of reflection/discussion should be ensured. The presentation of papers should be interspersed with periods of reflection. The papers offer much information; but time is needed also to reflect on the inputs. The talks could be distributed on the previous day.

2. Publication of the Acts

Should the Acts of the Seminar be published? If so, as a separate book or as part of a collection?

The Acts of the previous seminar in Hong Kong were published in two volumes, the first volume containing articles pertaining to the

Salesians, and the second volume those pertaining to other institutes belonging to the Salesian Family.

It was opined that it's worth publishing the Acts, which will also serve to communicate to others the fruits of the seminar. In this way justice can be done also to those who have taken the trouble to prepare the papers. Also for the sake of continuity, it is better to publish the papers, as was done the previous time. Since all the papers are not of the same standard, it is better to publish the Acts as part of the ACSSA collection (Varia) instead of a separate book by a known publishing house.

It will be good to include an appropriate introduction to the volume by someone from ACSSA.

The upshot of the discussion was to publish the Acts in one volume, possibly including all the papers. The norms to be followed for revising the papers for publication will be communicated to the authors by the editor/s. The presidency of ACSSA will select someone for the job.

The assembly was informed that there would be no publication of the Acts of the regional seminar conducted in South America; but some of the papers might be presented in the congress on Don Rua to be held in Turin.

How to transmit to others/the provinces the outcome of the seminar?

It was proposed and accepted to prepare a report/write-up of the seminar to be sent to the various Salesian Bulletins and Provincial Newsletters, which could publish the same with due modifications and/or after translation. Fr Motto was requested to prepare this basic text and reach it by email to the participants, who would pass it on to the Salesian Bulletins and Provincial Newsletters.

3. Next Seminar

Since Salesian works in the region started rather late, we cannot follow the same themes adopted by the main ACSSA.

It was unanimously agreed to organize a follow-up seminar.

ACSSA is organizing an international congress on Don Rua in 2009. In 2010 there will be another Congress on Don Rua at the level of the Congregation. For Don Bosco's bicentenary in 2015 nothing has been planned yet. (ACSSA of) EAO region can plan something in view of 2015 – something of a historical nature.

Can we propose some topic to ACSSA Presidency for 2015?

In the discussion that followed the following topics were suggested for the next seminar:

- The first thirty years of Salesian presence in each country in the wider ecclesial context
- Significance of our schools in the work of evangelization
- The Salesian charism: its understanding, assimilation, transmission, continuity
- Impact of Salesian works, different missionary approaches
- Transfer of leadership from European missionaries to indigenous personnel
- The two seminars organized in Europe studied the history of implantation and the educational impact of Salesian works during the difficult periods. There has not been a reflection on our pedagogical experience in the region. We have been practically only 'doing what Don Bosco did'.

We could study the history of the application of the preventive system in the different countries of the region, with particular attention to the kind of schools and colleges started, the educational methods employed etc.

Venue

Many showed interest in having it in Thailand, but were discouraged by the fact that too many meetings of the region are already being organized there.

A vote was taken by show of hands to know the preferences for the venue. The results were as follows: Thailand – 12, Seoul – 12, Jakarta – 10, Vietnam – 9, Tokyo – 6.

Participants

Invitation to participate in the seminar is to be made through the Provincials. ACSSA can write to the Provincials to send participants and also to ask for particular individuals.

The topic to be finalized before Easter, and before Christmas 2009 inform the Provincials and ask them to choose the people who will prepare the papers.

Since the seminar has also a formative value, it will be good to get the participation of the confreres in formation of the Province where the seminar will be held.

Organization

During the seminar half a day to be dedicated to offering guidelines on method of writing history.

Help those who have to prepare the papers by providing them with available material online or otherwise, such as articles in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*.

Some training could be provided to Provincial Secretaries; guidelines could be given for writing and maintaining the chronicles. But there are concrete difficulties: the Provincial Secretaries keep changing constantly; it has to be done in coordination with the Secretary General who is responsible for the training of Provincial Secretaries.

4. ACSSA unit for EAO

Ideas were exchanged on the advisability of starting a unit of the ACSSA for South Asia - Oceania region. All regions are represented in the Presidency of the main ACSSA, which is in communication with the other regional units.

What are the functions of the regional ACSSA?

Coordinate the activities of the members, organize seminars, circulate information, remind Provincials of their responsibilities with regard to the promotion of Salesian history. ACSSA, while admitting members, should take into consideration persons with 'interest' along with those with 'qualification' in history.

A straw vote taken among those present showed that 16 were in favour of starting a unit of the ACSSA for EAO. The proposal will be presented to the Provincials, whose competence it is to constitute ACSSA.