

I. LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR

Rome, October 1975

Dearest Confreres and Sons,

Once again it is time for our quarterly get-together!

First of all, I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to the very many who sent me their warm congratulations, best wishes, expressions of solidarity and most of all their fraternal prayers on the joyful occasion of my fiftieth anniversary of Ordination and First Mass. I want you to know that I felt deeply touched by your participation, which was not just an outpouring of affection, but also the expression of your understanding of the heavy responsibility which weighs down on my weakening shoulders. For all this I say thank-you to the Lord for having given our Congregation so many and such wonderful, kind-hearted confreres. In particular, I would like to underscore the sentiments of fidelity and enthusiasm for the Salesian vocation expressed on this occasion by very, very many of our young confreres, novices, postulants, Sons of Mary and Aspirants. I assure you that their expressions are a reason for much joy in the present and for high hopes for the future.

Once again, I thank you one and all, and at the same time I ask you to continue helping me to thank the Lord for all the good He enabled me to do during these fifty years, and I ask you to beg His mercy on my many shortcomings which have marred this long period of my life. This will, indeed, be an act of fraternal charity, for which I will be deeply grateful to you.

The First Centennial of Our Missions

The event on which our whole Congregations is now focusing its attention is certainly the first centennial of our missions.

By now all the provinces, I am sure, have received the first package of information and promotion material. Reports on various commemorative activities are already beginning to come in from various regions, particularly from Latin America, with Argentina in the lead.

But I would like to call your attention on how we should celebrate this November 11. Let it be not so much a day of exterior celebration, but one of prayer and reflection and thanksgiving to God for all the marvelous and great things that He has done throughout these one hundred years through our many dedicated, hard-working missionaries, be they well-known or almost unknown. Let it also be a day when we become more deeply aware of the pressing needs of our time and of the future, so that we too can become true and effective missionaries.

In this regard I find much consolation and hope in the fact that many young confreres are asking to be sent to the Missions, and many of them are asking to be sent to those missions where the need is greatest, and poverty at its worst. It is certainly encouraging and inspiring to see the high idealism and total dedication shown by these confreres.

Let us hope that this celebration, held in the right spirit, brings about an increase in missionary vocations. For experience tells us that when in a community the missionary spirit is flourishing, a spirit of dedication, temperance, faith and enthusiasm does also flourish, and in this environment vocations do develop and grow. It is up to each of us to foster such environment in our houses, each bringing his own personal contribution.

The Problem of Formation

This past summer a seminar for the confreres in charge of the formation of our students of theology was held here at the Salesianum. Given the importance of this period of formation, it was natural we should have delegates from all continents. They probed the many problems confronting them and reached not a few practical conclusions, which I am sure will serve as guidelines for them and for all those Salesians who have been entrusted with this most delicate task by our Congregation.

During their long hours of reflection and dialog many other problems and solutions emerged, which cover the whole gamut of formation, including permanent formation. And logically so, because no stage of formation is like a water-tight compartment, and the problems and solutions of one stage flow back and forth into the others.

I plan to deal later and at some length with some very important aspects of formation which should interest all of us, especially those who are going through, so to say the classical period of formation. But let me only remind you now that when we speak of permanent formation, we really mean a continuing work, a life-long task, which is imperative for each of us, if our religious life is to be true and productive.

The World Congress of Salesian Coadjutor Brothers

An event of particular significance was certainly the World Congress of Salesian Coadjutor Brothers, which took place at our Generalate during the first week of September.

Without going into detailed information that you will get from other sources, here I would only like to say that those days were marked by great enthusiasm and were spent in a climate of brotherliness, cheerfulness and prayer.

Many were the topics discussed, and the conclusions reached, all of them touching the vocation of the Brothers in a vital manner. You will find the concluding talk of the Rector Major in this issue of the Acts, under the heading "Communications". I invite you to read it attentively.

It deals with very important aspects of the figure, the identity, and the role of the Superior in a Salesian house, — a topic which I believe to be even more relevant today than in the past, since we need to have clear and well-grounded ideas on the true image of the Salesian Superior. Last but not least, that talk dispenses me from the treatment of some other topic at this time...

Going back to the World Congress of the Salesian Coadjutor Brothers, the wish that comes spontaneously as a result of those days of intense exchange of ideas and ideals is that there arise among us a renewed appreciation of the Coadjutor Brothers' vocation, which is so characteristic, so rich and so essential to the very life of the Congregation.

Once again my sincerest thanks for your warm expressions of love on the occasion of my Golden Jubilee, and in return accept my humble prayers and fatherly blessing. May Mary Help of Christians protect us all.

Sincerely yours,

FR. LOUIS RICCERI
Rector Major