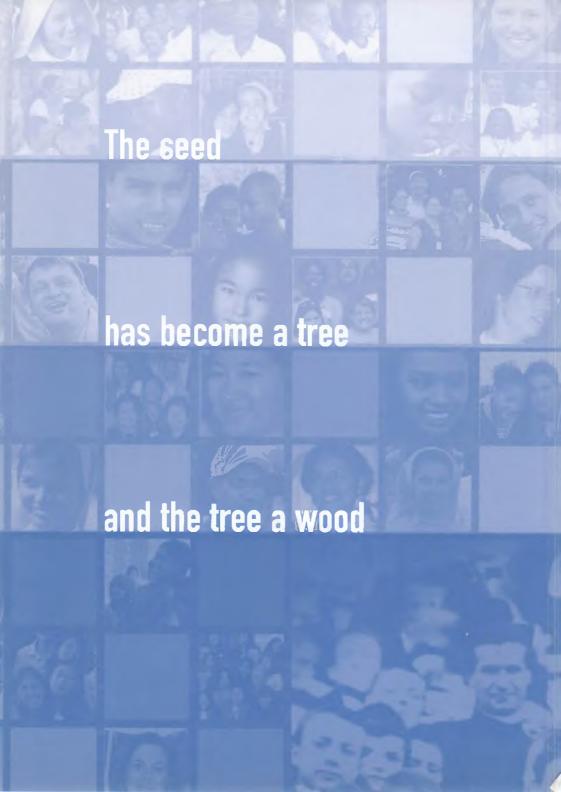


Salesian Family

THE COMMON IDENTITY CARD COMMON MISSION STATEMENT



PRESENTATION

The Salesian Family, a genuine apostolic spiritual movement for the salvation of the young, has a frame of reference within which it is called to operate and to plan for the immediate future. For this reason I call your attention to two documents which ought to be well-known, studied and brought to life.

The first is the "Common Identity Card of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco" in which are made explicit those fundamental elements which constitute unity in the spirit of Don Bosco. This Card leads us to think of the major criteria, of the essential statements that guide the practical choices and give the reasons for living and working in a certain way; it gives us the accepted rights and duties to be observed for the growth of each Group and of each individual within the Salesian Family according to each one's gifts. It is a Card which applies to all the branches since each one can find in it what it means to act as a "Salesian" and at the same time one finds in it the reason for our communion. "Through the energy of his charism, Don Bosco brings together in unity in a single apostolic Family religious, lay people, married persons, widows and widowers, celibates and priests, all of them testifying in various ways to the spirit of the beatitudes. ... Communion therefore remains the single objective of the Salesian Family for living its values with the greatest intensity."

This Card in fact presents in a very clear manner to all the Groups of the Salesian Family the need to grow and to live in depth and fidelity the specific and particular gifts of one's own Group while seeking communion with all the others. Only in a spirit of communion and co-responsibility with the other Groups of the Family are your Associations what they ought to be. I invite and encourage you to make your own "the characteristic features of the Salesian face," to plumb the depths of the wealth of Salesian spiritual experience, to enter into dialogue with all the branches. This implies the effort of investing in specific formation and in shared Salesian formation. Today more than ever it is necessary to "know how to give reasons for our faith" and for our convictions, so that our minds are full of light and our hearts full of fire.

Common Identity Card of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, 35



The second document is the "Common Mission Statement of the Salesian Family". Being a missionary is an essential part of Don Bosco's charism. This Statement – Fr Juan E. Vecchi said in his presentation – "brings us back 'bere', to our daily life, interwoven with communion, apostolic commitment, sharing of plans, of joint responsibility for the spreading of God's kingdom, and of Salesian spirituality."

This is a document that is inspirational and demanding, which from each member of the Groups of the Salesian Family calls for a real process of Salesian discernment in the choice of those for whom to work, of development and of evangelisation, for a deeper examination of the great insights of the Preventive System, for the co-involvement of everyone, emphasising the role of the laity, for a cultural re-presentation of the Salesian charism and mission. "The great breadth of the apostolic commitment proposed by Don Bosco to his co-workers brings with it the need to multiply the human resources and the forces available."

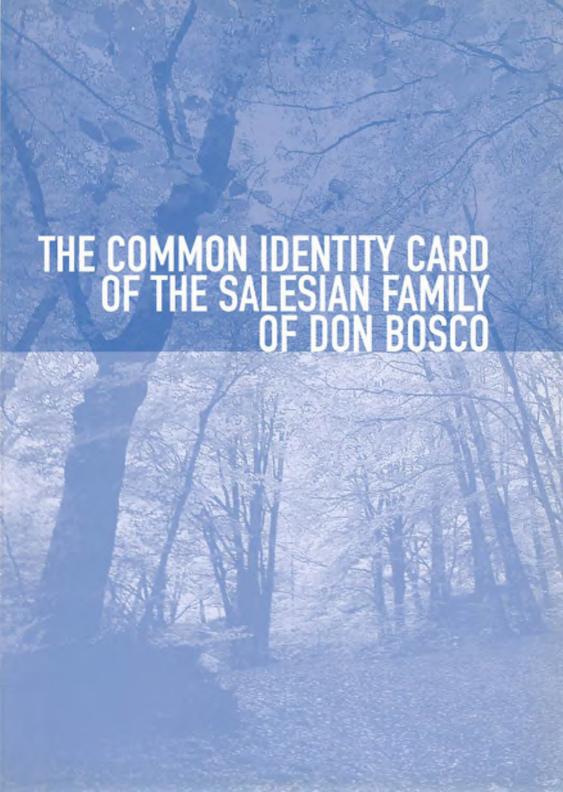
It is my hope that the 2009 Strenna with its appeal "to commit ourselves to making the Salesian Family a vast movement of persons for the salvation of the young," will be a further stimulus to appreciate the "Common Identity Card" and the "Common Mission Statement," to which in the future should be added the "Spirituality Charter".

May Don Bosco, the Father of our Family, help us to know better his original inspiration and his profound convictions.

Rome, 31 January 2009 Solemnity of Saint John Bosco

> Fr Pascual Chávez Villanueva Rector Major

^{*} Common Mission Statement of the Salesian Family, 5



THE SALESIAN FAMILY OF DON BOSCO

Let us give thanks to God who works wonders in his Saints.

To think of the Salesian Family at the present day is to recognize Don Bosco as its Founder. This is why we speak of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco. The rapport he established with certain persons and groups was quite special and privileged.

With *Pius IX* he shared the hopes and difficulties associated with the new institution, the Pious Society of St Francis de Sales, planned in the image and likeness of the human family with God as its Father, and of the ecclesial family with the Pope as its common father.

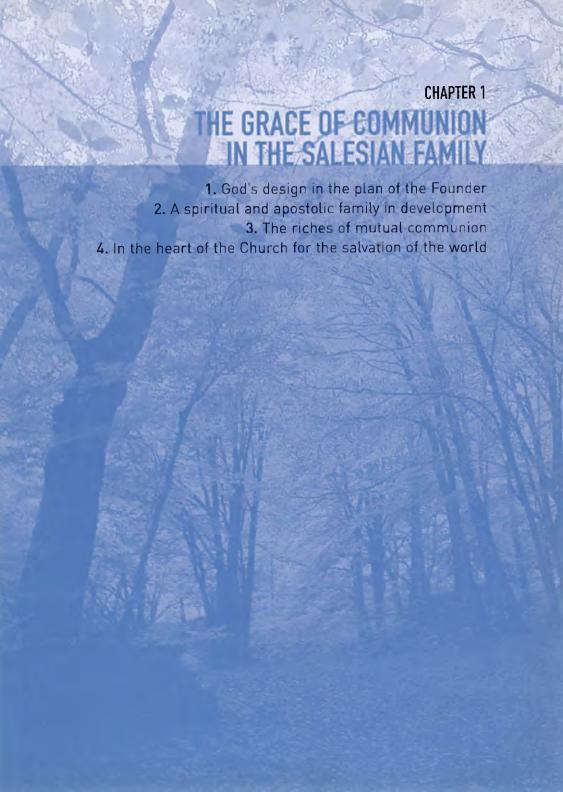
With Mary Mazzarello he lived a spiritual and religious experience which is noteworthy for the Lord's interventions; for the providential encounters and the light of a reciprocal intuition which rose above the prevailing apostolic contexts; for the authentic and fruitful collaboration that went into the founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

With *many believers*, committed to the good of the young and the strengthening of the faith of the common people, he experienced the strength and efficacious results of working together and drawing inspiration from the Gospel and the example of the Good Shepherd. This is how the Salesian Cooperators came into existence.

At just over a hundred years after his death the *Salesian phenomenon* continues to cause astonishment for its geographical extension and the growth in numbers of its groups which, with their own individual characteristics, look to Don Bosco as the Father of a great spiritual family.

The harmonic unity of the foundational charism, pastoral charity and the strength of the Spirit's gift to Don Bosco, ensure the atmosphere and environment of growth and substance of a Salesian Family.





Art. 1 God's design in the plan of the Founder

With souls full of joy and sentiments of humble gratitude, we express our certainty that, through the initiative of God and the motherly intervention of Mary, Don Bosco gave rise in the Church to an original evangelical experience.

The Spirit formed in him a heart as great as the shores of the sea, and made him the Father and Teacher of a multitude of young people and the founder of a vast spiritual family.

Pastoral charity, which finds its source and exemplar in Christ the Good Shepherd, was for Don Bosco the criterion of life and activity, the inspiration of educational work and evangelization, of prayer and missionary impulse; his *Da mihi animas coetera tolle* brings together into unity his love for God and for the young.

To meet the needs of the young and the common people of his time, Don Bosco founded the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Cooperators. Many other apostolic forces, with specifically distinct vocations but living in the same spirit and in communion with each other, continue his work of education and salvation at the present day.

In this way was born a true school of holiness which continues in our own time. From Don Bosco the Founder, subsequent founders of new groups draw inspiration and guidance, spirituality and pastoral method. The Groups live, preserve, deepen and constantly develop, in harmony with the Body of Christ in perpetual growth, the experience of the Holy Spirit which Don Bosco lived and continues to pass on to his followers.

Art. 2 A spiritual and apostolic family in development

Don Bosco, through his stature of holiness, finds a unique place among the founders of religious institutes in the Church. His life became an epic, his rule a spirit, his holiness a type and model. And we may say with hearts full of gratitude to God that the initial beginnings from being a small stream have now become a torrent.

Don Bosco dreamt of a many-sided mission to the young and the poor and welded the efforts of as many as shared his educative and saving plan into a vast movement. The prodigious fertility of the Salesian Family, a significant phenomenon in the perennial vitality of the Church, is evidence of this.

The Salesian Family of Don Bosco is made up of three central groups (SDB, FMA, Cooperators) to whose foundation he himself gave much time, energy, and formative and organizational expertise, because they constituted the key and nucleus of his work, and of a constellation of many other groups. From him the Association of Mary Help of Christians took its rise, and the Association of his Past-pupils came into being almost as a gift on his feastday.

As in the great Religious Orders, so in the initial charismatic experiences of Don Bosco there are implicit genuine indications of growth and development.

The awareness of a *spiritual kinship* and of a common apostolic responsibility has brought about fraternal relationships and exchanges between the groups and a unique presence which they have in the Church among young people and especially those particularly in need.

Art. 3 The riches of mutual communion

Today the Salesian Family is made up of numerous Groups. They form a single vital organism, and this explains their convergence with each other and also the differences between them.

In the first place they intensify the efficacy of their witness to the Gospel and render its proclamation more convincing; they extend the penetration of the spirit of the beatitudes in the world, and augment educational love to those most in need. They also realize a more lively pastoral charity, helping everyone to work together in sustaining the task of educating and saving the young and the poor. Finally they deepen the understanding of the characteristics of each group and so increase identity in communion.

Our brief history as Don Bosco's Family convinces us that without communion there is a real danger of impoverishment and of infidelity to the Founder's plan. "Without you we are no longer ourselves" can be the compelling slogan which each group is called upon to make its own and express in its daily living.

Don Bosco seems to have been almost obsessed by the need for unity and by the expression in unity is strength, which reflects another equally firm idea of his reli-

gious patrimony: that of a single family in the image and likeness of the human family which has God for its Father, and of the ecclesial family with the Pope as its common father.

He never thought of any group in separation, nor did any group ever exist in such a state; he saw them always within a unified perspective, strong and rich, so as to involve all the groups despite their distinctive characteristics.

Art. 4 In the heart of the Church for the salvation of the world

The Spirit brings charisms into being for the common utility, and inserts them in a harmonious fashion into the life of the Church. In this way there develops through the divine will a wonderful variety of religious groups which contribute to making the Church equipped for every good work and prepared for the building of Christ's Body. She is embellished by the variety of the gifts of her children, like a bride adorned for her Spouse, so that the wisdom of God may be manifested in many forms.

The Holy Spirit has raised up the Salesian Family, through Don Bosco, so that it may the better carry out the mission with which it has been entrusted.

The Salesian Family is a collection of baptized and consecrated persons which, through the unique nature of its particular gift, places itself at the service of the mission of the Church, the Body of Christ, the universal sacrament of salvation.

The Salesian Family, living in the heart of the Church, manifests in the harmony of its different gifts the importance of the mission, which gives tone and practical reality to the whole of the spiritual patrimony of the holy Educator. The reciprocal connection between 'education' and 'holiness' calls us to intimate solidarity with the world and its vicissitudes.

The planning of the mission must therefore be relevant to present-day circumstances, creative and constant, if we are to restore youthfulness to the spiritual and educative legacy entrusted to us, if we want to offer a competent support and effective contribution to the Church, which is rethinking its pastoral work for the young and the poor in the different geographical and cultural contexts.



5. Titles to membership
6. Reciprocal exchange of gifts
7. Reference to Don Bosco, Father and Teacher
8. Inspired by the humanism of St Francis de Sales
9. The Rector Major the centre of unity
10. Description of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco

Art. 5 Titles to membership

The term *family* is continually used in Salesian tradition to indicate in a generic manner the bonds existing between the various groups and is applied in different ways according to the nature of the relationship. This bond or relationship cannot be reduced to mere friendly rapport. It is rather the external expression of an internal and charismatic communion. It helps therefore to understand the different titles to membership of the Salesian Family.

Membership is fostered by a *common spirit*, which leads to a vast and complementary mission to the young and the common people; and by certain specific and original characteristics which justify official recognition, which is given through a specific title.

A first title is that of the Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Cooperators: they are the first three central groups of which Don Bosco is the founder in a quite special manner. They were constituted by him as the direct heirs of his work; they are the foundation and point of reference for all the other groups in whatever concerns the spirit, the mission, and the method of pedagogical and pastoral activity.

Another title to membership is that of the various groups of consecrated life which came into existence at a later date through the creative force of the charism. They enrich the common patrimony of the Family with particular charismatic expressions.

Finally there is a third level of membership which comes under the heading particular titles to membership. This category is of wider extension than those of the groups previously mentioned, but is equally bound in an objective manner to the vitality and riches of the spiritual legacy of Don Bosco. The unifying energy of his charism is indispensable also at this wider level.

The juridical title to membership is indicated in the letter of the Rector Major granting official recognition in response to requests made by the various groups.

Art. 6 Reciprocal exchange of gifts

The different expressions of the Salesian charism are related to each other in a substantial manner, i.e. they live a deep reciprocal relationship, so that the identity of the Salesian Family cannot be defined and lived by a single group without reference to that of the others.

All of us together, as a Family, proffer at the present day the spiritual and charismatic experience of the Founder, we express the riches of God's gift to his Church, prolonging and developing through the years the originality of Don Bosco.

In a Church which is a communion, the Salesian Family lives and manifests one heart and one soul, realizing experiences of fraternal and apostolic communion in the service of the mission and for the mutual enrichment of groups and individuals.

It is as though the members feel themselves as entrusted to one another. Becoming a member of a group is like entering the whole Family. Communion with others means the growth of all; it means that each one is complementary to every other member.

Joined together, the members make it possible for the Family to live out the interests of its gifts and values, because in the various groups is seen emphasized the various shades of spiritual aspects which should not be absent from any salesian heart. These however are better and more characteristically seen in a particular Group; communion in the Family then makes them available to all.

Ecclesial communion, reciprocal exchange of gifts, complementary relationships and mutual enrichment represent a valuable law of life for the Family, with a consequent and significant effect on the results of the mission. For educators and evangelizers to reach the young (and especially the most needy of them) and the ordinary people, the work of a single Group of the Salesian Family is not sufficient. What is needed is different kinds of intervention linked together, different models of Christian life, different and complementary ministries.

Art. 7 Reference to Don Bosco, Father and Teacher

Don Bosco is a giant of the spirit who has bequeathed to us a rich and well defined spiritual heirloom. He is the founder of a true school of an apostolic spirituality which is new and attractive. He is the obligatory point of reference for all who, under a particular impulse of the Holy Spirit, feel themselves called today to share his mission and destiny in their various states of life, each according to its own grade and level. Membership is built around a unifying centre, which is a person, a criterion and a style.

The person is Don Bosco. The Salesian Family draws its inspiration from the humanism of St Francis de Sales, as relived by Don Bosco in his own particular

way. What binds the different Groups and their members into a kind of spiritual kinship is Don Bosco, who is truly the Father of all.

The criterion of membership is pastoral charity. The apostolic thrust of Don Bosco is the spiritual energy which makes him seek souls and serve God alone. In him charity fills and directs everything. He calls together others around him; he coordinates and blends together their various functions and multiple talents, their different states and ministries; he elevates their differences into a rich organic unity. Don Bosco's apostolic charity is a force of attraction, a criterion of unity, a development of harmonious spirituality. He is truly the Teacher of everyone.

The slogan *da mihi animas coetera tolle* is the synthesis of a rich spiritual and apostolic experience. The ecstasy of action, which is a point of reference in St Francis de Sales, is the soul of apostolic charity in Don Bosco. Educative and pastoral love is a practical and demanding form of interior feeling. Don Bosco is truly the guide and model of the Salesian Family.

Art. 8 Inspired by the humanism of St Francis de Sales

We are called the Salesian Family of Don Bosco, thus linking ourselves with both St Francis de Sales and St John Bosco.

The reference to St Francis de Sales is not something merely formal in the experience of Don Bosco: he chose him as his patron because he corresponded to the intimate aspirations which he was concerned also to manifest and motivate.

The charity and gentleness of St Francis de Sales shall be my guide in everything: this was the resolution he made at the beginning of his priestly life. With the kindness and gentleness of St Francis de Sales the Salesians will draw to Jesus Christ the populations of America: that was the apostolic recommendation he was given in his missionary dream of 1883.

We insert ourselves to the utmost as Don Bosco's Family in the Salesian current of humanism, offering an original contribution to the Church in the field of both education and pastoral work. For Don Bosco Salesian humanism means the exploitation of everything positive found rooted in the lives of individuals, in things and in history.

This Salesian humanistic inspiration led him to appreciate worldly vales, especially if they were pleasing to the young, and also to get into the changing culture and

human development of his own time, promoting what was good and not merely decrying evils. It led him to seek the cooperation of many people, convinced that each one had his own talents, perhaps as yet undiscovered; to believe in the value of education which animates and sustains the change and growth of youngsters towards becoming upright citizens and good Christians; to entrust himself unwaveringly to the providence of God, perceived and loved as his Father.

The humanism of St Francis de Sales helps the Salesian Family to be open to its component groups, so that each one may live out its own specific mission in the joy of the Lord.

Art. 9 The Rector Major the centre of unity

Membership originates from communion and becomes consolidated in a communion which becomes ever deeper. It is not just a vague kind of sentiment with weak and fleeting bonds, but an impulse of the Spirit which tends towards unity and seeks concrete and sometimes even established expressions for a practical rapport and collaboration.

Membership of the Salesian Family is of concern to many groups, each of which has its specific autonomy. There is need therefore of a vital centre which will ensure that references to the Founder, to the common spirit and to the mission itself are always up to date.

In the thought of Don Bosco the centre which guarantees unity is the Rector Major. In him all recognize a triple unifying ministry: he is the successor of Don Bosco; he is the Father of all members; he is the Centre of unity of the Family.

The Rector Major is the successor of Don Bosco; an unbroken bond links him to the Founder's person and so renders him the fit and proper person to represent him in a living manner at the present day.

He is the centre of unity of the whole family. He provides, in fact, the example and teaching which ensure fidelity to the spirit and elicits participation in the Salesian charism. His function is one of animation and advancement which forges unity in the variety of the specific vocations, fidelity to the spirit and the coordination of initiatives. His is not a task of government, but rather one of vital service of animation.

The Rector Major is the father of all who collaborate in Don Bosco's mission. He

extends the compass of his fatherliness which is for him, as it was for Don Bosco, an essential characteristic. Fatherliness demands kindness, a sense of responsibility with regard to the growth of each one, guidance in fidelity to the charism, and commitment to the growth of the salesian vocation in all its expressions. "Your Rector will take care of you and of your eternal salvation", wrote Don Bosco.

Art. 10 Description of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco

The characteristic unity of the Salesian Family has its ultimate roots in the common nature of the spirit and of the mission in the service of the young and the poor. In this way a true community is realized in which all the members are integrated in line with their particular gifts, their specific functions and the different forms of life possible in the Church.

The exploitation and relaunching of the Salesian Family can well become for us an important contribution to the conciliar renewal.

And so we may read in a new light the story of Don Bosco's spiritual experience, linking it again with his first intuitions and with the heart of the Work of the Oratories: the Salesian Family is a charismatic community; the Salesian Family is an ecclesial reality.

The Salesian Family is a charismatic community. It therefore appears and must be lived as a gift of the Spirit to the Church and as an organized prolongation of Don Bosco's charism at the present day. Various Groups which have been set up and recognized participate in a true spiritual kinship and apostolic consanguinity. Groups of priests and laity, celibate and married, of consecrated persons and religious, in line with the various forms of life-bearing witness to the beatitudes, form an organic and vital unity through the unifying force of the spirit and mission of Don Bosco. They feel themselves heirs and bearers of his gift.

The Salesian Family is an ecclesial reality, i.e. it expresses the communion between the various elements in the service of the people of God; it integrates the particular vocations so as to make manifest the richness of the Founder's charism. It is inserted in the pastoral work of the local Church to which it makes its own original contribution. It seeks understanding and collaboration with other groups and institutions, both ecclesiastical and civil, for the bringing about of an integral personal and social education of the young and of people in general. It accompanies them, through education to the faith and apostolic commitment, until they can make their own choice of vocation in the world and in the Church.



A. Some particularly significant sayings of Don Bosco

11. Da mihi animas

12. To gain souls for God I push ahead even to the point of rashness

13. If we are one in heart we can do ten times as much14. No effort should be spared when the Church

and the Papacy are at stake

15. That you are young is enough
to make me love you very much

16. Our method is founded entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness

17. My one support has always been recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians

Art. 11 Da mihi animas

The life of Don Bosco found its origin, form and expression in a phrase which runs like a golden thread through his experiences: *da mihi animas coetera tolle*.

These words enclose the inexhaustible energy of Don Bosco: the secret of his heart, the strength and ardour of his charity, the apostolate in its thousand and one forms and realizations. He chose it because it characterized for all groups and members of the Family the spirit which must animate them.

For us at the present day it indicates a complex of interior attitudes which guide the steps of the Salesian in the practical events of daily life. It calls, in fact, for dedication to spiritual depth and interior apostolic commitment; it points to the mystery of God's loving presence by giving rise to a thirst for souls, as Fr Philip Rinaldi expresses it; it stimulates the vivacity and creativity of pastoral charity.

It is the distinguishing badge of the family!

It links us with St Francis de Sales and with his new way of attaining evangelical perfection; and with Don Bosco, shepherd of souls after the example of the Lord Jesus.

To be called children of Don Bosco we must remodel ourselves on the lines of this first charism of ours. To all his followers Don Bosco repeats: "The most divine of all divine things is to cooperate with God for the salvation of souls; this is a sure path to the heights of holiness".

Art. 12 To gain souls for God | push ahead even to the point of rashness

The expressions arising from the priestly heart of Don Bosco are not easily placed in the framework of common behaviour. The rashness of which our Founder speaks can be interpreted in various ways: apostolic ardour, tireless zeal, limitless activity, incessant pastoral work, a genial creativity in relevant interventions, an oratorian heart.

Work is a typical Salesian manifestation of pastoral charity when it is understood as work for souls. It is a mystique which builds God's kingdom and brings about happiness in the young person.

And so, like Don Bosco, the Salesian develops in himself all the virtues of a man of action and commits his own abilities and talents to the personal advancement, social progress and evangelical salvation of the young, particularly those in need.

He makes a gift of his whole life, as did Don Bosco who took no step, said no word and took up no task that was not directed to the saving of the young. Truly the only concern of his heart was for souls.

Art. 13 If we are one in heart we can do ten times as much

In all his activity as an educator, pastor and founder, Don Bosco showed a great ability for dialogue and for sharing responsibility with even the youngest of his collaborators; for harmonizing in apostolic and missionary work the talents of the most widely differing persons for the good of the whole enterprise; for finding for each individual a work suited to his character, his skills and his formation, in such a way that each one felt happy in what he was doing.

He was aware of the need for cooperative charity in educational and pastoral service, and knew that the Holy Spirit raises up charisms for the benefit of the whole Church and for the common good and usage. The talents of each one are there for the good of all, and the ability to find collaborators renders the work more efficacious.

In the Regulations for the Salesian Cooperators Don Bosco wrote: "At all times it has been considered that union between good people was necessary in order to help one another to do good and to keep far away from evil. If a piece of string is taken by itself it is easily broken, but when three pieces are plaited together they are more difficult to break. When weak forces are united they become strong: Vis unita fortior, funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur.

Art. 14 No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake

Don Bosco's personal story, like his public, civil and religious history, reveals a typical trait of his spirit: love of the Church, the centre of unity and communion of all the forces working for the Kingdom. In the context of the Church of his time Don Bosco appears as an expert in communion and collaboration.

He cultivated the awareness and sense of Church in his spirituality and in his work with the young and people in general, facing innumerable risks and hardships in the process.

He offered continual collaboration with the Bishops and the Pope, both at an external organizational as well as at a spiritual and apostolic level.

Don Bosco expressed his ecclesiality through incessant prayer, docility to the magisterium, availability for economic aid, shared responsibility in the service of the People of God, defence in word and writing of the person of the Pope and of the apostolic college, fidelity to the Church's options, convinced acceptance of doctrinal observations and guidelines, and unconditional dedication: "No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake".

Art. 15 That you are young is enough to make me love you very much

"It is my desire that the fruits of this commemorative year may long endure, both in this Salesian Family and in the universal Church which has recognized and continues to recognize in Don Bosco an outstanding model of an apostle for the young.

"And so I declare and proclaim Saint John Bosco Father and Teacher of Youth, and establish that he shall be invoked under this title, especially by those who are acknowledged as his spiritual children". Thus wrote John Paul II.

In this way Don Bosco's place in history is specified: he is the teacher of the young; and rightly too is expressed the manner of his task: father of youth.

The principal values of Don Bosco's experience find in the young their point of convergence and coherence: his kind of holiness, the choice of his field of apostolic work, his strategy of intervention, his practical plan of action, the secret of his success. With and after Christ, young people represent the other pole of Don Bosco's life and work.

The love for the young, typical of a father, teacher and friend, sustained Don Bosco in all his labours.

Youngsters represent a daily injection of youthfulness and optimism for the reinterpretation of society, a special vocation for Don Bosco. "For you I study, for you I work, for you I live, for you I am ready even to give my life".

Art. 16 Our method is founded entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness

The particular trait of Don Bosco's brilliance is linked with the educational method which he himself called the preventive system. The preventive system represents to some extent the quintessence of his pedagogical wisdom and constitutes the prophetic message he has left to his followers and to the whole Church.

It is a spiritual and educational experience. It is a love that gives itself freely in the practice of a charity which is able to kindle love in return. It is the choice of kindness erected into a system of which the content is the family spirit, capacity for friendship and dialogue, simplicity in associating with those most in need, joyful and optimistic amiability.

It is founded entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness.

Reason emphasizes the authentic vision of Christian humanism, in which joy, piety, wisdom, work, study and the sense of what is human are harmoniously blended.

Religion makes space for saving grace, for the desire for God, for Christ the Lord and New Man, who gives sense and response to the search for happiness.

Loving kindness is the substance of a psychological intuition: young people must not only be loved, but they must know that they are loved. It is the well-balanced composure of the educator who accompanies the youngster as a mature and responsible friend. It is the kind and patient evangelical charity which suffers all things and puts up with any annoyance. It is the ability to love at the youngster's level, in signs he can understand.

The preventive system is inseparable from the person of Don Bosco; it is in fact his experience of the Holy Spirit.

Art. 17 My one support has always been recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians

The Christ who dominated the existence of Don Bosco was prevalently Jesus living and present in the Eucharist, the master of the house as he used to call him, the centre point towards which everything converged, the bread of life, the Son of Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church. Don Bosco lived by this presence and in it.

The Eucharist as sacrifice and sacrament, the Eucharist eaten and adored, was in Don Bosco's life strength and consolation, the source of peace and the fire of activity. For both him and his boys holiness was unthinkable without the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the master-key for the radical conversion of the heart to the love of God.

In the Salesian spirit, the centrality of Christ is lived with an extraordinary sensitivity of contemplation and of friendship towards the Eucharist.

For Don Bosco the use of the phrase "Help of Christians" does not merely emphasize a particular and original title previously unknown. Rather it is a reminder of the universal motherhood of Mary, who intervenes in the work of foundation of his Family, so that the task is carried out by both of them together. This was a profound and unchangeable conviction of Don Bosco: "She has done everything".

We can trust Mary; and so to her we have entrusted ourselves. Moreover Don Bosco has permanently bound his Marian devotion to the sense of Church, to the ministry of Peter, to the simple faith of the People of God, and to the urgent needs of youth.

B. Basic elements of the common spirit

18. Pastoral charity
19. The grace of unity
20. Union with God and style of prayer
21. The mission to the young and the common people
22. Optimism and the joy of hope
23. The ascesis of kindness
24. Work and temperance
25. The spirit of initiative
26. Rooted in the mystery of Christ and entrustment to Mary
27. The sense of Church
28. Alert sensitivity to the challenges
of the new evangelization

Art. 18 Pastoral charity

The centre and synthesis of the Salesian spirit is the pastoral charity which Don Bosco lived in all its fullness among the boys of the Oratory, prompted by his priestly love and supernatural anxiety for their overall good.

Charity is the name of the love of God, and indeed of God himself. It is required of the Lord's disciples as a badge of recognition of the fact that it is God who guides their thoughts, their actions and their entire lives. It is the centre of Christian and evangelical life because it sustains and directs every form of apostolate.

In Don Bosco's style it is specified in certain characteristics:

- in apostolic enthusiasm animated by youthful ardour; we refer to it also as an oratorian heart;
- in sharing in the mission of Jesus the Good Shepherd;
- in the inspiration which finds its source in Pentecost, in the presence and action of the Holy Spirit;
- in the solicitude which finds in Mary a rich example of self-giving;
- in the exact opposite of mediocrity.

Every Salesian, in imitation of Don Bosco, humbly tries to be a sign and bearer of the love of God to the young and to everyone else he meets.

This charity is intensely pastoral, since it is practised in sincere and industrious association with the pastors of the Church, with the ministry of the Bishops and the Pope, who are primarily responsible for the flock of Christ the Shepherd.

Art. 19 The grace of unity

Pastoral charity is the virtue with which we imitate Christ in his self-donation and in his service. It is not only what we do but the gift of our very selves which shows the love of Christ for his flock.

Pastoral charity determines our manner of thinking and acting, and of our relationship with others.

Various terms are used in Salesian experience to denote the content of pastoral charity as self-donation in apostolic service: grace of unity, interior apostolic conviction, the contemplative dimension of life, vital synthesis, single movement of charity towards God and the young, liturgy of life, etc.

For the member of the Salesian Family, pastoral charity constitutes the interior dynamic principle that is able to unify the many daily concerns and activities.

The two poles of pastoral charity, God and neighbour, are mutually inseparable.

It is an unconditional availability to the action of the Spirit who consecrates the human heart to God's plan, self-donation to the work of salvation even to the cost of one's own life, the seeking and building of communion as a gift and commitment of love to Christ the Lord.

Salesian contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity leads to the continual discovery that God is in love with mankind.

Attention to one's neighbour proceeds from God and continually leads back to God, because it is always permeated by his love.

Art. 20 Union with God and style of prayer

Don Bosco has been defined as union with God. It is a reality which the Salesian Family intends to study more deeply so as to fully understand the intensity of the *Da mihi animas* which is the prayer of our holy Founder.

The ultimate objective of prayer was, for St Francis de Sales and for Don Bosco, union with God in the new life so as to be able to repeat with truth those words of Paul: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me".

In this way prayer leads into charity. It helps an individual to go out of himself to realize union with God. It is a process of being taken up into God, of ecstasy of life and activity. It is an interior attitude of charity leading of its nature to apostolic activity in which it is made concrete, becomes manifest, grows and is perfected.

Some characteristics and emphases express the simplicity attaching to the rich and deep intuition of prayer in Don Bosco.

In its inspiration, it is totally permeated by the breath of *Da mihi animas*. In its style, it is youthful and popular, joyful and creative, simple and adherent to life. In its main forms, it sticks to the essentials: the Word of God, Eucharist, Penance, Mary Help of Christians.

Art. 21 The mission to the young and the common people

Don Bosco's disciples acquire experience of God through those to whom they are sent: the young and the common people.

The young, in the first place: they are God's gift to the Salesian Family. They are not merely the beneficiaries of our activity; they are our vocation. The Lord showed Don Bosco that young people, and especially the poor ones among them, are the first and principal targets of his mission. Without youngsters therefore there can be no salesian presence properly so called. Being specialists of the young means having hearts turned continuously in their direction, towards their aspirations and desires, towards their needs and problems. "That you are young is enough to make me love you very much".

The common people is the ordinary and natural environment for the expression of the youth option; the human and social milieu in which to meet young people. Between the young and the common people there is, in fact, a compenetrational rap-

port. The commitment of Don Bosco's Family to be with them in an effort at human advancement and growth in faith is an attempt to make clear the gospel values of which the poor are bearers: the sense of life and the hope of a better future.

Don Bosco set out also, with the Association of Mary Help of Christians, a process of education to the faith for the people, exploiting the elements of popular devotion and guiding them towards the wisdom of the Gospel which responds to the great questions about existence.

For Don Bosco the common people were the first and significant workplace for the important and efficacious application of social communication.

Art. 22 Optimism and the joy of hope

"Meditate as seriously as you wish and make a close analysis of this Magna Carta of our Congregation which is the preventive system, appealing to reason, religion and loving kindness; but in the last analysis you will have to agree with me that everything comes down to infusing into hearts the holy fear of God; I say infuse it, i.e. make it take root in such a way that it will remain there forever despite all the storms of passions and human vicissitudes". It is the pedagogy of grace and joy of the pure conscience.

Don Bosco has sanctified the joy of living and has offered young people the key to the attainment of such happiness. The Companion of Youth, the biography of Dominic Savio, the allegory contained in the story of Valentino, all demonstrate the theoretical and practical correspondence between grace and happiness.

At the school of St Francis de Sales and of Don Bosco, the Salesian, consecrated or lay person, builds within himself/herself certain basic attitudes:

- confidence that the good will ultimately prevail.
- "In every young person, even the most wayward, there is a point accessible to what is good; the first duty of the educator is to find this point, this sensitive heartstring, and work on it":
- openness to human values.

The Salesian accepts the values of the world and does not bewail the problems of his time: he keeps everything that is good, especially if it is pleasing to the young.

Anyone always ready to complain does not have a true salesian spirit;

education to daily joys and happiness.

"A patient educational effort is needed to learn or relearn to enjoy in a simple manner the many human joys which the Creator places on our path through life". Education to joy is education to hope and self-donation.

Art. 23 The ascesis of kindness

The loving kindness of Don Bosco is without any doubt a characteristic and original pedagogical and methodological element within the system of education. Even today, albeit in a changed cultural context and with young people of non-christian religions, this characteristic constitutes one of the many original and valid examples of Don Bosco's pedagogy. Nevertheless it is not reducible to a pedagogical principle.

Loving kindness, understood as a manifestation and expansion of theological charity to the young and people most in need, is also the expression of a spirituality. It ensures the true identity of the salesian spirit and is a perennial portrayal of its style.

One can speak quite correctly in fact, for a member of the Salesian Family, of the apostolic spirituality of making oneself loved in addition to simply loving. "What is this reciprocal affection based on? (...) On the desire I have to save your souls, which have been redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ; you love me because I am trying to lead you on the path to eternal salvation. And so it is the good of our souls that is the foundation of our affection".

The method of Salesian action is not simply and solely that of loving (though this is obviously indispensable), but that of being able in a pedagogical manner to make oneself loved, because the obligatory task of education is a work of the heart.

It is not a target easy to attain. A continual and deep ascesis is needed to enable a youngster to find a place in his existence for his desire for God. Not with blows but with gentleness and charity were words that re-echoed in Don Bosco's mind from the time of his first prophetic dream.

Gentleness, kindness, the ascesis of making oneself loved, are the fruit of a sound balance between intelligence and the custody of the heart, between activity and self-giving.

Art. 24 Work and temperance

The practice of divinely inspired pastoral charity includes the need for conversion and purification, death to the old man so that the new man may be born, and that he may live and develop after the image of the Good Shepherd and be ready to give his life for the flock, to sacrifice himself daily in apostolic work. To carry on working to the end of life is the first article of the Salesian code.

Austerity has a place in behaviour, in the will to make sacrifices, in detachment, but not in the tone of life. One can work, be tolerant, be in need quite cheerfully, because in these things the heart comes into play and the soul is strengthened to high ideals, and in this way disposed to do without what is not necessary while remaining perfectly at ease in spirit and activity.

There is no need to look for extraordinary penances; it is sufficient to accept serenely the daily hardships and difficulties and to remain always available for the generous service of God and neighbour.

Salesian ascesis has various aspects: there is the ascesis of humility in being no more than servants before God; the ascesis of mortification for building self-control, control of the heart and senses, and the ability to reject an easy style of life; the ascesis of courage and of patience to be persevering in activity; ascesis of dedication when circumstances and events are an invitation to draw nearer to Christ crucified. And the final and best or gratuitous form consists in not complaining, in concealing the fact of renunciation altogether and doing it always with joy.

Art. 25 The spirit of initiative

The Church which guards and preserves the deposit of the Word of God, from which are drawn the principles for moral and religious order, even though it may not always have ready the answer to every single question, wants to unify the light of Revelation to the competence of all, so as to light up the path on which humanity has recently set out. It is everyone's duty, therefore, to cultivate courageous attitudes in seeking what is good, and creativity in forms of apostolic intervention.

In a time like the present, in a society characterized by mobility, speed and haste, we must not allow the sense and spirit of pastoral initiative to be lost. By remaining firmly tied to the principle of the concrete nature of the contextual reality in which we are called upon to live, the way ahead must be guided by spiritual discernment.

Fr Philip Rinaldi is forthright in his reminder to the Salesians: "This elasticity in adaptation to all the forms of good that continually arise among humanity is the particular spirit of our Constitutions; and if the day should come when there is introduced a variation contrary to this spirit, our Society will be finished".

Don Bosco frequently recommended this spirit of initiative: "We should comply with the wishes of others to the utmost of our ability; let us yield to modern requirements and to local customs and usages, provided we do not have to act against our conscience". It is not just a problem of adaptation; what is asked for is a continual renewal in the light of the signs of the times.

Art. 26 Rooted in the mystery of Christ and entrustment to Mary

The final guideline for the Salesian spirit is Christian life, the formation of the believer.

The mature and well formed individual is the citizen who has faith, who places at the centre of his life the ideal of the new man proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and who witnesses courageously to his own religious convictions.

To be rooted in Christ is the deepest joy for a follower of Don Bosco. From it stems love of God's word, and the desire to live the mystery of Christ represented in the Church's liturgy; the diligent celebration of the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation which educate to Christian freedom, conversion of heart, and service; participation in the Lord's Easter mystery which opens the way to a new understanding of life and its personal and communal, interior and social significance.

In the mystery of Christ the person of Mary is present in a significant manner that cannot be set aside. If we want to be Christians, we must also be Marian, i.e. we must recognize the essential, vital and providential relationship which unites Mary to Jesus and opens for us the way that leads to him.

The entire Salesian Family feels itself to be a Marian family, born through the motherly concern of the Immaculate Help of Christians, and so to her the individual Salesian entrusts himself/herself.

Entrustment is part of an ascending dynamic process: we are called upon to make the gesture of self-donation, to respond with generosity to a mission to be fulfilled, to correspond with the fullness of the charisms with which we have been enriched, to commit ourselves individually to a renewed process.

Mary, the sign of sure hope and consolation for God's pilgrim people, is the one who arouses personal commitment and apostolic thrust.

Art. 27 The sense of Church

Don Bosco placed as the fundamental principle of his apostolic activity the filial and devoted acceptance of the authentic Magisterium, but he was at the same time a tenacious defender of his own charism in the face of pressure of ecclesiastics insufficiently informed about it.

Deep and prolonged study of the Second Vatican Council has given pride of place to the reality of the Church-mystery which, in its dimension as the people of God, presents itself particularly as the centre of unity and communion. It builds this reality by accepting the gift of the Spirit and making of itself a practical response through the convergent commitment of all the baptized. At the present day the problem of unity is more relevant than ever before.

Don Bosco's Family counts among its patrimony a rich tradition of filial fidelity to Peter's Successor, and of communion and collaboration with the local Churches. "When the Pope expresses a wish, let it be for us a command", seems to be an expression said by Don Bosco off the cuff, but in fact it represents an explicit choice in line with his religious roots.

At the present day, collaboration with the local Church implies a new rapport in education and in pastoral work, with the original charisms and contributions of the lay faithful in a particular Church.

And so in fidelity to Don Bosco's spirit we are today asked for a new dynamism to build communion with all believers.

Art. 28 Alert sensitivity to the challenges of the new evangelization

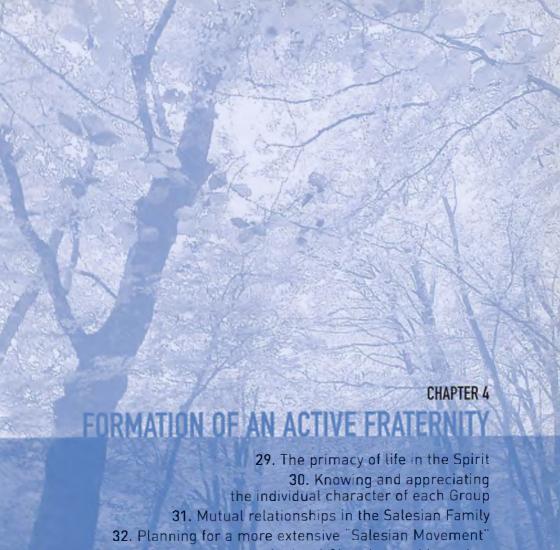
A new perspective dominates the commitment of the contemporary Church: the new evangelization.

All Don Bosco's work was born from a simple catechism lesson, and the evangelization and catechesis, which represent its setting and deeper development, remain for the Salesian Family a fundamental dimension.

Today this tradition renders all Groups of the Salesian Family particularly attentive and sensitive to the personal and objective demands of the new evangelization. In this many documents of the Church have indicated a new Pentecostal attitude of the People of God for the courageous proclamation of the ineffable presence of the living Christ, the Lord of history, the first and greatest evangelizer who is able to respond to the present gigantic challenges of the world.

To the Salesian Family the perspective of the new evangelization asks of us:

- to point out the new contexts in which evangelization is called for; we are facing ecclesial, social, economic and political situations never previously experienced;
- to accept the innovations contained in the Church's guidelines, which indicate
 the new workers in the evangelization field and the new frontiers for the proclamation of Christ;
- to take up the consequences imposed by the new evangelization on Salesian educative work. The reflection on the mutual relationship between the human maturing process and Christian growth must be considered as basic for us and indispensable in every situation.



33. Willing collaboration in the local Churches and in society 34. Esteem for other ecclesial forces

Art. 29 The primacy of life in the Spirit

Don Bosco's Salesian Family is firmly rooted in a unity and fraternity that is the result of its characteristic and distinctive charism: hence the continual concern for formation in evangelical love.

In seeking the Spirit of the Resurrection and Pentecost we must strive for the renewal requested by the Church for all groups and communities. Every moment of the life of a believer is marked by the sign of the Spirit.

Fraternity is the fruit of interior strength; it is an initiative of the Spirit.

When we interiorize our lives we make ourselves available to God's call and he can turn to us and work through us. God's love is revealed to us in Jesus, and as we correspond to this love we become his servants: and then it is that the barriers of division crumble. We become new creatures and walk in the Spirit with love, and the fruits of love become our standard.

From pastoral charity there flows that union and fusion that is the fruit of the power of the Holy Spirit; and the sure result of this is the vital inseparability between union with God and dedication to our neighbour, interior Gospel attachment and the active apostolate, the praying heart and toiling hands.

Art. 30 Knowing and appreciating the individual character of each Group

The growth of fellowship is also the fruit of knowing one another. We cannot love what we do not know.

Those groups which have obtained recognition of their Salesian Family membership have grown numerically in the last few years. They will be joined by others in the near future.

The Rector Major of the Salesians, as Don Bosco's successor and the father and centre of unity of the Family, presides over the progress of those groups that ask for recognition; his definitive communication involves us all, as we share in the joy of the development desired by the Spirit of the Lord. For this joy to be complete and well founded, however, there must be a definite commitment on the part of all members to achieve a better mutual and reciprocal knowledge of all the other Groups.

This knowledge must not stop at mere external features and structures: there must be an effort to fathom the specific characteristics of each group and see in the findings the rich resources of the common Founder Don Bosco. The basic documents and the Rector Major's letter of recognition of membership in the Salesian Family clearly express the importance of the charism and the affability of the Salesian experience.

An earnest call is made for a more thorough knowledge regarding the Groups directly founded by Don Bosco and those present and active in local areas.

Art. 31 Mutual relationships in the Salesian Family

Our intellectual knowledge must progress to the practical - which will result from fraternal sharing.

The apostolate covered by our family spirit and the interpersonal and group relationships is indeed extensive, as is evident from a few examples:

- our actual contacts, occasional and regular meetings of an informal or organized nature;
- our family, spiritual and prayer meetings that make the personal resources of each member available to all;
- the times we set aside for reflection and study regarding the various facets of the salesian charism, its spirituality, the inheritance received from Don Bosco and the challenges that the signs of the times present to the whole Family;
- the constant and established sharing of information by the groups in order to foster a continual family growth in the face of pleasant or unpleasant events, and to further the research and discernment that each group carries out in its annual schedule. Especially relevant here is the Consulting group of the Salesian Family, which should have the support of all the Groups;
- our sharing of mass media activities for the diffusion throughout the world of the spirit of Don Bosco: for instance, the commitment we share regarding the Salesian Bulletin:
- general recognition of the need for persons and groups to be patient and understanding with each other.

Our mutual relationships will certainly be of help in discovering the substantial correlation between all the Groups of the Salesian Family, who enjoy a reciprocal rapport and together form and prolong the charismatic experience of the Founder. The different Groups cannot make an integral reassessment of their vocation within the Church without reference to those who together with them are the bearers of the Founder's Gospel project. Hence the reason why all must seek a better unity between the Groups themselves whilst preserving the authentic distinction of each.

In the last analysis it all adds up to the fact that the various Groups collaborate with each other for fostering the vitality of the entire Salesian Family in respect of

- their vocational apostolate;
- the formation of individual members:
- pastoral research in finding adequate answers to the problems of the education and evangelization of the young and the masses;
- the fulfilment of the salesian mission in the diverse sectors and various types of work it is engaged in;
- and in the spreading of the spirit of Don Bosco.

Art. 32 Planning for a more extensive "Salesian Movement"

Don Bosco's Salesian Family, being an ecclesial reality, seeks to actuate and make known the common spirit inherited from the Founder; it does not live just for itself: the sacramental mission of God's love for the young guides, conditions and specifies its nature and activities. It sees itself as a charismatic reality, renewed in this special hour of the Spirit following the incentive received from the Second Vatican Council.

It also recognizes itself as an ecclesial movement that extends beyond the confines and possibilities of the single officially recognized Groups, because it attracts friends who, whilst not belonging to Groups organized or recognized as members of the Salesian Family, nevertheless work together with us in the Salesian style and spirit.

Don Bosco's Family becomes the inspiration for an even wider salesian movement when, in addition to the characteristics proper to the various Groups, it is able to

express some dynamic uniting factor which reveals the common apostolic identity.

The particularly significant words of Don Bosco and the basic elements of his common spirit, as set out in the present document, constitute a practical proposal and a suitable basis for operating as a vast movement of persons working in different ways for the salvation of the young.

Art. 33 Willing collaboration in the local Churches and in society

The fostering and formation of fellowship within the Salesian Family finds a determining factor in the penetration of the spirit of Don Bosco into the local Churches and society through effective collaboration between the Groups as they strive for a more productive apostolate.

Communion and communication must lead to effective apostolic collaboration, since the Salesian Family does not exist for itself but to carry out in the Church and in the world the mission confided to it, at the service especially of the young and the poor.

This comprehensive cooperation is evidenced in two ways:

- it is a collaboration between Group and Group in order to fulfil the salesian mission in its various sectors and areas, and in its different kinds of work;
- and it is a collaboration by Groups working together in the pastoral institutions
 of the local Church and in local civil organizations, so as to make a salesian contribution with its rich and varied ingredients for the building of a civilization of
 love.

The achievement of a common project calls for a convergence that can often require the sacrifice of personal points of view and of certain perspectives linked with one's own Group.

Art. 34 Esteem for other ecclesial forces

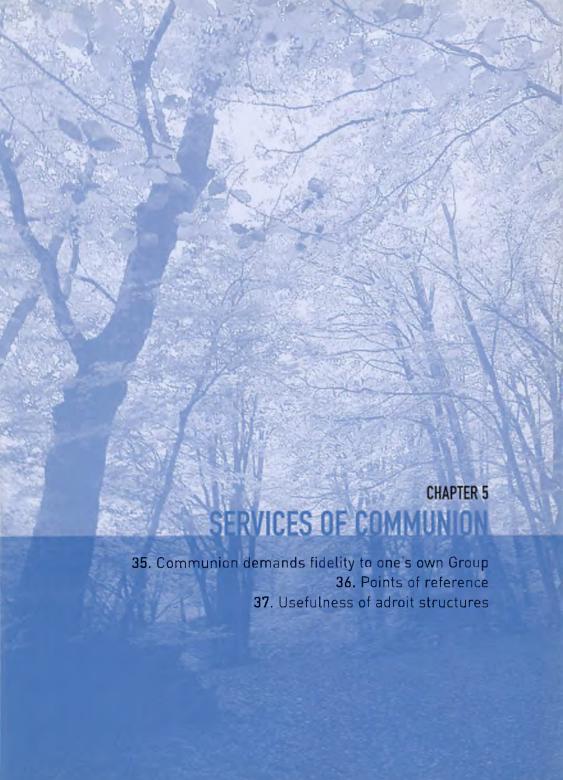
The confines of charity are widened by treating with esteem and cordiality other groups working for the building up of the Church and for the manifestation of the manifold graces of the Spirit.

The special graces God bestows in many different forms on the various ecclesial movements are expressed in a particular spirituality and specific apostolic character; when there is a true communion among these bodies, there is also an interchange of gifts, especially when the various groups succeed in manifesting clearly their own specific identities.

Communion does not lessen individual charisms, nor does it tend in any way to reduce all movements to a common meaningless mediocrity.

Communion demands openness to dialogue and the capacity to make a contribution of one's own particular values.

As the Salesian Family, stimulated by the example of Don Bosco, who had welcoming feelings and words for all, and knew how to share with them ideas, experiences and achievements, we are called to reconfirm the gift we have received and to walk hand in hand with all the Church.



Art. 35 Communion demands fidelity to one's own Group

The fact of belonging to the Family, so as to share among many people the same spiritual riches, in no way diminishes the values and originality of each individual Group. Fraternity does not extinguish but rather strengthens identity. And so the concrete circumstances of individuals and their ecclesial collocation are confirmed, enlivened and enriched.

Through the energy of his charism, Don Bosco brings together in unity in a single apostolic Family religious, lay people, married persons, widows and widowers, celibates and priests, all of them testifying in various ways to the spirit of the beatitudes. No one loses his or her specifically priestly, religious or lay spirituality.

Don Bosco's charism is a higher overall energy which takes up all the individual spiritualities, specifying and strengthening them.

Communion is the most mature fruit of charismatic identity, of organizational autonomy, of the expression of the originality of each Group, of the mutual and generous enrichment stemming from the values of all. Communion therefore remains the single objective of the Salesian Family for living its values with the greatest intensity.

Art. 36 Points of reference

By the very fact of their charismatic fellowship, the individual Groups that make up the Salesian Family recognize in Don Bosco's successor, the Rector Major, the father and centre of unity of the Family itself.

Closely linked with his ministry, there are further points of reference that facilitate and bring about convergence, in view of a service to unity of spirit and apostolic collaboration.

Within each group there are dedicated and qualified animators whose special task is to create communion with all the Family of Don Bosco.

The Salesians of Don Bosco are the special heirs and representatives of his bounteous priestly fatherliness, and thus have the responsibility of animating the entire Family.

Hence they perform a service that has no governing authority, but provides a

joyous guarantee of a true path for the faithful living of salesian holiness in all its fullness.

The seeking and acceptance of the different 'communion rituals' make evident the conviction that any person asking to be integrated into a particular Group as an active member, has the intention of belonging at the same time to a wider Family.

Art. 37 Usefulness of adroit structures

The Salesian Family is made up of established and well organized groups that provide a stimulus to further growth and development through a light and flexible structure that is understood and accepted by all the members.

An obvious element of unity at the general level is provided by the person of the Rector Major, as already explained in this document; he also has a specific institutional function in

relation to several of the Groups considered individually. His function is of a specific institutional nature.

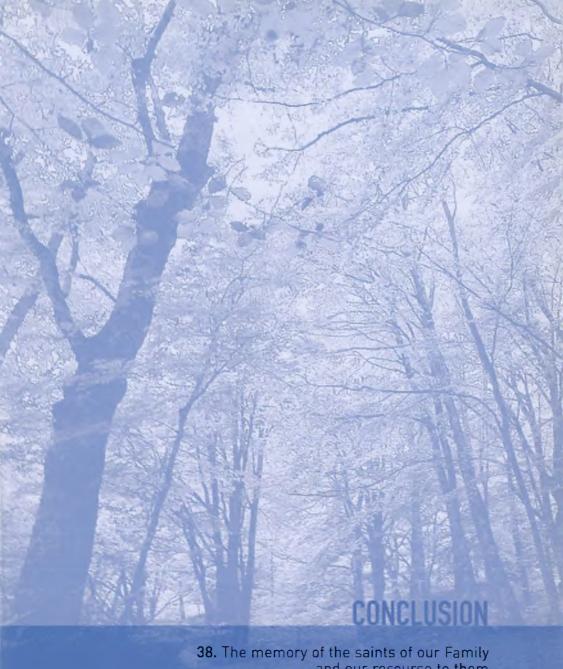
Other aspects could also be thought of as part of an organic picture.

At regional, national, provincial and local level, unity is sustained and promoted by councils and consulting groups.

To ensure normal vitality to the Salesian Family, it seems indispensable that this be not left only to the good will of those responsible for animation and government of the individual Groups at different levels.

It frequently happens that practical difficulties associated with apostolic work, interpersonal relationships and those between Groups, conceal the need and urgency for structurally organized fraternity.

The definition of possible structures must be the object of further shared reflection between the Groups of the Salesian Family.



38. The memory of the saints of our Family and our recourse to them 39. The ecclesial relevance of a Family united in life and activity

Art. 38 The memory of the saints of our Family and our recourse to them

The saints proclaim the wonders of Christ and are living witnesses to the Gospel; they strengthen the unity of the whole Church in the spirit and exercise of fraternal charity.

God has lavished his love on the Salesian Family of Don Bosco by enriching it with holy members. A wealth of inspiration is to be found in our Saints: their ranks include young and old; priests, layfolk and consecrated members; those committed to education, and evangelization; those battling to build a better society - and even heroic martyrs.

It is a source of wonder what the grace of the Holy Spirit can do in the hearts of those who accept his call and offer themselves willingly to work in his service!

Filling their hearts with love, he encourages them in their quest for perfect charity and an ever-deepening union.

The most valuable asset of the communion that we aim to achieve as a Family is a constant striving for holiness.

The invocation, then, of our brothers and sisters who have pointed out to us the way of love becomes a valid help in our weakness, and an encouragement to soldier on joyfully as we wend our way heavenward.

I shall be waiting for all of you in heaven, Don Bosco says to us.

Art. 39 The ecclesial relevance of a Family united in life and activity

Throughout the world the Church is the symbol of love and unity. Thus, according to the teaching of Jesus, communion is the most efficacious kind of apostolic witness.

In the present historical context of the Church's dedication to dialogue with all men of good will, this duty to manifest internal communion becomes all the more urgent.

The spiritual families within the Church can contribute much in helping it to be well equipped for the work of uniting all people and enhancing the Body of Christ.

Don Bosco has taught us that from our love of Christ there will inevitably flow love for his Church. Pastoral charity is the root and expression of unity in our Family communion. Visible and active unity in the Salesian family is a vital means for the new evangelization.

PRAYER to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Salesian Family

O Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, we firmly believe that yours is a special place in the history of salvation, and that you are the mistress and guide of our Salesian Family.

With joy we contemplate and strive to imitate your faith and willing availability to God and his loving designs, your humble acceptance of the great wonders performed by the Father, your apostolic charity and your fidelity at the foot of the cross.

With filial devotion we place ourselves under your loving care.

Immaculate Virgin, lead us to the fullness of self-donation; Help of Christians, give us courage and confidence in the service of the People of God.

Holy Virgin, we implore your loving protection, on each one of us, on each Group born of the charism of Don Bosco, on the entire Salesian Family and on the young people you entrust to our care.

Amen.







TO THE CENTRAL COUNCILS OF THE GROUPS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Dear Sisters and Brothers.

Recently we celebrated 125 years of missionary expeditions in the Congregation and the Family of Don Bosco.

Together with gratitude to God for all the help he has given us, I want to express once again my thanks to the missionaries leaving for the various areas of Salesian work, and to all who directly or indirectly prepared the meeting at Turin.

We have been strengthened also by the words of the Pope who, in the letter he wrote to the Rector Major for the occasion, recalled the significant experience of the "Salesian missions" in the whole world.

Being missionaries always implies two places for activity: here and there. At Turin our thoughts were directed to the requirements for living "there", i.e. in the mission territories. Going to the missions is a living part of Don Bosco's charism and of the salesian life. We should not be faithful to the gift of the Spirit if our missionary generosity ever waned.

The present text, "the common mission statement of the Salesian Family", brings us back "here", to our daily life interwoven with communion, apostolic commitment, sharing of plans, of joint responsibility for the spreading of God's Kingdom, and of Salesian spirituality.

It is a particular, but not a secondary, manner of realizing the dream of Don Bosco, educator and evangelizer, especially of the young.

In entrusting the Common Missionary Statement today to you who are **responsible at central level** for the Groups of the Salesian Family, I recall once again the richness of the meeting of the members of the General Councils which took place at this Generalate last June.



I remember with joy the high attendance, the active participation of every Group, the desire expressed for a deeper and more fraternal mutual knowledge, and the will to move forward in communion of spirit and sharing of commitments.

All of you therefore, each within the setting of the particular Group concerned, are promoters of the meeting of Rome and of its most important result, represented today by the Common Mission Statement.

It is the result of the work of many people.

It does not claim to be a doctrinal text nor to present innovations. What it aims at doing is portraying in some detail the orientation and sensitivity of the Groups of the Salesian Family as regards the apostolic mission.

We can rightly call it an **inspirational text**. It calls on each member of the Groups of the Family for a commitment that is characterized as Salesian: for the choice of those to whom the mission is directed, for the proposals of advancement and evangelization that it suggests, for the desire to go more deeply into the great intuitions of the Preventive System, for its involvement of the laity, and for its expression in culture and context of the Salesian charism.

Those responsible for the Groups at local, national, international and world level have the primary task of making known the criteria and guidelines contained in the present text.

Some words return with a certain frequency: mission, communion, apostolate, salesianity, young people, challenges, education, advancement, evangelization, Preventive System, Spirit and spirituality.

Some **criteria** seem already accepted, but need continual clarification and application at the practical level: **autonomy** and **shared** responsibility, communion and uniqueness.

Each of these realities I have mentioned would need an **adequate commentary**, but it is not my function, in presenting the Common Mission Statement, to provide this. It is rather the main function of those responsible at different levels for the life of the individual Groups.



We are in the process of preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, always so dear to Don Bosco. Mary Immaculate has placed her seal on many stages of the life and expansion of the Salesian charism. Let us pray to her with this intention.

May she be the Mother and Helper of all of us.

I wish you success in your work.

Fr Juan E. Vecchi Rector Major

Rome, 25 November 2000

INTRODUCTION

The Salesian Family knows that it has been willed and sent by God for the salvation of the young and of working class people.

To respond to the requirements of the various times and settings which are continually changing, the Groups which refer back to Don Bosco pay heed to the Word of God, and place themselves at the service of their brothers and sisters in need.

The mission carried out by the Family is a concrete response to the Holy Spirit and to his gifts, to the power which operates through the sacrament of Confirmation and to the Church which sends us.

United in an assembly of communion around the Rector Major, successor of Don Bosco, 1-5 June 2000, the Groups of the Salesian Family decided to collect together the fundamental inspirations of the common mission.

The text THE COMMON MISSION STATEMENT OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY must be read in the light of the process of convergence between all Groups and the originality of each of them for a more effective apostolic presence in the situation of the present day.

It is therefore entrusted to the General Councils of the individual Groups to apply it suitably to the different contexts of life.





THE SALESIAN FAMILY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

1. The Church for a new evangelization
2. The action of God's Spirit

3. The Groups of the Salesian Family involved in the ecclesial mission

4. Aspects of the apostolic commitment of the Family of Don Bosco

5. A mission particularly suited to lay people6. The Preventive System

Art. 1 The Church for a new evangelization

The Church has been missionary from its very foundation.

The dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and enriched by his gifts it lives in the world to give life and give it abundantly.

The Church is living a particularly missionary period, called "new evangelization". This is a mobilization of all ecclesial forces to give effect to the Lord's word: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28, 19-20).

Believers who are conscious of being a living part of the Church place themselves at the service of its mission, offering a particular contribution according to the gifts they have received.

It is in this vast ecclesial and apostolic movement that the Salesian Family finds its place.

Art. 2 The action of God's Spirit

The Holy Spirit gave to Don Bosco a penetrating insight into the world of the young, their needs, their expectations and the urgent requirements of youngsters who are "poor and at risk".

In the Church and society of Turin he began a vast movement of persons who work in various ways for the salvation of the young, a movement which soon spread to other cities.

The same Spirit gathers today in an apostolic project, priests and laity, religious and consecrated persons, men and women, people of various social backgrounds: all responsible for the realization of a dream which began on the hill of the Becchi, became a living experience in the Oratory of Valdocco, and spread through the world by force of a unique spirituality which took its inspiration from St Francis de Sales.

Art. 3 The Groups of the Salesian Family involved in the ecclesial mission

From the apostolic spirituality, typical in Don Bosco, each Group of the Salesian Family assumes and defines in an original manner its own commitment in the Church.

Living at present in the Salesian Family there are groups of priests, united in reli-

gious communities or working in dioceses.

There are also groups of the laity, men and women, belonging to lay associations or secular Institutes, officially recognized by the Church and the Rector Major. And finally there are also numerous female institutes of religious life, which have arisen to respond to new requirements of the Church's mission, in different places and circumstances.

Individuals and the various groups who listen with docility in their search for God, receive the light and strength necessary to fulfil their particular vocation in the world and in the Church.

The Holy Spirit spreads his gifts in the world in novel and diverse forms. The various charisms are all tailored to human and historical situations, in view of the development of God's Kingdom.

Art. 4 Aspects of the apostolic commitment of the Family of Don Bosco

The Salesian Family reaffirms in the context of the contemporary world, fidelity to the prophetic richness of Don Bosco, as a response of fidelity to God's design.

There are three settings in which it operates:

- human advancement,
- education,
- evangelization.

Addressing itself primarily to the young who are poor and to ordinary people, the members of the Salesian Family work, in the first place, to create conditions for fostering personal dignity.

In this way many activities arise for involvement in situations of poverty.

For advancement initiatives the presence of lay people is particularly necessary.

Education, of both young and adults, is a force which is indispensable for an effective process of growth.

Many are the expressions of formal education in the Salesian Family, and equally numerous are those of informal education.

Collaboration between the different Groups of the Family in the field of education is both essential and significant.

Many Groups are committed to direct **evangelization**: either by insertion in local Churches and therefore participation in diocesan projects; or by giving life to concrete and particular programs for meeting the needs of certain categories of people and problems of daily life.

The presence of Groups with a clear Christian identity leads to evangelization even in contexts where direct evangelization is neither easy nor even permitted.

Art. 5 A mission particularly suited to lay people

The vast extent of apostolic commitment asked by Don Bosco of his collaborators carries with it the need to multiply human resources and the forces available. Don Bosco had recourse to the help and support of laymen and women, as well as of ecclesiastics and religious.

Numerous are the men and women educators, social workers, catechists, professional people, politicians favourable towards salesian initiatives, young people with animating talents, who find in the works of Don Bosco a concrete opportunity for expressing a professional approach, charisms and prophecies.

In certain circumstances we are witnessing in Salesian activities a real mobilization of the laity, not necessarily practising believers, dictated more by the need for manpower than by the choice of ideals or theological considerations.

In this way begins a vast movement of persons which becomes organized and coordinated and shares a project for the salvation of the young and of people in general.

The movement exceeds the strict limits of the Salesian Family, but the latter carries responsibility with respect to all the friends of Don Bosco.

Art. 6 The Preventive System

Don Bosco lived the gift of the Founder of a spiritual Family, starting up some groups as a concrete expression of his dream of salvation for all. He left the Preventive System to all of us as a rich legacy.

It represents, in the experience of the Salesian Family,

- the manner of commitment to human advancement,
- the choice of content of educative and apostolic activity,
- the apostolic spirituality of action, taking inspiration from Francis de Sales.

CHAPTER 2

THE MISSION OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY IN THE NEW RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Apostolic commitment challenges the Salesian Family
 Upright citizen and good Christian

9. Salesian humanism

10. Commitment for the human person at the present day
11. Effectiveness in the local area

12. Progressive seeking of the overall objective

13. Complementarity in the convergence of forces

14. Educating by evangelizing, evangelizing by educating

Art. 7 Apostolic commitment challenges the Salesian Family

The Church of the Second Vatican Council, through the magisterium of the Pope, of the Synods of Bishops and the Great Jubilee of the Redemption, has prompted communities of believers to take up with enthusiasm fresh initiatives for the proclamation of salvation to all the world.

The Salesian Family in the process of renewal and communion of all its constituent forces, offers its members some fundamental choices for the efficacious living of its missionary and apostolic commitment.

This begins from some typical intuitions of the experience of Don Bosco.

Art. 8 Upright citizen and good Christian

This expression, used frequently by Don Bosco to define the aim of his work in the Church and in society, has spread beyond the confines of his own time and experience at Valdocco.

"Upright citizen and good Christian" is a phrase with **contents both traditional and new**. It refers to the desire to collaborate in the new order of society which has been coming into being in recent years, by becoming inserted in the processes of change of permanent values in moral life and action.

It **recognizes**, almost empathetically, the value of the new order being expressed by society.

It recognizes the rich values of the new culture which is coming to birth and the efforts being made to give to humanity a wider and more secure well-being. It recognizes the force contained in the religious movement which is being renewed in the light of the problems and expectations of the people, particularly those in greatest need.

And so it **represents** a synthetic statement of the educative manifesto of our Father. The synthesis is not to be sought only in brevity of expression, but also and primarily in the ability to avoid dividing what in daily life is united. We are all, at one and the same time, both citizens and believers.

Don Bosco's intuition was to show that these two concepts are interdependent. The upright character of the citizen leads to fidelity in respect of evangelical values. The life of a good Christian is the foundation for the social rectitude of the citizen.

Art. 9 Salesian humanism

The immediate content perceivable in the words of Don Bosco is the acceptance of everything that is integrally human.

In the first place, to aim at being an upright citizen and good Christian is to stress the dignity of the human person.

The Second Vatican Council in the pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World states very clearly: "According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown" (GS 12).

Educators and apostles have the task of awakening and mobilizing all the potentialities of the young: the faculties of knowledge and of reason; the diversified affective inheritance: the fortified will for freedom.

In addition, Salesian humanism looks at all daily realities, from work to culture; from the joy of friendship to civil commitment; from the nature in which we are immersed to personal and social education; from professional skill to moral honesty in deeds and options; all the realities which constitute life, as values which must be defended and helped to grow in universal experience.

The commitment to human advancement attaches great weight in salesian history to the small realities which build up personal experience.

Moreover, Salesian humanism functions in the perspective of giving meaning to everyday living.

Education, through the reason, religion and loving kindness of Don Bosco aims at filling personal experience with hope for the future.

The salesian apostolic commitment of all Groups of the Family is defined by education as the content of its particular mission, of the manner of making effective interventions, and of the spiritual options of the operators.

Finally, Salesian humanism aims at helping everyone to find their right place in society and in the Church.

The vocation of each one is the most important thing in life.

We are placed in the world not for ourselves but for others, committed to a specific mission as a service to our neighbour.

The reminder is of the urgency to work always and in everything with evangelical charity.

Believers, young and old, consecrated or lay, men and women, will have a thousand different ways of expressing the gift of charity: some through alms-giving,

others through educative activity, still others by commitment to evangelization, even to the extent of missionary self-donation.

Art. 10 Commitment for the human person at the present day

The objective of the mission of the Salesian Family, in the simplicity of its formulation "upright citizen and good Christian", has become complex and difficult in today's social and religious context.

Historical, cultural and religious motives do not make apostolic activities easy.

John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, responds to many questions which arise in the mind of an apostle.

Hence the need for the Salesian Family living in different parts of the world to read carefully and study more deeply the various situations envisaged in the ecclesial document.

Don Bosco reminded his collaborators to work with a charity practised "according to the needs of the time".

These, in fact, are the requirements which give concreteness to the mission's objectives. Let us try to indicate some possibilities.

Art. 11 Effectiveness in the local area

The primary yardstick for the assessment of the "upright citizen and good Christian" is an **effective** presence in the local area.

This implies an effective involvement in the life situations of ordinary people and of the young in particular.

One becomes effective either through the witness to sharing which is given, or by the practical proposals put forward as responses to the questions that arise when human development is sought.

There are problems of relationships, of small or wider import, with individuals and with institutions; questions of human and moral values to be recalled and promoted, in respect of different and contrasting positions, and in harmony with one's conscience; new solutions to be found based on past experiences and future prospects; rights to be defended, particularly of those who are weaker and more exposed to danger; an effective presence in areas of politics where educational strategies are drawn up and the convergence of forces to foster a public opinion nourished by evangelical and Salesian values.

The criterion of effectiveness has applications which are different in different geographical contexts and cultural areas.

It cannot demand the same things in different places.

It cannot indicate the same process to different peoples.

Art. 12 Progressive seeking of the overall objective

"The upright citizen and good Christian" is a phrase which expresses a maturity already achieved: i.e. openness to the whole of **truth**, and to responsible personal **freedom**. The Salesian of whatever Group of the Family is at one and the same time attentive to educative processes, and ready to animate and follow up the process towards the objective.

This requires that the process be a gradual one.

The Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco express this need very clearly: "Imitating God's patience, we encounter the young at their present stage of freedom. We then accompany them, so that they may develop solid convictions and gradually assume the responsibility for the delicate process of their growth in humanity and faith".

The Church has made some specific declarations, which it may be useful to recall in the present context.

Catechesi tradendae reminds us:

- lof the integrity of the content to be passed on "with all its inflexibility and force";
- lof the balance needed in organizing the contents to be presented;
- lof the organic relationship between the various parts, giving to each the emphasis it needs:
- lof the hierarchical correlation between certain contents and others, which makes them fundamental and conditioning;
- lof the language to be used, inspired only by the concern to make the richness of the content better understood.

The correct application of the Preventive System meets the demands of evangelical proclamation, because it is complete, clear and efficacious.

Art. 13 Complementarity in the convergence of forces

The "upright citizen and good Christian" presents a richness of content continually being more fully discovered.

Through the experience of education it becomes clear that to realize its objectives the **synergy** of many activities is indispensable, especially at the present day.

The simultaneous presence of many reference points concerning the same problems of life; the diversity of the view of the human person in today's culture; the endless number of messages which reach the same subject, through a communication now become polycentric; these are all factors demanding a wider and rigorous planning of the educational process.

Many forces are involved, and they must be coordinated for the attainment of the common objective.

The Salesian Family with its various component Groups can ensure in the best possible manner the covering of the various educative sectors, starting from the identity of the Groups and the specific ways in which they carry out the mission. In such a setting the richness and effectiveness of the differences is preserved within a deeper and more substantial communion.

Art. 14 Educating by evangelizing, evangelizing by educating

This is a second formulation of the apostolic commitment of Don Bosco's Salesian Family.

We shall reflect on it later, in the chapter presenting the salesian spirituality in apostolic activity.

Mention of it serves to emphasize a further new element.

The unity of the salesian mission, complex as it is in its components, needs missionaries who live an interior unity.

In other words, they are able to open education, especially of the young, to evangelization.

You cannot claim to have educated if you stop halfway, either with respect to the content of what you put forward, or to the responsibility to which you want to give rise in the pupil, or to the substance of education and evangelization, reducing them to private and individual benefits.

Apostles must know how to open evangelization to the demands of education, recognizing the importance of providing a reply to real problems, so as not to make a proclamation remote from daily life.



15. Heart of the salesian mission: da mihi animas, coetera tolle
16. Accepting the challenges of life
17. Social frailty of the family institution
18. A new awareness of the role of women in the Church and society
19. The challenge of social communication
20. The new forms of solidarity

Art. 15 Heart of the salesian mission: da mihi animas, coetera tolle

We start once again from the centre of salesian reality, by considering the story of Don Bosco, and by examining the experience of his apostolic Family.

Da mihi animas is like a milestone, with certain consequences.

In it is enshrined the whole of the salesian spirit. It is our salesian badge par excellence. It highlights the demands of the mission.

It expresses the impetuous eagerness of the apostle.

It is apostolic charity, ready to lose everything in order to save all.

In the constitutional documents it is said, with reference to Don Bosco's words "da mihi animas", that we are "signs and bearers of the love of God".

In a more immediate form we could say: "Everything, everything, even to giving our life for Christ and for the young"."

Art. 16 Accepting the challenges of life

The ability to reach the heart of the life and daily experience of those to whom our mission is addressed means that we must enter into their reality, nowadays particularly contradictory and conflicting, to accompany them, share with them and help them.

The most pressing problems regarding the activity of believers arise from contemporary culture, and involve among other things:

the challenge of complexity.

It concerns all of life's settings, including that of religious experience.

Many religions exist simultaneously in the same territory.

In this way the mission involves a relationship and encounter with movements and vital inspirations that are many and varied.

Young people are ever more frequently tempted to indifference and opposition to religion, with the risk of reducing faith to a private matter irrelevant to choices that must be made.

¹ Card. Anastasio Ballestrero, Don Bosco prete per i giovani, Editrice ELLE DI Cl, 1987, pag. 37

This leads to a moral disorientation which is a challenge to the Salesian charism, committed in the Church to the education of young people to the life they must accept and to interpersonal relationships.

Art. 17 Social frailty of the family institution

Today's social and cultural context does nothing to foster the development of the natural family.

The Church reminds believers of some fundamental truths:

the development of society and of the Church itself depends on the family;

the family is a workshop, the first place for human development and true solidarity; in God's design the family is a great gift, unique and blessed from its beginning, the cradle of life and love.

All who take their inspiration from Don Bosco feel challenged by the present situation, because they recognize in the family an educative function, the setting for preparing young people for love and the welcoming of life, the first school of solidarity between persons and peoples.

The members of the Salesian Family, lay and consecrated, assume a specific commitment for giving dignity and solidity to the family, so that it becomes in an ever more evident manner "a small Church, a domestic Church".

This is where we reach the new kinds of problem concerning the dynamics of procreation, the development of human life, and the manipulation of the human being. "The enormous development of biological and medical science, united to an amazing power in technology, today provides possibilities on the very frontier of human life which imply new responsibilities".²

Art. 18 A new awareness of the role of women in the Church and in society

The experience of Salesian life came into being and is enriched by the significant and efficacious contribution of many women.

Don Bosco would not have been able to devise the Preventive System had it not been for the formation he received from Mamma Margaret.

² John Paul II, Christifideles Laici, n. 38.

Mary Mazzarello was able to put a feminine gloss on Don Bosco's experience. The first Don Bosco Volunteers around Fr Philip Rinaldi inaugurated female consecrated secularity in the Salesian Family.

Today women belonging to the Salesian Family in its various constituent Groups are committed to the sharing of their natural feminine talent with their brothers.

Particular changes taking place in our world demand clarity concerning woman's dignity and her vocation. We may repeat here a statement of Vatican II in its conclusion: "At this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling".

Art. 19 The challenge of social communication

Technical instruments and means of information now immediately make public all that at one time was considered private.

Overcoming all physical barriers, communication and its contents, consumer models and proposals, invade the whole of life.

The new situation of the culture of communication, on the other hand, offers previously unknown possibilities for education and evangelization.

Today social communication is the obligatory pathway for the spreading of culture and life models.

It is a significant part of the experience of youth.

Don Bosco had an intuitive understanding of its efficacy and left as a legacy to his spiritual family the task of exploiting social communication as a means of personal and communal growth, and at the same time a defence of the faith among the working classes.

Art. 20 The new forms of solidarity

Interdependence between persons and peoples is a system which determines relationships in the contemporary world. It reaches the financial, cultural, political and religious fields.

Messaggio alle Donne, 8th december 1965

The response to interdependence can be twofold and it creates two opposing attitudes: a seeking of dominion over others or evangelical service.

The latter is what we call solidarity.

"This is not a vague feeling of compassion or superficial tenderheartedness for the evils suffered by so many persons near or far.

On the contrary it is a firm and persevering determination to work for the common good: i.e. for the good of each and all, because all are truly responsible for everyone else".

Solidarity is shown through:

• Salesian assistance, when it is understood and carried out in line with the many attitudes linked with it.

Today it can also be called the "ethics of heing neighbourly"; it commits one to making personal contacts, friendly and trusting relationships, for meeting the deepest expectations of young people, especially among the poor and lowly.

• the civil, social and missionary volunteer movement, now widespread among the young and adults.

It constitutes for the individual a possible significant vocation of commitment. Understood as willingness to devote time to the advancement of promotional, educative and pastoral initiatives, it leads persons to the sharing of responsibility.

social and political commitment.

This is a theme that needs a good deal of further explanation.

In the institutional texts of the Groups of the Salesian Family, there is habitually a statement that the Groups, to the extent that they are salesian, remain outside all political parties or organization.

In many areas there is a certain skepticism or absenteeism in respect of public matters on the part of believers.

But two criteria expressed by the Church must be kept in mind:

- "The Church praises and esteems the work of those who for the good of men devote themselves to the service of the state and take on the burdens of this office".
- "The lay faithful are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life', that is, in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultu-

Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, n. 75.

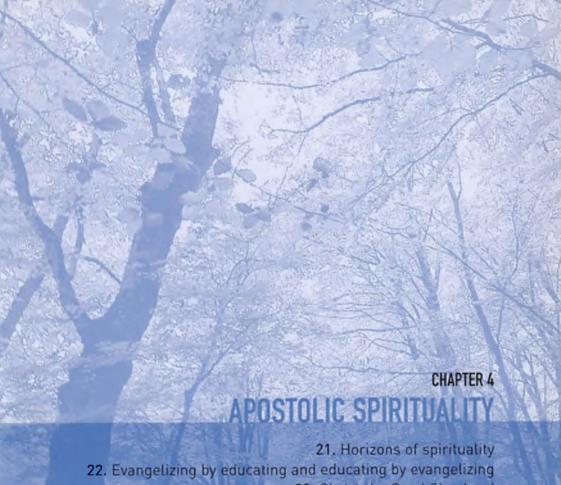
ral areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good".1

the new evangelization.

The process followed by the Church in preparing for the third millennium has indicated a commitment of fidelity to the Word of the Lord and to the vocation of individuals and of Movements.

The Salesian Family, attentive to the voice of the Spirit, has heard the call to a deeper pastoral and spiritual work:

- for a personalization of the faith of those to whom our mission is directed and of the operators, through systematic catechesis,
- for an explicit proclamation of both the message of the Gospel in daily life, and the practical demands that arise from the mystery of the incarnation,
- for a fraternal communion in apostolate which coordinates the many resources of the salesian charism,
- for accompanying the young who are looking for the meaning to give to their own life, even to the acceptance of the gift of God who calls with a vocation of special consecration to his Kingdom.



21. Horizons of spirituality
22. Evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing
23. Christ the Good Shepherd
24. Dynamic pastoral charity
25. Spirituality of action
26. Salesian loving kindness
27. Salesian prayer
28. Mary Mother and Teacher

Art. 21 Horizons of spirituality

From the charism stems a spirituality.

It gives a new vision of the reality, with the ability to read not only what is apparent in it, but also the underlying factors.

It fills the believers with a strength that enables them to give themselves to others with boundless enthusiasm in practical charity.

It suggests aspects of the mystery of God which become criteria for a relationship with him, with creation and history, with brothers and sisters.

It unifies the whole of existence, giving it a soul, a centre and a motivation.

Art. 22 Evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing

This is the typical formula expressing the unity of the spirituality lived in the Salesian Family.

It is a different mode of expressing the Preventive System, not only in its pedagogical and methodological dimension, but also in that of spirituality.

It helps the understanding of spirituality as a gift, in so far as it indicates unity of life and action in the apostolate, as a fruit which is born of the Spirit and leads back to him.

It demands that we be witnesses of the educative force inherent in the Gospel, and at the same time we are called upon, as spiritual sons and daughters of Don Bosco to manifest the rich evangelizing qualities of education.

For this reason we say that we are "signs and bearers of the love of God" for the young, especially those most in need, and for the working classes.

This is a challenge today for all Groups of the Family, because there is a strong tendency to simplify the apostolic mission, reducing it at times to a mere promotional perspective, and at others to explicit evangelization and nothing else.

Education, on the other hand, requires us to give expression to what it has not yet been possible to express at a human and spiritual level.

Consideration of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist as signs of grace and instruments of education is a new way of looking at them.

Art. 23 Christ the Good Shepherd

The image of the Good Shepherd is applicable to all believers who practise animation towards others, particularly the poor and lowly.

And it points to two important perspectives of apostolic spirituality.

The first: in every kind of work and commitment we believers "enter in the name of Tesus".

In other words, it implies that we place at the centre of our attention, concerns and endeavours the person as the supreme value to whom we dedicate ourselves without limit.

The apostle loves, loves totally, loves without prejudice or reserve: thus did the Good Shepherd deal with the lost sheep.

The second: to welcome and live by the Lord Jesus as the only one who gives fullness and meaning to daily life.

He is the place where life is saved from instability and emptiness.

He is the guarantee of freedom, because he leaves us free to enter or leave, as John puts it.

He is the example of solidarity, and offers us safe and green pastures.

Through our Salesian experience, the image of the Good Shepherd guides the content, method and projects of the spiritual life.

It presents in a new way the understanding of the Preventive System, through: reciprocal and personal knowledge,

follow-up, shown by encouragement and optimism in difficulties linked with pastoral work, and adapted to the situations and circumstances of each one,

mutual responsibility, by inviting all to take up attitudes of sympathy and practical help with regard to strangers and outsiders.

Art. 24 Dynamic pastoral charity

Dynamic pastoral charity is the heart of Don Bosco's spirit, the substance of salesian life, and the force behind the apostolic commitment of the members of the Salesian Family.

The term "charity" means more than the strengths of the human heart, the sympathy of educators, and the joy of knowing that one is being useful. It is as well a sharing in the very heart of Christ and in the foreseeing mercy of the Father. The dream at the age of nine already contains this requirement.

"Pastoral" charity therefore is the participation in the interior soul of the Lord Jesus, in his mission of salvation, in the commitment shown by the Good Shepherd for the salvation of all.

In the heart of the Salesian apostle this aspect strengthens his love for the Father and his glory, and his love for his brethren, and especially the most needy of them, who have to be saved.

"Dynamic" pastoral charity expresses the need to live at a level above the normal, with a liveliness and even a bit of foolishness which is wiser than human wisdom. Salesian charity follows the innovative dynamism typical of the young: it cannot stand routine, but looks for new aspects of prophecy typical of youth.

Art. 25 Spirituality of action

Saint **Francis** de Sales is the recognized master of a new spirituality in the Church: the ecstasy of action and of life.

In committed Christian experience, three forms of ecstasy can be realized: the intellectual kind: it is born of admiration of God's design and work, and appears as light illuminating the path of faith;

the affective kind: this finds its strength in the offering of one's life and talents to the Lord and his Kingdom, and is shown in the fervour and enthusiasm of love; that of action and of life: it has its origin in daily practical activity and is nourished by good works done with care, readiness and frequency.

For Saint Francis de Sales this latter is the highest form and is totally directed towards the perception of God's presence in the life of people and of the Church.

The Salesian Family, looking again at Don Bosco as the Founder of a spiritual family, has expressed the demands of spirituality and mysticism seen at a youthful level with a simple but demanding formulation: the spirituality of daily life.

^{*} Cfr. 1 Cor. 1.25.

Art. 26 Salesian loving kindness

Loving kindness requires the overcoming of one's own selfishness, so as to be open to the needs of others.

It is a true exodus from oneself.

It demands a great love, a hope that is proof against all temptation, and a trust that will not give way in the face of difficulties.

The young are to be accepted at the point at which they are found, as regards human and religious experience.

We have to take them from where they are, so as to bring them to where they are called to be

The internal forces for good, for justice and love which are in them, are looking for educators able to accept and develop them.

"The charity of Christ urges us on continually": repeat the Salesian educator and pastor.

Loving kindness is a visible and human sign of the love of God.

It is the instrument for bringing him to birth and growth in the heart of all who are reached by Don Bosco's loving kindness.

It is the manifestation of God the loving Father, of Jesus who takes on himself the whole of human experience, of the Holy Spirit who loves and defends the poor as their friend.

Loving kindness goes hand in hand with reason, to avoid the possibility of us getting lost in mere emotion.

Art. 27 Salesian prayer

We usually call it apostolic prayer.

Its exemplars for all of us are Saint Francis de Sales and Don Bosco.

It is not easy to judge Don Bosco by the traditional parameters of prayer. He showed in his way of acting that he was very different from other saints: he combined extraordinary and continuous work with prayer that was deep but simple and not unduly prolonged.

In his own time many of his priestly colleagues were little edified by the kind and quantity of Don Bosco's work and the little evidence he showed of formal prayer.

And yet he was encouraged by the Pope to continue in the same manner.

Three **characteristics** must be jointly considered in the story of Don Bosco as a holy and spiritual man:

The **harmony** between the periphery and centre of his life.

By periphery is to be understood his tireless work.

The Centre is to be interpreted as his mystical recollection.

Though ceaselessly concerned with so many business matters, the periphery caused no disturbance to the centre, and the centre caused no obstacles for the periphery.

Harmony is the expression of a synthesis that has been achieved, as Francis de Sales had taught.

The very **name** of the most significant work of his apostolic experience and as a master of the spiritual life: the Oratory.

Don Bosco himself remarked that the word was meant to indicate very clearly the substantial purpose of the work of the oratories.

It also expressed the foundation of his institution: prayer!

The request made to his sons: perform well **the practices of a good Christian**. A right understanding of Don Bosco's words is possible in a context of God's Word. The practices of a good Christian cannot be reduced to only the external practices of piety.

They provide us rather with a much broader horizon, that described by the evangelist Matthew in the judgement at the end of life.

The practices of the good Christian are the seeking and fulfilment of God's will, and prayer and work for the building of his Kingdom.

Art. 28 Mary Mother and Teacher

Many Groups of the Salesian Family make reference to Mary in their officially recognized title: Mary, Mary Immaculate, Mary Help of Christians, Queenship of Mary, Heart of Mary.

From his childhood, from his first dream at the age of nine, Don Bosco referred to Mary as a Mother and Teacher, because this is how she had been indicated by the Personage of the dream.

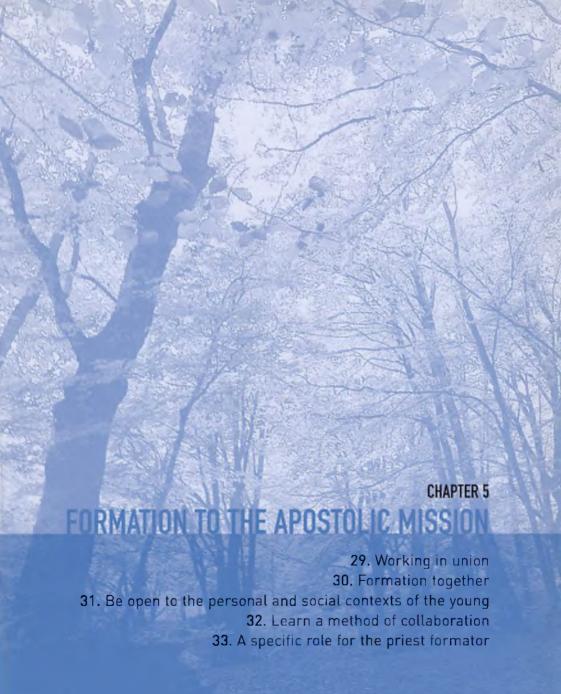
In his first educative experience, following the custom of his local Church, he attached himself to the Virgin of Consolation.

To feel themselves protected by a consoling Mother responded fully to the needs of the young who were "poor and in danger".

When he had gathered the boys stably together at Valdocco in an integral project of education and evangelization, and the universal Church was living the spiritual moment of the dogma, he proposed to them the image of Mary Immaculate. She seemed to Don Bosco to be the most effective educator for youngsters who had to overcome the difficulties inherent in their human and Christian growth. Finally, as the Founder of an apostolic Family, committed to the education and evangelization of the young and the poor, and after experiencing how "Mary had done everything" in his life, always giving him timely aid, he proposed and spread devotion to the Blessed Virgin under the title of Help of Christians.

Observing the picture Don Bosco wanted for the Basilica, and reading again the description he gave the painter who was to produce it, Mary Help of Christians appears in her mystery of Mother of the Church and in her role as educator and

powerful help.



Art. 29 Working in union

Communion is the first and fundamental apostolic work.

Apostles must be prepared for a mission shared with other workers.

To be alone in this environment is to court failure.

The gifts received must be cultivated, so that they will grow and multiply.

But it is indispensable to be able to adopt common projects and perspectives.

Every family becomes such when it succeeds in living in unity and becoming organized as an organic whole.

We are called together at the same time, and together we are sent.

Differences and specific characteristics are not destroyed, but are rather sustained and strengthened.

The dispersion of apostolic efforts and individualism in good works reduces gospel witness and operative efficacy.

In the Salesian Family there are working together priests and laity, religious and consecrated persons, men and women, young people and adults.

Each one must learn to recognize himself in the multiplicity of relationships, build them in fraternity and leave room for the charisms of others.

The good of the young and the working classes is something that rises above and beyond concerns about the growth and image of the individual groups.

Art. 30 Formation together

The criterion in Salesian life is that of making of experiences the content of formation.

We point out two levels of formation together, while recognizing that there are many other possibilities.

- A theoretical level.
- ${
 m I}^{\circ}$ Learn to **think together**, so as not to reduce **real**ity to one's own point of view. In other words:
 - overcome selfishness and individualism in the organization of action;
 - overcome the fear of having to discuss and compare with others;
 - concentrate on the good of those to whom the work is directed, rather than on

the success of the work itself:

- decentralize on yourself so as to concentrate on others.

2° - Arrange matters so that you can work together.

In other words:

- the various Groups of the Salesian Family should take up the commitment of a practical application of what is contained in this *Common Mission Statement*. And so they should:
- meet together;
- consider, in particular, the good of the young and of people in general;
- find a common field of action, as far as possible, for an effective apostolic and educative project.

• A practical level.

The indications that follow are only examples. Life is very much richer. Creativity is still a precious result of fidelity to Don Bosco.

It is traditional in many places to live the following in common:

- spiritual exercises
- summer schools
- days of retreat
- courses for animators
- schools of apostolic prayer
- days of reflection ...

Art. 31 Be open to the personal and social contexts of the young

The apostolic mission is realized in the ability to reach the hearts of the individuals and the substance of their daily experience, recognizing the needs and demands of different social and cultural contexts.

"Like what the youngsters like, so that they will learn to like what we like!" Don Bosco would still repeat at the present day.

Love can never be considered and lived in a merely instrumental manner, as though to captivate the other person and draw him into one's own world. It is rather the eloquent expression of the incarnation of the Lord who loves human realities, enters them as a dynamic force in the story of the individual and the world, and propels them towards complete fulfilment.

The apostle must be able to adapt.

To cast off judgements and prejudice, to overcome personal sensitivity so as to welcome all others, to share the problems, outlook and expectations of the young and people in general, is to realize the inculturation which the Church asks for today of all missionaries.

Art. 32 Learn a method of collaboration

Educative and apostolic activity has its own internal laws which must be respected, especially when many operators are called upon to intervene.

Learning how to practise these laws takes up a substantial time of the formation of the members of the different Groups.

• The first law is that of coordination.

Convergence of forces in view of a concrete objective is never something automatic. It needs to be foreseen and programmed.

For effective coordination, each one should know exactly

- the problem to be tackled,
- the practical possibilities for an effective solution,
- and should have the will to give and to receive.
- The second law is that of reciprocity.

Giving and receiving are not to be considered in a one-way sense, as though some are always called to give, and others always to receive.

Reciprocity is

- welcoming what the other person gives,
- recognizing the other's value,
- collaboration offered with skill and ability.
- The third law is that of shared responsibility.

It is a consequence of the two preceding laws, and stems from the ability to accept a primary responsibility and fulfil it.

To take up an apostolic responsibility is never a form of domination.

It is always a service to be rendered to God's Kingdom.

It means recognizing the responsibility of others, leaving elbow-room for all so that they can play an active part in the common design.

Art. 33 A specific role for the priest formator

The Second Vatican Council presents priests as guides and educators of the people of God.

It writes: "Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian

maturity".

And it justifies the statement: "Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free"."

In this way the Salesian priest is called to his most significant responsibilities in the sector of formation.

The Word of God, the sacraments and particularly the Eucharist, the service of unity and charity represent the greatest treasure of the Church.

Paraphrasing some words of the Council, we may say that it is not possible to bring about the spiritual formation of an apostolic family other than by taking as its root and stem the celebration of the sacred Eucharist, which must therefore be the starting point for any education tending to form the spirit of a family."

The Groups of the Salesian Family have always shown this need for formation, and they put it forward once again through the present document.

Preshyterorum Ordinis, n. 6.

Ibid.

[&]quot;Cf. Ibid.



36. Objectives of pastoral communion 37. Organization of apostolic communion

Art. 34 Horizons of pastoral communion in the Salesian Family

Communion is all important from a vision shared around two elements: the significance of an apostolic mission and the awareness of a priority within the broad apostolic field left to us by Don Bosco.

The **mission**, in the language of our Salesian Family, is **specified and determined** by a series of considerations, such as:

- those to whom our apostolic activity is addressed,
- the general and particular content of our work,
- the spirit that animates our activity and pastoral options,
- the specific and original areas programmed,
- the structures and works which express, sustain and give a concrete expression to our pastoral presence and activity,
- the educational and family atmosphere created in the activities.

Hence the mission, for us, does not consist only in material activity.

Moreover, the Salesian Family has a clear and convinced awareness that

- young people, especially those in greater need, and the ordinary people have a prior part in the salesian apostolic legacy,
- our educative and pastoral presence among those whom the Holy Spirit entrusts to our care is a significant part of the salesian charism.

Art. 35 Communion in pastoral autonomy

Apostolic communion is to be understood as a strengthening of the specific characteristic and autonomy of each Group in the fraternal communion of the family.

We reassert the autonomy of the Groups.

We are speaking here of apostolic autonomy, and not only of that which is spiritual. It is not a matter of uniformity of intervention by everyone: all doing the same thing!

Nor are we seeking a levelling out of differences, which would only lead to confusion and pastoral uncertainty: with everyone doing everything!

It is a matter of coordinating gifts: each inserts its own contribution harmoniously into a project. Each has its own sphere!

The Groups are not identical with one another, either as regards their internal

structure, or their practical apostolic ability.

We consider the originality of each Group as important.

The rich nature of the salesian charism is manifested more completely and attractively when the characteristics of each Group are seen together.

The complexity of today's field of education and the integral growth of the young propel us towards creativity, and at the same time towards convergence.

It is the right of young people to be able to make use of a specific service of each Group.

It is a distinctive example of the rich nature of the Church.

Communion in autonomy is something to be sought after if we are to be effective in our activity and multiply the forces at work for the benefit of the young.

Art. 36 Objectives of pastoral communion

The Groups are called upon to spread, with the values of the Gospel of Christ, the characteristic traits of the Salesian charism.

The latter belongs to the entire Family.

It cannot therefore be the concern of only certain Groups.

All, and even the individual members, are personally responsible for the animation and promotion of the spiritual legacy they have received.

We all accept therefore, in the different geographical places where we work, and in the different cultural contexts in which life has placed us, the responsibility:

• of an educative concern in today's context.

We help to make recognized the frailty and the strength inherent in a special manner in the education of the young;

• of the Preventive System.

Reason, religion and loving kindness are still, and perhaps even more than yesterday, indispensable supports for a society that is more human and more the measure of the new generations;

of the Salesian spirit.

Salesian humanism, with its respect for the person, even the simplest and lowly; with trust in his continual growth when he has an educator at hand; with the encouragement for all those who are looking for a meaning in life, is the harbinger of a new civilization of love;

of the Salesian movement.

The need is well known to group together around realities which are significant for those who accomplish them and those who benefit from them.

Don Bosco used to involve many people in his educative plans; at every level he asked them for care and attention for his boys.

The broad salesian movement and its linkage with so many forces are offerings useful to all.

Art. 37 Organization of apostolic communion

The present document now awaits the test of experience.

The various indications in the text need to be read again locally, to study their possible practical application.

Each Group, in preparing its own program, should consider the aspect of collaboration and the possible forms of its realization.

One may think of collaboration and shared responsibility:

between two or more Groups who share the need and demand for a common project for the poor of a certain area;

between all the Groups living and working in the same territory, if it be seen that this would be useful and apostolically effective.

Frequent communication between the Groups should never be lacking, because it is the premise for reaching shared apostolic responsibility.



38. In praise of the Trinity

"Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, almighty Father, for ever and ever". Every day as conscious and committed believers, we renew in the Eucharist our faith in the Lord's work, and offer him our praise.

The Salesian Family reconfirms its awareness of living and working in the Church, making its modest but original contribution, so that "hallowed be your Name, your Kingdom come, your Will be done".

The spiritual preparation for the third millennium, wanted and guided by the Church, has shown all Christians the essence of true life: that which derives from the Father, is manifested in the Son and is sustained by the Spirit.

To go back to our Trinitarian roots is to understand the urgent need of communion and the apostolic mission for enlarging the circle of sonship and fraternity.

We believe in the love of God, and so we love to spread it.

Rome, 15 November 2000.

THE COMMON IDENTITY CARD

PRESENTATION INTRODUCTION	7
CHAPTER 1. THE GRACE OF COMMUNION IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY 1. God's design in the plan of the Founder 2. A spiritual and apostolic family in development 3. The riches of mutual communion 4. In the heart of the Church for the salvation of the world	9
CHAPTER 2. PARTICIPATION IN THE SALESIAN FAMILY 5. Titles to membership 6. Reciprocal exchange of gifts 7. Reference to Don Bosco, Father and Teacher 8. Inspired by the humanism of St Francis de Sales 9. The Rector Major the centre of unity 10. Description of the Salesian Family of Don Bosco	13
CHAPTER 3. CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THE SALESIAN COUNTENANCE A. Some particularly significant sayings of Don Bosco 11. Da mihi animas 12. To gain souls for God I push ahead even to the point of rashness 13. If we are one in heart we can do ten times as much 14. No effort should be spared when the Church and the Papacy are at stake 15. That you are young is enough to make me love you very much 16. Our method is founded entirely on reason, religion and loving kindness 17. My one support has always been recourse to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary Help of Christians	19

B. Basic elements of the common spirit	25
18. Pastoral charity 19. The grace of unity 20. Union with God and style of prayer 21. The mission to the young and the common people 22. Optimism and the joy of hope 23. The ascesis of kindness 24. Work and temperance 25. The spirit of initiative 26. Rooted in the mystery of Christ and entrustment to Mary 27. The sense of Church 28. Alert sensitivity to the challenges of the new evangelization	
CHAPTER 4. FORMATION OF AN ACTIVE FRATERNITY 29. The primacy of life in the Spirit 30. Knowing and appreciating the individual character of each Group 31. Mutual relationships in the Salesian Family 32. Planning for a more extensive "Salesian Movement" 33. Willing collaboration in the local Churches and in society 34. Esteem for other ecclesial forces	35
CHAPTER 5. SERVICES OF COMMUNION 35. Communion demands fidelity to one's own Group 36. Points of reference 37. Usefulness of adroit structures	41
CONCLUSION 38. The memory of the saints of our Family and our recourse to them 39. The ecclesial relevance of a Family united in life and activity	45
APPENDIX Prayer to Mary Help of Christians, Mother of the Salesian Family	48

COMMON MISSION STATEMENT

PRESENTATION INTRODUCTION	51 55
CHAPTER 1. THE SALESIAN FAMILY IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH 1. The Church for a new evangetization 2. The action of God's Spirit 3. The Groups of the Salesian Family committed in the ecclesial mission 4. Aspects of the apostolic commitment of the Family of Don Bosco 5. A mission particularly suited to lay people 6. The Preventive System	57
CHAPTER 2. THE MISSION OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY IN THE NEW RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL CONTEXT 7. Apostolic commitment challenges the Salesian Family 8. Upright citizen and good Christian 9. Salesian humanism 10. Commitment for the human person at the present day 11. Effectiveness in the local area 12. Progressive seeking of the overall objective 13. Complementarity in the convergence of forces 14. Educating by evangelizing, evangelizing by educating	61
CHAPTER 3. FRONTIERS FOR THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL MISSION OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY 15. Heart of the Salesian mission: da mihi animas, coetera tolle 16. Accepting the challenges of life 17. Social frailty of the family institution 18. A new awareness of the role of women in the Church and society 19. The challenge of social communication 20. The new forms of solidarity	67
CHAPTER 4. APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY 21. Horizons of spirituality 22. Evangelizing by educating and educating by evangelizing 23. Christ the Good Shepherd 24. Dynamic pastoral charity 25. Spirituality of action 26. Salesian toving kindness 27. Salesian prayer 28. Mary Mother and Teacher	73

