

# The parish and the shrine entrusted to the salesians

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Sector for  
Salesian Youth  
Ministry

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

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- CCJL: *Code of Court Law* (1993)
- CSC: *Cost, Structure, and Opportunity of the Society of Court Services* (1996)
- DC: *Central Chapter of the Ellinon of Dan Illinois*
- EDW: *Edison Industries Project* (2001)
- FSCP: *Florida Supreme Court Strategic Plan*
- EPO: *Economic-Political Opportunities*
- F3: *Sabean youth ministry Frame of Reference* (Book); Ministry Department (2016)
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# Introduction

## The parish

as a Church in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters, to be able to evangelize, has always had to adapt to the times, changing the ways in which she is present. Today, the Salesian parish is called to do the same. It must be a Church which "goes forth" throughout the local area in which she is located, capable not only of bringing people together, but of igniting states of faith and creating bonds in everyday life.

As a Congregation, the need arose to identify some privileged areas of pastoral renewal in the Salesian parish. After the first text of the sector "Salesian parish and Shines entrusted to the Salesians" in the "Frame of Reference for Youth Ministry" drawn up in 2014, it was decided to adapt the content, based on a more current knowledge of parish realities.

For this reason, the Salesian Youth Ministry Department has involved the Provinces, with the aim of prioritizing, in the first place, a critical analysis of the situation of the parish with regard to certain issues: the current socio-religious situations, the characteristics of evangelization which exist today at the local level, the specific nature and roles of the people involved (priests and parish priests; the faithful, young people, parents, etc.). At the same time, the guidelines of the Sector Major and the Council and the various contributions sent by the provincial delegates for youth ministry and by some pastoral commissions were received and examined with attention and involvement.

This process made it possible to develop a **relevant reflection on the Salesian parish**. This document does not claim to be exhaustive and complete with respect to this broad context, but aims to offer further stimuli and possible pastoral implications. In fact, since each reality has its own crucial issues and challenges, choices have been made by giving preference to the essential elements that characterize and guarantee its original nature and its specific educative-pastoral characteristics, as a place of welcoming and apostolic service, in the face of the challenges of this era of great changes.

Therefore, the text takes the form of a synthetic and organic collection of the major reflection, educative-pastoral guidelines and operational issues that emerged from the various contributions received from the provinces, thus preventing an articulated expositon of the theological foundations and a complete analysis of the cultural and pastoral context of each reality.

To make the contents more systematic, it was decided to divide the text into five chapters. The structure can be functional in order to conceptualize the essential elements of all Salesian settings.

- The first Chapter focuses on the **ORIGINAL NATURE** of the parish entrusted to the Salesians in order to better identify the purpose for which we are present in these ecclesial realities. A programme that arises from Don Bosco's intention to create a parish for young people without a parish, a precious gift for the mission in the entire ecclesial community, by retracing the process of the assumption of parishes in the various deliberations of the General Chapters.
- Next we identify the **PEOPLE** involved in the mission: the educative-pastoral Community, a community of people (a "home"), not a structure or an institution. Being a community of communities, there is emphasis on the importance of the E.P. of the parishes and of all its members who take on a common mission that involves everyone in shared responsibility.
- The **VISION** identifies questions that characterize the third Chapter: What hopes, and dreams do we have? What apostolic challenges are we facing as a parish entrusted to the Salesians? Whom and what are we trying to transform evangelically? In other words, it focuses on what objectives we intend to achieve. Then follows an analysis of all the elements characterizing the educative-pastoral proposal of the parish entrusted to the Salesian community.



- The fourth focuses on **ORGANIZATION**. The proposal, inspired by the Christian catechumenate, looks after the personal, community and celebrative and liturgical dimension and the commitment to incorporation which guides the correct planning of interventions with young people, ensuring the completeness and integrity of the Christian experience of the people and structures of participation and responsibility.
- In the last Chapter, an update relating to public churches and Shrines is presented.

At the end of this process, I would like to thank all those who have contributed their observations; we have certainly had a positive experience of listening to the realities of the Congregation. Thanks to the quality of the reflections, we were able to gather valuable elements for verifying and reexamining our pastoral charity in the parish setting. The effort to systematize all aspects related to the parish setting was carried out with the intention of continuing the reflection at the local and provincial level, hoping that this work will have pastoral effects/results.

**B. Miguel Angel Gaita Mercuende, sub  
General Councillor for Youth Ministry**

15 October 2021

# THE ORIGINAL NATURE OF THE PARISH ENTRUSTED TO THE SALESIANS

CONTINUATION



## ASSUMING OF PARISHES IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTERS

Don Bosco's apostolic zeal for the poorest youth of Turin led him to create a **parish for young people without a parish**. During his time, Don Bosco accepted seven parishes and in 1887 he wrote a regulation on the proper functioning of the parish. He touched on the issues that concerned him most: the priority of attention to young people, especially the poorest, the educative preference of the Congregation and the identity of the Salesian parish priest that served in communion with the Bishop and the diocesan clergy. These themes continued to be central points of reference in the following years.

*«The sick, the poor and the children are the subjects of special concern of the parish priest» (Instruction on the Salesian Clergy, 2000)*

After a long process that lasted many decades, the GC 19 of 1965 states that, "the Salesian ministry seeks to include all the ordinary activities of its Parishes in the overall plan of diocesan pastoral ministry, even if they are carried out according to our spirit and in harmony with our methods and our structures" (GC79, Part I, chap. XI, 3). GC 70 affirmed in 1971 that "the parish entrusted to the Salesians should no longer be seen as a work situated next to the college or school, but as the true centre and pivot of our service to the local ecclesial community. In this perspective, the parish is presented as a field of work carried on a community of Salesians, to whom the Church entrusts the mandate of spreading the Kingdom of God" (GC70, 136).

The subsequent General Chapter of 1978 defines the parish commitment as Salesianally valid, also "because it allows to reach out to young people in their natural environment and to assist them throughout their development; it offers easier opportunities to involve parents and adults for their education; it promotes their natural integration in the local Church and in the territory" (GC71, 135). The reflection is based on two assumptions:

- the parish allows us to position ourselves among young people;
- here we can evangelize them in the style of the SIEP (Salesian Educative Pastoral Plan).

In this General Chapter the parishes are entrusted to the youth ministry department (OCP 1470).

In 1984, with the definitive approval of the renewed Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of Saint Francis de Sales, the parish is explicitly recognized as one of the environments in which we implement our proposal: "We carry out our mission also in the parishes, responding to pastoral needs of the particular Churches in those areas which offer us adequate scope for service to the youth and to the poor" (cf. Const. 42; Reg. 25).

Considering the importance of the steps described above, we can draw two conclusions:

- Primarily in the Salesian parish, the charism of the Congregation must manifest itself no less than in other sectors of our Salesian works. Basically, it is fundamental to bear in mind that it is not necessary to start from structures to seek the Salesian identity, but from the charism, spirituality and mission. This is expressed in article 42 of the Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco:

*[In parishes] ... I am committed to the spreading of the Gospel and to the advancement of the people. We collaborate in the pastoral programme of the particular Church out of the rhythm of our liturgical activities. (Const. 42)*

- The second conclusion is that the presence has a responsibility for animation and governance, not only in reference to the religious life of the people and the religious community to which the parish is entrusted, but also in reference to the pastoral and educative activity of the parishes themselves. This is due precisely to the main goal of each province: promoting the life and mission of the Congregation and offering a specific service to the particular Church (cf. Const. 157).

Therefore, taking on a Salesian parish implies first of all identifying the Salesian components in the situation of this environment, asking ourselves what charismatic contribution is given to the diocese through the parish entrusted to us.

## A PRECIOUS GIFT FOR THE WHOLE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

The parish is the first community instance in which the Church carries out the mission entrusted to her by Jesus in a well-defined socio-cultural context. In *Evangelii Gaudium* 78, Francis recalls some significant aspects of the identity of the parish, which, in addition to being a "presence of the Church in a given area", is a "community of communities", a place and sanctuary of Christian life, a missionary and evangelizing community:

"Since its inception, the Parish is summoned to a response to a precise pastoral task, namely that of bringing the Gospel to the People through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments (...) I called upon to read the signs of the times, while adapting both to the needs of the faithful and to historical changes (...) in search of new forms of accompaniment and discernment. A task of this kind ought not to be seen as a burden, but rather as a challenge to be embraced with enthusiasm."  
("The parish is a precious gift for the whole ecclesial community", 2015)

In our case, the parish entrusted to the Salesians enters the pastoral ministry of the Church with a style, a structure, a peculiarity; by its nature, it is configured as a privileged space for the evangelization for young people and the option for them is not exclusive or discriminatory, but preferential and constitutes a timeless challenge. This preferential option is a precious gift for the mission in the whole ecclesial community.

This pastoral presence has many diverse characteristics, both with regard to the request for entrustment and with respect to social position.

*The request for entrustment may concern:*

- parish presences of the diocesan clergy which are subsequently entrusted to a religious community; in some cases, the religious animate only the parish environment; in others, the centers who animate the parish are part of a broader Salesian Work, which also includes other pastoral activities;

- passages from "public church" or "Shrine" to "parish";
- the entrustment of a parish or of different parishes to several priests "in solidum", all equivalent to the parish priest; in this case the "coordinator" is to direct the joint pastoral action and answer for it to the Bishop (cf. OC, can. 517, 51);
- lastly, parishes entrusted to religious who are isolated or in a personal capacity, or for contingent reasons. With respect to this last mode of entrustment, the Congregation is gradually no longer accepting this type of request. All the indications concerning the



conditions established by law and the procedures to be followed for the acceptance of a parish, are contained in the document "Legal elements and administrative practice in the government of the Province" (Directorate General for Works. Qon Riwac, 2004, no. 126).

As for the pastoral and social position in which the parishes entrusted to the Salesians are situated, there has been a certain multiplicity:

- they are located in regions of widespread social adhesion to the Church that require in-depth evangelization; others are located in contexts in which faith requires a phase of reformulation due to the rapid process of secularization;
- quite a few develop in societies in which the Church is not allowed other structures, environments or methods of evangelization;
- some parishes are mission stations, while others are located in rural environments;
- they are also present in environments with a strong popular religiosity, but also in immigrant contexts;
- there is no shortage in large urban areas and in the suburbs of big cities, with related agglomeration, human promotion and rooting problems;
- lastly, several are located in medium-high socio-economic contexts, while others in more modest ones.

## AT A GLANCE

### ORIGINALITY OF PARISH ENTRUSTED TO THE SALESIANS

A privileged space of  
incarnation for young people.

according to the Salesian  
Pedagogical Educational Project

Parish entrusted to  
Salesians for the Salesian Work

Different from other  
models of parish work

- Ascension of parishes in  
the determination of General  
Chapters

- Solemn Parish, a precious  
gift for the ecclesial community

- The charism of the  
Congregation must be  
manifested no less than in  
other orders of our Salesian  
works

- The Finance has an  
irreducible and ultimate  
responsibility

- diocesan parishes entrusted to a  
religious community
- transition from "public church" or  
"collegiate" to "parish"
- delivery of one or more parishes to  
several priests (in addition)
- parishes finally entrusted to salesian  
missions or in a personal capacity (the  
Congregation ceasing towards no  
longer accepting this type of trust)

Social Placements

- placed in regions of widespread social  
poverty in the Church
- located in contexts where faith may  
not be predominant
- in countries in which the Church is not  
permitted other structures
- mission stations or rural settings
- environments with a strong popular  
majority, but also in interfaith contexts
- in large urban agglomerations, in the  
suburbs of large cities
- in medium-high or middle  
socioeconomic contexts



# **THE EDUCATIVE PASTORAL COMMUNITY OF THE PARISHES**

CHARTER



APPROVED

APPROVED

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EPC OF THE PARISH

From the mystery of the incarnation arises the mystery of the Church: "In the human nature united to Himself the Son of God, by overcoming death through His own death and resurrection, redeemed man and re-molded him into a new creation. By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body" (LG 7). The Church is a "mystery of communion". The essence of the Church is determined by the mystery of the Triune God: it is the people of God the Father (LG 7), the mystical body of Christ (LG 3) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (LG 4).

The parish, in this society and in this history, becomes the face of the Church, which is conceived as a Eucharistic, missionary and evangelizing community in the territory of a particular Church, and which people find close to their own homes, visibly and socially inserted in their daily lives. In it, Christians live faith, hope and charity, nourished by the Word of God, in the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, creating communion in a community committed by its essence to the mission of salvation of the Universal Church, through the particular Church.

The parish is a large community of baptized believers, a "portion" of the universal Church, within the dynamics of diocesan ministry. The Christian community is the place where communion is experienced: the believer finds a home there. In this respect, today the typology of the parish is certainly not unique but rather it is a complex reality. Being a community of communities, the parish creates a broad weave of human relationships that fosters communion and fraternity, a "spirituality of communion" (Novo Milenio Ineunte, 43-45).

The Salesian form of animation of every educational reality, which comes out Don Bosco's mission, is defined as the *Educative-pastoral Community* (EPC) (cf. Const. A7, GC24, no. 169-172; R8, chap. V). It is not a new structure that is added to the other management and participation agencies existing in the various pastoral works or environments, nor is it an organizational way of working or a technique of participation. It is a group of people (young people and adults, parents and educators, religious and lay people, representatives of other ecclesial and civil institutions and also belonging to other religions, men and women of good will who work

together for the education and evangelization of the young, especially the poor, in the style of Don Bosco. This reality can be conceived as a structure of concentric circles, based on how individuals' responsibilities in the mission are shared.

Our charism is a gift of the Spirit for the Church, thus a Salesian parish exhibits two distinctive characteristics:

- first of all, it is where God's presence is found in the local Church, in the light of personal charity;
- secondly, it is the *Educative-pastoral Community*, where everyone feels responsible for proclaiming the Gospel and for the growth of the community, especially young people.

The EPC of the Salesian parish takes up a common mission involving responsibility (cf. GCM, 18), shared by the largest possible number of people and evangelizing energies around a pastoral plan. It is therefore necessary to overcome an essentially clerical and "monolithic" parish model, a parish in which only ordained ministers make decisions and govern.

It is a matter of establishing a communal vision of the parish that prevents the self-referential conception and the clericalization of the pastoral ministry, putting the spotlight on fraternal relations, a parish understood as an EPC, in which the plurality of vocations, charisms and ministries build a harmonious organism, in which all the members find their place and in which the daily journey is an exercise of shared responsibility. It is a community that is enriched with faces, names, charisms, dialogue, and discussion.

A parish in which a "fusion of diversities" takes place: with priests, religious and laity who co-operate in a single ecclesial, mutually complementary to diversity, each bringing their own contribution and all united by the same baptism. In other words, in the Church there is a place for everyone and everyone can find their place in the one family of God, respecting each other's position and trying to value every charism.

In fact, in the parish, diversities "make up the church" together: diversity of faith literacies; first of all, socio-cultural diversity; diversity

of temperaments, inclinations, mental categories, diversity of origin, age, diversity, diversity of responsibilities in the same parish.



## THE MEMBERS OF THE EPC OF THE PARISH

The numerous vocational expressions are a manifestation of lay co-responsibility and ministry within the configuration of the parishes. In the parish communities there are numerous lay people (adults and young people) who give their service and ministry in view of the common good. From being simple recipients of "religious service", the members of the parish community must become members of the mission of the church in their area.

People, especially youth, live in an environment where they share interests and experiences, in dialogue with peers and adults, in a climate of mutual accompaniment and in a continuous exchange of skills and talents. Living this experience of reciprocity in a community perspective, this "culture of encounter", means implementing in every Salesian house an **Educative-pastoral Community**, which is not a requirement of order and balance, but our **educative-pastoral model**. For this reason, we do not only exist together, but we find the need to work together, because we believe in the wealth that every vocation offers.

The people who make up the EPCs are: young people, families, groups of the Salesian Family, religious communities, committed lay people, groups, associations and ecclesial movements.

"The 'culture of encounter' is resonance in dialogue, solidarity that opens up to others, no it is person-oriented. Naturally, a Parish must be a "place" that brings people together and fosters long-term personal relationships, thereby giving people a sense of belonging and being needed. The Parish community is called truly to master the "art of accompaniment". ("The nurturing encounter of the Salesian community in the service of the education mission of the Church", 2000)

 The Salesian religious community of the parish increases its value with the significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay Salesians.

who constitute an essential element of its make-up and its apostolic completeness. In fact, the Salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status (cf. Const. 45).

Therefore, the community to which the parish is entrusted, with the wealth of its specific vocation, cooperates "charismatically" (according to the Salesian apostolic consecration) with the ministerial mandate entrusted by the diocesan Bishop. The whole renewal of the Congregation after the Second Vatican Council focused on the local "community" as the subject of the mission (cf. Const. 44, 49). It is increasingly urgent to cooperate in the creation of a mentality that considers the pastoral ministry of a Salesian parish as not exclusively connected to the figure of the parish priest, but to the entire Salesian community.

The entity **Salesian religious community** is the brain of a "specific pastoral sensitivity", which enriches the overall pastoral ministry through its spiritual and charismatic heritage. Its pedagogical style, and its relationships of fraternity and shared responsibility in the mission represent a reference testimony in the parishes and neighbourhoods.

The community lives the family spirit by being a witness of sharing for this purpose: first of all, if experience mutual understanding and respect in the internal dynamics. The provincial and his council ensure a religious community for the pastoral care of the parish and support the confirmer in the authentic realization of their Salesian vocation by encouraging their apostolic, real ministry dedicated to youth. The provincial visits a Salesian parish and intervenes to ensure that close commitment with the Bishop, is fulfilled according to the Agreement stipulated (cf. Legal elements and administrative practice in the government of the Province, Directorate General Works Don Bosco (DGDML Appendix A-14), to assure the Congregation that the Salesian proposal is accepted and implemented in the fulness of Don Bosco's charism.

It is the whole community that assures the pastoral guidelines of the diocese, with the wealth of its pastoral charism. The whole community:

- is fully integrated in the life and guidelines of the parishes it belongs to;
- creates a group of leaders for the pastoral ministry around the parish priest;

- promotes the development and implementation of the SEPP (Salesian Educative pastoral Plan) in the parish;
- is responsible, in collaboration with the parish priest and his team, for the formation and spiritual direction of the faithful;
- guides the members of the Salesian Family to be the first assistants in the development of the plan;
- participates in the life of the parish, taking an interest in the life and history of the people, especially the youth.

The religious community (cf. GC21, 138; Reg. 26) is part of the animating nucleus of the parish entrusted to the Salesians and assumes a clear role (cf. GC24, 157) as:

- it bears witness to the primacy of God;
- it visibly manifests its fraternal life and practice of the evangelical counsels through moments of prayer, meetings and social gatherings;
- it shares this testimony with the rest of the parish community;
- it is a portion of the pastoral project that gives space to the different gifts of the brothers.

*These particularities make the life of the community more homogeneous, more exciting and rich, more satisfying, giving it an internal and outer "attractive" gospel and life – the church.*

- B The Rector of the Salesian house**, as "first in order of responsibility for its religious life, its apostolic activities and the administration of its goods" (Const. 175), is the custodian of the Salesian consecrated identity for the local community. He accompanies and helps each brother to discern, develop and use the charismtic gifts bestowed on him for the realization of the Salesian mission, also in the parish (cf. *Animating and governing the community. The ministry of the Salesian Rector, Society of St Francis de Sales, Salesians of Don Bosco* (7019) point 4: "guardian and animator of the Salesian consecrated identity"). He looks after unity and the Salesian identity of the entire Work and

encourages the confirmands as they carry out the parish pastoral plan (cf. Reg. 70).

The difficulty in coordinating in a single plan his activities as rector, which he carries out from a religious and educational point of view for the whole Salesian Work, with those of the parish priest who is in charge of the parish community (ultimate reference for the animation and direction of the parish), is clarified by GC5 70 (GCS 430, 435) and by the Regulation (see Reg. 77). These directions have attempted to give order to the structure of these two figures. Art. 79 of the Regulation (1984) gathered the results of the experience with this rule: "Where the situation permits, the canonical election of the Salesian House should be carried out at the service of the parish with its rector-parish priest. When the offices of rector and parish priest are separate, the rector looks after the unity and the Salesian identity of the community and encourages the co-responsibility of the confirmands as they carry out the parish pastoral plan".

Therefore, the rector of a Salesian house who is dedicated only to the parish should also be a parish priest, if possible, assuming the role of rector-parish priest. The two roles have the common goal of creating a religious community which is the animating centre of a broader community of the Salesian parish.

On the other hand, it may well be that the rector has a dual responsibility as pastor or a responsible worker of the treasury; this requires a confirmand to be appointed, preferably with the role of assistant pastor, assigned to the treasury or parish, allowing him to devote himself to the main tasks and responsibilities of the rector.

In complex works, with more than one environment, the rector chairs the **Council of the EPC or of the Work**. This Council is the liaison and coordination body made up of the rector and representatives of all the settings that make up the Work itself; for this reason, it would be appropriate to encourage the presence of the parish priest and a few members of the Pastoral Council. Annotated by the same charism and partakers of the one mission, they are responsible for making the life and service of the Salesian charism present in an area in its significance. For this reason, they share the various responsibilities resulting from the management of all the settings of a Work, and they come together not only to organize, but also to be formed and build paths of common reflection.

**C** The parish priest is the first person responsible for the parish mission that the bishop entrusts to the Salesian Congregation; in fact, he is aware of his responsibilities towards the Bishop and the Congregation. It is important to bear in mind that the Salesian parish priest carries out a dual representation: He "makes present" the bishop and the project of the particular Church (cf. LG 28) and it is for this reason that he receives the mandate from his person; at the same time, he represents the Congregation and its proposal, since the parish is entrusted to the Congregation and the latter is in charge of appointing and replacing the parish priest at the end of his mandate. The parish priest presides over the parish community, assuming the responsibility of implementing the Educative-pastoral Plan, in communion with the Rector, with the Salesian community and with the Pastoral Council.

Faithful to the educative-pastoral mission, the Salesian parish priest patterns himself after Don Bosco in the evangelization of young people and the people of God. Today this inspiration is expressed by cultivating a careful vision of the educative-pastoral model, which every Salesian should seek. This approach is very important. We recall the importance that the Salesian Constitution has in the identity of the Salesians as "education and pastor", aware of the need to possess a kind of Salesian formation that is able to help them respond to the challenges of today's vocations, to the unexpressed questions and yearnings of the people of God, especially young people. Salesian priests who are more connected to the spaces, times and life situations of the people who live in working-class environments.

Besides that need for relationships, the parish priest should become a permanently accessible reference, in terms of time, but also of desire in "radiating" his community, pastorally and administratively, carrying in his heart all the pastoral and making it available to others, in your *easy frank style*: activity of a youthful and popular style.

Another characteristic - closely linked to the previous ones - is the ability to establish quality relationships, taking care of diversified interpersonal relationships with individuals, with couples, with the religious men and women he comes across, with the laity, the sick, with young people and children, with the elderly and families, with the people who make up the groups that work in the parish and with the local Church.

In this respect, the parish priest is called to welcome, listen, accompany and form the parish community "in a Salesian way", that is, with a simple and appropriate spirituality, a concrete apostolic witness, an example of diligence, a sense of optimism, a missionary horizon, a predilection for youth and the poor, a renewed Marian devotion and an engaged practice of the Sacraments.

The personal existence of a Salesian priest is based on a wide array of values inspired by the Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco. In short, it combines the gifts of Salesian apostolic consecration with those of the pastoral ministry. Clerical reflection has made it clear that the priesthood is not vague, neither as an exercise of the ministry nor as a grace. The charism has given rise to a unique way of being a priest and exercising his ministry. The authors who gave the biography of Don Bosco the title "A priest and educator", or "The young people's priest" have summarized this concept.

- ④ By virtue of Baptism, the laity have a very specific place, role and responsibility within our parish communities. They promote and accompany the diversity of vocations, also by encouraging a laity that assumes its significant role in the evangelizing mission. The parish community cultivates human relationships and takes care of people and groups so that everyone feels recognized, accepted and understood. Our pastoral communities represent the most fitting place to live the day-to-day Christian experience on a daily basis: the laity, families, young people and the poor are the priority reference subjects in the proposals of the community.**

*In every parish there are groups of lay people who devote their time to the various sectors of education, evangelization, refection and charity. These are members of options (youth), economic affairs, elderly youth centre, council and leaders of groups, associations and movements, which are present and active within the parish territory.*

*The value of a parish is given by its ability to build itself up as a community. A place where people are not only identified with roles of a whole range of "ministries" and services (such as priests, deacons, lector, acolyte, catechists, members of the Eucharist, workers of charity, etc.). The list cannot be representative of all realities, as it is modelled according to the activities that the parish decides to activate in response to the characteristics and*

needs (not only strictly religious) of the context in which it lives. In addition, however, it is also a space populated by families who bring novelty and life. In order to populate parishes with families it is necessary to look after and accompany them when they are formed (marriage preparation), at the birth of a child (baptism), in the stages of the child's growth in faith (Christian initiation), in being close to the sick and the elderly who live in the houses (pastoral care of the sick), in times of mourning and separation (funerals).

The parish priest, together with his council, gives guidelines regarding the leadership of pastoral groups, with special attention to the proposals of the Salesian Youth Movement and the Salesian Family. In this respect, the charism, which characterizes the parish, is primarily the Salesian charism. This requires that the various components of the Salesian Family, who have responsibility for Don Bosco's charism and spiritual point of reference, take



care of their identity more explicitly and renew their practice with dialogue and collaboration.

**E** The Salesian parish considers young people as legitimate and indispensable members of the EPC. They are "the historical 'fortune' of the Congregation" (in the words of don Juan Vicente). Therefore, this charismatc presence must ensure concern for the world of adolescents and young people, for their worries, experiences and expectations. Youth ministry in the parish expresses the Church's care for a very large number of young people, paying attention to all ages. Being linked to the concreteness of activities should also lead to considering the broad reality of young people which is often found outside the parish.

*"I want to state clearly that young people themselves are agents of youth ministry. Certainly they need to be helped and guided, but at the same time left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity [...] I am more concerned with helping young people to use their insight, ingenuity and knowledge to address the needs and concerns of other young people in their own language" (Christiansen 2011).*

The parish aims to be a community that makes room for the **protagonism of young people**, bringing out their needs and accompanying them, leaving their initiative, creativity and autonomy in the activities and paths along which they are accompanied according to their sensitivity and perspective, in order to be actively involved in initiatives for themselves and for the parish community. It is important to encourage the involvement of young people also in the formative programmes of the parish-cratory, not as mere performers of animation, but as active players in thinking and implementing new experiential paths. Ordinarily some of the members of the Pastoral Council are young people, who are involved in the planning and execution of the Salesian Educator-pastoral Plan. The preference for young people, as previously mentioned, characterizes the pastoral proposal of the parish as dynamic, enthusiastic and proposing Gospel ideals.

**F** The responsible agent of the cratory-youth centre, according to the guidelines of the GC70 (cf. 432) should be the assistant pastor for the youth sector. This proposal can still offer valid suggestions. In fact, it has two advantages:

- on the one hand, it connects the parish and the Oratory-Youth Centre in a single pastoral action plan;
- on the other hand, it presents the Oratory-Youth Centre as a centre where youth initiatives are spread throughout the area and not only as an entity where activities are proposed.

*Finally, the intermediary nature of the Diocesan Oratory can and must originate from the territory of the parish, without making the mutual activity of authorizing take its own course.*

In some cases, the responsible agent of the Oratory-Youth Centre is a lay person. In fact, some provincial realities have taken advantage of the possibility of establishing this figure full or part time. It is strongly recommended that the lay person having this role be present at the Parish Pastoral Council.

Attention should be paid to the link with the Oratory-Youth Centre (see Reg. 26) as we will see later on. In many situations there are no parishes without an oratory while there are some examples of the opposite situation (countries in the pastoral area without a parish).

## AT A GLANCE

### THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATIVE PASTORAL COMMUNITY OF THE PARISH

It initiates a common mission. It involves in the responsibility around a project the greatest number of people.

Quality of vocation, charisms, and ministries: a "culture of communion".

### PASTORAL COMMITTEE

#### **Parish Pastoral Council**

increases its value with the significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay "communities".

- becomes a "specific pastoral sensitivity"
- keeps the family spirit in sharing
- assumes the pastoral guidance of the Diocese and the vicariate
- is part of the animating nucleus of the parish and assumes a didactic role there

#### **The Vicar of the Parish**

- keeps the consecrated Salesian identity for the local community
- cares for the unity and Salesian identity of the entire Work
- motivates the continuity in the implementation of the pastoral project of the parish
- presides over the Council of the EPC or Work

#### **The Salesian Priest**

- first responsible for the parish mission entrusted by the Bishop to the Salesian Congregation
- represents the Congregation and its projects
- presides over the parish community
- assumes responsibility for implementing the Salesian Educational-Pastoral Project in communion with the Vicar, the Salesian community and the Parish Pastoral Council

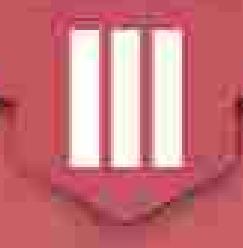


## **MISSION STATEMENTS**



# **THE EDUCATIVE-PASTORAL PROPOSAL OF THE PARISH ENTRUSTED TO THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY**

**UNIVERSITY**



The parish certainly has its own needs, in view of its ecclesial and cultural nature, which must be considered in a Salesian presence that assumes them, but our charism fits into them in a homogeneous and original way. Consequently our task is to fully assume this tension, taking care to enrich our educative-pastoral proposals with our human, while being faithful to our Salesian DNA.

*But what is the educative-pastoral "propositum" of the parish entrusted to the Salesians?*



## A CENTRE FOR EVANGELIZATION AND EDUCATION IN THE FAITH

the Acts of the Apostles is the book of the New Testament which helps us best understand the difficult life of the first Christian communities. In this book the sharing and spreading of the truth of Jesus Christ blossomed and was strengthened. The following passage can truly accompany the life of every parish community: "They persevered in the teaching of the apostles and in the communal life, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers." (Acts 2:42).

- In this passage from the Acts of the Apostles we speak of "perseverance" in the teaching of the apostles. This involves proclaiming the Gospel and deepening this proclamation through catechesis. Listening to the Word is an important moment for a community filled with the power of the Spirit; indeed, the encounter with the Word takes place in the community.
- A further perseverance takes place in communion, in "being together" and being in agreement. This is embodied by all the members of a parish, by remaining on the same foundation, on the same faith; hence an agreement that leads to the sharing of material goods and indicates unity in faith and the communion of charity.
- The third "perseverance" is that of the "breaking of bread". The "breaking of bread" recalls our Eucharistic celebrations: the gathering to eat the Bread of Life implies that the story with Jesus is not over, but continues.

- Finally, there is perseverance "in prayer", which is the basis of all community life. It is the prayer that guarantees a link between listening to the Word, the celebration of the Eucharistic and the practice of charity.

When the Salesians are called by the Bishop in the pastoral care of his area or sector of God's People, they answer, before the Church, the demanding commitment to build - in full responsibility with the Lord - a community of brothers, gathered in charity, in love to the Word, to celebrate the Lord's Supper and to proclaim the message of salvation (SCDS, 40).

 Along these lines, the parish is the natural place where a systematic proposal of evangelization and education in the faith takes place for everyone (cf. CG 7), 116-157). By promoting the first proclamation to those who are estranged from it and by offering ongoing programmes and gradual education in the faith, the parish entrusted to the Salesian community sees the urgent need to shift from a pastoral ministry of sacramentalization (with a catechesis which is mainly oriented towards (i) to a pastoral ministry of ongoing formation in the faith (initiation and maturity in Christian life, with a corresponding catechesis).

Attention to promoting the first proclamation is a concrete missionary expression of the Salesian parish. The "first proclamation" of faith, which concerns the vital encounter with the risen Lord, is not only the "beginning", but the "centre" and "heart" of our belief. A faith that must give me also in a journey of formation, maturity, growth, "which entails taking seriously each person and God's plan for his or her life" (CG 160). This is a challenge for all our parishes. "It is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment" (PG 164).

Don Bosco committed to the Salesians above all his passion for the salvation of the young, an attention that is expressed in concrete terms through the constant commitment of a simple and essential catechesis, which is tailored to the condition, age and culture of the young, linked to other educational and recreational proposals of the Society. "This Society, at its principle, was a simple catechism". Therefore, it is important to promote a diversification and renewal of catechetical literacies. In this respect, the

anthropological dimension of catechesis should be emphasized, not only the mythological sphere, but also the one relating to context, paying attention to the psycho-sociological conditions of children, adolescents, young people and adults; to the "signs of the times"; to "youth cultures"; to openness to human sciences.

**D** The parish is a community where the most characteristic values of Salesian youth spirituality can be experienced: the joy of daily Christian life, the hope that is the positive in people and situations, the promotion of communion and the social dimension of charity, a fundamental practice in our charismtic expression.

The parish community therefore strives, with everyone, for human and religious maturity with a specific proposal of Christian life which consists in opening up to new forms of acceptance, welcoming those who are searching for the religious meaning of their life, offering compassion and accompaniment to those who are tempted to turn away from it; accepting everyone, even those who are not initially interested in setting out on a journey of faith.

**C** It is a missionary and evangelizing community where the Word of God and the liturgy support the life of faith of its members, promoting the communication of the Christian experience. The parish community places the Eucharist at the centre of community life and celebrates the sacraments of Christian life in a meaningful way, in particular the sacrament of reconciliation.

For this reason, our parish churches are called to create spaces of silence, prayer and personal encounter with God, among many other activities. His Word must be proclaimed, studied, received, prayed, lived. His presence is celebrated. His call is listened to and followed. His will is accomplished. The parish should not be a meeting place only for socializing, even if it welcomes everyone, let alone a place to escape to in a false spirituality ... The fact that the Lord is present they tell us that this is the house where he lives, the place of transcendence and of his presence, which we choose to dwell in; this is our common and priority interest.

There are several opportunities in which this centrality of the Word of God can be implemented. First, have a unique opportunity: the family. The

faithful can tell it their priest believes in what he is saying, if he is passionate about the Word of God, if he tries to live it personally in his heart, through love and acceptance of his neighbour.

### **D** The Salesian parish nourishes devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

The Virgin of Don Bosco is to be considered a very active presence encouraging us to follow Jesus better, "do whatever He tells you". In our Mother's invitation, furthermore, devotion to Mary Help of Christians unites us in the universal community of the Church. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians is, in fact, a distinctive aspect of the Salesian contribution to the Church because it becomes an original sign of Don Bosco; we cannot separate our spirituality from devotion to Mary Help of Christians, which is therefore an essential element of our Charism; it permeates every recognizable feature and vitalizes its components. Without a vital Marian dimension, our spirituality would lose its vigour and fruitfulness; conversely, giving appropriate attention to a profound Marian vitality will invigorate the whole Salesian vocation. Our devotion to the Help of Christians which, as Salesians, we promote in all settings, has a very intimate, radically life-giving connection with both the Salesian "mission" and the "spirit" proper to our Charism. Marian worship and piety show if a parish is properly Salesian.

The Association Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) lives and spreads this devotion, in accordance with Don Bosco's spirit. It offers a programme of sanctification and apostolate, by promoting veneration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to Mary Help of Christians in a special way. By joining the ADMA, one strives to imitate Mary and to live a daily spirituality with evangelical attitudes, renewing participation in liturgical life and strengthening the Word of God and the prayer of the Rosary, especially on the 7th of each month. ADMA's members in the parishes are eager to collaborate with local apostolic initiatives, at the service of others, with particular attention to priestly and religious vocations.

### **E** One of the characteristics of the Salesian parish is the importance given to **educative mediation**. Indeed, the preferential option for the new generations, especially the poorest, constitutes the entire point in a particular kind of activity and a particular educational approach. This educational contribution to the Church and to pastoral care takes on a particular implication in the Salesian parish priest; in fact, he finds himself having to manage a wide range of activities that range from catechesis, to the

celebration of the Sacraments, to the practice of charity, to approaching families and visiting the sick, etc... His educative charism is reflected in all these areas, hence he becomes a model from an educational point of view.

Expressions of educative mediation also involve the field of culture, youth associations, human promotion, educational support, experiences of service and solidarity, and socio-educational projects. Hence, activities that are not only liturgical or catechetical, but ones that are of growth and orientation in life. Engaged in a dialogue with the various areas, the parish helps everyone to develop values, criteria of judgments and patterns of life according to the Gospel, through a presence based on trust (given and received).

## A PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH THAT IS OPEN AND FULLY PART OF ITS LOCALITY

 **The parish is the face of the Church. It is the reference point in its locality which makes the Church visible in everyday life. It is where Christians experience and live out faith, hope and charity, nourished by the Word of God and the celebration of the Sacraments. The parish is "the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters" (*Christifideles Laici*, 76).**

Indeed, the Salesian parish makes visible the Church's concern for the young and, by making it take root in a concrete place, it makes it "concrete". Belonging to a community characterised by a charism, together with other sectors of our Salesian work, it is part of the local Church and its pastoral ministry. The parish is a community, open to everyone, in which the family spirit is lived internally and it becomes a school and instrument of communion and solidarity; it is an educative-pastoral community, gathered and called by the Lord Jesus, in a place that represents and defines a sense of belonging, Mission spiritualising the love for the Church that lives among the young and in the midst of the simple people of God.

**The territoriality of the neighbourhood offers the parish numerous social, cultural, religious and family and social problems; it brings people in difficulty with whom we can dialogue and accompany even in the last of years. It is important**

**to emphasize that belonging to a territory on a permanent basis does not always coincide with belonging to the same parish. In fact, the concept of belonging has expanded due to the great mobility of people and to the network of relationships that bonds people outside their own territory.**

Therefore, the territory is not only a geographical place, but it is also a network of traditions and human relations. Today there are many places of membership and the memberships are constantly being redesigned. In other words, the originality of the parish with regard to the evangelical proclamation in a territory is perceived in its unceasing in people's lives. Living in a parish community entrusted to the Salesians therefore means "trusts" the quality of human relationships, wherever people are.

**① A parish is conceived and understood in the light of its innerness, an already specified, in which the faithful are made up of all the people who live there:**

- the baptized, "with their diversity" of paths and journeys, within a Church where fervent and committed faithful, but also occasional or seasonal faithful, live together;
- Christians who have turned away due to individualism or disappointment towards religious institutions;
- people who follow other religions and live in the same geographical area, city or town;
- non-believers, the doubtful and those who live in indifference.

We are yeast, that is, simple witnesses of communities that recognize the joy of the Gospel and strive to make it present in a comprehensible way with sincere hospitality, an open door ... all distinctive elements of a Salesian style of hospitality.

Aware of this, the parish is positively challenged by those who consider themselves to be indifferent or non-believers. We are required to learn the languages and cultures in which these people talk about their experiences in order to understand what is important and interesting to them, as Paul did in Athens (Acts 17).

Each parish has its own characteristics and its own particular *Ad Salesianum*, our proposal is pastoral in nature and includes all dimensions; however there must be a preventive discernment aimed at ensuring that the proposed activities reflect community standards in harmony with *Dom Bosco's charism* (cf. *ibid.*).

- B** As a result, the parish community is a significant focus also for the various ecclesial communities and groups that exist within it. This is an enormous wealth, but it implies a certain availability and organization; the groups present within it conceive our way of being Church through the IPC and SEPP or in any case they must be accompanied in understanding and sharing them.

It is an open community, collaborating with other parishes and communities, with diocesan pastoral organisations and with other social and educational agencies in the area which provide for the human and spiritual growth of its citizens. The relationship between the religious community to which the parish is entrusted and the other male and female religious communities that operate within the area around the Salesian parish, must be inspired



by authentic fraternity, making them feel they are an effective part of an overall pastoral ministry, while complying with the specific goals.

The parish carries out its mission in communion with the local Church and the Bishop by collaborating with the pastoral ministry of the particular Church through the wealth of a vocation; it is therefore an expression in the local Church of the "Charonian criterion of Don Bosco". In fact, Art. 40 of the Constitutions of the Salesians of Don Bosco, the experience of Don Bosco, for us Salesians is the guiding criterion:

*"Our Salesian model is pastoral experience in the first university which served as a model: it was for the young—men from that unknown, a parish that comprised a school that prepared them for life and a playground where friends could meet and enjoy themselves. As we carry out our mission today, the Salesian experience is still the leading criterion for dimensioning and renewing all our activities and projects" (Constit. 40).*

In our provinces we try to respond to those challenges that we take on in all Salesian settings: shifting from a pastoral ministry of "maintenance" to the articulation of an educative-pastoral Community capable of being a friendly and family environment ("home"), marked by joy ("playground") where everyone can develop their potential and acquire new skills for life ("wheel") and walk according to a clear proposal of faith ("church").

**④ It is also attentive to dialogue with other religions and traditional beliefs.** Where there is a significant presence of people of other religious traditions, as indicated by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (*Dialogue in truth and charity: Pastoral orientations for interreligious dialogue*, 2014), "parish priests are to take lead in the task of implementing the policies and directives for interreligious dialogue in their parishes, making them part of the pastoral plan. It may also be fruitful to establish relationships with leaders of other religions in the neighbourhood, based on, when possible, small groups for dialogue.

Through personal example and activity, priests can invite parishioners to live in solidarity with people of other religions, sharing in their joys and sorrows, such as at times of birth and death, marriage, success and failure, sickness, adversity, etc. As circumstances allow, common, social and cultural

programmes and celebrations with people of the various religions present in the parish may be good occasions of exchange of friendship and solidarity".

The coexistence of ethnic groups, traditional beliefs, languages and own original expressors of life, celebration and thought, highlights the need for a pastoral ministry that is attentive to this reality, so that the truths and values of these cultures may be touched and transfigured by the Gospel. Therefore, it is necessary to engage in a dialogue of friendship, esteem and respect for those who belong to these traditional religions, highlighting the positive values that blend harmoniously with the content of the faith. Such a capacity for integration and creativity requires an open and critical spirit.

## A COMMUNITY WITH A MISSIONARY OUTLOOK

**A** In a world that needs the message of the Father's tenderness, forgiveness and mercy, it is urgent that every Christian become a missionary. They must be ready to be them for others in times of hope, in times of desolation and also in times of persecution (Mt 24:4-6).

Indeed, all Salesian parishes must be animated by the missionary spirit of Don Bosco. Many Salesian parishes are located in identified mission areas, in metropolitan cities and in large urban areas, but also in other contexts, at the service of human dignity and the proclamation of the Gospel.

In Obligation to Jesus, the parish believes that the Kingdom of God has the poor as its beneficiaries and privileged target. Therefore, its pastoral, evangelical nature should reflect the **preferential option for the poor and needy**. The Salesian parish must pay particular attention to what creates unease and marginalization in the territory. This helps us to bear in mind that we must first of all start from the clarification of two terms: choice and preferential. By "choice" we mean a mature, pastoral, conscious, ultimate gesture, a free act, the consequence of a vocation, that is, a call by Jesus Christ, who came among us, blessing especially the poorest and the sick. A sign that is full of responsibility for pastoral care. By "preferential" we state a choice which is not exclusive or discriminatory.

The parish is encouraged to be a welcoming place, one of hope for everyone, especially for the tired, disheartened, marginalized, sick and

suffering. Thus, in close dialogue and cooperation with institutions within parish boundaries, it strongly promotes the protection and promotion of their human rights and shares their concerns, aspirations and actions.

It assumes as its fundamental choice and criterion the existential unity of evangelization, human development and Christian culture. Evangelizing means manifesting the God of Love without excluding anyone.

*We proclaim the Gospel and the person of Jesus in intimate relationship with the history of the people, their problems and their possibilities. In the desire to find situations of encounter, we are guided by the value of *service*, following the maternalistic attitude of God. Development of evangelization is the parish option for both the spreading of the Gospel and the enhancement of the people (cf. Catech. 47).*

 In the past, the parish was perceived as an enclosed space, a sort of aquarium with the tumultuous organisms within it; today we have the impression we are all in the open sea. This expression "in the open sea" can tell us about the breadth and depth of our mission. We are "fishers of men" in a vast and complex world that demands of us a pastoral attitude of openness and acceptance, which requires us to sharpen our gaze, to reach out to everyone. We cannot ignore or neglect the spiritual thirst of so many people, nor can we ignore the cry that takes on so many form and languages and not detect the desire for authentic spiritual experiences.

It is no longer possible to proceed according to the perspective of "trying to bring people to the parish", which is of a centripetal nature. It is necessary to become aware of the profound changes in society. The urgency of a permanent dialogue with the community; we must acquire a kind of indispensability in the way we relate to others, with the proposal of multiple and diverse paths of faith – in language and form – compared to what is usually proposed.

It is essential for us to try to observe the daily life of the parish in some of its usual recipients which require greater vigilance and pastoral attention:

- The parish experience is an observatory and terrain through which we carry out our missionary capacity if we focus on our loved ones.

we realize, for example, that it is the place where many of our elders feel at home; the place where they can pray for the dead and seek comfort in their solitude. It is the place where they can express their religious sentiments with simplicity, often through a popular religiosity, in harmony with many well evangelical attitudes. Other elderly people, on the other hand, must be reached outside the walls of the parish temple, in their solitude. Loneliness can be healed with charity, closeness and spiritual comfort.

- Parishes cannot and must not be recognized only for their architectural grandeur (even though many of them have an inherited historical and artistic heritage which we must preserve), but as territories in which "foreigners" find a home. They are the context in which we manifest God's promise to this part of humanity, a place where what God says in the covenant with his people becomes reality: I am a faithful God, a God who is close, a God of tenderness and mercy, which makes now every day that dawns. We meet young men and women whose lives have led them to existential changes, including traumatic ones: these are migrants and foreigners, for work and for necessity. What are these men and women actually requesting of us? How do they live their faith? Our parish is the place attended by more and more men and women from other latitudes, cultures and languages. In the face of these realities, the parishes entrusted to the Salesians must be a welcoming home for citizens of every continent, because of our Catholic nature. And each member of the parish community contributes to this hospitality in a humble and merciful way, more by the practice of life than by words, especially with the wounded.
- For this reason, we are all called to be aware that in the geographical space of our parishes, there are many human situations, "existential" peripheries of all kinds. It is in charity that the proclaimed Word becomes credible, for example by visiting families, the sick and the poor, bringing the Eucharist or even a word of consolation. For this reason, the parish also relies on pastoral charitable organizations (Caritas and other forms of volunteer service) or initiatives (listening centers for psychological and social support, in order to be the place of God's presence in the city, as France has said many times: cities and towns where the paths of life cross, sometimes full of pain, sometimes full of hope, paths that we must accompany and which must not be obstructed with borders).

- A missionary conversion of the parish is urgent in order to teach people while taking into consideration the current reality: An outgoing church that can deal with the **emergencies** that arise during economic, social, educational and pandemic crises, which bring out vulnerabilities and lead to numerous consequences in various fields.
- In our Congregation there are several **chapels and parish mission stations**. They are places, around the parish, where one or more confessors regularly go to provide pastoral service. They are found mainly in very large parish districts, in areas of new evangelisation in urban centres, in rural or mountainous areas, or in contexts where Catholics are a minority. They are generally animated by lay catechists, while the priests visit them from time to time to celebrate the Sacraments for the benefit of the community, which otherwise would not be able to participate in the life of the Church.

They are characteristic places of the first missionary proclamation which promotes the development of the "rays of truth" (*Verba Aetate*, 2) and the growth of the "seeds of the Word" that the Lord has planted in cultures, religions and peoples (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53) and also the social transmission of the poorest and most marginalised. Thanks to the mission station, the local community, enjoying the presence of lay ministers and priests, is stimulated to "go forth" in order to build the Church.

In fact: "the missionary is integrated within the local church, and in the life and educative-pastoral project of the Province, enriching them with his personal gifts, apostolic zeal and missionary sensitivity" (*The Salesian Missionary Vocation. Reflections, processes and operational guidelines*, Part I point 1, 4 April 2011).

## CLEAR OPTION FOR THE YOUNG AND FOR WORKING CLASS PEOPLE

-  Don Bosco's charism is a substantially pastoral commitment which is characterised by its youthful and popular mission. Youth ministry should be considered the dimension that most characterizes parish life. This is the particular contribution the Salesians offer as an enrichment to the mission of the particular Church (cf. *Const. 48, Reg. 76*). Our preferable choice

of a youthful dynamic in evangelization is, therefore, the special attention we give to young people.

In every area of the Salesian Work – and therefore also in the parish – this choice sets the tone for the whole evangelization of a specific territory. It develops a pastoral ministry of the future, especially for young people and the working class, offering educative-pastoral proposals which are a model for the new generation. Indeed, Salesian pastoral care among young people has a "style" and "method" for all fields of the mission, as stated in art. 70 of the Constitution: «Don Bosco lived with the boys of the Oratory a spiritual and educational experience which he called the 'Preventive System' ... he passes this on to us as a way of living and handing on the Gospel message...».

A clear option for young people, however, does not mean that the parish's goal is a "concentration of youth pastoral initiatives", while neglecting other groups. It is rather a question of entering into a perspective in which every parish community is a place of human and Christian growth, with particular attention to the new generations, supported by the presence and service of adults, explicitly trained. Nobody is asking the parish to be a "youth institution". "Preference" does not mean "exclusion" because the parish embraces without discrimination all the persons and groups that make up the Christian people, whom the Word of God must reach according their particular life situation: children, adults, the elderly, the sick, etc. Therefore, it is inconceivable to think of a parish that does not practice a corresponding care of the whole community. The preference for young people is primarily a perspective, which is then expressed in several methods and initiatives.

In our parishes, children, adolescents and young people cannot and must not be relegated to a secondary role. It cannot only be those whom we "teach catechism" that fill the parish halls for a few years and then leave them permanently when they receive the Sacraments of Christian initiation.

- 1** We need to revive a hopeful outlook for young people, similar to that of our **Latin Don Bosco**. The Oratory of Valdocco was defined by Monsignor Ivanonni, the Auxiliary Bishop of Turin, as "the parish of abandoned children without a parish". The preferential choice of young people, especially the poorest, became the backbone of his pastoral work. Today we are called to "respond" to the cry that young people are sending out to the world of

adults with the request to "be seen" and accepted: it is a cry that implores hope for the future, then and ours.

"Evangelization proceeds, therefore, and of ever increasing necessity, by way of an analysis of life-situations that influence the personality of the young" (EG 21, 20). The ability to skillfully grasp or read the condition of youth in the light of the Gospel can give the Salesian parish a characteristic trait. As a result, Christian communities must also open their mentality to the culture of young people with respect to those aspects that are new. For this reason, it is necessary not to get lost in discouraging complaints and analyses which often produce a sense of inadequacy and threatens to turn us away from a world from which we feel disconnected in many respects:

We must be a Church that encourages, instead of complaining; a Church that brings and conveys joy, instead of bitterness; a Church that conveys familiarity, instead of abandonment. We need to reinforce a positive outlook, but one that is in line with the other and predominant reality of today.

It is necessary, as Franco says, to overcome the temptation of "We have always done it this way" (EG 33). We need the creativity and the noisy presence of young people. It is necessary that our parishes undergo a profound conversion that will give them an opportunity to introduce a friendly face to young people: that is to be a house in which the reality of the new generations (pre-adolescents, adolescents, young adults) takes over, despite its complexity in a world that is changing dramatically: young people can teach us to interpret their reality in order to meet their needs and desires in a living way.

"The world is lacking our little in this family first century, characterized by the diversity of cultures and contexts, needs experts, we could say, to encounter committed Salesian apostles who are prepared and willing to live their lives with the mind and heart of this House. Salesians capable of constituting to give their lives for the young people of today's world, and their languages, their culture and their interests. Without doubt, many of these adolescents and older youth are as Salesians know, today many others frequent "other compounds" or playgrounds we are Salesians for them too". (EG 28, 2)



**C** On a practical level, the parish can implement possible activities or develop interest in favour of young people in their daily life:

- A relevant knowledge of the situation of young people and, therefore, competence in the pastoral problems which the leaders of the parish must also cultivate in order to enrich the particular Church;
- developing programmes, initiatives and proposals in the parish that make it possible to embrace a greater number of young people, to involve them in the definition of their needs and the most appropriate educational solutions. On Don Bosco's pastoral methodology evangelization and education are inseparably linked, that is, the pedagogical dimension is always included in pastoral practice;
- appreciating the people who work with/for young people, whose skills and work must be valued, as well as the environments and institutions that deal with children and young people;
- raising the awareness of the diocesan community with regard to the problems and needs of youth ministry;
- the concern to bring young people closer to the faith and to make them grow within it, especially paying attention to those most in need, to the underprivileged, etc.;
- interest in the world of work and issues related to unemployment;
- promoting an active participation of young people in the celebrations;
- updating the procedures of Christian initiation and formation of adolescents and young people (we are ever more convinced that the paths of education in the faith must go beyond the concern for conveying content, in order to open up to a more comprehensive formation, in which the experience of God can bear fruit);
- the renewal of Christian means of expression (songs, gestures, language, methods, narrative, liturgy, symbols, postures);

- the participation of young people in parish councils (they need to feel they are key players in the life of the community, even with voice and vote when possible);
- promoting the participation of young people in parish groups and in experiences that make young people evangelise all other young people;
- raising the awareness of the whole parish community (to educational matters);
- preparing adults to address the issue of youth in family, educational and public environments, also through groups and initiatives for reflection and study.

As a result, these proposals call for an intelligent review of organizational procedures of the parishes entrusted to the Salesians. Massive doses of creativity are needed in experimenting with new forms of presence, witness and listening of youth culture.

We must stimulate our imagination and suggest ideas and activities that may be a stimulus in the daily life of our young people. Indeed, more than being an answer to an attitude of quest, Jesus' proposal must be a provocation and a question addressed in particular to wounded, broken or disoriented young people. Hence the need to insist on the newness of the Gospel, its potential to give unparable joy and meaning to life, acknowledging at the same time that its acceptance places the Christian against the tide of certain socially prevailing values.

We need to accompany young people who want to start dreaming again... enthusiastic young people, who choose to fall madly in love with Jesus' plan, and who, spiritually equipped, decide to live the commitment of the Gospel.

- 1** The Salesian parish is of a broadly accepting popular nature. Salesian parishes are generally found in the poor and populated neighbourhoods of big cities (GC21, 141), in "poor, working class neighbourhoods" (GCS20, 411, 407), with "humble people" (GC21, 141) - areas where there is a type of activity that tends to reach the largest number of people. The evangelization of popular culture requires constant attention to the many ways this manifests itself. Evangelization is contextualized and integrated.

into these poor environments, through consideration of their history, tradition and culture, customs and its roots.

*"The parish entrusted to the *Sacerdos de popularis fidei* becomes of its locality, because it is preferably integrated into the past and popular neighbourhoods of his case, and the style of its ministry which looks after the connection with the people and does not seek either sheltered and closed community, or a church, far a few. Therefore, it looks after the liturgies and feasts in which the people can meet with ease and simplicity; it pays attention and affection to the expression of popular party and is able to guide them, with respect, through a pedagogy of evangelization. It is the popular because of its openness to the life of the neighbourhood because it participates in the problems of the people with whom it lives and with whom it shares joys and sorrows" (ICERI, 1991).*

When, from a Christian faith perspective, we speak of popular party (or religiosity, or even devotion), we refer to a genuine Christian faith, which is rich in religious and historical cultural values which cannot be ignored. Many of these devotions represent a set of values of historical tradition, folkloristic atmosphere and round and artificial beauty; they combine rich human emotions of shared friendship, equality of treatment and the value of all that is beautiful in life in the common joy of celebration. Under these profound roots we can see genuine spiritual values of faith in God.

Furthermore, we cannot but question ourselves about the care of pastoral popular manifestations in the practical life of our Christian communities. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin, for example, is very positive and encouraging, but we must be able to give these works of faith their evangelical fullness, leading us to re-think the profound reasons for the presence of Mary in our lives as a model in our pilgrimage of faith. On the other hand, it is令人惊讶 to note that in some cases there is great concern and solicitude in promoting a greater Christian formation in this type of religiosity and a more active liturgical and charitable participation in the life of the Church, which results in true apostolic dynamism.

We wish to stress the importance of the evangelical care that is able to draw human religious goodness from all the expressions and customs of popular party, which by accepting them purifies, strengthens and elevates them.



## A MEETING PLACE FOR THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE SALESIAN HOUSE

**A** The parish becomes a central environment in which all the other sectors converge as a point of reference for celebrating and sharing the faith. It is indeed a pastoral environment that embraces the whole Salesian Work, especially the sectors in which young people are present.

Animating this context implies integrating it first of all into the overall plan of the Salesian house, which "enters the vision of an organic, unitary and co-responsible service for the human, civil and religious development of the neighbourhood it is a part of (GC20, 436). The parish is in fact called to be "the house of God and the gate of heaven" (a reference to Jacob's dream, cf. Gen. 28:12-17) for all those who enter a Salesian house.

One of the urgent needs of our world, in a globalized society which is often distant from the faith, is that of being a space which is open to transcendence, a skylight that makes God's presence transparent. The parish cannot simply be a meeting place for people, where various types of activities take place (theatre, games, workshops, camps, music), nor is it only a school of social voluntary service, a centre for support or social integration. There is no doubt that all of these activities, of great pedagogical value, are essential within the community, but as previously mentioned, the Salesian parish is the place where the Christian community of the Salesian Work celebrates and prays; it is called to be the "tent of meeting", the space the Lord has chosen to dwell among us.

"The house where he dwelt" is the name that Jacob gave to the place where he fell asleep and had a dream (cf. Gen. 28:12-17). The parish is not a monastery or an exclusive place of prayer, but the unique space which is always available for encounter with God, where the elderly and young people, adolescents and children take their cue from prayer.

**B** The parish is called to be a welcoming place for those young people, educators or families who return to the faith after being disappointed by the void that our society offers us, and who in the end are unable to give meaning to their lives. Our Works embrace the concerns of many pilgrims of life, of many travellers who seek to be "sewed", that

b, to be continually restored to life; they ask to find reasons and support for a good and happy life, in the name of the Lord Jesus. The parish is not a building, but a meeting place for all those who seek the one true God, even without knowing him. In all our pastoral settings, our concern must be how to accompany so many people who are searching (whether explicitly or not) to that through its witness and the beauty of a personal encounter with Jesus it may be capable of kindling (or rekindling) their faith. Using a beautiful definition dear to St. John XXIII, the parish has the same importance as the "village fountain": it quenches our thirst, gives refreshment and is a meeting place.

**C** We must make his home, our home, a place where children, adolescents, young people and adults sing a place of joyful celebration, linked to life. Liturgical celebrations that do not lose their sacramental dimension, in which symbols are an expression of the depth of our existence and, therefore, give them an ultimate meaning: a place "that provides an opportunity also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God." (*Christus vivit*, 104).

The house of God is called to be the place where the community is lived in an additional family, which meets every Sunday to sit at the Father's table as children and as brothers and sisters. It is the place where adults, children and youth meet after the various duties of the week and day-to-day concern, the table around which stories, anecdotes, hopes, but also worries and failures, are shared. It is not the place where differences are resolved, but where, thanks to the Father's mediation, we children can make peace and ask forgiveness for the pain we have caused them.

It can be truly said that a parish community that lives in this way has the Eucharist at its centre. In this community, the breaking of bread and its distribution does not become a routine liturgical gesture, but the memorial Sacrament of the body of Christ given to us out of love and the expression of who we are, "God's family", and on what we live, brotherly love and service.

## AT A GLANCE

### TASK OF THE PARISH

- Integrating the Catholic charism into the historical and cultural structure of the parish.
- Adhering to our Strategic Plan.

### EDUCATIONAL-PASTORAL PROPOSAL

**A member for  
engagement  
and reflection in  
the faith**

From a  
personal level  
concerned  
appropriate to all  
members and  
ministers in  
the Christian  
life

- reflects a systematic programme  
of evangelisation and education in the faith
- attention to conversion, growth and  
developed paths of Discipleship
- a community which can experience  
the values of Collision Youth Leadership
- promotes the centrality of the Word of God
- makes community life central
- the sacramental life of Christians
- local leadership in Many ways of  
Christianity
- open relevance to educational institutions

**A presence  
of the Church  
spouse and  
invited in the  
territory**

A point of  
reference that  
welcomes the  
Church visitors

- clearly present in the daily life of the territory
- however, all those who inhabit the  
geographical space identified in the  
diocese, those who have shared  
any form of other religious, non-  
religious, spiritual or cultural
- with a Salesian style of welcome
- significant contribution of all the various  
ecclesial communities and groups
- attempts to dialogue with other religious  
and traditional beliefs



**Ancillary  
ministry  
and  
youth ministry**

The ecclesiastical pastoral option for these communities

- distinct entities of committee, of animating, whose purpose is to change our gaze, in reaching us all;
- healthy ecclesiastical entity of evangelization, liturgy promotion and other pastoral actions;
- groups care and pastoral attention towards the elderly, foreigners, "marginalized" peripheries, immigrants and parish migratory chapels; and

**A clear option  
for young  
people and the  
working class  
people**

• fundamental choice for youth less extraverted and people characterized by less acceptance

- forming field a meeting point for the young and their friends; the parish is friendly face for the young
- updating knowledge of liturgical education
- elaboration of documents, initiatives and proposals for young people
- involving people who work with or youth
- members of the diocesan community
- concern to bring the young people most in need closer to the faith
- involved in the world of work and employment
- promotion of active participation of young people in the celebrations
- updating the processes of Christian initiation and formation
- renewal of songs, gestures, liturgical acts
- adult participation in pastoral groups and bodies
- revitalization of the entire parish community to educational issues
- adult preparation programs

- "Heart of mission" about the Christian community of the Ecclesial Work: celebrate and pray
- place of welcome in the Ecclesial Work for every pilgrim of life
- space of radical collaboration, related to life
- "Family" for the children, seated at the Table of the Father

Central "space" in which all other ecclesial communities are placed in reference to celebration and sharing the faith

**Place of  
celebration  
and prayer  
of the gathered  
members  
of the Ecclesial  
Work**

**Ecclesial Work - Pastoral proposal**



# **SYSTEMATIC PASTORAL ANIMATION IN THE PARISH**

CHAPTER

**IV**



## MAIN INTERVENTIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

 The parish is an evangelizing community. It brings first proclamation to those who are estranged from it and reattaches them, taking them as they are as the starting point. Therefore, it seems appropriate to recover certain principles inspired by the Christian catechumenate as a pedagogical element and basis for education in the faith. It is a question of considering the gift of faith as a dynamic force of progressive growth, which consists of phases, stages and passages which result from each other. It is a journey that is supported (as well as by the free gift of God), by necessary educational assistance. Thus, education, from the Christian perspective, must be seen as a necessary accompaniment on the path of faith, as a journey made together, along the lines of the travellers of Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), for man's global fulfillment in the light of faith.

Therefore, the catechumenate seeks to evangelize in the four main areas of growth in the faith, found in the Church's experience: the personal dimension, the community dimension, the liturgical and celebrative dimension and total commitment to evangelization. Through these dimensions we understand that:

- apart from the proclamation, a personal, free and responsible response is required;
- it is necessary to initiate a process of Christian education which leads to a faith that is lived, celebrated, expressed and witnessed as a whole;
- it is essential to integrate the conversion of life and the witness of charity.

This path can assist in proper programming of interventions with young people, ensuring the completeness and integrity of the Christian experience.

 The parish creates and offers gradual and diversified programmes in faith education, particularly for young people and families, teaching them to live their faith in a very simple way, through their experiences, and not only in terms of "theoretical courses". The programmes could prepare families for the faith education they offer their children, set up

processes for baptismal catechesis, offer education in faith programmes of faith education for engaged couples which might later form family group programmes (cf. *Youth Ministry and Family*, Salesian Youth Ministry, Salesians of Don Bosco, 2021, chap. 3).

Christian initiation considers the personal experience, the community relationships and the testimony of life. It is a demanding journey that requires an appropriate period of formation, also called *catechumenate*, including many lively and creative pastoral processes and initiatives which allow for personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

*In all these forms, catechesis should become an adequate and relevant summary of the Christian message and, above all, integrate personal experience to the process of maturity and growth, seeking to encourage and accompany gradual commitment to Christian life.*



However, an indispensable prerequisite for ensuring the fruitful integration in concrete terms in the planning carried out by the catechists and leaders of the faith groups. It is not simply "desk" planning, in search of the best proven program; nor does it object to catechetical "am", but it is in function of it. Planning is a due act of the individual catechumen with his specific needs and potentials (religious sensitivity, preparation level, pace of learning ...); it is an important task for the value given to the Christian message; is a condition for making the dialogue and syncretism possible.

**④ Another parish activity is to encourage membership of groups in the Church by making them grow in the awareness of a pastoral accompaniment that is increasingly attentive to their values, specific characteristics. For this purpose, the parish facilitates movements, youth groups and Salesian Family groups, among others. It promotes the coordination of these groups with the SYM (Salesian Youth Movement) and the invitation to Salesian Youth Spirituality. Group experiences should be able to lead to more open and integrated Christian communities.**

On the other hand, the parish point is a Salesian priest, who tries to bring together all the presences of the Spirit that live together in the parish, not preferring only one of them exclusively. We must be careful not to exclusively promote movements, particular experiences, or sector groups. By not fostering association pluralism, not only do we prevent young people and adults from becoming familiar with various vocations and opportunities, but we impoverish the very nature of the parish community.

At this point, we can further emphasize the significance of the lay ministry of a parish. The parish priest should constantly promote the growth of lay pastoral workers and enhance their charisms, without running the risk of falling into the temptation of being interested or praising them only at the approach of a necessity or organizational problem. In the same way, it is dysfunctional to entrust tasks in an improvised way to anyone who is available, without a discernment of his skills and actual maturity.

**⑤ The parish is a community that practices liturgy and the Sacraments: celebrating them with dignity and beauty. All parts of the work live the celebrative dimension with the parish by experiencing the liturgy, the place of celebration, the sacred space and lived Sacraments, because the parish is the place where everyone nourishes their faith. It is necessary to think of a liturgy that is in close contact to life, trying to use an under-**

standable and accessible language, expressed in a simple way through song, gesture, stories, liturgical symbols, the Word of God presented well, so that the celebration is alive, and everyone can be actively involved in its preparation and implementation. A language therefore that is not fixed, far from stereotyped formulae, which are often incomprehensible and almost always devoid of the expressiveness of the celebrating assembly.

*We must come up with new communication strategies for proclaiming the faith and decipher a way to reach the hearts of young people by speaking about the Gospel. A new evangelisation that is able to translate Jesus' message using the new methods of communication. Cultural diversity which often afflicts "us" young people causes a lack of commonality and therefore a lack of language. In more concrete terms, there is no communication because the way of expressing the Good News is not in line with the lived experience.*

- B** By fostering growth of an active faith the parish educates to the social dimension of charity, building a culture of solidarity. Thus, it recognises and encourages the commitment of members of the parish community to being involved in social and charitable activity.

A church community needs to exhibit concrete and visible gestures of a modest lifestyle and one which is open to generosity and solidarity through actions which manifest the values of the Kingdom. The charitable activity of parishes is extensive, but we can focus on how this dimension has been readapted, for example, in the implementation of activities that allow the parish Centre to know and accompany situations of poverty, hardship and social vulnerability. Among many other actions, we highlight: opening of training centers; welcoming particularly underprivileged groups such as irregular migrants and the homeless; taking on more specific services and building networks (with other ecclesial realms and civil organizations) to respond to the needs of the new poor who come knocking at our door. The request for assistance no longer comes only from the chronically poor but also from people who have fallen into poverty due to particular events such as the loss of a job, addictions, physical and mental health problems and the pandemic.

Therefore, the assistance offered by the parish cannot be limited to mere financial support (food parcels, clothes, small subsidies), rather it must

reach the deepest needs of individuals, relationships and meaning in order to bring hope. It is a question of "rearranging" and rethinking things, time, people and parish places, starting from those who are "missing", those who are "far away", those who are "alone", those who "suffer", those who "are growing", those who "don't work". Even when people ask for material help, they bring with them a greater suffering, arising from the difficulty in giving meaning to their life, from experiences they have lived and at times from conditions of solitude. The real need is to re-establish relationships and discover the meaning of one's own biography.

**The specific nature of the parish is no longer economic support or just parishes, rather the relational style that transforms life from simply interacting, to companionship and hospitality (where possible), up to more structured paths. In addition to giving economic support, the parish manifests its presence by being close and listening to individuals and families.**

The social dimension of charity fosters the apostolic involvement of youth leaders in the social, cultural, charitable and missionary initiatives of the parishes. It supports the promotion, formation and accompaniment of voluntary services and missionary work, etc. *Voluntary work in the Salesian mission. Youth Ministry Department. Mission Department, 2019*. The formation of young and adult street educators also has an educational impact in reaching youngsters who do not normally attend our settings; this specialization makes it possible to reach the many types of poverty, invisible at times, that surround us.

**③ The parish community is to become a formation centre for lay people who are dynamic and committed, above all for pastoral leaders of young people.** A priority that keeps the future of the Church community in mind is the development of appropriate formation courses for a variety of categories. Among these operators, a particular place is occupied by those who are involved in delicate matters and in the crucial sector of faith education, such as catechists, educators, leaders of groups of young people, adults and engaged couples, etc.

The function of these ecclesiastical figures is fundamental. With their witness, teaching and formation, they are called to a true spiritual accomplishment: to lead youngsters to listen to and embrace the word of God, to meet with the Lord, to make coherent choices. In addition to

their competence and exemplary Christian life, catechists are asked for loving kindness, dedication, great skill in preparing the soil, generous sweat, loving closeness, encouragement, prayer, patient expectation. A creative and dynamic approach cannot be truly faithful unless practised by catechists who have themselves been well formed.

Francis officially instituted the "lity ministry" of salesians (*Antiquum ministerium. Apostolic Letter issued "Misericordia Vobis" by the Supreme Pontiff Francis, 10 May 2021*), thus giving a greater value to the "mission" of the inspired by people who proclaim the Gospel. Each ministry is a sign of the strengthening of the lity's role in the community.

A common basic formation must be ensured, which guarantees the Salesian identity of each collaborator in the Salesian educational-pastoral implementation. It is essential to know, promote and practice the educative pastoral model of Salesian youth ministry. *Prayer of discernment. Youth Ministry Department, 2021*) and article 2, the model of Salesian youth spirituality: the spirituality of everyday life, where people recognize the interior presence of God and live their own personal faithfulness; the spirituality of joy and optimism, without renouncing commitment and responsibility; the spirituality of friendship with the Lord Jesus, which gives reasons for hope and introduces a life that finds its full meaning in love; the spirituality of continual conversion, the natural environment for growth in faith (through the Sacraments in the Church or fiat Mary, the first believe, who provides, accompanies and supports the spirituality of responsible, proactive, ordinary and extraordinary service for the dear PV).

-  In this Cratory, Don Bosco created a community, that is, a family in which he himself was the centre and heart, a welcoming meeting place for vocation, where human and Christian values were practised and enjoyed to the point of making the proposal of holiness desirable (cf. Youth Ministry and Family. Salesian Youth Ministry Department. Salesians of Don Bosco, 2021, chap. 2). The Salesian parish is also a place where "vocation" can be introduced in a lively, effective, continuous and complete way. In this context, the parish is a community that accompanies the faithful in their vocational choices, especially the young. Accompaniment of young people requires considerable effort.

This service helps them personalises faith, listen more profoundly to God and mature in their Christian life understood as vocation. The parish guides and accompanies various vocations in the Church but offers young people in particular a specific invitation to religious life, priesthood or a committed lay vocation. Prayer for vocations is continuously celebrated in the parish community and its various groups and movements.

**H** One of the most significant challenges of evangelisation today arises from the digital environment. The new media and the Internet are indeed a great and indispensable communication opportunity for evangelizing. However, it is necessary to learn about their nature, functioning, limits, strengths and the transformations they introduce. Communication tools are a great opportunity for the parish, because they make it possible to transmit the events of community life into news; the website and social profiles have now become privileged communication channels not only for young people, but also for adults.

The attention to communication in parishes, therefore, is not a secondary activity, but a vital focus, not related solely to the creation of parish bulletins, posters and leaflets. In many cases, the parish radio, for example, reaches many people who cannot participate, for various reasons, in the life of a local community. The radio becomes an effective and practical solution for spreading the voice of the parish and it helps to make one feel part of parish life, especially with regard to the elderly and the sick.

Parishes are called to play an active role in the challenge of communicating also through the Internet, but the commitment to "inhabit" digital environments should not be interpreted as the need to follow a fashion, but as an opportunity to give new impetus to pastoral activity. This task requires the acquisition of skills, community outreach and the appreciation for those who have shown to have strong, often lay, skills in this field; many parishes cultivate the life of communion and missionary activity also through text messages, Internet sites and newsletters. These methods give the opportunity to interact and communicate with young people, to contact daily with pastoral workers, to create and increase the sense of belonging to the parish community. Furthermore, they allow more and more people to be actively involved in the activities promoted by the parish, they also provide useful "service information" (through websites or social networks) especially for those who do not attend the parish and to spread information about the life of the Church and local area. This digital habitat,



## STRUCTURES OF PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

### A) Leadership in the local parish community

In the previous sections we defined the Salesian educational-pastoral proposal of the parish and the different roles involved (parish priest, rector, responsible community, lay people and young people), so as to dwell now on the **bodies of shared ecclesial responsibility in the parish**. They represent a significant opportunity for participation in the pastoral activity of the parish through the contribution of the "council" which is offered for the good of the Church, in view of common discernment for the service of the Gospel.

In the Church, "co-responsibility". It is a privileged moment of discernment, it is a powerful outlet of belonging to the Heart of Christ and to the respects of all the members of the local Community; it is a result of communion and is expressed as a mature form of shared responsibility. **All the faithful**, in a complementary and co-responsible way, have the right and duty to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church, in order to fulfil the universal vocation to holiness, to contribute to the integral development of the individual and society and to extend to all men and creatures to all human realities the saving plan of the Father, revealed and accomplished in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- ① Among the ecclesial bodies in which the sacramentality of the Church is fulfilled through the communion, participation and shared responsibility of priests, religious and laity, the **Parish Pastoral Council** occupies a privileged place. Within it the whole community is represented in the unity of faith and in the variety of charisms, gifts and ministries, not by a mere matter of delegation or by a mere organisational request, but by an **organic exercise of sense of the church**, which is accomplished through mediation, discernment and decision.

**Membership** in the Pastoral Council has above all a mediating function, not in the sense that the members of the Council act by delegation of those they represent, but because they mediate the requests of the whole local community.

Every parish has its own Council and takes charge of the tasks attributed to the Parish Pastoral Council, and therefore covers the functions assigned by the Code of Canon Law (c. 536, §§ 1-2). In the "one educational environment" works, the Parish Pastoral Council coincides with the Council of the FPC (see IR, chap. VI, p. 7); in the case of very complex works with many educational environments, it would be preferable for the rector not to be absent from parish life and therefore it would be desirable for him to be a member of the Pastoral Council of the parish. At the same time, it is appropriate to specify that in any case the Parish has its own juridical personality (can. 515§2) and the Parish Priest is its only title holder, just as it is necessary to keep in mind the provisions of can. 519: the Parish Priest is the Pastor of the Parish.

The parish council is an advisory, operational pastoral body by nature, in accordance with the Code of Canon Law (cf. can. 520) and the guidance of the local Church. In this way the communal nature of the structures of participation is confirmed, which must be understood in a strictly ecclesial sense and only metaphorically in reference to the common language and practice of democratic legal systems.

While it is true, in fact, that - due to the hierarchical constitution of the Church - the decision-making opportunity is entrusted to the parish priest (at the parish level), it is equally true - due to its communal nature - that the decision must mature through dialogue, contact, and community discernment with all the bodies of shared responsibility that support him in the various activities.

The decisions made in the Pastoral Council are the opportunity in which the various opinions and suggestions developed in community discernment must be summarized through the own ministry of pastors. In this way the Pastoral Council is truly a unified subject of ecclesial choices, as a complete expression of communion in the Christian fraternity, albeit with the various forms of collaboration of the pastor and all the other faithful.

The Council is ultimately a team which is essential for the pastoral animation of the parish. It is presided over by the parish priest, led and accompanied by him along with other Salesians in the community; the team is made up of priests assigned to the parish, representatives of the various sectors of parish life, and the other members. Therefore, in order for it to carry out the task it should be:

- appointed from the bottom in a shared form;
- representative of the main groups, activities and communities of the Parish, ensuring that the various members are the voice of everyone, especially young people, regardless of the group they represent;
- made aware of the particular Salesian charism and work together under the coordination of the parish priest.

Its functions are defined in its own Statute and are mainly as follows:

- analysing the local situation, taking note of the needs of the parish and its members, offering an evangelical response to the challenges encountered;
- participating in defining and implementing guidelines and initiatives;
- studying and approving the regular parish budget;
- finding the most suitable ways for a broader communion and lay involvement;
- ensuring the formation of the pastoral workers in the parish;
- promoting the STEPP to the parish assembly, implementing it and evaluating it periodically.

**11** The obligation to establish the Parish Council for Economic Affairs remains unaffected and it must be constituted in accordance with can. 537 of the Code of Canon Law. The criteria for its composition include competence and administrative efficiency. It is the organ of the faithful collaboration with the parish priest in the administrative management of the parish. Its role is advisory.

- It assists the parish priest in preparing the Parish budget;
- It approves the financial statement;
- It expresses its opinion on the acts of extraordinary administration;
- It looks after the annual updating of the parish balance sheet.

The members should be experts in finance and of upright conduct and actively involved in parish life. It is made up of at least three faithful appointed by the parish priest, after hearing the opinion of the Parish Council. The chairman of the finance council is the parish priest, as its "proper pastor" (cf. CC, can. 515; 519) of a specific community of faithful. The parish priest is responsible not only for the Sacraments, liturgy, catechesis and charitable requirements, but also for administration. He is the legal representative (cf. CC, can. 532) and sole administrator (cf. CC, can. 1779).

*It can be deduced that it is essential to pay attention to an orderly, accountable, precise and formed administration based on moral and ethical principles. Therefore, it will be necessary to engage in the good administration of money and goods that pass through parish channels; make the financial statement for the people concerned (the community, parishes, Caritas, faithful); follow up on the employment contracts of lay collaborators, their social insurance, compliance with municipal and national regulations; be well aware of what yearly contributions are to be allocated to national and diocesan collections. From this act of recompensation, it is clear that the Council for Economic Affairs, if well informed and well apprised, can make a very effective contribution to the parish, by recognizing the specific competencies belonging to the lay people.*

- **The committees and working groups** are teams that, in accordance with the SPP, provide leadership in various areas of activity. Among these the Youth Ministry Leadership committees or teams is particularly important. It is coordinated by the assistant parish priest, or by a Salesian lay person responsible for the Diocesan Youth Centre (cf. GC 20, 432). In

some realities the Oratory council is identified with the Youth Ministry leadership or team members; this is a good solution to prevent dispersion and guarantee the ordered and systematic unity in reflection and choices. All this while taking into consideration the different realities, which also include Salesian houses with a single "sitting", namely the Oratory Youth Centre.

**④ The parish assembly and groups** are instruments both of communion, by involvement and shared responsibility in the life of the community, in particular with the lay people identified and committed to the Salesian mission. Their identity is strengthened through the preparation and implementation of the Salesian Executive Pastoral Project for the parish.

To sum up, it is to be hoped that these councils and groups are understood through the prism of shared responsibility, as an expression of communion, and not the result of curiously and goodwill.

- These bodies aim to be competent in promoting the original and creative nature of each parish, capable of creating a pastoral project on the basis of the local and present SESP, according to the areas of commitment of each one.
- everything, therefore, is aimed at discovering the parish community as a subject of evangelization, with shared responsibility and full involvement in the mission of the Church.
- for these reasons, the *places* and *times* of community discernment (groups, meetings, assemblies) must be explored, promoted and valued, by focusing as a community on the present moment and its requests, without running the risk of being too attached to the nostalgia for past administrations and leaderships, which were perhaps connoted exclusively by priests and religious.
- These organisms are the expression of a true "Christian community", which does not indicate a restricted circle of a chosen few (cf. 28), perhaps to please the parish priest speaking of "community" leads, rather, to strengthening awareness that the Christian call is lived together with others and is mutually sustained and strengthened in a circularity of vocations and mutual relationships.

## II) In dialogue with the Bishop and the Local Church

**I** the Salesian Work enjoys great esteem in the diocese and in ecclesiastical bodies. While confirming the complete availability to collaborate with the particular Church, whenever possible, it is important to recognise the parish's entrustment to the Salesians as a community of consecrated persons in line with the founding charism. The Bishops, themselves urge us to make our work in the field of youth ministry more visible, in order to enrich the territory with the expression of the Salesian charism and tradition.

Therein lies the question of the written Convention between the province and the diocese, requested both by Mutual relations, 57 and can. 520 of the Code of Canon Law. What is officially expressed in these conventions highlights the relevant and valid reasons for accepting the parish and the characteristics that must be highlighted in the service the Salesian community and the diocese must render.

We are aware that the first commitment we have when we are assigned to the parish is not that of submitting, but of contributing the wealth of a charism to the particular Church.

We should bear in mind the sentence that "Mutual relations" addressed to Bishops: "It is the specific effort of the Bishop to defend consecrated life; to foster and promote the fraternal and solidarity of religious and to help them become part of the compensative and of the compensating action of the Church, according to their distinctives acts" (CIC 520). And furthermore: "His specific commitment should be an incentive to draw from each creature" (CIC 46).

**I** From what has been said, we must move towards communion and collaboration in the particular Church. Membership in the Congregation, which is important in order to remain faithful to one's vocational choice and to continue to be rooted in one's specific charism, must not be seen as an alternative to belonging to the diocesan presbyterate, but at the service of the overall pastoral plan of one's diocese. There are a number of different diocesan structures in which our parishes are integrated (pastoral area, deanery, vicariate...). We believe it is worth reflecting, from the perspective of communion, on the positive relationship with neighbouring parishes and the archdiocese.

The parish priest is generally present at the retreat or at the meetings of the vicariate or the diocese: these days of existence and planning strengthen the atmosphere of collaboration and the bond between the parish priests and the diocese. In communication with the bishop and the other parish priests, he gains an experience of diocesan communion that he must be able to communicate to the whole community. It is a type of awareness and mediation that the parish priest should handle in a systematic way. Inter-parish and inter-diocesan communion is not a simple organisational strategy, but a requirement of the very mission of the Church (cf. CG21, 41E).

The above passes not only through the consistency in the life and action of individuals and parish Communities, but also the sense of belonging to the particular Church, its history and pastoral ministry, to the point of becoming dialogue, good relationships, cordiality of relationships, willingness to make oneself present, commitment to support the proposed initiatives, conviction that in the Church nothing is ever just organisational and functional, but communal.

### C) The ~~written~~ and articulated Executive-Pastoral Plan

 The parish is immersed in a world which is undergoing profound and rapid change. It is necessary to sit down, share, reason, reflect, analyse, identify objectives and priorities, evolve, share responsibilities, form, verify, in short, plan. We need a more detailed interpretation of the changes and provocations of the territorial reality and of the impact that ecclesial communion and mission must have on it. It is a unified and complex reality and requires a plan (cf. GC21, 140). The primary objective of pastoral action, carried out in the Salesian parish, is to become a real house made up of many individuals who share a mission. For this reason, the Salesian charism needs methodological attention, an operational tool, which makes it possible to trace paths in order to achieve the objectives, to use resources well, to verify the results: the Executive-Pastoral Plan.

*«The parish exercised in the following way: there according to the style and spirit of our Executive-Pastoral Plans» (GC 21, 140)*

Parish ministry is given a unified and articulated shape in the plan, a mental and community process of involvement, clarification and identification.

Planning is done in the light of faith; indeed, it is a definite form of facing reality with the eyes of faith. Therefore, it does not immediately fall within the context of a "technical aspect" or a simple printed compliance. This plan helps the parish forge effective collaboration in its pastoral mission to teach, sanctify and guide everyone. Parish structures strengthen communion, convergence and complementarity amongst people, activities and other structures focused around the operational plan.

To ensure that parish pastoral ministry has continuity, it must not only ensure the stability of people, but it must have "points of reference" for all people: a plan. The SEPP is a concrete operational channel that guides the journey of our parish communities and, therefore, it is a proposal that cannot be derogated. It is:

- an indispensable tool for carrying out parish ministry according to the Salesian identity, interpreting and renewing our proposal and its method;
- an important element for the pastoral community of parish life when inevitable staff turnovers take place;
- a point of reference in the dialogue with the bishop and diocesan bodies;
- a condition that is integrated in, qualifies and enriches the local Church's project, responds to its requests and needs and those of the local area;
- a concrete possibility for a journey together in the convergence and mutual enrichment between the parishes of the same province (cf. Salesian Youth Ministry: Frame of Reference, Youth ministry Department, 2014, chap. IV).

**11** In conclusion, because of its membership in the local Church, the Salesian parish incorporates the pastoral guidelines of the diocese and those of the provincial and local SEPP in its SEPP. There needs to be the effort of a global project which is able to formulate a wide-ranging pastoral plan in connection with both the diocese and the province. It is a matter of making a synthesis, of creating harmony. The vision of the diocese must therefore be experienced not in a conflictual way, nor in

mutual indifference or distrust, but in mutual and necessary coherence and enrichment (cf. OC 21.139c; OC 70.403). The parish priest in particular is called to this action, in order to prevent the flattening of the Salesian pastoral proposal, the quantitative and qualitative estrangement from the youth and the loss of "educational" capacity.

In implementing the line of the charism, both the fear and the danger of juxtaposing two pastoral ministries must be overcome: the pastoral ministry of the particular Church must be rethought with the awareness of one's own Salesian charism, making choices that are dictated by the specific service in which the Congregation is called to bear witness. At times the difficulty of "recognizing" these two references is more apparent than real, in the sense that it refers to organizational and calendar aspects, rather than to the singularity to express one's own charism. For this reason, the Salesian parish priest dialogues not only with the bishop, but also with the provincial, who is a reference and inspiration.

**III** When a parish is one of a number of other sectors in a given area (Oratory-Youth Centre, School, Social Work, Boarding house, Hostel), through dialogue it fuses along with them a special collaboration for unified pastoral ministry within a single mission.

*Our way of evangelizing is not just "religious meeting" or "the service of worship". Don Bosco preferred a type of pastoral activity that favored a program of holistic education (creativity-work-study-direction), to which faith was its illuminating centre.*

It expresses the desire to grow systematically as a Salesian house. If the division of responsibilities is legitimate, the multiplication and division of pastoral plans within the same work with dualities and parallel is not comprehensible. For the Oratory-Youth Centre the parish is a reminder that there is a converging pastoral plan involving the local area and the local Church, based on the different responsibilities of the two sectors. There is a need for a real plan that unites the two sectors, with mutual benefits. Unified pastoral activity is split out through mutual relationships and the fact that they are different projects help us provide a better response to quite a few special situations in the Congregation.

#### • Oratory-Youth Centre in a Salesian parish:

- Oratory Youth Centre in diocesan parishes;
- Oratory Youth Centre in presences with multiple sectors, where there is also the parish along with other sectors and activities.

The Oratory is an environment full of many educational proposals for children and young people, all centred on relationships and inter-generational exchange, with significant figures according to age and charisms (the pedagogical model). It is the place where catechesis and the celebration of the faith occupy a central, but not unique, place, since it is naturally connected with a rich and varied programme tailored to the basic needs of the young people: group life, singing, music, walks, summer camps, leadership in activities of service according to age.

As mentioned above, the Oratory Youth Centre cannot, in its entirety or through its well-known membership, be representative within the parish pastoral council to guarantee the unity of the evangelizing activity.

## D) Provinces/Nations of animation

**①** The parish priest is appointed by the Provincial and presented to the local Ordinary to be of service to the local Church, in communion with the Bishop, the presbyterium and the other parishes. He seeks coordination with other parishes in the Province and the Youth Ministry delegation in the Province. The guidelines of GC 10 and GC 20 (cf. GC 20, no. 411) require co-ordination of the parishes to be fostered in all our Provinces.

The parishes depend on the diocese in which they are located but are entrusted to the Salesian Congregation to respond to the pastoral needs of particular Churches (Reg. 79). If the acceptance of a parish charity requires the approval of the Rector Major with the consent of his Council, the significance of the Salesian representation in such a vast area as the province is verified by the Provincial with his Council. The restitution of the parish to the diocese, its relocation to another area and the redevelopment of the parishes respond to new needs and new recipients. The province is not only a juridical-administrative district, but it is also a charismatic and juridical community that is concerned with promoting life and mission in all its works.

In addition to the precise agreement report, signed by the bishop and the Salesian, in the person of the provincial, the Province must give operational guidelines in the Provincial Directory, for example regarding: building structures; the relationship with Bishops and municipal Administrations; the relationship between parish and cratery; the promotion of vocations; and lay formation (pastoral workers, catechists, lay people with ministries, administration); shared responsibility of the religious community in the parish; administrative and economic mission between the parish and the Salesian house; in accordance with universal law, the Constitution and the document Legal elements and administrative practice in the government of the Province, Directorate General for Works Don Bosco (2004), n° 16).

-  A **Provincial Commission** headed by a coordinator ensures Provincial accompaniment and support for parish communities in their implementation of the parish SPP. Both the coordinator and the Commission are part of provincial Youth Ministry bodies.

The Coordinator and members of the Commission have the following functions:

- raising awareness of Salesian communities so that they pay more attention to the parish where they are located;
- promoting reflection on and improved understanding of the identity of the Salesian parish in relation to the material and social situation around them;
- raising awareness of Salesian communities so that they are integrated not only in parishes entrusted to the Salesians, but also so that they may have an impact, collaboration structure and pastoral care together with the parish where they are located geographically;
- ensuring the development, implementation and evaluation of the SPP in parishes and Shrines, offering parish communion guidelines that can help them live out their Salesian identity;
- fostering communication and collaboration amongst the different parishes of the Province, so that amongst our parishes there may be progress in the communication of experience, good practice, shared projects and specific formation programmes.

- supporting ongoing formation of Salesians and laity who share responsibility for parish ministry, through meetings and courses (in fact, some formative programmes cannot be carried out only by one parish, but they require collaboration between the various parishes of the Province);
- taking a greater care of the formation of parish priests (the formation should facilitate the Salesian parish priest and the community in coordinating the parish according to the Oratorian criterion);
- convening regular meetings of parish priests, pastoral councils, teachers, diaconal teams, health apostolate and youth ministry and the conferees engaged in the ministry of the Word and Reconciliation;
- responding to the pastoral challenges of the Church in local churches and Shrine where the mission of the Province is carried out.

We must stress the importance of establishing a Provincial commission of it is not yet present, and there needs to be liaison with other Provincial commissions: Oratory-Youth Centre, Salesian Pastoral Movement, Health apostolate, Missionary animation, Social Committee—etc. The Provincial Formation Committees assume particular importance for studies of theology especially discern, in the exercise of their ministry. They are part of the overall running of parish ministry.

- II. The dynamics and work of provincial coordination are supported by National leadership and coordination**, according to circumstances and contexts. Its function is primarily to promote reflection and a deeper understanding of the Salesian identity of the parish through the development and updating of the educative-pastoral proposal.

Other guidelines and proposals at the national level are, for example:

- providing precise guidelines in order to encourage the growth of an educative-pastoral harmony between parish and Oratory-Youth Centre in a unified plan and in sharing a program;
- preparing and offering concrete, structured and open subsidies, of lines and elements, to draw up local pastoral projects;

- facilitating communication amongst the provinces in order to share experiences and challenges;
- planning a formation and updating service for formation houses on the themes that are typical of the Salesian Cratoense and Paesi work.

A common practice in various situations around the Congregation is to promote the updating and formation of parish priests through National organisation (formation, retreats and specialization courses). Moreover, it is possible to convene meetings for reflection on a national level, conscious of the wealth arising from the variety of groups involved in our parishes (catechists, pastoral council, youth leaders, committees, groups).

## AT A GLANCE

### THEIR MISSION STATEMENT

**Ensuring that children  
especially the Disadvantaged  
experience the joy of  
learning and achieving.**

**Quality of Standard  
of Education for the  
poor.**

**Ensuring that children  
experience the joy of  
learning.**

**Empowering (Collaboration) of the  
Disadvantaged community  
through education.**

**Education to the world  
through Quality Primary  
education for the poor.**

**Ensuring that children  
experience the joy of  
learning.**

- Contribution to multiplication initiatives  
and responsive proxy of the  
poor communities in the society.

- Creating opportunities especially  
for learning with the community and  
affiliates.

- Coordination of their operation with the CDE and  
the proposal of School Year Sponsoring
- The jurisdiction continues the growth of big  
sector policies and initiatives.

### GOALS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

- Identifiable and measurable targets  
(expressed in a simple manner, concrete,  
demonstrable, quantifiable)
- Raise the active participation of all in the  
preparation and organization
- Have an association of targets for the  
implementation.

- To be a support to the development of  
members of the family competency and  
social action and charity.

- Visible results expressed in a visible progress  
spirit in generosity and solidarity
- Harmonious, balanced and harmonized child  
ability and personality development.

- Patriotic pride of School Year Sponsoring  
in particular, capability, resilience, youth group  
leaders and engaged couples.

- Operations have different sections in the Church
- A parish committee has a group and organizes other constant prayer services.

**Parish Committee**  
and the Parish Council  
Prayer Services

- Translating continually life in the church into action.
- The members of the parish and community approach.
- The council is provided to reflect and dialogue with various people, carry pastoral services, care daily tasks, spiritual and physical the material of life among the parish communities.

**Parish Committee**  
and the Parish Council  
Prayer Services

- pastoral team w/  
an advisory and  
operational nature.

**Parish  
Pastoral  
Team**

- **Advisory Team:**
- **Collaborate**  
according to culture  
of communication  
and administrative  
efficiency

**Council of  
Advisors  
Advisory  
Team**

- **Team** that will  
cooperates with the  
CCP, answer the  
different needs of  
the community.

**Cooperative  
team working  
group**

- **Team** of  
communicators,  
communicators and  
important writer  
life of the community.

**Team  
communicators  
and writers**

## UNIFICATION IN THE LOCAL CHURCH



## SCHOOL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

### Mission and Educational Objectives

- The quality of formation with an emphasis on personal and social values.
- Formation of the individual with the integration of the educational, cultural and spiritual.

- Written collaboration between professor and student.
- Communication, collaboration and sharing of experiences by the particular Church.

### The Educational Programmes Offered

- Adaptation to the characteristics of each individual according to the religious identity.
- Adaptation according to the needs (activity of pastoral).
- Form of relationship of dialogue with the Ministry of Education.
- Contribution to the ministry and enrich the project in the local church.

- Materialized education (Catechesis, Religious education).
- Spiritual development with the promotion of the spirituality and creativity of each youth.

- The spiritual education to the "youth" corresponds to the spiritual formation of the members of the Christian community of the pastoral and local SEMPP.

### Pastoral Conferences

- Parish Conference in all parishes.
- Diocesan Conference in the Episcopal Directory.
- Provincial Conference in the episcopal region of the SEMPP.

- Parish in the area together with other associations of the Salesian Work (Catechist, Youth Council, Catholic Social Work, Interparish Committee), providing a special education for a ministry focused within the one dimension.

• Formation and support of ecclesiastic spirituality of the educational pastoral project of the parishes.

# OTHER FORMS: PUBLIC CHURCHES, SHRINES



The public churches and Shrines represented in the works of the Province are everywhere a significant Salesian "presence", a sacred "place" of attraction and meeting, witness and Salesian and ecclesial message.

It is important, as we have emphasized in reference to the parish, to look after the hospitality of the faithful, the visitor and the passer-by, which is manifested by various factors, from the simplest details to the personal willingness to listen and accompany. Here lies the visible aspect of charity, which causes the visitor to reflect as he feels welcomed by God because he is welcomed by His brothers. It could be a hospitality provided by priests, religious or lay people, characterized by human qualities, respect for personal processes, which help clarify doubts and even trigger them.

In these circumstances, other elements of particular importance are the dignity of liturgical celebrations and manifestations of popular piety; atmosphere of respect and meditation; order and safety; the maintenance of the entire space; the proper indications; a barrier-free architecture; printed material and new technologies; the creation of adequate and welcoming physical spaces for each category of people and for each specific use (shops for almonies and reconciliation, information points, museums, etc.); to avoid the perception of commercialization in sacred spaces.

Therefore, *new church structures* must be considered within the provincial XRDPP as typical expression of our tradition, which offer their own cultural and pastoral proposals. This means that each auxiliary oratory depends both on the religious community and the local parish.

 **Public churches** are also called "missions" which operate with some pastoral services that are not recognized in parishes. There are liturgical services on public holidays and weekdays with Eucharistic celebrations, prayer meetings for groups of faithful, including young people, special or Salesian missions or novenas. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians represents a great contribution to the Church. The service of reconciliation is the most appreciated, not only by the faithful, but also by priests and religious, and in some places, even by tourists and pilgrims.

 **Shrines and/or Basilicas** are churches recognized as such by the ecclesiastical authorities and places of welcome and prayer for many

faithful, the Congregation has a wealth of Shrines and basilicas. "Shrines" are sacred places to which the faithful make pilgrimage for a special reason of piety (cf. CCC, can. 1230-1234). At Shrines the means of salvation are to be supplied to the faithful by the diligent proclamation of the Word of God, through the celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, and the celebration of approved forms of popular piety (cf. CCC, can. 1234). As a rule, Shrines, besides being particular destinations for pilgrimages, are a place of worship and devotion linked to events or manifestations of the Blessed Virgin, Saints or Martyrs. In fact, some preserves relics or images considered miraculous or are places particularly visited by the holiness of a servant of God or by multiple forms of "popular piety".

We must not forget that the religious presence in public spaces is another way of evangelizing, as well as all the manifestations of popular religiosity (such as processions, festivals and pilgrimage). For some people who



come to the Shrine, this is the only bond that unites them to the Church community. The Church, therefore, takes this opportunity to proclaim the Gospel message and lead people to Christ.

In some Shrines there are artistic expressions of paintings, sculptures and sacred representations which are tastefully arranged and supported by doctrinal content and objects for worship. In this regard, music, song, architecture, painting, sculpture and sacred objects and vestments should be given special care in Shrines.

Every pilgrim, visitor and passer-by deserves all the attention he can receive. As far as possible, he must be welcomed as an individual, on a personal level: everyone must find their place in the Shrine.

The document "The Shrine, Ministry, Province and Prophecy of the Living God" invites us to this idea. It says that "the experience of Church must be particularly favored through the living witness given in pilgrimage to the Shrine. This should take into consideration the specific characteristics of each group and each individual, the yearnings of their hearts and their collective spiritual needs" (Francisco Ortega, *Los tres. Cultos y Misiones: una función pastoral*, Mar A, 1998, 33).

This is why we cannot be content with a standardized hospitality, but we must strive to expand the proposal, without running the risk of uniformity. If diversified hospitality implies personal encounter, this requires high-quality attention in the Shrine, which implies that those responsible demonstrate an active presence, as well as a loving attitude.

**Other concrete actions** that can help achieve a living hospitality are:

- promoting voluntary service for the hospitality and formation of those involved in the life of the Shrine, developing specific programmes and manuals for human, doctrinal, spiritual and pastoral formation;
- organizing guided tours within the Shrine;
- skill-training of priests who exercise the Ministry of the Word and Reconciliation;

- ▶ the clear definition of the charism specific to the Shrine, which must shape the spirit and meaning of life of the work of volunteers.

All this is part of the timely development of a pastoral plan for welcoming and evangelization, in harmony with the diocesan pastoral ministry, so that it may become part of it, also taking into consideration the collaboration between Shrines and parishes, between Shrines and public churches (perhaps by fostering regional or national meetings, with the presence of numerous pastoral workers), between pilgrimage associations, with civil entities, agencies and tourist guides.

Finally, it is important to stress the relevance of can. 1234 § 2 CCC, which expressly provides for the preservation and protection of valuable offerings of popular art and piety. We should also recall Can. 1189 regarding precious images and those honoured with great reverence (cf. can. 1190 § 3) and also that concerning sacred relics and those of great significance (cf. can. 1190 §§ 1 and 2).

## AT A GLANCE

### Worship

Second "place" of cult and meeting of witness and Solomon's wisdom message.

With some pastoral function. Why are not recognized as places of Ecumenic celebrations, prayer meetings, liturgies and masses.

### Sacrament

Churches movement is such by the influence of everybody and culture of developing and praying for many believers.

The "Sacrament" like sacred places where the faithful go for reasons of party and pilgrimage.

### Family space or the reception of the faithful, the visitor, the passer-by

- dignity in liturgical celebrations and simultaneous of regular body
- open in the whole space
- respect and reconciliation
- barrier-free architecture
- printed material and new technologies
- appropriate and welcoming physical spaces for each category of people and for each specific use (dishes for admissions and reconciliation, information points, treasury, etc.)



# Concluding remarks

The parish is "Salesian" due to the community style it promotes, the ecclesial experience it lives and the witness of the migrant community. It is "Salesian" because of its relationship of communion with the local Church, the support and development of groups and associations, its involvement and favourability integration in the local area and the preferential and priority of attention for young people. We live the parish ministry as a true Salesian apostolate to the extent that we remain faithful to our mission and make Don Bosco's charism relevant.

The parish entrusted to the Salesians, like the Salesian charism, is characterised not only by some "spiritual" features, but it evangelises according to the style and spirit of the Salesian Educative-Pastoral Project. This is where Salesian attitudes, initiatives, contents, experiences and pastoral choices are represented. These pages have attempted to provide some stimuli in this direction.

# Documentation



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