

Youth Pastoral Document No. **10**

THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY
AND
ITS MILIEU

Presence and mission

DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH PASTORAL WORK-ROME

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AND
ITS MILIEU**

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For private circulation only:

Original title:

COMMUNITA SALESIANA NEL TERRITORIO - 1986

Translated by Fr. Chrys Saldanha SDB

The Gondals Press. P-12. Connaught Place, New Delhi-1.

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FOREWORD

1. A CONTEMPORARY THEME

The Salesian Community and its Milieu" is a new addition to the series of "Aids" brought out by the Department for Youth Pastoral in Rome. Its purpose is to throw some light on a theme that has acquired considerable pastoral importance in recent years, as can be seen from the following facts:

- The human groups among whom we work have one thing in common, viz. the territory where they live. It is there that we strive to build up the people of God and the human community by establishing a network of relationships and joint initiatives and by creating educational and development- oriented institutions
- The civil community, in the name of decentralization and development planning, divides its population into blocks, wards, sectors and zones. Through such an arrangement it hopes to succeed in facing up to its problems and needs and in improving the quality of life of its citizens.
- The ecclesial community, already experienced in such matters, rethinks its presence today as the people of God in the midst of the human community and while doing so, pay increasingly greater attention to its service to a particular area. It sees the pressing need to work for ideals and causes on a global scale, but at the same time it recognizes the urgency of occupying itself with the concrete problems of human beings living in a determinate geographical area.
- Alert to this theme because of its working-class character, the Salesian community echoes it in its Constitutions: "[The Salesian community] is open to the world's values and attentive to the cultural milieu in which it carries out its apostolic work. At one with those among whom it lives, it cultivates good relations with all" (Const. 57). "We are ready to cooperate with civil organizations working in the fields of education and social development" (Const. 48).

2. A SALESIAN THEME

This theme is not completely new. Several concise statements are to be found in previous Aids. We shall expand on them here and tease out their implications.

- In "Resource Material and Guidelines for the Salesian Educational and Pastoral Plan", we read: "To accomplish its educational and pastoral task, the community ropes in the social forces at play in its area and in the local Church, while at the same time itself striving to become involved in its human and Christian milieu. With these forces the community engages in an enriching dialogue on the principles of education. It does its part in the human and/or Christian formation of the young, collaborating with the various bodies that work for the same ends" ("Resource Material ..." 4.1.5).
- Applying the same principle to the educative and pastoral community in our schools, we come up with the following assertion: "Because of its service to culture and to society and on the strength of its Plan and professional competence, the educative community rightfully occupies a place in civil society and involves itself in matters pertaining to education. It carries out, therefore, an animation according to the spirit of the Gospel in large bodies...In this way it brings a Christian leaven to the field of culture and thus shares in the mission of the Church" (Resource Material and Guidelines for the Educational and Pastoral Plan in Salesian Schools" 2.4.4).
- Salesian parishes are recommended "to share the life and problems of the neighbourhood by becoming personally involved in the area, its organizations, neighbourhood services, etc." ("Resource Materials and Guidelines for the Educational and Pastoral Plan in Salesian Parishes" 3.38).
- As for Oratories and Youth Centres they are encouraged to attempt an active and meaningful presence within their social context. Suggestions are offered as to what form such a presence could

take, ("Resource material and Guidelines for the Educational and Pastoral Plan in Salesian Oratories and Youth Centres" 1.2.5).

- As is abundantly clear from the foregoing, the link between us Salesians and our milieu affects every aspect of our vocation:
 - *To be educators*, we need to consider the overall situation of our area, close to the daily lives of our youngsters, where the different educational influences coalesce, reinforce or neutralize each other.
 - We call ourselves *evangelizers*. To bear witness to and proclaim the Gospel necessitate our presence and communication within the human community, and our ability to influence its criteria.
 - Day after day, as *missionaries* of the young, we realize how hard it is for them to build themselves up as persons; we know the difficulty of helping them get a grip on themselves to give their life a sense of direction. The common substratum of all these difficulties lies in the milieu, in society and in culture.

3. PROBLEM AREAS

To meet the needs and difficulties outlined above, we find we have to tackle three problem-areas:

The first concerns the operational significance of the guidelines laid down in articles 48 and 57 of the Constitutions. In other words, what concrete pastoral forms are the following enunciations to assume?

The Salesian community

- [is] attentive to the cultural milieu in which it carries out its apostolic work (Const. 57).
- [is] at one with those among whom it lives (Const. 57);
- cultivates good relations with all (Const. 57);
- [is] ready to cooperate with civil organizations working in the fields of education and social development (Const. 48).

- The second pertains to the concrete means a Salesian Community should employ to acquire a sufficient knowledge of its surroundings, whether it be knowledge related to persons (the condition of the people, human resources in the area, expectations, plans) or knowledge related to structures (decision-making bodies and processes, the balance of political and economic forces).
- The third problem-area is to identify a practical course of action, in a particular area, keeping with our Salesian identity.

4. CONTENTS AND PURPOSE OF THIS AID

To answer these and other questions (which have not been asked here), this Aid is structured in three parts:

- **The first part presents the different aspects that go to make up the reality known as the "milieu".**
- **The second part gives us the motivations and fundamental options that should inspire our pastoral care in a milieu;**
- **The third part confronts our Salesian pastoral praxis with the demands arising out of our presence in a milieu and offers operational guidelines for Salesian communities**

This Aid does not pretend to resolve every problem on the subject of "Salesians and their milieu"

Rather, it intends to back up the effort our communities make to find ever more adequate answers to the problems they face; it also invites them to rethink the full gamut of their problems beginning with the very terminology itself, which does not seem to have the same meaning and resonance everywhere.

Many local churches have already begun to reflect on these issues and have come out with some orientations. Salesians should not fail to keep themselves informed of the direction followed by the Church in the milieu in which they live. Furthermore, they must know how to creatively intervene in the planning stages so as to bring Don Bosco's charisma, to bear when choices are made concerning the human community.

Concern for one's milieu will prove to be a genuine seed of renewal for our communities in as much as it will call for a continuous revision of our presences in keeping with our Salesian identity.

Fr. John Vecchi, General Councillor for Youth Pastoral

Rome, 31 January 1986, Feast of St. John Bosco

ABBREVIATIONS

AGC Acts of General Council

Const. Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales

CEI Italian Episcopal Conference

SGC Special General Chapter

GC21 21st General Chapter

GC22 22nd General Chapter

CNOS Centro Nazionale Opere Salesiane

CT Catechesi Tradendac

DV Dei Verbum

EN Evangelii Nuntiandi

GC Gaudium et Spes

EPP Educational and Pastoral Plan

Reg. General Regulations

RH Redemptor Hominis

Rom St Paul's letter to the Romans

RRM The Rector Major's Report to the 22nd General Chapter on the state of the Congregation

PART - I
THE MILIEU

- 1. WHAT IS A MILIEU?**
- 2. THE CENTRAL POINT OF REFERENCE: MAN**
- 3. THE DYNAMIC FORCES AT WORK IN A MILIEU**
- 4. POSITIVE ATTITUDES ARISING OUT OF A CONCERN FOR ONE'S MILIEU**

1. WHAT IS A MILIEU

It is only when we understand our pastoral ministry deeply, as a religious service and as a presentation of the Gospel in a dialogue about the human situation, that we come to the Christian community and its manifestations with the milieu in which it lives and operates.

The word milieu holds for us the broad meaning of "a human community with its own structures and organization of its life and relationships," within which, we have "such works and activities as make possible the human and Christian education of the young" (Const. 42).

Many elements go into the making of a milieu; they constitute its various dimensions. And each of them has its own importance from the practical point of view.

A milieu is many things simultaneously. It is:

- *a physical and geographical space*, i.e. a portion of land occupied by a people or a community and involved in matters such as ownership, migration and transit. In this physical space are performed actions that have a bearing on every aspect of life, such as neglect, congestion, and the creation of more space.
- The physical space of a milieu not only reflects living conditions there, but also influences them. It forges a relationship of men among themselves and with their habitat. It creates certain conditions that leave their mark on life, culture and institutions.
- *an environment*: this is a complex of situations within which the growth and development of the individual, society and culture take place. As an entity that is simultaneously stable and dynamic, it undergoes · modification during an exchange process in which each one, either consciously or unconsciously, contributes his share towards improving the environment, even while he draws benefits from the environment which is the result of everyone's contribution. History, customs, traditions, culture, subculture - these are the main ingredients that go to make up the environment, in which we are all immersed.

- a natural human community: in the process of socialization taking place today, two tendencies are noticeable:
 - on the one hand there is a desire to participate in the life of the wider community or mankind without getting bogged down in a group;
 - on the other hand, there is a move to have the decisions and responsibilities and the development and organization of life, to be chosen at the level of groups that are increasingly smaller in size, concrete and well- defined.

Thus, we have the following reference points for the growth of the human community: the family, the group, the voluntary association and the neighbourhood are entities in which a certain number of persons act together, maintaining a link with the wider community of the city and the country.

- a texture of human relationships: consequently, there is a milieu a texture of human relationships possessing certain unique characteristics which set it apart from the kind of rapport prevailing in other places where men encounter each other, as for instance, in a factory, school or office.
- The basis for relationships in a milieu is not work or the common enterprise, but simply the nearness of persons to each other; and not only persons, but above all families. In a neighbourhood there takes place a meeting of persons, but still more of groups, and through this interchange personhood and social interaction are welded together.
- a socially and politically organized community: a milieu also assumes the countenance of a community that has its own social and political set-up. Hence, a milieu is not only physical' space, but above all, a context arising out of laws which govern social relationships and the exercise of power.

- From the social and political point of view, the following hold considerable importance:
- families: they constitute the basic ambient in which persons grow;
- natural and spontaneous groups: they are important factors of socialization, offering wide scope for the functioning of roles and relationships;
- the structures existing in the neighbourhood: these represent the balancing point between the personal and the public domain. It is through them that it becomes possible to really involve all the citizens in the management of public affairs, to identify "needs" and to plan and assess solutions.
- It must be noted that there are also intermediate forms of linkage between the small communities (neighbourhoods) and the vaster totality of the city. Through them it becomes possible to bring together in certain locations some specialized services, as for instance, health and sanitary services in the municipal wards of the city.
- a "culture of the people": the milieu is the first place for an encounter and circulation of people and ideas and for an assimilation of the culture of the people.
- By "culture" we mean the sum-total of the life and characteristic conscious attainments of a human group at a given historical moment in a given place. By "the culture of the people" then, we mean the culture that people manifest in their life, beyond and before any kind of scientific ordering or schematization.
- The individual is a part of and surrounded by, this common endowment. Place and culture are for him a source of dignity and identity. His cultural heritage offers him basic values and the key to grasp his identity as a person. Whatever therefore, his surroundings offer him by way of culture becomes an indispensable factor in his development as a person.

2. THE CENTRAL POINT OF REFERENCE: MAN

From the preceding section there emerges a central point of reference on which all the constituent elements of a milieu converge, viz. Man – man understood as a single individual and as a community.

Because of the centrality of the human person, the meaning of a milieu cannot be reduced to a bureaucratic or administrative entity and not even to a purely geographical space.

Instead, a milieu is to be seen as a place where people live together and share common interests, a place that obtains its characteristics from the human group dwelling there with all its needs and potential, a place which offers room for participation and therefore for imbuing organization with values.

A milieu permits each one to become responsible for all that takes place about him and so enables him to make his own contribution to the development of human history.

Man, therefore, is not only the centre of the structure known as milieu, but also the fountain-head of all those dynamic forces that give a milieu its particular physiognomy.

3. THE DYNAMIC FORCES AT WORK IN A MILIEU

From a single physical and cultural space, a milieu becomes a place for participation and action in the measure in which the various elements constituting its social fabric interact positively with one another. It is time, then, to take a closer look at these dynamic forces and the interaction existing between them:

3.1 Personal initiative

Personal initiative is the starting-point of every process. It is the pivot on which the network of relationships, meetings and experiences depends. It

lies at the origin of the various forms of coming together that we call communities; these mould the life and history of persons in no less a manner than persons through their initiative influence the shape and the course of the history of their communities.

Because of his capacity for initiative, the person is the first cell that gives rise to life and communication. Today when every aspect of life force one to choose between various alternatives, the milieu is the space in which a person is called to assume his own responsibility of giving his ambient and community its proper physiognomy of a human face.

3.2 Participation

Not to be confused with a mere "taking part in social life", participation is an indicator of the level of a social group. It is a certain type of presence of a person in a complex society by which he is able to act as a co-responsible "subject" and to be more directly and deeply involved in its process of decision-making.

Real participation is had when a person:

- knows his own ambient, the structures giving rise to the decisions which affect him, and the forces creating the situations that involve him;
- perceives his surroundings as a favourable ambient for his full realisation as man;
- enjoys sufficiently the material and cultural benefits of his milieu;
- contributes towards determining the values of his ambient for his own good and the good of others.

3.3 Free association

Individual initiatives give rise to the primary forms of grouping in social life: groups, associations and communities.

Among these groupings there are some which are particularly important for "moving things" in an area. They are:

- those which help primary relationships to mature;

- those which give ample rein to the free initiative of persons seeking to participate;
- those which perceive the demands and urgent needs of the wider community in which they live, and promote the common good.

3.4 Institutionalization

Institutions are an organized system of social roles and functions built up around a value or a set of values, and possessing the necessary mechanism to preserve and communicate that value/ those values.

Institutions are generally classified according to the social entities they are concerned with, as for instance:

- *the institution of the family*: this consists of a set of attitudes, roles and norms that define the affective and sexual behaviour of a couple, their transmission of life, and the educational factors involved in the growth and maturation of their children;
- *cultural institutions*: these are concerned with the processing and handing on of knowledge and culture. Organizations that are scientific, artistic, philosophical, educational and recreational fall into this category;
- *financial institutions*: these provide for the production and distribution of goods and services;
- *political institutions*: these are concerned with the exercise of power and the relationship of one society with the other;
- *religious institutions*: these are a locus for support, dialogue and sharing in all matters pertaining to the faith.

Institutions have a function to perform and they carry weight: they interact with persons and voluntary associations; they choose, direct and promote initiatives but at times they also curb, exclude and modify them. It is essential for institutions to maintain a critical, human, educational and pastoral alertness so as to provide always for freedom of expression, and not stifle it

3.5 Social communication

The man of today cannot close his eyes to all that takes place not only around him but everywhere. Cultural and sports meets, catastrophes, wars and social conflicts, persons outstanding for their goodness or evil deeds - all these elements strike his imagination and involve him in one way or another. Furthermore, he receives messages that are constantly circulating in his milieu through words, gestures and events.

In all this involvement of the person in the whole of reality through communication, there are to be found certain advantages and risks:

- Communication makes it possible for timely information to be given to people and so to expose them to the problems of their area, the city, the country and the world. At the same time the risk of ideological manipulation is ever present on the part of those who man the communication network.
- The message addressed to the masses have a great part to play in shaping public opinion, perceptions and criteria, and thus they foster participation and help people grow; but at times they can also create a herd mentality and cultural conformism;
- The messages coming in from the outside can change for the better the ways of thinking and doing inside the structured ways of living in a territory; but they can also bring about abnormal or violent changes in the social fabric of a milieu.

Within such a framework of possibilities, then, the milieu becomes the locus where the flood of messages can be channelled towards the real dimensions and needs of persons; but to attain this end, it is necessary that the dissemination of information be:

- *pluralistic*: it must be possible to listen to the different voices, whether of groups or of individual persons, that circulate in a milieu;

- *selective and critical*: the information imparted must be such as to favour a sifting of ideas so that in this way it can make for the growth of individuals and of communities;
- *action-oriented*: communication must bring people to work together to ensure that whatever is good, true or just, blossoms to full maturity, irrespective of the place or the person proposing it.

3.6 Transmission of culture:

There is a complex of things, customs, traditions, feasts, celebrations, ideas, perceptions, values and attitudes that every generation in society transmits to the succeeding one. This transmission not only effects a considerable saving in that there is no need to rediscover what has been acquired by preceding generations, but is also a necessary source of identity.

Now, there are three fundamental ways of appropriating what constitutes the heritage of one's group: inculturation, socialization and education.

- *Inculturation* is a process whereby a person acquires and internalizes the cultural equipment necessary for normally taking one's place in society;
- *Socialization* is the process whereby persons take their place in society in bigger and bigger groups: the family, the school, the associations etc
- *Education* is the process whereby persons striving to develop all their potential in a conscious and purposeful way, are assisted in realizing their legitimate personal and community goals.

These three processes together form the living and dynamic current through which a cultural tradition is passed on and appropriated.

Thus, in our present discovery of the milieu, tradition plays a leading role as an antidote to social and cultural fragmentation. It becomes:

- *a human living space*: the sense of belonging to a family and to a social ambient provides the roots for one's existence, or, in other

words, a way of thinking and acting which substantially is a collective memory drawn from living in society;

- *an anchor for one's identity*: tradition creates continuity in the way of thinking and by a codification of values, forestalls the chaos that could arise in a process of change;
- *a thrust towards the future*: the attachment to one's roots serves as a springboard for launching more decisively into the future.

The importance of tradition in the lives of individual persons is most clearly seen in the double phenomenon of migration:

- *in emigration*, leaving one's surroundings there ought not to take place a rupture with one's past so as to avoid becoming impoverished of the values inherent in one's community of origin;
- *in immigration*, entering a new area, one should turn this event into an opportunity for growth by opening oneself to new value, instead of losing one's personality and so provoking an imbalance in one's social behaviour.

4. POSITIVE ATTITUDES ARISING OUT OF A CONCERN FOR ONE'S MILIEU

It is obvious then, that to think in terms of the community and its milieu, leads us to act differently and to highlight certain values and attitudes. Let us present some of them here:

4.1 Acknowledging the person as the goal of structures

To speak of milieu as "the space for a person to assume his own responsibilities" means to ensure that there be in a milieu the necessary objective conditions for his effective participation.

Consequently, there should be an alertness, courage and persistence to see things from the viewpoint of the person. This presupposes:

- a tremendous love for man:

- a continual readiness to modify structures according as the needs of the persons undergo change;
- a real possibility of freely embarking on various social services according to the measure of the people who have need of them;
- a constant concern about how power is wielded in the area, together with the willingness to intervene every time the rights of persons and their dignity are trampled upon or not sufficiently respected.

4.2 Gaining an objective knowledge of the situation

To forge ahead only because of subjective spurts of generosity and not on the basis of objective data concerning a situation is a procedure fraught with deficiencies, as actual practice has already shown. Such a procedure may satisfy the person who acts, but it does not transform the situation.

Concern for persons implies knowing their needs and identifying the root-causes of their situation. Solutions brought in from the outside or from beyond a situation, only cause distortions. For this reason, one must be constantly looking at, understanding and interpreting a situation in line with the data it presents.

Knowledge must therefore be objective, because the steps to be taken must really correspond to the persons in a situation of need;

but knowledge must also lead to action, because life is continually changing.

To arrive at this kind of knowledge there are two complementary ways: the empirical-existential and the scientific-systematic.

The first way consists in:

- giving persons a greater awareness of their rights and helping them express their needs;
- learning to live with others in such a way as to get a feel of their problems from the inside;
- reflecting on the experience acquired to ensure that it does not remain as some kind of inert or insignificant material;

- establishing a dialogue not only with individual persons but with groups and categories of persons.

The scientific-systematic way to obtain knowledge of a situation is much easier today because of data-collecting systems and communication between institutions. It is possible to make use of the data banks available in civil society as also to employ simple and appropriate methods (cf. Appendix 2).

By knowing of the causes, we are led to broaden our understanding. We come to have an awareness of the complexity of a situation, and learn how to give due weight to moral, psychological and family considerations just as we do to economic and sociological factors.

4.3 Acquiring a mentality geared to development

The concept of development is valid in both the human and the specifically religious contexts. Our concern for the milieu is actually a part of a cultural outlook where the accent is placed not so much on the means to rectify and preserve as on the means to promote and prevent: development rather than cure.

As we, then, mobilize forces for development, more than for maintaining the status quo, we begin:

- to gather people together and motivate them;
- to find out and make use of the means and resources available in the area;
- to strive for realistic goals.

Thus, there arises the need to educate the whole civil community (parents, adults, youth) - and this constitutes a real challenge to use.

4.4 Feeling a preoccupation for the environment

Such a preoccupation leads us to assess each element within the whole, and the effects of this whole on persons.

As a result of an outlook concerned with development and prevention, new factors connected with human advancement have acquired much

importance today: a pollution-free atmosphere, open spaces in the city, facilities for sports and recreation, etc.

There are many forces in society today (movements concerned with ecology, saving the environment, peace, the quality of life, etc.) that show a lot of concern for the habitat. And with reason, because it is this which shape forms of behaviour, attitudes and relationships.

Much the same solicitude is shown in attempting to keep the young free from all forms of moral contamination, safe from manipulators, and healthy in the development of their personality. The environment is a gift to everyone and is truly human if every man receives it as a means of growth; unfortunately, it has emerged as an urgent problem today.

All this requires a change of mentality and of the way of living in society. Everyone and especially the members of the Christian community, ought to be aware of the resonance of each element in society and share more generously the good things they have in their environment.

PART – II
PASTORAL ACTION IN MILIEU

- 1. UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONS**
- 2. PASTORAL STRATEGY**

In our efforts hitherto to understand the meaning of "milieu" in view of our Salesian mission, we will surely have come to realize that we are dealing with something that is much more than merely the sum of individuals, even if ultimately it is to individuals that we direct our message and our service.

We now turn our attention to our presence in the milieu and to the kind of action and interaction necessary for our pastoral care to be effective. In doing this, we find we have to tackle some thorny questions:

- Should we in our pastoral work address the complexity of the milieu, or should we simply leave it aside and continue being concerned with individuals only?
- Is the complex reality of a milieu only a place where the Gospel is proclaimed or is it a reality needing to be evangelized and to evangelize?
- Is there any difference today between youth pastoral ministry that is concerned with its milieu, and one that is not?

The manner of carrying out our pastoral service depends on the answers we give to these questions. But the answers themselves depend on the motivations that inspire them. Hence, it is these underlying motivations that we shall consider in the first place.

1. UNDERLYING MOTIVATIONS

1.1 The incarnation: the model of pastoral service

- Christ, the "Sacrament of the Father"

God revealed himself to man in a human way. His ineffable mystery and salvific will became intelligible and tangible because they came to be expressed through human mediations. While this communication on God's part takes place all through-out history, it occurred in a particular way in the event of the Incarnation. The humanity of Jesus was what God himself wanted to become in order to meet and save man.

Already in creation itself, man was made capable of being a manifestation of God insofar as he was made to God's "image and likeness". Now, through the event of the Incarnation man was assumed into God's own life. Thus, humanity became the locus of revelation and of salvation. Jesus, in fact, taught by what he was, even before he taught with words, ' that God manifests himself in humanity, and the proper place to what we call "human".

- Man, the "way for the Church"

Therefore, man is the only possible way for the Church - "we are not dealing with the 'abstract' man, but the real "concrete', 'historical man" (RH 13) - man, considered not only as a receiver of the Word ; but as a "subject" involved in the very act of revelation; man in his situation, "in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being... he is the primary and fundamental way for the Church, the way traced out by Christ himself" (RH 14).

From the life of Jesus and the Church's own experience we can infer that the process of incarnation has a power to reveal in history and culture. Not being tied "exclusively and indissolubly to any nation or race, or to any customary practices ancient or modern" (GC 58), the Christian message is able to enter and work out an inner transformation of those cultures which do not exclude it a priori. And these cultures, once they have been impregnated with the Gospel, pour forth the riches of the same Gospel in the most original ways.

- Milieu, the "locus of salvation"

Milieu is where the total and concrete man is to be found, living in a particular space and time. Now, salvation for this man is not only one aspect of his life, but his very vocation as a believer. To separate, then, religious from human objectives, and the individual person from his environmental structure is to make distinctions which go radically counter to Christian experience

and tend to treat creation and incarnation as beliefs and not as truths to be lived. "What is not assumed is not redeemed!"

Following the logic of the incarnation, the Christian community in a milieu assumes responsibility for man, seeking to know his situation and share in it, and directing all its efforts towards his liberation and full-realization.

Thus, the human community in a milieu becomes a meeting- place with God,

- where the salvific power of God is at work;
- where the faith is engaged in discerning the workings of grace and of sin, that is, in discovering the presence of God who ceaselessly redeems his creatures in Christ from sin, transforming them into new creatures in his Spirit;
- where there is real scope for the exercise of charity.

And so, the decision we make in a milieu arises out of the need to work in continuity with the mystery of the Incarnation. Christ, who came to save and not to condemn the world, is the model of our pastoral service by which the tremendous good news of the Gospel is announced in the very heart of the human situation.

1.2 The Church, the "Sacrament of salvation".

- The Church walking beside man

The Church represents and continues the mystery of the Incarnation. "That very special story of God with man and of man with God" (K. Barth) carried on for every person and every age until the recapitulation of all things in Christ.

Down through the centuries the relations between man and God, the world and the Church, the profane and the sacred, and the earthly and the heavenly, have been lived in very different ways, conditioned as they have been by a variety of cultures, mentalities and situations.

Starting from Vatican II, the Church progressively recognizes herself as a sacrament, a sign of salvation set up in the flow of human history to "walk side by side with humanity". She therefore realizes in a new way that she is not to be extraneous to, or juxtaposed with, the world and mankind's history, but embedded in it and in the human communities whose "companion" she is to be.

It is this capacity and need to walk together with the community of men, to feel herself responsible for their life, to share daily bread with them ("companion" from "com-pane") and to be present in the tensions, problems and hopes of every person, that makes her more caring for, and friendly with, the human family oriented to Christ.

"The Church, at once a visible organization and a spiritual community, travels the same journey of all mankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God" (GS 40).

- *The Church incarnated:*

The Lord wanted his Church to be universal, without frontiers or barriers. "Nevertheless, this universal Church is incarnated in the particular churches which comprise this or that part of the human race, speaking this or that language. Each has its own cultural heritage, its own outlook on the world, its own historical memories, its own human foundation" (EN 62).

Without for one moment losing sight of the horizon of the universal Church, we shall here speak of the particular church in an area, that is, a Church which, articulated in terms of persons (basic communities), "when she establishes herself in differing circumstances, cultural, social and human, assumes different outward appearances and characteristics in every part of the world" (id).

- The Church in relation to the human community:

It is precisely this area-wise organized Church which has to cope with "the most diverse world-views, ethical principles and socio-political systems" (1977 Synod,15). But this relation between the Church and the human community will be the richer in salvific potential, the more it manifests the following attitudes:

- mutual rapport: neither of the two can define its aims without the other;
- specific service: The Church rediscovers her "missionary" identity. She does not exist for herself but is meant to be at the service of man and of the world. She makes efforts to build communion, with a view to proclaiming, bearing witness to and living the Gospel
- dialogue and participation: instead of giving in to the temptation of withdrawing into her shell, the Church engages in dialogue with man and with the world in order to be more faithful to her Master, Jesus Christ and more capable of discharging her responsibility for the Gospel.
- esteem for the effort present-day society is making to become more humane, not with-standing the many contradictions and setbacks. "Esteem" means appreciation of the good accomplished, irrespective of who does it, in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel; it means recognizing the "seeds" or elements of truth implanted in various historical forces.
- optimism: Christian optimism springs from the certainty that Christ is present and active in history, even in the limited history of the neighbourhood.

Whatever has been said about the relation between the Church and the human community is also applicable to the relation that ought to exist in a particular milieu between those who feel they actively belong to the Church and those who do not, between Christians and non-Christians, between the Christian community and those of the political community. Thus, the

relation to the milieu becomes a special area of concern, dialogue and collaboration, also because "the work of the Spirit in the community of man is far more extensive and unpredictable than the work of the Christian community" (CEI, *La forza della riconciliazione*, 1.2.2).

1.3 *The evangelization of culture* (EN 20)

This theme may seem difficult and academic, but it has to be rendered in practical terms and applied to a milieu. The idea it tries to convey is that of a pastoral service concerned only with individuals will not suffice, in much the same way as a pastoral service geared only to "preservation" is inadequate. There is need today of a pastoral strategy that touches the lives of people as a group

Paul VI explained this early when he said: "It is the aim of evangelization to effect an interior transformation. In a word, the Church may be truly said to evangelize when, solely in virtue of that news which she proclaims she seeks to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective consciences...She seeks by virtue of the Gospel to effect and as it were, recast the criteria of judgement, the standard of values, the concerns, the ways of thinking, the incentives and life standards of the human race which are inconsistent with the Word of God and the plan of salvation " (EN, 18-19).

Real evangelization is not possible when the practical forms of life and relationship are ignored. In the last analysis, what has to be brought into focus is the problem of the encounter and the conflict between the word of the Gospel and culture, or in other words the question whether the Gospel only offers explanations about invisible realities "that are not of this world" , or rather, as the above text affirms, "recasts life's standards."

- **EVANGELIZATION**

To evangelize means to create and/or become aware of a "situation of salvation". The work of evangelization in this sense rests on some solid foundation:

- Christ, who constitutes the riches of the believing community is the way to salvation: "If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved" (Rom. 10,9).
- To be saved is to allow oneself to be penetrated by Christ's Gospel: Salvation occurs today only if the "form" of Jesus of Nazareth "transforms" a piece of history here and now, penetrating and vivifying a real-life situation.
- Naturally this has consequences for evangelization: we have to enter into a deep relationship with Christ living in his Church and at the same time with contemporary man. "Indeed, the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the Eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like man" (DV 13).
- The marvellous condescension of God becomes the exemplar of pastoral action.
- It is absolutely essential then, that the Word be read and interpreted in community, under the influence of the Spirit and within one's situation and that means: in a manner far removed from vague and abstract considerations that act as a stumbling block. Yesterday's prophecy if simply repeated today, remains only a memory. But if it is reflected in the mirror of our existing situation, it becomes replete with prophetic power.
- Catechesis, for its part, if it is to speak of God and of Christ, must concern itself with man's needs and respond to his real and profound questions. It must therefore:
 - open up to an understanding of the world and of man, and to a new type of relationship;
 - educate to a correct appraisal of the socio-cultural criteria of our society from the point of view of salvation;
 - clarify the relation between action in the world and the work of the Church.

- **REQUIREMENTS FOR AN EVANGELIZATION OF CULTURE**

The impact of the Gospel message on culture is to be seen in the light of the following considerations:

- The culture of a milieu means everything for man; hence "the rift between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the unfortunate drama of our times" (EN 20).
- Every culture possesses an organic unity: the inner cohesion of its various elements makes for a common set of values and a unique solidarity among those sharing in them. For this reason, it is inevitable that when the universal message of salvation encounters a particular culture, it enters "into a mental interaction with all the political, economic, social and scientific elements that constitute the global system of that culture" (R. Sigmend "Evangelizzazione e culture", Rome 1975, p.12).
- The Christian message makes an impact on culture in the measure in which evangelization takes place "not from without as though by adding some decoration or applying a coat of colour, but in depth, going to the very centre and roots of life" (EN 20). If this does not happen, the Christian message runs the risk of failing, especially in the face of new situations and new lifestyles.
- The transformation of a culture is accomplished through a "communication" of the Gospel. It is indispensable, therefore, to understand the language of one's culture and to grasp the languages of thought and expression present in it. More than ever before, the dialogue between the Gospel and the culture of today elicits our involvement "in the field of communication, semantics and symbology" (CT 59). A Gospel proclamation that does not perceive and make use of the "language" of a culture is bound to remain foreign to it.

- it is therefore important to know:
 - what it means to evangelize in such a way as to create culture and to create culture in such a way that it opens up to receive the Gospel and gives expression to it in its own original manner;
 - what the conditions are that make this two-fold programme possible.

2. PASTORAL STRATEGY

The evangelization and the very education of man, which together form an indissoluble binomial, have their own particular physiognomy. For, in the last analysis, pastoral action is a transposition on the level of operation of the logic of the incarnation and of the connected ideas of the Church and it is precisely in the light of this logic that one must act.

It would seem therefore, that from our foregoing reflections we can point out a pastoral strategy to orient our action:

- Thinking out and implementing an approach from within the life-situation itself, i.e. from within the pressures and tensions, the preoccupations and pleas of the human community and not side by side with such a situation, as though offering a message or a service from without;
- Taking part in public life and dialogue and not hiding in a corner. For this purpose, it will be necessary to overcome the constantly recurring temptation to stay aloof and reject the faith that sees its role confined to the personal sphere only;
- Evolving a pastoral course of action for the community and its environment, and not remaining limited to service on an individual basis only. The quality of life, the common good, the structures of contemporary society and the relations within the neighbourhood are all matters calling for evangelization and the education of the person.

Such a pastoral strategy is made up of three courses of action: presence, solidarity and a missionary thrust and it is these components of the Plan that we shall now describe one by one.

2.1 PRESENCE

This is not a pastoral tactic on the part of the Christian community, but a carrying out of the Father's designs for humanity. The Church actualizes a communion within herself, and seeks to extend it. The active and committed presence of Christians in the very life and struggles of mankind is a sacrament of communion: it is a sign and bearer of the presence of the Risen Jesus.

Presence is not only an edifying action on the part of some individuals. It is a course of action which, in the mind of the particular churches, embodies a global pastoral method. It means being there in the lives and vicissitudes of men, placing oneself on an equal footing with them, making a joint pilgrimage with them towards the same goal; in short, 'presence' means to be with, to mix with, to take part in.

The Church is not a body that keeps its members secluded in some kind of a refuge or a "special corps" consisting of its own organization, structures and activities; instead, she launches them on a prophetic mission among men. For their part, Christians must know that this presence of theirs in society derives from their own vocation and commitment to service.

As for the kind of space, institutions and activities in which the Church's presence should be concentrated, the most convenient forms in each context or human group will be known only if one has a good knowledge of the network of relations and structures existing there.

- The need for a real sharing leads in the first place to an involvement in the flow of life and movement of a community. The ordinary committed citizen (and every member of the Church is to be so considered), asks himself whether, for the sake of a presence in society, he must enter the arena of power and of relations with the higher political echelons; or whether he should not rather prefer the daily flow of movement of groups, institutions and civil and social gatherings, where people are

the point of reference, people who are sensitive to justice and solidarity and even those who are not, but hopefully can be won over. Obviously, the first choice should be for a presence among people and not the state apparatus.

- Next there are areas of action that the outside domain of politics (areas such as culture, education, professional training, social advancement and welfare) which offer everyone the possibility of a meaningful presence in society. The unnecessary broadening of the concept of politics has sometimes led to a hasty devaluation of several efficacious initiatives that sought to educate the population. Through ventures in these and other similar non-political areas, we are becoming aware of the role they can play in society by strengthening genuine personal values, creating various processes to impart culture and fostering new experiences which call in question the present structures of society.
- Finally, to those individuals who wish to commit themselves in their own personal capacity, there is the political arena, and the community would do well to support and encourage this Christian duty. Such a presence (in politics) can assume different legitimate forms because not necessarily do identical political platforms derive from one and the same faith. While none of these different forms can claim to be totally and exclusively Christian, it should be remembered at the same, that not all political programmes are indifferent to the Christian faith and to the important values of human life, democratic freedom and human rights.

A pastoral strategy based on 'presence' naturally gives rise to certain criteria concerning Christian institutions:

- All (Christians) have an inalienable duty of being interested in every aspect of the social, political and cultural life of a territory;
- It is the right and duty of the Christian community to create and direct structures which can serve to express Christian values and consequently enable the faithful to discharge their responsibility;

- The Christian structures that are set up for the service of man in the secular field must be open to forms of management that are proper of the society of today (participation, public character of administration, democratic spirit, co-responsibility); they must also recognize the worth of man as a person, especially of the man who has no voice in the social, cultural and political world;
- It is desirable that Christians, even if they do not directly control the organs of participation, or are a minority, should contribute through their commitment and constructive criticism to resolving, albeit partially, the problems of mankind.

It will be up to the Christian community, distinguished for its adherence to certain values and meaning of life, to animate all its members, giving them the proper elements of spirituality by which their faith and love may increase through their communion with man. The young especially are to be educated to show an interest in their territory, to consider themselves full-fledged citizens and to make their presence felt in the field of culture and politics in such a way that they show respect for the opinions of others and courageously manifest their own.

2.2 SOLIDARITY

From the considerations made so far, it is easy to understand that milieu is not only something outside of man, but something within him and happening through him: in man the history of the milieu takes place.

Similarly, the salvific mystery of the Church exists not only on the outside of man; it lies within him and within the community where faith in Christ, the Incarnate Word, is lived.

Thus, the solidarity between God and man, between the salvation that comes from God and the history of man, lies first within man's very being and then only in the decisions made by men.

The very same persons who live out the history of the world also inseparably live out the history of salvation. The very same persons who make up the Christian community also belong to the civil and political community. Notwithstanding the differences in objectives and means,

structures and viewpoints, there is an interaction taking place between life in the socio-political realm of life in the realm of the Church.

Now it is not the spirit of the Gospel to downplay permanently man's endeavours to grow with the help of his reason, even if at times these efforts on his part have revealed limitations, lacunae and even mistakes. Man's history has never been pure in any of its aspects.

This then, is the kind of human history with which the Church intends to be solidary. A renewed educational effort is needed today to ensure that solidarity becomes a way of "constantly mobilizing the faithful" (Paul VI) to be the bearers of a message that does not overlap human solutions but incarnates itself in them to illumine them, bring out their potential and purify them.

This means concretely that we must:

- *overcome in our mentality and in our praxis the parallelisms and the spirit of rivalry that set up the Church against civil society;*
- *enter the healthy currents of human endeavour, collaborating with other forces, getting involved and participating in the struggle for man's liberation from every inhuman form of life or relationship;*
- *not lose, but not even absolutize our Christian identity.* In today's pluralism, a person who loses his own identity does not contribute in any way to dialogue and the building up of a more just world; and on the other hand, the one who pushes his identity too far, distorts it and creates artificial "barriers".

The Christian community, therefore, seeks to participate not as a guest or outsider, but as one directly and personally involved in a cause, and forces with legitimate human endeavours to improve the quality of life. This has concrete applications on the international scene (peace, disarmament, new economic order, hunger), on the national scene (rights, equality, justice, concern for the poor and the weak) and in one's own milieu (environment, the functioning of institutions and services, education etc.).

2.3 MISSIONARY THRUST

- The Church is truly missionary when she incarnates her faith in the culture of a particular milieu. A fellow-traveller with the community of mankind, living through various events, the Church resembles the Gospel image of the leaven in the dough. "Christians insert the ferment of the Gospel in the mainstream of the process of history. As a result, every attempt to separate the Church from the world is to be rejected in order to avoid that a world without God may result from a proclamation of a God without the world" (W. Kasper).

Christian communities have specific means in their hands to unleash energies that may ferment a frequently lethargic world. They translate their faith into companionship, charity into pardon and reconciliation, hope into a united pilgrimage towards the Kingdom. And they announce the power and the source of all this: Jesus Christ and his mystery of salvation for the whole man

- The Church manifests her missionary thrust by:

Gathering the believers so that they may grow together and be the promoters of communion and not of evasion and division. It is a matter of abiding by Jesus' testament: "As you, Father, are in me ... may they also be one, so that the world may believe that it is you who sent me" (Communion).

- *unifying around the primacy of evangelization the rich multiplicity of charisms the Spirit has bestowed on her: priests, religious, laity, associations ...* (Proclamation).
- *Promoting a deeper knowledge of, and intimate belonging to, the mystery of Christ* on the part of those who have chosen to follow Him (Catechesis).
- *Revealing the active presence of God in our celebrations* the power of Christ's sacrifice and of our communion with him and reflecting in them at the same time the daily lives of our people (Celebration).

- *Assisting the faithful to show clearly "the first place they give to their life in the Spirit from which everything else depends". Faith, hope and charity are the good leaven that the world stands in need of (Witness).*
- *Offering a generous service to civil society that today needs an extra helping hand to meet some of the scourges and miseries that afflict it (marginalization, underdevelopment, dehumanization, drugs, violence...) (Service).*
- *Spreading, with an originality borne of the Gospel and therefore far removed from political and sometimes even ecclesial interests, the values of life, human dignity and the common good (tolerance, social justice, solidarity) (Commitment).*
- *Discerning and interpreting in all of men's efforts a yearning for "something that lies beyond" (Prophecy)*

All this is not the task of a few moments; nor is it easy. The Christian community is not discouraged, however, in the face of its own limitations and tire enormity of its responsibility; but it places it's trust in Him who has overcome evil in its most radical form.

We can now answer the questions that were mooted at the beginning of this chapter by enunciating some statements of principles:

- Pastoral action today is the work of a whole community for the benefit of the whole community, both human and ecclesial.
- Milieu is not only a geographical "place" where the Gospel is to be proclaimed, but a mediation in human history, by which God's salvific action reaches the men of today and meets their expectations and possibilities of liberation and of salvation.
- Concern for one's milieu entails a type of pastoral action in general, and of youth pastoral in particular, that embodies unheard of challenges and new approaches, especially if by vocation we serve the working-classes and the young: we are to carry out the work of evangelisation and in such a way that it becomes communion and culture; and build up a human community in such a way that it becomes open to the announcement of the Gospel.

PART - III
THE SALESIAN COMMUNITY IN ITS MILIEU

- 1. BACK TO THE SOURCES**
- 2. PASTORAL PRAXIS OF THE CONGREGATION**
- 3. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES**

The impulse to be deeply involved in a milieu is an inherent characteristic of the Salesian mission and of its spirit of service to the young, the poor and the working-classes.

Side by side with the developments taking place today in the civil and ecclesial spheres, a more mature reflection has been growing, concerning the extent and manner of involvement in concrete situations.

Over the last few years, while our Rule of life was in the process of reformulation, this topic came up for particular consideration; it has now found its way into some articles of our new Constitutions, thus offering secure guidelines to communities and individuals.

1. BACK TO THE SOURCES

1.1 Genial intuitions

It would be an exercise in futility to search through the biography of Don Bosco for explicit statements on the topic under consideration. Presence and participation in one's surroundings are modern problems in a society at once so complex and varied. However, there are to be found in the pastoral experience of Don Bosco genial intuitions which make us see today the importance of bringing the "seeds" he sowed to fruition.

One can discern Don Bosco's mentality from the following facts:

- his ability to adopt words and gestures suited to the understanding of his interlocutors, many of whom were labourers, farmers and emigrants;
- his adjustment of a whole educational system to the level of his boys, whether it be in the matter of content, method or rapport;
- his timely response through specific initiatives (schools, workshops, etc.) to the needs he perceived in his area;
- the cultural adaptation of his work, when it was transplanted in other countries and struck roots in social situations so different from those of its country of origin;

a particular awareness of the social and political implications of his work which led him to rope in governments and ministers, while retaining the freedom of the Gospel and his conscience as a citizen.

1.2 Pastoral preference:

Further light is cast on this problem by the work-preferences Don Bosco had, inspired as he was by the Gospel, but also led by concern for a society in which Jesus Christ had to be announced. We refer to the following preferences:

- *his preference for education*: education is a way to hand on the faith; it is also a way to serve society and the State. Don Bosco once said: "If you like, we are also engaged in politics... Politics has been defined as the science or art of governing the State. Well, the work of the Oratory in Italy, France, Spain, America and in all those countries where it is now established ... paying particular attention to needy youngsters, tends to reduce the number of the urchins, ruffians and young miscreants, to empty the prisons ... seeks in a work to form 'good citizens' ... they will be the ones you can count on to maintain order, tranquillity and peace in society" (MB XVI, 290-291).
- *his preference for a proper lay dimension*: this was apparent in many of his deeds and sayings: We shall choose four of the most significant examples:
 - The first concerns Don Bosco's respect for the laws of the State and his compliance with them: "Will they require that our teachers have degrees? If so, we shall send them to study at the University". The words of advice Don Bosco received from civil and ecclesiastical authorities when founding his Congregation, directed him towards a new animating presence in the Italian social context
 - The second example refers to his doing a secular write-up on the Preventive System in order to show it to the authorities. What made him see the usefulness of such a dialogue, which was not without difficulties, was the need he felt to adapt himself to the

situation created by the 'Risorgimento', the need also to spread his educational ideas everywhere, and above all his conviction that the Gospel enshrined values that had to be proposed to every man of good will.

- The third example is his concern for the problems of man and culture: work, emigration, adult education, marginalization. He saw these problems as a space for a work of evangelization which would always include human development.
 - The fourth and all-embracing example is the form of his Congregation {priests and laymen), the nature of its mission, its pedagogical model (humanistic and Christian) and its preference for certain structures (oratory, professional and agricultural schools ...).
- his preference for ordinary people: this made him attentive to working-class adults and to the masses of the poor and the needy. Because of the preference he showed for employing "community means" rather than political structures, because of the surprisingly modern use he made of social communication, and also because of his concern for social problems of his time (emargination!), Don Bosco found himself authoritatively and effectively situated at the very heart of the problems of his people.
- his preference for wider collaboration: Don Bosco preferred the kind of educational and pastoral institution that had its door thrown wide open. The oratory was a typical example. His institutions were to be accessible to benefactors, co-workers, authorities, enquirers, guests of honour and parents.

2. THE PASTORAL PRAXIS OF THE CONGREGATION

2.1 Focal points of reflection

There are certain ideas which have invariably turned up at every Chapter: they are ideas which refer to the milieu.

We present some of them here in the hope that they will give a sufficient inkling of what many Salesians think.

- The environment as an object of evangelization. Salesians are to act in favour of the "working-classes", recognizing their Gospel values and offering them support in "their efforts at human advancement and growth in the faith" (Const. 29).
- The Special General Chapter succinctly asked Salesians, "not to evangelize individuals without keeping in mind the collective evangelization of their environment" (SGC, 77). "The spread and complexity of the integral advancement of youth and the joint pastoral care of the area forces us to fulfil our mission even by 'indirect action', that is, by acting on the greatest possible number of adults and of organizations which have influence over youth" (SGC, 53)
- Involvement as a criterion and method of pastoral work. This theme was 'developed in various ways but on every side, there was an unanimity about the need to. interact with the "living forces" with whom we share our historical destiny.
- We Salesians are to involve ourselves in the particular Church, which we see as "a body of forces that work for the Kingdom" in a certain area. We are reminded to work towards "a greater and better qualified presence at ecclesial and social levels concerned with the education and evangelization of the young" (GC22, 76). "We offer the particular Church the contribution of our work and Salesian pedagogy" (Const. 18).
- But there is also an involvement with the human group, within which the community has chosen to live (cf. Const. 57). To meet its needs the community organizes activities of an educational and pastoral nature (cf. Const. 41). Such an involvement can acquire "prophetic" dimensions because of the intense communion among the members and their insertion into special type of life and work, close to the style and dwelling of the people (cf. SGC, 510).

- The educative and pastoral community as the responsible subject for our mission. This community in fact has manifold ramifications extending into the neighbourhood: parents, lay collaborators, those involved in extension programme of the institution and like-minded institutions. The progress made by the Congregation in this area was mentioned in GC22: "There is a better understanding of the overall bond of union in an educative and pastoral community (parents, collaborators, the young) and of its role in a milieu: thence have arisen its linkages with the surrounding human community and a suitable involvement in the particular Church" (RRM, 163).
- The educational and pastoral plan. Its link with the situation in a milieu is seen in many of its elements:
 - the goal (of integral education): "We educate and evangelize according to a plan for the total well-being of man... bringing to men the message of the Gospel, which is closely tied in with the development of the temporal order" (Const. 31);
 - the dimension of culture: some of the areas of concern in our pastoral action (such as sports, tourism, work, teaching and free time) are means of socializing, sharing and human advancement in a milieu;
 - the particular concern for people's movements and their social repercussions: the promotion of solidarity and justice is the characteristic content of our educational and pastoral work. "We share in a way appropriate to religious in the witness and commitment of the Church to justice and peace" (Const. 33); "we refuse every compromise with any form of social injustice" (SGC, 73); "We educate to a sense of moral, professional and social responsibility" (Const. 33)
 - the point of reference for our strategy in our educational work: without forgetting our Salesian inspiration, it is the youth situation to which we are called to respond.

- the method of participation by which the Plan is drawn up, revised and implemented, binds us closely to our neighbourhood; for it is there and for its sake that the plan is conceived in the very first place.
- Assistance seen as a synthesis of our pastoral method: it is without doubt, one of Don Bosco's most original achievements. The newly formulated art. 39 of the Constitutions expresses in a clear and concise way the two standpoints from which to consider "Assistance": as a disposition of the educator and pastor and as a methodology of action.

Assistance comprises simultaneously:

- presence: hence it is a direct sharing;
- solidarity: hence it is a sincere and active participation;
- invitation: hence it is not simply "getting an idea of the situation" but helping to grow;
- dialogue: hence it makes use of reason, religion and loving kindness in order to find possible and better solutions.

A re-reading of this typical Salesian experience will lead to its application to the wider community today. The service of assistance is not to be limited to individual youngsters or to groups of youngsters, abstracting from the cultural and social context in which they live. There is a need today to "assist" neighbourhoods, cultures, groups and movements.

- Prevention as a fundamental imperative of Salesian pedagogy, is but an expression of assistance, with which it is closely associated. Prevention too is one of the bases for our work in an area, for it means: to work on the causes so as to prevent their effects, to redispense a whole environment to encourage wholesome initiatives, to show concern for each person in order to prevent his being pushed to the fringe society.

2.2 Typical realization

Side by side with the focal points of reflection on the pastoral identity of the Congregation, there are some typical realizations which manifest a particular spirit. We shall now mention some of them:

- The Oratory or Youth Centre

This is a pastoral presence and activity in a neighbourhood: it is a home, a parish, a school and a playground for those who wish to come together and build up a community. While it would be a mistake to think that it has no religious identity, it would also be a mistake not to recognize its basic characteristic of "bringing together people" (young persons and adults) precisely for a pastoral reason. "An unquestionably 'lay' semiologist has gone as far as saying that with the Oratory Don Bosco has invented not only a new way of gathering people together, but also a new and updated way of effecting social communication" (AGC 313, p.7).

The important thing is to realize that the Oratory is "the model" for every Salesian presence

New Presences

The guidelines issued by GC21 on "new Salesian presences" tie in with the contemporary quest for a more effective involvement in one's surroundings.

The "renewal" asked of Salesians - is also measured by the geographical context in which they work, or which they give up in order to relocate themselves in a more suitable place and with greater charismatic openness in response to real needs.

This is the open attitude one finds in art. 41 of the Constitutions: "The education and evangelization of many young people, especially among the very poor, means that we have to go to them where they are to be found and provide adequate forms of service in the context of their own life style."

- The province: a structure for the suitable animation of an area. The SGC perceived the importance of reshaping the provinces in view of a deeper involvement and greater pastoral effectiveness in their ecclesial and socio-cultural contexts (cf. 512). It wanted the provinces to have a better pastoral consistency, which today implies that each province must:
 - ❖ know and define the situations in which it operates so as to arrive at the formulation of a Plan (Reg. 155);
 - ❖ offer a specific service to meet the needs of the particular Church (cf. C 157);
 - ❖ respond to the needs of different places with a variety of useful initiatives;
 - ❖ play a middle role between general orientations and local situations, translating the former into meaningful activities for the latter (cf. SGC, 185);
 - ❖ co-operate in a more original way with local bodies, particularly with those that are concerned with the evangelization and education of the young;
 - ❖ set an adequate means of animation and of linkage of its local communities, so as to promote a deeply felt unity of spirit and of action;
 - ❖ and thus, enable the life of the Congregation to take root in an area and to be enriched thereby.

3. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Following on all that has been said so far, we now present some lines of action for a Salesian community in its surroundings.

- 3.1 Make the educative and pastoral community a "meaningful" presence in the neighbourhood.

- A meeting-point

The community draws into its educational and pastoral work the social forces existing in its surrounding and in the particular Church; and itself tries to become integrated in the human and Christian milieu in which it lives. It engages in a dialogue with these forces for the sake of enriching itself; it participates in the human and Christian advancement of the young; and collaborates with other bodies that work for the same ends (cf. SGC, 17, 132).

To give a visible shape to all this involvement and collaboration, the Salesian House (community) must:

- Be a centre that receives or brings together as many persons as possible
 - ❖ the young, attracted by our presence and meaningful initiatives;
 - ❖ lay collaborators and parents insofar as they are the first ones responsible for the growth of the young;
 - ❖ co-operators, past-pupils and well-wishers who have chosen to get involved in an education inspired by the Christian faith;
 - ❖ those who are interested in the human and religious facets of life in the area and are willing to support a good work.
- Become a centre of communion and participation: the growth of the educative community ought to resemble a spiral where starting from a centre there is a constant evolving in sensitive concern and co-responsibility unto the outer limits. Concretely speaking, this implies that there is a participation and involvement in the educative community at various levels:
 - ❖ the Salesian community animates from the evangelical and practical point of view;
 - ❖ several lay persons can be made co-responsible in drawing up the Plan and in carrying out activities;

- ❖ those who believe in the advancement of man and in the basic educational orientations of the Salesian Plan can find a suitable place in the educative community;
 - ❖ finally, there is also some scope for those persons from the area who can support the Plan with their professional skills and their solicitude.
- A radiating centre

The community is not confined to the walls of the House. It extends into the surroundings. It becomes almost a second nature for a community to be present through its members in the discussion, deliberation and execution of various focal initiatives. Its educational and pastoral expertise can be asked for in handling problems concerning the young.

Such activity therefore, requires a community to:

- Organize some of its elements socially with an eye to exercising influence in the area. This can be done in a Parents' Association, for instance, by joining it up with other associations which pursue like-goals and are imbued with a similar spirit.
- Give youth groups a space for responsibility in the
- area. One can identify four types of groups in the Church today:
 - ❖ groups whose members are concerned with values belonging to the private sphere and have no, intention whatever of involving themselves in social issues;
 - ❖ groups involved in education and in a social action that is not of the political kind;
 - ❖ groups having an explicit religious connection but remaining independent of ecclesiastical structures; they operate in the midst of society through direct political and trade-union activity;

- ❖ groups having a critical and constructive religious connection and operating on the basis of volunteering.

[In such a context of groups] the Salesian community:]

- ❖ takes care of the ecclesial dimension of the groups and brings them gradually to feel that they belong to a much vaster ecclesial community; this it does by also identifying ways in which the groups can participate in youth associations of the parish or diocese;
 - ❖ develops in each group a sensitive concern for service, proposing concrete forms of involvement in and of animation of the neighbourhood;
 - ❖ trains each group to carry out an objective and structural analysis of its situation and keeps on constantly enriching the frames of reference of the group as it interprets it-<; situation beginning with the causes;
 - ❖ encourages the groups working in the same area to come together to discuss problems and situations.
- Open up new possibilities of collaboration: There are numerous possibilities arising today out of so many different values and situations.

In particular, there are facts and reports testifying to the growing interest in the volunteer movement, both on the level of individuals and of groups.

As we see it, the volunteer movement gives practical expression to one of the aspects of the integral formation of the person because of the values it embodies:

- ❖ Solidarity: The logic behind the volunteer movement is that persons, no matter what their convictions or motivations are, discover their own life, history and destiny to be closely bound up

with the life, history and destiny of others. Thus, the movement is an open war on apathy, individualism and self-centred.

- ❖ Free gift: The volunteer movement carries out its activity freely without seeking any remuneration. It experiences the joy of giving without expecting a recompense. This is a radically Christian value; in fact, it follows the Gospel teaching closely: "freely you have received, freely give". So, upsetting is this value in our culture and way of life that people often do not believe in it or treat it with diffidence.
- ❖ Concern for persons: The volunteer movement is in the first place a concern for persons. It is born precisely from the discovery that especially some people, the very poor and the marginalized, are not treated as persons, that is, with dignity and respect, but are condemned to live in humiliation and oblivion.
- ❖ Spirit of service: We are concerned here not so much with the good deed itself, as with the spirit animating it. This means paying attention to how needs develop, endeavouring to meet them adequately, and not consequently, preparing and forming those who perform such a service.
- ❖ Gospel of liberation: The real help to give persons is that which provokes them to emerge from their state of dependence and poverty into a state of autonomy and freedom. And so, the methodology that is adopted by the volunteer movement is one that enables persons to stand on their own feet. In this sense, the emphasis is placed on working "with the marginalized" rather than on working "for the marginalized". Leaving aside the whole problem required to form an individual volunteer group, we now indicate the spheres of action that are possible in one's area:
 - the public service-oriented structures, where there is need of a greater care and concern for man;
 - the private "ecclesial" structures, so that they may be a proclamation of the Gospel, avoid discrimination, set aside

considerations of profit, evolve in respect of new needs, open up to the neighbourhood, and agree to be involved in public programming;

- service on one's own: this would be the case, for instance, of an "anticipated" service to those poor and marginalized persons who are not yet cared for by anyone.

Such initiatives may disappear when society assumes its responsibility to conduct them. But they may also remain as evidence of a pluralism in the forms of service within an overall unifying plan.

- Support and encourage committed Christians in the area:

The members of the educative and pastoral community, of the Salesian Family and of the Christian community hold posts of responsibility in various local bodies, be they political, administrative, service-bound or managerial.

All of them need to discharge their duties with competence, diligence and honesty, resisting the temptation to make use of their responsibilities to feather their nests or to increase their personal power or prestige.

The Salesian community must sustain and encourage them, so that, despite their many years of public service, they may always have a "feel" for the concrete problems of persons and may bring their love and concern for the poor into the very heart of civil society, translating it into political decisions and financial priorities.

3.2. Give the Pastoral Plan a "cultural" stamp.

Education, whether of the young or of the working-classes is not only a specific aspect of the Plan, but a mould which fashions the other aspects; and among them evangelization, which is of course the very heart of the Plan.

As Salesians and as an educative community, we go to the young "to prepare them to take their place with dignity in society and in the

Church and to alert them to the role they must play in view of the Christian transformation of social life" (Const. 27).

- An education, rich in content

Milieu, the expectations of the young and the Pastoral Plan require that a community's attitude be one of carefully assessing, creating and spreading culture according to its possibilities.

In practical terms, this implies:

- ❖ a creative effort at programming initiatives, keeping in mind the situation obtained in one's milieu.
- ❖ establishing as a goal of the formative process the training of the young to a "Christian view" of the most urgent problems of man, leaving them of course the possibility to opt for different concrete solutions;
- ❖ stimulating and guiding the young to a *critical assessment of modern culture* and encouraging them to take part in contemporary debates over ideas and issues;
- ❖ forming the young to be capable of standing on their own two feet, with the help of:
 - a solid heritage of genuine principles and a clear-sightedness of situations and their needs;
 - an active and discerning attitude towards events and their interpretation;
 - an ability to make decisions that are motivated and service-oriented (cf. EPP, 5.2.1).
- ❖ an effort to mature individual consciences to the point where they can conscientiously object to unjust laws and behaviour (e.g. abortion or racist laws, inhuman treatment of prisoners), thus expressing their ethical and political convictions and offering a necessary service for the common good (cf. GS 74);
- ❖ motivating, devising and living a peace-living culture, educating to non-violence, developing a pedagogy of peace;

showing in this way that "the discourse on the mountain" has a power to transform this world;

- ❖ projecting a kind of Christianity that readily acknowledges the autonomy of the profane world, and is not at all inclined to religious experiences which make for an escape or alienation from the world;
- ❖ an ability to promote a direct experience and analysis of life in a civil, political and religious society;
- ❖ an effort to support the family in its not always understood task of mediating culture;
- ❖ a commitment to expand education in the neighbourhood through activities aimed at advancement and conscientization;
- ❖ taking part in common initiatives for cultural advancement and in meetings whenever possible.

- An evangelization of ordinary people

At the heart of the Plan lies evangelization and it is concerned with saving and helping man, both as an individual and as a community, to grow.

The principal contribution that our pastoral presence can make to its surroundings is to offer it space, time and means to engage in discussion on religious questions and to discover the reasonableness of the answer of faith. In other words, our pastoral presence, in keeping its own scope, serves as a centre for dialogue on religious issues and especially for a proclamation of the Gospel: "We are called to be educators to the faith at every opportunity" (Const. 34).

We should recall here what has already been said in previous 'Aids' on the different aspects of pastoral action, and has been summarized in this Aid in chapter II, 2.3. However, our

consideration here of the surroundings, brings us to focus on two points:

- Evangelizing "man's problems" through word and deed (SGC 289-292)

The Salesian community ... must place itself in harmony with the world in which it lives, and within this situation seek a meeting-point for announcing the Word of God ... He who remains aloof from the concrete existence of the individual cannot evangelize him; he could perhaps make him much better instructed in the revealed truths of religion; but he will not succeed in leading him to the Lord" (SGC, 289).

Consequently, besides "the faithful adherence to the words and thoughts of Christ" (Paul VI) three lines of action are necessary:

- ❖ identifying the sectors of life which have a connection with the world of youth in a particular area; identifying also the most glaring deficiencies that give rise to marginalization and frustration;
 - ❖ spell out the "problems" which affect the growth of a person as a man and as a Christian within the context of the entire community;
 - ❖ rethinking and reproducing the Gospel, so that it becomes for everyone a message of joy, hope and new life in the existing situation.
- Appreciating, supporting and evangelizing the religiosity of the people
Popular religiosity comes in the garb of faith and popular tradition. Sometimes it is a confused perception of the big questions about life and the great hopes God has sown in the hearts of men; at other times through a patient work of education, it reaches the level of popular piety based on a simple understanding of the mystery of God and of human life. It therefore stands in need of being

evangelized; but it evangelizes at the same time through its own contents (cf. Puebla documents, nn. 450, 454, 456, 457). It possesses religious and cultural values that help to build the human community in a particular area by means of shared convictions and intense moments of faith. To mention a few:

- ❖ feasts, as expressions of hope and of a presence enveloping the community (the Madonna, Christ);
- ❖ gatherings, as occasions to overcome human barriers and differences;
- ❖ spontaneous solidarity in joy and grief as a triumph over individualism;
- ❖ traditions, gestures, words, places and convictions, as means to identify with a sense of existence that is rooted in transcendence.

Popular religiosity, however, particularly in its more spontaneous forms, needs a work of evangelical education (EN, 48; Puebla, 457). The broad outlines of this education could be spelled out as follows:

- ❖ draw out "its inherent nature and its desirable qualities" (EN,48);
- ❖ purify it of its deviant elements, deformations and cultural expressions that are devoid of faith (cf. EN, 48);
- ❖ direct it towards an increase in depth, placing Christ and his mystery of redemption and mediation at the centre of life and worship (cf. EN, 27);
- ❖ "When it is wisely directed, popular religiosity can make a constantly increasing contribution towards bringing the masses of people into contact with God in Jesus Christ" (EN,48)

- An effective communication

Culture and evangelization are fused together in "communication" and it is this reality which shapes the world with or without words today.

In the framework of a milieu built on relationships and living communication, the modality of our pastoral presence and the events that occur exert an influence on people. What is more important than the mere material effects of our pastoral activities are whether these same activities can be "models" to refer to, "signs" of certain values, "messages" that mould opinions and criteria. As for events and their significance these come to be known and shared by all through social communication; through it, it becomes possible to mobilize "the great potential for influencing others through the spread of ideas, to liberate energies to do good, and to help numerous forces converge on building up a civilization of love" (AGC 1981, 302, p.19)

- ❖ The possibilities of such a communication are tied up with:
 - *the style of functioning of a religious community*: a community can emit "messages" of nearness and solidarity through its attitudes of availability, presence and dialogue; but it can also project a "Gospel" of disinterestedness by remaining aloof from the real life of the locality;
 - the image projected by the educational and pastoral institution, depending on whether all its interests are focussed on itself or it is concerned with the human advancement of the young and of ordinary people; again, depending on whether its chief preoccupations centre on organization or on education in response to new challenges;
 - *relationships*: positive or negative "signals" are conveyed, depending on whether or not our relationships are weighed down by bureaucratic considerations to the detriment of interpersonal rapport; whether or not the focus of interest has shifted from the

person and the community to the structure; whether or not there is sufficient interaction between the young and adults, and both_ are involved in the planning of the educational enterprise; whether or not "our" works are placed in opposition to civil and ecclesial initiatives, which therefore remain ignored despite the richness they have to offer for formation;

- *the messages we want to convey*: we must arrive at an awareness, a proper choice and a correct formulation of what "refines man and gives free rein to his several capacities to make use of goods, to draw up plans, to establish customs, to practice religion, to express himself, to develop the arts and sciences; in a word, to give value to his existence" (CEI, "La Chiesa italiana e le prospettive del paese");
- *languages*: symbols, words, signs and events must be immediately expressive and telling; the total language of communication has to be brought into pastoral action (meetings, debates, stage performances, music, songs, festive celebrations);
- *the capacity for discernment*: we must know how to assess and make others assess the messages emitted from other sources so that these messages can be utilized or corrected;
- *a better use of the structures* and the time available in a community for conveying appropriate messages, both educational and religious (reading rooms, news bulletins, meetings, magazines);
- *linkages with all the agencies* operating for the same purpose of the education and Christian advancement of society; in this connection it must be remembered that many "messages" in a milieu emanate from agencies that operate on a vast scale (newspapers, weeklies, radio, T.V.) and depend on the support we give them;
- *support for the Christians and the men of good will* who work in the social communications sector, and also a backing for the code of ethics to which they are subject in their profession, viz. a respect

for the truth, a mediatory role between the events and the general public, and their responsibility to promote education and culture.

- If we are convinced that the various kinds of language exercise a decisive role in social life and customs, and that it is not the task of specialists alone but of the whole community to draw up "a well-knit plan of pastoral action in relation to culture" according to each ambient, the preceding two aspects of our pastoral strategy in a milieu ("an education, rich in content", and "an evangelization of ordinary people") will certainly call for this third one ("an effective communication"); the message, the languages and the means are so fused together today that they cannot be separated in actual fact. Evangelization and education lead to communication

3.3 Render visible the fraternal and apostolic presence of the Salesian Family in the area

- The Salesian Family is not identical with the educative and pastoral community. The latter is established around a concrete goal, uniting persons bound by a definite practical undertaking. Hence it has roles and structures for an adequate involvement and participation in order to attain its objectives and the nature of its programme.

By way of contrast with the educative community, the Salesian Family is not just a "performing body" but a spiritual entity, an element of the Church, a vocation. There can be several educative communities (of the Salesians and of the Sisters) within the ambit of the Salesian Family, just as there can be individual members of the Salesian Family who, because of their commitments, cannot belong to the educative and pastoral community.

It is the fondness for the person and the human and apostolic ideals of Don Bosco, and still more for his spirit, that unites a wide circle of persons, for whom our religious communities are meeting-points and centres of animation.

Authoritative texts and abundant explanations have been offered by competent bodies concerning the Salesian family, the spirit which animates it, and the way to build it up. Here we only wish to focus on the significance the Salesian Family can have for our pastoral presence in an area through its fraternal union with us, through our mutual convergence on pastoral criteria, and through our operational links with its members and their initiatives.

- We must attach a proper importance to:

the manifold and complementary contribution the Salesian Family can make, and which constitutes a richness for the area: for instance, simultaneous and joint ventures for boys and girls; a positive influence on families and in places of work; a Christian presence in public and private bodies, in those forums that create public opinion and in those that make decisions.

strengthening the bonds of spiritual unity: this will make for a convergence in action even if individual action here and there cannot be continually coordinated;

a close understanding on the level of ideas, a thorough study of initiatives and practical coordination;

consequently, meetings and opportunities for an exchange of ideas among the various components of the Salesian Family at area-level;

a common resolve to spread the Salesian spirit in all its human and Christian richness in the neighbourhood.

APPENDIX - 1

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE THE INVOLVEMENT OF VARIOUS SALESIAN STRUCTURES IN A PARTICULAR AREA

- 1. The Oratory/Youth Centre**
- 2. The Parish**
- 3. The Salesian School**
- 4. The Technical School**
- 5. New Presences**

Scattered over the documents of the church, the orientations given by General Chapters, the letters of the Rector Major and the documents of the Department for the Youth Apostolate, are to be found suggestions for a specific involvement of our communities and institutions according to their nature, in a milieu.

In fact, in the matter of reaching out to a milieu, one thing is the contribution expected of religious groups and institutions; quite another is what institutions which also have formal goals of imparting education and culture, can really give. We wish to put together here, by way of example, some suggestions that may make our considering the milieu, a little more intelligible and concrete. The experience of those who are everyday immersed in pastoral action will serve to add to the list of suggestions given here

1. THE ORATORY/YOUTH CENTRE

Because of its missionary slant, and because it is open to the youngsters who frequent a parish and even those who do not, the Oratory has the typical appearance of a pastoral work in a neighbourhood.

The possibilities of it linking up with its surroundings, revolve around three points:

- the "style" of the Oratory
- its involvement in the Church
- its service to the neighbourhood.

- With regard to the style, it is important to:
 - Make the Oratory/Youth Centre stand out for the preponderant presence of youngsters: the oratory/youth centre has a knack for attracting boys and young men and for communicating with them in a language that creates expectations;

- Revive the missionary slant that leads us to announce the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted the Christian faith, and prompts us to contact those boys and young men who do not come to us spontaneously;
- Make the boys feel at home by being interested in them and in their situation, and by inviting them to take part in the activities of the Oratory/Youth Centre:
- Adapt our service of education to meet the needs of the youngsters of the neighbourhood (sports, free-time activities, stage performances, etc.);
- Implement a suitable programme of formation for a large group of youngsters, and with definite methods and goals, we could spell out the elements of this formation thus:
 - ❖ liberation from the alienation and superficiality that accompanies any first approach to an activity, by the force of habit or external stimuli (cf. sports, cinema, drama, etc.);
 - ❖ growing to full personhood by discovering values and the meaning of life;
 - ❖ interpersonal communication and the capacity to meet others and collaborate with them;
 - ❖ socialization, by acquiring the consciousness of being and acting with others and for others and so overcoming the phase of seeking private enjoyment and relaxation.
 - ❖ Christian commitment, so as to permeate one's activities with the spirit of the Gospel.
- Encourage the young to participate: our criterion should be to entrust to them whatever they are capable of doing. In an Oratory/Youth Centre: our efforts at education aims at bringing the youngsters to maturity through an ever-greater participation in the life and the activities of the centre.

- Increase the co-responsibility of adults, making the Oratory/Youth Centre: a model institution of community participation. It is the adults' role to bear witness and to offer moral, social cultural and financial support.

Among the adults, whose presence in the Oratory/Youth Centre we consider important, we include:

- adults who have specific animating roles;
- the parents of the youngsters, especially if they wish to collaborate in our work of education;
- the members of the Salesian Family: all those who share the spirit of Don Bosco and live his heritage as a social group according to their possibilities, are to be counted among the dynamic forces at work in an Oratory/Youth Centre.
- With regard to communion with the local Church, we highlight the following:
 - The educative community of an Oratory/Youth Centre: forms part of the parish council and brings to the joint pastoral action a particular youth concern and perspective;
 - The parish council encourages the youngsters themselves to be active and coordinates the programme of the Oratory/Youth Centre with that of other pastoral presences, activities and needs;
 - When an Oratory functions in a parish entrusted to the Salesians, the community's Pastoral Plan forges unity by effecting a real integration or programmes
 - With regard to the specific services the Oratory can render to the neighbourhood, we may mention the following:
 - Help for an analysis of the youth situation of the locality;
 - Sensitizing youth and adults to the problems faced by some people living near them;

- Various free initiatives for the benefit of the needy,
- especially by means of groups;
- A witness to, and defence of, human and religious values;
- A concern shown in the Oratory for the situation and problems of the area. Depending on the availability of persons and their interest, depending too on the objectivity and complexity of situations, we could envisage the presence in the Oratory of professional people, those responsible for the social and educational institutions in the locality; and the animators of the Social Communications sector, especially if all these persons draw their inspiration from Christianity;
- Linkage with other factors that make for socialization and education, such as the family, the school, the work place, etc.
- The presence of additional services of human advancement in the Oratory, according to need: coaching classes, counselling facilities, professional and vocational guidance;
- The offer of opportunities for an exchange of ideas and growth in culture to all the youth and population of the area, with the help of the structures and resources of the Oratory. Such opportunities could be: conferences, special days, cultural programmes, festivals, stage performances, etc.

2. THE PARISH

The parish is the point of reference for the coming together of the Christian community and for dialogue on religious issues in a particular area. The word that proclaims Christ, the revelation of God and of man, impinges on whatever is human, especially if it regards the person or the community. Furthermore, in so far as it is a Salesian parish, one would expect to find there a particular competence for what concerns education and youth.

The involvement of the parish and its surroundings bears on four points:

- the form of the Christian community
- the proclamation of the Gospel and dialogue on religious matters;
- participation in the life of neighbourhood;
- "services" or particular contributions

- With regard to the "form" of the Christian community, we must underline the importance for a parish to:
 - build up the community as an externally visible reality that is aware of its originality and its mission to serve;
 - establish a "participative" style: dialogue within the Christian community educates Christians to encounter others without prejudice or the fear of ideas;
 - bring into the liturgical and sacramental celebrations the aspirations, fears and hopes of the everyday life of the human community;
 - strengthen convictions about the role of the faith-community in the area as a locus of communication and friendship;
 - take care of the socio-political maturation of persons and of the collective consciousness of the community, following in this the recommendations of the Church. In this connection, we have to concentrate our efforts on:
 - ❖ awakening the faithful to their political responsibility;
 - ❖ educating them to acquire constructive attitudes towards building community and values that will make that community more human;
 - ❖ presenting to them the social teaching of the Church;
 - ❖ encouraging them to take an active part in whatever enhances man and in learning how to discern between various options in the light of the Gospel.

- With regard to the proclamation of the Gospel in the area, we underscore the importance of the following:
 - our availability to any person or group that so wishes to go deeper into matters of religion;
 - employing a language in our evangelizing work that is understandable by everyone in words and gestures;
 - making an effort to reach out to as many as possible, even to the extent of meeting those who are far away from the Church;
 - situating our pastoral action within the culture of the people and making use of its manifestation such as: popular religiosity, traditions and typical values of the people;
 - taking part in a pastoral strategy for the zone if it serves as a good means of involving the youth or other categories of persons.
 - With regard to participation in the life of the neighbourhood, we stress the need for:
 - sharing in the problems of poor people;
 - offering to, the clergy and to civil institutions the specific contribution of our competence in education and in dealing with the young;
 - involving ourselves in the structures and bodies existing in the neighbourhood;
 - seeing to the formation of the Christian educators who work in state schools;
 - giving importance to rapport with the surroundings, the institutions and the educational and development projects of the parish. Every initiative for the benefit of the young, whether or not it is coordinated by the parish, ought to find in us ready support and encouragement.

- With regard to the services of particular contributions the parish can render to the neighbourhood, in addition to its main service of evangelization and catechesis, we point to the following:
- formation programmes and counselling services for families;
- sensitizing parents and adults to the problem of the young and to their responsibilities to communicate their faith and values to the newer generations;
- creating a welcoming atmosphere for the young and adults of the area who wish to involve themselves in praiseworthy initiatives;
- strengthening and renewing the exercise of charity and assistance to those who are near and of solidarity with those who are far;
- holding cultural events that are compatible with the mission and resources of the community (art, exhibitions, debates, meetings, etc.);
- paying particular attention to the boys and young men who keep away from even the slightest signs of invitation we give them; with the help of suitable means we should, from time to time, assess the young people's attitude of indifference to religious, social and political issues and their marginalization (drugs, prostitution, alcoholism);
- getting those who carry weight and hold responsibility in the civil and ecclesial spheres to take timely action on the causes of maladjustment and marginalization in society;
- setting up information and reception centres for the marginalized, enlisting the help of suitably trained and legally approved volunteers.

3. THE SALESIAN SCHOOL

The Catholic School belongs to the neighbourhood as an educational institution and as a promoter of culture and an original pedagogical experience. It daily becomes more and more "a school of the civil and Christian community because of its characteristics and goals. Through the committed service it renders to form honest, free and active citizens, the Catholic School is, and feels itself to be, fully immersed in its social and civil surroundings" (cf. "La scuola cattolica in Italia", n.77)

The immersion of the school in its surroundings hinges on three factors:

- the options it makes as a school;
- its involvement in the local Church;
- its linkage with the needs of the area

- With regard to the options the school makes concerning those it reaches out to and its educational orientations, we underline the importance of:
 - giving a preference to those curricula, specializations and programmes that respond to the needs of the youth of the area;
 - remaining open to all classes of society, while' showing a preference for localities and youngsters that are in need, in the broadest sense of the word;
 - eschewing every kind of discrimination, and requiring only an openness to the values offered by the Educative Plan;
 - preferring the advancement of all rather than catering to only the best; in consequence of this policy, we direct the boys to different kinds of schools, we follow methods and programmes suited to their capacity and at their pace and we follow up with love those who are at the bottom of the class;

- establishing itself as an "educative community"; allowing the possibility of participation on the part of our lay collaborators and parents, and fostering the Parents' Association;
- paying heed to the particular aspects of the culture of the place.
- With regard to the school's involvement in the local church, we wish to underline the need of:
 - making the Pastoral Plan of the school a part of the joint pastoral Plan of the diocese;
 - coordinating the school's activities with those of other Christian forces that also work for the education of the young;
 - making our own the criteria for education laid down by the local Church and taking part in those bodies that animate the pastoral work in schools;
 - giving community expression to our sense of belonging to the Church by means of gestures appropriate for the level of faith of the educative community and consonant with the pastoral orientations of the local Church;
 - collaborating with the particular Churches in those sectors where its professional expertise is requested: continuing education, means of social communication, orientation programmes for youth, etc;
 - taking part in the pastoral council where action plans are drawn up by the community of the parish or of the zone.
- With regard to the direct linkage of the school with the needs of the area, we show here the various ways in which it can be done, by way of example:
 - becoming a centre of animation and of service in education and culture for the improvement of the neighbourhood, according as the situation requires;

- making available persons and facilities for initiatives of adult education;
- creating an awareness of the need and the justness of maintaining a pluralistic school system (public and private schools);
- collaborating in common ventures to defend the teaching profession and the rights of parents and pupils;
- holding a dialogue with neighbouring institutions on matters such as the problems of youth, trends in education and the updating of teachers;
- establishing linkages for support and collaboration with the other active forces in the neighbourhood (the world of work, cultural centres);
- promoting grass-roots organizations, as they are able to wield greater authority and influence in creating a consensus because of their numbers, and this especially when it is a matter of disposing of lawful structures and public spaces to provide for the education and culture of the young.

4. THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Because of its goal and its characteristics, a technical school permits an immersion in one of the most dynamic elements of life in an area, viz. work [and consequently in all those initiatives for education and culture connected with work.

In addition to all the linkages and activities which we have previously mentioned concerning other Salesian presences, and which hold good also for Technical schools, we wish to mention the following:

- the formation of young workers,
- participation in a pastoral strategy aimed at the world of work,
- dialogue with the other forces in the area.

- With regard to the formation of young workers, we draw attention to the importance the following elements have for a particular area:
 - offering a "professional training", understood as the capacity to take part in controlling the process of production, together with a good sense of political awareness in the full sense of the word;
 - imparting an ability to read and analyse the human and social factors in the field of labour;
 - creating an environment that help to joyfully internalize the work ethic;
 - in the spirit of the Preventive System paying attention to the risks entailed in an education geared solely to production; hence, liberating the education to work from the logic of production and giving it a humanistic outlook instead;
 - helping the young acquire, through all the preceding elements and through the social teaching of the Church, a "Christian outlook" on work and on the problems connected with it;
 - utilizing to full advantage the conditions under which the educative community operates: the predominant presence of competent persons and a healthy conflict-situation, can become positive steps in educating the young a balanced point of view;
 - eliminating the risk of a one-sided ideological indoctrination;
 - imparting a correct sense of solidarity and of the collective dimension of every problem, which is only natural in the world of work (cf. The Educational and Pastoral Plan for the formation of young workers, CNOS 1978, p.40);
 - educating to a correct relationship between the person and work, and between work and the other values of life and the social situation.
 - With regard to participation in a pastoral strategy aimed at the world of work, a technical school should see to the following:

- sensitize the Christian community to the values and the problems of work: pastoral action geared to the world of work, ought not to be an isolated sector but a perspective that every local Church must assume and express in an attitude of listening, understanding, dialogue and commitment in a society transformed and characterized by work (cf. "Salesiani nel mondo del lavoro" p. 192);
- propagating the figure of the Salesian lay Brother who by his technical and pastoral competence aims at leaving the world of work with the Gospel;
- being present in those bodies that are concerned in a general way with the coordination of pastoral action in this field, and more particularly with initiatives of education and human advancement;
- collaborating in the reformation of the catechetical and liturgical-sacramental formation, according to the language and experience of the world of work, so that the Gospel may not appear alien to this field;
- giving one's contribution to preparing texts for the teaching of religion and to qualifying the religion teachers and pastoral animators of technical schools;
- keeping up a dialogue and contact with movements of committed Christians in the world of work and with persons who are actively engaged in non-religious organizations;
- introducing the young to those movements so as to prepare them for a specific Christian presence in society and in politics;
- an effort on the part of the educative community to rethink the relation between faith and politics, faith and the work ethic, faith and the developments in the world of culture;
- Finally, with regard to the dialogue between the tutorial school and other local forces, we underline the importance of:

- examining ourselves in relation to all those other bodies which in the various spheres of civil and political life create a “work culture”;
- entering into dialogue particularly with those organizations that best express the just aspiration of the working classes and promote their interest within the framework of the common good;
- keeping up a contact with the forces that produce goods, technologies, norms and social models in the field of work, also in view of helping our youngsters and their education;
- intervening in the local bodies of the neighbourhood, giving them the contribution of our competence;
- collaborating in order to diagnose the condition of youngsters working as apprentices and above all the situation of employment and unemployment of young workers;
- giving one's contribution to attack and resolve together with other forces the problems of unemployment of young workers. This may call for various kinds of initiatives like: cooperatives, new areas of employment, employment exchanges.

5. NEW PRESENCES

None of the presences we have studied so far is unconcerned about the problems affecting the surrounding human community, the quality of life and the forms of marginalization present in an area. But each of those presences has its own specific goal, to attain which it conducts certain activities.

In the immediate and in the wider milieu, there arise all sorts of needs and afflictions: illegal immigration, exploitation of child labour, drugs, abandoned children and street urchins, delinquency and prostitution, unemployment

A response to some of these afflictions of society is to be had in existing educational and pastoral institutions, provided of course these have a

broader outlook and a renewed approach. But for many other problems it becomes necessary to search for a specific solution with its own methods, organization and points of reference.

Given the diversity of the categories of persons to be reached and the programmes to be implemented it is not possible to present a single set of concrete suggestions here, about how the new presences can have an impact on the territory in addition to caring for individual persons.

We shall mention only a few suggestions drawn from actual experience:

- acquire and spread a knowledge of the problem of marginalization, so as to get the community involved in doing something about it;
- inform in order to prevent -get people to become aware of;
- the roots of a particular kind of marginalization or deviant behaviour and of the measures to prevent such a thing from happening;
- motivate and organize a wide collaboration on a voluntary basis, especially involving the young, and get them to contain the evil and help those who have fallen victim to it;
- sensitize civil and political bodies, the Church bodies as well, to do something in the matter;
- link up with educational institutions so as to receive their specific help and competence;
- set down and present your own experience in order to benefit others desirous of entering the same field;
- motivate the areas of rehabilitation (work, community ty, institutions) to receive those who are emerging from a difficult personal situation.

APPENDIX - II

SCHEME FOR AN ANALYSIS OF A MILIEU

The following scheme is a synthetic presentation of the principal elements that have to be taken into consideration when analysing the situation in a milieu. It is only indicative and its purpose is to render more concrete what has already been said in the text of this Aid.

Situation	Problems	Cause
<p>a) Geographical & Territorial Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proportion of building and open space; - types of housing: single- family, flats, "chawls" huts; - type of roads: broad, narrow - direction & type of expansion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - urban imbalances - housing shortage - lack of open spaces - problem of parking space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of or faulty planning - lack of solidarity - insufficient awareness of problems
<p>b) Demographic structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - population density - age: young couples, elderly... - place of origin . Immigrants from the countryside . Immigrants from the city . foreigners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of essential services for large numbers - lack of concern for immigrants and foreigners - discrimination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient services - ghetto mentality, exaggerated nationalism
<p>c) Economic & Production structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - work and employment - productive sector of people: primary: agriculture, fishing, mining - secondary: industry - thirdly: services - social classes: upper, middle, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unemployment - integration of social classes - lack of sufficient preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient development plans - computerization of industries - inadequate economic policy - lack of social concern
<p>d) Education and culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - private & public schools - technical schools other places of culture: academies, libraries, exhibitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - level of fluency - illiteracy - lack of dialogues between family & school - absence of cul. prog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inadequate education policy - lack of culture in the family
<p>e) Free time & entertainment</p> <p>space for children and playing fields halls for cinema & stage performances bars, coffee houses and meeting-places other places where the young & adults can meet magazines & newspapers widely circulated TV program Most preferred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - absences of spaces for meetings and for recreation - impersonalized entertainments - pornography and prostitutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - municipal & housing policy - collective egoism - absence of values - lack of culture - unemployment - exaggerated quest for pleasure

<p>f) Public utilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transport & communication - traffic police, garbage collectors - moohats/bazaars - health assistance, hospitals - police & civil prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient services - lack of culture in the population - lack of coordination of public interventions - delinquency and in- security of citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of essential services - maladministration of the same
<p>g) Socio- political structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - party and trade union setup - party receiving most votes - level of absenteeism - participation and collective bargaining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - political inexperience - basic economic structure - lack of structures of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - indifference to politics - absenteeism, lack of participation - drastic measures, violence
<p>h) Specific youth problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - truancy in schools - juvenile delinquency - drugs & alcoholism - other types of marginalization - youth unemployment - handicapped youth - indifferentism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [Each of their students have their own set of problems] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - misunderstandings and problems in the family - lack of schools - lack of moral values - solitude and depression - drug addiction - economic and Labour policies
<p>i) Religious aspect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - places of worship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Catholics . others - time of worship - religious affiliation - level of religious practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Eucharist . other sacraments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - excessive territorial extension - religious absenteeism - rupture between faith and life - closing down of Institutions - scarce involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inadequate evangelization - ignoring signs of times - lack of moderation - message dissociated from life - we - they mentality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vitality of the parish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . services of evangelization & celebration . liturgy & celebration . Christian assistance and charity . concern for those far away - relationship of the Church to the territory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . absenteeism and disinterestedness . presence, solidarity and missionary thrust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bureaucratization of religious services - scarce involvement - poor sense of mission - not much love for the least of the brothers" ... - religious formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - diffidence towards civil society - secularism in ambient - disjunction between liturgy, catechesis and charity - resistance to change - lack of creativity - tendency to let institutions carry on, notwithstanding.