

**On the journey to being in the Church
A Presence that generates life**

Dearest Sisters,

We join you with joy at the end of this time of Plenum to share with you the rich experience lived together. The various visits and formative meetings renew us in the gift and commitment of being a "presence that generates life" and make us savor the beauty of our Institute when we breathe the genuine family spirit. Through direct contact with the life of the various Provinces and the sharing between us after the visits, we once again grasped the vitality of the charism and the missionary commitment of all the educating communities. The processes that take place in every reality to assume the choices of GC XXIV and the Chapter Deliberation, the life given with passion that continues to be "generative", have allowed us to praise and thank the Lord for the dedication of each sister and each Province. We encourage you to continue to give vitality to the Six-Year Plan, especially in difficult situations where it is hard to walk together and fully live the shared mission.

The visit in Sicily

In Sicily during our spiritual exercises, we recalled the testimony of life and the educational action of Blessed Maddalena Morano. Her story, and that of the first community of Alì Terme (Messina), is not "a heritage of the past, but it is our today, our ever-present history," according to the thought of Pope Francis. Pausing in those places where we strongly felt the presence of Mother Morano was a gift to renew the enthusiasm of our vocation at the service of the Institute. Let us keep in our hearts the joy experienced during and after the exercises: the "volcanic" welcome and the family and festive spirit of the educating communities. With wonder and gratitude, we experienced the educational passion and love for the charism that our Blessed and the first sisters sowed in that land. Even today, that seed continues to generate life in the hearts of many young people through the creativity and dedication of our sisters and educating communities.

The encounter with the Provincials

A significant moment in this time was also the encounter with twelve Provincials in Castel Gandolfo (Rome). Together we reflected on the service

entrusted to them. The availability of these sisters from the five continents, their openness to dialogue and the joy of fraternity, the sharing of different experiences made us feel their desire to walk and live the call received as a gift with love. As we are about to conclude our meeting, we are joyfully preparing for some particularly relevant events.

To Lisbon with hope

The XXXVII World Youth Day will take place from 1 to 6 August in Lisbon (Portugal) with the theme, "Mary arose and went with haste" (Lk 1:39). It is an event in which Mary of Nazareth invites everyone, especially young people, to walk the path of proximity and encounter in the context of a humanity tried by the trauma of the pandemic and torn apart by the drama of war. It will certainly be an opportunity for the participants to welcome the beauty of cultures, to celebrate unity in diversity, to listen together to the voice of the Lord who invites everyone to stand up, to let themselves be involved in His dream of life, of hope, of peace, of fraternity without borders in favor of the neediest in the world. As the Salesian Youth Movement, about 200 young people from many countries will meet on 2 August to dialogue with the Rector Major, the Mother General, and with each other on how to make their presence at the world level more significant. On that same day, over 8,000 young people will participate in "SYM Day", the *SYM Day* that includes a moment of celebration on the theme "Come, see, and celebrate" and which will culminate with Eucharistic adoration and a "Goodnight" from the Rector Major and Mother.

The Seminar for the Interprovincial Conferences

During the Plenum, the definition of the program of the inter-sector Seminar for the Interprovincial Conferences was also concluded: "For a service of generative authority", which will take place in the years 2023-2024. The Interprovincial Conference Africa – Madagascar (CIAM) and the Interprovincial Conference Middle East and Europe (CIME), will be the first to live this experience in the coming months. We thank them for having sent us the synthesis of the reflection carried out in the Provinces which becomes precious material and a starting point for sharing during the Seminar. Responding to the Programming for the six-year period, elaborated in the light of the three priority choices of GC XXIV, which invites us to be a *Presence that listens, walks together, outgoing, and networked*, the Seminar will be a formative space and a way to implement some of the action guidelines: Plan, implement, and accompany specific formation journeys on the service of authority which, faithful to the educational charism of

the Institute, generates a participatory style of animation and governance. Renew the style of animation and governance in synergy, encouraging participation and integration between the various Sectors for a shared mission. Assume an animation style based on involvement, participation, and co-responsibility. The aim of the Seminar is to accompany the Provincials, the Provincial Councils, and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who are the Sector Referents, in their service of animation and governance in the perspective of the Preventive System, in the light of GC XXIV, in the synodal journey of the Church. We have chosen a workshop method in the style of discernment to create an atmosphere of mutual sharing, fraternity, and prayer. We wish to dedicate a time for reflection-experience to seek together and assume a new style of animation and governance that generates life, knows how to "take care", strengthens the family spirit, favors integration and synergistic sharing between the various Sectors in the mission.

Formation Course online “‘I will give you the Teacher.’ Mary, Mother and Educator in the Salesian Family”

In response to the call of General Chapter XXIV *to be with Mary a presence that generates life*, the Salesian Family Sector, in collaboration with the Pontifical Faculty of Educational Sciences *Auxilium*, offers the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the various Groups of the Salesian Family present throughout the world, an online formation course entitled “‘I will give you a Teacher.’ Mary, Mother and Educator in the Salesian Family.” It was conceived as a path of biblical, theological, and anthropological study on the figure of Mary, starting from the Sacred Scriptures and the Magisterium of the Church, with particular reference to the Salesian charism. It will offer the opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to promote in the Institute or in one's own group of the Salesian Family, the processes of growth in the knowledge of Mary and her presence as Mother and educator in the Church and in humanity. It will take place in different languages; the first will be in Italian and will start in September 2023.

In preparation for the Synod

The XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will be celebrated from 4 to 29 October 2023. We feel represented by Mother Yvonne Reungoat and we thank Pope Francis who, by inviting her, once again wanted to bear witness to his esteem for our charism. The synodal Church is rooted in the love and unity of the Trinity. It arouses the participation of all the faithful called

to mutual service and involves them in the mission of bearing witness to God's love for the whole human family. In this stage, the icon chosen is the encounter of Emmaus which intertwines the Easter experience of the disciples with the Eucharistic celebration in a synodal key. It reminds us of the style of proximity and listening that inspires our educational relationships. We too feel challenged and included in this path of the Church with the commitment to rediscover our Baptism "which makes those who receive it, daughters and sons of God, members of His family, and therefore brothers and sisters in Christ, inhabited by the one Spirit and sent to fulfill a common mission" (Working Document, n. 20). It can be meaningful and beautiful to confront the fundamental characteristics of a synodal Church listed in section A of the *Working Document* and with the priorities expressed in the form of a question that emerged from the work of all the Continents and collected in section B of the same document. On this journey, we feel invited to make our educating communities places increasingly characterized by the family spirit and by dialogue which make communion and participation visible in view of the mission. The successive stages of the synodal journey are the sapiential one in a spiritual perspective and the prophetic one which will culminate in the years 2024-2025, confirming the desire for a Church that becomes an ever more a welcoming home, focusing on relationships and faces.

In communion with the whole Church, let us invoke the Holy Spirit on the participants, asking for the grace of a sincere availability for profound and fraternal dialogue and the ability to overcome any resistance to the newness brought about by the synodal style and to feel ourselves ever more a journeying Church. With the whole Salesian Family, we give thanks to God for the appointment of the Rector Major, Fr. Ángel Fernández Artime, as Cardinal in the consistory on 30 September. We assure him of our prayers that will accompany him in the delicate commitments that await him. As August 5 approaches, we feel united in celebrating once again, our gratitude to Mary Help of Christians who sustains us in ever more joyful fidelity to the Lord's call for the salvation of young men and women. May mutual prayer support us and strengthen those bonds which find their origin in the love of the Trinity and their purpose in fidelity to the mission. We are grateful for all the good you do every day with courage, boldness, and gratuitousness; to each we assure our fraternal prayer. We greet you with the affectionate words of Mother Mazzarello, who wrote to Sister Ottavia Bussolino, "...I will never forget you" (L 65.4).

Castelgandolfo, 24 July 2023

Mother and the Sisters of the Council