YOUTH MINISTRY DEPARTMENT
Salesians of Don Bosco - Rome

Introduction

In January, Fr Miguel Ángel offered a very valuable reflection during the course for Salesian family Delegates, on "Youth Ministry and the Salesian Family". I am grateful for the opportunity to continue this reflection. Indeed, it is one that all of us working on more or less explicitly in this or the other Sector, if we can call it that. The Salesian charism (mission, communion, spirituality) is One by definition, from its origins, and dynamic in its historical development. One and dynamic. Nothing can be understood if isolated from the rest. Here, too, it is clear that everything is connected, including the Salesian Family and Youth Ministry. The desire to respond adequately, passionately, to the service entrusted to us enlightens our reflection and our journey.

I suggest the following goals:

a. **raise some points about Don Bosco the Founder of the Salesian Family**, that can encourage reflection on the SF and YM;
b. **emphasise certain practical applications from the YM field, and Salesian Family animation** that can help identify certain points to build on from both areas, to better respond to the calls we receive from the Salesian mission today;
c. **listen to how these points echo for you**, involved as you are in animating the Saelsian mission in the Provinces.

My contribution can be summed up as follows:

— The relationship between pastoral activity and the groups founded by Don Bosco has been a living reality since the beginning of the Society of St Francis de Sales. Today we call this "the relationship between Youth Ministry and Salesian Family".
— It is, therefore, something with deep charismatic roots, has a biblical and ecclesial foundation, and is essential for an adequate understanding of and action by the Salesian mission in the world.
— The meaning of terms, criteria, attitudes, procedures and their scope must be clarified in the present context of the Salesian mission and in the context of the Salesian Family in each of the territories and different dimensions of this mission.
— The basic perspective is this: **There is a clear place for the Salesian Family in Youth Ministry**. This has been affirmed already by Don Miguel Angel. **I would add that there is an essential place for Youth Ministry in the Salesian Family.** It is with a conviction that the Salesian Family offers to the young people, who are attracted by the spirit of Don Bosco, can live (spirituality), share (the communion) and commit themselves to the evangelisation of the world of youth, of both Christians and Non-Christians (mission). It provides the natural space where the educative-pastoral processes accompanied in the previous stages, which converge with that part of the Church which is explicitly willed by the Holy Spirit as to where they belong.

However, in order to connect with your experience and the circumstances in your provinces, I have posed four simple questions in my reflection. Thank you for your collaboration. It will also be helpful for you. Here is a summary of the data provided (Cf. separate document)

I. DON BOSCO, FOUNDER OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

1.1. Return to Don Bosco, founder of the Salesian Family

Everything in the Salesian world refers to Don Bosco. It is certainly clear that the driving force of Don Bosco's charism for the young and for ordinary people was the Holy Spirit; that the image of Christ the Good Shepherd became very much alive in him; that everything he undertook was for the greater glory of God; that he felt supported by the maternal assistance of Mary; that he did nothing that was not in and for the Church. But the point of reference is Don Bosco. That everything he did was from a profoundly vital and apostolic unity. The Spirit made him the Father and Teacher of youth that we know "as well as the Founder of a vast spiritual and apostolic Family". (Identity Charter, 1)

We are familiar with **the events of Don Bosco's journey as he tried to respond to the growing needs of the young people of his time.** We are able to identify the iconic signs of this progress: the "*do you know how to whistle*?"; the wandering oratory; the Pinardi shed; the family home with mamma Margaret and other mothers; his first helpers, those who stayed with him and those who left him; the first to receive the cassock from among his boys; the act of foundation of the Congregation; the first lay helpers either directly or indirectly; his interested in 'extern' Salesians; his meeting Mary Mazarello and the girls at Mornese; and finally, the Salesian Co-operators; his attention to the 'clients' of Mary Help of Christians; his welcoming approach to former oratory members; the idea of people consecrated in the world (which Fr Rinaldi said "*had always been part of Don Bosco's thinking*"); his "*do at Mirabello as you have seen done at Valdocco*", words addressed to Fr Rua and applied by subsequent generations of Salesians wherever they have been sent.

The words "***return to Valdocco***", so oft repeated and once again made clear by Pope Francis in his address to GC28, continue to urge us to contemplate the origins and development of the charism, understand it in biblical and ecclesial terms, and link it to the current situation so as to continue developing it in all its potential for the benefit of the most need young people of our world. Valdocco is the root of our mission. It is the cradle of the Salesian Family. It was there that its development took its first steps.

1.2. The role that young people must play in the formation process of the Salesian Family

"*Return to Valdocco*" speaks of the "**role that young people played**" in the foundation of the Congregation. Without young people taken in and formed by Don Bosco, the Salesians would not have been what we are (and should be). When we speak of them, we use the word "*co-founders*". It is not a trivial word. In fact, we were born as a "Society" of young people for young people. **The Salesian Congregation is the result of youth ministry carried out by Don Bosco**. And not only us. **The FMA Institute** has its beginnings in a group of young women whose thoughts were for girls, and in whom Don Bosco would instil such energy as to become a pole of attraction for women. Don Bosco was also drawn by the affection and gratitude of his former oratory boys and gave them the enthusiasm to help one another and others: this was the beginning of **the Past Pupils**. But his educative and pastoral passion for the young did not cease until he found a way of integrating many lay people and priests in the Salesian mission who felt the call to commit their energies to the field of youth: **the Salesian Co-operators**, a work he pursued to the utmost, came into being with an indelible youthful imprint because of the origin of many of its members and the mission that Don Bosco entrusted to them. Added to the role young people played was then added the response **of Christians through ADMA** and the network of benefactors, all united by the ***Salesian Bulletin*.**

Now, if we look not just at Don Bosco but also at the first Salesians, we immediately realise that the set of guidelines that Fr Rua received when, at the age of 25, he sent him to Mirabello ("Do at Mirabello what you saw done at Valdocco"), is followed in one way or another everywhere. **The Congregation grew through native vocations** awakened by contact with the educative and pastoral activity of the first generations of Salesians. **The same could be said of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.** And with the Salesians, also the Salesian Co-operators, Past Pupils, ADMA also developed... **then other groups over the years** (ASF, VDB, HHSSCC, SOSC, SAL, SCG, SIHM, IJA...) began to take shape. Groups that constituted what soon began to be called ***the Salesian Family*** and which today has reached such great development (32 officially recognised Groups); in short, the Salesian Movement itself, which in addition to including the organised Groups, reaches many other people who in one way or another have been touched by Don Bosco's spirit. **The role young people have played in this process either directly or indirectly is undeniable.**

1.3. The Salesian Family Groups are the result of the spiritual accompaniment of the young, in other words a youth ministry of quality.

There are many fruits of youth ministry and in particular, many ways of spiritual accompaniment of the young. It is worth taking a closer look at the origins of each of the Groups that officially make up the Salesian Family today. They all come from a careful **reading of the educative and pastoral reality** of the territories in which they were born, and **from a deep spiritual accompaniment of the people**, mostly young, by the Salesians who accompanied them. Faith led them to the mission and the mission nourished their faith. Salesian spirituality sustained them. **They were all the fruit of quality youth ministry.**

This is the conclusion reached by those who seek to know the first steps of each of the Groups. Some examples: the VDB and CDB; Groups that came about in dioceses in "mission *ad gentes"* lands, or in dioceses that were very poor religiously speaking; Groups born from the call to a strongly evangelical, community-oriented and missionary lay life guided by the spirit of the Council and by a renewed vision of the Salesian Family after the SGC. In them we sense the quality of the spiritual accompaniment of individuals and a faith-filled interpretation of the needs of the missionary Church in the world, especially the needs of the young.

1.4. Youth movement in the vast Salesian movement

Would it be possible to conceive of the current development of the Salesian mission without considering **the thousands of committed young people coming from our Salesian settings** (all the settings of the various Salesian family Groups)? Leaders, catechists, young evangelisers of the young, volunteers..., giving life to hundreds of initiatives, projects and youth groups and movements.

To these **we need to add the great number of Teachers and professors we have in our various presences**. Many of them are individuals, past pupils or not, who have strongly identified with Don Bosco's educative charism, coming to understand their profession ever more in terms of a vocation to serve children and young people in a Salesian style.

This is one of the deeper reasons why **Salesian Family Groups look to the young**. Most of their members **have come from young Salesian settings**: oratories, schools, parishes. These Salesian settings have been the cradle where their spirituality was forged, where their vocation grew, where they felt called to give a response not just during their youth, but for the rest of their lives, some by being consecrated to the Lord, many others by being involved in the mission, and many others again deciding to personally live and act professionally by thinking directly or indirectly of the circumstances of the young.

Let us ask ourselves: Is this just by chance, out of some kind of hidden interests, or pure philanthropy? **Rather, it is by pure vocation, pure charism, because this is the *raison d'etre* of their entire life,** because if they were not so, if they did not feel this way, act this way, they would not be who they are (we would not be who we are!). By the grace of God, the youth movement is the guarantee of the vast Salesian movement we are all part of.

1.5. The Biblical and Ecclesial roots of Don Bosco's Charism

It is by no means difficult to discover the Gospel as lived by Don Bosco. It is sufficient to refer to article 11 of the Salesian Constitutions – that in one way or another is repeated in the Constitutions or Statues of the various Groups – recalling the features of the Gospel that the Salesian charism is most sensitive to: "*Gratitude to the Father for the gift of the divine vocation offered to all; predilection for the little ones and the poor; zeal in preaching, healing and saving with the urgency of the coming of the Kingdom; the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd who wins hearts by gentleness and self-giving; the desire to gather his disciples into the unity of brotherly communion*."

This is an article where **the heart of the mission** (preference for the little ones and the poor; teaching, healing and saving; the preoccupation of the Good Shepherd) **is inserted into "the divine vocation offered to all" and "the desire to gather his disciples**". Don Bosco felt, like few others did, the urgency of the Kingdom, and this led him to nurture the gift of vocation in his boys, and to seek and find (missionary disciples) to work for this Kingdom.

It is easy to imagine how **Don Bosco made Jesus' desire his own**: "*Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into his harvest*"; and to imagine him as "*the administrator of the Lord of the vineyard"* who goes in search of workers for his vineyard and discovers, with admiration, that every time he goes out looking for them, there are people available to whom he only has to say: "*You too go and work in my vineyard*".

These are some of the biblical roots of the Salesian charism. And we will certainly go astray if we do not start, like Don Bosco, from a relationship with Christ the Good Shepherd who, despite the difficulties we may encounter, allows us to have a broad view of the matter, allows us to accompany the processes of vocational growth by listening to the calls that the Lord addresses to people, and moves us to facilitate the first steps towards a choice.

But **Don Bosco's passion for Christ was a passion for the Church. And his passion for the Church nourished in him a passion for young people**. This passion awakened in him an original, in many ways prophetic, experience in the Church. **Here are some of his characteristic features** that relate to the configuration of the Salesian Family:

- Discovering and **knowing how to accompany the children of the people in the discovery of their vocation** (when in fact until that time only children of well-established families had access to ministries).
- Discovering and **knowing how to accompany lay people from all walks of life in their Christian commitment**. Following Don Bosco, in the light of Salesian sources, in his relationships with actual lay people is a precious source of inspiration for us today.
- **Discovering the potential of young people and opening up a space for them to play an active role on behalf of their peers, the Church and society at large.**
- **Valuing the role of women and the power of spiritual motherhood** that nurtures the family atmosphere so necessary for orphaned, poor or abandoned boys and girls.
- **Nurturing a broad vision of the Church** that awakens a sense of belonging and missionary awareness.
- **Promoting Christian associations for the edification of the Church** and the service of youth, with the healthy realism of tying them closely to his charism for effectiveness.

— **Proposing a joyful, radiant, apostolic Christian lifestyle** based on his three most important loves (the Eucharist, Mary, the Pope), that is, friendship with Christ, love for Mary, the Magisterium of the Church.

The profound vision of the Church cultivated by Don Bosco is reflected in the SDB and FMA Constitutions, in the Co-operators and ADMA Regulations. This viewpoint has remained constant in the development of the Congregation, has been enriched by the contributions of the Council and is clearly expressed in the Charter of Charismatic Identity of the SF: article 6 (a charism for the common good of the Church); article 14 (with a mission in the Church and for the Church); article 26 (the ecclesial dimension of Salesian spirituality).

** ** **

A wide-ranging look at Don Bosco's pastoral journey “for” - “among” - “with” the young, grounded in his passion for Christ and for the Church, illuminates, among many things, a truly essential one: the origin and development, not only of the Salesian Congregation, but of the entire Salesian Family. The vector of this process was the youth ministry activity of Don Bosco, of the Salesians who inherited his charism and of all the members of the various groups of the Salesian Family who are derived from him. Can we find a greater charismatic justification for the necessary relationship between youth ministry and the Salesian Family? This relationship is an aspect of the relationship between Youth Ministry and the Christian Community in the Church.

2. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND APPLICATIONS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF YOUTH MINISTRY AND ANIMATION "IN/FOR" THE SALESIAN FAMILY

2.1. Indications from the Youth Ministry Frame of Reference (FoR)

The Congregation has equipped itself with the so-called "Youth Ministry Frame of Reference" which enlightens and guides its pastoral activity. What references to the Salesian Family that can enlighten and guide the practical application of what we have just said can we find in it? Among others, the following:

a) The FoR clearly presents **the EPC as the subject of pastoral activity** whose challenge lies in a new way and style of thinking, working and relating with young people. Stressing the shared responsibility of the laity, it emphasises that *"Among them, members of the Salesian Family who work in our settings bring a special contribution that reflects the peculiar features and the richness of their vocation*" (p. 118). Among the works is reference to **the Oratory/Youth Centre** in whose animation "*members of the Salesian Family"* can participate (p. 189). The mission of those responsible for these works is to encourage their members to be "the first collaborators in the development of the project**"** (p. 230).

b) The FoR emphasises **the spirit and commitment of the SYM**, "*The 'heart' of the movement is undoubtedly the young leaders*". These young leaders "*are the focus of special attention by the SDB, FMA, the Co-operators and other adult members of the Salesian family who guide and accompany them*" (p. 175). Planning "*a Salesian invitation to formation which can be offered the various groups and associations as a point of reference for their own formation plan, and within the overall context of the Salesian Family*", should be the norm (p. 177).

c) The formation process of the young encourages "*membership of groups in the Church. For this purpose, the parish fosters group movements, youth communities and Salesian Family Groups"* (p. 236).

d) The new kinds of youth groups that "*take the form of a project rather than a structure (spirituality, leadership, search for meaning, social involvement.) open up pastoral opportunities to be animated together with Groups of the Salesian Family"* (p. 255).

e) Among the criteria of animation and organisation of the various initiatives, coordination bodies, there is need for "*a team of SDBs and other members of the Salesian Family*" for formation proposals (p. 257).

2.2. Some considerations from the YM Sector (Fr Miguel Ángel)

a) The spirit that embraces all the Groups of the Salesian Family is (must be) **the passion of the "Da mihi animas, cetera tolle**" for the good of the young. Commitment to a mission for youth and ordinary people is not optional, it is essential. We are all part of the common Christian vocation to the apostolate to which our Baptism leads us. The path followed by the Salesian Family is part of the path the Church has taken and reflects it.

b) The body responsible for the Salesian mission has been extended (GC24). Indeed, "*without the others, the members of a particular group cannot be who they are*". The Salesians have the humble and joyful task of "[*preserving] unity of spirit and [fostering] dialogue and fraternal collaboration for mutual enrichment and greater apostolic fruitfulness*" (Charter identity, 45). This means, among other things, calling people together, sensitising and accompanying them (and

letting themselves be accompanied!) for sharing and dialogue regarding the mission. This is not about strategy but finding points of convergence together, creating room for communion, enriching the common mission and the mission of each and everyone.

c) A Salesian Family that is alive, vocationally involved and renewed, that acts and collaborates in the pastoral mission, **needs a committed and active YM. In turn YM is enriched by the contribution of the various SF Groups**, lay and religious, that advance Don Bosco's common mission, together animating and building up projects and processes of pastoral activity.

d) The basic principle is to work "with an oratorian heart" which means: a keen interest in everything regarding the young; attention to the young people we meet on our journey; contact and welcome that builds humanity and communicates faith; openness to the young as key players; concern to safeguard the rights of children and youth; networking with everyone who would like to contribute to their growth; active involvement where youth policies are being decided on... There are so many places where the oratorian heart can be expressed!

e) **The areas of pastoral activity cover all the dimensions of the human being**. The possibilities for intervention are many, **but the need for joint work where responsibility is shared is clear. The Salesian Family Groups are called upon to assume greater responsibility in responding to the urgencies and challenges of the world of youth**. Intentions, attitudes, actions, proposals, methods, quality of interventions... are part of the spiritual experience inspired and guided by the pastoral charity of our charism.

f) The Educative and Pastoral Plans of local EPCs (be they plans for specific settings – Oratory-Youth Centre, Social action, Parish or others – or plans for the work as a whole) are natural places for involving the Salesian Family according to the possibilities and preparation of its members.

g) There are also areas common to all that can be a broad field for projects in common, both in Salesian settings and in broader settings such as the local Church or society in general: ***the family*** (school for parents, guiding young couples, family movements, helping the elderly, inter-generational dialogue...); ***social activity*** (sports groups, walking groups, leisure time movements, leadership and social involvement, socio-political formation, volunteering...); ***the cultural scene*** (theatre and music groups, promoting cultural values regarding the environment, city....); ***the spiritual area*** (groups and movements, education to the faith, prayer groups, popular religious expression, liturgical formation, higher level spiritual experiences, youth gatherings, youth days...); ***the project and initiatives area*** (youth ministry departments or centres...); ***the area of reflection and formation for youth ministry agents*** (a team to draw up studies or materials, magazines, workshops, courses...); ***social communications*** (social networks, digital materials...)....

2.3. The area of spiritual accompaniment and vocational discernment

This area has characteristics: ***the area of spiritual accompaniment and vocational discernment/guidance***. This is the dimension which, seen from the perspective of human and Christian education, ***knows how to cultivate the vocational component of every intervention and every educational experience at every moment in such a way that we can speak of vocational youth ministry*** (youth ministry is vocational or it is not ministry, we say).

Now, considered from the point of view of the young person as an individual, ***it is about the process by which the young person feels inwardly "touched" and invited to give a response***. **The specifically Christian nature of this interior movement** lies in coming to recognise a voice in this "***feeling touched***" that moves him or her, no longer about something

that suits them or is useful to others, but **to listen to God who invites them to respond and, gradually, to make choices of ever greater commitment.**

If this is the case, **the spiritual companion becomes extremely important.** This person, with their spiritual intelligence, wisely helps discern the voice of the Spirit and, in due course, opens up the range of options that allow the one being accompanied to choose what the Lord rightly asks of them... and, certainly, to accompany their first steps until they are put in touch with the leaders of the relevant groups.

Accompanying this process requires great human sensitivity, a remarkable Christian experience, a keen sense of Church, a heightened sensitivity to the Salesian Family. Among us, the figures of Joseph Cafasso and, more specifically, Don Bosco, and of the best confreres we have known with this ability, are most illuminating.

This area is a "crowning step" in the educative and pastoral process. And even though it is the Lord who gives birth to specific vocations in those he wants and where he wants, it is up to us to create the conditions for this process to move from ideas to reality. There are many elements that must come together, the first of which is the witness of communities and groups. The pastoral educator is a mediator in God's call.

Among these elements, we must also consider a sufficient and lively culture of the Salesian Family in educators and in those who accompany them: a deep experience of Salesian apostolic spirituality; charismatic vision; consciousness of belonging (we are family!); knowledge of the Groups and of their specific contribution to the Salesian Family; relationship with the people in the groups in the local area...

2.4. Practical applications from the Youth Ministry Delegate's handbook and the document on the Provincial Delegate for the Salesian Family

I will now enter the practical concretely possible practices ***for a closer relationship between Youth Ministry with its animators, and the Salesian Family with its animators in a Province***. They are obviously made of up of different teams, as are the spaces to be considered for each of them:

- **YM space**: The educative and pastoral activity of the works and services in the SDB province in relation to all the bodies considered in the Delegate's Handbook, one of which is the individuals and coordinating bodies of SF Groups (Cf. Role of YM Delegates and teams).
- **SF space**: Animation and accompaniment "*in*" and "*for*" the Salesian Family Groups in the spirit of communion, formation, spiritual experience, mission, while always respecting the identity and autonomy of each of them (including sense of belonging and communion with the SDBs in the Salesian Family).

The differentiation of teams and areas of action does not mean we follow parallel paths, but it means being aware of the framework of each area and understanding that **we are both part of a greater whole**. Because **we are all Salesian Family**: we are united by mission, we are united by spirituality, we live in communion and in real life we share many initiatives and projects. The present moment (of our societies, of the Church and of the Salesian Family as a whole and of the groups that constitute it in particular, and above all the situation and needs of the young), **urges us to be creative in giving new vigour to the vision of the charismatic Family prophetically imagined by Don Bosco and made possible by the Holy Spirit who is at work in history.**

a) To move in this direction, we need only to:

- **Start from a serene analysis of the situation** carried out by the people involved in the areas of Youth Ministry and the Salesian Family: becoming aware of and evaluating the existing

strengths (there are many!) and identifying the possible deficiencies or factors that would hinder the desirable development of this relationship (there are certainly many of these too!).
— **Interpret all this with a Salesian heart** to discover what the Lord is calling us to do here and now.
— **Agree on the direction or guidelines for action** aimed at developing the relationship between YM and the SF without haste but also without pause, enthusiastically and with reasonable continuity. Plans that become processes open up new perspectives and transform situations.

b) There are many practical things indicated in the **YM Delegate's Handbook**:
— Maintaining a constant rapport with SF members (especially those in charge), p.6.
— taking part in SF bodies, p.8 and 17.
— Collaborating with the Provincial Delegate for the SF, p.9
— Encouraging involvement of SF members in Province YM processes, p.9
— Encouraging and guiding processes of accompaniment "with" and "by" SF groups, p.11

c) The following are emphasised in the **"SF Delegate" document:**

Common elements:
— Consider a common goal for the SF and YM: to accompany young people in their vocational growth, suggesting paths of commitment and life choices in which they can find meaningful responses.
— Participate in meetings where guidelines are decided and decisions are made in both areas (think and act as one, avoiding parallel paths).
— Work together in the SYM, making the most of the strengths of YM and SF.
— Commit to the continuity of the relationship and maintaining the practical guidelines and agreements made.
— Establish an ongoing seminar for reflection between YM and SF.

Element specific to the Salesian Family
— Cultivate and promote sensitivity to youth issues and challenges and engage in opportunities that are open or offered.
— Be present in the world of youth with specific interventions of animation and accompaniment.
— Openly cooperate with the goals and actions promoted by YM.

Elements specific to YM
— Accompany young people on their vocational journey and in their apostolic commitment by offering the proposal of Salesian Family Groups.
— Collaborate in caring for youth groups belonging to Salesian Family Groups: PP youth, ADMA youth, Young Cooperators, youth of other groups present in the area.
— Emphasise the SF in formation processes for leaders, missionary volunteers, educators, groups of engaged couples, marriage groups...

2.5. Other possible applications or practical considerations

In the various forums that have been held in recent years, desirable perspectives have been opened up and best practices in this regard have been and are being implemented in the Salesian world. What has come to my knowledge allows me to indicate other possible applications:

Formation:
— Initiatives of pastoral formation for members of the SF, and formation to Salesian identity for lay people involved in the Salesian mission (animators, educators, volunteers...).

— Forums, reflections (ongoing seminar?) on young people and youth ministry opened to members of the various SF Groups.
— Familiarise and deepen awareness of the YM Framework (for SF leaders and animators) and acquaint and deepen awareness of the SF Charter of Charismatic Identity (for YM leaders and animators).
— The organisation or promotion of social, ethical and political formation projects starting from a clear vision of the Church's social doctrine (example: the socio-political formation course at IUSVE).

Mission
— Participation of the YM delegation in the SF Advisory Council, and participation of SF members in the YM team.
— Joint YM projects for all or some SF Groups in the area (especially faith education processes).
— Pastoral activity projects (across local, provincial are, e.g., family ministry).
— A common vocation ministry programme and involvement in the team.

Communion
— Joint celebration (YM and SF Groups) of Salesian events.
— Collaboration of SF members in YM events.
— Appreciate and know how to highlight the specific nature of the different groups of the SF: each enriches specific and very valuable aspects of the Salesian charism.
— Appreciate and know how to value the legacy of Salesian holiness, which undoubtedly leads to “an ever higher (or deeper) measure of Christian life.”
— The dream of official inclusion of the SYM in the Salesian Family.
— Compare views between YM leaders and SF Group leaders to help renew the mission and Groups.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by recalling Fr Miguel Angel’s conclusions at the SF Delegates’ course with some of my views as well:

a. The reality of the Salesian Family and of the vast Salesian Movement (the subject of the Salesian mission, today, of which we are all an active part**) grows to the extent that we develop an understanding of the common mission**, beginning with the specific vocation each of us has.

b. The mission today demands the involvement of all the forces of the Salesian Family that revolve around Don Bosco, in order to face the current socio-cultural and religious situation with competence and effective educational presence. This has a multifaceted value, through adequate service, in the context of the local civil community and of the particular Church and in the ordinary places of educational activity.

c. It is important **as a Family to share moments and activities, to work together** at certain qualitative moments and in specific areas of intervention, to give more space to meeting and sharing. These revive the family spirit, foster reciprocity, improve the quality of collaboration and intensify it.

d. A new style of communication is also necessary if we are to be effective in addressing new challenges and new areas of mission. Openness to dialogue, to what is new, to the richness and mutual gifts we can bring as a Family, will increase the capacity for new responses. This style allows the lay as well as the consecrated individual and the priest, to take true responsibility for the mission and to grow in the capacity to transform reality.

e. In view of the common goal, it is important to always **think and act as a Movement**, with an intense spirit of communion (*concordia*), with a convinced desire for synergy (unity of intentions), with a mature ability to network (unity of projects). We must never forget that we were founded by a saint of “social charity” who was aware that the work of education needs cooperative charity, for which the Holy Spirit gives rise to various charisms.

f. Youth Ministry offers light as a reference for the commitment of communities and EPC to the service of young people. A dense network of educational pathways, initiatives, structures, and resources made available show that Youth Ministry is at the heart of our Salesian works. It is also a rich experience of listening, encouraging analysis and the exchange of ideas at all levels. **There is a clear place for the Salesian Family in YM.**

g. And allow me to add: **there is an essential place for YM in the Salesian Family. The Salesian Family offers that part of the Church explicitly willed by the Holy Spirit where one can live *(spirituality*), share *(communion)* and commit oneself to the evangelisation of the young, ordinary people and non-evangelised peoples (*mission*), being the natural place where the educative and pastoral processes accompanied in the previous stages converge.**

* * * * *

If this broad vision of the Salesian Family and youth ministry is well-founded, as I believe it is, **what does it invite for those of us who have been called to qualified service in both areas?**

Thanks for your attention and for sharing your reflections.

Fr. Joan Lluís Playà
Delegate off Rettor Major for Salesian Family
Roma, 10 may 2022