



MANUAL
FOR
THE
FORMATION
OF
SALESIAN
LAY COLLABORATORS

**A FOUNDATIONAL
PROGRAMME
FOR THE
FORMATION
OF SALESIAN LAY
COLLABORATORS
IN SIX KEY
AREAS:**

1. The needs and challenges of youth today
2. The Salesian response to youth needs and challenges
3. The educative and pastoral community
4. The Salesian service to the young
5. The Salesian style
6. The person of the Salesian lay collaborator

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FOR THE
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OF
SALESIAN
LAY COLLABORATORS**

Salesians of Don Bosco

1994

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A. FOR WHOM THIS FORMATION PROGRAMME IS INTENDED

The programme drawn up in this manual is intended for the formation of the Salesian lay collaborator. Who are our "collaborators"? They are the many different people who work with us in a variety of ways - teachers, coaches, parish council members, office assistants, club moderators, and so many others; they range from full-time paid employees to part-time volunteers.

B. WHY THIS FORMATION PROGRAMME?

Since all these people fulfil important roles and make up a large portion of our "Salesian workforce", it is essential that we share with them our Salesian charism and help them to grow in it. The Church too asks us to assist them in discerning and accepting their own lay vocation.

The GC23 stated that "numerically they form the major part of the educative and pastoral community. Mature relationships of shared responsibility must be established with them. There is need especially of a process of formation ... We are spurred relentlessly on in this direction by the guidelines of the Church, recently expressed in *"Christifideles laici"* (# 233).

C. HOW THIS PROGRAMME CAME ABOUT

At the invitation of Fr. Luc Van Looy, General Councilor for Youth Ministry, five of us came together and worked in Bangalore, India for three weeks in August - September 1993. Fr. Luc Van Looy too was with us for most of the time.

From the outset, we saw our task as twofold.

First, to meet the needs of Salesians working in the English-speaking world, we found it necessary to draw up an overall programme of formation, one which would be ongoing, which could be implemented in various ways, and which, for the most part, would be valid for all our collaborators. The programme we outlined has six parts to it and is described below. Second, in order to help confreres at the local level to implement the programme, we chose to prepare this manual of formative sessions.

Because we came from different nations and cultures (India, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea and the United States), we tried to organize the material in such a way that it would speak to all of them. It may be that we have not always succeeded in this as well as we would have liked. For this reason, use of the manual should be guided by the flexibility and adaptation described in the "Notes to leaders" below.

D. HOW THE FORMATION PROGRAMME IS DIVIDED

The programme covers six broad areas of formation which we consider fundamental for the Salesian Collaborator. At present, the manual contains one or more formative sessions for each of these areas.

It should be noted from the very beginning that the sessions contained here constitute only a **foundational** programme. Formation has to be ongoing, and there are many other topics which can and should eventually be covered through supplementary sessions in each of the six areas.

In planning formative sessions at the local level, the persons responsible should look at these six areas as a **framework**, and should choose topics which will complement those already provided for. Ideally speaking, even after the sessions contained in this manual are completed collaborators should continue to participate in at least one session per area in the course of a year.

The six general themes or areas of formation are as follows:

1. THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY

Salesian youth ministry always wants to begin with young people as they are. Consequently, Salesians and their collaborators have to be continually in touch with the changing needs, challenges, hopes, fears, strengths and weaknesses of the youth they are serving.

2. THE SALESIAN RESPONSE TO YOUTH NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Don Bosco was in tune with the needs and challenges of the young people of his day, and the ways in which he responded to them are a model for the members of the Salesian Family, spread across the span of time and around the world. An ongoing study of his life and work therefore becomes imperative for those who want to serve the young in his charismatic style.

3. THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

In Salesian youth ministry, the mission is entrusted to the community of all those involved in working with the young. Formation therefore has to be concerned with the growth of this community and the quality of relationships among its members; it must ensure that they have a clear understanding of the mission entrusted to them and engage in the process of planning it in educative, pastoral ways.

4. OUR SERVICE

Our revised Constitutions and recent General Chapters have spelt out in clear terms the service we render youth. We have to form our collaborators to think along the same lines, viz. to aim at a service which includes education and evangelization, and promotes social growth, group experiences, and the making of life choices with a view to building up the Kingdom of God.

5. OUR STYLE

Don Bosco gave a name to his style of working with the young; he called it the Preventive System. It is both a method of carrying out the mission and a spirituality for the educator. Our programme of formation therefore includes an ongoing education in this unique Salesian style of pastoral action and enables the collaborator to grow in Salesian spirituality.

6. THE PERSON OF THE SALESIAN LAY COLLABORATOR

A sound programme of formation not only looks to the collaborator's participation for our mission, but also provides for his or her personal growth. We are all on the same journey of life and faith as our young people are, and therefore we need to attend to each of its stages. Consequently, the ongoing formation of our collaborators must include a continued attention to their human growth, their encounter with God, their maturing membership in the Church, and their growing commitment to the Kingdom.

E. IMPLEMENTING THIS PROGRAMME

Ideally, all collaborators at the local level ought to participate in every one of the foundational, formative sessions contained here, as well as in other sessions that may be of relevance to the local situation. These sessions should take place at regular intervals over the course of a year or more.

Realistically, however, it may happen that in most places not everyone is able to participate in every session, and the frequency of the sessions may have to be sorely limited by the many other demands on the time of both collaborators and Salesians alike. Also, it may be that not all collaborators need every session. For example, while topics like "Don Bosco" and "The Educative and Pastoral Community" will be meaningful for any collaborator, a topic like, say, "Evangelization" might have a more limited appeal and relevance.

Two principles ought to guide persons responsible for implementing the formation programme at the local level: **completeness** and **coherence**. Our collaborators deserve a complete formation, that is, one that touches on all the foundational material. They also deserve a coherent formation: one whose component parts are in proper sequence and not unduly separated from one another in time.

We believe that participants in the programme would be well served by journals and/or folders into which could be put any hand-outs made available as well as their personal notes and reflections. This would be especially so for those collaborators who are taken through the entire set of sessions contained in the manual. We also suggest that local communities complement this programme by offering the collaborators some good reading material on the person of Don Bosco, of which there is much available in all of our countries.

NOTES REGARDING THE MANUAL

A. FOR WHOM THIS MANUAL IS INTENDED

The formation programme contained here is destined for our Salesian lay collaborators, but the manual itself is not meant to go into their hands. It is intended for the person(s) who will assume roles of leadership for the various sessions.

B. ROLES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE FORMATIVE SESSIONS

While it would be possible for one person to conduct any of the sessions contained in this manual by himself/herself, that would be the least desirable way of proceeding. Our hope is that each session would be more interactive and take on the character of shared learning. One way to achieve this would be through the involvement of several persons in roles of leadership for each session.

The various parts of each formative session - the activities, the input of key concepts, the discussions, the wrap-ups, the evaluations - could be led by different people. However, no matter how many people get involved, there must be a leader who assumes overall responsibility for the flow of the session and the integration of its various parts.

The person who provides the input of key ideas will ordinarily, though not necessarily, be a Salesian. In fact, we would recommend that lay people be involved actively in the formation programme as much as possible; they could, for instance, present certain topics, or act as leaders of the various segments of a session.

Whoever takes on the role of providing the input, however, should be someone who:

- is familiar enough with the topic at hand so as not to be a slave to this manual;
- is capable of leading the formative sessions in such a way as not to make the collaborators feel like children;
- can convincingly represent the Salesian slant on the topic at hand.

C. FUTURE INSERTS

It is our hope that more formative sessions will be forthcoming, whether by way of a working group like the one which devised this manual, or by way of local initiatives which can be shared around the English-speaking world. For this reason, we have prepared the material with a view to its being put in ring binders: new material can be inserted and older material edited or replaced with ease.

We now offer some particular recommendations for those persons who will coordinate the actual formative sessions.

NOTES TO LEADERS

1. Please note that the sessions as designed are meant to be guides and resources, and that therefore they need not, indeed at times they should not, be slavishly followed. Much thought and work has gone into them, and we believe they are quite good as they are; but you alone will have to judge whether they need to be adapted in order to serve the needs of your collaborators.
2. The sessions have been deliberately put together according to a methodology which is experiential, inductive and interactive. We would strongly urge you to respect this methodology, whatever be the adaptations you make, and not to reduce the sessions to lectures.

In general, you will find that the sessions follow this pattern:

- ◆ Activity
- ◆ Discussion of/exploration of the activity
- ◆ Input of key concepts
- ◆ Discussion of/reaction to the input
- ◆ Application of the input to life and work
- ◆ Evaluation
- ◆ Conclusion

3. Two standard evaluation forms are provided in the manual which could serve for any and all of the sessions. However, it should be noted that these forms evaluate only the session, viz. the activity, the presentation, the discussions, etc. They do not deal with questions of personal learning and growth. Most of the sessions give indications for allowing the participants to do some personal evaluation as well as a session evaluation. For these, you may need to see that the appropriate sheets or materials are prepared ahead of time.

Many of the sessions also have a prepared "Summary Sheet" which could be given to the participants at the end, if desired

4. Each session is designed to be self-contained. One need not have done previous sessions in order to appreciate subsequent ones, although that would certainly make for a richer formation overall. We would also recommend that the order of material as presented in this manual be followed as closely as possible.
5. The average length of each session is approximately 90 minutes, although the time required may easily be adjusted up or down by a discerning leader. We have given the approximate times required for the activities in each session. The other sections have been left open in terms of time: it will be up to you to determine how much time they can and should be given.
6. Besides time, the leader and those assisting him or her must be flexible and discerning on several other counts when using this material:
 - **Audience:** The material offered may be too heavy or too light for some audiences.
 - **Issues:** For some groups, an issue may arise in discussion which requires serious attention. Giving that necessary attention will take up time.
 - **Response:** Some groups may not respond at all to certain activities or questions; alternatives will have to be found. Other groups may respond so well that it may be best to extend the time given to them

In making whatever adaptations seem necessary, we believe that the material offered in this manual should serve as a matrix or core material to which additions are made or from which portions are cut.

7. The "Key concepts" sections should not be read to the group. These sections are meant as outlines of material. They are arranged in a point-by-point order to make it easier for the presenter to refer to them, but they are not to be treated as a text. They are often written in the first person, but this is meant more as an example than as a script to be followed.
8. In the light of the above, it is essential that you review the entire session well in advance of leading it, that you substitute activities as needed, that you supplement the material provided with whatever else you may judge

necessary, that you edit material deemed too long, and that you prepare yourself to move in slightly different directions should your particular audience require it.

At the end of the "Key concepts" sections, references to the source material used are provided, unless the work is original.

FINAL NOTES

The GC23 and the contemporary teaching of the Church are absolutely clear on our need to provide meaningful ongoing formation to our lay collaborators. This manual is an attempt to help our confreres in the English-speaking world act on that mandate.

We respectfully request that our confreres do make use of this manual, freely adapting it as need be, and that they get back to us with their reactions and suggestions for improvement. Such feedback could be forwarded to any of the undersigned.

Finally, one key to a sound formation is to make it ongoing. As was noted above, the six broad areas of formation outlined in this manual are quite inclusive for our needs, but the material provided here for each of those areas is by no means exhaustive. In every province, in every local community, new and better material must continue to be prepared and offered to our generous collaborators for each of these areas. To the extent that we enable and empower them, Don Bosco's charism will be able to work in them to set the hearts of the young on fire with love for life and the faith!

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THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF YOUTH TODAY

"Enlightenment," said the Master, "means knowing precisely where you are at any given moment - no easy task at all!"

And he told of a popular friend of his who was, even in his late eighties, invited to dozens of functions. Once he was spotted at a party and asked how many he was attending that night.

"Six," said the elderly gentleman, without taking his eyes off his little notebook.

"What are you doing? Seeing where you are to go next?" they asked him.

*"No," said the dynamic fellow. "Finding out where I am now." (Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Nonsense*, p. 6)*

Young people themselves are the starting point of Salesian youth ministry. Section 1 aims to give our lay collaborators a sense of where they are as they launch out in their work among the young. It helps them know more about the needs and challenges of today's youth, leads them into the exciting world of the young, and invites them to share the responsibility of Salesian youth ministry.



SESSION 1

**THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES
OF
YOUTH TODAY**

THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF YOUTH TODAY

"Great attention needs to be paid, especially on the local level, to discovering the actual position in which young people find themselves and identifying the influences bearing upon them" ("Youth in the Church Today", Pastoral Action# 28, SACBC 1982).

OBJECTIVE

To create in our lay collaborators an awareness and understanding of the reality of the youth condition and an openness to allow themselves to be challenged by it.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A pen and paper for each participant.

Large sheets of paper (newsprint) and felt-pens.

Copies of the Hand-out (pp. 7 - 8) for participants.

INTRODUCTION

To help the participants enter fully into the spirit of the programme beginning with this session, the leader may find it necessary to start by elaborating on the objectives of this course for collaborators, viz. to encourage them to see the role they have to play in their work with the Salesians and to give them a sense of belonging.

Then, to introduce this session, he may wish to start with a description of the following allegorical scene.

It is night, and the moon is obscured by the threatening storm clouds. On the dark sea a small boat tries to make its way to the safety of the harbour. However, the waves are mountainous and the tiny boat rolls from side to side.

Each time the boat dips into a trough, the walls of water obscure the view of the many twinkling lights along the coastline. The next moment, however, it is right on top of a rising swell, and for an instant it appears as if it could be landed safely amid the bright lights and the roller-coaster of the amusement park on the shore.

The crack of thunder and the heavy drops of icy rain chill the imagination back to reality. The boat, with its crew, struggles against the wind and the current that seem determined to carry it out to sea. The many coloured lights on the beach-front are inviting, yet it is the penetrating beam of the lighthouse that must be found in order to ensure a safe entry into the calm and security of the harbour.

The navigator's skill and the power of the boat's little engine are very necessary at a time like this, when any error of judgement, any rash action, or any mechanical weakness can easily spell disaster for the struggling boat.

At this point the leader invites his audience to analyze the parable. He may choose to interact with them in the following manner.

From the parable you have just heard we can draw out a few points to illumine the subject we are dealing with.

The boat on the stormy sea represents young people today who find themselves tossed about on the sea of life.

The many coloured lights along the shore have different names, depending on the country, the culture, and the circumstances of our young people who are attracted to them, losing sight of the steady beam of the harbour lighthouse.

The young are searching for the truth; but they are fragile, and tossed about by the storms of confusion, the currents of the times, and the conflicts caused by their unsteady emotions.

No doubt, they have an inner strength of their own, but they require the sensitive and loving guidance of a friend of someone who understands them, is on their side, and can show that he loves them.

Our session today will focus on youth, on the immense potential they have and the problems they face.

ACTIVITY (45 minutes)

The leader distributes a copy of the Hand-out to each participant.

At the end of the activity, he invites the groups to report on what they have come up with, and leads into a presentation of the following Key concepts.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. When we speak of "young people", we refer to preadolescents, adolescents and young adults, varying in ages between the early teens and 25 years. However, "youth" is not merely an age group; it is a transitional stage in life having its own specific characteristics.
2. Most young people are in the process of struggling to cope with the turmoil of _their own physical, social, spiritual and emotional development as individuals. They find themselves grappling with such issues as their own identity, self-image, sexuality, values, and life choices.

At the same time, they have to face the pressures exerted on them by their peer groups, the media, and the demands made on them by their family, school, church, cultural and political institutions. They are quite susceptible to the attractions of ideologies and role-models, and are often subjected to the manipulations of business and commercial enterprises.

3. As adults involved with and concerned for the holistic development of youth, we know that we have to be sensitive to, and take into account the culture, age, sex, tensions, and aspirations of our young people. We have to be "in tune" with the signs of the times, and offer to the young the vision, security and direction they are searching for in their quest for wholeness, meaning and maturity. What is relevant and important for them must be relevant and important for us too who accompany them on their road to adulthood. With the short time at our disposal for this session, we cannot deal with all the issues concerning the young, but deal with them we must at some later stage.
4. Our service to youth must take its starting-point from the young people themselves. We cannot fool ourselves into thinking that we have all the answers, nor even all the questions. Our work has to be **with** our youth, not just for them.
5. We want to be their friends and guides. Therefore, we do not consider everything concerning them as problems; rather, we look at their potentialities, their hidden strengths, and their capabilities as persons searching for the fullness of life. We feel glad to be given the privilege to "walk" with them on their journey, well aware of the reality in which they live.

6. Among the factors that could be considered as important for recognizing the present day reality of the youth condition, we may mention the following.

[It is very likely that most, if not all of them, will have already emerged from the reports of the group activity conducted a little earlier; hence it may not be necessary to deal with them again.]

POSITIVE ASPECTS

A desire for solidarity, identity, reform
A search for unity, peace, meaning
Youthful energy and idealism
A sense of community: wanting to belong
A yearning for the spiritual
A rejection of whatever is "hypocritical"
Positive and concrete action – involvement

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

Individualism - self-interest - opportunism
A sense of independence - licence
Changing values - ideologies
Involvement in conflicts of a political, racial, religious or social nature
Unemployment
Secularization - religious indifference
Instability - violence
A lack of good relationships with adults - family breakdown - loneliness
A fear of the future - a feeling of powerlessness
An inability to be constructively critical, to be objective

DISCUSSION

1. At this point the leader invites the participants to form into small groups and to discuss the implications of these positive and negative aspects for the young people they generally have to deal with. He asks each group to pick out the elements they consider to be the most pertinent to their work with the young.
2. The findings of each group are then reported to the whole assembly, and the Leader tries to see if he can effect a consensus on the major issues affecting the young with whom the participants are involved.

WRAP-UP

The leader reminds the participants that they have been speaking as adults about the major issues affecting young people. It would not seem enough to leave it there. Rather, it would appear to be much more appropriate for the participants to find a way of taking up the conclusions with the young people themselves and listening to their feedback about their situation today. It might then be possible to set do-able goals together with the young people in order to actually address some of the issues that surface.

EVALUATION (to minutes)

The leader invites the participants to evaluate the session, making use of one of the evaluation sheets provided at the end of this manual.

If he chooses to have a personal evaluation too, he may ask the members to complete the following statements.

I have learnt that youth....

My personal relationship with young people is....

I am disappointed when young people....

I feel that young people have to

I am challenged by the present youth reality to....

CONCLUSION

The session is concluded with a suitable prayer, poem, or song.

REFERENCES

Pastoral Action# 28, South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, Pretoria 1982.

John Roberto, ed., Guide to Understanding Youth. Readings in Youth Ministry, New Rochelle 1991.

Michael Carotta, Discovering. A Junior High Religion Program, Winona, Minnesota 1989.

XXI General Chapter of the Salesian Society. Chapter Documents, Rome 1978.

YOUTH TODAY

ACTIVITY

Take a piece of paper, and working by yourself, go through the following steps one by one. Keep your answers short and in perspective:

Step One: Quickly develop a list . . . What comes to your mind (e.g. words, pictures, phrases, ideas, symbols) when you hear the term "youth"?

Step Two: Quickly develop another list ... What are some of the chief problems, issues, or worries typical of young people you know?

Step Three: Come up with two or three responses..... What do these youths want or hope for most?

Step Four: Create a one- or two-sentence "working definition" for the term "youth".

Step Five: Join with one or two others in a group and share your responses.

Step Six: As a group, draw up a list of the strengths and weaknesses of youth, filling the spaces against each of the headings given in the table overleaf. (You may choose other headings of your own, if you so wish.)

	Strength/Potential	Weaknesses/Problems
Family		
Peer Group		
Neighborhood		
Money		
Politics		
Society		
Church		
Religion		
Education		
Culture		
Mass Media		



OUR SALESIAN RESPONSE

Don Bosco spotted some thirty children playing in a small piazza. Immediately he walked up to them. They stopped their game in amazement. Holding a medal high in the air, he said in a friendly tone: "It's too bad that I can't give a medal to each one of you. I have only one."

No longer shy, the boys stretched out their hands, each one shouting, "Give it to me."

"Just a moment," Don Bosco interrupted. "I'll give the medal to the best boy! Now, who is the best boy here?"

"I am, I am!" they all shouted.

"That won't do!" replied Don Bosco. "I guess I will have to give it to the naughtiest boy. Who is the naughtiest?"

"I am, I am!" they again yelled. (BM_ V, p. 586)

Salesian youth ministry is our response to the needs and challenges of youth. Section 2 gives our lay collaborators a model by introducing to them the fascinating figure of Don Bosco. By studying his life and his work; they will be inspired to share the love and concern that he had for the young, and feel proud to belong to the vast Salesian family.



SESSION 1

DON BOSCO: HIS LIFE

DON BOSCO: HIS LIFE

"Keep doing everything you learnt from me and were told by me and have heard or seen me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you" (Ph 4, 9).

OBJECTIVE

To acquaint the participants with some aspects of the life of Don Bosco in the hope that they will look up to him as a model.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of the Hand-out (pp. 5 - 15) for participants.

A large sheet of paper (newsprint) or a blackboard.

(Optional) Slides/filmstrip of Don Bosco and the corresponding projector.

INTRODUCTION

The leader opens the session with these or similar words.

From the day of his birth in a humble cottage in Piedmont, Italy in 1815 to the day of his burial in 1888 when two hundred thousand people lined the streets of Turin to mourn at his funeral, the seventy-three years of Don Bosco's life were a colorful saga of extraordinary achievement through dedication, hard work and trust in God.

St. John Bosco - or Don Bosco, as he was and still is popularly known was a towering figure during one of the most critical periods in the history of the Catholic Church. Founder of the Salesian Family, he was the trusted friend of popes, kings and statesmen, and played no small part in the affairs of both Church and State in nineteenth century Italy.

But his real greatness lay primarily in the strength of his character and his steadfast determination to make a difference in the lives of poor boys.

It is obviously not possible for us to compress seventy-three years of his tremendously active and varied life into the span of a couple of sessions like this one and the next. However, in the short time available to us, we shall endeavor to catch a few glimpses of the marvelous and rich personality of Don Bosco and the genial and enterprising ways in which he faced up to the challenges of his time.

ACTIVITY (60 minutes)

The leader divides the participants into groups of six or seven each and then distributes a copy of the Hand-out to each participant.

The INPUT for the session is contained in the Hand-out itself; so too are the points for DISCUSSION.

Alternatively, if the leader finds it convenient, he could choose to present the life of Don Bosco with the help of slides or a filmstrip.

WRAP-UP

When all the groups come together in a general assembly, the three messages from each group are written on a large sheet of paper or on the blackboard.

The leader then highlights the areas of convergence among the various messages, and if necessary, briefly elaborates on them, inviting the participants to take them to heart.

He may also wish to encourage the participants to read a full-length biography of Don Bosco, offering for this purpose the titles of some readily-available books.

EVALUATION

The leader may use either of the two forms provided in this manual for an evaluation of the session.

CONCLUSION

*The leader may wish to conclude the session with the following prayer adapted from *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, Rome 1986, p. 194:*

We thank you, Father,
for having filled the heart of Don Bosco
with predilection for the young:
"That you are young," he said to them,
"is enough to make me love you very much."
Enrich the heart of every one of us
with the same gift of loving-kindness,
and help us to discover in all young people
the presence of Jesus,
so that we may be ready to offer to them
our time, talents and health,
and even the total donation of our whole life,
in imitation of Don Bosco, who said:
"For you I am ready even to give my life."

DON BOSCO: HIS LIFE

PART 1

Here are four glimpses into the life of Don Bosco:

his love for the young,
his tenacity in the face of difficulties,
his trust in God, and
his cheerfulness.

Taking one aspect at a time, read the input given and carry out the activity suggested, before moving on to the next aspect.

A. DON BOSCO, THE FRIEND OF YOUTH

Don Bosco was troubled at the sight of so many youngsters roaming through the streets of Turin without anyone to care for them. He made up his mind to dedicate his whole life to them.

One bitterly cold morning of December 8, 1841, while Don Bosco was vesting for Mass in the sacristy of the church of St. Francis, he heard a commotion behind him. A sixteen-year-old bricklayer who had come in to shelter from the rain, was being forcibly evicted by the sacristan. Don Bosco called out to the sacristan, "Giuseppe, that's no way to treat my friend."

"Your friend, Don Bosco?" he asked.

"Yes, my friend," repeated Don Bosco. "Any boy in trouble is my friend. I want to speak to him. Call him back."

Don Bosco continued vesting. In a few moments the boy, followed by the sacristan, reappeared. He looked frightened and kept twisting a soiled cap in his hands.

Don Bosco put his arm around him. "There's no need to be afraid, son. I'm your friend." The boy looked up at him.

"Have you heard Mass yet? No? Then, we'll do like this. Let's say Mass. Afterwards, we shall have a nice chat together, all right?"

After the Mass Don Bosco had a very cordial conversation with the lad, and he ended up saying: "If you come back here next Sunday and bring your apprentice friends along, I can promise you a pleasant day with games, music and a good meal. Well, what do you say?"

Having been made to feel so welcome, the boy - Bartholomew Garelli was his name - was only too happy to accept.

*

Within a month, Don Bosco's group of apprentices had grown from 5 to 40 to 100. In Don Bosco, the young workers had found a very understanding and dear friend, one tuned on their own wavelength of interests and feelings. As Don Bosco himself would say, "That you are young is enough to make me love you very much."

*

Another time he said: "What can I promise you? I promise and give you all that I am and all that I have. All my thoughts and deeds are for you. I live for you and am even ready to die for you . . ."

*

Marchioness Barolo, the rich lady who operated the Refuge where Don Bosco worked as chaplain, could not countenance Don Bosco's additional apostolate of caring for boys. One day she came into Don Bosco's room, looking unusually determined. "Don Bosco," she said, "I have come to give you a piece of advice."

"What is...it?" Don Bosco asked.

"You have to give up either your work or mine. Think it over. You can tell me your answer in a few days."

" But I have thought it over, Madam. My life is entirely given up to my poor little lads, and nothing and no one will drive me from the path which Our Lord has marked out for me."

"So you prefer your young vagabonds to my little orphan girls! In that case, consider yourself as discharged from your office. I will look for a successor."

Notwithstanding his dismay at the prospect of having to move on to another place, Don Bosco told his young friends: "My dear boys, cabbages grow bigger and better when they are transplanted, and so it is with our Oratory."

*

In 1846 Don Bosco suffered a severe attack of pneumonia and lay at death's door. Realizing that there was little hope for him in human remedies, his boys appealed to heaven with admirable fervor. Some vowed to recite the whole Rosary daily, some for a month, others for a whole year, and not a few, throughout all their life. Several fasted on bread and water and promised to continue fasting for months, and even years, if the Virgin Mary would only make their beloved Don Bosco well again. Heaven heard their prayer. Don Bosco recovered miraculously.

When he returned to the Oratory shortly afterwards one Sunday afternoon, leaning on a cane, there were tears in every eye, and in Don Bosco's too. He addressed a few words to them, and among other things, he said: " I want to thank you for the love you have shown me during my illness. I want to thank you for the prayers you said for my recovery. I am convinced that God granted me an extension of life in answer to your prayers. Therefore, gratitude demands that I spend it all for your temporal and spiritual welfare. This I promise to do as long as the Lord will permit me to remain in this world."

*

When in 1861 he happened to be at the mountain solitude of St. Ignatius' Shrine for his spiritual retreat, Don Bosco wrote to his boys: "I have been away only a few days, my beloved children, and it seems months since I have seen you. You are indeed my delight and my joy, and I lack both when I am away from you."

*

Towards the close of his life, when the doctor urged him to have complete rest, Don Bosco remarked: "I have promised God that I would give of myself to my last breath for my poor boys."

ACTIVITY

Of the episodes from Don Bosco's life that I have just read, the one that impressed me most was

I was impressed because

Now, please share what you have written with your group.

B. DON BOSCO'S TENACITY OF PURPOSE

Right from his early years, Don Bosco had to face innumerable obstacles and difficulties that stood in the way of his becoming a priest.

At the age of 12 an unpleasant scene occurred in his house. His stepbrother, Anthony, was an insensitive 21-year-old whose whole life revolved around farm work. He had no sympathy for a young "dreamer" with a taste for studying.

"I've had enough!" he burst out in a tone that was final. "I'm tired of seeing books around the house. I am big and strong and I never even looked at a book."

Angry and hurt, John replied: " Yes, just like our donkey. He is even stronger and never went to school either! Do you want to be like him?"

At those words, Anthony flew into a rage, but John managed to dodge his anger and a rain of blows, thanks to his quick legs. However, Mamma Margaret realized that there was no way John could stay at home and continue his studies. She arranged for him to go to work as a cowherd on the Moglia farm. There he remained for the next three years.

*

When later he began to study at Castelnuovo, it meant trudging every day to school and back - a distance of some five kilometers - oftentimes in a biting wind or in a downpour.

*

Still later he went to Chieri where, to pay for his board and lodging, he worked in a cafe', cleaning up in the morning before going to his classes, keeping the scores of the billiard-players in the evening, and after the shutters of the cafe' were closed, studying by the wavering light of a candle and sleeping in a cupboard under the stairs.

*

When he became a priest, and threw himself into his work with poor boys, rumors began spreading across Turin that Don Bosco was on the verge of losing his mind. Many thought he was having hallucinations when he waxed enthusiastic over the future of the Oratory. " He is stark mad!" they concluded.

In no way intimidated by their opinion about him, Don Bosco would say: " In those things which are for the benefit of young people in danger or which serve to win souls for God, I push ahead even to the extent of recklessness."

*

To get his young Society approved, Don Bosco had to face enormous difficulties, both from the civil authorities who were anticlerical, and from certain ecclesiastical quarters who were not pleased with the style of functioning of the new religious family. So much so that when at last he obtained the approval, he was heard to exclaim: "If knowing what I now know, I had to start anew all the work that the foundation of the Society cost me, and to endure all the toil it entailed for me, I don't know if I should have the courage to do it."

*

For ten years Don Bosco had a host of problems and misunderstandings with his archbishop, Mgr. Gastaldi, who did everything he could to prevent the Salesian Constitutions from being accepted by Rome, and even went so far as to impose on Don Bosco personally the severest punishment any priest can suffer, that of being deprived of faculties to offer Mass, to preach or to hear confessions. "The sort of thing," stormed one angry bishop, "we only give to hopeless alcoholics." When the controversy between the archbishop and Don Bosco was discussed in the Vatican in 1881, by eight Cardinals, two were for the archbishop, two abstained, and four were for Don Bosco. The Pope stopped all further discussion. "Pass no verdict," he said, "but rather propose a settlement so as to safeguard the archbishop's authority. Don Bosco is so virtuous that he will fully cooperate." His solution was that Don Bosco should send a letter of apology to the archbishop, begging his pardon.

The Salesians were furious at the manifest injustice but Don Cagliero stopped all argument. "The Pope has spoken," he said. "That's enough." Don Bosco, drinking his bitter chalice, wrote his letter, to which came a reply, "I heartily grant the pardon you requested."

*

At Marseilles in 1884, the famous Doctor Combal, Professor of Medicine at Montpellier, was called by Fr. Albera for a consultation on the case of Don Bosco. After a minute examination, he said: "You have burnt away your life by working to excess. Your whole constitution is like a coat worn threadbare by too much use. For that there is no remedy, or very little indeed. For such a garment only the wardrobe can be recommended. You understand: rest must be complete." "Well, Doctor," replied Don Bosco, "your remedy is just the only one I cannot take. The machine can't be stopped; there is too much to do."

ACTIVITY

Don Bosco was a person who was faithful to an ideal. Do you think that fidelity or tenacity of purpose is a value our present day society appreciates?

Could you illustrate your point of view, drawing examples from your experience?

Now, please share what you have written with your group.

C. DON BOSCO'S TRUST IN GOD

God occupied a central place in Don Bosco's life.

It was his mother, Mamma Margaret, who taught him to see the presence of God in a flower strewn meadow, in a flaming sunset or in a starry sky.

"God sees you" was the watchword she constantly brought home to him.

*

At the age of nine, he had a prophetic dream vision.

Surrounded by his usual group of wild young friends, he felt so appalled by their rough conduct and foul language that he charged headlong, swinging with both fists. The melee was stopped by a majestic person.

"Not with blows, but with gentle loving-kindness will you win them over. Start now to teach them the beauty of virtue and the ugliness of sin."

"But how can I do the impossible?"

"I will give you a lady as wise teacher and guide." "But who are you?"

"I am the son of her whom your mother has taught you to greet three times a day."

Suddenly there appeared a stately lady, wearing a beautiful mantle, all studded with gems that shone like stars. Seeing how

hopelessly confused John was, she bade him come close to her, and taking his hand, said: "Look! This is your field of work." The boys had all vanished, and in their place were wild animals. The lady continued, "But first you must grow up to be humble, strong and sturdy. " Suddenly all those wild beasts were changed into lambs. It was all too much for John. Bewildered, he burst into tears. The lady gently placed her hand on his head. "Someday, little John," she promised, "you will understand."

*

Once, when a visiting priest remarked to him about how much he had accomplished by way of oratories, religious congregations, schools, hospices, and foreign missions, Don Bosco replied: "You're wrong, my friend. God alone is responsible for them ... they are all the work of His hands." Then he bowed his head, and with his eyes full of tears, said again: "They are all the work of His hands!"

*

One midnight in 1861 a terrifying blast of thunder shook the Oratory; it was followed by a bolt of lightning which struck the chimney of Don Bosco's room, cracking the wall, overturning his desk, and finally, hitting his iron bed, lifting it three feet into the air and slamming it against the opposite wall. The impact threw Don Bosco on the floor where he lay dazed for a few moments. On recovering, he made his way to the dormitory directly above which had fared even worse. Lightning had struck the southern end, toppling two chimneys and tearing away a portion of the roof. As tiles, bricks, and plaster rained down on the beds, the dormitory turned into a bedlam of screams, groans, and prayers, accompanied by panicky cries for help and a blind rush for the door. Just then Don Bosco arrived on the scene, holding a lamp before him. Calmly and smilingly he allayed their fears. "Don't be afraid," he said. "We have a good Father and a good Mother in heaven watching over us!" Then, he went from bed to bed, and when he had checked that everyone was safe, he sighed a grateful "Deo Gratias". "Let us thank Our Lord and His Most Blessed Mother with all our hearts!" he said. "They shielded us from grave danger. Can you imagine what would have happened if fire had broken out? All of us might have perished."

*

One evening after supper he was talking familiarly to a circle of Salesians. "They tell me," he said, "that Fr. Rua has some shares in his desk which could be sold to provide cash to meet some of our current debts." "It is true," replied Fr. Rua, "but in about two weeks' time we have to meet a heavy financial obligation and we should be involved in legal trouble if we were not prepared to make an immediate payment." "No, no, that will not do," Don Bosco vigorously rejoined, "the obligations of today must not be left unsettled in view of those of next week. How can we expect Divine Providence to help us if we let ourselves be guided by such human prudence?"

ACTIVITY

Do you think that trust in God can help a person become mature?

Why?

Now, please share what you have written with your group.

D. DON BOSCO, THE SAINT OF CHEERFULNESS

Don Bosco narrates that while he was studying at Chieri, he got some of his companions to form a club, which he called the "*Societa dell'Allegria*" (Society for a Good Time). There was a reason for the name, because everyone was obliged to look for such books, discuss such subjects, or play such games as would contribute to the happiness of the members. Whatever would induce sadness was forbidden, especially things contrary to God's law.

*

When he became a priest, he wanted all his boys to be happy. He would stress three things: cheerfulness, work; and piety. And he would keep on repeating St. Philip Neri's maxim to boys: "Run, jump, have all the fun you want at the right time, but, for heaven's sake, do not commit sin."

On noticing a gloomy boy, Don Bosco would call him over, ask what bothered him, and then tell him that St. Philip Neri regarded gloominess as the eighth capital sin. After brightening him, he would dismiss him with a light tap on the cheek and a "Cheer up, my boy!"

Once when the boys of St. Aloysius Oratory came to visit Don Bosco, he told them: "I am happy when you enjoy yourselves, when you play and are lighthearted. In this way you can become saints like St. Aloysius just as long as you try to avoid sin."

*

Sometimes Don Bosco would accost a young cleric and ask him, "Do you know algebra?" "Yes, Father."

"Then, tell me: what is the meaning of: $A + B - C$?"

Stumped, the young man would stammer in reply, and then give up.

"Well now," Don Bosco would go on, "here is what it means: A stands for *Allegro* [Cheerful], B for *Buono* [Good], C for *Cattivo* [Bad]. So always be cheerful and good but never bad."

*

In 1847 Don Bosco wrote *The Companion of Youth*. Introducing it, he said: "The first snare that the devil uses to discourage boys from trying to be good is to put into their heads the idea that obeying God's law means having a miserable time with no fun at all. As this is absolutely false, I should like to teach you how to lead a Christian life which will make you happy and contented. I will show you what true enjoyment and fun are, so that you may make your own the words of the holy Prophet David and say: 'Let us serve the Lord with gladness.' This then is the purpose of this little book: to teach you how to serve God and be always happy."

*

Thirteen-year-old Francis Besucco once went up to Don Bosco and said: "Here I find myself among companions who are so good; I would like to become good like them, but I don't know what I should do. Would you please help me?"

Don Bosco replied: "I shall help you with all the means at my disposal. If you want to become good, you have to put only three things into practice, and everything else will come by itself." "And what are these three things?"

"They are: happiness, study, piety. If you practice them, you will be happy and will do much good to your soul."

*

Another pupil, Dominic Savio, understood Don Bosco's slogan, "Serve the Lord in gladness," so well that he exclaimed: "I see that one can become a saint by being very happy." And to a newcomer at school, he said: "You must know that here we make holiness consist in being very happy. All we do is try to avoid sin, fulfil our duties and be friends of the Lord."

It was Fr. Caviglia who wrote that "Serve the Lord in gladness!" could be considered the eleventh commandment in Don Bosco's house.

*

Fr. Rua relates that the greater the suffering in which Don Bosco found himself, the "more joyful" he seemed to be, "so much so that, when he was more humorous than usual, we, his children, would say to ourselves, 'Don Bosco must have many troubles since he appears so cheerful'; and, in fact, on questioning him, we would discover the new difficulty which bore down on him."

ACTIVITY

Which one of Don Bosco 's sayings about happiness impressed you?

Why?

Now, please share what you have written with your group

PART 2

Write down what you would consider to be the three most important messages Don Bosco has for you as a Salesian lay collaborator?

1.

2.

3. _____

Now, share your answers with your group and come to a consensus - as a group - on the three most important messages for you as Salesian lay collaborators.



SESSION 2

DON BOSCO: HIS WORK

DON BOSCO: HIS WORK

He saw a large crowd, and he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and He set himself to teach them at some length" (Mk 6, 34).

OBJECTIVES

1. To bring our lay collaborators to an understanding and appreciation of what Don Bosco did in response to the urgent needs and challenges of his day.
2. To create in our lay collaborators an awareness of the need to approach the work with young people today - as Don Bosco did - by identifying the needs and challenges, and responding to them as effectively as possible.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of Hand-out 1 (pp. 5 - 16) and Hand-out 2 (pp. 17 - 18) for participants

INTRODUCTION

The leader opens the session with these or similar words.

Don Bosco was not a theoretician in the field of youth work. With his profound sense of realism, he took young people as they were, grasped intuitively the needs and challenges of their situation, and sought to respond to them as best he could.

It is his way of doing things that we wish to examine now in order to learn from him.

ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

The leader forms the participants into groups of six or seven each and then distributes a copy of Hand-out 1 to each participant.

[Please note that the INPUT for the session is contained in the Hand-out itself]

WRAP-UP

When the groups have finished going through Hand-out 1, the leader suggests that it is now time to summarize what they have learned so far and apply it to their own situation.

For this purpose, he distributes a copy of Hand-out 2 to the participants and takes them through the summary and the exercise. The exercise should take about 40 minutes.

At the end of the exercise, the groups come together in assembly. The reports are read out one by one, and recorded on a large sheet of paper or on the blackboard.

The leader may then proceed to analyse the conclusions of the groups, maybe by commenting on them, or pointing out the convergence reached, or clarifying points needing further explanation.

In the end he tries to bring the assembly to zero in on something that all would like to do together to follow Don Bosco more closely.

EVALUATION

To evaluate the session, the leader makes use of one of the evaluation sheets provided at the end of this manual.

Additionally, to help each participant assess the impact the session has had on him/her, the Leader may ask that each one:

reflect on the particular attitude or response on the part of Don Bosco that he/she identifies with readily, or

complete the following statements in silence as they are read out, one by one:

In this session I learned that ...

I was disappointed that ...

I have decided that ...

CONCLUSION

*The session may conclude with a song, a brief meditation or whatever the participants feel comfortable with. If so desired, the following prayer from *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*, Rome 1986, p. 242, may be used.*

May you be blessed, O Lord,
for having given us Don Bosco as our father and teacher
and for filling him with extraordinary gifts
of nature and of grace;
he showed himself perfectly human
among his contemporaries,
and completely dedicated to you

in docility to the Holy Spirit.
Grant, we pray you,
that following his teaching and example
we may bring him to life again in ourselves,
in dedicating ourselves to you and to our fellowmen,
in faithful service given to the young
with constancy, courage and perseverance
and with the warmth and sensitivity of a generous heart.

DON BOSCO: HIS WORK

To describe in a nutshell, the crises and challenges of a complex period of history like that of the nineteenth century in Italy, and more specifically in Turin, is no easy task. It is even harder to gauge the repercussions of these crises and challenges on different categories of persons, particularly the young, and on the various aspects of the culture of that period.

Without going into too much detail, we wish to recall here the four major aspects of the general situation in which Don Bosco found himself and the way in which he responded to each of them.

A. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENE

1. NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

There was a rapid transition taking place- from an agricultural to an industrial society. As a result, the city of Turin was expanding in population and size, becoming a Centre of building and economic growth. Immigrants kept pouring in from the mountains and the countryside; workers were hired and fired at will; young people were put to work in factories; housing was scarce; and idleness was rampant, especially on Sundays and festive days.

2. DON BOSCO'S RESPONSE

Don Bosco began to gather what he called "poor and abandoned youth", "the boys who were needy and in danger". Prisoners, street-lads, daily labourers, young workers, poor country boys whose parents could never have provided them with the means to study - these were the ones for whom Don Bosco worked.

His Oratory offered indispensable "food, lodging and clothing to the boys", "both of the city and of the villages of the province ... who are so poor and abandoned that they could not be employed in any art or trade."

*

One Sunday evening as the boys were having fun, racing to and fro, playing and making a great deal of noise, a boy about fifteen years old came close to the hedge. He seemed to want to cross this slight barrier and join them, but not finding the courage, he stood there and watched with a grim, unhappy expression on his face. Don Bosco noticed him and came over to ask him a few questions, "What's your name? Where do you come from? What do you do?" But the poor boy could not answer. Don Bosco wondered if he was dumb, and was about to speak to him in sign language when he decided to try another approach. Placing his hand on the boy's head, he asked: "What's the matter, son? Tell me, do you feel sick?" Encouraged by his kindness, the boy answered simply, in a tone that seemed to come from the hollow of an empty cave, "I'm hungry."

The pathetic reply won everybody's sympathy. Someone ran for food, and the boy was given something to eat: As soon as he had finished, Don Bosco engaged him in conversation.

"Have you any family?"

"Yes, but my parents live far away."

"What's your job?"

"I worked in a saddler's shop, but, since I wasn't very good, I lost my job."

"Have you looked for another one?"

"I did, all day yesterday, but I don't know anybody here and couldn't find anything."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"On the steps of St. John's Church."

"Did you go to Mass this morning?"

"Yes, but I couldn't pay much attention because I was so hungry."

"Where were you going when you stopped here?"

"I was tempted to steal. That's what was on my mind the past few hours."

"Did you ask anybody for a little money?"

"Yes, I did; but they all yelled at me. They all said, 'You're strong and healthy. Why don't you look for a job?' They gave me nothing."

"If you had stolen, you might have landed in prison. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, that's what has held me back more than once. But the Lord took pity on me and instead of letting me go wrong, He led me here to you."

"What were you thinking of, when you stopped to look at us?"

"I said to myself: 'How lucky these boys are. They're happy and cheerful, jumping, running about, and singing.' I envied them. I wanted to join them, but I didn't dare."

"Will you come again on Sundays and holy days?" "I'd love to."

"Then, by all means, come and you'll always be welcome. For tonight, I'll take care of your supper and get you a place to sleep. Tomorrow I'll find you work with a good man who will give you a job, food and shelter."

ACTIVITY

In the light of the episode you have just read, please write down what you consider to be the elements of Don Bosco's response to the situation confronting him:

B. THE EDUCATIONAL SCENE

1. NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Illiteracy was rampant, but especially after 1830, there arose a new interest in culture and in providing schools for the masses. Many well-to-do persons considered it their duty to help the poor free themselves from their misery and ignorance; they were convinced that by doing so they would help to bring about a gradual and peaceful evolution of a new civil and political order and thus help to promote the cause of national unity. And so, to cope with this huge influx of young people into the city, many efforts were made to provide more elementary and vocational schools.

2. DON BOSCO'S RESPONSE

Fr. Lemoyne, Don Bosco's biographer, narrates that in order to respond to the most concrete needs of the young during those years of social upheaval, on Sundays and holy days, after church services, and on weekdays in the evening, except Saturdays and the vigils of holy days, many boys would go to the residence of Don Bosco and of Fr. Borel, and these priests, ever ready to help, would turn their own rooms into classrooms and teach them the three R's .

*

In the late autumn of 1845, the three rooms taken on hire at the Moretta house were turned into an evening school for about 200 pupils. "During that winter," Don Bosco narrates, "we began the evening school. It was the first time in our region that such a kind of school was spoken of; therefore, it made a lot of noise, some in favours, others against."

*

In 1848 Don Bosco expanded the evening classes until the boys numbered over three hundred. Those attending the evening classes were not all young boys. Nearly a hundred were illiterate adults, most of them sprouting beards and moustaches. They came to school at Don Bosco's special invitation. He taught them himself in a separate room, and they were as docile as babes. He had his own special method for teaching the alphabet. His witty remarks and interesting similes delighted the pupils and strongly impressed on their minds the letters that he wrote on the blackboard for them. He would draw, for example, O, then cut it in half vertically; the left half became a C, the right one a D. Thus, by drawing straight and curved lines, erasing and rewriting, but always following a logical presentation to avoid confusion, he taught the entire alphabet. He then went on to form syllables and words. Sometimes his young teachers would leave their own classes for a few moments to watch him at work and enjoy his pedagogical props. Although his pupils were mentally sluggish, they learned amazingly fast and soon were able to read and write. Don Bosco found jobs for those unemployed and also gave financial aid to those in need.

*

Meanwhile, Don Bosco was coming to realize that his sending the boys to town every day for work, even after a careful selection and supervision of the workshops, was at least morally dangerous, if not actually harmful, to discipline and character formation. Irreligion and immorality were unfortunately on the rise. He was aware that on many occasions his boys had been the target of ridicule and that this could undermine their moral and religious education. And so, with the help of some benefactors, he purchased a few work benches and tools and started a shoe repair shop in a small corridor of the Pinar di house. That was followed in the same year 1853 by a tailor shop; in 1854, a shop for bookbinders; in 1856, for carpenters; in 1861, for printers; and in 1862, for blacksmiths.

*

In the meantime, the schools at the Oratory were doing very well. Don Bosco had added recitation, singing, and music to the curriculum to enrich the boys' religious and moral education. As a diversion he also arranged some demonstrations of their progress, either in the presence of distinguished guests visiting the Oratory or in intramural competition.

Soon also this initiative of his was crowned with success. In fact, early in 1847, after only a few months of Sunday school, he decided to hold a demonstration in catechism and biblical history and geography. Several prominent people of Turin were invited, among them Joseph Rayneri, the most distinguished member of the department of pedagogy at the Royal University. These guests questioned the boys on the above subjects, were pleased with their answers, praised the experiment, and left prizes and souvenirs for the best students. Professor Rayneri was so very enthusiastic that when lecturing to his own students, in his education courses, he often told them: "If you want to see pedagogy in action, go to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales and watch Don Bosco."

*

Encouraged by this first test, the boys later put on another display on academic subjects they had studied at night school. This second experiment was very solemn. Since everyone in Turin was talking about Don Bosco's school as a great novelty, and since many professors and eminent people frequently dropped in, word reached City Hall. A committee of three persons was formed to find out whether the rumored results were really as good as people said they were, or whether they were very exaggerated. The committee members themselves tested the boys' reading knowledge, their enunciation, their knowledge of arithmetic and the metric system, public speaking, and their knowledge of other subjects. They were quite at a loss to explain how boys who had been completely unschooled until the age of sixteen or eighteen, could have made such progress in so few months. The committee also noticed that a large number of young adults were gathered at the school to get an education, instead of roaming the streets, and by the time the members of the committee left, they were full of admiration and enthusiasm.

*

In a short novel that he wrote, *Valentino o la vocazione impedita*, Don Bosco intentionally showed the educative efficacy of a Christian boarding school in obtaining rapid and convincing educative results:

"Being away from his companions, without bad books, in the company of good fellow-pupils, the emulation in class, music, declamation, and some dramatic shows in a little theatre, soon made him forget the dissipated life he had led for about one year."

*

In 1863 a Mr. Ferri, professor of philosophy and inspector of academic secondary schools, came to inspect the school at Valdocco. As he closed his visit to one of the classrooms which had over 124 pupils, the teacher - Celestine Durando, a cleric - courteously offered to escort him to the next room, but Professor Ferri tried to excuse him, lest even his momentary absence from the classroom give so many lively boys an opportunity for some mischief. "No danger of that, Professor," the teacher replied. "No one will speak or move about."

Popular culture, which had been traditionally permeated by a Christian spirit, now began to break down as a result of the political and economic upheaval, the insecurity arising out of the newly-promulgated law of freedom for every religion and an increasingly pluralistic way of thinking in the realm of moral and religious ideas.

Popular culture, which had been traditionally permeated by a Christian spirit, now began to break down as a result of the political and economic upheaval, the insecurity arising out of the newly-promulgated law of freedom for every religion and an increasingly pluralistic way of thinking in the realm of moral and religious ideas.

2. DON BOSCO'S RESPONSE

In his introduction to his Regulations for the Festive Oratory Don Bosco wrote: "Religious instruction is the Oratory's primary objective." And he asked his Rectors to "strive in every possible way to instill in the boys love of God, respect for sacred things, frequent reception of the sacraments, filial devotion to Our Lady, and the elements of true piety."

*

One day, two priests called on Don Bosco to complain that his Oratory was taking boys away from the parishes in the city. "The boys who come to me do not in any way interfere with attendance at the parish churches," Don Bosco replied.

"Why not?"

"Because nearly all of them are from out of town. They have come to Turin for work and they are not under parental supervision."

"Couldn't you send them to the parish church in their neighborhood?" "They have no idea of what parish they belong to."

"Why don't you tell them?"

"It is practically impossible. Their various 'dialects, the instability of their domicile for reasons of work, and the example of their friends, who for the most part are not churchgoers, are an insurmountable obstacle that prevents the boys from coming to know and attend their parish church. Moreover, many of them are already young adults; some are fifteen, eighteen or twenty years old and their religious ignorance is appalling. Who would ever be able to induce them to attend a catechism class with boys eight to ten years' old who already know more than they do? Many boys come to the Oratory because they enjoy their games and outings. (Don Bosco might have added: "and the kind way in which they are treated"). With these means I attract them to catechism class and church services. Without these attractions, they probably wouldn't go to any church at all; neither their pastors nor Don Bosco would have them, and their souls would suffer."

*

No feast of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin ever occurred without his preparing the boys to celebrate it fruitfully by receiving the sacraments. Their frequent reception was the goal of all his efforts. Since he made it easy for the boys to go to confession, there were several communicants every day; on Sundays almost all received. Don Bosco had laid down the principle: "Frequent Communion and daily Mass are the two pillars of education."

*

*

The boys were so fond of Don Bosco and had such confidence in him, that one and all went to confession to him. It was always an encouraging sight to see his confessional surrounded by twenty, thirty, forty, and even fifty boys who waited for hours for their turn to confide to him the innermost secrets of their hearts.

One evening, the eve of a solemn feast, as the clock struck ten many boys were still waiting for confession.

"I think it's time to get some sleep, boys," Don Bosco suggested. "It's very late!" "Please go on," they begged.

Don Bosco obliged, but after a while, one after another, they all dozed off. Don Bosco followed suit, resting his head wearily on the arm of a boy named Gariboldi whose confession he was hearing. The boy's hands were folded, his forearm resting on the kneeler. Don Bosco did not awaken until around five in the morning. Seeing all the boys stretched out on the floor asleep, he turned to poor Gariboldi, who had been awake all night, and said, "It's really time we all went to bed."

*

Giving a "good night" on Dec. 18, 1864, Don Bosco said: "Tonight I'll point out the best way to acquire knowledge: 'Always trust in the Blessed Virgin's protection.' Since She is the Seat of Wisdom; say a Hail Mary and the invocation 'Seat of Wisdom, pray for us' before you start on your homework and lessons."

*

The Oratory sheltered dozens of boys whose virtue, as Don Bosco said, was equal to that of St. Aloysius. Once, in 1878, Father Vespignani, who was twenty years the Provincial of the Salesian Houses in Argentina, asked Don Bosco:

"Is it true that some of your Oratory boys are as pure as St. Aloysius?" "Yes, it is quite true," Don Bosco replied.

*

One evening in September 1862, while talking to some young religious, Don Bosco confided this to them: "I can assure you we shall have boys who will be raised to the altar. If only Dominic Savio, who died five years ago, goes on working miracles, I do not doubt, if I can set his cause going, that the Church will one day recognize his sanctity."

ACTIVITY

In the light of the episodes you have just read, please write down what you consider to be the elements of Don Bosco's response to his situation:

D. THE POLITICAL SCENE

1. NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

There was an upheaval taking place in Italy as the political set-up changed over from an absolute monarchy to a democratic society. The process of the unification of the country was under way, and the temporal power of the Papacy was coming to an end. With the press acquiring greater freedom, liberal ideas were being propounded everywhere; political manifestations were the order of the day.

2. DON BOSCO'S RESPONSE

It might appear at first sight that Don Bosco shied away from the socio-political scene. But, on closer observation one will see that he did not want to get his fledgling Oratory enmeshed in party politics.

In 1848 Marquis Roberto d' Azeglio called on Don Bosco to press him to participate with his boys and the other schools of Turin in a mammoth parade in Piazza Vittorio Emanuele to force the King to grant the Constitution. The marquis was on friendly terms with Don Bosco, whom he had often met in some of the patrician homes of the city, and he was sure that his invitation would be accepted. Don Bosco instead replied, " Marquis, this Oratory is not an officially recognized institution. It is nothing more than a family living on the charity of the people. Were we to take part in such celebrations we would only make ourselves ridiculous."

"Not at all," the marquis rejoined. "Let everybody know that this budding undertaking of yours is not hostile to the new institutions. This will greatly help you and channel more donations to you. The municipal authorities and I will be generous to you."

"I am grateful for your goodwill," Don Bosco replied, "but I firmly intend to keep on assisting these poor boys morally by teaching them and finding them jobs, but I will not fill their heads with ideas they cannot understand. By sheltering abandoned children and striving to restore them to their families and to society as good sons and well educated citizens, I prove clearly that my work, far from being hostile to modern institutions, agrees with them and helps them."

"I understand all that," insisted d' Azeglio, " but you're making the wrong decision. If you keep up this course of action, you will be deserted, and your work will collapse. My dear Don Bosco, one must be interested in the world, become acquainted with it, and update both old and new institutions."

"Thank you for your advice, dear marquis," said Don Bosco. "I shall certainly put it to good use, but you will kindly forgive me if I do not attend the coming celebration with my boys. Ask me to help out in some project where a priest can exercise his ministry, and you will find me ready to sacrifice myself and all I have. But I don't want to bewilder my boys by having them attend demonstrations whose true import is quite beyond them. Besides, marquis, in my present circumstances, I have made up my mind to keep aloof from anything that smacks of politics. Never for, never against."

*

Don Bosco sincerely loved his country. But because of his relationship and especially his frequent conversations with the archbishop, he saw what others missed: how armies, in the name of patriotism, were being aligned against the Church. So, important reasons inspired his reserve. Besides, it seemed to him that he had enough on his hands to gather abandoned youths and make good citizens out of them.

During his life Don Bosco was deeply concerned with political matters, but not with party politics: "I will never belong to a political party," he said. In his dealings with public officials (as well as with bishops and cardinals), he was a skillful politician. But when he had to deal with politicians, his interests were statesmanship, specifically the politics of Church and State, and social justice, specifically the care of abandoned youth. He entered the political arena of Church and State only when both sides pressed him and the good of souls required it.

Don Bosco revealed his patriotism not in flag-waving but in practice: in his willingness to mediate between the Vatican and the Italian government despite the difficulties involved and the misunderstandings risked; in his ability to distinguish the proper roles of the Church and the State, and remain at the service of both; in his never-failing respect for the King and government ministers; in his insistence that his work performed a public good as well as a religious one, that he was forming good citizens of Italy as well as good Christians; in the love for Italy's history, language, and culture, that he showed through his study, textbooks, classroom practice, and educational outings.

*

At a conference he gave at Casale Monferrato on Nov. 17, 1881, Don Bosco spoke about how his work "reaches out to domestic and civil society, because these boys, if sent to a workshop, in time will learn a trade, will be able to provide an honourable wage for their family, and through their skills and activity they will be able to be of great help to the social setup; if on the other hand, they study science or literature, they will be useful to society with their intelligent activity, in this or that civil employment. And then, all of them: having been not only instructed, but, what matters most, also wisely educated, will always be a guarantee of morality and good order among the people. They will be honest citizens and they will give no trouble to either political authority or to justice."

*

In May 1849 the Turin newspaper, *L'Armonia*, wrote that as a result of the education imparted at the Oratory to boys and young men of the poorer classes, "useful and upright members have been given to society, instead of burdening it with people who follow evil ways and give little hope for the future."

The article concluded, saying: "It would be a good thing if those who call themselves democrats were to visit this place where Christian charity labours unceasingly for social reform. It would do them good to see the work of these priests who, rejecting life's more attractive blandishments, sacrifice themselves to train better citizens for society. Let these democrats learn that not idle talk, but action is needed. Let them also learn a useful lesson by seeing the patience and hard work required of those who undertake the mission of educating people."

*

In a letter he wrote to a certain Dr. Carranza in 1877, Don Bosco narrated how he became convinced "that the only way to assure the future of society was by taking care of deprived children ... Boys who might have swelled the prison population and become the scourges of society, can be turned into good Christians, honest citizens and become a credit to both their country and their family, earning their living industriously by honest work."

And so, by carrying out his socio-pastoral activity, viz. by forming good Christians and honest citizens for the regeneration of society - which latter finality could in a broad sense be termed political - Don Bosco was able to present his work in a way that would be accepted by the liberals in power. However, in actual fact it was far removed from the model of society propounded by them; the inspirational ideal of Don Bosco's work always remained the utopia of a Christian society.

*

For Don Bosco the oratorian task was synthesized in the forming of "good Christians and honest citizens". Both these aspects either stood or fell together, because the Catholic youngsters had also to be upright men, furnished with those civic virtues of honesty, responsibility, hard work, and respect towards established authority that represented a guarantee of healthy living with others.

ACTIVITY

In the light of the episodes you have just read, please write down what you consider to be the elements of Don Bosco's response to his situation:

CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Here is a summary of the needs and challenges Don Bosco faced in his own day and of how he responded to them.

DON BOSCO'S SITUATION THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES	DON BOSCO'S RESPONSE
<p>A. The socio-economic scene:</p> <p>A transition from an agricultural to an industrial society with all the accompanying problems of poverty, exploitation, lack of accommodation, etc.</p>	<p>Don Bosco chose to work among boys who were poor and abandoned; he offered them shelter, or better, a home where they could stay and found them a job</p>
<p>B. The educational scene:</p> <p>Illiteracy; poorly educated masses</p>	<p>Don Bosco made every effort to provide his boys with a good integral education through evening classes, night schools, academic schools, and workshops in various trades</p>
<p>C. The religious scene:</p> <p>A general weakening of the faith as a result of the disintegration of families and emigration, the separation of Church and State, and the rise of anti-clericalism</p>	<p>To build up the faith of his young people Don Bosco imparted religious instruction to them, encouraged them to receive the sacraments of confession and communion frequently, fostered a filial devotion to Our Lady, and directed them oil the path to holiness.</p>
<p>D. D. The political scene:</p> <p>A transition from absolute monarchy to democracy The unification of Italy. The dislodgement of the Church from the mainstream of society</p>	<p>Don Bosco prepared his boys to take their place in society as upright and useful citizens</p>

This fourfold response of Don Bosco to the needs of his times found expression in the various initiatives he embarked upon: The Oratory, the school, the workshop, publications, a Marian shrine, etc.

Following in Don Bosco's footsteps, we too are similarly called to respond to the needs and challenges of our situation today.

Working as a group, reflect on the following two questions and enter your answers in the columns given below:

- 1. What are the principal needs and challenges of the situation in which you work with your young people?
- 2. What could you do to respond better to these needs and challenges?

OUR SITUATION: ITS NEEDS AND CHALLENGES	OUR RESPONSE
A. The socio-economic scene:	
B. The educational scene:	
C. The religious scene:	
D. The political scene:	



SESSION 3

THE SALESIAN FAMILY

THE SALESIAN FAMILY

"Let us be united in our common aim, and in using the same means to achieve it . . . Let us be united in a single family by the bonds of fraternal charity which will stimulate us to help and support one another in our work for others" (Don Bosco).

OBJECTIVE

To give our lay collaborators a sense of pride in belonging to the worldwide movement of the Salesian Family.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A copy of the Hand-out, " A Quiz on the Salesian Family" (pp. 9 - 10), for every participant.

A score-sheet prepared on a large sheet of paper or on a blackboard in the following manner: the horizontal and vertical columns must be drawn intersecting each other (see diagram given below) so that the number of horizontal columns is 12 (corresponding to the number of statements in the quiz); and the number of vertical columns corresponds to the number of participants in the quiz.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															

INTRODUCTION

The leader announces that the session will be devoted to explaining what the Salesian Family is and how lay collaborators relate to it.

ACTIVITY (20 minutes)

- A. *A copy of "A Quiz on the Salesian Family" is distributed to each participant. Each one has to complete every one of the 12 statements of the quiz by placing a mark against one of the three answers that he/she considers to be correct.*

In case some participants have never heard of the Salesian Family before, they can answer the quiz all the same by guessing what the answers might be.

When everyone has finished, the leader takes up the 12 items, one by one, and gives the correct answer each time.

The correct answers are:

- | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 – a | 2 – C | 3 – C | 4 – A |
| 5 – C | 6 – A | 7 – C | 8 – A |
| 9 – C | 10 – B | 11 – A | 12 – C |

The results are entered on the score-sheet, item by item. After the answer to the first item has been given, the leader ascertains by a show of hands the number of those who have answered correctly. He then colours a corresponding number of squares in the first horizontal column, starting from the left-hand margin.

He proceeds to the next item, follows the same procedure and enters the result in the second horizontal column. He continues in this manner till the whole score-sheet has been filled.

By the end of the exercise there will emerge an idea of the level of information the participants as a group possess about the Salesian Family. Meanwhile, individual participants too will have assessed their level of knowledge from their own answers to the quiz.

In the light of the answers, the leader proceeds to describe to the participants the Key concepts of the reality of the Salesian Family.

- B. Alternatively, the leader introduces the topic of the Salesian Family by showing slides of the different groups of the Family at work in various countries of the world (15 - 20 minutes). He then proceeds to describe the Key concepts of the reality of the Salesian Family*

KEY CONCEPTS

[Note to the leader: It might help to clarify that the word "movement" is here taken in the sense of a free coming together of persons and groups around a common Centre of interest (e.g. sharing common Salesian values) and having a minimum of structures (no rules, enrolment or commitment by vow or promise).]

1. DON BOSCO AND HIS CO-WORKERS

Already in his time Don Bosco recognized the vastness and the complexity of his work for the young and the consequent need for as many people as possible to join hands with him in the unity of a "family".

Among those who worked with him were people who, responding to a call from God, chose to remain: permanently at the Oratory, to live a common life with him and to put themselves under his command. There were others instead who, drawn more to the life of other Christians, lived in their own homes each committing himself, according to his state and opportunity, to an apostolic life which in some way reflected, completed and enriched that lived by the former group. All of them committed themselves for service on behalf of youth "in the Salesian way". The form their work took was not identical, but it varied according to the actual situation of each one and the real needs of youth in a particular place and at a given moment.

2. THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Within this movement of persons who worked with him for the salvation of the young, Don Bosco brought into being the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and the Association of Salesian Cooperators. Other groups were added later. And so, with the passage of time there grew up a vast movement of persons about Don Bosco in what we today can call the "Salesian Family".

The word "family" indicates the reality of interpersonal relationships, and a certain style in keeping with them, among those who possess the "Salesian spirit", which is precisely a "family spirit". It is a worldwide movement, made up of various groups of people, not all of them homogeneous, and having different kinds of organization, but all of them attracted by the figure of Don Bosco and united with him in some way.

3. THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY

There are five things that characterize the persons who belong to the Salesian Family. They feel "CALLED" to dedicate themselves to Don Bosco's MISSION, which is the service of the young, and especially the poor; many of them do this by joining hands with Don Bosco's spiritual sons and daughters. What inspires them to take this step is the PASTORAL LOVE they have in their hearts, viz. a love for God and for the young. Their STYLE of functioning is that of the Good Shepherd, who wins hearts by gentleness (hence their "Salesian" name, derived from St. Francis de Sales, the saint of gentleness) and self-giving ("The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep"). Finally, their concern is always to work together in UNITY, as part of a closely-knit team: this they also manifest in their reference to the Founder of the Family, and to his successors as the centre of unity.

4. A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

People from all walks in life belong to this Family today. According to the degree in which the five elements are present, one can speak of several levels of belonging to the Family, much like concentric circles around a central common nucleus. And so, the Salesian Family is made up of:

- Religious priests and brothers: The Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB);
- Religious women: The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), and several other Congregations of women in different parts of the world, generally founded by Salesians, like the Sisters of Mary Immaculate (Krishnagar, India), Daughters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Colombia), Sisters of Charity of Miyazaki (Japan), etc.;
- lay persons, both single and married, such as, for instance, those belonging to the Salesian Cooperators, the Archconfraternity of Mary Help of Christians, the *Damas Salesianas* of Venezuela, etc.;
- lay consecrated persons, like the Don Bosco Volunteers;
- the hundreds of thousands of past-pupils of Salesian institutions around the globe;
- the numerous benefactors, friends and admirers of Don Bosco, who associate themselves in some manner with the work of Don Bosco;
- and the many lay collaborators - like yourselves - who work together with the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in the variety of works they have in every corner of the globe.

DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

At this juncture, the participants are given some time:

to ask questions,
to clarify points,
to seek more information

Then, when the leader sees that the participants have attained a good grasp of the meaning of the Salesian Family, he breaks up the assembly into groups of five to seven participants each and gives them the following questions for sharing and discussion.

1. What would you see as the **advantages** to you personally of your being a part of the worldwide Salesian Family?
2. Does the thought of belonging to the Salesian Family give rise to any **apprehensions** or fears in your mind?
3. What do you think would be the **implications** for you personally to belong to the Salesian Family?

At the end of the discussion, the leader reassembles the groups and asks for a brief report from each of them. This gives him the opportunity to clarify further whatever point may remain unclear or to allay any fears that might have surfaced (e.g. the fear of having to take part in too many meetings or having to take on additional work . . .)

WRAP-UP

To end the session, the leader tries to get the participants to feel a sense of joy and pride in being part of the worldwide Salesian Family. If he is a Salesian, he may, for instance, speak of his own experience of belonging to a worldwide Salesian Congregation: he could tell his audience what it means to him; he should make sure to insist on the aspect of "family", on the feelings of community and brotherhood, and on mutual help and support.

EVALUATION

The leader asks the participants to evaluate the session, making use of one of the samples provided in this manual.

CONCLUSION

The session ends with a hymn or a prayer, preferably addressed to Don Bosco.

REFERENCES

The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco. A Guide to the Salesian Constitutions, Rome 1986, pp. 119 - 128.

E. Vigano, "The Salesian Family", in: AGC 304, Apr. - Jun. 1982, pp. 3 - 48.

"The wealth of a spiritual Family that flows from the unifying force of the Founder's charism is immense: it extends to such proportions that it is not possible for each member to live all its elements to the full. All can implement them up to a point, but each concentrates on certain specific elements for his own sanctification and the service of others. When all the members join forces the Family is able to live to the full every one of its values. Thus it is that in our Salesian Family we are able to share a veritable wealth of values, enhearten one another, and benefit from the example of others; and each becomes staunch and enthusiastic in his vocation" (Fr. Vigano).

A QUIZ ON THE SALESIAN FAMILY

Please complete each of the following statements. Choose the best answer from the ones given and place a check in the box in front of it.

1. The Salesian Family
 - a. is a movement.
 - b. is an association.
 - c. is an organization.

2. The Salesian Family
 - a. has a set of Rules approved by Rome.
 - b. has a set of Rules but it is not approved by Rome.
 - c. does not have a set of Rules.

3. The Salesian Family denotes
 - a. the three groups founded by Don Bosco: The Salesian Congregation (SDB), the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) and the Salesian Cooperators.
 - b. the Salesian Congregation (SDB) and its collaborators.
 - c. all those who in one way or another are associated with Don Bosco and his work.

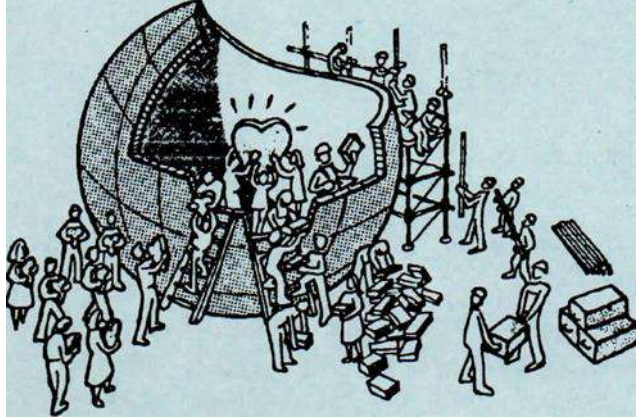
4. The Salesian Family
 - a. was founded by Don Bosco.
 - b. was founded by one of the Successors of Don Bosco.
 - c. was founded by the Salesians of Don Bosco.

5. When Don Bosco ran the Oratory at Turin,
 - a. he worked alone.
 - b. the Salesians were his only helpers.
 - c. he had a team of priests and lay persons to work with him.

6. The Salesian Family
 - a. is a worldwide reality.
 - b. is a reality existing only at the national or provincial level.
 - c. is a reality existing only at the level of the Salesian institution in every part of the world.

7. One becomes a member of the Salesian Family by
 - a. enrolment.
 - b. committing oneself through a vow or a promise.
 - c. sharing common Salesian ideals.

-
8. By reason of belonging to the Salesian Family members
- a. are interested in the young and the poor.
 - b. are interested in any category of persons who may be in need.
 - c. need not be interested in any particular category of persons.
9. Those who belong to the Salesian Family
- a. do not need to have a spirituality.
 - b. have a spirituality of their own.
 - c. have a common spirituality.
10. As a bond of union among the members of the Salesian Family, Don Bosco established
- a. "The Companion of Youth".
 - b. "The Salesian Bulletin".
 - c. "The Catholic Readings".
11. The role of the Salesians in the Salesian Family is one of
- a. animation.
 - b. organization.
 - c. direction.
12. The centre of unity of the Salesian Family
- a. lies in no one in particular.
 - b. is the Provincial.
 - c. is the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation (SDB).

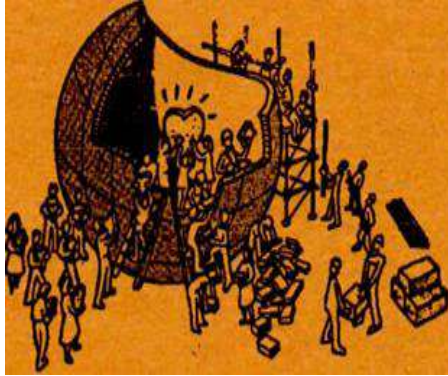


THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

One day, the flowers found themselves surrounded by strange creeping things. "Weeds!" they cried. "Why doesn't the gardener come and pull them up?" "It is so unfair. look at the sun. He shines on them the same as he does on us. And the rain is no better." The flowers were getting gloomier by the hour.

Hardy the Flower knew something had to be done. He called all the flowers to attention; everyone wanted to talk at once. And no one, worthwhile suggestion; only fears and misgivings. Suddenly, Hardy got an idea. He shouted: "Is there anyone here who would rather be a weed than a flower? If so, let him raise a petal." A great silence followed. Not a single petal was raised. Encouraged, Hardy continued. "One thing is clear. We are all glad to be flowers. let us then firmly resolve to always act like flower., . There is one way and one way only that we can beat the weeds. Every single one of us must do his utmost to grow to his full potential. We must close ranks. We must stick together. The stronger ones must support the weaker ones. In this way we will smother the weeds and so outgrow them."

Salesian youth ministry has as its chief agent the educative and pastoral community, the group of people to whom the mission to the young is entrusted. Section 3 will help our lay collaborators to discover that this work cannot be done alone, that the young need to grow in an atmosphere of love and unity, and that only by everyone living and working together as a community will the youth ministry be effective.



SESSION 1

THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

"The setting up of the educative and pastoral community means that all the members are directly involved and are made to share responsibility for the educational experience and Christian formation" (GC 23 # 232).

OBJECTIVES

1. To clarify the concept of the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC).
2. To describe the kind of shared responsibility the members are being invited to in the drawing up and carrying out of the local pastoral plan.
3. To invite the members to help make the EPC a fuller reality by attending to personal relationships, by developing their sense of belonging, and by committing themselves to ongoing formation. *(The last part of this third objective, regarding formation, may be omitted if time is short; cf "Key concepts".)*

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of the two Hand-outs for each participant:

Hand-out 1: "Please Pass the Potatoes" (pp. 11 - 12). Hand-out 2: The EPC: A Synthesis (pp. 13 - 14).

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, noting that the group of people present are the ones (or at least some of the ones) who carry on the youth ministry in the local Salesian work. As such, it is a very important group of people.

The day's session is meant to clarify what kind of group or community it is called to be.

The introduction should lead into the opening activity.

ACTIVITY (25 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To highlight some common problems that can affect a community like the EPC, by seeing how those same problems are played out in a family situation.

PROCEDURE:

Copies of Hand-out 1 are passed out to all participants. They are asked to break into smaller groups where they can read the story, "Please Pass the Potatoes," and then together identify the problems they see evidenced in the behaviours of the family members.

(An alternate method would be to have some readers take parts and read the story, "Please Pass the Potatoes," aloud for everyone. The discussion could then take place in the large group. This procedure might also take less time.)

DRAWING OUT:

The leader might allow 15 minutes for work in the small group. Then he should invite the groups to report briefly on their discussions. The groups will probably note many behavioral problems in the family, but at least the following should be mentioned:

- decisions affecting the whole family are made by only one person, without due input by the others;
- members are not genuinely encouraged to speak their minds;
- criticism is not well accepted, and sometimes not tactfully given;
- there is low-level participation by some members in discussion, even when it is invited;
- there is only minimal ownership and enthusiasm for the decision within the group as a whole.

The leader should apply these lessons to the situation of the local EPC:

- decision-making ought to be participative;
- members should be encouraged to speak their minds;
- criticism needs to be both constructively offered and appropriately listened to;
- attitudes of shared responsibility and active participation will lead to a broader sense of ownership of the community's mission.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. ORIENTATION

- a. Link up with the last session on the worldwide Salesian Family: just as there is a vast movement of people at the worldwide level who carry on the Salesian mission in various ways, here too at the local level there are many people who are carrying on the same Salesian mission, although in various ways.
- b. The group activity just completed highlights problems in a family's life and communication, problems which affect the ability of the members to own and be enthusiastic about their joint activity - in this case, going on vacation.
- c. This session wants to examine the kind of team spirit and family atmosphere Salesians hope to build up along with those people who work most closely with them.
- d. In every Salesian work - school, parish, youth centre, summer camp or whatever - the group of people who together carry on the mission to the young is referred to as "the educative and pastoral community".

2. A COMMUNITY

- a. Identify the various groups and individuals who, consciously or unconsciously, are educating, influencing, and shaping the youth served in this Salesian work: religious, administrators, teachers, catechists, secretaries, other professionals, support staff, coaches, club moderators, parents, young people themselves, etc.
- b. Don Bosco's aim is that all these people should be drawn into a genuine community, a family characterized by mutual respect, a climate of affirmation, support, familiarity, a deeply felt sense of belonging, etc. The common link among them all is the shared desire to do good to the young.

- c. Salesians want all these individuals to feel entrusted with the overall mission of fully educating and evangelizing the young people. Each one is not only responsible for his or her specific activity, but has an investment in, a voice in, and a concern for the total project.
- d. There are several good reasons for thinking this way:
 - (1) Education is social, by nature; many people are required to help youth discover themselves and their world, to prepare them for a successful step into adulthood;
 - (2) Evangelization is also a communal task; faith comes to the individual from the believing community;
 - (3) The Church is a community at heart; anything truly Christian is interactive and relational; and
 - (4) Don Bosco; his example and teaching insist on an education that is carried on by a community of competent persons, bound by a familial concern for one another.

3. AN EDUCATIVE COMMUNITY

- a. What brings the EPC together is the service they render the young, their desire to provide all they can so that the young have the best hope of living a full and satisfying life as human beings and good Christians. This is the ultimate goal of all education: in all things the EPC wants to be educative.
- b. As responsible educators, the community begins with young people just as they are. It takes time to know them, to know their reality, their needs, hopes, fears, ambitions, and to know well the culture within which they live and move.
- c. The members of the EPC then need also to assess their own resources: in the light of the needs of the young, what can this community offer them? How can this community better equip itself and best use the resources at its disposal for the good of its young people?
- d. To be an educative community of this kind obviously requires careful planning: planning to understand the young, and planning to meet their needs in the most effective, efficient and responsible way possible.

4. A PASTORAL COMMUNITY

- a. The Salesian mission goes beyond the realm of human formation, learning and culture. It also aims to educate to the faith, to introduce youth to the person of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, and to deepen already formed relationships with Him. In this sense, the community is a pastoral one.
- b. The EPC has a pastoral concern in another sense. It not only wants to evangelize young people; it wants also to be an environment which is in fact evangelized. It intends to live as a community of faith, where the values of the gospel are being lived, however imperfectly.
- c. This requires an interior commitment by the members of the EPC. It does not exist simply because a group of people do the same work in the same place. It requires each of the members to want the whole reality and to

work for it. It calls for reflection on the quality of the life of the members together, on the influence of Jesus Christ in their midst, on the helps and hindrances the young people experience on the journey of faith.

- d. The plan will need revision. As the situations confronting the young undergo change, the plan too will have to change. As some goals are met, others will have to be articulated. As some action steps fail, alternatives will have to be tried.
- e. The key thing to keep in mind is that every member of the EPC needs to own and share a sense of responsibility for the whole mission of educating and evangelizing its young people. While each member works in one area, he or she can certainly observe, have insights, have a concern for the success and needs of other areas. The members of the EPC need to be open in both giving and receiving input from each other in the ongoing development of the educative and pastoral plan.
- f. And finally, each one needs to take the plan to heart and let it give shape to his or her work.

5. A COMMUNITY IN ONGOING FORMATION

(The following section could be omitted here if the time is not sufficient, as it is touched on at other times in the general programme of formation.)

- a. This ideal of the EPC is exciting but also challenging. It requires an inner commitment on the part of each one to come alive. One way this commitment manifests itself is in the effort and time the members give to their own ongoing formation.
- b. Professional formation: whatever the members' spheres of responsibility are, they will want to be the best they can be, for the sake of the young served. The members need to keep abreast of new information, ideas, technologies and techniques.
- c. Christian formation: for the members to be living witnesses of a community of faith for their youth, they need to be growing in their own relationship with God, from whatever faith stance they find themselves to be in. Both as individuals and as a community, the members need to let their lives be enlightened by God's Word and they need to take responsibility for the life of the Spirit within them.
- d. Salesian formation: for the members to offer young people the unique gift God gave the world through Don Bosco, they must expand their grasp of the educative service he sought to render youth, and they need to finely hone his charismatic style.
- e. This kind of ongoing formation is what our entire programme is all about!

DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

The leader invites the assembly to break into smaller groups and to discuss the following two questions:

1. *In what ways is the EPC, as described here, already alive and well in this work?*
2. *In what ways is the EPC, as described here, in need of attention and development?*

The leader asks each group to have one member prepared to report to the larger assembly

WRAP-UP

The leader invites each group to report on its discussion, giving a very brief (1 minute) summary of its responses to the two questions.

At the end, the leader should pull together the various responses, noting especially points that come up repeatedly.

Finally, the leader needs to help the group see some practical applications of the day's topic. These may come up in some of the group reports. If no he should be prepared to mention some simple, practical ways in which the group can function more authentically as an educative and pastoral community.

EVALUATION

The leader asks the participants to evaluate the session by using one of the evaluation sheets in this manual.

He then invites all to form small groups by just turning to one another, and to share a personal assessment of the day by completing the following statement:

"Today I learned that I can build up the educative and pastoral community in our · work here by ...

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes with a prayer, song, poem, or whatever seems appropriate.

REFERENCES

C47.

R 5.

GC 23 # 110 - 111, 232 - 238.

Salesian Youth Pastoral Work, Manila 1990, pp. 47, 55 - 65.

PLEASE PASS THE POTATOES!

Iris and Carlos Cuevas were not looking forward to dinner. The food was no problem; Mom was a great cook. Dad was the problem. Dad and his vacation plans.

"Hi, kids!" called Maria Cuevas as she lifted a roast pork out of the oven.

"Hi, Mom," they answered.

Iris and Carlos both stood there, not saying anything.

"Hey, what's wrong?" asked their mother.

"Where's Dad?" asked Carlos.

"Oh ... He's inside at the table already. He's looking forward to seeing you. And Carlos," she called as her son moved towards the dining room, "please, no fights."

"Yeah, sure, Mom."

"Eh, Carlitos! It's about time you came home. And you Iris, what are you doing now? Living all day on the street corner?"

"No, Dad," said Iris as she bent to kiss her father.

"So, I have great news!" said Carlos senior, beaming with pride and waiting for his children to eagerly ask, "What, Dad?" But as neither of them showed any interest, he began to lose his smile.

"Please pass the potatoes," said Carlos without looking at his father. Carlos senior just looked at his son, so Iris passed the potatoes.

"What, you're not interested in the family vacation?" he asked.

"No, to be honest, Dad. I'm not interested."

Iris nearly choked on her salad. She was sure her brother's blunt response would set her father off. She tried to intervene.

"Where are we going, Dad?"

It took a moment for Carlos senior to respond. His eyes were trying to bore a hole into his son across the table from him, but without success. "We're going to Florida to see Grandma."

Maria came in with the pork. She stopped and, sizing up the situation, asked, "What's wrong now?"

"Your son is too good to travel with his family. Your son is not interested in his grandmother. Your son is getting too big and proud and smart for his own good! That's what's wrong!" Carlos' voice grew louder and angrier as his litany went on.

"That's not true!" shot back Carlos. "It's just that you always decide all by yourself where we should go, and then expect us to get all excited about it. I like Grandma, but I hate where she lives. It's nowhere. And we went there last year for vacation, too. Why can't we all decide where we go for vacation? Will someone please answer me that?"

Mr. Cuevas stared in disbelief, nodding his head, fuming at the ears. "You are really something, son! Your sister is happy to go to Florida, aren't you, Iris?"

Iris was dreading this. She wished he had just left her out of it. Caught between her father and the truth, she played with the tomato on her plate.

"Iris! I asked you a question. You are happy to go to Florida, aren't you?"

It was time for Mom to step in. "Hey, look, everybody. Let's not spoil our dinner, OK? We can eat now and talk later." Then, turning to her husband, she said: "I'm sure the kids will be happy with whatever you plan for us. They just need some time."

Carlos mumbled something.

"What was that?" demanded his father.

"I said I WON'T be happy going to Florida, OK?"

Carlos' father slammed his fork onto the table. He was pulling off his napkin. Lips curled around his teeth. He looked at Iris, nodding his head. Not saying anything, just nodding. Finally, he asked her: "And you, Iris, you agree with your brother?"

"Well ..."

"Answer me straight, Iris! You don't want to go to Florida either, isn't it?"

Iris knew it was hopeless. She'd have to answer. And she'd have to answer the truth, because she could never say she did want to go to Florida with any conviction. "No, Dad, I don't want to go ..."

Mom broke in at once. "Now kids, this is not right. You're showing no respect for your father. He works hard: he plans a nice vacation for you, and all you are is ungrateful!" Maria looked warily at her husband.

Dad stormed out of the dining room.

"This stinks!" Carlos slammed his own fork down and removed his napkin. "I'm 16 years old, for crying out loud. Do I have to be hauled around on vacation with my parents every year and never have any say about where we go?"

Iris turned to her brother. "Carlos, be fair. Last week Dad wanted to toss around a few ideas about where we should go and

you didn't have any time for it. You wanted to go out with your friends."

"It wouldn't have made any difference. He always does just what he wants."

"Maybe so," said their mother, "but you often show little interest in planning family things, and then you complain about them when they don't go your way." _

"What do you think, Mom?" asked Iris.

Maria began spooning out, helping herself to the roast and did not look at her daughter as she answered. "I think Florida is a wonderful idea. I can't imagine anyone not having a good time there."

Carlos sighed, put down his napkin and went outside.

Iris wanted to run and cry. But she stayed at the table. "Please pass the potatoes ... "

THE EDUCATIVE AND PASTORAL COMMUNITY

SYNTHESIS

THE SALESIAN MISSION

We want to educate and evangelize our young people according to a plan for the total well-being of the human person directed to Christ, the perfect Man. Faithful to the intentions and style of Don Bosco, our purpose is to form "upright citizens and good Christians" (cf. C 31).

WHO CARRIES ON THIS MISSION?

We bring about in our works the educative and pastoral community, which involves young people and adults, parents and educators, in a family atmosphere, so that it can give the fullest education possible to our young people, and become a living experience of Church (cf. C 47).

AN EDUCATIVE COMMUNITY

As educators, we work together with our young people to bring all their talents and aptitudes to full maturity. We begin with them as they are, making ourselves aware of their needs and their environment. We help them to be open to truth and to develop in themselves a responsible freedom. We commit ourselves to inculcating in them an appreciation for true values which will lead them to a life of healthy relationships and responsible service (cf. C 32).

A PASTORAL COMMUNITY

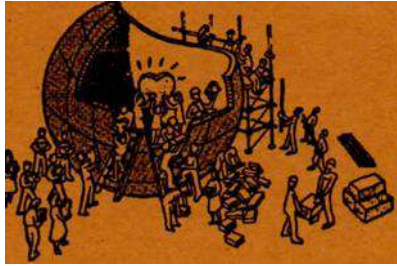
Like Don Bosco, we are all called to be educators to the faith in every activity, at every opportunity. We walk side by side with the young so as to lead them to the Risen Lord. We choose to plan our life together in such a way that it becomes a lived experience of Church (cf. C 34, 47).

A PLANNING COMMUNITY

In each of our works, the educative and pastoral community, animated by the local Salesian community, draws up a plan for the purpose of directing all initiatives to the dual tasks of education and evangelization. This plan requires the involvement of all the members of the local EPC (cf. R 4, 5).

A COMMUNITY IN ONGOING FORMATION

For it to succeed, the EPC, both its religious and lay members, needs to be committed to its ongoing formation as professionals, as Christians, and as Salesians (cf. GC 23 # 232, 233).



SESSION 2

COMMUNITY BUILDING

COMMUNITY BUILDING

"You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus Himself is the cornerstone. Every structure knit together in Him grows into a holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in Him, are being built up into a dwelling-place of God" (Ep 2, 20 - 21).

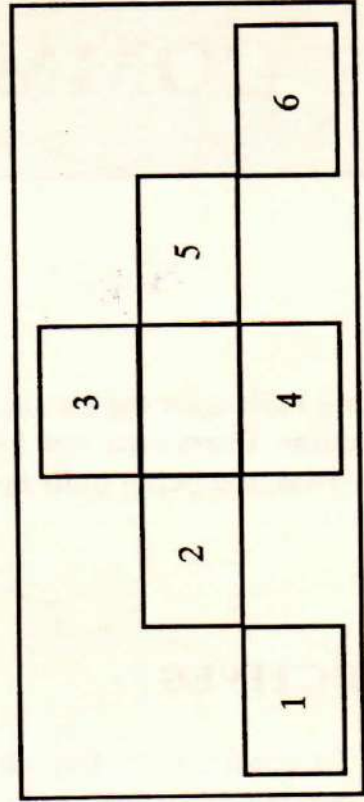
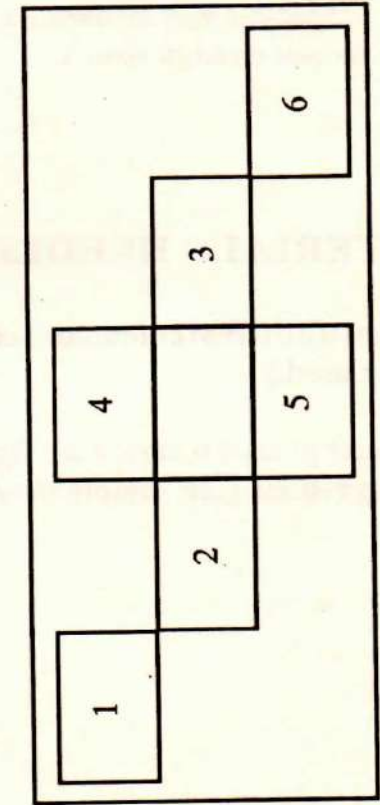
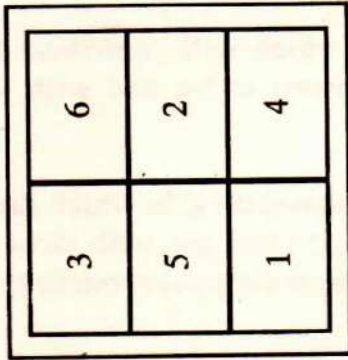
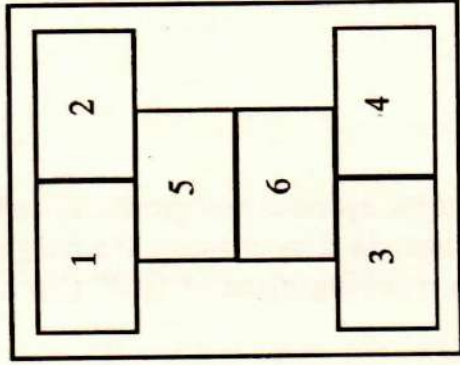
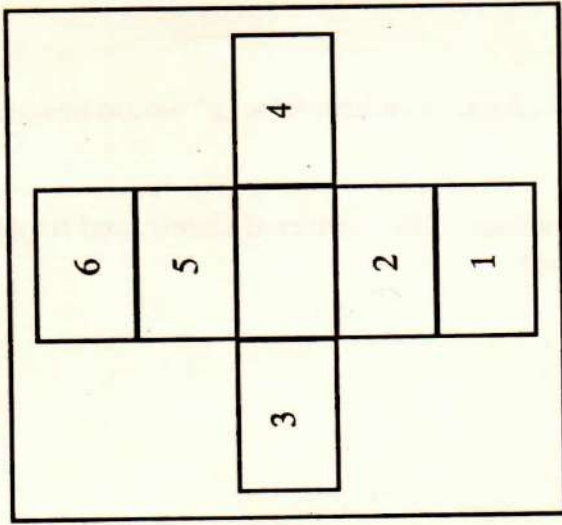
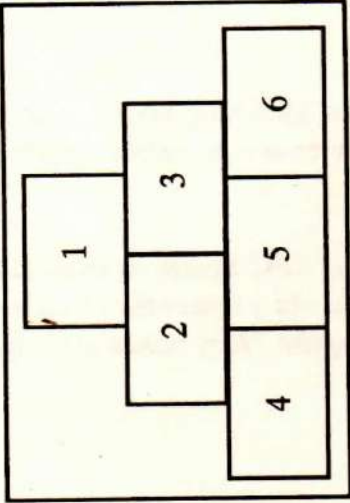
OBJECTIVES

1. To consider six key elements which will contribute to the building up of a dynamic community, such as the EPC wants to be, and with which every member needs to be concerned.
2. To look at two other broader communities, in which the local EPC needs to function as a member, keeping itself concerned there too with those same six elements. *(This second objective may be omitted, along with the corresponding part of the "Key concepts", if there is not enough time.)*

MATERIALS NEEDED

6 sets of 6 different coloured sheets. (Approximately 8" x 12" would be ideal, though smaller sheets can be used.)

A master plan of 6 varied configurations of the coloured sheets, and 6 varied placements of these configurations (see sample overleaf).



A large blank wall space, divided into 6 spaces, following the same arrangement as the spacing on the master plan; the size of the paper sheets used will determine the overall size of the wall space required.

Adhesive tape.

6 sets of 3 different coloured sheets for use in the evaluation exercise.

Copies for participants of the Hand-out, "Six Key Ingredients for a Healthy Educative Community" (p. 11). Alternatively, the Hand-out could be converted into a transparency for overhead projection or into a large poster.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, noting that the dynamics of healthy community life are not static but fluid; they shift in importance and in relationship to each other as the circumstances of the community's life change. He leads into the opening activity.

ACTIVITY: "PUTTING IT TOGETHER" (30 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To conduct an icebreaker which involves people taking 6 constant elements (in this case, coloured sheets) and rearranging them according to shifting configurations; to graphically illustrate in this way how 6 elements essential to healthy community life and work need to be differently arranged, focused and emphasized as the shifting needs and circumstances of the community's life require.

PROCEDURE:

- 1. The large group is divided into 6 smaller groups, each with anywhere from two to seven members.*
- 2. Each group is given a number, between 1 and 6, to identify it.*
- 3. Each group selects a captain.*
- 4. Each group is given a set of 6 envelopes for each of the 6 rounds of the game to be played. Accordingly, the envelopes must remain in proper sequence and be marked on the outside: "First round", "Second round", etc. A sheet is placed ahead of time in each envelope according to the master plan, so that, in every round, 6 different coloured sheets will be brought up to the wall.*
- 5. Within each group, the envelopes (of each set of 6) are distributed as evenly as possible among the members. The captain gets no envelope.*
- 6. When the signal is given, the captains go to the leader, who shows them a configuration made up of 6 coloured sheets. These sheets are numbered, and these numbers refer to the groups. Thus, for example, the captain of group 4 will be looking to see the placement of coloured sheet number 4 in the configuration.*

7. *At the same time, the leader will also show the captains where the particular configuration is meant to go on the wall space, in relation to the five other configurations yet to be revealed. Only one configuration per round is shown.*
8. *Captains must do the following:*
 - a) *memorize the configuration;*
 - b) *note where their groups' sheets fit into the configuration;*
 - c) *note the placement of that configuration on the wall space.*
9. *Captains may take as long as they wish to look at the configuration and its placemen but once they leave the leader they may not return during that round.*
10. *Captains then return to their groups and do the following:*
 - a) *instruct the person with the envelope marked "First round" to open it;*
 - b) *describe to that person the configuration to be constructed, and where this group's sheet fits into it;*
 - c) *describe the placement of that configuration on the wall space.*
11. *The member holding the sheet runs to the wall, and with the players from the other groups, tries to properly arrange the configuration in the correct wall space.*
12. *The leader will allow only a limited time per round; the aim is to do this as quickly as possible. (Suggested time: 90 seconds per round; this may need adjustment up or down.)*
13. *At the end, the accuracy of each configuration will be checked. Either every- one wins or loses each round!*

DRAWING OUT:

The leader asks the group to analyze the tasks involved in the game, and to think of some lessons about community and communal action that could be drawn from it. Among the points he draws out might be the following:

- For every small group, everything depended upon the captain clearly articulating a vision of what the group was trying to build. Similarly, in the EPC, the leadership must clearly articulate the vision of what the community is trying to accomplish.
- Within each of the six configurations, it was important that each sheet be properly placed with respect to the other sheets. Similarly, the various elements in the life of the EPC must be in a proper relationship with each other.
- For the proper construction of each configuration, it was important that each of the players representing the different groups have the same understanding of the configuration as the others. Similarly, all members of the EPC have to be working from a shared vision. It is not enough for each one to work well; each has to be "in sync" with the others.
- For each small group, and for the group representatives working together at the wall, it was not enough to properly understand and construct their own configuration. It had to be properly placed with respect to the other five configurations. Similarly, the EPC does not live and work in a vacuum, but has to link up properly with other communities of which it forms a part.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. ORIENTATION

- a. Some time ago, we looked at the idea of the "Educative and Pastoral Community", the EPC. Today, we want to focus on what might help us build that kind of community among ourselves.
- b. The exercise we just did serves as a kind of simulation game for our purposes today. As was the case in that game, there are six key ingredients we could suggest for a lively, healthy, dynamic community such as we want to be. Each ingredient is important, although, as a "living community", the place each ingredient holds in our life and work together will shift according to needs and circumstances. It is important that we know these ingredients or elements, and be able to manoeuvre them together in an appropriate way.
- c. In addition, just as it was not enough to properly reconstruct the configurations, since each had to be correctly placed with respect to other configurations, the Salesian family recognizes that it is not enough for its members to have a good living and working relationship among themselves. In any given work, like our own, once we are in a dynamic relationship among ourselves, we need to be in a proper relationship with at least two other communities: the local civic/social reality of the neighbourhood, and the local Church community.

2. SIX KEY INGREDIENTS

(The leader then presents the following six points, making whatever comments and using whatever examples seem appropriate to him. Brief comments on each are offered here.)

- a. **Sharing with each other whatever we know and whatever we are doing in our youth work**
In the Salesian style of doing youth work, none of us wants to work in isolation and "go it alone." Both as a means of helping one another and of keeping good communication intact, we share both our knowledge and experience, and our plans of action. In this way, each one benefits from the others, and conflicts and cross purposes are avoided.
- b. **Exercising our competencies and our talents in a genuine spirit of service**
For us, it is not enough to be capable. We want to exercise our capabilities in a spirit of service of the entire educative community. We look on what we are doing ourselves as a service to the others, not merely as a means of self-expression. We allow that awareness to colour the way we act. This spirit of service ensures that, among ourselves, each can count on the others.
- c. **Recognizing and respecting differences of role, age, experience and ability**
We are a family, and in a family each member does not do and often cannot do exactly what the others do. All members are expected to respect and not overtake the responsibilities that belong to the others. All are asked to do what they CAN do, in the areas entrusted to them, and are not held to unfair standards. Therefore, we respect and value our different areas of competence and our diverse responsibilities. We try to respect the parts that age, previous experience, level of education completed, and so forth, play in determining what we do and how we do it.
- d. **Showing interest and concern for one another's activities**
In a Salesian family, the entire educative project is owned by all the members. The success of one is the success of all; the difficulties and failures of one are also shared by all. We take care to see to it that no one feels alone or unsupported, and that no one's work is made to look unimportant.

e. Building a lively family spirit

For us, it is not enough to work together. Following Don Bosco's example, we feel called to give serious attention to the kind of relationships that exist among us and that are seen by the young; to support each other in difficulty; to celebrate together in times of joy and success; to come together from time to time before the God who summons us to this work.

f. Committing ourselves to shared learning and growth

In a genuinely Salesian setting, it is not only the young who are on the journey of life and faith. We too are seeking the fullness of life and faith. We too recognize our need for new learnings and new growth. Therefore, we are open to learning from each other, and we strive together to outline areas where we can grow, as individuals and as a community.

Each-of us is convinced that at all times we all have much to give and much to receive.

3. RESPONSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN OTHER COMMUNITI

(If time is a problem, this part could be omitted.)

- a. For our purposes today, we cannot deal with these points at length, but they at least deserve mention.
- b. As a _____ (here, name the kind of work your group comprises: school, parish, youth centre, etc.), we are a significant and perhaps powerful component in the life of the local civic community and Church community (diocese).
- c. Just as amongst ourselves, we need to share our abilities and plans, balance our professional service with a spirit of service, respect our differences, support one another's work, build a lively family spirit, and commit ourselves to ongoing growth, we need to do the same in the context of these two other communities.
- d. Don Bosco saw himself as a participant in his own civic community. He kept abreast of its needs and reached out to help; he drew on its competencies and services when he could; he also spoke up when he saw its plans as detrimental to the welfare of his young people. We need to keep in mind that we do not live and work here in a vacuum; nor should we want to. Within the local civic community, people of goodwill are hard at work, and we ought to be seen as a support to them, as collaborators with them, in whatever ways we reasonably can.
- e. Don Bosco also saw himself as part of the particular Church (diocese). Even more, he saw himself as being at its service. We too are part of a larger reality, the Church of ... We need to see to it that we share our competencies and plans with the diocese, that we support its endeavours, that we maintain healthy relationships with it and its representatives, that we reach out to it when it is in need, and that we not be too proud to call on it in the face of our own needs.
- f. (Here, it would be appropriate for the leader to mention a few practical ways in which the local EPC can be mort; actively and responsibly involved with the local civic and ecclesial communities.)

DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

The leader invites the smaller groups to go into a discussion over the following questions:

1. Of the six ingredients of a dynamic community that were looked at, which one do you feel is our strong point?
2. Of those same six ingredients, which one do you think is the least developed, causing us the most stress?
3. As a group, try to come up with two action steps that would address that issue, one which every individual could do, and one which the local administration could look at. (These suggestions should be written out and handed in to the leader.)

The leader reminds each small group to have a reporter.

WRAP-UP

The leader invites each group to report. It will be sufficient to hear the group's assessment of the strong point, the weak point, and the two suggestions. He should mention that in the near future, a printed list of the suggestions each group made regarding individuals will be prepared and distributed. A list of the suggestions made regarding the local administration will also be prepared and given to the administrators.

EVALUATION

The small groups sit together for this evaluation: Each group is given three coloured sheets. One is designed to mean "Very helpful, very interesting!" A second is designed as "Just OK" The third sheet means "Not interesting, not helpful." The leader explains that four incomplete statements will be read aloud. After each is read, the small groups have a few moments to decide together which card to hold up. The leader then calls for the cards to be shown. This procedure is repeated for each of the four statements.

1. The opening activity for today's session was
2. The presentation on today's topic was
3. Our small group discussion today was
4. Overall, we rate today's formation session as

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes the session with a prayer, hymn, poem or whatever else seems appropriate.

<p>Alone I stood, together we walked; Alone I dreamed, together we built; Alone I feared, together we hoped; Alone I saw my past, together we see the future!</p>
--

SIX KEY INGREDIENTS FOR A HEALTHY EDUCATIVE COMMUNITY

SUMMARY

In a Salesian-style community working for the young, the following six ingredients will help keep us united, dynamic and on target:

- a. Sharing with each other whatever we know and whatever we are doing in our youth work.**

- b. Exercising our competencies and talents in a genuine spirit of service.**

- c. Recognizing and respecting differences of role, age, experience and ability.**

- d. Showing interest and concern for one another's activities.**

- e. Building a lively family spirit.**

- f. Committing ourselves to shared learning and growth.**



OUR SERVICE

Don Bosco himself described this encounter.

Early in the morning of Monday, October 2, 1854 I saw a boy coming toward me with his father.

"I am Dominic Savio. My teacher, Father Cugliero, told you about me. We come from Mondonio."

We understood each other perfectly. I realized that this boy's soul was imbued with the Spirit of God, but I was somewhat surprised to see the wonderful working of divine grace in a boy so young.

"What do you say, Father? Will you take me to Turin with you to study?"

." Well, you Look Like good material to me!"

"Good material, Father! Good for what?"

"Good to make a lovely vestment for Our Lord "

"Then I am the cloth and you must be the tailor..."

(BM V, pp. 79 - 80)

Our lay collaborators share in the Salesian ministry by which they seek to form every young person into "a lovely vestment for the Lord"!

In Section 4 they will discover the four dimensions of this total Salesian ministry to the young: we render a service which, beginning with a concern for their human growth, leads them to Christ and his gospel message, teaches them how to relate to others, and helps them to discover and live their vocation in life.



SESSION 1

EDUCATION

EDUCATION

"Do you want to do a good deed? Educate the young. Do you want to do something holy? Educate the young. Something even holier? Educate the young. Do you want to do divine work? Among divine works this is the most divine of all" (BM XIII, p. 490) .

"Education is evidently not the same thing as shaping a block of marble. It consists rather in the ability to accompany a free subject through his maturing process" (E. Vigano, "New Education", in: AGC 337, p. 21).

OBJECTIVES

1. To bring our lay collaborators to a deeper consideration and understanding of the first dimension of our Salesian service to the young, viz. education.
2. To enhance their capacity to be good "Salesian educators".

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of the Hand-out (pp. 9 - 10) for participants.

Stationery items like large sheets of paper, pens, drawing pencils, etc.

A blackboard.

INTRODUCTION

The leader opens the session by saying that Salesian ministry, in all its forms, is characterized by its educative and evangelizing dimensions. As our Rector Major, Fr. Vigano, is wont to say: "*We educate by evangelizing, and evangelize by educating.*"

This session, the leader says, will deal with the first dimension: education. To Lead into the topic, he invites everyone to take part in the following activity.

ACTIVITY (20 minutes)

PURPOSE:

This activity is meant to create an awareness in the participants of the wide variety of educational influences on young people today.

PROCEDURE:

1. The leader divides the participants into smaller groups, preferably according to the Locality the youth come from, e.g. a residential area, or a suburb, or even a city itself . . .
2. He then asks each group to draw up a List of the various educational influences in that Locality that impinge in one way or another on the Lives of the young. Some of the influences, for instance, could be the family, educational institutions, youth clubs, shopping malls, cinema theatres, cultural establishments for the arts, hist01y, etc.
3. Next, the Leader invites the groups to examine how the many influences affect the young people in their growth - to what extent, in which direction, and with what kind of impact.
4. Finally, the groups are invited to present their findings to the assembly in a creative manner, using whatever means they have at their disposal, e.g. using coloured charts, diagrams, drawings, symbols, etc.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. CULTURE AND EDUCATION

a. Culture and growth

We live in a complex society which is marked by an intermingling of different cultures, a breakdown of cultural value-systems, and a gradual evolution of a universal form of culture. We daily experience the strong influences that our socio-cultural environment exerts on our way of thinking and acting. But, we are aware at the same time that we are not just products, but also creators, of culture.

This is the kind of society in which today's young people find themselves. They are expected to grow and develop into mature adults, but they often remain quite unsure of themselves and confused by the complexity of their socio-cultural situation. The many institutions that form part of society, as well as the many beliefs, values and social norms that comprise culture, influence and affect them, some for good and others for bad. But, it is only by means of and within this total ambient that their growth can take place. It is only by means of and within culture that the young can achieve their true and full humanity (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* # 53).

b. Education and values

For young people therefore, education is vital; through it, the riches of culture are transmitted to them. As a purposive and systematic process, education effects a genuine inculturation, that is, a methodical, active and critical assimilation of culture.

Education, then, must concern itself with values, for these constitute the wealth of a cultural heritage and form the basis of a person's actions. Education enables a person to discover within himself the many beliefs and values that influence his behaviour, to strengthen them and integrate them into his life, and to develop them into value-systems which accord a pride of place to the nobler values.

2. THE BASICS OF EDUCATION

a. The vision of education

Every person is gifted with:

- a body,
- an intelligence and will,
- feelings and emotions (affectivity).

Education seeks to develop all these gifts simultaneously in a gradual process of growth and integration.

Furthermore, the human person is a social being; through these gifts, he/she has a capacity for relating to:

- the world,
- others, and
- God.

What enables him/her to develop this harmonious relationship in freedom is education.

Rightly then has education been defined as the integral promotion of the person in all his/her potentialities with a view to bringing about both personal and social growth.

The vision that education sets before us is of a renewed humanity, that is, fully mature persons living out their vocation, shaping their own history, contributing to the common endeavour of transforming humanity, and in this way seeking to attain the fullness of life.

b. The subject

The basis of every educative effort is the young person who, as the chief agent of his/her own development, must needs be actively involved and take part in the whole process. He/she is a living part of the journey leading towards the realization of the new human being in Christ.

And so we can say that education is a growth-enabling process not imposed from the outside but originating from within the person; by gradually developing his/her human gifts, the person becomes empowered to act.

c. The educator

The educator collaborates in the maturing process of the young person and offers the climate and the means of growth.

As an **enabler**, the educator fosters the right motivations, promotes growth in the responsible use of freedom, and attractively presents values and principles. He/she believes in the positive capacities of every young person, helps to discover them, encourages their development, and guides them to full growth.

As a **communicator**, the educator shares his/her own experience of human living, which develops in the search for and adherence to values which in turn are proposed to others. He/she is like a parent who communicates life-giving energy.

And, as a **friend**, the educator accompanies the young person in the laborious process of developing his/her values and using all his/her potentialities to the full.

d. Other young people

The young educate one another; they strengthen one another in their solidarity and joint action to achieve their goals.

They form groups in order to develop and integrate their own values. Through groups they become socially involved and embark on social and apostolic activities with a sense of mission. Groups also introduce them to the wider community of the Church and of society.

It is obvious, then, that peer ministry and group experience are fundamental factors of the Salesian educational process, and as such deserve to be properly appreciated and supported by every educator

3. THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF SALESIAN EDUCATION

a. Education, a basis for evangelization

In Salesian circles, education is related to evangelization. In fact, education and evangelization are two inseparable dimensions of the Salesian educative and pastoral enterprise. Education seeks "to stimulate and accompany [the young] in a process of growth which gives freedom to the creative talents of the person, and which favours his critical involvement in culture and in society" (Salesian Youth Pastoral Work, Manila 1990, p. 66). In this way it serves as a basis for a subsequent evangelization. Furthermore, we must also assert that in every form and setting of Salesian youth ministry, the educator is always an evangelizer.

b. The educative climate

Salesian education stresses the creation of an environment in which values are nurtured and developed. This is the so-called "family spirit", a climate in which young people feel at home and are enabled to grow. This is the kind of climate that ought to reign in every Salesian setting - a school, a parish, a youth centre, a crisis-intervention centre, or whatever.

c. Personal presence

The most precious gift a Salesian work has to offer to the young is the educator: a teacher, friend and guide; an apostle, prophet and witness of the gospel (cf. The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco, Rome 1986, p. 321, 325). Salesian education depends very largely on the educator's personal presence. He knows each young person by name - just as the Good Shepherd knows his sheep; he recognizes their voice and they recognize his. Through his attention and presence among them the educator is able to "say the right word to the right person at the right time".

d. The integration of various elements

Salesian education is not restricted to the classroom, nor is it identified with the school. It also takes place in the parish, the youth centre, or the youth group. It is an integration of various elements in the life of the young. A Salesian educator is able to bring together free-time, cultural activities, systematic learning, religious practices, service to others, group-undertakings, family gatherings, and meetings with friends, in one integrated educative "movement".

e. The educative community.

In the Salesian pattern of education, all persons have a role and a place. They form the so-called educative and pastoral community, which includes Salesians, lay personnel, parents, and the young themselves. No true education can take place if it is imparted by one person alone; rather, it must be the joint endeavor of an educative community that journeys together.

In its turn, the educative community (whether of a school, a youth centre, or a parish) is related to the bigger community of the locality or neighborhood.

f. A liberating process

Salesian education takes the young as they are and in whatever state of freedom they find themselves. Through a liberating process, it enables them to rise up and stand on their own. This process does not start and finish with a textbook, but evolves in the lives of persons as they live and grow.

DISCUSSION (25 minutes)

At this point the participants go into their groups again and the leader distributes the Hand out which contains two sets of questions for discussion, A and B. He invites the groups to choose a question from each set.

WRAP-UP

When the discussion is over, the groups read out their answers to the question. they have chosen from Set B. These answers are written on the blackboard. Working on them, the leader tries to bring about a convergence of the assembly on some resolutions.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of the session is done with the help of one of the sheets provided in this manual.

As for an evaluation of the impact the session has had on each person, the leader reads out the following questions, asking the participants to reflect on them in silence.

1. How do I rate my own "Salesian educative ability"?
2. Would I want to read something on Salesian education if it were available?
3. Would I be interested in further formation in the Salesian system of education?

CONCLUSION

The session may conclude with a song to Don Bosco or a prayer.

EDUCATION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are two sets of questions for discussion. Would you please choose one question from each of the two sets?

Set A

1. Compare and evaluate the programmes of the various educational institutions you know (Salesian schools included).

What is their vision of education?
What type of person do they intend to form?
What is their curriculum?
What are their co-curricular activities?
Are there any basic options they have made?
How do they allot their funds?

2. Compare and evaluate the climate of the various educational institutions you know (Salesian schools included).

Is there a place for student creativity and personal involvement?
Do the young participate in all the stages of decision-making?
Are the young empowered to become responsible for their own growth?
Are the teachers more concerned with teaching their subject or with communicating with their students?
Is there a growing educative relationship between the educators and their young students?

3. Compare and assess the education that takes place through other non- scholastic institutions and agencies that you know.

How strong is the impact of the mass media?
In what ways does the parish reach out to the young?
Are there centres where the young gather and are enabled to grow?
Do families provide the young with the necessary climate for growth?
Is there a coordination among the formal educational institutions?

Set B

1. As Salesian educators,

what attitudes should we develop to make the young feel that they are the chief agents of their own education?
what should be our style of communicating with them?
what skills do we need to develop?

2. As Salesian educators,

- in a school: how can we integrate co-curricular programmes within the formal curriculum?
- in a youth centre: how can we lead the various (religious, cultural, and interest-based) youth groups towards our common goal?
- in a parish: how can we complement the evangelizing process with youth groups, associations and movements?
- in a home for marginalized youth: how can we integrate programmed activities with activities of their own choice?

3. As Salesian educators,

how can we journey with the young and accompany them in their growth?
how can we carry out a personal follow-up of the young?
what are the necessary attitudes and skills we need?



SESSION 2

EVANGELIZATION

EVANGELIZATION

"Like Don Bosco, we are all called to be educators to the faith at every opportunity. Our highest knowledge therefore is to know Jesus Christ, and our greatest delight is to reveal to all people the unfathomable riches of His mystery" (C 34).

OBJECTIVES

1. To clarify the meaning of evangelization (and catechesis).
2. To present the Salesian view of evangelization through education.
3. To focus on the need for ALL in the Educative and Pastoral Community (EPC) to allow themselves to be evangelized in an ongoing way so as to be educators who evangelize.

(N.B. Given the nature of this topic, it may require substantial adaptation for non-Christian audiences, or even for Christian audiences that work primarily with non-Christian people.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Two copies of Hand-out 1 (pp. 9 - 11) containing the role-play, "Investments, Anyone?"

Whatever props the performers in the role-play may need.

Copies of the Hand-out 2, Summary Sheet (p. 13) for participants.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, noting that, whereas many people may think that evangelization has nothing to do with them and their particular tasks, it is a topic that concerns all members of the EPC. Some of the difficulties "evangelizers" experience will be brought out by means_ of the opening activity.

ACTIVITY (20 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To highlight the flawed approach of many would-be evangelizers of the young, who do not take time to really know the young people they work with, and who do not know how to share their faith personally with them.

PROCEDURE:

A role-play is performed involving an investment broker, Mr. Hearme, and a prospective client, Ms. Whyme. The role-play is followed by a discussion among all the participants.

DRAWING OUT:

The leader makes a brief comparison between the process of trying to sell an investment venture to a client, and the evangelize, trying to "sell" a personal investment in the person and message of Jesus Christ. He invites the group to critique Mr. Hearme as a salesman.

The following points at least should be drawn out:

- Mr. Hearme thinks it is enough to insist right off on investing, without taking time to know his client.
- He is ready with the details of investment procedure and the marks of membership in the company, but does not build a rationale for investment
- He shows no interest in the present investments of his client; indeed, he does not even know if the client has already invested in the company or one of its branches.
- He avoids speaking about his own investments.
- His inability or refusal to speak concretely, from his own personal experience, about the benefits of this investment casts doubts about its real benefits.

The leader should ask for or at least offer some brief parallels with the process of evangelization, focusing on the need to know the you.11g and to personally share our own faith experiences with them.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. ORIENTATION

- a. Last time we looked at the process of education from a Salesian point of view. Today, we want to consider the process of evangelization from that same Salesian perspective.
- b. The role play we just watched and enjoyed demonstrates, in at least a few ways, the mistaken notions people often have about educating young people to the faith. They are often too eager to elicit a commitment without first knowing the young person and his or her real needs. They urge belonging to the community of believers without spelling out the benefits in any convincing way, or worse yet, without paying attention to the quality of life among those believers as seen by the young. They focus on policies and procedures rather than on persons. They are often unwilling or unable to share their own investment of faith in the person of Jesus Christ with the very youth they aim to evangelize. And perhaps worst of all, they treat evangelization as something parallel to and distinct from the rest of the educational process.

2. WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

- a. Evangelization is a process of bringing the person and message of Jesus Christ into all dimensions of life and culture, transforming humanity and making it new (*Evangelii Nuntiandi* # 18).
- b. Since the gospel is not mere information to be had, but a new way of life to be lived, and since we live in cultures and create cultures by the way we live, evangelization is intimately tied to the whole process of education. Evangelization includes a message, but it involves learning a way to live that message as it touches every area of human life.
- c. Salesians put it this way: we evangelize by educating; we educate by evangelizing. For us, neither one is complete nor properly understood without the other. For this reason, we also refer to the whole complex process of evangelizing young people as a process of "education to the faith", with faith here denoting not simply tenets and religious information, but a life-giving relationship with Jesus Christ and the new way of living in the world which results from it.
- d. In this view, following on "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*", catechesis is one step, although a very important one, in the larger, more comprehensive process of evangelization. Unfortunately, many people catechize and neglect to evangelize. Others evangelize, but in an incomplete way. They do not realize that the specific goal of catechesis within the overall process of evangelization is to enable the individual to more fully grasp and live out the message of Jesus that has been accepted in faith. "All in all, it can be taken here that catechesis is an education of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (*Catechesi Tradendae* # 18).
- e. In the Salesian understanding of education to the faith, catechesis is a planned component all along the way.

3. STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION TO THE FAITH

a. In "Evangelii Nuntiandi", Paul VI outlined various stages in the process of evangelization, stretching from a simple and sincere presence among the people to be evangelized all the way to the point where the evangelized themselves become evangelizers. We have clustered those stages into four broad steps which every Salesian educator should know.

b. Formation to Human Maturity

The evangelizer in a Salesian setting wants to lead the young person to fully develop his or her human life, and in particular, to help them:

- to accept life with responsibility and a sense of joy;
- to learn how to be open to others;
- to discover the deep aspirations in their own hearts;
- to begin to question the meaning of life;
- to yearn for God, the Transcendent

c. An Authentic Meeting with Jesus Christ

The evangelizer in a Salesian setting is eager to introduce the young person to Jesus Christ, or at least to deepen an already existing friendship with Him. For this to happen, several things are needed:

- convincing witness on the part of the evangelizing community;
- gradual preparation for the encounter;
- a planned offering and deepening of the young person's encounter with Jesus, by preparing religious experiences which are meaningful to the young;
- enabling the young to make an inner choice for Jesus

d. An Intensified Membership in the Church

The evangelizer in a Salesian setting is convinced that the Church, even with its shortcomings, is the best place to encounter Jesus Christ. He or she understands that membership in the Church is something that matures progressively. To foster this maturing process, it is necessary:

- to begin by focusing on youth's desire for friendship and interpersonal relationships;
- to respond to their desire for group experiences by fostering a wide variety of them
- to gradually help group experiences become ecclesial experiences, by leading groups to be prayerful, worshipping, and of service;
- to help young people's choice for Jesus become a convinced choice for the Church;
- to enable the young to engage in apostolic action in an ongoing way, to become evangelizers themselves.

e. A Commitment for the Kingdom

The evangelizer in a Salesian setting helps young people see that their life choices are of crucial importance, involving responsibilities and opportunities of a familial, social, professional and political kind. For some, these life choices will also have an explicit ecclesial connection. With all young people, the evangelizer tries:

- to begin by drawing out their positive qualities;
- to help them develop attitudes of generosity and availability;

- to make appropriate vocational suggestions, of whatever sort, when the time is right;
- to help discern exactly God's call in their regard;
- to make committed choices.

4. ONGOING RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ENTIRE EDUCATIVE COMMUNITY

- a. No one person can do all this. It is the whole educative and pastoral community which has to evangelize. All of the educators have the power and responsibility to manifest to the young the way the gospel is to be lived; this they do by the manner in which they fulfil their own specific tasks.
- b. For this to happen, it is not enough for the educative community to focus only on evangelizing the young, but it must look to its own ongoing evangelization as well in each of the four areas described above.

DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

The leader invites the assembly to discuss (in smaller groups, if the number is large) at least two of the following questions. Everyone should discuss # 1, and then half of the groups could discuss # 2, the other half # 3. If there is time, of course, all three can be discussed by everyone.

1. What is your reaction to the suggestion that everyone of us is responsible for the work of evangelization?
2. As you consider what we do here in our Salesian work, what is our greatest strength in the work of evangelizing our young people?
3. Again, as you consider what we do here, where do we need the most improvement as evangelizers of our young people?

The leader asks each group to have someone ready to report on its discussion (if several groups are discussing).

WRAP-UP (10 minutes)

The leader invites the groups to make brief reports. He affirms the positive things that were pointed out, and synthesizes the areas in need of improvement.

He should bring the topic to resolution by suggesting some practical applications of the theme, some ways in which the local EPC can develop its evangelizing role.

He may want to consider some of the following:

- Suggest that evangelization be a topic for a future staff retreat.
- Invite interested persons to meet with the local youth ministry team to discuss at greater length the issue of evangelization at the local level. -
- Discuss ways in which more of the group can get involved in things like retreats, liturgy preparation and faith sharing.

OUR SERVICE 6

EVALUATION (10 minutes)

The leader invites the participants to evaluate the day making use of one of the evaluation sheets provided in this manual.

He then asks each one to take a moment and consider how he or she feels personally challenged by the experience. Materials could be provided for people to write down a few thoughts if they wish. Those who choose to are invited to share their thoughts with the group.

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes with a prayer, hymn, poem or whatever seems appropriate.

REFERENCES

C 6, 20, 29, 31, 34, 41, 45.

R6, 11-13, 26.

GC 23, especially # 94 - 157.

Salesian Youth Pastoral Work, Manila 1990, pp. 59 - 65, 69.

Evangelii Nuntiandi.

Catechesi Tradendae.

"The Spirit present in the heart of Don Bosco attracted youngsters not just to his own person, but to God. Despite the complexity of situations and the precarious nature of his resources, he lived as one 'seeing Him who is invisible'. With trust he sowed seeds of faith through kindly gestures, and formed others to do likewise. This is the experience that we too at the present day want to pass on to youth" (GC 23 # 92).

"INVESTMENTS, ANYONE?"**ROLE-PLAY**

(The following scenario, though written here for a man and a woman, can be played by either men or women. The players should have read it through many times and familiarized themselves with both the content and how the session leader plans to use it for discussion purposes. There is no need to memorize parts, but the more acquainted the participants are with the text, the freer they will be to "ham it up". After reading the script, they may want to get a few props to help them along.)

The scene begins with Mr. Hearme being welcomed into the home/office of Ms. Whyme.

- Hearme: Thank you so much, Ms. Why me, for taking time to see me. It's awfully good of you
 Whyme: Not at all, Mr. Hearme. Glad to have you. Now what exactly was it you wanted to speak to me about?
- Hearme: Investments! The most crucial issue of the day for persons like yourself, obviously possessed of a lot to invest! And not just any investment, but the investment of a lifetime!
 Whyme: You don't say? Well, tell me, please, exactly what is this investment and why should I be so intrigued by it?
- Hearme: Yes, well. Here's how you invest. You simply read this lovely brochure outlining your fiduciary and other responsibilities, write out your cheque, and sign on the dotted line.
 Whyme: Mr. Hearme, as it is, I have a lot of investments already. I have a good bit of money tied up in several ventures. Why should I invest in yours?
- Hearme: You know, every day I hear stories of people who on their deathbeds are heard to exclaim, "Why on earth did I not hear Hearme! I squandered my assets on shallow deals that all fell through!" Mark my words, Ms. Whyme, if you pass up this deal you will live to regret it
 Whyme: But you still haven't answered my question. Look, just tell me straight out, what exactly am I investing in?
- Hearme: It's a company that people need. They don't always know they need it, but they do. Oh sure, people will tell you how the company didn't do them any good, how they've gotten on fine without it, but that's just a bunch of malcontents crying in their beer
 Whyme: And this company, what does it do?
- Hearme: Everything! Builds and maintains hospitals and schools, provides programmes of social welfare, and in general, responds to the needs of the day
 Whyme: But Mr. Hearme, many companies do what you've just described. What makes this investment, should I choose to go with it, so different from any other?
- Hearme: I'm glad you asked that question! Ms. Whyme, you've gone to the heart of the matter. What makes this investment so unique, so valuable, is the President and Founder, Mr. Jason Christopher
 Whyme: I see . . . And you've met this Mr. Christopher?
- Hearme: Well, of course I have. Many times.
 Whyme: Tell me about him

- Hearme: I beg your pardon?
Whyme: Tell me about him. I'd like to know about this person who'd like to have my personal investment
- Hearme: Well, what's to tell... He's a wonderful man who does wonderful things. Now, about signing on ...
Whyme: Do you speak to him? When was the last time you spent time with him?
- Hearme: I speak with him every day.....dutifully.
Whyme: Really? That's interesting. What do you talk about?
- Hearme: Really, Ms. Whyme, I think we're getting off track now. I do need to outline the procedure you'll have to follow if you're going to sign on.
Whyme: Mr. Hearme
- Hearme: Yes?
Whyme: Have you made any investments yourself in Mr. Christopher and his company?
- Hearme: Well, of course I have.
Whyme: May I ask what kind of investments you're talking about? I mean, have you invested in a big way, or just a little?
- Hearme: You know, Ms. Whyme, that's a very personal matter which seems out of place here. It's YOUR investment I'm concerned with. I'm already taken care of.
Whyme: What benefits do you derive from your investment?
- Hearme: Benefits? Why, my annual dividend, of course.
Whyme: But, Mr. Hearme, every company I invest in offers financial dividends. You said there was something special about investing with the Christopher company. "The investment of a lifetime!" were your words, I think.
- Hearme: Ms. Whyme, I'm afraid if we go on like this we'll end by wasting all our time. And as Mrs. Hearme is given to reminding me, "Wasted words, wasted time, Hearme's job is on the line!" Now there are just a few items remaining here. Once you sign on, you '11 receive this lovely ring. Then, there are stockholders' meetings twice a quarter. You MUST attend. The company frowns on members who don't attend regularly.
Whyme: I see. And what goes on at these meetings?
- Hearme: Well, we report on numbers, profits, and deal with procedures. Pretty much what we've been doing here. It's wonderful!
Whyme: And the famous Mr. Christopher ... Do we get to meet him there in any meaningful way?
- Hearme: Meaningful way?... I'm afraid I don't understand.
Whyme: Will I get to meet with him, speak with him, have any sort of meaningful interaction with him?

Hearme: Ms. Whyme, you do ask the oddest questions ... Now then, how much would you like to invest?
Whyme: I'm afraid I'll have to pass.

Hearme: Come again?
Whyme: Good day, Mr. Hearme!

EVANGELIZATION

SUMMARY

WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

A kind of education to the faith, a process of bringing the person and message of Jesus Christ into all dimensions of the lives of our young people, transforming them and making them new.

WHAT IS CATECHESIS?

One stage of the overall process of evangelization. It includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine in an organic and systematic way.

STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION TO THE FAITH

1. Formation to human maturity

We want to lead our young people to fully develop their human lives.

2. An authentic meeting with Jesus Christ

We want to introduce young people to Jesus, or help them deepen already existing relationships with Him.

3. An intensified membership in the Church

We believe that the Church, even with its shortcomings, is the best place to meet Jesus. We help the young to gradually intensify their sense of belonging, and to find varied and more active ways of participating in its life.

4. A commitment for the Kingdom

We help young people appreciate the fundamental importance of their varied life choices. We assist them in the process of discerning their gifts and their call, and then to respond to their own call with generosity.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

All of us, since no one of us can do all this alone, and since all of us witness to varied ways of living the faith in different settings.



SESSION 3

SOCIAL GROWTH

SOCIAL GROWTH

"Group experience is a fundamental element in Salesian pedagogical tradition" (GC 23 # 274).

OBJECTIVES

1. To bring our lay collaborators to a better understanding and appreciation of the Salesian group experience and of its unique potential for training the young in responsibility, relationships, and service;
2. To get our collaborators to be involved in animating youth groups and in making these groups truly alive and formative for the human and Christian formation of the young.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Five 3" x 5" blank cards for each participant.

A large sheet of paper or a blackboard.

INTRODUCTION

The leader begins by making the point that in the process of education and evangelization (on which the two previous sessions were focused), a particular importance attaches to the group experience. The youth group today is a widespread reality with a rich potential for the formation of the young.

But it is not any kind of group that is able "to deliver the goods". There are certain elements that go into forming a good youth group - and this will be the subject of the opening activity.

ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

The leader hands out 5 blank cards to each participant. He asks each one to think of 5 things that are necessary to form an ideal group and to write them down, one on each card. (5 minutes)

Next, the participants are to move around and trade cards with each other, one for one, with the objective, as far as is possible, of collecting the 5 cards that best represent the elements that go into forming an ideal group.

After some 5 to 10 minutes, each person is asked to number the cards in his or her possession in descending order of importance, with number 1 being the most important ingredient for forming an ideal group.

Of the five cards each one has, the last three in order of importance are now to be discarded, leaving only two the best ones.

With these two cards in hand, each participant goes in search of 4 or 5 other participants with whom to form a group that will collectively symbolize the "ideal group".

Each group now discusses its components, and then presents itself in the assembly, explaining the forces that enliven it, and how it sees itself within the context of the wider community.

The leader closes the activity by drawing the conclusions together and using them as a launching pad for the following input.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. ANSWERING THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG

The truism, "No man is an island," applies universally to all mankind, but nowhere is it verified so vividly as in the case of young people, because the young feel a strong urge to form or enter groups.

One of the things you must have noticed in the activity we have just concluded is that a good youth group is one that, among other things, answers the needs of young people. The young experience the need to grow in autonomy and self-affirmation, in a sense of responsibility and achievement, but these needs cannot easily be met in the formal set-up of an institution catering to a mass of young people, or even in a classroom. It is the group that is better able to take care of these needs and help young people to grow.

(At this point, the leader may invite those participants who are willing to share instances from their own lives of how they have grown as a result of a group experience.)

2. ACQUIRING LIFE SKILLS

Now, groups can be of different kinds:

- formal or informal; for example...
- voluntary or established; for example ...
- a gang or a club; for example, ...
- big or small; for example, ...
- organized or spontaneous; for example, ...

Within these various kinds of groups, the young person learns, not only the activity or interest around which the group is organized, but also and above all, the larger and more important life skills that make for a happy and useful adulthood, both as upright citizens and good Christians.

"Groups can offer young people everything from recreation to culture, from religious commitment to service projects, and from educational objectives to political action. In groups and clubs, young people who crave friendship and deep interpersonal relationships can really feel at home, achieve better self-knowledge and experience the joy of sharing. Active and responsible participation in a group helps to develop leadership and communication skills, a sense of dedication and responsibility, mutual trust and team work. In the group the young person can contribute to the life of the Church and to the transformation of the world. Young people themselves, then, become apostles and effective peer ministers" (East USA Pastoral Plan, p. 9).

3. DON BOSCO'S INTUITION

Don Bosco grasped this intuitively, and he consistently made group experiences an essential element in his educative method. He encouraged a variety of groups band, choir, apostolic groups, etc. - and through them he responded to the varied needs, conditions and interests of different young people. At the same time, he insisted that his collaborators should lead these groups in such a way that the groups' full potential for educating young people in faith and life skills - their " hidden agenda" - could be attained.

Starting with Don Bosco, the Salesian plan of education and evangelization has always sought to offer the possibility of group experiences, adapting them to the situation of the young, to the directives of the Church (in the case of religious groups), and to the findings of the educational sciences. It has taken the natural propensity of youngsters for groups and converted it into an educative methodology and a complementary opportunity for fostering their human and Christian growth.

4. THE EDUCATOR'S ANIMATING ROLE

The educator's role in respect of the group is always one of animation, that is, a form of accompanying which contemplates the presence of an educator who interacts with the young, the responsibility of the young themselves, and a typical process of reflection and action.

Such a work of animation is not the exclusive competence of the priest or religious members of the educative community. The lay person too can offer his own proper contribution of experience and Christian witness. After all, it is a fact that the majority of the young who form part of groups will eventually opt for life in the world.

To the young, therefore, in addition to his educative competence, the lay person can give:

- a Christian outlook (by way of doctrine, orientation and testimony) on the problems and situations of the world in connection with the family, one's profession, politics . . .;
- the example of a concrete incarnation of the lay vocation as complementary to that of the priest and the religious;
- and the joy of living the Christian commitment in a way that goes beyond the limits of one's profession or obligations and takes the form of gratuitousness, availability and service.

5. THE YOUNG ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN FORMATION

The animation of the group by an educator in no way lessens the responsibility of the young; on the contrary it provokes them to assume responsibility for their own formation. This they do by:

- learning to accept themselves and recognizing the intrinsic and unique value of each person;
- appreciating the complexities of the social situation;
- searching and critically examining ideas and actions by means of dialogue, and building up in themselves a frame of reference for making future assessments;
- courageously embarking on practical initiatives of solidarity and the apostolate;
- setting goals for themselves, testing their own abilities, and growing in self-confidence; and
- beginning to exercise new social role which stir up their generous dispositions and bring them gradually to involve themselves more and more in the wider community.

6. THE ULTIMATE GOAL: HUMAN AND CHRISTIAN MATURITY

Ultimately, the aim of the group is the growth of the young persons to human and Christian maturity.

Their education to the faith must go hand in hand with and include their human formation, an understanding of the meaning of life, the choice of values, and social commitment - all this must be part and parcel of their learning to lead a "faith-full" life.

One of the pointers to a good education is the growth in a sense of solidarity, that is, the ability to live with and for others. From a Christian point of view also, solidarity provides a measure of the integration of faith and life. The Church is a communion; Christian love is a call to be a leaven in social life.

However, this spirit of solidarity or the social sense does not grow in the young person unless it is explicitly cultivated. Planning and dedication are required by those responsible for animating groups in Salesian settings. The social sense is best seen when the members of a group feel closely bound together by a shared belief, faith, and goal, which leads to shared respect, shared responsibilities, and shared commitment.

But for this to take place, each one's gifts and talents have to be recognized and put to good use. In this way not only is the individual developed, but also the group in its outreach to the wider community.

(The leader may wish to conclude this section by reading and commenting on 1 Co 12, 14 - 26, where St. Paul builds on the analogy of the body.)

DISCUSSION

The assembly breaks into groups of 6 or 7 participants each.

From the list of ten questions given below, the leader chooses the questions that seem appropriate for the audience and allocates them to the different groups.

1. How do you encourage the young to form groups?
2. What types of groups seem to be the most appropriate in our setting?
3. How does your group help the young to feel good about themselves? How do you affirm and bring out the best in young people?
4. How do you help the young to build stronger relationships with their peers?
5. What steps does your group take to build stronger relationships with adults, family members, and the Church?
6. How do you help the young to feel that they are needed? What opportunities do you give them to help others?
7. How do you help your youth to understand and grow in the faith?
8. What assistance do you give your young people to make their life choices?
9. How do you see yourselves as educators in the group process?
10. Is your style one of collaboration or control? How much do you let your young people lead?

WRAP-UP

At the end of the discussion, the feedback from the groups is recorded on a large sheet of paper or on a blackboard. The leader may make some pertinent observations, briefly and to the point.

He may wish to draw out some practical conclusions, especially if he notices a convergence of the participants on certain points.

EVALUATION

The evaluation of the session is done with the help of one of the sheets provided in this manual.

If a personal evaluation too is desired, the leader reads out the following statements one by one, giving sufficient time for the participants to reflect on and complete the statements in writing.

During this session:

I learnt that . . .

I felt that ...

I was upset that ...

I enjoyed ...

I will certainly take steps to . . .

CONCLUSION

The session comes to a close with a prayer, a poem or some suitable song.

REFERENCES

Salesian Youth Pastoral Work, Manila 1990.

GC 23.



SESSION 4

LIFE CHOICES

LIFE CHOICES

There are many different gifts, but it is always the same spirit.....The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good (1 Co 12, 4.7)

OBJECTIVES

To help our lay collaborators

- Understand the meaning of “vocation orientation”
- See it as an intrinsic part of their role as educators and evangelizers of the young
- And carry it out in their work with young people

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of the Hand out (p.9) for the participants

A large sheet of paper (newsprint) or a black board

INTRODUCTION

The introduces the session along the following lines

In the previous sessions, we saw that education and evangelization are the two fundamental dimensions of our work with the young. Today, we wish to reflect on “vocation orientation” the crown of all our educational and pastoral activity.

To introduce us into this topic, we shall do a little exercise that will help us clarify to ourselves the meaning of "vocation".

ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

The participants are divided into groups of about 6 or 7 each, copies of the Hand-out are distributed to all the participants, and the activity is carried out according to the instructions in the Hand-out.

When the group activity is over, each group gives a brief report of its discussion to the assembly.

The leader then summarizes the points that have emerged on the subject of "vocation" and uses them as a launching-pad for the input that follows.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. THE MEANING OF VOCATION

A work that is totally completed has no future; it is over; it is done with. On the contrary, a work that is unfinished is an invitation to pursue a goal; it is a call to commit oneself to completing it.

Every person who comes into the world is not a finished product, but is in a process of "coming to be", that is, attaining a goal that is within his reach. In so far as his life has not yet been fully realized during the stages of his childhood and adolescence, it becomes an invitation or a call to self-realization.

Now, because we believe that God in creating us had a plan about what we should be, we hold that behind the call to self-realization which each human person experiences, we encounter God.

Every person, then, has a vocation. Life itself is a vocation.

2. VOCATION AND PROFESSION

Being a call by God, therefore, vocation is a religious concept and outlook

Thus, an aptitude for, or an inclination towards, a particular profession, with no reference whatever to Someone who calls, is not a vocation. A vocation represents a global way of taking hold of one's life before God; it draws out the aspects of transcendence present in a person's existence.

A profession, then, is only a partial reality. Should it be chosen and assumed within the "bigger picture" and the services it renders be an expression of transcendent realities and values, it then becomes an expression of a vocation.

3. VOCATION ORIENTATION

A vocation is a "Projection", an anticipation of a future construction. Each one is called to "project" what God wants him to be.

Now, any projection entails a twofold task:

First, an effort to conceive it, to trace the lines of the future construction; and second, an effort to execute it, to bring it to its concrete realization.

Similarly, the "project" of each one's vocation entails a twofold task

The effort to discover one's vocation: the vocational call;

And the effort to pursue it: the vocational decision. If it is not pursued, it cannot come to completion.

And so, the work of vocation orientation is precisely to awaken and to illumine the vocational call in a young person, helping him to discover it, and to strengthen, accompany and help him in its realization.

As such, then, vocation orientation goes far beyond the partial and limited work of helping to choose a line of studies, providing career guidance, or looking out for candidates to the priesthood or religious life. It is concerned with globally orienting a young person for life, paying attention to all aspects of his personality.

It is a duty we owe "all young people whom the Lord in one way or another places in our path. (GC 21 # 111); we have to help each of them find his or her walk in life.

4. VOCATION ORIENTATION AND THE LAY COLLABORATOR

We have already seen that the two fundamental dimensions of our service to the young are education and evangelization. Both these dimensions require vocation orientation as their indispensable goal and crown.

In fact, we do not educate fully if we do not strive for the full growth to maturity of our adolescents and youth, and that includes assisting them to build up their identity as persons and helping them assume their position in life face to face with themselves, others and God.

Similarly, we do not evangelize fully, we do not carry out a proper catechesis, if we do not bring the young person to shoulder his own responsibility as a Christian, and we do not make him capable of concretely responding to God's call in his life and living a concrete path of service in the Church.

"In the Salesian perspective all educational and pastoral activity contains, as an essential objective, a vocational dimension. As a matter of fact, the discovery one's calling, the well-thought-out free choice of a programme of life, constitutes the crowning goal of any process of human and Christian growth" (GC 21 # 106)

Vocation Orientation, then, is not a task reserved for a psychologist, a spiritual director, or a guidance counsellor. It is the duty of everyone who works with the young. It is a marvellous collaboration with God's design – but also a serious responsibility.

5. VOCATION ORIENTATION, A PROCESS

Being a part of the work of education and evangelization, vocation orientation is a process. It is not a final activity to be carried out, say, in the last year at school – somewhat like the icing on the cake! Nor does it take place through occasional or sporadic initiatives, or through improvisation. No, it is a journey undertaken step by step from childhood to adulthood as a human being grows up as a person and as a believer, gradually coming to understand and accept God's plan in his regard. From the very beginning of his education to the faith, he is given an attitude and an ability to read the signs of God in his life and to respond to them with generosity.

"We must help them at every age in their effort to discover and develop their vocation: in beyond, preadolescence, adolescence and beyond, because each of these stages of life has its own phase of growth and entails proportionate decision which every young man must learn and carry out in a responsible manner". (GC 21# 111)

Obviously, the chief agent in this process of vocation orientation – as in the case of education and evangelization – is the young person himself, who has to assume responsibility for his life and give it a particular direction.

The role of the adult is only one of mediation between the call and the response, viz. someone who act as an animator and stimulus, a friend and guide, a help and a support. Anyone with a sufficient preparation in the human sciences can help the young person to become conscious of his real possibilities and to arrive at a free and lucid decision.

6. DISCERNING A VOCATION

Vocation is a mysterious reality of divine origin, but it is deeply rooted in the human person, in its basic structure and unconscious preferences, in its impulses and free options, the totality of these elements being moved by faith. God calls through the complex of "signs". He has placed in the very fibre of each one's existence as a human being; He also speaks through the persons and events that surround him.

And so, the delicate task of vocation orientation means accompanying the young in a way that enables them to "read" God's signs in their lives, and accordingly to formulate their plans for the future in a realistic manner, taking the proper decisions in that direction.

All this implies that there are many things that anyone who works with the young can and should do:

- Help the young to understand themselves deeply – their strength and weaknesses, their possibilities and limitations;
- Show them how the subject learned in the school or college, or the skills mastered in the workshop or on the playground....can all be useful for life
- Instil in them a positive outlook on life and on the future; impart to them a sense of their human and their Christian vocation and show them the many ways in which these can be lived out;
- Give them information about the world of work, the various professions and their requirements; help them to assess their interests, aptitudes and possibilities;
- Affirm the positive gifts each young person has; give them experiences of success in the things they do well; help them to build up their self-confidence and to learn from life's experiences;
- Prepare the young to face the real world; give them a balanced attitude towards persons, events and information;
- Train them to responsibility and generosity; enable them to stand on their own feet and to look at life in terms of service;
- Make them aware of and concerned for the needs of the Church and the world; help them to discern the voice of God in the cries of their brethren;
- Help them to discover God's initiative in their lives, and to enter into dialogue with Him, in which they listen and respond creatively by drawing up their "plan of life".

7. THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF VOCATIONS

In common usage the word "vocation" is generally associated with those who are called to, or live in, the priestly and religious way of life.

However, a correct understanding leads us to speak of two basic vocations, viz. the "human vocation" and the "Christian Vocation", the latter being lived out in a number of "specific vocations".

The human vocation

This is the vocation of every human being who is called by God to develop himself, to dominate the universe, to share this world with others, to join with them in shaping of history, and to respond to God in knowledge and freedom, prayer and worship.

Every human being has to recognize life as a gift and a responsibility, and accept it as housing a divine presence.

The Christian vocation

Over and above the human vocation, God gives a further and totally unmerited call. Through baptism, He calls persons to live their lives in communion with the Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit. This is the Christian vocation, and it is a call to become and to live as sons and daughters of God in Jesus Christ, and as members of the Church, taking part in its mission.

This basic Christian vocation can be lived in variety of ways, each of them being a specific vocation:

a. *THE LAY VOCATION* in its three forms of: the vocation to the single life, the vocation to marriage, and the vocation to consecrated secularity;

b. *THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION* which can be lived out in a monastic or in a apostolic way of life, and according to a variety of charism;

c. *THE PRIESTLY VOCATION* which has variations like the diocesan and the religious priesthood, or the permanent diaconate, whether as a single or as a married person;

d. *THE MISSIONARY VOCATION* which is open to all the previous specific ways of living the Christian life – whether as a lay person, as a religious or as a priest.

Faced with such an array of vocations in the Church, it is imperative that, in our work of education and evangelization, we endeavor to give each one of our young people, Christian and Non-Christian alike, a sense of their human vocation; and that we undertake to set before our Christian youngsters the wide variety of vocational options that are open to them in the Church, assisting them at the same time to find out the one that God calls them to.

The sad fact is that most of our young people do not see their as a vocation; they are hardly aware of the choices that are open to them; if they are aware they are often very badly informed about them; and if they are properly informed, they receive hardly any help and encouragement to discern or read the signs of God in their own lives, and to follow the path they have discovered to be their own.

DISCUSSION (15 minutes)

After the input, the leader gives the participants some time to ask questions, to clarify points, and to seek more information.

Then, he invites them to go back to their small groups, and assigns them the following tasks:

1. Name five important skills that our young people would need for a successful adult life in society and in the Church.
2. Name five things we could do to give them those skills

WRAP-UP

The feedback from the group is recorded on a large sheet of paper or on a blackboard. Convergences are noted, and the leader seeks to draw the sessions to a close by helping the assembly arrive at some concrete resolutions.

EVALUATION

For an evaluation of the session, the leader makes use of the sheets given elsewhere in this manual

CONCLUSION

The leader may conclude with a prayer, a song, a short meditation or whatever the group feels comfortable with.

LIFE CHOICES

GROUP ACTIVITY

STEP 1 (Brainstorming)

Each one in the group takes a piece of paper and jots down whatever reasons come to his or her mind as answers to the following questions:

Why do young people choose a particular profession?

When all have finished, each one reads out his or her answers while someone records them on the blackboard, or on a large sheet of paper.

STEP 2 (Analysis)

The group now analyses the motivations behind each answer, distinguishing between various kinds of motivations:

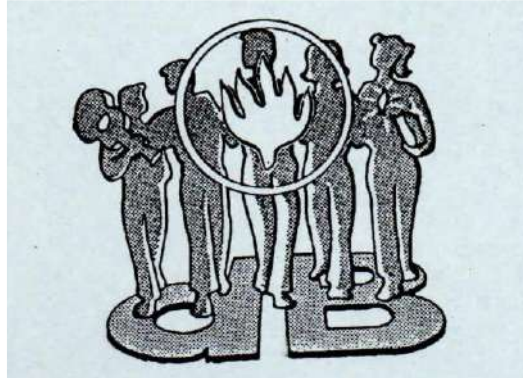
- Those that are just plain selfish;
- Those that seem worthy of considerations;
- Those that are altruistic; and
- Those that are explicitly referred to God.

STEP 3 (Discussion)

In the light of the above exercise, the group discusses the following questions:

1. What is the meaning of "vocation"? Does every person have a vocation or is it given only to some?
2. What is the difference between a profession and a vocation?

Someone is deputed by the group to report to the assembly on the results of the discussion.



OUR STYLE – THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM

Don Bosco was going round the Technical School of St. Michael, Rome when a boy bounced downstairs singing and whistling. The Rector scolded him for his ill-mannered behaviour.

“Did the boy do anything wrong?” asked Don Bosco.

“Don’t you think that such loud whistling was uncivil?”

“But it was not a deliberate infraction,” said Don Bosco. “I expect silence at certain hours of the day too, but I ignore minor, thoughtless slips. Besides, I let my boys shout and sing in the play grounds and on the stairways. Don’t you think we ought to go and cheer him up?”

The Rector courteously agreed. In the shop Don Bosco called the boy over to him; bitter and dejected he shuffled over.

“Come here, my friend,” Don Bosco said to him. “I want to tell you something. Don’t be afraid. Your superior has kindly given me permission to talk to you. Cheer up! Everything is all right, provided that you be a good boy from now on and we remain friends. Take his medal and say a Hail Mary for me!” (BM V, p. 551)

Salesian youth ministry is carried out in a certain way after the style of Don Bosco, Section 5 deals with the Salesian style of reaching out to the young and accompanying them in their growth.

In this section our lay collaborators will come to know more about Don Bosco’s Preventive System and its three pillars – Reason, Religion and Loving-Kindness; they will also come to consider it not just as an educational method but as a spirituality and a way to holiness.



SESSION 1

AN EDUCATIVE METHOD BASED ON REASON

AN EDUCATIVE METHOD BASED ON REASON

“Instead of constraint, the Preventive System appeals to the resources of intelligence, love and the desire for God, which everyone has in the depths of his being” (C 38).

OBJECTIVES

1. To create an awareness among our lay collaborators that reason and a reasonable approach are determining factors in the Salesian style of presence among young people.
2. To bring out collaborators to apply some of the practical implications of the role of reason to their behaviour and style of presence among the young.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of the Hand-out, Summary Sheet (pp. 9 – 10), for the participants, if desired.

Suggested: the 20 points of the input on an overhead projector or on posters, for the participants to follow as the input proceeds.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, noting that reason and reasonableness are like common sense – they are not always so common! He mentions how important reason was for Don Bosco in determining his style of being among and working with young people.

He then leads into the opening activity.

ACTIVITY (15 minutes)**PURPOSE:**

To have the participants recall how they felt when their younger days they were dealt with unreasonably by adults, and to draw from this motivation to take the day's topic to heart.

PROCEDURE:

The leader invites the participants to do the following exercise, using these or similar words:

Takes a few moment and reflect on the years of your own youth. Try to recall some occasion when an adult – a parent, a teacher, an employer, a coach, or whosoever – dealt with you unreasonably. Try to recall the details of that event and how you felt.

After a few moments, the leader invites the participants to share their stories. He should make sure to get both the events and the resultant feelings.

DRAWING OUT:

By means of questions or comments on the stories that are shared, the leader tries to stress the power that these negative experiences exert on our memories, sometimes also on our view of ourselves and of others. He tries to develop a sense of the importance of the day's topic.

KEY CONCEPTS**1. ORIENTATION**

- a. The sharing of stories we have just engaged in highlights how unreasonable behaviour by educators can hurt young people; in fact, it becomes literally deformative.
- b. Salesians want that not only the CONTENT of their service to young people should be educative, but the STYLE of their service as well.
- c. Don Bosco shows us that when we act reasonably with young people, we are appealing to their own inner light, and we make it easier for them to respond to our direction. We show them reasonable ways of interacting, and thus our very style of being among them becomes formative in a positive way.
- d. In future sessions, we will look at how loving-kindness and religion, and a sensitivity to the presence of and thirst for God in each one of us, should permeate the way we interact with young. For the moment, we want to look at “reason and reasonableness” as factors which should also define our youth ministry.

2. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Today, rather than give a talk on the role of reason in Salesian youth work, we prefer to consider some practical suggestions for making our style of presence more “reasonable”

(The following points are by no means a complete list. The leaders should feel free to add to them, edit them, and to comment upon them as he sees fit. It would be good to have each point shown on an overhead projector, or at least put up on a poster, one at a time. The Hand-out should be given only at the end.)

(1) Explain to your young people why you do what you are doing.

Do not assume they immediately grasp the rationale for your actions and demands. Enable them to respond to your direction because they perceive the goodness and reasonableness of it, not because of external pressure or fear of punishment.

(2) Clearly make known your rules and requirements.

Young people often break rules without realizing it. Take time to clarify what is expected. And they forget easily, so give frequent reminders.

(3) Keep your rules simple and easy to remember.

Endless lists of complex rules are never remembered; they become oppressive, and breed resentment. Keep it simple!

(4) Understand what is going inside young people, so that you can act reasonably with them.

Many different things are going on in each young person. The more we are aware of them, the easier it is for us to interpret and respond to their behaviours. For example, underlying much adolescent behaviour we may find: a searching for their own identity; a weakness in the face of peer pressure; a search for satisfactory role models; and an experimentation with freedom and independence from adults.

(5) Be reasonable in what you require of young people.

If you ask them to do what is too difficult, what is childish or silly, what seems vindictive, or what is not in their best interests, you are asking for trouble.

(6) Be at your place before the young people arrive.

By being at the bus, on the field, in the classroom or cafeteria before the young people get there, you are in a position to set the tone and prevent misconduct before it happens.

(7) Be with your young people all the time.

Remain with your young people for the entire time you are responsible for them, or at least until someone else can take your place.

(8) Use their life experiences as a frame of reference.

Young people love to talk about themselves. By using their present reality and their hopes for the future as a constant frame of reference, you will find they listen to you more easily.

(9) Find the positive and build on it.

Young people would rather look at their good points and talents than at their faults and defects. By starting with their good qualities and what they can do well, you can more easily help them face their faults and their need for growth.

(10) Let them lead.

Whenever possible, in every kind of activity, try to let the young people take an active role in planning and carrying out the project. The more involved they are, the more cooperative they will be. While leading, they learn a whole new set of skills.

(11) Set learning goals for or draw out some learnings from every activity.

There is always something that at least some of the youth still need to learn, say, about things like hitting a ball, resolving a conflict, getting sick, understanding mathematics or suffering the painful consequences of a foolish deed.

(12) Encourage questions and suggestions.

Young people do not always assume their questions are welcome, and adults often bristle when young people offer them suggestions. Invite questions, and face it: sometimes kids can have a better idea!

(13) Do not correct young people in public.

While some actions may call for an immediate response from us, in general we should try to correct young people privately. The embarrassment of a public correction often makes a deeper impact on the youngster than the substance of the correction itself, and can breed resentment.

(14) If you must punish, punish reasonably.

When an educator has been able to win the confidence of young people, punishments are rarely needed. It is enough to let them know you are disappointed. Still, when and if punishments are needed, be sure they are proportionated to the offence, that they are given when you are calm and reasonable, and that they have no hint of revenge in them.

(15) Praise more than you correct.

When you are generous in praising your young people, they know you really see them and esteem them as persons, and they accept your corrections more easily. It is not a question of neglecting corrections, but also of balancing it with attention to positive qualities.

(16) Encourage group evaluations and a sharing of learnings.

At the end of a good day or a bad day, a game won or lost, invite the young people to assess their activity and their performance and to share what they have learned. You thereby create an environment where even failures become learning opportunities. When learnings are shared, everyone learns more.

(17) Develop critical reflection skills.

Many adults simply pass on to young people their own critiques of ideas, events and issues. Help the young to reflect for themselves and to form their own views: they need to develop these much needed skills. Realize, too, that as these skills are developed, they may sometimes be aimed at us, our institutions and our activities!

(18) Share your difficulties with your colleagues.

Within the educative community, we do well to share our problems. We each have experiences, insights and ideas that can benefit one another. No one needs to suffer in silence!

(19) Be consistent.

The adults who lead and assume responsibilities in the educative community should be consistent with each other, as well as with themselves. If each one has widely differing expectations, standards of behaviour and patterns of response, we confuse the young people.

(20) Be reasonable with yourself.

Do not try to do more than you can; do not be afraid to ask help; do not fail to rest when you need to. You cannot be the Salesian presence among the young that you want to be if you do not first take care of yourself.

DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

The leader breaks the assembly into small discussions groups and asks them to look at the following two questions. The first should be dealt with briefly, with real discussion focusing on the second.

1. Which of the suggestions reviewed today would be most helpful to you personally?
2. As you think about the work that we do here and the way we do it, does anything strike you as unreasonable? If so, what?

The leader reminds the groups that someone should be ready to report. Reports should be limited to questions # 2

WRAP-UP (20 minutes)

The leader invites the groups to report on the second question, that is, to look at the things that seem unreasonable in what the educative community does, or in the way it is done.

The leader then synthesizes the issues, and points out whatever implications seem most appropriate, For example:

- The need for some behaviour changes in the group;
- The need for the institutions to reconsider a policy or a previous decision;
- The need for the institutions, or some groups within it, to formulate a decision with respect to some matter at hand.

EVALUATION (15 minutes)

The leader invites everyone to fill out an evaluation sheet, sample of which are provided in this manual.

Afterwards, he invites the participants to turn briefly to the persons around them, and to share any personal assessment of the day they may wish to make: what I felt, what I learned, I am glad that, I was disappointed that, etc.

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes with a prayer, hymn, poem, or whatever else seems appropriate.

REFERENCE

Don Bosco, *The Preventive System in Education of the Young*," in: *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*, Rome 1984, pp. 246 – 253.

"Some may say that this system is difficult in practice. I reply that for pupils it is easier, more satisfactory and more advantageous. To the teacher it certainly does present some difficulties, which however can be diminished if he applies himself to his task with zeal. An educator is one who is consecrated to the welfare of his pupils, and therefore he should be ready to face every difficulty and fatigue in order to attain his object, which is the civic, moral and intellectual and education of his pupils" (Don Bosco, *The Preventive System....*" P. 251).

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR A “REASONABLE” PRESENCE AMONG YOUTH

SUMMARY

- (1) Explain to your young people why you do what you are doing.
- (2) Clearly make known your rules and requirements.
- (3) Keep your rules simple and easy to remember.
- (4) Understand what is going on inside young people, so that you can act reasonably with them
- (5) Be reasonable in what you require of young people.
- (6) Be at your place before the young people arrive.
- (7) Be with your young people all the time.
- (8) Use their life experiences as a frame of reference.
- (9) Find the positive and build on it.
- (10) Let them lead.
- (11) Set learning goals for or draw out some learnings from every activity.
- (12) Encourage questions and suggestions.
- (13) Do not correct young people in public.
- (14) If you must punish, punish reasonably.
- (15) Praise more than you correct.
- (16) Encourage group evaluations and a sharing of learnings.
- (17) Develop critical reflection skills.
- (18) Share your difficulties with your colleagues.
- (19) Be consistent.
- (20) Be reasonable with yourself.



SESSION 2

AN EDUCATIVE METHOD BASED ON RELIGION

AN EDUCATIVE METHOD BASED ON RELIGION

“A merchant (is) looking for fine pearls; when he finds one of great value he goes and sell everything he owns, and buys it” (Mt. 13, 45).

OBJECTIVE

To bring our lay collaborators:

- To understand and appreciate the place of religion in Don Bosco’s Preventive System,
- And to want to practice it in their work with the young.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of Hand-Out 1 (p. 9), 2 (p.11), 3 (p.13) for the participants.

A large sheet of paper or a blackboard.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topics with the following ideas.

Don Bosco left us the legacy of a style of service to the young based on the three fundamental elements: reason, religion and loving-kindness.

This session will focus on the second of these elements, via. Religion.

We shall begin this topic with an activity concerning the place of religion in our life.

ACTIVITY (20 minutes)

The leader distributes Hand-out 1 to the participants. He asks them to go through the five cases and to reflect by themselves on the questions given at the end.

After a brief time for reflection, he invites the participants to form a small, informal group with two or three participants sitting about them, and to share their reflections.

There is no reporting back to the assembly, as the exercise is meant only to simulate interest in and an initial reflection on the subject. But the leader may extend an open invitation to anyone who wishes to share his reflections with the assembly.

The point being made in this activity is that religion is not just a matter of practices but something deeper as it affects the way a person lives. This should lead into the input that follows.

KEY CONCEPTS**1. WHAT IS RELIGION?**

- a. Normally, when we speak religion, or man's relationship with Transcendent, we usually associate it with the various doctrines, practices and customs that are a part of any faith. No doubt, these external and visible aspects are important and necessary (for man is not a pure spirit but is made up of body and soul, and must therefore necessarily give expression to the faith that lies within him).
- b. But, we must not lose sight of the fact that religion lies primarily in the depths of a person's conscience, for in every human being there is an innate longing for the divine, the Transcendent.

Religion means perceiving the Mystery in nature and in human life and history.

Above all, religion is the fullness of meaning; it means to acknowledge God as Father, to live in the light of this conviction and to model one's existence in line with this belief.

- c. Seen this way, religion something far more and far deeper than "practices". Religion manifests itself also and above all in the ordinary events of daily life. Often, these apparently human events take on a religious character, and become "religious experiences", or experiences of God. Through them, people are able to cope with the many mysteries that form part of human life.
- d. This is how religion seeks to save the soul, to "save life" from meaninglessness and despair, and to give it instead a fullness of meaning that galvanizes it into action, sustains it, and fills it with peace, joy and hope.

2. DON BOSCO AND RELIGION

- a. In his work the young, Don Bosco made religion one of the three pillars of his Preventive System, together with reason and loving-kindness. However, religion is not just one element alongside the others. There is a close interplay between the three elements, with religion impregnating reason and loving-kindness, giving them a depth-dimension, and in turn being permeated by them. This is why religion takes pride of place among the elements of Don Bosco's system.
- b. Don Bosco was convinced that the educator's loving-kindness must be inspired by charity ("pastoral charity") which has its roots in the love of God and its model in the attitudes of Jesus Christ. Only then, he felt, will it be able to blossom into a love which is more than just a warm friendship: the educator will recognize the intrinsic value of each young person in the eyes of God, and come close to venerating the mystery of his destiny.
- c. Reason on the other hand, as Don Bosco saw it, has to draw from and lead to religious motives. From him, education is a process based on the motivation of charity (love of God) and ultimately leading to God. Don Bosco was convinced that religion serves to form the conscience of the young. In fact, the "discipline" that he was able to obtain at the Oratory was the fruit of religion.

When an English cabinet minister, on a visit to the Oratory at Turin, asked in his amazement how it was possible to obtain the sense of responsibility and collaboration that he noticed in the boys, Don Bosco spoke to him of religious convictions and practice being powerful means of education. "Quite true!" rejoined the minister, and echoing Don Bosco's words, he said: "It is either religion or the stick!" (BM VII, p.337).

3. THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION AT THE ORATORY

Religion at the Oratory was something all-encompassing; it permeated every activity and came to be expressed in a variety of ways, among which we might mention the following:

a. A religious climate

The educators – priests, students and lay collaborators – contributed to it through their exemplary lives; so did public signs like statues, pictures, crucifixes and inscriptions.

The secret of Don Bosco's success, remarked Pope Paul VI on one occasion, lay in the fact that he introduced the boys to God, not only through the door of the chapel, but through the door of the workshop and playground as well.

b. A religious outlook on life

Everything at the Oratory was lived and accomplished in the light of God and at His service. There was much insistence on the fatherly presence of God and on the response of filial obedience and love. Herein lay the religious source of the happiness that was to be found at the Oratory: "Serve the Lord in gladness."

c. A solid catechetical instruction

This meant learning the Catholic faith. It took place during class-hours on weekdays and the catechesis on Sundays. Further impetus was given it on special occasions like triduum's, novenas, "months" ...when interest was stirred up through prizes and competitions.

d. Religious practices

At the Oratory there were the usual practices of piety: daily prayer, which according to the catechism of the time, ought to take place "at the beginning and at the end of the day, before and after meals, before beginning work"; daily Mass, devotion to BI. Virgin and to the saints.

e. Sacramental Life

As Don Bosco saw it, all that was required of the educator was to put the youngster in direct contact with the Lord through an experience of the sacrament of the Eucharist and regular confession. One this took place, the youngster would find in Christ his "interior master" who would then influence him far more than other teachers could do.

f. Apostolic commitment

Don Bosco set up various apostolic groups (sodalities) so that the boys could be active both within the setting of the Oratory and outside as well. When, for instance, cholera struck the city of Turin, many of the boys belonging to the sodalities chose to give a helping hand.

g. The striving for holiness

This was the culminating point of all that was done at the Oratory. Don Bosco presented the striving for holiness as the "normal" path for Christians to follow, that is to say, as a path that was within the reach of every good Christians; he convinced his boys that it was easy too because it did not require them to do extraordinary things, but only to perform their daily duties well and out of love for God.

4. INCULCATING A YOUTH SPIRITUALITY

- a. Times change, and so do situations, practices, and vocabulary. Religion still remains one of the three pillars of the Preventive System of Don Bosco in our Salesian service to the young. But, while the basics of religion are the same as they were in Don Bosco's time, its forms and expressions have been adapted to the youth condition of today.

- b. Salesians today speak in terms of inculcating a religious experience in young people – a YOUTH SPIRITUALITY – drawing their inspiration for it, of course, from Don Bosco himself (cf. GC 23 # 158 – 180).
- c. This spirituality aims at helping the young person to integrate his faith with his life. It is summed up in the following 5 nuclei:

(1) A SPIRITUALITY OF ORDINARY DAILY LIFE

Daily life is lived out as the setting where one meets God. To accept the challenges, questions and tensions of growth; to work to overcome the ambiguities present in daily existence; to leaven everything with love – all this is part of the process necessary for discovering the voice of God and responding to it in daily living.

(2) A SPIRITUALITY OF JOY AND OPTIMISM

Daily life is lived out in a simple, serene and happy form of holiness which brings together in a single vital experience the joyful daily rough and tumble of a playground, serious study, and a constant sense of duty.

(3) A SPIRITUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

Daily life is lived out in a relation of friendship with Jesus who is perceived as Friend, Teacher and Saviour and in whom is found the fullest meaning of life.

(4) A SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION IN THE CHURCH

Daily life is lived out in the Church as the natural setting for growth in the faith through the sacraments, for fellowship and shared responsibility. In the Church too we find Mary who goes in front, accompanies and inspires.

(5) A SPIRITUALITY OF RESPONSIBLE SERVICE

Daily life is lived out by the young as a setting for service, where the young involve themselves in situations of need which call for the generous giving of themselves to others, even to the point of committing their whole life to a cause.

DISCUSSION

After the input, the leader may allow some time for clarification, if necessary

He then invites the participants to break into small groups, distributes Hand-out 2, and allots a question to each group for discussion.

WRAP-UP

When the groups reassemble, the leader asks for a brief feedback from each group. Since the feedback will probably be in the form of suggestions, these could be recorded on the blackboard or on a large sheet of paper.

The leader may then wish to understand certain suggestions or he may try to bring the participants to arrive at some concrete lines of action.

EVALUATION

For an evaluation of the session, the leader distributes Hand-out 3 to be filled in by each participant.

As for a personal evaluation, the participants could be invited to write out a brief personal prayer to God, describing their feelings about what they have learned in the session.

CONCLUSION

The session may conclude with a short prayer service. All may take part, including those of other religions.

IS THIS A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE?

Case 1

A nine-year-old boy is hit by a speeding car; apparently, the driver is drunk. The boy breaks his back and remains paralyzed for the rest of his life. His family is furious and they want to finish the driver. One day he appears at the hospital room and asks for forgiveness. The family refuses, but the boy says: "I have forgiven you a long time ago."

Case 2

A group of young people in a parish decide to take off for a missionary experience in a poor country. They want God's love to reach the poor in real, concrete ways. They have been meeting regularly for prayer. They know there is a deeper message they have to bring to those people, and they feel confident they can do it.

Case 3

Nellie lives in one of our modern cities. She is caught up in the hustle and bustle of everyday life. Often, at the end of a hard day's work, she goes to a monastery on the top of a hill. In the midst of nature, she finds some peace and quiet. There too she is able to spend time with God.

Case 4

Christiane is the mother of six children. She has to get up early every morning to prepare the kids for the school. She spends the rest of her day doing the many household chores. At the end of the day, she finds herself tired but happy. She has found God in the midst of her family.

Case 5

Robert received a good Christian education. Although his family was poor, he was able to complete his university studies because of the sacrifices his father made for him. On entering politics, he had to struggle hard against the unjust treatment meted out to the poor. Many a time he found his political career in danger because of the outspoken stand he took in favor of the downtrodden. Everybody knew he was a Christian. There were times when he thought of giving up, but his conscious told him to keep on struggling.

For your reflection (and sharing)

Which of these cases describe a religious experience? Why would you think so?

What place does religion occupy in the lives of the persons concerned in each case?

RELIGION

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As lay collaborators, we care for the young according to the style of Don Bosco.

How can we become more aware of God's active presence in our own lives?

In our life and work among the young, which are our most significant religious experience?

What are the obstacles that come in the way of our having a genuine experience of God?

2. Many youngsters in our youth centres and schools have never learned how to deal with religion and how to integrate the dimension of the Transcendent in their lives.

What could be the first two or three steps that would be needed to bring about an awareness of God in them?

3. Many of our youngsters belong to other religions.

How can we respond to their religious needs in our Salesian schools or youth centres?

How can we introduce them to the Christian religion?

What criteria should we follow with regard to their participation in Catholic services?

4. How could we create a religious climate in our schools or youth centres so that everyone, including those of other religions, experiences a sense of God in the environment, and at the same time feels free and at home with us?

Which elements (signs, gestures, attitudes, activities) would we consider indispensable for the creation of this climate?

RELIGION

SESSION EVALUATION

Please use a rating scale of 1 – 10, 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

1. The objective of the session was clear to me. _____
2. The objective of the session was attained. _____
3. The contents of the session were clearly presented. _____
4. The contents of the session were relevant to me. _____
5. The session was conducted in an interesting manner. _____
6. The activities of the session were helpful. _____
7. The leader of the session did a good job. _____



SESSION 3

AN EDUCATIVE METHOD BASED ON LOVING -KINDNESS

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“Education is a matter of the heart” (Don Bosco).

OBJECTIVE

To bring our lay collaborators to a good understanding, appreciation and practice of Salesian Assistance.

MATERIAL NEEDED

A copy of Hand-outs 1 (pp.13 – 14) for every participant.

INTRODUCTION

The leader begins by linking up with the previous sessions on Reason and Religion. Loving-kindness, he points out, is the third key elements of the Preventive System of Don Bosco. A good way to deepen our understanding of it would be to study the letter Don Bosco wrote from Rome in 1884. To introduce the letter, the leader addresses the participants in these or similar words.

Towards the close of his life, Don Bosco was preoccupied about ensuring the continuation and spread of his educative work. The Oratory of Turin was undergoing many changes – and Don Bosco was not always happy with what we saw. Consequently, he wrote a letter while he was Rome in 1884, and in it he speaks of his preoccupation to his educators and pupils at the Oratory.

Today we consider this document to be a statement of his convictions and a recapitulation of his best educative experiences. Among other things you will see how Don Bosco describe the theme of loving-kindness.

ACTIVITY (40 minutes)

PURPOSE:

The leader announces that he is going to give each one a copy of an extract from Don Bosco’s letter; he adds that while each one reads the letter, he/she should keep in mind the following three questions that will have to be answered afterwards, viz.

1. Share with your fellow participants about the aspects of the letter that impressed you most.
2. Describe the characteristics of the two settings of the Oratory – that of the early days and that of 1884.
3. Discuss the lessons that you think this letter conveys on the theme of loving-kindness.

PROCEDURE

Then the leader proceeds in either of the two following ways:

- A. *The participants are formed into groups of five. Copies of the Hand-out 1 are distributed. Each one has to read the extract from the letter in silence about ten minutes should be sufficient for the purpose. Then as a group they take up for the discussion the questions given at the end of the Hand-out.*

B. *Alternatively, three persons read aloud the whole extract in the form of a dialogue, taking the parts of Don Bosco, Valfre and Buzzetti, while the assembly follows closely on the Hand-out which has been distributed. After the reading, the participants are divided into groups of five each, and asked to take up the questions given at the end of the extract.*

After some twenty minutes, the participants come together in assembly. They report briefly on their discussions.

DRAWING – OUT

As the report are read, the leader tries to bring the assembly to a summary of the principal assertions in the letter on the subject of loving-kindness – which would be along the following lines:

- Education is a matter of the heart; in other words, mutual trust is indispensable for the work of education
- Mutual trust grows out of love.
- Love comes from closeness
- Closeness takes place through presence.

Then the leader begins his presentation of the Key concepts – in these or similar words

KEY CONCEPTS

1. ASSISTANCE, A PARTICULAR FORM OF LOVING – KINDNESS

Don Bosco saw loving-kindness primarily (though not exclusively) as an active, friendly presence of the educator among the young. And he had a name for this type of presence – he called it Assistance.

Fr. Lemoyne, his biographer, writes that his love for the young was such that “he himself was always with them...going from one group to another. Without their being aware of it, he sounded them out, to discover their moral character and needs. He would whisper confidentially to one boy or another some spiritual advice or an invitation to approach the sacraments, or he would linger with those who seemed to be lonely and try to cheer them up with some joke. He himself was always cheerful and smiling, though nothing ever escaped his vigilant eye” (BM III, pp. 79 – 80)

And in his goodnight of August 1863, Don Bosco told his boys: “I am here every moment of the day and night for you” (BM VII, p. 302).

2. THE PROTECTIVE FUNCTION OF ASSISTANCE

Why the presence among the young? For one thing, Don Bosco did not have an unbridled optimism about his boys. No doubt, he was unashamedly optimistic when appealing to their sense of responsibility (“even the most callous boys have a soft spot”), but as he told his teachers and assistants, “boys break the rules more through thoughtlessness than through malice, more through the lack of proper supervision than through evil intent” (BM IV, p. 386). He was also aware of the spiritual condition of the young at their time of entering one of his institutions. The *Biographical Memoirs* inform us that “among the many boys entering the Oratory, there would unavoidably be some who were corrupt, worldly-minded, unbridled, pleasure-loving, little inclined to piety, slothful, and even morally dangerous” (BM IV, p.395).

3. THE POSITIVE FUNCTION OF ASSISTANCE

But, while Assistance, according to the mind of Don Bosco, did have a **protective function** in the first place, it had above all a **positive and constructive function**. In his *Confidential Directives to the Rectors*, he said: "Spend as much time as you well know, whenever you see the need. This is the secret of becoming the master of their heart" (BM X, p.449).

And in one of his conferences, he said: "See the effort a gardener puts into cultivating a seeding – effort thrown to the wind, you might say. Yet he knows that, given time, the seedling will produce abundantly. Hence, regardless of effort he toils and sweats to till the soil – spading, hoeing, fertilizing, weeding, planting and sowing. Then he carefully makes sure that no one tramples the seeded ground and that birds and chickens do not peck at the seed. Happily, he watches the seedling grow: 'It is sprouting; it has two leaves, three!' Then he prepared a graft, selecting with exquisite care the best of his garden plants. He slices off a branch, binding the graft to keep it from the cold and damp. If the young stalk sags to one side, he quickly adds a support to keep it straight; if he feels it will yield to wind and storm, he drives in a stake and binds them together to forestall damage. If you wonder why he expends all the care, he answers, 'Because without it, it will bear no fruit. He wants a good crop; I have to do all this.' Yet, remember, sometimes, despite all his care, the graft does not take and he loses the plant. It is only the hope of success which makes him do all that work" (BM XII, pp. 330 - 331).

4. THE PRACTICAL FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

So, Assistance, for Don Bosco, was not a matter of "controlling", "preventing" or "containing" eventual infractions of the rule; that, according to Don Bosco, would be a characteristic of the Repressive System.

In concrete terms instead, Assistance as a loving, active presence entailed:

Taking the first step: Going out to meet the young, showing initiative and creativity, knowing how to build bridges.

Being with the young: "Here in your midst I feel completely at home; for me, living means being here with you" (BM IV, p. 455). Being close to and actively participating in the world of the young and the places they frequent; spending time with them.

Conversing: Entering into dialogue with the young on themes of interest to them.

Empathizing: Showing an ability to understand deeply the feelings of young people.

Suggesting: Proposing activities, giving ideas, offering advice, (and when in groups) stimulating the young to share ...

Bearing witness: Manifesting through word and attitude the values one has incarnated in one's life, so that the young cannot fail to notice them; still more, having a ready answer to justify the faith one professes (cf. 1 Pt. 3, 15).

Forestalling: Being aware of the limitations and risks involved in the development of the young, and therefore being attentive to prevent whatever might seriously jeopardize it.

Creating a climate: Building up an atmosphere of invigorating values and relationships which stimulate growth to maturity.

Accompanying: Through patient dialogue helping the young to internalize values and convictions, and giving a feedback in order to improve their self- perception.

Making the young responsible: Getting them to collaborate and play their part in building up the climate of the institution; reviewing from time to time the decisions taken and their implementation.

Establishing new meeting-points: Encouraging socialization and celebration like free-time activities, outings, inter-group encounters, and youth celebrations.

DISCUSSION

The leader allows some time for clarification. Then he distributes Hand-out 2 and invites the participants to examine themselves regarding their presence among the young.

At the end of the exercise, he tells the participants that while there are no right or wrong answers, they could arrive at a rough evaluation of themselves by seeing how far their answers stand in relation to the ideal represented in the following answers:

1 – Never	2 – Always	3 – Never	4 – Always	5 – Always
6 – Never	7 – Never	8 – Always	9 – Always	10 – Never

WRAP-UP

Finally, the leader invites the assembly to engage in a quick brainstorming of ideas to improve the practice of loving-kindness in the form of Assistance in the educative community. He tries to forge a consensus on one or two practical commitments.

EVALUATION

To evaluate the session, one of the sheets provided in this manual may be used.

CONCLUSION

The session is brought to a close with a hymn or a prayer.

REFERENCES

P. Braido, "L'amorevolezza, supremo principio del metodo," in: *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, Zurich 1964, pp. 156 - 163.

"La Amabilidad. Relacion Educativa" = Booklet 3.3 of *Guiones para la formacion permanente de la comunidad educativa: 3. Nuestra propuesta educativa*, Rome 1986.

"As regards yourself, behave in such a way that all those who speak to you may become your friends" (Don Bosco).

LETTER FROM ROME

Rome, 10 May 1884

My dear sons in Jesus Christ,

Whether I am at home or away I am always thinking of you. I have only one wish, to see you happy in this world and in the next. It was this idea, this wish of mine, that made me write this letter. Being away from you, and not being able to see or hear you, upsets me more than you can imagine... And so, although I shall be back very soon, I want to send you this letter in advance, since I cannot yet be with you in person. These words come from someone who loves you very dearly..., someone who has the duty of speaking to you with the freedom of a father. You'll let me do that, won't you? And you will pay attention to what I am going to say to you, and put it into practice.

I have said that you are always and exclusively in my thoughts. Well, a couple of evenings ago I had gone to my room, and while I was preparing for bed I began to say the prayers my good mother taught me, and whether I simply fell asleep or became distracted I don't know, but it seemed that two of the former pupils of the Oratory in its early days were standing there before me. One of them came up to me, greeted me warmly, and said: "Do you recognize me, Don Bosco?" "Of course I do!" I answered.

"And do you still remember me?" the man went on.

"I remember you and all the others. You're Valfre, and you were at the Oratory before 1870." "Tell me," went on Valfre, "would you like to see the youngsters who were at the Oratory in my time?"

"Yes, let me see them," I answered, "I would like that very much."

Valfre then showed me the boys just as they had been at that time, with the same age, build and looks. I seemed to be in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a scene full of life, full of movement, full of fun. Some were running, some were jumping, some were skipping. In one place they were playing leap-frog, in another a game, and in another a ball-game was in progress. In one corner a group of youngsters were gathered round a priest, hanging on his every word as he told them a story. In another a cleric was playing with a number of lads at "chase the donkey" and "trades". There was singing and laughing on all sides, there were priests and clerics everywhere and the boys were yelling and shouting all round them. You could see that the greatest cordiality and confidence reigned between youngsters and superiors. I was overjoyed at the sight, and Valfre said to me: "You see, closeness leads to affection, and affection brings confidence. It is this that opens hearts and the young people express everything without fear to the teachers, to the assistants and to the superiors. They become frank, ... and they will do everything they are asked by one whom they know loves them."

At that moment the other past pupil, who had a white beard came up to me and said: "Don Bosco, would you like to see and know the boys who are at the Oratory at the present time?" This man was Joseph Buzzetti.

"Yes," I replied, "it is a month since I last saw them." And he showed them to me.

I saw the Oratory and all of you in recreation. But no more could I hear the joyful shouts and singing, no longer was there the lively activity of the previous scene. In the faces and actions of many boys there was evident a weary boredom, a surliness, a suspicion, that pained me. I saw many, it is true, who ran about and played in light-hearted joy. But I saw quite a number of others on their own, leaning against its pillars, a prey to depressing thoughts. Others were on the steps or in the corridors, or upon the terraces near the garden, so as to be away from the common recreation. Others were strolling about in groups, talking to each other in low tones and casting furtive and suspicious glances in every direction. Sometimes they would laugh, but with looks and smirks that would make you not only suspect but feel quite certain that St. Aloysius would have blushed to find himself in their company. Even among those who were playing, there were some so listless that it was clear they were not enjoying their games.

"Do you see your boys?" asked my former pupil.

"I can see them," I replied with a sigh.

"How different they are from what we used to be," went on the past pupil.

"Too true! What an apathetic recreation!"

"This is what gives rise to the coldness of so many in approaching the sacraments, to neglect of the prayers in church and elsewhere ... This is why they are ungrateful to their superiors, why they are secretive and grumble, with all the other regrettable consequences."

"I see, I understand," I said. "But how can we bring these youngsters back to life again, so that we can get back to the liveliness, the happiness, the warmth of the old days?"

"With charity!"

"With charity? But don't my boys get enough love? You know how I love them. You know how much I have suffered and put up with for them these forty years, and how much I endure and suffer even now. How many hardships, how many humiliations, how much opposition, how many persecutions to give them bread, a home, teachers, and especially to provide for the salvation of their souls. I have done everything I possibly could for them; they are the object of all my affections."

"I'm not referring to you."

"Then to whom are you referring? To those who take my place? To the rectors, the prefects, the teachers, the assistants? Don't you see that they are martyrs to study and work, and how they burn out their young lives for those Divine Providence has entrusted to them?"

"I can see all that and I am well aware of it, but it is not enough; the best thing is missing."

"All right, then. What is it that is missing?"

"That the youngsters should not only be loved, but that they themselves should know that they are loved."

"But haven't they got eyes in their heads? Have they no intelligence? Don't they see how much is done for them, and all of it out of love?"

"No, I repeat: it is not enough."

"Well, what else is needed?"

"By being loved in the things they like, through taking part in their youthful interests; they are led to love those things too which they find less attractive, _ such as discipline, study and self-denial, and so learn to do these things too with love."

"I'm afraid you'll have to explain that more clearly."

"Look at the youngsters in recreation."

I looked, and then asked, "Well, what is special about it?"

"You've been educating young people for so many years and you don't understand! Look harder! Where are our Salesians?"

I looked, and I saw that very few priests and clerics mixed with the boys, and fewer still were joining in their games. The superiors were no longer the heart and soul of the recreation. Most of them were walking up and down, chatting among themselves without taking any notice of what the pupils were doing. Others looked on at the recreation but paid little heed to the boys. Others supervised from afar, not noticing whether anyone was doing something wrong. Some did take notice but only rarely, and then in a threatening manner. Here and there a Salesian, did try to mix with a group of boys, but I saw that the latter were bent on keeping their distance from teachers and superiors.

Then my friend continued: "In the old days at the Oratory were you not always among the boys, especially during recreation? Do you remember those wonderful years? They were a foretaste of heaven, a period of which we have fond memories, because then love was the rule and we had no secrets from you."

"Yes, indeed! Everything was a joy for me then, and the boys used to rush near me and talk to me; they were anxious to hear my advice and put it into practice. But don't you see that now with these never-ending interviews, business matters, and my poor health I cannot do it anymore."

"Well and good, but if you cannot do it, why don't your Salesians follow the example you gave? Why don't you insist, why don't you demand that they treat the boys as you used to do?"

"I do. I talk till I'm blue in the face, but unfortunately not everyone nowadays feels like working as hard as we used to."

"And so by neglecting the lesser part they waste the greater, meaning all the work they put in. Let them like what pleases the youngsters and the youngsters will come to like what pleases the superiors. In this way their work will be made easy. The reason for the present change in the Oratory is that many of the boys no longer have confidence in their superiors. There was a time when all hearts were wide open to their superiors, when the boys loved them and gave them prompt obedience. But now the superiors are thought of precisely as superiors and no longer as fathers, brothers and friends; they are feared and little loved. And so if you want everyone to be of one heart and soul again ... you must break down this fatal barrier of mistrust, and replace it with a happy spirit of confidence. Then . . . the old peace and happiness will reign once again in the Oratory."

"How then are we to set about breaking down this barrier?"

"By" a friendly informal relationship with the boys, especially in recreation. You cannot have affection without this familiarity and where affection, is not evident there can be no confidence. If you want to be loved, you must make it clear that you love ... The teacher who is seen only in the classroom is a teacher and nothing more; but if he joins in

the pupils' recreation he becomes their brother. If someone is only seen preaching from the pulpit it will be said that he is doing no more and no less than his duty, whereas if he says a good word in recreation it is heard as the word of one who loves. What changes have been brought about by a few words whispered in the ear of a youngster while he is playing. One who knows he is loved loves in return, and one who loves can obtain anything, especially from the young. This confidence creates an electric current between youngsters and their superiors. Hearts are opened, needs and weaknesses made known. This love enables superiors to put up with the weariness, the annoyance, the ingratitude, the troubles that youngsters cause ... "

And now I must finish. Do you know what this poor old man who has spent his whole life for his dear boys wants from you? Nothing else than, due allowances being made, we should go back to the happy days of the Oratory of old: the days of affection and confidence between boys and superiors; ... the days when hearts were open with a simple candour, days of love and real joy for everyone. I want the consolation and hope that you will promise to do everything I desire for the good of your souls ...

With much love, your friend in Christ Jesus,
Fr. John Bosco

After all the members of your group have finished reading this extract of Don Bosco's letter,

1. Share with your fellow-members about the aspects of the letter that impressed you most.
2. Describe the characteristics of the two settings of the Oratory - that of the early days and that of 1884.
3. Discuss the lessons that you think this letter conveys on the theme of loving-kindness.

LOVING-KINDNESS

This is a *short exercise on the practice of loving-kindness as an active, friendly presence among the young.*

Please rate yourself on each of the following statements. Choose one of the five answers that you think applies to you. Remember that there are no right or wrong answers. You may have perfectly valid reasons for rating yourself in one way rather than another.

1. Whenever I am with youngsters, I feel threatened, as someone unable to relate to them.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

2. In the course of conversation, youngsters find in me a person who is ready to listen rather than to speak, someone who respects their opinions.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

3. I am a person with responsibilities that far exceed the amount of time I can spend with the youngsters and they sense it; so they "disturb" me as little as possible.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

4. If I notice that a youngster is depressed by the way he expresses himself and even by his very looks, I leave everything aside and talk with him.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

5. I sit in a group of youngsters while they are discussing and I allow them to make their own decisions. They might make mistakes but I prefer that they learn from them, as a rule.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

6. The more I give them, the more they take ... and so I am very cautious. I will not allow the youngsters to take advantage of me. I make sure they know the limits of their familiarity with me.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

7. Whenever I see a group of youngsters, I keep away from them and wait to see if they will approach me. If they do not, I do not bother at all.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

8. I will sit in the company of young people and forget about the time. I can see that my presence is accepted. I do not have to dress like them or speak like them, but "just be there".

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

9. At outings and informal gatherings, I am more concerned with where everyone is and what everyone is doing rather than getting lost in the organization of the activity.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

10. I feel I should not, step outside of my official responsibilities in order to be informally present with the youngsters.

Always Very often Frequently Sometimes Never

In the light of your answers, write down now what further steps you propose to take to show greater loving-kindness to the young people with whom you work



SESSION 4

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: A SPIRITUALITY

THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: A SPIRITUALITY

"The 'preventive system' ... in addition to being a method of education is above all a spirituality; it is a love freely given, inspired by the love of God ... " (GC 21 # 17).

OBJECTIVES

1. To clarify the meaning of spirituality for our lay collaborators.
2. To lead our lay collaborators to an understanding and appreciation of the Preventive System, not just as a method of education but also as a spirituality.
3. To increase in our lay collaborators, the desire to live the spirituality of the Preventive System.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A copy of the Hand-out (pp. 9 - 10) for each participant.

INTRODUCTION

The leader informs the participants that in this session he intends to explore with them the meaning of spirituality and its relation to their lives in the service of the young. Up to this point (in the previous sessions) they have seen the three fundamental elements of the Preventive System (Reason, Religion and Loving-kindness) as an educative method. The moment has now come for them to realize that at the heart of the Preventive System lies a spirituality.

ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

The participants are divided into groups of 5 - 7 each. Copies of the Hand-out are distributed and the participants are asked to work according to the instructions given.

When the exercise is over, all the groups come together, and each group is asked to report its findings briefly. Then, building as much as possible on their findings, the leader addresses the assembly in these or in similar words.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

While you were doing the exercise I gave you, you would probably have realized that beneath the outstanding characteristics of each individual person in your list, there was an underlying "spiritual" element in all of them which had something to do between that person and God.

Would you think that the "spiritual" element in them was only a matter of their praying to God? Their performing acts of penance and asceticism? Their being priests or religious?

Not really. For instance, praying is generally considered a holy action, but if I were to pray to be seen and applauded by others, would I really be a spiritual person? Or again, if I were to perform

heroic penances and mortifications, but people found it difficult to live with me or to relate to me, would I really be a spiritual person? And, does the mere fact of my being a priest or religious make me spiritual? Have you not, in fact, come across some priests and religious who did not impress you at all and whom you would in no way consider spiritual?

2. A LIFE PERMEATED BY FAITH AND CHARITY

You see, then, it is not just that some people or some things are spiritual and others are not. Spirituality is a matter of attitude. In all the persons whose names you had on your list, the one trait that stood out was not simply that they believed in God, but that their belief in God penetrated their everyday lives, transforming it, inspiring all that they did. Theirs was an integrated life so much so that their faith was the source, the driving force and the energy of everything in their lives. Spiritual persons are indeed whole persons - there is no dichotomy between what they believe in and the life they lead; on the contrary, their life is deeply permeated by their faith.

So, "spiritual" means to be moved in everything by one's faith in God, or by charity (which is faith in practice), or to put it in other words, to be moved by the Spirit of God. "You, however, live ... by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God has made a home in you" (Rm 8, 9).

3. THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM FOR THE SALVATION OF THE YOUNG - AN EXPRESSION OF DON BOSCO'S FAITH AND CHARITY

Having clarified the meaning of the word "spiritual", we now wish to consider Don Bosco and his Preventive System. Don Bosco was a spiritual person, a saint, and what stands out in him is that everything he did in his life, including his work for the education of the young, emanated from his priestly heart. So deeply imbued was he with his faith and love for Christ the Redeemer that he chose "Give me souls" for his motto.

One cannot imagine, for example, educators like Henry Pestalozzi, Frederick Froebel, Basedow or John Dewey speaking to youngsters the way Don Bosco addressed them in a "good night" of 1863: "I have something very important to tell you," he began. "I want you to help me in a matter that I have very much at heart - your eternal salvation. This is not only the main reason - it is the only reason why I am here" (P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, Zurich 1964, p. 126).

Don Bosco's work of education - his Preventive System - was not just an educative method: it originated from and was inspired by his zeal for souls; it was the ardent expression of his faith and love.

4. SALVATION, AN INTEGRAL REALITY

And just as his spirituality affected his whole person and all that he did, so too his work of saving souls took in a youngster's whole life and not only the spiritual aspect. Don Bosco had a holistic view of the person.

For Don Bosco "salvation" was not limited to a concern for the religious aspect of man; it did not mean only freedom from sin and growth in Christ right up to the level of sanctity. Don Bosco was aware that a humanly depressing situation of poverty and abandonment can be a serious risk for a person's eternal salvation. As a result of his contacts with delinquent youth in prisons and with boys who roamed the streets of Turin, he realized that if he wanted to save them, catechism would require personal relationships too, and religious instruction would have to go hand in hand with preparation in a school or workshop for the life in society.

Hence his zeal for souls (or what we call "pastoral charity") led him to launch out into every kind of initiative that he thought necessary for the total development of his young people. Behind it all was an integral concept of the boy: neither an angel nor a beast but a living synthesis of spiritual needs and bodily functions, an individual destined for heaven but entrusted with a mission on the earth below, someone anchored in God and a future citizen of heaven but also solidly established in the society of human beings as a citizen of the earthly city.

5. REASON, RELIGION AND LOVING-KINDNESS

This is why, on the one hand, he sought to impart a good education, a sense of duty, a training for a profession, and a preparation for insertion in society - all contents of what he called "**REASON**"; and on the other hand, he instilled morality, conscience, faith, an understanding of the truths of Christianity, religious practices, and an involvement in the life of the Church - elements that made up what he termed "**RELIGION**".

But, there was also a third crucial element: the method of **LOVING-KINDNESS**. Don Bosco was convinced that there was very little he would be able to achieve with his boys if he could not win their love and confidence. In that "good night" we referred to above, after telling his boys that he was there for only one purpose, viz. to help them save their souls, he went on: "We must be of one mind in this, and real confidence and friendship must unite us" (BM VII, p. 303).

6. THE ROOT OF THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: PASTORAL CHARITY

And so, all these three pillars or foundations of the Preventive System - Reason, Religion and Loving-kindness have their source and inspiration in pastoral charity. And as such, they become for the educator a way to his own sanctification, a path to achieve holiness. No wonder the Preventive System can rightfully boast of having made saints of both the educator (Don Bosco) and his pupil (Dominic Savio): it is more than a method of education; it is fundamentally a spirituality!

7. THE PREVENTIVE SYSTEM - A SPIRITUAL AND AN EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

To sum up, then, we can distinguish two different levels or aspects in Don Bosco's Preventive System, both of them closely linked with each other.

There is in the first place the **source of inspiration**, which creates a certain spiritual attitude in the person of the educator (the "pastoral thrust"): it is a way of thinking and feeling, of living and doing, a principle that inspires his whole existence. This is his **spiritual experience**, and its source of inspiration is pastoral charity. Don Bosco wrote in his little treatise on The Preventive System in the Education of the Young: "The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St. Paul who says: 'Love is patient and kind. . . Love bears all things ... hopes all things, endures all things.'"

And then, there is the **pedagogical method** on the level of action. Don Bosco described it, saying: "This system is based entirely on Reason and Religion, and above all, on Loving-kindness." This is the **educational experience**, which flows from the spiritual attitude.

DISCUSSION

After his presentation the leader allows some time for clarification. He then asks the participants to return to their groups to discuss the following questions. (25 minutes)

1. Is it important for an educator to be a spiritual person? Why? What difference would it make in his work of education? What effect would it have on the young with whom he works?
2. What are the means to grow in one's spirituality as a Salesian educator, or to put it in other words, what are the means to grow in pastoral charity?

WRAP-UP

When the groups have reassembled, the leader asks for a brief feedback of the discussion, paying particular attention to the suggestions that have emerged in response to the second question, and more especially the suggestions involving the educative community. He tries to forge a consensus among the participants on some concrete line of action, say, for instance, a particular initiative to help the lay collaborators grow in faith or to give expression to their faith in their work among the young.

EVALUATION

The leader asks the participants to evaluate the session, making use of one of the samples provided in this manual.

CONCLUSION

The session concludes with a hymn or a prayer.

REFERENCES

P. Braido, *Il sistema preventivo di Don Bosco*, Zurich 1964, pp. 121 - 130.

J. Vecchi, "La espiritualidad en la mision," in: *Un proyecto de pastoral juvenil en la Iglesia hoy. Orientaciones para caminar con Los jovenes*, Madrid 1990, pp. 141 - 153.

Don Bosco lived with the boys of the first Oratory a spiritual and educational experience which he called the "Preventive System". For him this was a spontaneous expression of love inspired by the love of God . . . (C 20)

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

1. **The following question is a personal one. You will not be asked to share your answer with the members of your group, so please do not be afraid to answer as honestly as possible.**

Q. Do you consider yourself a spiritual person? Give reasons for your answer.

A.

2. **The exercise that follows is to be done in your group.**

Q. Below is a list of some men and women who are generally considered spiritual people. In case there are some others you consider to be spiritual, please feel free to add their names to the list.

St. Francis of Assisi
Martin Luther King
Bishop Oscar Romero
Mother Teresa of Calcutta
Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Raoul Follereau
Mahatma Gandhi
St. Maximilian Kolbe
Don Bosco
John XXIII
Dorothy Day
Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Now, working as a group,

1. *Write down, against the name of as many persons as you know from the list, his/her outstanding characteristic.*

2. *Identify what you think would be the reason why all of them are considered spiritual persons. Is there a common spiritual element in all of them? If so, what is it?*

3. *Try to arrive at a definition of what you mean by "spiritual" or "spirituality".*



THE PERSON OF THE LAY COLLABORATOR

"Why... why.... why?" demanded the disciple when, to his astonishment, the Master insisted on his leaving the monastery forthwith barely twenty-four hours after he had been welcomed.

"Because you do not need a Master.

"I can show you the way but only you can do the walking.

"I can point to the water; you alone can do the drinking.

"You know the way. Walk!

"The water is right in front of you. Drink!"

(Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Nonsense*, p. 81).

Salesian youth ministry depends greatly on the persons who carry it out, Salesians and lay collaborators alike. Section 6 gives our lay collaborators a chance to look at themselves, to "come to the water and drink"!

It challenges them to strive for personal maturity, to deepen their relationship with God, to strive for a genuine and active membership in the Church, and to commit themselves to their work with the young.



SESSION 1

TOWARDS HUMAN MATURITY

TOWARDS HUMAN MATURITY

"We urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus; we instructed you how to live in the way that pleases God, and you are so living; but make more progress still" (1 Th 4, 1).

OBJECTIVES

To enable our lay collaborators

- to understand what is entailed in the quest for human maturity, and
- to realize the need to grow in maturity in order to work effectively with the young.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies of Hand-outs 1 (pp. 11 - 12) and 2 (pp. 13 - 14) for participants.

A large sheet of paper or a blackboard.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic in the following, or similar, words.

Anyone who works with youth is conscious of the need for his or her own personal maturity in order to be with the young and help them to grow.

This maturity is neither a matter of improvisation nor a matter of some strategies for dealing well with the young. It is an ongoing process of growth in one's life.

The theme of human maturity is a vast one and embraces many aspects. Here we shall restrict ourselves to those personal attitudes and qualities that one would need as an educator of young people.

ACTIVITY (25 minutes)

The participants form groups of about 6 or 7 each, and are given copies of Hand-out 1. The leader asks them to read the parable, "The Begging Bowl", and then to draw out the lessons it seeks to convey. A brief report may then be given to the assembly.

(An alternate method would be to have some readers take parts and read the parable aloud for everyone. The discussion could then take place in the assembly itself. This procedure might also take less time.)

Among the points drawn out, at least the following should emerge:

- What we really are (the "real self") and the way we perceive ourselves (the "imaginary self") are often two different things. Our "imaginary self" generally poses as our "self-image" and conditions the thoughts we entertain about ourselves as well as our feelings and behaviour. For instance, though in reality he was rich, the beggar perceived himself as a poor man, and therefore went about begging.
-

- It is not easy for us to perceive ourselves objectively, and if we do, what we become aware of is only a tiny proportion of our many good points and qualities. This explains why many people have a poor self-image. They tend to be much more conscious of their limitations and shortcomings than of their strengths and talents. We have to believe in, accept, and appreciate our intrinsic worth as persons.
- Any real and lasting growth to maturity as persons must begin from a consideration of our inmost selves. A better self-image will make us feel better and act more assertively.

Drawing on the points that have emerged in the sharing, the leader begins the input.

KEY CONCEPTS

All of us are in a process of development; we experience within ourselves the need to become more fully the person we ought to be. Or, in other words, we are growing towards greater human maturity.

Now, maturity does not automatically come with age or with the passing of years. It is the result of an effort one makes to grow in three sets of relationships:

with oneself,
with others,
and with God.

In this session, we shall consider the first two of these relationships (with oneself and with others), leaving the third (the relationship with God)' to be dealt with in the next session.

A. GROWING IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH ONESELF

1. SELF-KNOWLEDGE

The journey to maturity is not a rough and difficult ascent through sheer willpower, but a descent into the depths, or better, a journey within. It is a looking into oneself and attentively considering the different elements that make it up:

a. Ideas and opinions

It is important that we realize that we have a certain framework of thinking; without such a framework, we would run the risk of being carried away by every idea that comes along. However, this does not mean that our ideas and convictions have to remain rigid and closed. Far from it: we must be open and willing to change as new elements come to us from outside, especially if they are elements that strengthen and improve the quality of our life.

b. Feelings

As we grow up, we become aware of our feelings by which we respond to the situations confronting us. We have to make sure, however, that we are not swept away by feelings that are instinctive, but that our feelings have an adult quality about them. In the face of a defeat, for instance, we should be able not to instinctively withdraw into our shell, but to accept the limitation serenely.

c. Scale of values

Every one of us lives according to a certain scale of values, which we classify according to the place they ought to have in our lives. Values are not to be confused with our interests and needs; they are important qualities that are valid for ourselves and for mankind in general.

d. The meaning of life

The meaning of life directs the choices we make, the attitudes we assume, and the actions we perform. There can be meanings for the medium term (like choosing a career, seeking a job, entering into a marriage, forming a family) or for the long term (like answering the important questions about life: Why am I alive? Where am I going? What is the meaning of suffering?). Human maturity consists largely in having everything in a person's life bound up with and inspired by one's ultimate meaning of life.

2. SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Many traumas or problems people face come from their simply not accepting themselves.

Self-acceptance includes many aspects like acceptance of one's body, character, past history, family, and even the place where one lives.

If, for instance, a person cannot accept his being short or tall, as the case may be, or some negative experience he has had in his past life, this detail tends to play on his mind and hampers him in relating to others in a free and spontaneous way.

3. A POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE

Loving oneself - which is different from selfishness - is absolutely necessary to be able to have a loving relationship with others.

Our positive self-image is formed starting from the way others see us. If a child is aware of being appreciated by others, he builds up a positive self- image; if instead he experiences rejection, the self-image will tend to be negative.

No doubt, even as adults, we are influenced in our self-concept by the way others see us, but the fact remains that ultimately our self-image depends on the way we see ourselves. We must have the capacity to look at ourselves in a positive way: we are indeed people of worth and there is so much of good in us, despite the defects we may have (and after all, who is without defects?).

In helping the young to form a positive concept of themselves, the educator has a key role to play. To highlight their positive side is not a matter of tactics or strategy, nor can it be improvised on the spur of the moment. It must be lived on the personal level, and become a normal attitude in one's work among young people.

4. COMMUNICATING ONE'S INNER WORLD TO OTHERS

People need to communicate. But, there are different levels of communication. Some communicate only on the external plane: they are content with what they see, hear and touch. Others communicate only ideas, what they know about a question, or what they have read in a book. But, to communicate one's feelings, one's scale of values, or the meaning of one's life is something far deeper - and more difficult.

The problem with this type of communication of one's inner being is not only one of environment - there are things that are not communicated to everyone and in every situation - but is often a matter of not having the proper words to express one's feelings. An adolescent, for example, has a world of emotions in him, but he does not know how to express them.

Here is where the educator has an important role to play. By putting in words his own convictions, his feelings, and the meaning he has found in his life, he brings the others to participate in his inner life and encourages them by his example to communicate themselves in greater depth.

B. GROWING IN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

Growth in human maturity depends very much on the way we relate to others, too. And here there are several aspects one has to consider:

1. ACCEPTING THE OTHER PERSON

Each person is unique. Our problem is that all too often we do not accept the other person in his uniqueness; we do not allow him to be different; we want to make him to our image and likeness.

Accepting another person means accepting his ideas and feelings, however different they may be from ours, even if we do not necessarily agree with them.

It is only when the other person feels accepted that mutual confidence arises, and it becomes possible to enter into a closer relationship with him.

2. GIVING SPACE TO THE OTHER TO BE HIMSELF

A person who feels secure in himself is not afraid to let another person be himself.

He does not identify the other person with his behaviour and withhold his acceptance of him until he changes what appears to be objectionable in his manner of behaving - this would be manipulation. Nor does he become impatient or angry because he sees the other person making little or no effort to change as he would like him to do - this would be tantamount to exerting a subtle kind of force on him.

Instead, he simply accepts the other person as he is, feels with him, listens to him - perhaps he is in a difficult situation- and renounces any preconceived model or timetable for change. He lets the change come freely from within the other person.

3. SHOWING APPRECIATION OR RECOGNITION

Each person is like a hidden treasure: there is always something new and beautiful to be discovered.

But, it is not enough for one to notice the value of the other person and his positive qualities. He must acknowledge them, for instance, by mentioning them to the person by way of a feedback.

We know from our experience that when a teacher praises a pupil for his good behaviour or his diligence at school, the pupil responds better to the teacher's efforts, and a closer relationship between the two comes to be established.

4. BEING AUTHENTIC

Interpersonal relationships can be quite superficial at times. Communication can take place only at surface level, while the real self hardly enters into communion with the other person. As a result, things are said in order to impress or to please, but there is no authenticity in the relationship.

To be authentic, it is important that when we speak, we manifest what we feel and think. We open ourselves to the other in sincerity. And, even if we have to say something negative to the other person, we do so but without hurting him or her.

5. HAVING AN UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE

Understanding is that marvelous quality by which we can capture not only what the other person is saying but also feeling. We are, so to say, able to get into the other person's skin.

But, understanding can mean many other things as well. It can mean knowing how to wait; not expecting everything all at once; giving oneself and the other person time to mature and to overcome a problem; making allowances when the other person fails ...

6. REAFFIRMING THE OTHER PERSON

We are often tempted to categorize people: "Oh, he's always like that. He'll never change!" The fact is that we really do not, and cannot, know the other person completely.

To reaffirm the other is more than accepting him as he is. It is to accept the potentiality that lies within him, to acknowledge that he has a capacity to become what he can be; it is to recognize that he has been created to become more than he is; it is to believe that he too is on the road to human maturity, towards the fullness of life.

DISCUSSION (25 minutes)

At the end of the input, the leader invites the participants to *engage in a little exercise in connection with the second of the two aspects presented in the input, viz. the growth to human maturity through our relationship with others.*

He invites the participants to form into groups of about 6 each. He distributes Hand-out 2 to them and asks each one to do the exercise - in silence.

When all have finished, the leader informs the participants of the meaning of the letters (A - F), and asks each one to add up his or her score for each letter.

A (Authenticity) =

D (Acceptance) =

B (Appreciation/recognition) =

E (Understanding) =

C (Giving Space) =

F (Reaffirmation) =

The leader then invites the participants to evaluate their findings according to the following criteria:

3-5	Poor
6-8	Barely satisfactory
9 - 11	Good
12 - 15	Excellent

Next, he asks the groups to discuss the conclusions reached by each of their members, and then to brainstorm for suggestions about what could be done to improve the present level of relationships among themselves.

WRAP-UP

When the groups reassemble, the various suggestions are read out and recorded on a large sheet of paper or on a blackboard.

The leader helps the assembly to arrive at a consensus on certain practical steps that could be taken to improve the relationships among the participants themselves.

EVALUATION

For the evaluation of the session, the sample given in this manual can be used.

If a personal evaluation is also desired, the leader could read out the following statements, one by one, asking the participants to reflect on - and maybe even write down - their feelings and impressions.

In this session on growing towards human maturity I learned that ...

Regarding myself, I came to realize that ...

Regarding my relationship with others, I found that...

I want to ...

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes with a prayer, hymn, poem or whatever seems appropriate.

REFERENCES

"Maduración humana," in: Delegación Nacional Salesiana de Pastoral Juvenil, Animadores de grupos de fe. Formación básica 1, Madrid 1992, pp. 19 - 30.

Luis Augusto Castro, *Lasciare che l'altro sia se stesso. L'equilibrio nella formazione*, Turin 1989, pp. 109 - 128.

GC 23 # 120 - 129.

THE BEGGING BOWL

- Narrator: There was once a poor beggar who was homeless and hungry. He felt lonely and despised by everyone. He passed his days begging for alms from passersby. With a begging bowl in his hand, he would drag himself from door to door, and from street to street. The only thing he possessed in the world was a big, dirty, heavy begging bowl. He would use the bowl to ask for alms, and also eat from it. The beggar thought of himself as a very poor man. He considered himself useless and no good at all.
- Beggar: Oh, what a wretch I am! I am useless and good for nothing. Nobody cares for me...No one likes me! I am poor. There is nothing I can give others. All I can do is only beg ... Oh, what a life!
- Narrator: Sometimes the beggar appeared to be shy and withdrawn in front of other people. At other times, he would be downright nasty and spiteful. When he saw others who were better off than himself, he felt depressed, jealous, and resentful: he hated them for being rich, and what's more, he hated himself for being poor! One day while he was on his begging rounds, he happened to stop at the door of a curio shop. Stretching out his begging bowl, he cried:
- Beggar: Sir, please help me! Just a few pennies to buy some bread, if you don't mind! I haven't eaten since yesterday. I am hungry. Do be kind to me, sir. Please help me.
- Narrator: The shopkeeper looked at him contemptuously. He was about to turn away, when the begging bowl caught his eye. He stared at it for some time, and then, out of curiosity, asked:
- Shopkeeper: Do you mind if I have a closer look at that bowl of yours?
- Narrator: The shopkeeper took the bowl in his hands and examined it closely. The beggar watched him intently and impatiently. The shopkeeper went on examining the bowl. Then, he scratched it. Finally, he gave the bowl back to the beggar, and shaking his head in disbelief, exclaimed:
- Shopkeeper: You know, you're a funny sort of guy! You don't have to beg for alms. You could give alms to others!
- Beggar: What are you saying, sir? Oh please, sir, don't make fun of a poor man like me. Please help me!
- Shopkeeper: Poor man? You are a rich fellow! You are richer than I am! You don't have to beg at all! Do you realize that that big, heavy begging bowl of yours is made of pure gold?

When you have finished reading the parable, please remain in silence for a little while, and ask yourself what insights you have gained from the story. Then, share your insights with others.

MATURITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

This little exercise is meant to help you evaluate the level of human relationships among yourselves as staff-members of our Salesian work/institution.

Please mark each of the following statements with a number chosen from between 1 and 5, according to the following scale:

1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Always

I feel that my fellow staff-members:

- _____ A. Tell me sincerely what they think of me.
- _____ B. Show interest in what I do.
- _____ C. Are a group that allows me to grow and mature.
- _____ D. Accept me as I am.
- _____ E. Understand what I really want to say.
- _____ F. Do not put me down if I make a mistake.

- _____ A. Are willing to help me see my mistakes
- _____ B. Show me affection through their concrete attitudes.
- _____ C. Treat me as a free and responsible person.
- _____ D. Create an atmosphere in which I can be what I am.
- _____ E. Are able to understand my real feelings.
- _____ F. Give me a chance to reveal something new about myself.

- _____ A. Have confidence in me.
- _____ B. Show respect for what I consider important.
- _____ C. Are tolerant of me when I am not able to be at once what I should be.
- _____ D. Make me feel like one among them.
- _____ E. Are able to understand when something troubles me.
- _____ F. Support me even when I fail.

After you have marked each statement, please add up the numbers you have assigned against each letter: A, B, etc.

A =

B =

C =

D =

E =

F =



SESSION 2

MEETING GOD

MEETING GOD

"Eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17, 3).

OBJECTIVES

1. To bring it about that our lay collaborators have an opportunity for a reflection and an informal exchange of ideas, experiences and attitudes regarding the question of meeting God.
2. To help our lay collaborators to perceive that the four dynamics that are part of healthy adult relationships should also be part of our relationship with God.
3. To bring our collaborators to consider two of these ways of meeting God from a Salesian perspective.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Copies for participants of the two Hand-outs:

Hand-out 1: "Meeting God" (pp. 11 - 12).

Hand-out 2: Summary Sheet (p. 13) (optional).

Suggested: Input outline on overhead projector or on posters/large sheet of paper.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, noting that talking about God in our lives is not always easy. He refers to both the inclination many have to keep such things private, and the feeling many have that the experience of God is unfamiliar territory.

He leads into the opening activity.

ACTIVITY: "MEETING GOD" (30 minutes)

PURPOSE:

To allow the participants to share their own various experiences of God, or lack thereof, and their underlying attitudes towards the possibility of encountering God.

PROCEDURE:

The leader divides the participants into smaller discussion groups. Small group facilitators ought to have been chosen and prepared ahead of time for this activity.

Each group is given copies of the "Meeting God" Activity Sheet to fill out. The small group facilitators then lead a sharing on the members' responses and on any questions/issues which emerge.

DRAWING OUT:

This is done in the small groups by the facilitators, who will try to highlight both the desire people have to encounter God and the difficulty many people find in doing so. The facilitators will show parallels between the relationships we have with God and those we enjoy with other adults.

KEY CONCEPTS**A. ORIENTATION**

1. In recent sessions, we have been looking at issues that concern ourselves as people working with and for youth. Not so much at how we can serve them better, as how we can BECOME better: better qualified, better satisfied with ourselves and our work.
2. Last time we looked at the whole question of attending to our own human maturity and development. We saw that this comes about through a positive relationship with ourselves and with others. But, we also noted that the growth to human maturity requires a positive relationship with God. Today, we want to look at the question of how as adults we can better meet and relate with God.
3. In the small group discussions, we looked at some areas of life in which people often do meet God, and we had the chance to share some of our own experiences there. We also looked at some attitudes underlying our experiences of God, or lack thereof.
4. We would now like to clarify some dynamics of healthy adult relationships, and see how they might apply to our relationship with God. This is a delicate topic, since faith and prayer are very personal matters. But they are also group concerns for a gathering like our own. So we offer today's session as a help to those who are seeking more, and perhaps as an encouragement or at least another point of view for those who have given up seeking, or who are not yet convinced that there is something to seek!
5. We shall also be looking at two Salesian ways of meeting God which have a special significance for us today.

(Note for the leader: This input outline does not include any specifically Christian ways of meeting God, like sacraments. The session is so designed that it can be used with both Christians and non-Christians alike, at least for the most part. However, the leader should adapt it as needed, and expand it, if desired, to cover things like sacraments, Christian prayer, Marian devotion, etc. It may be wiser to do so in a separate session, as there is already a lot here.)

B. FOUR DYNAMICS IN ADULT RELATIONSHIPS**1. AWARENESS OF THE OTHER**

- a. Relationships do not develop between ourselves and people on the other side of the world whom we have never met and with whom we have no kind of contact at all.
- b. Two kids at school, two adults in the workplace, two eventual spouses: their friendships and bonds of relationship have to start somewhere. Often it is an event or common interest which brings them together. Sometimes it is a shared tragedy; sometimes it is pure accident. However, it occurs, the two people at some point begin to be aware of each other.

- c. For the believer, God is Someone who does exist. But because God is not seen the way we see each other, not heard with a human voice, not so easily conversed with or kept company with, we can easily overlook His presence.
- d. The first step for a believer who wants to encounter God in more meaningful and satisfying ways is to make him or herself AWARE of God. In our opening activity we looked at four general areas where God can be met. Those who are serious about meeting God need to reflect on the presence of God that just may be lurking beneath the surface of nature's wonders, of the people surrounding us, of the events in which we are caught up, and of the religious symbols that are sometimes so well known that they become routine, and lose their power.
- e. To develop awareness requires some time and attention. And so, as with any relationship, our relationship with God requires some of our time. If nothing else, time to make ourselves aware of just where God is at the moment and how He may be presenting Himself to us. This requires at least some times of silence.
- f. (Here, some examples of becoming aware of God's presence in nature, people, events or religious rituals could be shared.)

2. SPEAKING-LISTENING/ LISTENING-SPEAKING

- a. The various forms that communication takes between two people in a meaningful relationship always entail two elements: speaking and listening. At times, we initiate the dialogue and the other listens. At other times, the one we care about speaks to us, and we respond with attention. In a healthy relationship, both partners do their share of speaking and listening. The two dynamics become so shared, so reflexive and so ongoing that good and ongoing communication becomes almost synonymous with the relationship itself.
- b. There are special problems when we try to get this dynamic going between ourselves and God. One common problem is to focus on only one of the two dynamics. Usually, it is the speaking one. We rattle off prayers to God as a kind of tribute and homage paying, but give God no chance to respond. This keeps us in the position of lowly subject before the all-powerful Lord; it does not enhance an inviting sense of adult relationship.
- c. Sometimes we limit the range of possibilities for speaking with God. We may think that only formalized "prayers" count. But as anyone in a healthy adult relationship knows, anything shared is something communicated. Simply sharing my day with God, with any and all of its components, is a way of speaking with Him.
- d. Listening to God also poses special problems. Sometimes we have it in mind ahead of time how God should respond, and when we do not experience that kind of response, we feel unheard. Also, God speaks in many ways: in His Word, in the words of other people, in nature and in dreams, and in the language of the events that surround us. In all these, God is not simply PRESENT, but God is also often SPEAKING. Here, too, it takes time to discern the voice that flows from the presence of the One whom we begin to recognize around us.
- e. For us to develop our relationship with God in a satisfying way, we need to reflect periodically on the ways we communicate: do I speak, do I listen, do I speak in varied ways, do I hear the variety of ways in which God speaks, and so on? In the light of this reflection, we may need to make time, or at least more time, or different time for God, in order to speak and listen to Him in a more satisfying, adult manner.

3. SHARING ACTIVITY

- a. Among friends and lovers, there is more than just conversation. They go places together, take on projects together, work at tasks together, share joys and sorrows together. A deeply felt cause by one becomes the concern of the other. A heavy responsibility weighing on one is borne at least in part by the other. Without some shared activity - and the deeper the relationship, the more ongoing this sharing is - there can be no depth of relationship.
- b. But what can I do with God? What does God do with me? Is God, in fact, doing anything in the world?
- c. Many of us think of ourselves as going through our lives trying to do the best we can, and at times, when things are really tough, we call on God for some help. We hope we can catch His attention and win some assistance from Him. But this is a flawed way of thinking.
- d. No one wants good for the world more than God does. And no one is DOING more for the good of the world than God is doing. It is not as though God has done with the world and left it to us to make of it what we will. God is still creating, still in the process of bringing about "a new heaven and a new earth", where people live in peace and justice, health and harmony, in a life founded on the values of the gospel.
- e. Every human being is called to "collaborate" with God, to be at God's side, to size up the situation before him or her, to assess the personal resources God has given him or her, and to put them to work at the service of a better world for all people.
- f. In an adult relationship, everything the individual does, from rising to resting, has a part to play in God's plan. It is action, and it is not neutral, irrelevant, or meaningless to God. By being the best husband, wife, father, mother, teacher, priest, religious or whatever, I am concretely participating in God's work of building up the world.
- g. In this way, everything I do can further my relationship with God. Everything I care about and give my energy to, seen in this light, becomes my prayer and builds up my relationship with the One who cares more about my life and my responsibilities than even I do.

4. CHANGE WROUGHT BY RELATIONSHIP

- a. In serious adult relationships, every meaningful encounter does something to the relationship. It expands it, or deepens it, or at times, weakens it and sets it back.
- b. Encounters with God ought to be changing us. Some encounters are so powerful that we sense immediately that we are changed. Others are less striking and more gradual in their effects. But over the long haul, we see ourselves changing precisely because of the relationship.
- c. Anyone in a genuine relationship with God is growing as a human being, becoming more him or herself, more filled with all that is genuinely good and human. If this is not the case, then perhaps the individual is not really in a meaningful relationship with God. That sorry situation can befall any of us, from Pope and Bishop to secretary and truck-driver.
- d. Sometimes, because of bad impressions we may have been given by some "so-called" religious people, we can be afraid of coming too close to God, afraid of getting "too religious". This is because we do not want to become like the people we have seen! But genuine religion, which is nothing more than the shared expression of a people's shared relationship with God, always makes us more human. If it does not, it is not so genuine to begin with.

- e. Don Bosco encourages all of us, as his family, so given as we are to doing God's work, to not only carry out this work in a routine way at His side, but to reap from it the rewards of a more fully developed and adult relationship with the God who is longing to be involved with us.

C. SALESIAN PERSPECTIVE ON TWO WAYS OF MEETING GOD

- a. In conclusion, we might look briefly at two ways of meeting God already mentioned in our opening activity that could have a special significance for us. To be sure, we want to meet God in all the ways that we can, but around the world today, many in the Salesian family are trying to pay special attention to these two.
- b. The first is, of course, meeting God in the young. We believe God calls us- to work in the Salesian family because He intends to meet us in the young. Meeting God among young people has two sides to it, also. We see God in the faces of the young, in their potential, in their life and enthusiasm, as well as in their suffering and their need. But we also meet God in the young by BEING the presence of God for them. God touches the young through our hands, our voices, our hearts, when we give ourselves to them.
- c. And the second way of meeting God which many believe has special significance for us today is in events. Don Bosco knew how to read the signs of his times. He picked up on what God was doing or trying to do, and shifted his own efforts accordingly, in order to be "in sync" with the Divine Hand. Furthermore, he did what he could to help shape events in a responsible way, thereby letting God act through him.
- d. In our world, this is an especially urgent issue. With so many social injustices around us, so many people who are sick, unemployed, uneducated, unprepared to play their part in the human community, we can be certain that God is wanting to be very active in the social currents of our own day. We can find Him there; we can bring Him there.
- e. For both of these ways of meeting God to be effective for us, however, they will require of us time and effort time and effort to be aware of His presence, to recognize Him and what He is doing. Through this presence He will speak to us and await our response. People of faith generally refer to this "making time for God" as prayer.
- f. May our awareness that a deeper and more satisfying relationship with God is indeed possible, encourage us to give ourselves to prayer, in whatever ways are effective for us. There we will find ourselves listening and speaking, speaking and listening. If we can carry that prayer beyond its time by seeing our daily activity as a collaboration with God at God's side, we will find ourselves changed and changing, for the better.

DISCUSSION (20 minutes)

The leader invites the smaller groups to meet again and to discuss the following question. He reminds the groups to have a reporter ready, and that the reports this time should focus on one or two significant points from the discussion. A full summary of every group's input will not be possible.

Of the four dynamics mentioned - being aware, speaking and listening, sharing activity, growth and change - which dynamic is most challenging for you in your own relationship with God at this time?

WRAP-UP (15 minutes)

When the groups re-gather, the leader asks for a brief report from each group. At the end, having heard the challenges named, he might offer some suggestions on meeting those challenges for adults seeking a deeper relationship with God.

He might suggest that the local Youth Ministry team, listening to the group reports, take up the topic(s) at a future staff retreat or prayer service.

EVALUATION (15 minutes)

The leader asks all the participants to fill out an evaluation form, samples of which are provided in this manual.

He then invites all to take a moment and reflect on how the day has been/or them. He asks each one to think of three adjectives to describe his or her experience of the day. Both positive and negative comments are welcome!

After a few moments' reflection, he invites the members to begin saying aloud the adjectives they have chosen.

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes the session with a prayer, hymn, poem or whatever else seems appropriate.

REFERENCES

C 86, 87.

GC 23 # 94 - 96, 203 - 214, 300.

An art writer was giving a lecture at the monastery.
"Art is found in a museum," he said, "but beauty is found everywhere, in the air, on the ground, all over the place, free for the taking - with no name attached to it." "Exactly like spirituality," said the Master the following day when he was alone with his disciples. "Its symbols are found in the museum called a temple, but its substance is everywhere, free for the taking, with no name attached to it."
(Anthony de Mello, *One Minute Nonsense*, Anand 1992, p. 121).

"MEETING GOD"

Try to name at least a few instances when you felt you had met God in each of the following

NATURE	PEOPLE
EVENTS	RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS/CEREMONIES

Try to place yourself on the continuum given for each of the following sets of statements. The further you are to the left, the more you agree with the statement above the line; the further you are to the right, the more you agree with the statement below the line.

I really want to experience God
in a deep and personal way.

The issue is irrelevant for me; I don't believe in God or am simply not interested.

I am confident that I CAN experience
God in a deep and personal way

I have little confidence that I can have a genuine experience of God.

I am well aware of what I can do to
foster this experience of God.

I have no idea of what I can do to foster this kind of experience of God.

"MEETING GOD"

SUMMARY

1. GOD IS COMMONLY MET:

In Nature

In People

In Events

In Religious Symbols and Ceremonies

2. FOUR DYNAMICS OF ADULT RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD:

Awareness of the Other

Speaking-Listening / Listening-Speaking

Sharing Activity

Change Wrought by Relationship

3. SPECIAL CONCERNS OF THE SALESIAN FAMILY TODAY:

Meeting God in the Young

Meeting God in the Signs of the Times



SESSION 3

MATURING MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

MATURING MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

"A member of the lay faithful 'can never remain in isolation from the community, but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited . . ." (*Christifideles Laici*, # 20).

OBJECTIVES

1. To help the participants see the Church as more than an "institution" by exploring a variety of models of the Church.
2. To present "maturing membership" as a call to grow in the attitudes and behaviours represented by those various models.
3. To highlight Salesian points of emphasis deriving from each model.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Copies for the participants of:

Hand-out 1, "What Do We Do Now?" Activity Sheet (p. 11)

and also, if so desired, Hand-out 2, Summary Sheet (p. 13).

2. Suggested: posters representing the six models of the Church dealt with in the input section.

INTRODUCTION

The leader introduces the topic, observing that many people have mixed feelings about the Church, what it does and what it should expect of its members. He notes that the group will have a chance to address all that today.

Then he alludes to the objectives of the session, and leads into the opening activity.

ACTIVITY (45 minutes)**PURPOSE:**

To have the participants surface their own preferred ways of thinking about the Church, and to share their reactions to them, both positive and negative; in this way to prepare for the input.

PROCEDURE:

The leader distributes copies of Hand-out 1, the "What Do We Do Now?" Activity Sheet.

The participants are to imagine themselves as being the disciples of Jesus shortly after the Resurrection/Ascension. They have to decide what they are to do now.

The leader gives all a few moments to make their choice from the Activity Sheet. Then he instructs all those with the same choices to rearrange themselves and sit together.

DRAWING OUT:

At this point, he asks each group to think of a few reasons why they consider their choice to be the best one.

After a few minutes, each group shares its opinion

From here, the leader engages each of the groups in a lively discussion, inviting each group to react to the others' choices, to name the flaws they see in those choices, and to keep asserting their own position.

After some time, the leader invites anyone who wants to, to change his or her choice and move into a different group.

In the midst of all this, the leader is both moderating the discussion and animating it, seizing on points made, assumptions underlying statements, contradictions, implications, etc. The aim is to have as lively a discussion as possible, one which keeps surfacing new points in favour of or in opposition to the various positions taken.

Finally, the leader winds up the discussion and moves into a presentation of the input.

KEY CONCEPTS**A. ORIENTATION**

- a. The discussion we had shown us that there are many different ways of thinking about the Church, many aspects to its life, each with relative importance, depending on your point of view.
- b. The six possible choices or models represent six different ways of thinking about the Church. No one model exists completely and independently in the real world. God calls the Church to encompass the best in all of them.
- c. Problems always arise in the life of the Church at large, and in the lives of its members, when we inappropriately emphasize some to the neglect of others.

- d. *(Here, the leader could ask the group how they think most people would see the Church at the present day.)*
- e. Today, we want to look briefly at all six images or models of the church, so that we might better respond to God's call to "mature our membership" in the Church by growing in all that is represented by the six different models.

B. THE SIX MODELS

1. THE CHURCH AS A PRAYER

- a. This way of thinking about the Church is rooted in the example of Jesus Himself. It emphasizes that the Church unites us to God, and that prayer is the means of keeping that union alive.
- b. It is this approach to understanding the Church that has led to the founding of many monastic communities, some religious orders, various prayer movements, and a general emphasis on the importance of prayer for both individuals and the Church as a whole.
- c. The advantage of thinking about the Church in this way is that it prevents us from just being busy about many things, and forgetting about the most important things, that is, keeping in touch with God, hearing His Word, etc. But, the danger is that one could get so caught up in prayer that he forgets about his neighbour and the needs of the real world around him.

2. THE CHURCH AS A PREACHER

- a. This model of the Church is rooted in the example of Jesus who spent many hours and days on mountainsides and in villages, preaching the Good News of God's reign. It was carried on by the apostles who, after Pentecost, went about proclaiming the gospel to the ends of the earth.
- b. Those who favour this approach tends to emphasize missionary activity, giving personal testimony to Jesus in their lives, preaching, the study of the Bible, etc.
- c. The advantage of this model is that it reminds us that doing good works is not enough. We must do them in the name of Jesus, and by our words and deeds we must proclaim Him to those who do not yet know Him. The danger with this model is to have too narrow a view of "preaching" or evangelization; to think that unless we are actually talking about Jesus we are not doing the Church's work.

3. THE CHURCH AS A SACRAMENT

- a. This model focuses on the Church as the visible representation of Christ on earth, and still more, as the living presence of Christ among us as He continues to act in our world through the Church.
- b. People who favour this model emphasize the seven sacraments, the many key symbols and key people which both remind us of Jesus Christ and make Him present among us. For those who look at the Church in this way, liturgy, especially the Sunday Eucharist, is the heart of what it means to be Church.
- c. This view is important because it reminds us that the Church not only keeps the memory of Jesus alive, but is actually the way by which Jesus remains present and active in the world. Those who favour this model need to remember, however, that the Church is also human, its members are not perfect, and that the quality of liturgical life should be matched by the quality of everyday life lived by its members.

4. THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY

- a. This approach looks to the Acts of the Apostles, where the early Christians are described as being of one mind and one heart, sharing everything. It believes that if we love one another as Christ has loved us, all will know we are His disciples, and will be drawn to join us.
- b. Those who favour this model prefers smaller Christian communities, prayer groups, and close parish communities, where the members can find not only worship, but friendship and support, where prayer is often less formal but perhaps more heartfelt.
- c. This emphasis helps balance what could be a cold focus on organization and doctrine. It has special appeal for many people in our day who feel that ordinary society is too impersonal. The danger is that the community could become narcissistic, all taken up with itself, and forget about its mission to the rest of the world.

5. THE CHURCH AS A *SERVANT*

- a. This way of thinking about the Church focuses on Jesus' words, "I came to serve, not to be served," and it recalls all His works on behalf of the poor and needy.
- b. Those who favour this approach emphasizes the need for Christians to get involved, to take up some action on behalf of the poor and suffering. This view is at the heart of many movements for social justice and of at least some of the so-called "liberation theologies".
- c. The great advantage of this model is that it challenges us to do and not just talk. Especially for Christians who are well off and secure, this view is a reminder to them to keep their eyes on their needier brethren. A danger in this approach is that one could reduce the meaning of salvation to the elimination of all human suffering and injustice an impossible task.

6. THE CHURCH AS AN INSTITUTION

- a. This view is founded on Jesus' clear intention to set up some kind of community, with Peter and the Apostles as leaders. It is also rooted in the long history of the Church. The Church exists in the world, in space and time, and like all institutions, it acquires customs, develops identifying characteristics, and needs regulations in order to endure.
- b. People who focus on this way of thinking about the Church tend to emphasize its hierarchical structure, proper lines of authority, procedures, the role of "tradition" (with a small "t"), canon law, and the often uninspiring details of keeping the Church going amid all the turmoil of various times and places. They also tend to highlight the differences between Christians of various denominations.
- c. The advantage of this model is that it is often the only thing to hold together the vast, sprawling, living and evolving entity which is the Church. It helps ground the Church in everyday reality. The danger, of course, is that the institutional concerns can overtake the deeper, more spiritual and relational, dimensions of the Church, which should be its hallmarks.

C. MATURING IN MEMBERSHIP

- a. We need to realize that each of the six ways of thinking about the Church is valid, necessary, and has something to teach all of us. God wants each of us to grow in all six aspects of our Church membership.
- b. Some aspects of the Church appeal to us more at certain times in our lives. We should be comfortable with that-and build on it. We should also recognize that we may need to take a second look at those aspects we are less comfortable with, or to which we feel less inclined, and see there, perhaps, the cutting edge of our own growth as members of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- c. We live as members of the Church in many settings: in our homes, here at our Salesian work, and most important, in our own parishes and in the larger community of the diocese. In each of these settings, we need to be attentive to the six ways of thinking about and being the Church.

D. SALESIAN POINTS OF EMPHASIS

In each of these models or ways of thinking about the Church, the Salesian family sees and takes hold of certain elements which are of special importance for youth:

PRAYER: We focus on simple, lively, creative prayer, drawn from everyday life, which will appeal to the young.

PREACHER: We emphasize the need to evangelize through education, and the role every Christian has in this work.

SACRAMENT: We have special regard for the sacraments of the Church, as moments when the young can really "meet Jesus", especially Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

FAMILY: Don Bosco teaches us that a genuine family experience is what young people crave, and we strive to make them feel welcome, especially in Church.

SERVANT: We want to help our young people grow up to be honest citizens, committed to the transformation of the world. We help them develop their gifts and encourage their involvement in service projects.

INSTITUTION: With Don Bosco, we teach the young to have special regard and respect for the Pope and the Bishops of the Church who, though never perfect, are entrusted by Christ with the task of leading us.

WRAP-UP (10 minutes)

The leader asks if there are any questions for clarification, any comments. He makes some brief, practical application to the local scene in whatever way seems appropriate.

(Note that there is no discussion at this point as it has already taken place earlier.)

EVALUATION (10 minutes)

The leader asks the participants to fill out one of the evaluation sheets, samples of which are provided in this manual.

He then invites all to take a moment and make a personal reflection on the day, and then to share it with the group if they so choose.

CONCLUSION

The leader concludes with a prayer, perhaps even a renewal of baptismal vows, if that seems appropriate.

REFERENCES

C 13, 35 - 37.

GC 23 # 140 - 148, 169 - 177.

Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, New York 1974.

"The Church has a saving and eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the next life. But it is now present here on earth and is composed of men; they, the members of the earthly city, are called to form the family of the children of God even in this present history of mankind and to increase it continually until the Lord comes
... The Church believes it can contribute much to humanizing the family of man and its history through each of its members and its community as a whole" (*Gaudium et Spes* # 40).

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?!?

You are one of the disciples of Jesus who was with Him during His time on this earth. It is now a few weeks after the Resurrection and Ascension. You and your companions have to decide what to do. Several suggestions have been made, but there is no agreement among you about which step should be taken first.

Consider these six proposed steps, and decide which one you prefer to go with:

1. The first thing we should do is go off for a good while and pray. We cannot know the will of God without prayer, and prayer will strengthen us for what lies ahead.
2. The first thing we should do is get out on the street corners and into the market places and spread the Good News. Many people have not yet heard about Jesus or His message!
3. The first thing we should do is realize that we have become a sacred temple for the Lord; He dwells in us. We must plan how we can show ourselves to the world as a sign of His presence. We should give great time and attention to celebrating His Passover Supper together, the Eucharist, the greatest Sign of all.
4. The first thing we should do is get ourselves together and form a credible family. We should live the message we want to preach to others. Once we're together and united, we'll be able to do anything. Jesus told us to love one another!
5. The first thing we should do is get out and start caring for the poor and needy; Jesus told us that what we fail to do for the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and imprisoned, we fail to do for Him. Enough words, let's start acting!
6. The first thing we should do is organize. We have a long road ahead of us. Who's in charge? What are our expectations of members? How does someone become a member? How do we finance our operations? These are not small questions and we can't delay in settling them.

(Adapted from "The Apostles' Mission" in: Bryan Reynolds, A Chance to Serve, Winona, Minnesota 1984, p. 106.)

SIX "MODELS" OR WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT THE CHURCH

1. The Church as a **PRAYER**

2. The Church as a **PREACHER**

3. The Church as a **SACRAMENT**

4. The Church as a **FAMILY**

5. The Church as a **SERVANT**

6. The Church as an **INSTITUTION**

"Maturing in Membership" in the Church means to accept and respond to God's call to develop the positive aspects of each of these ways of thinking about the Church in our own lives.



SESSION 4

COMMITMENT



COMMITMENT

"Not that I have secured it already, not yet reached my goal, but I am still pursuing it in the attempt to take hold of the prize for which Christ Jesus took hold of me" (Ph. 3, 12).

OBJECTIVE

To help our lay collaborators deepen their understanding and their living out of their personal commitment.

MATERIALS NEEDED

A blackboard.

Paper and pens/pencils for participants.

A bag or a container to hold slips of paper.

Copies of Hand-outs 1 (p. 9) and 2 (p. 11) for participants.

INTRODUCTION

The leader opens the session with these or similar words:

What does it mean to be committed to someone or something? What does commitment do to our lives? In fact, we may ask the question: Is it possible to get on in life without any commitments whatsoever?

All of us have commitments of one type or another, and if we think about it for a moment, we will have to admit that commitments do enrich our lives.

We may sometimes dream of a life where we could be free of any responsibilities, and could do just whatever we liked. However, being practical people living in a real world, we know that such fantasies remain what they are - just dreams.

To try to understand better what our commitments mean to us and what part they play in our growth as individuals and as a community, let us do the following mini-research.

ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

PURPOSE:

This activity is meant to show that commitments vary from person to person in duration, intensity and quality. It also brings out the criteria that are used to determine which commitments are more important than others.

However, a commitment must be seen as an expression of personal freedom that gives meaning and direction to one's life. The deeper the commitment, the greater the challenges and the more rewarding the experience of life.

PROCEDURE:

1. *The participants are given two sheets of paper, and asked to work through the exercise in silence.*
2. *They are invited to think of their various commitments and to jot them down very briefly on one of the sheets.*
3. *From among the commitments they have written down, they now jot down on the other sheet just one commitment that they consider fairly important and possibly special to them.*
4. *This second sheet is collected in a large bag or any kind of container that can serve the purpose. The leader emphasizes the aspect of anonymity: he tells them that there is no need for them to write their names on the sheet.*
5. *The following grid is drawn on the blackboard. (It would be preferable to have it prepared already beforehand.) Please note that the six headings on the top horizontal line of the grid can be adapted according to the composition of the group of participants or their cultural background.*

COMMITMENTS

	Social	Faith	Personal	Vocation	Work	Education
Short - term						
Long - term						
Lifelong						

6. *The sheets are picked out from the bag, one by one, and, in agreement with the participants, placed in their proper position on the grid.*

DRAWING OUT:

The leader now invites the participants to discuss their various observations about commitment. He also draws out the criteria they used in placing the various commitments on the grid.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. THE PROCESS LEADING TO COMMITMENT

- a. When someone asks you to commit yourself to a particular course of action or to support a worthwhile project, the very use of the word "commit" means something more than "giving a hand" or "helping out". It is asking you to engage in an activity with more than just your money, advice or blessing. You enter a process of reflection about what will be required of you, and the goals and objectives of the person or organization asking for your commitment. Unless you are reasonably aware of the major implications of accepting the commitment and feel you can cope with them, you will tend to hold back.
- b. Then, after proper reflection and discernment, you decide. Your decision to commit yourself is freely made, and is usually linked to some form of ceremonial, e.g. the shaking of hands, the signing of a certificate, an exchange of vows, etc.

- c. All that remains now is to live out your commitment. This is not something static, but something that continues to grow with you. You celebrate an ongoing involvement with your decision, bringing to your commitment the various talents and gifts of your being.

2. THE NATURE OF COMMITMENT

- a. The consequences of commitment reach beyond what we can foresee; they involve uncertainty.
- b. Even when we come to know the commitment we will make, its implications still exceed our grasp.
- c. Commitment threatens us because we cannot control that to which we are committed; at the same time, not to commit our lives is to risk living a meaningless existence.
- d. Each step along the way of our call to commitment reveals something more about the mosaic of our life.
- e. We often take for granted our call to be committed to God, to self and to others.
- f. The level and depth of our personal commitment is reflected in the principles, beliefs and values that give meaning and direction to our lives. This does not escape the notice of our young people, who may eventually be led to use the very same principles, beliefs and values as a springboard for their own process of discernment, decision, and personal commitment.

3. KEEPING ONE'S COMMITMENT

- a. Commitment does not survive in a vacuum. It grows or dies with the person, depending on how that person relates to the responsibilities of his or her commitments, and the way the person is supported.
- b. Growth always needs to be nurtured; hence, if a person is to persevere in a commitment, an accepting and affirming environment needs to be developed.

4. THE COMMITMENT OF THE COLLABORATOR

- a. The quality of a faithful commitment is such that not only does it have its own rewards for the collaborator, but it also stands as a beacon for the youth in his/her care. It encourages the development of similar loyal and dedicated patterns of mature behaviour in the young who can see quite easily if someone is genuine or not in his/her concern for them.
- b. In the Salesian context, our commitment is tested by our youth in many ways. We should take time to reflect on this commitment and consider not only what it means to us, but also the significance it holds for our young people.

DISCUSSION (30 minutes)

Participants now break into groups, and are given Hand-out 1 containing questions for discussion. It is enough that the groups discuss one or two questions only. However, all the groups must answer question 1 and prepare to have the feedback of the discussion reported to the assembly.

The other question for discussion may be assigned by the leader to each group or left to the choice of the group itself

WRAP-UP

The leader sums up the suggestions that have emerged from the discussion on question 1 and tries to bring the assembly to reach some practical conclusions.

In his closing remarks, he may emphasize that as believers, Jesus calls us to a commitment to the Kingdom of God.

EVALUATION

The leader makes use of one of the forms provided in this manual for the evaluation of the session.

For the evaluation on a personal level, he reads out the following statements slowly, one by one, while the participants reflect in silence (or jot down their reflections):

Commitment for me means that I ...

The most important personal choice I have ever made is....

This choice involves a commitment to ...

I am in the process of making a decision that will affect my life. The most important consideration for me is

My commitment as a Salesian lay collaborator is....

CONCLUSION

The session concludes with a renewal of commitment, a prayer or a song.

REFERENCES

Susan Muto & Adrian van Kaam, *Commitment: Key to Christian Maturity*, New Jersey 1990.

Cecilia O'Leary & Betty McCafferty, *Life Commitments: Following My Call*, Center for Learning, Villa Maria, PA 1988.

GC 23.

COMMITMENT

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

From the list of questions given below, please discuss the first one without fail, and any other assigned to you by your leader or chosen by you, as the case may be.

1. As collaborators involved with and committed to the young, together with the Salesians, discuss ways to support each other in your commitment, drawing up a list of at least five things that could be done.

2. What would life be like if we were not able to count on people to do what they say they will do?

3. Describe a time when someone showed commitment. Discuss why.

4. What relationship is there between community building and personal commitment?

5. "Maturity and commitment are two sides of the same coin." What does this statement imply?

6. "Faith cannot be reduced to mere intellectual assent. The believer confesses the truth by committing his own life to the cause of God, the Saviour of mankind" (GC 23 # 149). What part does religious belief have in commitment?

COMMITMENT

SUMMARY

Commitment is part and parcel of our human lives. But it is the perception of that commitment that makes it for us a key to growth in the understanding of our place in the world and of the meaning of our life.

1. THE PROCESS LEADING TO COMMITMENT REQUIRES:

- discernment and reflection,
- choices and decisions,
- celebration and engagement.

2. THE NATURE OF COMMITMENT ENTAILS:

- **fears of:**
 - uncertain consequences,
 - unknown implications,
 - demands for sacrifice,
 - the exercise of faith.
- **joys of:**
 - the blossoming of life,
 - meaning and direction,
 - the use of freedom,
 - the exercise of hope and charity.

3. KEEPING ONE'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT REQUIRES:

- the correspondence of principles and goals,
- the support of the community,
- ongoing formation.

4. THE SALESIAN COLLABORATOR'S COMMITMENT CALLS FOR:

- faithfulness,
- simplicity (the absence of self-interest),
- witness.