

February 26, 2008 - Turin – GC26: “Fraternal gathering”



(ANS – Turin) – On Feb. 25 the delegates of the general chapter completed their pilgrimage to the places associated with Don Bosco.

The morning was devoted to the fourth part of their itinerary, taking them first of all to the basilica of Mary Help of Christians, brought back to its former splendor by recent restoration work. It is from this church that missionary expeditions have been sent out, taking the charism and heart of Don Bosco to all parts of the world.

There followed a celebration of the Eucharist presided over by Cardinal Severino Poletto at the Consolata Shrine. The celebration was noteworthy by the strong spirit of fraternity that was felt. The cardinal's words in his homily are evidence of this: "Meeting with you here to celebrate Mass together in the shrine of the Our Lady of Consolation, patroness of our diocese and to whom Don Bosco was particularly devoted, is for me as archbishop of Turin a motive of great joy, as I welcome you, to pray with and for you, and also to thank the Lord for all that the Church of Turin has received and continues to receive from the pastoral presence of the Salesians and all the great spiritual family of Don Bosco. Personally, and don't think this is simply an expression of courtesy, it comes very sincerely from the heart, I feel a great affection for the Salesians as well as sincere gratitude for the spirit of shared friendship that I have always experienced and for the wonderful collaboration there is at all levels between us."

Conveying the good wishes of the archdiocese of Turin for this important event of a general chapter, the cardinal went on: "Your general chapter sets before you a subject so dear to Don Bosco and so essential for the Church of all ages: 'Da mihi animas, cetera tolle!' This theme challenges you to commit yourselves in three fundamental areas. First, holiness of life, namely, to continue in our own day Jesus' work of salvation; second, a better knowledge of the real charism of Don Bosco: the active Don Bosco, continually on the move among his boys, the Don Bosco of the apostolate of the playground and of the oratory, the Don Bosco of the outings in the countryside with the band of musicians, or the Don Bosco of 'becoming saints while being cheerful,' but also the contemplative Don Bosco who knew how to live in continual communion with God and found in prolonged prayer and a personal relationship with the Lord the true live-giving sap that gave his charism its strength; and last, the challenge of being committed to the formation of the young: we have to be able to present ourselves to the young as signs of hope. They have a great need to discover the beauty of a life lived with purity, with a great faith in God and with disinterested love. They have a thirst for joy, which only the Lord can give and which we need to be able to transmit as life's total fulfillment."

After the final blessing the celebrants paused a while at the chapel dedicated to St. Joseph Cafasso, the Turin saint who was Don Bosco's spiritual guide.

At the end of the three days, Fr. Chavez declared: "This pilgrimage has been a very positive experience. All the chapter delegates have felt overwhelmed at this closeness to Don Bosco in his own native places. It is thanks to the magnificent preparation by the chapter moderator that we have been able to live through this experience which gave us the opportunity to go right to the heart of the whole Salesian enterprise." He ended with these words: "From a number of delegates there has been a suggestion that every general chapter should begin with a pilgrimage to our Founder's origins, so as to set out again each time from Don Bosco himself."