

February 1, 2010 - Argentina – A new phase of Salesian presence



(ANS – San Nicolas de los Arroyos) – Several events marked the feast of Don Bosco at San Nicolas de los Arroyos, Argentina, which the Rector Major is visiting for the official launching of the two provinces.

The day began with the renewal of religious profession of young Salesians in formation. “The readiness of these young men to renew their commitment in the Church and in the Congregation is a sign of hope,” the Rector Major suggested, recalling that it was thanks to a group of young men that Don Bosco was able to give continuity to the work of the Valdocco Oratory.

A meeting with the Salesians in Argentina followed, who for the most part had come to San Nicolas de los Arroyos precisely to meet the ninth successor of Don Bosco. Also present were six Salesian bishops in Argentina: Bishops Pozzi, Laxague, Romanin, Radrizzani, Ronchino, and Melani.

Attention was focused in a special way on Blessed Michael Rua, the first successor of Don Bosco, the centennial of whose death is being celebrated this year. He was the one who ensured that the Salesian charism continued and established itself at the most difficult moment in the life of the young Congregation, following the death of its Founder. At the same time Fr. Chavez spoke about the insights and the innovations Blessed Michael Rua brought to his 22 years as Rector Major.

At the end of the meeting, before the Salesians put some questions to the Rector Major, the Spanish version of Fr. Pietro Braido’s book *Don Bosco, priest of the young, in the century of freedom* was presented. It is the result of long process by various collaborators. The Rector Major gave a copies to the Salesian bishops present, to the outgoing provincials, and to some of those involved in the production of this edition.

In the early afternoon, thanks to the production team of Missioni Don Bosco, Fr. Chavez was linked by satellite to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. In a short interview Don Bosco’s ninth successor spoke about his travels in Argentina, the meeting with the young, and some aspects of the Salesian charism and holiness. Before finishing the Rector Major greeted his vicar, Fr. Adriano Bregolin, and the young people and others present in the basilica in Valdocco, who were about to begin the Mass for the feast of Don Bosco.

In the church of the Salesian school in San Nicolas de los Arroyos there was a meeting with the Salesian Family, “the fruit of the vitality and the fecundity of the charism of Don Bosco,” as Fr. Chavez said. He reminded the more than 400 people present that the re-organization of the provinces was an important historic moment, not without its challenges, which needed to be seen, accepted, and shared as a family occasion.

The day ended with a solemn and well-attended Mass in the courtyard of the Salesian school. More than 1,200 people were present from all over Argentina, despite the fact that in Argentina it is summer vacation and camps for youngsters are in progress.

After the gospel the decrees were read erecting the two new provinces and appointing their superiors: that of Blessed Ceferino Namuncurá (ARS) with Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime and that of Blessed Artemides Zatti with Fr. Manuel Cayo (ARN).

The social and cultural situation of Argentina is different from that of 1875, when the first Salesians arrived, a situation in which "there are new opportunities and new challenges." The Salesians and with them the Salesian Family in Argentina are at a new stage in their history. Referring to Fr. Rua, the Rector Major said that today there is a greater need than ever for Salesians who like Don Bosco's first successor will know how to give to the Congregation a development in vocations, an extension in area, and a seal of holiness.

At the end of the Mass, the mayor of San Nicolas de los Arroyos officially greeted the Rector Major. A commemorative plaque was unveiled by Fr. Chavez under the school portico.