

June 25, 2010 – Salesian GHQ – The feast of the Rector Major 2010



(ANS – Rome) – On June 24, solemnity of the birth of St. John the Baptist, the community of the Generalate celebrated the feast of the Rector Major as an occasion on which to pay homage to the successor of Don Bosco. There were two main events: Mass in the morning and an evening of fraternity.

The Mass, at which Fr. Chavez presided, was introduced with some words by the vicar general, Fr. Adriano Bregolin, who spoke on behalf of the Congregation and the whole Salesian Family to thank Fr. Chavez for his dedication and for all his efforts.

Among those present, in addition to the members of the Generalate community and the general council, were some recently appointed provincials who had just completed a formation course, Fr. Alberto Lorenzelli, provincial of Central Italy, the directors of the community of the Vatican and of St. Callistus, and Fr. Carlo Nanni, rector magnificus of the Salesian Pontifical University.

Commenting on the readings of the Mass, Fr. Chavez spoke of St. John the Baptist as the one who pointed out the Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God!" – the task which Don Bosco undertook with such dedication and which today is asked of every Salesian and member of the Salesian Family in the work of evangelization.

Referring to the role of the Rector Major, Fr. Chavez spoke briefly about his experiences during the last year at the service of the Congregation: a year full of joy at the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation, the centennial of the death of Fr. Michael Rua, and the recent meeting of Salesian bishops, but also a year clouded by the suffering associated with some cases of abuse identified in some Salesian houses. A point of reference for him has been Fr. Rua who, as Don Bosco's successor, had known how to face up to a number of situations during his term of office interpreting in a dynamic fashion the charism of the Founder.

After evening prayer there was a convivial gathering. At the end Fr. Chavez gave a short Good Night in which he thanked the Salesians present and also mentioned the many messages he had received by e-mail, recalling that the feast of the Rector Major was not "a celebration linked to the charism of the individual, but to the charismatic person of the successor of Don Bosco"; a lesson he had learned, he said, from the example of his predecessor, Fr. Juan Vecchi, who in spite of his illness and bearing the clear marks of his operation, wanted to be present at the gathering of young people at Colle Don Bosco. He then referred to the Congregation, present in more than 130 countries, living in a variety of different situations, and with gratitude recalled the great work being undertaken by the Salesians in all the corners of the world, "a Congregation full of vitality and rich in vocations."

The feast of the Rector Major marked the end of the first part of the plenary session of the general council. On Sunday, June 27, the council will begin a retreat at Camaldoli.