

## May 7, 2010 – Salesian GHQ – Fr. Chavez writes a letter to the Salesians about youth ministry



**(ANS – Rome)** – A youth ministry which shows that *Deus Caritas est* is the message and the exhortation which Fr. Pascual Chavez addresses to the Salesians in a letter dated the Fourth Sunday of Easter, dedicated to the Good Shepherd.

At the end of the 26th General Chapter, Don Bosco's Congregation launched a review of its pastoral activity which shows the essential link between evangelization and education.

The letter, published in the *Acts of the General Council* n. 407 is already available in Italian and English on [sdb.org](http://sdb.org), and illustrates the "what" (needs to be done), the "how" (also looking to the future), and especially the "why" regarding Salesian youth ministry. Commenting on the verse from St Mark which introduces the letter – "he took pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he set himself to teach them at some length" (6:34) – Fr. Chavez explains that for Jesus "the first response of his pastoral compassion is evangelization, inseparable, however, from his concern to satisfy the basic human needs of the people – to eat, for example."

The importance of this letter is underlined by the fact that the Rector Major asks explicitly that this text "be studied by provincials, provincial councils, directors, and those in formation." This is then followed by the observation: "the pastoral model of the Congregation is not fully understood, and even less put into practice even in the more dynamic provinces and by the most zealous pastoral workers." It is therefore necessary for the Salesians to experience a cultural revolution and a conversion to the young; educational-pastoral action, which is called to become the revelation of God, a demonstration that *Deus Caritas est*.

Referring to the model of the Valdocco Oratory, the Rector Major traces the path followed by the Congregation in the general chapters between 1965 and 2004, identifying some of the major objectives achieved.

The description of the overall picture at present is followed by that of the various sectors in which Salesian youth ministry operates in its unity and with its qualities.

Its future is then indicated according to the proposals of the 26th General Chapter: the assimilation and the putting into practice of the Salesian youth ministry model; one which, as indicated by *Strenna 2010*, is clearly evangelizing, directed to proclaiming Christ and to educating the young to the faith; focusing on the vocational aspect of every pastoral project; with special attention given to the poorest and those at risk as a special feature of every Salesian presence and work; and the re-definition of all Salesian centers, making them more significant. Along these lines there is also the ever more closely linked

coordination between the departments for the Salesian mission: youth ministry, communications, and missions.