

2.8 Social Communication and Salesian Tradition - 2

Aim

- To study how the exhortation of Don Bosco to “keep alive” the communication tradition has been interpreted by the society through the years.

Procedure

- Share the input after which a discussion on one of the passages from the Documents could follow.

Input

- Let us take a closer look at the apostolate of the media in the Salesian Society from the period after Don Bosco to the present day.

Fr. Michael Rua (1888-1910)

- When in 1891, Leo XIII’s encyclical “Rerum Novarum” on the condition of the working classes was published, Fr. Rua in the 7th GC of 1892 emphasised that the directives of the Pontiff be translated and distributed in small publications that would be within the grasp of the ordinary people.

Fr. Philip Rinaldi (1922-1931)

- Fr. Philip Rinaldi was the founder of the SEI (Societa Editrice Internazionale) in Turin. When signing its statute in 1929 he wrote: “Our educational system accepts everything which is truly Christian. But radio, cinema, gramophones and similar recreational and sporting innovations, if they are harmful to the soul of the young, we would treat them as our Lord commands us to do with an eye that gives scandal.” This defensive and negative attitude towards the means of social communication was typical of the time, even in the documents of the Church.

Fr. Peter Ricaldone (1932-1951)

- Fr. Peter Ricaldone too referring to theatrical productions, cinema, radio and music for amusement purposes, spoke of how the devil makes use of amusements “to corrupt the senses and contaminate morality”
- However we also see re-emerging, in the words of Fr. Ricaldone, Don Bosco’s commitment to the positive approach. He wrote: “We cannot be satisfied with this purely negative part; we have to stem the evil of a bad press by spreading good books.” He took steps to set up publishing centres and insisted on each house having its own library.

Fr. Aloysius Ricceri (1965-1977)

- The 19th General Chapter under Fr. Ricceri marked a turning point in the Congregation’s attitude towards the means of social communications.
- In his general report on the state of the congregation, Fr. Ricceri asserted...
 - The duty of creating an imaginative and practical awareness that communication apostolate is strictly Salesian.
 - The need of preparing personnel at various specialisations; “communication,” he added “is a modern sector of apostolic activity urgently called for by the Church and society, which can offer concrete results in the carrying out of the mission left to us by Don Bosco.”

Fr. Vigano (1981)

- Writing to the Salesians on “The Challenge of the Media” in AGC 302, Fr. Egidio Vigano spoke of the need for a “new Salesian presence” in the media.
- In particular, the Salesian, he said, must apply himself to three main priorities: Ways and means of evangelising through the media; Formation of confreres for the media; Regular and improved diffusion of Salesian information.

The New Constitutions (1984)

- The new determination and commitment of the Salesian Congregation to the field of social communication finally came to be enshrined in the new constitution drawn up by GC22.

Materials Required

- Some documents of the General Chapters pertaining to the Salesian Charism and Communication.



- The Constitution described social communication as “one of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission”. The Regulations offered concrete guidelines for the development of this sector in the provinces.

GC 23 (1990)

- Considering the theme of evangelisation, the congregation committed itself over the next six years to an adequate use of social communication for transmitting the Christian message and educating youth to the faith.
- The Chapter established that the local community would foster its own capacity for communication: among other things by exploiting means like theatre, video, music, through which the message of salvation can be spread.

GC 24 (1996)

- Considering the question of collaboration with the laity, the GC said that to communicate is to mobilise and co-ordinate forces for good, so that together they may cultivate the hope of humanity, which is called youth.
 - The broadening of involvement and promotion of shared responsibility demands a capacity for and exploitation of communication.
1. Exploiting communication means that we have to be aware of the new cultural situation in which we find ourselves; we are witnessing, in fact, a massive invasion of means and messages and critical and educative use of the means of social communications.

Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS) – 2005

1. The Salesian Social Communication System of the Congregation aims to respond to the complexity as well as the energy of Social Communication in its many expressions and meanings. The simple creation of a communication sector does not serve such a vision. The communication system is placed at the service of the institution’s entire project with the objective of involving everyone in a shared vision of values and mission.
2. The Salesian Social Communication System is conceived as a unified and integrated project with a shared vision of values and mission which is distinctly Salesian, with planned policies and actions in the areas of animation, formation, information and production, and with a management of organisational structures and communication processes networked with the various sectors within the Congregation and the Salesian Family, and externally, with Church organisations and those in society.

Salesian, Communicator, Social Communications Handbook - 2005

This handbook has a single aim: to help whoever works within Social Communication in the provinces, provincial conferences or regions by offering practical directions, helping to spell out the frame of reference already provided in *The Salesian Social Communication System (SSCS)*. It was first published in 2001, but this current edition is a complete re-writing what had happened within the Congregation in this sector, following GC25 and the appointment of a Councillor specifically for Social Communication.

Fr. Pascual Chavez (AGC – 390) 2005

“With the courage of Don Bosco on the new frontiers of social communication”

By reminding the Salesians of Don Bosco’s letter on good books, we want to recall and re-echo in our hearts the heartfelt appeal by which our Father entrusts us with “a most important part of our mission”, “one of the principal purposes of our congregation”, “one of the greatest enterprises” entrusted to him by divine Providence, one of the best means – and even a “divine” means – of ensuring the fruitfulness of our ministry. Hearing God’s word is authentic only if it becomes transformed into witness, because every proclamation brings with it a vocation to be lived and a mission to be fulfilled.

Guidelines for Formation in Salesian Charism - 2006

1. Social communication has always been seen as an urgent and necessary field of formation in the congregation. Given its importance for Salesian life and mission, from the 90’s onwards there have been efforts to offer a formation programme for the different stages, especially for those in initial formation.
2. The “guidelines for the formation of Salesians in social communication” are meant for the same people and groups who were given the Ratio, namely: all saints, but especially provincials and their councils, Delegates and members of Formation and Social Communication Commissions, formators, and those being formed, all those responsible for initial and ongoing formation of Salesians.

GC 26 2008

- Encouraged Salesian communities to give importance to media education and use technologies to spread Salesian charism (109).
- Invited the provinces to lay down a realistic strategy for inclusive presence in media through youthful and popular artistic expressions and qualifying personnel (110).
- Called on the Rector Major and council to make cohesive inter-departmental plans for formation in social communication of Salesians and laity to minister to young people (111).

The Salesian Bulletin

The Salesian Family Bulletin, a magazine targeted at the Salesians of Don Bosco as well as Christian faithfuls seeks

to consolidate Salesians in their mission and founder, Don Bosco. It also contains updates on the latest happenings in the Salesian mission areas. It was founded by St. John Bosco in 1877.

Review

1. Fr. Rua in the 7th GC of 1892 emphasised that the directives of the Pontiff be translated and distributed in small publications that would be within the grasp of the ordinary people.
2. Fr. Philip Rinaldi said: “Our educational system accepts everything which is truly Christian. But radio, cinema, gramophones and similar recreational and sporting innovations, if they are harmful the soul of the young, we would treat them as our Lord commands us to do with an eye that gives scandal.”
3. Fr. Peter Ricaldone too referring to theatrical productions, cinema, radio and music for amusement purposes, spoke of how the devil makes use of amusements “to corrupt the senses and contaminate morality”.
4. The 19th General Chapter under Fr. Ricceri marked a turning point in the Congregation’s attitude towards the means of social communications. He asserted: The duty of creating an imaginative and practical awareness that communication apostolate is strictly Salesian. The need of preparing personnel at various specialisations; “communication,” he added “is a modern sector of apostolic activity urgently called for by the Church and society, which can offer concrete results in the carrying out of the mission left us by Don Bosco.”
5. Fr. Viganò called for the need for a “new Salesian presence” in the media. In particular, the Salesian, he said, must apply himself to three main priorities: Ways and means of evangelising through the media; Formation of confreres for the media; Regular and improved diffusion of Salesian information.
6. The new constitution, drawn up by GC22, described social communication as “one of the apostolic priorities of the Salesian mission”. The Regulations offered concrete guidelines for the development of this sector in the provinces.
7. The Salesian Family Bulletin is another means of Communications.

Reflection

Communication is being spoken of as the “new power.” The conscience of modern man is being progressively moulded by it. As Salesians who are entrusted with the growth of the youth, in what practical ways can we communicate our message in the modern audio-visual age?

Relevant Skills

Review the EPP of your community on Social Communication with guidelines from GC 26.

Resources

BOSCOM-INDIA. ‘SHEPHERDS’ FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini, 2000.

