 Reading time: 5 min.

To my Salesian Brothers SDB
To my brothers and sisters in the Salesian Family

My dear brothers and sisters: Please accept my fraternal and affectionate greetings on this day when we remember our Father Don Bosco's birth. I am sending you these words a few minutes after solemnly celebrating the liturgical feast of Don Bosco's birth at the Becchi, Colle Don Bosco, where he was born on 16 August 1815. This child was a wonderful instrument of the Spirit of God to give life to the great movement that is the Don Bosco Family.

This morning, in the presence of the Vicar of the Rector Major and many of my Salesian brothers and sisters, the Salesian Family, lay friends of Don Bosco, civil and public service authorities and 375 young people from all over the world who took part in the Youth Synod, I signed my resignation from the service as Rector Major, as established by the Constitutions and Regulations of the Salesians of Don Bosco, given that I have been called by the Holy Father, Pope Francis, to another service.

I would like to communicate to the whole Salesian world, in these words, what has taken piace. I would like to express my outlook of faith and hope in the Lord who has guided us, and I wish to express my gratitude for so much good received over these ten and a half years as Rector Major of the Congregation and, in the name of Don Bosco, as Father of the entire Salesian Family.

1. First of all, dear brothers and sisters, in addressing you I would like to express my deep gratitude to God for these years in which he has blessed our Congregation and the Salesian Family. Over a decade we have certainly experienced very different events and situations, especially in a Congregation that is present in 136 nations; I think I can say that we have approached everything from a perspective of faith, with great hope and determination, always for the good of the mission and in fidelity to the charism we have received.

2. I am grateful to the Lord for the fact that over these years I have net lacked, nor have we lacked, the serenity and strength that comes from him. For how true is what the risen Lord says to St Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Cor 12:9). This is how I have experienced, and this is how we as the General Council have

experienced our service of animation and government. In particular, I would like to thank the two General Councils that have accompanied me over these ten and a half years for their loyalty to our common project, for their dedication and their service.

3. At the end of this period at the head of the Salesian Congregation, I express particular thanks to the Vicar of the Rector Major, Fr Stefano Martoglio, who takes up his service at the head of the Congregation with total dedication and generosity. In the coming months there will be much work and great responsibility, but his personality, his fraternal approach, his ability and optimism, with the help of the General Council and guided by the Lord, will facilitate the journey that remains until the 29th General Chapter.

4. I express my deep gratitude to all my Salesian confreres around the world. I have always felt welcomed, loved and fraternally accepted, and I have found collaboration and generosity. lt is true that the Salesians of Don Bosco love and care for the Rector Major as they would for Don Bosco himself, as he asked of us in his spiritual testament. Thank you for your generosity.

5. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Salesian Family spread throughout the world: to our sisters the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to the Salesian Cooperators, to the Association of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA) – all founded by Don Bosco – and so on up to the 32 groups that today make up this great charismatic tree. These were years of growth and blessing. Thank you to all the people who, through faith in the Lord, have made all this possible.

6. And over these ten years of my service of animation and government, during which I have been able to visit 120 of the countries in which the Congregation and the Salesian Family are present, I have received the great gift of meeting young people around the world: little ones, teenagers, young adults, boys and girls of every nation. I was able to “see with my own eyes, feel with my heart”, first-hand, how “the educational miracles that heal and transform lives” continue to happen every day in many Salesian presences and in our family. And I was able to meet thousands and thousands of young people from all continents and cultures. They were one of my profoundest joys.

7. And I have one last thank you to make. Throughout these years, I have always felt encouraged and supported by the unconditional love of my biological family. For

nine of these years my parents, now with God, accompanied me lovingly, serenely, and with their prayers, always telling me not to worry about them. They and all the rest of my family have always been there forme, supporting me with their presence and representing a safe haven to reach so that I never forget my humble origins.

8. Let me conclude by referring to what I said on 25 March 2014 when the then Rector Major, Fr Pascual Chavez, asked me, on behalf of the 27th General Chapter which had elected me in the voting, whether I would accept the service of Rector Major.

I remember that in my poor Italian of that time I said, not without deep emotion, that “trusting in the Grace of the Lord and in faith, with the certainty that I will always be supported by my Salesian confreres, and because I truly love the young people whom I carry in my Salesian heart, I accept what is asked of me.” Today, with these words of thanks, I can tell you that everything I had hoped for has come true with God’s grace.

My final words are addressed to our Father Don Bosco and the Help of Christians. There is no doubt that Don Bosco has watched over and supported his Congregation and his Family over these years. And I have no doubt that in all this time what he himself had assured us has been achieved: “She did everything”. This was the case with Don Bosco. This has been the case in the recent years to which I refer, and this will undoubtedly continue to be the case. To her, our Mother and Help of Christians, we entrust ourselves.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you and greetings from this brother of yours who is and always will be a Salesian of Don Bosco. With all my affection,

Ángel Fernández Cardinale Artime
Prot. 24/0427
Colle Don Bosco, 16 August 2024

Let us also add the office termination act.

I, the undersigned, Ángel Fernández Cardinale Artime, Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de Sales,

– whereas in the Consistory of 30 September 2023 the Holy Father Francis created and proclaimed me Cardinal of the Deaconry of Santa Maria Ausiliatrice in Via Tuscolana; whereas on 5 March 2024 he assigned me the titular see of Ursona, with the dignity of archbishop, and whereas on 20 April 2024 I received Episcopal Ordination in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome;
– considering that the religious elevated to the Episcopate is subject only to the Roman Pontiff (can.
705);
– taking into account that, in accordance with can. 184 §1 CIC "*An ecclesiastical office is lost by the lapse of a predetermined time*" and that, by decree of 19 April 2024, the Holy Father ordered "*by exception and only for this case*" the continuation of my service as Rector Major after episcopal ordination, until 16 August 2024,
hereby

I DECLARE

that, since the time established by the aforementioned decree has expired, **from today's date I h1ve ceased to hold the office of Rector Major of the Society of St Francis de Sales**.

In accordance with art. 143 of the Constitutions, the Vicar, Father Stefano Martoglio, wili simuitaneousiy take over the governance of the Society *ad interim*, until the election of the Rector Major that will take place during the 29th General ha ter convened in Turin from 16 February to 12 April 2025.

Ángel Fernández Cardinale Artime
Prot. 24/0406
Rome, 16 August 2024