

□ Reading time: 2 min.

*For the attention of my Salesian confreres, for the attention of our dear Salesian Family*

*My dear Salesian confreres, my dear brothers and sisters in the Salesian Family throughout the world: please accept my warm and affectionate greetings, especially at this time.*

The reasons for my writing to you today, right on the eve of my Episcopal Ordination, at the nomination of the Holy Father Pope Francis, is to officially and definitively pass on to you my personal situation with regard to our Congregation and the Salesian Family.

Some time ago, Pope Francis expressed to me his wish that my Episcopal Ordination would take place during this Easter season together with our Salesian confrere Archbishop-elect Giordano Piccinotti, and that I could continue my service until the appropriate date. So, trusting always in the Lord, who is the only guarantor of our lives, the following is definitive:

1. The Holy Father has prepared a document for me with the 'deroga' (an Italian term meaning "an exception to what is legislated", in which he authorises me to continue for a further period as Rector Major, after having received episcopal consecration). This document containing the Holy Father's authorisation has already reached us and is in the archives of the Congregation.

2. In agreement with Pope Francis, I will conclude my service as Rector major towards the evening of 16 August this year, 2024, following the celebration of the 209th anniversary of the birth of our father at Colle Don Bosco. On the same day we will celebrate the closing of the Youth Synod' with the young people, a Synod in which 370 young people from all over the world will have participated on the occasion of the bicentenary of the dream at 9 years of age, an event for Don Bosco that was a dream-vision and a programme for life that has come down to us. On that afternoon, in a simple act, I will sign my letter of renunciation in accordance with Article 128 of our Constitutions, and I will hand over this document to the Vicar of the Rector Major Father Stefano Martoglio who, according to Article 143, will assume the government of our Congregation 'ad interim' until the election of the Rector Major at GC29 to be held in Valdocco (Turin) from 16 February 2025.

3. Certainly from now on, but particularly from that date onwards, I will be attending to the service that the Holy Father will indicate to me.

I wish to thank the Lord, together with all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, for how blessed we have been over these last ten years, both as a Salesian Congregation and as the Family of Don Bosco. The Lord has assisted us in his Spirit and our Mother the Help of Christians has never let go of our hand. And we are certain that this will continue to be the case in the future because “She has done everything”.

My final word at this moment is addressed to Don Bosco who will undoubtedly continue to look after his Congregation and his precious Family.

With true affection and united in the Lord,

*Cardinal Ángel FERNÁNDEZ ARTIME, sdb*

*Rector Major*

*Society of St Francis de Sales*

*Rome, 19 April 2024*

*Prot. 24/0160*