 Reading time: 5 min.

Communication, now more than ever, is a decisive area for education and evangelisation. For this reason, knowing who leads it in the Salesian Congregation means also understanding the path that the Salesians intend to take alongside young people and the Church. We met the new Councillor for Communication, Father Fidel Orendain, a Filipino Salesian, to briefly hear about his story, his vocation, the challenges of the educational mission and his perspective on the digital world.

Can you give us a self-introduction?
I am Fr. Fidel Orendain, a Salesian of Don Bosco. I was born in the Philippines on April 24, 1965. I professed as a Salesian on April 1, 1985, and was ordained on December 8, 1993. My background is in education and communications, and I've served in different roles — as a teacher, counselor, preacher, communicator, strategic planner, and more recently in leadership. But more than the positions, what has defined me is a simple love for learning, teaching, and for being with young people. I've always been curious, someone who liked to organize, tinker, build, and repair things — and I've discovered that this same spirit helps in building lives and guiding communities too. A personal motto that guides me is "the disposition to be always in wonder" — to never lose the childlike openness to learn, to marvel, and to discover God's presence in daily life.

What did you dream of as a child?
I actually wanted to be many things when I was a child — a scientist, an astronaut, a builder, even a teacher. At the heart of it, I wanted to understand how things worked and to help people. I loved reading and imagining different worlds, but I was also the kind of child who spoke what was on my mind, liked fixing things, and enjoyed inventing or repairing whatever was broken. Looking back, those simple traits stayed with me and shaped my path.

Can you tell us how you discovered your Salesian vocation?
My brothers entered the seminary in high school. I listened to their stories when they came home for vacation. I got curious, so I also entered. The Salesians I met inspired me because of their hard work and friendliness. I loved listening to the stories of the missionaries, especially an Italian priest, Fr. Peter Garbero, who had been a missionary in China.

How did your family react?

My family was supportive, even if they had natural worries. I think they knew that I was kind of naughty and hyperactive and might not fit in the discipline and rigidity of the seminary. But when they saw that my choice of being a Salesian gave me joy, they gave their blessing.

Do you remember any educator in particular?
Yes, several. I remember a Salesian who was always smiling, even when tired. A Polish priest, Fr. Felix Glowicki — his kindness and constancy marked me deeply. He taught me that education is not about grand gestures but about daily fidelity and presence. The Salesian priests and brothers in my high school and college years were also very inspiring.

Was there a moment of crisis or doubt along the way?
Of course. Every vocation passes through moments of darkness. For me, the biggest struggle was balancing personal freedom with obedience. At one point, after being harshly scolded by a formator, I thought of finding another seminary. Later, in those midlife moments, I somehow became overly sensitive and selfish. I'm glad I had people telling me that the stage was a transition inviting me to "go deeper."

What is your best experience?
My best experiences have always been with young people. Early on, I discovered the joy of being with them — whether in sports, theater, or just in ordinary conversations. Those moments of laughter, play, and creativity showed me what it means to share life and faith together. Later, I began to appreciate the deeper wealth of community life, even with people who were very different from me or sometimes challenging. That's where I learned patience, humility, and what I now call radical optimism: avoiding complaining, blaming, or imputing ill intent, and instead choosing to see the good and the possibilities in others.

What do you think are the greatest challenges in educating and accompanying young people today?
I think the greatest challenge is a weakening of the sense of right and wrong, and of the sacred. Many young people grow up without clear references for truth, goodness, or holiness. When this inner compass is blurred, it's easy to be carried away by distractions, trends, and superficial choices. Our task is to help them recover that inner compass — to rediscover their dignity, their values, and their vocation — so they can live freely and generously.

Are there any particularly significant experiences you've had that you'd

like to share?
Yes, many. I remember engaging with young people in sports and theater — both very close to my heart. Sports taught us teamwork, discipline, and resilience; theater awakened creativity and helped us enter into each other's stories. At the same time, I tried to inculcate in them a love for the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and confession, and a genuine appreciation for the sacrifices their parents made for them. These simple yet profound lessons often became the foundation of their growth. Even in ordinary moments — conversations, laughter, or silence — I felt fraternity growing step by step. Years later, when I meet some of them as adults with families of their own, they tell me how those experiences, both playful and spiritual, left a lasting mark on their lives.

Social media, gaming, artificial intelligence: how do you relate to these worlds to stay close to young people?
I try to approach them with curiosity, not fear. These tools can distract, yes, but they can also connect. My role is to guide young people — and, in my current office, also guide and inform Salesians — to use them with freedom and responsibility, and always in harmony with their deeper values.

How do you see the dialogue between faith and digital culture, especially among the new generations?
Faith must not be afraid of the digital world. If we see communication not just as technology but as communion, then the digital culture becomes another space to witness and share the Gospel. However, as Salesians, we should also be aware that the digital world can create isolation, fragmentation, or superficiality. Our task is to humanize it, to make it a place of encounter, meaning, and fraternity.

What are the prayer practices or devotions that you find most meaningful to you?
The Eucharist is central for me. Daily Mass, adoration, and simple moments of silence sustain my vocation. Of course, the Rosary and devotion to Mary remain constant companions.

Is there a prayer, a "Salesian good night" or a habit that you never fail to do? Why?
I try not to miss my daily rosary and saying good night to Mary at the end of the day. The daily and frequent examen of conscience taught by Francis de Sales also grounds me, helping me to live with simplicity and gratitude. Now that technology is available, I try to drop a few lines to friends before the end of the day to check on

them and assure them of my prayers — my own version of a digital “good night.”

Can you tell us about an experience that has particularly marked you in your ministry?
One experience that marked me deeply is my journey in communication. At first, I thought it was about handling tools, media, or public relations. But I slowly discovered that at its heart, communication is about communion: helping people and communities connect more deeply, grow in honesty, and live with transparency. I realized that the real challenge is not the technology but the relationships — how we listen, how we build trust, how we create spaces where truth and fraternity can flourish. This discovery changed the way I approach leadership and ministry.

What are the most relevant challenges for the future?
Remaining faithful to our identity. Technology, trends, and new challenges will come and go. But if we stay rooted in Don Bosco’s charism — joy, presence, fraternity, and love for the young — we will always be relevant.

Do you have any project that is particularly close to your heart?
Yes: forming a culture of communication as communion in our Congregation. Before speaking to the world, we Salesians must learn to speak to one another — build relationships with honesty, patience, and fraternity. If we can live this, then every project we take on will bear fruit.