

GOODNIGHT TO THE COMMUNITY

CENTRAL OFFICE

AUGUST 6, 2026

We have reached the end of the second session of the General Council this year, 2026, which has kept us intensely engaged. Before sharing a thought drawn from the encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the General Council and, consequently, to all of you who are part of their teams or who support the work we carry out here at the Central Office. The new working method—three sessions of five weeks each, with an additional week in the first session dedicated to the Spiritual Exercises—involves all of us whenever the General Council meets.

It is a new experience that asks us to make good use of the time we spend together, bringing forward topics of regional interest for study and accompanying processes that require us to promote or strengthen synergy among the various Sectors. In light of my past experience, I am pleased to see that this work is already bearing fruit: this is a good sign. It does, however, require an additional measure of commitment and energy. I therefore take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Councilors, the women and men who collaborate with us: without the contribution of each and every one, this journey would not exist or would be much more fragile.

In light of these considerations, I would like to share, in this “Goodnight,” two reflections drawn from *Magnifica Humanitas*, capable of shedding light on our service of governance and animation and encouraging us to continue in the mission to which the Lord calls us, here and now.

Called to Choose

From the very first paragraph, Pope Leo begins the encyclical with a clear and urgent invitation:

THE MAGNIFICENT HUMANITY created by God today finds itself faced with a decisive choice: to erect a new Tower of Babel or to build the city where God and humanity dwell together. Each generation inherits the task of giving shape to its own time: of helping history mature as a place where the dignity of every person is protected, justice is promoted, and fraternity is made possible. (No. 1)

For us, who are consecrated to the education and evangelization of young people, these words resound as a call awaiting a concrete response.

First of all, discernment. Recognizing that this call has been entrusted to us highlights the responsibility that belongs to us. We are here because we have been called by God to discern His will and to live it out for the benefit of young people. We have freely accepted this call and live it with dedication.

From this perspective, the Pope outlines the path to follow and points to the questions that must be addressed:

We need to begin a shared discernment capable of penetrating the spiritual and cultural roots of the transformations taking place. If we limit ourselves to circumstances, we risk allowing the succession of emergencies to decide the direction of our journey for us. (...) Decisive questions are imposed upon our conscience, questions that can no longer be avoided: Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves? What direction should we choose as a human community and as peoples? (No. 6)

The path opening before us requires discernment capable of going beyond a simple—and insufficient—reaction to problems. It challenges our personal and collective conscience, which cannot be allowed to remain a spectator. The need to begin with conscience for serious discernment is evident from the earliest days of **Don Bosco's** life as well. Already during his time at the *Convitto*, **St. Joseph Cafasso** accompanied him in discerning the city, the young people who lived there, God's plan for him, and how to respond to those challenges.

Second, Pope Leo writes that the call to choose how we will inhabit the present moment places us before two possibilities, which he himself presents and comments on very effectively through two biblical images.

To respond to these questions, and to discern how to responsibly inhabit the age of artificial intelligence, I would like to recall two biblical images: the construction of the Tower of Babel (cf. Gen. 11:1–9) and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 2–6). (No. 7)

The description of these two possibilities is particularly valid and relevant in light of what we see today in the fields of education and evangelization.

The first possibility is the project of Babel. Some of its characteristics, although they may take different forms, are still present today.

Human beings (...) want to (...) guarantee themselves stability and power, and above all to “make a name for themselves” (...) The undertaking appears imposing: one language, one technology, one direction. Yet the project conceals a profound danger: it is a work conceived without reference to God, sustained by a uniformity that eliminates diversity and that, instead of communion, chooses conformity. (No. 7)

It is a city that needs no one, founded on the “claim to be self-sufficient.” We know well what the outcome was. The Pope writes:

“Babel (...) although grandiose, arises from the absolutization of the human and its claim to self-sufficiency; it sacrifices the dignity of persons to efficiency and aspires to reach heaven without God's blessing.” (No. 7)

Are these—or other similar conditions—not what the Lord is asking us to recognize today, so that we do not allow ourselves to be carried along by them?

The second possibility leads us to rebuild Jerusalem.

The encyclical dwells on the context in which the desire to embrace this project takes shape. These were not easy times—far from it. They were times of “great vulnerability in the history of ancient Israel.” It was precisely in this context that the desire to return to Jerusalem emerged. A desire that had to come to terms with reality: once they had returned, the city “was still in ruins, its walls had collapsed, and its gates had been burned (cf. Neh. 1–2).” Certainly, this was neither a comfortable nor an easy return.

Let us ask ourselves: How does the fact that the human heart is still capable of dreaming of a holy city challenge us, even when all it sees before it are ruins and destruction? Where does the longing, the desire, the dream that, despite everything, it is possible to rebuild the city come from? Let us think of our father and teacher: What moved **Don Bosco’s** heart when he faced a youth population that was humanly impoverished, spiritually empty, and thirsting for affection?

Nehemiah Challenges Us

The Holy Father focuses on Nehemiah’s choices. In this context, the prophet, “before acting, fasts, prays, and intercedes for the people; then he asks the king for permission to return to Jerusalem and, upon arriving there, silently surveys the destroyed areas.” (No. 8)

Nehemiah’s attitudes also offer us light and courage today. Precisely because he is a prophet, he is aware that, before every project and undertaking, one must be rooted inwardly. Before looking outward, Nehemiah looks within himself: he fasts, prays, and then intercedes for the people.

It is from this intimate and profound experience with God, from this deep familiarity with the One who inhabits his intimate and sacred space, that Nehemiah can turn his gaze toward the destroyed city he has been called to rebuild: “upon arriving there, he silently surveys the destroyed areas.” (No. 8)

It is precisely in those places that the prophet is called to begin the work of reconstruction.

These are fundamental choices that continue to challenge us: Where do the processes we propose to the Provinces begin? How truly essential do we consider it to be that, before sharing our plans with others, we ourselves are convinced and committed to inhabiting the terrain of our interior life?

If we speak of interiority, that is, of mystical life, we need only know the journey of **Don Bosco**. In him we encounter a soul completely rooted in God, in profound union with Him.

Fr. Pietro Braido observes that, at the end of the decade, in 1859, the figure of **Don Bosco** already emerges in all its extraordinariness. At the conclusion of this account, he writes:

One final characteristic that already marks Don Bosco is his well-established familiarity with the extraordinary, which is ordinary in the Church and in its saints. There have already been several opportunities to emphasize this: Don Bosco displays an early sensitivity to the invisible. Evidently, it is, first and foremost, the supernatural that dwells within him from the moment of his baptism: the sacrament of divine adoption through grace enables him to live daily in faith, hope, and charity, continually nourished by the Word of God, the sacraments, and prayer.¹

Nehemiah Shows Us the Way

In the encyclical, the Holy Father presents the choices that mark Nehemiah's journey, a journey in harmony with that of the Church and our Congregation.

He does not impose solutions from above. He gathers the families, entrusts each one with a section of the wall to rebuild, listens to their fears, coordinates their efforts, and faces opposition. The account shows how the city is reborn not through the initiative of a single person, but through the shared responsibility of the entire people: priests, craftsmen, heads of families, women, and young people. It is a work that has God at its center and rebuilds relationships even before the stones. Ancient Jerusalem thus rediscovers a common language—not that of uniformity, but that of communion: the harmony that emerges when each person assumes his or her part and the entire people recognize that their strength comes from the Lord. (No. 8)

In light of this initial reflection by Pope Leo, this evening I would simply like to invite each of us to embrace the example of Nehemiah, contemplating him both in his interior and exterior dimensions.

As was the case with **Don Bosco**, there is no doubt that our choice must be oriented toward the city of Jerusalem, welcoming it without judgments or prejudices, just as it is. At this stage of history, let us do our best to ensure that an awareness of the greatness of the undertaking never causes us to lose courage in the face of what we are called to build.

This courage finds its source, first and foremost, in our relationship with God, in the purification of our intentions, and in our ability to make our hearts “fast” from whatever can poison them. The prayer that for Nehemiah provided and nourished this healing and strengthening power has the same effectiveness for us today. Let us live it with conviction and perseverance, personally and as a community, aware that this is the first step, indispensable and non-negotiable.

Alongside this, and only after this, let us live out our calling with the conviction that the mission is shared. None of us can do it alone: we know this. Let us continue working so that the spirit of collaboration and the desire for communion, already present among us, may grow in charity, which is patient and kind.

Every day, in our intimate, personal, and community lives, as well as in our pastoral activity, we are called to choose between the “Babel syndrome” and the “way of Nehemiah.” As educators and pastors, we can choose only the “way of Nehemiah,” which calls us to “build together, transforming diversity into a resource and making listening and dialogue the common ground on which to foster justice and fraternity” (No. 10), for the good of young people.

I will stop here for this evening. Pope Leo still has many other things to say to us, which we can share at other times.

Goodnight.

¹ **Pietro Braidò**, *Don Bosco, Priest of the Young in the Century of Freedom*, Vol. 1 (LAS – Rome, 2009), Chapter 11: No. 10, “Point of Arrival: A Multifaceted Don Bosco,” pp. 365–367.