



## The Modernity of a Vocation

Last October, Pope Francis canonized Blessed Paul VI, Pope Montini. In his homily, he said: *Paul VI "spent his life for the Gospel of Christ, crossing new boundaries and becoming a witness through his messages and dialogues, being a prophet of an extrovert Church that looks into the distance even as it takes care of the poor. Today, he still urges us to live our common vocation: the universal vocation to holiness. No to half measures, but completely open to holiness"*.

One of the frontiers that he surpassed was to recognize, deepen and promote the vocation and mission of Secular Institutes, "the authentic springtime of the Church". I have here a fragment of one of his speeches that helps to recognize, deepen and promote this vocation, which is especially relevant in the Church of our present time.

**Now what was the original inspiration of Secular Institutes?** What was the soul, giving birth, animation, development? It was a longing, a search, deep and **preoccupying, for a synthesis**, a way of life combining the two characteristic features of your way of life: 1) **full consecration according to the evangelical counsels** and 2) **freedom to take on the responsibility of a presence and transforming action in the world**, from the inside, to shape it, to make it a better world, to sanctify it.

On the one hand **the profession of the evangelical counsels** is a specific form of life, giving both strength and witness to that holiness which is the vocation of all the faithful. It is a sign of perfect identification with the Church, and with the Lord and Master himself and the aims and purposes which he has entrusted to the Church. On the other hand, **to reside in the world** implies the Christian responsibility of men and women who, themselves redeemed by Christ, are, as surely committed to *"illumine and organise temporal affairs in such a way that they may always start out, develop, and persist according to Christ's mind, to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer"* (LG, 31).

In this picture of the present situation there is a **deep, providential, unmistakable link** you might say **identification between the charism of Secular Institutes and one of the clearest and most important themes of the Council, the Church's presence in the**

**world**. In fact the Council documents underline the various relationships between Church and world: the Church is part and parcel of the world, destined to serve the world, to be the leaven in the lump or the soul in the body, for the Church is called to sanctify and consecrate the world, to shed upon it the pure light of the supreme values of love, justice and peace.

At a time like the present, Secular Institutes, in virtue of their charism of consecrated secularity (cf PC, 11), **have emerged as providential instruments to embody this spirit and to pass it on to the whole Church**. Their life, even before the Council, was a kind of forging ahead in this matter, and that is the best of reasons today for giving witness as specialists in the field as models, of the Church's attitude and mission in the world.

Clear directives and repeated instructions are not enough, as things stand today, to accomplish those changes in the Church which are needed in today's world. We need the realities of person and community, people who embody and transmit consciously and responsibly, the spirit with which the Council required all members of the Church to be imbued. **This is the mission given to you and being given it enhances your stature to be the model of untiring inward energy towards the new relationship and attitude to the world, to service of the world, which the Church seeks to embody.** (*Paul VI, 1972*)



*From the Homily of  
Don Egidio Viganò to  
the Eucharist of the  
First Profession of Se-  
ven Secular Consecra-  
ted Salesians (CDB)  
(8/09/1994)*

It is certainly, a day of special baptismal intensity for those who will make the profession and for their companions, because it highlights the profound mystery of Baptism as a covenant with the Lord.

Here, you make a gesture of special intimacy with Jesus Christ. Alliance means friendship, it means collaboration, it means the ability to bear witness to its mystery in front of any situation in life.

And then, to see the presence of so many people of the Congregation and of the Volunteers, when it should have been a profession, let's say, a bit particular, almost hidden like the seed that falls into the root and then grow luxuriantly, it means that this is a day of celebration for the Salesian Family. I say family to understand the whole charism of Don Bosco. To see that from the vigorous, fruitful root of Don Bosco's charism is blossoming a new, much awaited shoot that will certainly flourish and that will give the whole Salesian Family the sense of novelty, as on the first day, the sense of enthusiasm to realize what the Holy Spirit suggested to Don Bosco, and that he carried on with great generosity, creativity and flexibility and that we are called to continue according to the needs of the new times.

This is why we are happy and feel solidarity with you. We assure you of our prayer, our accompaniment, our trust and above all we are full of gratitude to the Lord, because this was not born of the imagination of some "shrewd" man but was born at the initiative of the Lord himself, who puts in the hearts of people generosity, the sense of the Church's current needs and above all the relevance and urgency of Don Bosco's mission for new times.

So, thanks be to God, congratulations to you, and let us celebrate together by accompanying you in this act, and gesture, which is the greatest that you can do as baptized, that is the supreme act of freedom that is actually the radicality of Baptism.

### **VDB presence in the world**

Currently, there are 1150 Don Bosco Volunteers (VDB). They are present in the territory of 63 SDB Provinces and in 60 countries. There are 162 groups or subgroups established, grouped into 27 Regions. The number of people employed by the Center is 22. The most recent countries are Turkey, Lebanon, Mali, Benin, Indonesia, Gabon, Mozambique, Kenya, Cameroon.

### **CDB presence in the world**

Currently, there are 85 Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB). They are present in the territory of 25 Provinces and in 26 countries. They form 5 groups or subgroups. The number of people employed by the Center is 30. The countries where they have been most recently present are the Philippines, Turkey and Congo.

### **The Role of the AE (Ecclesiastical Assistants)**

The Salesians who accompany the Volunteers (CDB) and the Volunteers (VDB) are called Ecclesiastical Assistants. What is this Role? This is a service, provided for in the respective Constitutions, which both Institutes ask the Rector Major. Their functions are: to guarantee the priestly ministry, to collaborate in the formation of the sisters / brothers and to be available for any requests that are made to them, but not for directing, because they are autonomous Institutes. The Local Assistants are appointed by the Provincial of the group's territory and the Regional Assistants by the Rector Major.

### **What are the presences dependent on the Center?**

Both Institutes are organized in groups or subgroups of brothers / sisters who live in a nearby area and are accompanied by the Local Responsible. In the case of territories where this is not possible, the group dependency on the Center is considered, i.e. members are accompanied by a member of the Central Council. This happens especially in countries where the Institute is in its infancy. In this case, the Ecclesiastical Assistant is specially asked to accompany these members, until the group is able to manage itself.