



Pedagogy of secularity (Proclaim, 64 and ss)

... We could say **it is a pedagogy of secularity**, that is, an attention in which the entire person educates himself to experience the world with a Christian soul, searching for the creative mark that God has left on him. This process, which we can define as a process of wisdom and as generative of evangelical life, should be part of the formation of consecrated men and women according to their specific form of life.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, the following question is quietly present: **Is secularity... unrelated and opposed to Christian faith, or the contrary, is it consistent with its essence?** The Church recognizes the secular entity of the world entrusted by God to man's responsibility. At the same time, the Church exists in open solidarity with it, to make it sacred but to make it the seed of sanctification. Experiencing the world, therefore, is an archetype to combine the prophetic mission of the Church with. According to the doctrine of *Gaudium et Spes* which talks about a legitimate secularity of society, **worldly and profane realities have their own autonomy and reason for being.** *"For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order"* (GS, 36). Deeper involvement in the secular world can be a way to God because *"earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labours to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity"* (GS, 36).

The mission requires delicate balance: codetermining the path of the secular world without wanting to determinate it (K. Rahner) The Church, Pope Francis affirms, *"stands by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance" while it "consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time"* (EG, 24).

"The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him" (Jn 1:9-10): this Word is fulfilled in secular conditions... The incarnation can only be expressed through secular categories.

The secularity has been indicated as "the proper and specific character" of that form of consecrated life incarnated in secular institutes. Today, **the relationship with the world interpellates all forms of consecrated life in every dimension:** our existence and our attitudes of dialogue, witness and mission. Paul (cfr. At 16, 9.11-15) walks out of the gates and along the river; he immerses himself in secularity, confronting his faith and allowing the meeting to educate him in the newness of the Spirit. The Church is called to enter into this process to witness the effort of the search and the bliss of a beyond...

The passion makes us friends with life and friends with men, part of humanity that dream of a more just and fraternal future. It is nice to think about a consecrated man in a secular institute who turned his work in the world into a missionary song (Georges La Pira): *"Our 'programme' of sanctification has been upset: we believed that the silent walls of prayer were sufficient! We believed that closed within the internal fortress of prayer we could stay apart from the problems that were troubling the world... It is a situation that tells us that Jesus: "go and proclaim the Good News to every creature, or rather take up your cross and follow me is not a mere expression of piety. We have to change society!... we have to get involved, sharpen our tools; we need reflection, culture, word, work, etc., as well as plows to plow the field of new effort and weapons to fight our battle of transformation and love. We must transform the flawed structures of the human city; repair the ruined houses of man, according to the principal commandment of charity.*

Such incarnation becomes a formative necessity, a continuous pedagogy to implement without considering it in any way fulfilled.

Good Christians and upright citizens

VDB group reflection participant in the Spirituality Days 2020

Our Institute is very committed in the field of formation with a view to human and Christian growth. In this regard, we wish to share the intense experience we had a few months ago: our General Assembly/8. The theme we addressed was that of **the mission of VDB today**. For us it is not so much a question of "doing mission", but rather of "being mission". That is why we are concerned to take care of the attitudes to be taken in our relationships, through working on ourselves, to be capable of relationships that make us credible and witnesses. It is, above all, a work of human formation that aims to make us "more human" and to meet each person with an open and available heart.

The reflection of our GA stimulates us, once again, to go to the source of our being "good Christians", quenching our thirst at the source of the living water that is Christ and always trying to feel the "thirst for God", that thirst which He has for us and that which we and all humanity have for Him. Only if we feel the need of this Water and only if our life is filled with God, can we identify the spiritual thirst, sometimes unconscious, present in others and offer living Water!

In our reflection, we have also identified the areas of commitment in which to be present: young people, suburbs, families, neighborhoods, politics, media, ecology, school, human rights, inter-religious dialogue, peace, meditative Christian communities... and the style to adopt in our being missionary, made up of listening, respect, relationships, witness, proclamation...

Good Christians and honest citizens! Conform to Christ in order to be in the world a reflection of Him and witnesses, capable of sowing seeds of "good citizenship": honesty, commitment, availability, involvement, dialogue, honesty, participation, justice, solidarity, ...

We the VDB are engaged in different fields, especially through our profession of doctors, teachers, employees, nurses, workers, social workers, ... and through the voluntary work we do all over the world. Where there is a VDB, you will find a woman who tries to live her 'being a good Christian' and show the face of God and, at the same time, precisely because she is authentically filled with God, who is committed to building the city of man, involving, dialoguing, valuing the daily life.

One last thing: even when we are retired... we do not retire! We continue to form ourselves and we continue to bear witness even from a hospital bed or a retirement home, trying even in difficult situations to be signs of authentic believers and active and responsible citizens.

February 2: XXIV World VC Day

Here is one of the thoughts of Pope Francis repeated many times: "Jesus did not choose and send us so that we might become more numerous! He has called us to a mission. He put us in society as that small amount of leaven: the leaven of beatitudes and fraternal love in which as Christians we can all find ourselves to make his Kingdom present. The celebration of World Day stimulates us to renew our passion for God and humanity.

General Chapter 28 of SDB

From February 16 to April 4 the 28th General Chapter of the Salesians will take place in Turin. "What type of Salesians for today's youth?", is the central theme of study and reflection beyond the other specific themes of such an Assembly. The Chapter has the responsibility to orient the Salesian life and mission for the next six years, and to choose the Rector Major and the members of the General Council. This is a Work for which the chapter members should feel intensely accompanied by the Spirit of God and our prayers. We can all follow the information through ANS.

What have the Days of Spirituality of the Salesian Family left us?

The Spirituality Days 2020 took place from January 16th to 19th in Turin - Valdocco. It was really Beautiful, lived and involving. A strong call to revive the Christian commitment ("good Christians") in the current social-cultural-religious context ("honest citizens") so that "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). What have they left us?

- ✓ The presentation of the Strenna made by the Rector Major through a film and a PPT, which facilitated the reading and the study of his letter commenting on the Strenna.
- ✓ The report of Bishop Sebastià Taltavull, Bishop of Mallorca (Spain), a Salesian past pupil, offered us the biblical foundation of "goodness" and opens many reflections to live the beauty of Christian life in the present social context.
- ✓ An interesting round table discussion between Emma Cicarelli (IT), Nico Lotta (IT), Joaquín Martín (SP) and Jorge Santos (PT), Salesian cooperators and former students, on being "honest citizens with a Salesian spirit". And also other testimonies that have strongly impressed us, above all, the youth of Aleppo and Damascus.

Materials available on the website of the Salesian Family. Don't let go of so much life.