

## The sign of the Holy Spirit nella vita consacrata secolare

(Father Egidio Viganò, 24/09/79)

The consecration is not primarily an act of a consecrated person. Rather it is an act of God, of the Spirit of Christ animating the Church. The consecrated person responds, offers himself, gives himself. This is clearly seen in the sacramental consecration of Baptism, Confirmation and Orders. The initiative comes from God. It is he who "anoints the consecrated person with the oil of joy" of the Holy Spirit, marking him in the image of Christ with his spiritual and saving sign.

Something similar happens in the consecration that is brought about by professing the evangelical counsels. This profession reinforces the already existing sacramental consecration; it sets the professed member on the path of total commitment as a "sign and bearer" of some special aspect of the Mystery of Christ among the People of God.

This is how the seal of the Holy Spirit comes to one: a particular charisma is bestowed; it develops; the individual called makes a personal response; this results in a total self-donation with the pronouncing of the vows.

Naturally, in the beginning, every charismatic group must have an explicit ecclesial bearing, with hierarchical approval and liturgical mediation. From this the charism derives its authenticity as a part of the sacramental life of the Church. However, when it is a genuine case of a charism bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the developing embryo of the future Institute already exists, even before the official recognition by the Church.

So when your seven votaries made their first vows, that constituted the historical beginning of the "spiritual experience" of your group of consecrated women. The sign of the Holy Spirit had already placed there the essential elements of all later development. The uniform growth that was to follow would include all the changes required by the signs of the times and "in harmony with the Body of Christ" (cf. MR XI). (History shows that Christ's Body is in constant process of growth yet possesses within itself throughout the whole of its existence one vital identity.)

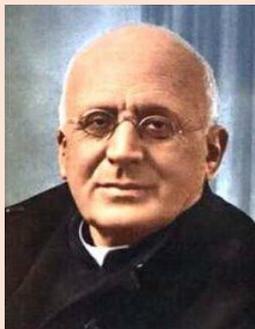
We need to discover the Institute's vital identity in all its true historical objectivity. This is not a difficult search: Father Philip Rinaldi's "Conferences" are a wealth of information. They were given to the first group of "Secular Votaries of Mary Help of Christians of the Society of St. Francis of Sales", and diligently copied down by the secretary, Miss Luigina Carpanera. They are an unpublished treasury of the spirit of Don Bosco with practical application to the laity: a new way of showing forth that "seal of the Spirit" already witnessed in Don Bosco's charisma; a scion, brand new and brave, living on the sap of its Salesian stock; a daring spiritual experience characterized by those Salesian values that Don Bosco has bequeathed to history. It is indeed fitting that you should be called Don Bosco Volunteers.

An objective appraisal of your traditions shows clearly that the consecrating action of the Holy Spirit was the source of all that this first act of consecration stood for. Your way of life follows the broad lines of the Gospel as shaped by God in Don Bosco's Salesianity. The newly professed Volunteers thus ordered their lives and attained a happy union between their own religious values and the practical needs of people living in the lay state. Yours is a vocation, a spirit, a mission, an apostolic style, thoroughly pondered, harmonized and evidenced in your explicit and total choice to live as laics.

The divine initiative of the Holy Spirit and the human response made in the profession of the evangelical counsels work together and produce a new kind of "anointing", a "lay consecration". This is something quite novel in the Salesian Family and it gives life and permanence to your original group.

The consecration you make is the underlying force that urges you to live your Christian faith selflessly and in accord with a Gospel plan formulated along the principles of Don Bosco; and you become signs and bearers of a peculiar aspect of Christ's love for man. The choice of living as laics is special: it pervades all your evangelical planning, yet it does not change your Salesian identity (even though the witness given by your Institute is quite different).

Indeed, Salesianity is not just something added on to your consecration: it belongs to its very essence and keeps it alive.



## Thoughts from Don Rinaldi (QC 1921)

- ❖ Make sure, above all, that you are loved and respected if you want to obtain some fruit; with love, with affection, you obtain much.
- ❖ Nowadays, a lot of energy is wasted, a lot of work is done and little is obtained in return, because it is work done with dissipation, with vain glory, with human shrewdness, out of a desire to appear; therefore, the grace of God and the blessing of the Lord are lacking.
- ❖ Do not forget that you will succeed in doing good to others in proportion as you remain hidden, unite and love Jesus.
- ❖ We do not know how to do good. We do not understand either. But, if we live in union with God, if we love him very much, from the love of the Lord, we will also love our neighbor.
- ❖ Remember that a single burning word of God's love is worth more than a river of human words.
- ❖ Always work in the presence of the Lord, with your thoughts fixed on God, without worrying about the judgements of men, go forth to do good, guided by divine experience.
- ❖ The basis of the Christian life is humility of heart, and we must give our works a secure foundation by practising it in its essence.
- ❖ It is not in being outstanding, not in appearing, not in being praised that you will sanctify yourselves, that you will be able to perfect yourselves, but rather in humility and in the love of God.
- ❖ In your condition, you must, of necessity, participate in the life of the world, but you do so not for your own satisfaction, but as a means of helping this world to save itself, striving to take advantage of all opportunities with charity, with a good word, to bring it closer to Jesus.
- ❖ Do not say: we are poor children, incapable, lacking in intelligence; what good can we do? By trusting fully in the Lord, you can do much.
- ❖

### Online initiatives of formation and prayer.

Online connections, so abundant in this time of pandemic, are a strong support for the life of communion and a sign of the family spirit that characterizes us. VDB and the CDB are developing a program of prayer, formation and communication initiatives among the sisters and brothers that strengthen bonds and nourish vocational vitality in the difficult circumstances of the present time. Initiatives are to be valued and thanked.

### In the midst of darkness, the Lord continues to make us listen to Him

The witnesses of so many youth groups and adults who have committed themselves to helping those suffering the consequences of the pandemic, is a clear sign that the Lord makes his voice heard even in times of great difficulty. In fact, there are young people knocking on the doors of the CDBs and VDBs to clarify their choice of life. These people involve us in taking seriously once again the accompaniment, including spiritual accompaniment, of those around us.

### The Don Bosco House in Valdocco

Valdocco, the cradle of the Salesian charism, has undergone a major transformation in recent years. Beyond the necessary maintenance work, the aim has been to bring pilgrims and visitors into the charism of Don Bosco as it was born and as it developed. The museum is a welcoming space that slowly introduces us into the apostolic heart of Don Bosco and his first followers -young people, lay people, Salesians- and helps us understand the meaning of the institutions he founded in favour of the poorest and most abandoned youth

### Guidelines of the Rector Major for the Salesian Congregation after GC 28

Responding to the challenges to be faced in the coming years, the Rector Major indicates these guidelines: Salesians of Don Bosco forever. Six years for growth in Salesian identity.

1. In a congregation where we are invited by the "da mihi animas, cetera tolle".
2. To live the "Salesian sacrament of presence".
3. Formation for being Salesian pastors today.
4. Absolute priority for the young, the poorest, the most abandoned and defenseless.
5. Together with lay people in the mission and in formation.
6. The charismatic strength that the laity and the Salesian family offer us.
7. It is time for greater generosity in the congregation. A universal and missionary congregation.
8. Accompanying the young towards a sustainable future.