



## The secularity consists in living to God's plan in history

Pope Francis (20 November 2021)

You are called to live this charism in secularity, integrated in the world with your heart immersed in God. Being consecrated in a secular Institute does not mean taking refuge in a *middle ground*, but sharing fully, like Jesus, the condition of ordinary people, the daily routine of work, of the home, of neighbourly relations, and so on, all inspired by the light of faith,

the warmth of charity, the horizon of hope. It is living the spirit of the Incarnation in the time and place in which God has placed us, taking on reality with an open heart, to sow the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

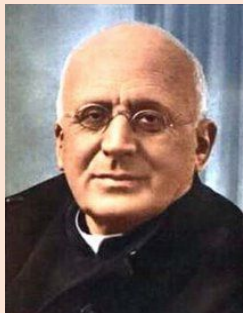
Your specificity is precisely that of sanctifying secular activities in order to *recapitulate everything in Christ*. To live like others, in the midst of others, in the same professions, in the same trades, in the same difficulties; but with such a union with God that it sanctifies projects and actions. When Pope Pius XII, in his Motu Proprio *Primo Feliciter*, dealing with secular institutes, says that *"the entire life of the members must be translated into an apostolate"*, he means precisely this. Indeed, Jesus, in his hidden life, is a model for all. Even his ordinary actions had a divine value, conferred by his Person, by his union with the Father, by the redemptive purposes for which he became incarnate. The same applies to the members of secular institutes and to the lay people associated with them. Their common daily activities acquire a very special apostolic value because of their personal consecration, their union with God and the purpose given to their lives. Secular activities, in themselves, are not a direct apostolate, but they can become one.

If mission is dedicating oneself to God's plan in history, secularity consists in living it. And the prophecy of secular consecration is incompatible with the fear of places and situations at risk. On the contrary, it is precisely these situations that are propitious for such consecration, so that in them the members of secular institutes can make their contribution, with humility and courage, to the history of salvation, wherever people suffer exclusion and marginalization, and their dignity is violated. Everyday relationships - in the family and in the Christian community, at work and at school, in the various psychological and social situations, and above all in the sharing of faith and in apostolic commitment - this is the fabric on which to embroider the richness of your charism. Without relationships everything falls apart and everything risks being a counter-witness: *"In the name of God, be holy"* (Saint Eugène de Mazenod). I would like to structure this call to holiness according to three attitudes:

*Being ready.* Jesus says: *"Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning"* (Lk 12: 35). This means living fully in the present by grasping the promise of eternity. Our whole life is a striving for eternal life and we must be ready. A person is ready when he or she is completely given to God and to his or her brothers and sisters. Not when there is applause and success, no, life is much more than that. It is being in the world to the full, in the truth and freedom of the children of God and in the relationship of brotherhood with others. And this intensity of relationship with the Father and with our brothers and sisters is nourished by prayer: prayer allows God to be close to us, it frees us from solitude and infuses hope. Prayer oxygenates life: just as one cannot live without breathing, one cannot be a Christian and live as a Christian, let alone as a consecrated person, without prayer.

*Being oblates:* you are *"Oblate"*, that is, totally given to Christ in order to identify spiritually with Him. It is very important to always remember this *"totally"*. It indicates an exclusive, generous, and unreserved belonging. But beware! We must not focus our gaze on our commitment, but on him, on the grace of his gift. He is the Oblate, Jesus, coming among us as a servant, and dying on the cross in the midst of two evildoers, explained to us well what life is: it is love that asks for love, grace that asks for gratuitousness. And he shows it to us from the cross, because this road is not easy, it is not comfortable, it requires payment in person. But it is the path of peace and joy.

And the third: being *confident in God like Mary*: imitating her in listening to and accepting God's will, so that his Word may also become flesh in us. Thanks to her faith, to her *"yes"*, to her *"here I am"*, the Father's plan of universal salvation was fulfilled. *"Your vocation is love, your law is love, your medicine is love"* (Gaetano Liuzzo). Trinitarian Christocentric love and universal missionary love, at home and throughout the world, reincarnating that of the Mother, as true new Mary of Nazareth, ardent and generous like and with her". And this is also my wish for you. May you do everything with joyful dedication like Mary. Go forward with courage and boldness, without concern for numbers! You - you have said it - are like yeast. Small, hidden, but full of faith. The larger the dough to be leavened, the richer the quality of the leaven must be!



## Thoughts of Father Rinaldi

(QC, November 1921)

Advent is a time dedicated to prayer and penance in preparation for the Lord's coming. For a good preparation for Christmas, it is essential to mortify our senses: our tongue, our ears, our curiosity, our appetite, the movements of our heart; and it is well worth it to be able to keep one's senses in check at all times.

It is natural that living in society, in order to get along in good harmony with others, mortification is necessary; many times it is done out of courtesy, but much more must be done out of charity. Not speaking ill of people, being ready to render a service, saying a good word, keeping silent when one would like to speak... is mortification..

Get used to mortification in this time of Advent; not eating is the last thing you should do, instead, practise subduing and mortifying all your senses in order to please others. A good consecrated woman must not mortify herself in order to appear, but to please the Lord, even in small things and in some cases in great things.

It is necessary, however, to combine it with the spirit of prayer, so that there may be true Christian mortification; frequent brief prayers, the elevation of the mind to God, spiritual communion, a greeting to the Lord, to the Blessed Virgin, and if you have the facility of saying other prayers apart from the ordinary ones, say them as well; all this truly constitutes the religious spirit.

You should strive to acquire and preserve this spirit of mortification and prayer as a means of preparing yourselves well for the Feast of Mary Immaculate and the Coming of Jesus, and of perfecting yourselves better and better in order to please God and do good to your neighbour.

You who have consecrated yourselves to follow in the footsteps of Don Bosco, who want to cooperate in carrying out his programme of good for the salvation of so many young people, who have made the solemn promise to consecrate yourselves entirely to the carrying out of this programme; work under the protection of the Immaculate; work with the hands, the feet, the very eyes of Our Lady, because she was truly the inspirer, the guide, the Counsellor of Don Bosco; and he who already saw in a dream that so many good souls would join him, to follow him and help him: well, now it is reality; you are souls inspired, called by Our Lady to follow in Don Bosco's footsteps.

### Registration for the Spirituality Days

The SALESIAN FAMILY SPIRITUALITY DAYS will be held from 13 to 16 January. They will take place at two levels: online and in person.

*The online programme* will take up two hours a day, from 1pm to 3pm (Italian time), and a further two hours a day in a timetable to be indicated by those responsible for the various regions around the world for all those enrolled. The link for registration online is <https://bit.ly/GSFSIscrizioni2022>

*The in-person programme* will take place at Valdocco (Turin), from 11am Thursday the 13th to 3pm Sunday the 16th. The link for registration **ONLY** in person is: <http://tiny.cc/GSFS2022>. To enrol for the in-person Days, please contact the one responsible for your Group.

### 5 December: Blessed Philip Rinaldi

The Salesian Family remembers Fr Philip Rinaldi on 5 December. This is the day that the Volunteers of Don Bosco celebrate their founder. This year will be the 90th anniversary of his passing to the Father's House. It is a wonderful date for emphasising the most characteristic traits of his spirituality, especially his deep humanity made up of kindness, gentleness, prudence, practicality, wisdom, politeness, optimism... On 5 December the VDB will take part online in a Mass celebrated in the chapel where Don Bosco wrote the Letter from Rome in 1884, located at Salesian Headquarters in Rome.

### The approaching recognition of the Volunteers With Don Bosco as a Secular Institute of Diocesan Right

The Archbishop of Caracas, the diocese where the Association of Volunteers With Don Bosco is registered, has given the green light for commencing procedures for its recognition as a secular institute of diocesan right. In view of this, the essential documentation is now in preparation and the bishops where the Association is currently to be found are being asked for their opinion on the matter. This is a new step in consolidation of the Association now found in some 30 countries.

### Changes among the World Leaders of the Salesian Family Groups

In recent months a number of General Chapters and World Assemblies have taken place among the Groups of the Salesian Family. Mother Chiara Cazzuola, FMA, and Mother Emilliana Park, SCJ, have been elected Superiors General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Sisters of the Charity of Jesus respectively. Mrs María Carmen Castellón was elected world president of the FMA Past Pupils. Mr. Bryan Magro was elected president of the PPDB, and Mr. Renato Valera was confirmed as president of the Primary ADMA. We thank them for their availability and will accompany them in prayer.