



1. The beginnings of the journey

In the second half of the eighties some young people, in four different Countries (Italy, Malta, Paraguay and Venezuela), moved by the Holy Spirit, without one knowing about the other, expressed the desire to consecrate themselves to God in the world. Accompanied by three Salesian Priests and a VDB, they began to experience this form of life; the Rector Major Fr Egidio Viganò, informed about the journey completed (by them), recognized the gift of the Spirit and encouraged the young people and their animators to move forward. In December 1993 he summoned the various members of the groups and their accompanists to Rome. Convened once again the following year, they decided to officially begin the Group of "Volunteers with Don Bosco" (CDB), on 12 September 1994, the feast of the Holy Name of Mary. On the same occasion the Constitutions "*ad experimentum*" were drawn up and the first professions took place.

On May 24, 1998, at the request of the Rector Major Fr Juan Edmundo Vecchi, the Archbishop of Caracas, Cardinal Ignacio Antonio Velasco García, SDB, issued the decree by which he erected the "Volunteers with Don Bosco" as a "Public Association of Lay Faithful" Oriented to become a Lay Secular Institute. With the same decree, Bishop Velasco approved the Constitutions.

Already at this phase they were recognised as belonging to the Group of the Salesian Family.

2. From its foundation to the present

From 1998 to present the Volunteers with Don Bosco (CDB) celebrated six General Assemblies, deepening and determining their identity as consecrated secular Salesian persons, their mission, the contents and the modalities of formation, the life of communion.

3. Identity

The identity of the CDB can be enclosed in three words: **Secularity, Consecration and Salesianity.**

- **Secularity:** The CDBs live in the world, for the world, but do not belong to the world. They fulfil their own vocation in work, in professional competence and in the ordinary circumstances of life, remaining in the family or living alone. They see Jesus in Nazareth as their model, with the silent and discreet presence of his hidden life. They live "among" the others "like" the others. To better ensure the effectiveness of their apostolic activity in frontier places and in the secular milieu, they maintain a prudent and responsible reserve about their own and (about) the others belonging to the Institute: It must be life that speaks, testifies, poses questions about why and, above all, for Whom these men live and testify.
- **Consecration:** the CDB lead a life according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, through which they commit themselves to follow Christ with radicality, to witness to the love of a God who walks the streets of men. They have

no community life, but are united by a strong bond of fraternal communion and meet for moments of formation and discussion.

- **Salesianity:** the CDBs are part of the Salesian Family and they choose to live according to the spirit of Don Bosco, they cultivate a deep interior life, they pay attention to the urgencies of the youth world, they testify with joy and optimism to the love of God for the world. Inserted into the Salesian Family and in communion with the other Groups, they offer the specificity of their contribution. They recognize the Rector Major, successor of Don Bosco, as a centre of unity and a common father, responsible for unity in spirit and fidelity in mission; to the Salesian Congregation they ask for the service of spiritual assistance.

4. The CDB today and their Dissemination

The small seed of 1994 has now spread to twenty-six different nations on four continents; as of 10 April 2019, there are 83 CDBs, 52 of whom are bound by the profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience, and the others are involved in the a process of discernment or in the journey of initial formation.

The Volunteers With Don Bosco are men happy to be loved in a special way by God who consecrates them in the Church for the world. Attentive to the signs of the times, they want to be witnesses of a God who walks the streets of men and for this they make their own the passion for the world, which is the passion of God.

The entire life of the Volunteer is mission: each participates in the mission of the Church, and is inserted, with professionalism and competence, in the world of work and in the various sectors of human activity; in them he experiences the encounter with God and with his brothers, responding with joy and creativity to the needs and the demands of the society that surrounds him.

The journey of life of the Volunteers With Don Bosco is for each of them a journey of holiness: a simple, concrete holiness built up by adhering to the will of God in the midst of the suffering and difficulties of everyday life. In March 2012 the Cause for the Beatification of a CDB Volunteer was started, Nino Baglieri (1951-2007), who for 39 years lived the call to sanctity in conditions of particular suffering in illness, dedicating himself to the apostolate and to the testimony of man redeemed and loved by the Lord.

5. Challenges

The CDBs feel the urgency of making possible the proposal to live the evangelical counsels while remaining lay people in the world. They pay particular attention to the communion of life and formation, overcoming the various linguistic and cultural barriers, appreciating the riches of each one. They consider it essential to put themselves at the service of existential peripheries to bring the good fragrance of the Gospel to the contemporary world.