

SALESIAN BROTHERS AND THE LAY MISSION PARTNERS

II. THE LAY VOCATION

L: St. Pope John Paul II declared: “You go too. The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men



and women religious.

The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of

the Church and the world.” (Christifideles Laici, 2)

ALL: The Salesian Congregation declares to its own confreres: “The processes of discernment and initial formation must bring to maturity the conviction that to be an SDB at the present day means entering a Family, becoming part of a vast Movement, in which lay people play an active part, both in participation in the salesian spirit and in the sharing of educative and pastoral work, and also in shared responsibility in view of the mission.” (General Chapter 24, 142)

L: “Aware of the importance of the education of youth and the people for transforming society... Don Bosco involved a broad circle of people, dreamt of a

movement as expansive as the world through the collaboration and complementary of people of good will interested in the education of the young and the future of society.” (International Congress on the Preventive System and Human, p. 82)

ALL: St. John Bosco, enable us to mature together
in our ability
to be
formative
agents and
animators of
the laity, so
as to promote
lay vocations.

As we get a
more vital
knowledge of
and
encounter
with various
groups of the
Salesian
Family, may

we help their identity known and their growth
diffused. Form in us the affective maturity required
for collaboration with the lay people and with the
world of women. (cf. General Chapter 24, 147-148)



L: St. John Bosco, you were formed by the Spirit to
be founder of the vast Salesian Family...

ALL: Pray for us.

L: St. John Bosco, you intensified the efficacy of
salesian witness to the Gospel through the Salesian
Family...

ALL: Pray for us.

L: St. John Bosco, you organized the Salesian Family as the Spirit's gift to the Church and as the expansion of your charism...

ALL: Pray for us.

I. INTERDEPENDENCE WITH THE LAITY

- 1.1 In the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 102, he acknowledged as a challenge in the Church:

“Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – **ordained ministers – are at their service**. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the **tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith**. At the same time, **a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places**.

- 1.1.1 In some cases, it is because lay persons have **not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities.**
- 1.1.2 In others, it is because in their particular Churches **room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism** which keeps them away from decision-making.
- 1.1.3 Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is **not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors.** It often **remains tied to tasks within the Church,** without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society.

The **formation of the laity** and the **evangelization of professional and intellectual life** represent a significant pastoral challenge.

- 1.2 In his address at the conclusion of GC 27, the newly elected rector major, Fr. Angel Fernandez Artime said: (3.7)

“In our Chapter reflection we have noted the more pivotal role being played by lay people... Already eighteen years previously, in GC 24- without going back to earlier magisterium- the Rector Major and his Council were asked to make known initiatives and experiences of collaboration between SDBs and lay people (GC 24, 127)... the Salesian mission

cannot be thought of without the laity, for what they bring to it is also vital for our charism.

Let me add this, dear confreres: The *shared mission between SDBs and lay people is no longer optional- I say this in case there is anyone who still believe it- and it is because the Salesian mission in the world today so clearly demands it.* It is true that in the Congregation we have different 'speeds' in our Provinces and in relations between them, however, *the shared mission between SDBs and laity, reflection on this mission, the process of conversion by our SDB confreres in this regard, is something we cannot go back.*

This is why I dare ask each Province that in the first three years after GC27 it makes the program for shared mission between SDBs and lay people that is in place more concrete still- where this already exists- or that the situation in the Province be studied and the concrete project and planning be developed over the years leading up to the next General Chapter. (italics and bold letters from the rector major himself)

- 1.3 Interdependence is a habit of a highly effective person (cf. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*)

The maturity growth: (cf. Covey, pp. 49, 51)

- **Dependence:** you come for me and take care of me; I blame you if you don't...
- **Independence:** I can do it; I am responsible and accountable; I am self-reliant; I can choose...
- **Interdependence:** We can cooperate; we can combine our talents and abilities and create something greater together...



1.3.1 **Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make:**

- I am self-reliant and capable, but I also realize that **you and I working together can accomplish far more than, even at my best, I could accomplish alone...**

- I derive a great sense of worth within myself, but I also recognize the **need for love, for giving, and for receiving love from others...** I need the **best thinking of other people to join with my own...**
- I have the opportunity to share myself deeply, meaningfully, with others, and I have **access** (*way in, means of entry*) **to the vast resources and potential of other human beings.**

1.3.2 Foundations for interdependence: (cf. Covey, pp. 217-223)

- **Integrity:** We clearly identify and commit ourselves to our values and **proactively organize and execute our lives around those values on a daily basis...**
- **Maturity:** It means we have **achieved balance:** ego strength and empathy balance; balance between concern for people and concern for tasks; courage to speak for one's convictions balanced with consideration for those of others... balance between being nice and being tough, between animation and governance, between justice and mercy...
- **Abundance Mentality:** It is the paradigm that there is **plenty out there for everybody, in contrast with the Scarcity Mentality** in which many people are scripted...

1.3.3 Scarcity Mentality vs. Abundance Mentality

- People with **scarcity mentality**:
 - Have a very difficult time sharing recognition and credit, power or profit
 - Have a very hard time being genuinely happy for the success of other people
 - Feel as if something is being taken from them when someone else receives special recognition, windfall gain, or remarkable achievement
 - Sense of worth comes from being compared and from having competed
 - Give their energies to possessing things or other people to increase sense of worth
 - Believe that to win means to beat
 - Want other people to be what they want them to be, to clone them according to their own image and likeness
 - Surround themselves as leaders with 'yes' people, who won't challenge them, who are weaker than they; look on differences as signs of insubordination and disloyalty
 - Difficult for them to be members of a complementary team
- People with **abundance mentality**:
 - Flow out of a deep inner sense of personal worth and security
 - Believe there is plenty out there and enough to share in prestige, recognition, profits, decision making
 - Open to possibilities, options, alternatives and creativity

- Appreciate the uniqueness, inner direction, proactive nature of others
- Recognize the unlimited possibilities for positive interactive growth and development
- Work, communicate, make things happen together
- Associate with model or mentor who really moves beyond 'either-or' to 'this-and-that' or 'win-win' thinking
- Have high deposits of 'emotional bank account' to respect one another and to focus on issues and not on personalities or positions
- Have genuine courtesy, respect, and appreciation for other person and for the other's point of view, and so are able to stay longer in the communication process

2. **THE IDENTITY, ROLE, AND MISSION OF THE LAY PEOPLE**

- 2.1 **WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD** (Matthew 20:1-16): "You go too. The call is a concern not only of pastors, clergy, and men and women religious. The call is addressed to everyone: lay people as well are personally called by the Lord, from whom they receive a mission on behalf of the Church and the world."

Pope John Paul II acknowledges in the same article that the "path of the lay faithful **has not been without its difficulties and dangers**. In particular, two temptations can be cited which they have not always known how to avoid:

- the temptation of being **so strongly interested in Church services and tasks** that some fail to become **actively engaged in their responsibilities** in the professional, social, cultural and political world; and
- the temptation of **legitimizing the unwarranted separation of faith from life**, that is, a separation of the Gospel's acceptance from the actual living of the Gospel in various situations in the world.”
(Christifideles Laici, 2)

2.2 SECULAR IN CHARACTER

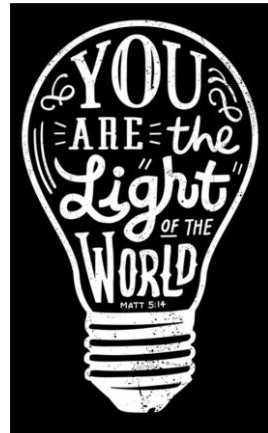


The Second Vatican Council has described this manner of life as the ‘secular character’: **‘The secular character is properly and particularly that of the lay faithful’...** The lay faithful “live in the world, that is, in every one of the **secular professions and occupations.**

- 2.2.1 They **live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life**, from which the very fabric of their existence is woven.” They are persons who live an ordinary life in the world: they study, they work, they form relationships as friends, professionals, members of society, cultures, etc...

2.2.2 The “world” thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their **Christian vocation**, because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ.

2.2.3 The images taken from the **gospel of salt, light and leaven**, although indiscriminately applicable to all Jesus' disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful. They are particularly meaningful images because:



- they speak not only of the **deep involvement and the full participation of the lay faithful in the affairs of the earth, the world and the human community,**
- but also and above all, they tell of the radical newness and unique character of an involvement and participation which **has as its purpose the spreading of the Gospel that brings salvation.**” (Christifideles Laici, 15)

3. HOLINESS IN THE WORLD

“Everyone in the Church, precisely because they are members, receives and thereby shares in the common vocation to holiness. In the fullness of this title and **on equal par with all other members of the Church, the lay faithful are called to holiness:**

‘All the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity’. ‘All of Christ's followers are invited and **bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their own state of life**’.” (Christifideles Laici, 16)

- 3.1 “The vocation of the lay faithful to holiness implies that life according to the Spirit expresses itself in a particular way **in their involvement in temporal affairs and in their participation in earthly activities...**
- 3.2 The lay faithful... must be **sanctified in everyday professional and social life... must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God...**
- 3.3 Particular Churches especially should be attentive to **recognizing among their members the younger men and women of those Churches who have given witness to holiness in such conditions...** so that, if the case calls for it, they (the Churches) might **propose them to be beatified and canonized...**” (Christifideles Laici, 17)

Pope John Paul II had very special connections with



Salesians in Crakow, Poland, where he went for his university studies. There he found the Salesian parish as his community, and he had his favorite place in the salesian parish church, the kneeler between the wall and the first pillar, for his morning mass. From there, during the war when university classes were suspended, he

walked to the soda factory for work, his second job after working in a quarry. The salesians would also joke when they saw the young Karol praying with his missal in the church: The beetle is already buzzing.

He spent his years of young adulthood in that salesian parish of St. Stanislaus Kostka. The Salesians there remember their contacts with him as someone who was really looking for inspiration, open-minded, took pleasure in meeting Salesians, and his spiritual director Jan Tyranowski, the layman of that salesian parish who was the central figure in the spiritual formation of the young Karol Wojtyla.

The Salesians of Don Bosco whom he aided in ministry during World War II have now put Tyranowski forward for his cause for sainthood. Now

Servant of God Jan Tyranowski is buried in the Church of St. Stanislaus Kostka.



During his last trip to Poland, already fragile of old age and illness, John Paul II passed by his salesian parish church for the last time. And there he said from his popemobile with an improvised microphone: "I always remember those Salesians that were arrested and taken to the concentration camp; most of them didn't come back, only two of them. I always remember. I

also remember the Living Rosary and Mr. Jan Tyranowski. All of that links me to this church. From the depth of my heart, I bless all Salesians and all parishioners."

A commentator said that John Paul II always referred to his stay in that parish: "That particular place was his starting point to the whole world, his first step."

REFLECTIONS:

- How have **my cultural programming and formation training** influenced my thinking of the laity?

- In what ways are my **beliefs about the dignity and mission of the laity accurate?** In what ways are they **incomplete?**

- What is my contribution to **bring to fruitfulness the “communion and sharing in the spirit and mission of Don Bosco”** between Salesians and lay people as desired and directed by General Chapter 24?

“The role of the laity is critical because it is the lay members of the church who have the greatest contact with those who are outside of the normal structures of church life. In such a situation the task of clergy is not so much to engage in mission themselves, as to support the laity in their mission.”

(Martin Robinson, *The Faith of the Unbeliever*)

