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# The Concept of Secularity in Salesian Documents

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## Scope of This Study

At least once in the Super Bowl championship game of American football, or in the World Series baseball championship, the TV camera will pan over to somebody holding a sign that reads “John 3:16.” This verse reads, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that all who believe in him might not die, but have eternal life.” Why, on the high holy days of the American secular religion of sports, this verse? And why does God so love the *world*, when he means to give eternal life to all *believers*? Does he mean to give eternal life also to Rover, Aunt Edna’s goldfish, Mt. Rushmore, computer and HIV viruses and the Moon? What is this world of which John speaks, and what relation does it have to the one that cannot give peace, and indeed is ruled by Satan (see Jn 1:29–30)? Whatever the world might be, a Christian vision of it must begin from the fact that God leaned lovingly over it, came to it, and still calls it.

This article examines the theological meaning of the term “secularity” in Salesian official documents. It begins with a survey of the meanings of secularity in recent theological dictionaries, then shows how these meanings are present in reflection by the sons of Don Bosco. The documents examined are limited to those of the SDBs; they do not include those of the FMAs, Cooperators or other groups in the Salesian Family. They include the General Chapters, the various editions of the Constitutions and Regulations, the circular letters of the General Council, special documents like the *Acts* of the World Congress of Salesian Brothers, and the booklet *The Salesian Brother*. The emphasis in the Church-wide view is in the post-Conciliar period, and in the Salesian view, on the works of the recently deceased Rector Major, Fr. Egidio Vigano.

## Theological Issues in Secularity

A survey of “World,” “Creation,” “Secularization” in the theological dictionaries gives us an approach to secularity, which we may provisionally describe as “being connected with the world.” Only the *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*

explicitly deals with the precise term "secularity" at any length, and that in the article "Secular institutes."<sup>1</sup>

"Secular" comes from the Latin adjective *saecularis*, "relating to the world" (*saeculum*). It can also mean "of a long time," or "long-term temporal," since *saeculum* can also mean "age" or "century." The Greek for "world" in *saeculum* senses is *kosmos*, but a different word, *aion*, means time—*saeculum*. Secularization is then a process of becoming secular, or related to the *saeculum*, but is used only with respect to world—*saeculum*. The noun "secularity" means the condition of being secular; anything having a "secular character" or "secular dimension" has secularity.

Two articles distinguish several related meanings for secularity. A. Müller, E. Pace and G. Rocca relate secularization to the second term of the pairs "monk and world," "Church and State," "transcendence and immanence."<sup>2</sup> Albert Keller's summary definition is that secularization is the process of being connected with the world. He then gives three developed meanings quite similar to those of Müller *et al.*:<sup>3</sup> separation from religious life, appropriation of Church property by the state, and decoupling of religion from human life. Other articles focus on

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<sup>1</sup> Dictionary articles used for this survey: M. Albertini–G. Rocca, "Istituti Secolari," in Guerrino Pelliccia and Giancarlo Rocca (eds.), *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* (Roma: Edizioni Paoline, 1973, 8 vols.) [=DIP] V:106–121, esp. "La secolarità," 110–111; "Gli istituti secolari sacerdotali," 114–115; Jean Beyer, "Secular Institutes," in Karl Rahner (ed.), *Sacramentum Mundi* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968–1970, 6 vols.) 6:61–64; Marie–Dominique Chenu, "Work," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 6:368–373; Yves Congar, "Laïc et laïcat," in Marcel Viller, F. Cavallera and J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique...* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–, 14 vols.) [=DS] 9:79–107; Bruno Forte, "Laicato," in *Dizionario Teologico Interdisciplinare* [=DTI] (Torino: Marietti, 1977) 333–345; Gerd Haeffner, "World," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 6:375–381; Albert Keller, "Secularization," in *Sacramentum Mundi* 6:64–70; J. Leclercq, "Mondo," in DIP VI:54–67; Columban Lesquirit and Pierre Grelot, "World," in Xavier Léon–Dafour (ed.), *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd ed. San Francisco: Harper, 1973) 676–680; A. Müller–E. Pace–G. Rocca. "Secolarizzazione," in DIP VIII:1221–1234; Manlio Sodi, "Secolarizzazione," in Domenico Sartore–Achille Triacca (eds.), *Dizionario di Liturgia* (5th ed. Milano: Edizioni Paoline, 1993) 1265–1279. Studies that survey the whole range of tradition include Yves Congar, *Lay People in the Church* (translation of *Jalons pour une théologie du laïc*. Westminster MD: Newman Press, 1957); Giovanni Magnani, "Does the So-called Theology of the Laity Possess a Theological Status?," in *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After* Vol. 1, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987, 3 vols.) 568–633; Kenan B. Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: its History and Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Müller *et al.*, "Secolarizzazione," 1222.

<sup>3</sup> Keller, "Secularization," 64. I have inverted the order of his first two to match that of Müller *et al.*

only one or two of these, but there is enough material to attempt a synthesis based on Müller *et al.*, and Keller.

The most fundamental meaning of secularity is in relation to the divine, that is, the fact of being created by God. This brings in redemption and eschatology as well; secularity is a way to see creation–redemption–recapitulation as a single process. If we begin with this, then descend on God’s side through the Church to religious and ordained ministers within her, we obtain successively:

**Secularity is the quality of created–redeemed–recapitulated in reference to the Creator–Redeemer–Pantokrator.** This is the God–world problem. Secularity is about temporal, material affairs. It is the condition of immanence as distinguished from transcendence; it is the built-in ability of the universe to be renewed and recapitulated in Christ. But secularization can mean rejection of these religious explanations. “Dechristianization” and “desacralization” are equivalent terms here. Post–modern religious revivals (natural, aboriginal, charismatic, sects) are a challenge to secularization in this sense. By contrast, the Catholic Church and the mainline Reformed traditions have embraced the created world with open arms, seeing in it a path to holiness provisionally marked out for our time.

Similar is the Church–world problem. The Church is the sacrament of God’s action to solve the God–world problem from both ends. Secularity is, from this point of view, the world’s quality of being *object* in relation to the Church’s being the *subject* of this sacramental action. When the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* says the laity have their “secular character,” and their vocation to “seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs, and directing them according to God’s will,”<sup>4</sup> it is dealing with secularity in the sense of the Church–world problem.

To work is to participate in creation, and that requires scientific and technical competence. However virtuous or spiritual a work may be, it still has to be properly done.<sup>5</sup> Manlio Sodi, writing on “secularization” in a liturgy dictionary, says it can happen in a liturgical framework. We can legitimately speak of secularizing objects, places, time and persons in the liturgy because it gives earthly values their true worth. Creation is a sign and instrument of God’s saving plan.<sup>6</sup>

In this century, phenomena such as lay confraternities, oratories, attempts to found orders of nuns that ministered in the world, Catholic Action, the advances of Vatican II, all had the effect of focusing attention on the Church–world relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> Vatican II document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* [=LG], 31.

<sup>5</sup> Chenu, “Work,” 368–373.

<sup>6</sup> Sodi, “Secolarizzazione,” 1270–1273.

**Secularity is the worldly character of the State in reference to the other-worldly character of the Church.** It means that the State does not have the same aims as the Church, and can mean appropriation of Church property by the State; in this sense it is also laicization. This is related to the larger struggle between Church and Empire, the *regnum et sacerdotium* question of the Middle Ages. Back then, the Church and the Emperor competed for political power, and for the symbols (*temporalia, spiritualia*) that went with it. Later, the French and American revolutions of the 18th century changed the terms of the old *regnum et sacerdotium* debate into *cives et sacerdotium*. The individual citizen, with inalienable rights, not the king or emperor, stood over against the hierarchy. This gave rise to the conception that “lay” meant “anti-Church,” a distorted meaning carried into the 19th century, not corrected until the Second Vatican Council.<sup>7</sup> In this century, “laicization” has acquired the more precise meaning of eliminating moral considerations from social questions like politics, labor-capital and social welfare.

*Gaudium et Spes* notes the increasingly fast pace of change, advances in science, a growing sense of solidarity...along with poverty and underdevelopment, economic injustice, violence, threats to the dignity of life, nuclear war. Indeed, economic structures assume some of the role and importance formerly held by the *imperium*, then the *civitas*. General Motors and Microsoft have annual revenues larger than many cities and even some countries, with accompanying social and political clout.

Kenan Osborne sees John Paul’s papal program to be a mission as servant-minister to the world, not only the Church. This means world unity by way of an alliance between the Church as a religious superpower, and a political superpower: a united Europe including Russia. Such a papal monistic program could lead to reclericalization.<sup>8</sup>

**Secularity is the condition of exposure to the world’s dangers to salvation.** This meaning of secularity is directly concerned with the role of consecrated persons in the Church, chiefly religious in relation to laity. All Christians are exposed to worldly dangers, but religious can live apart from them. Secularization of a religious is “returning to the world,” to lay life; it is the opposite of “flight from the world” (*fuga mundi*). “Secular” is also used from medieval times to distinguish secular clergy from monks and regular clergy. Recently, “secularization” has referred to the tendency among modern religious to go out to the world, minister to it, to live in communities more connected with it, or even outside community as in secular institutes. It is directly opposed to the prior dominant tendency of *fuga mundi*, and we can call the resulting secularity *apud mundum*, or “with the world.” That kind of secularity is less radical than being *in mundo*, or “in the world.” Secularization also represents one pole

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<sup>7</sup> Osborne, *Lay Ministry*, 464–508.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 565–567.

of renewal by adaptation to the world against conserving the charism of the founder.

J. Leclercq recalls Evagrius Ponticus' dictum: "the monk is separated from the world, and united to all humankind."<sup>9</sup> The one dictionary to devote a major piece of an article to the exact term "secularity" gives a similar meaning: being an apostle in, while being hidden from, the world.<sup>10</sup>

With the beginning of the modern era in the late Renaissance, Luther and other Reformers questioned the need for monks and nuns. Among Catholics, new religious congregations undertook new ministries, typically more engaged in the world. St. Ignatius Loyola spoke of "mysticism of joy in the world," while St. Francis de Sales proposed "devout humanism." But Jansenism and various reformisms tended to diffidence with respect to the world.<sup>11</sup> From then until well into our century, the *fuga mundi* interpretation of religious life held sway and was popularized by writers such as St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Vatican II does not explain the value of religious life in those terms, but prefers to point out the value of witnessing Gospel values to the world by holy lives.<sup>12</sup> Shortly after the council, discussion of *fuga mundi* among religious was sharpened by the psychological reaction of some younger writers to the old-style formation they had.<sup>13</sup>

Along with the "going into the world" problem, secular institutes provoke comment on the Church-world relationship; Paul VI said they must model that relationship. They do so by consecrated secularity, in which each of the three counsels is lived in a secular fashion. Chastity shows self-control to the world; poverty the model of relation to created goods, and obedience the wisdom of God who rules the world by secondary causes. And "secularity...is to take the natural order seriously, working for its perfection and its sanctification..."<sup>14</sup>

**Secularity is the condition of commonness, ordinariness in reference to the holy, special, set apart, offered, priestly condition of sacral or cultic realities.** The distinction between profane and sacred is within this meaning: "profane" means "not sacred," "not set apart," "common," perhaps even "impious" or "anti-sacred." Like the "world's dangers" meaning

<sup>9</sup> J. Leclercq, "Mondo," in DIP VI:66-67, citing *De oratione* 124.

<sup>10</sup> Albertini *et al.*, "Istituti Secolari," 106-121, esp. "La secolarità," 110-111.

<sup>11</sup> J. Leclercq, "Mondo," 62. See also Karl Rahner, "Die ignatianische Mystik der Weltfreudigkeit," in *Zeitschrift für Aszese und Mystik* 12 (1937) 124-136.

<sup>12</sup> LG 31, 43-47, esp. 46 seems to repudiate *fuga mundi*. See also PC 1: religious help the Church witness to the world.

<sup>13</sup> J. Leclercq, "Mondo," in DIP VI:62-63.

<sup>14</sup> Paul VI, "In questo giorno," allocution on 25th anniversary of *Provida Mater*, in AAS 64 (1972) 206-212; quote from 210. This caught the attention of the Salesians: see "Pontifical Magisterium" in ASC LIII 266 (March 1972) 28-29.

just considered, this meaning also relates to vocations in the Church. This time it is that of sacred ordained ministers, distinct from the common laity. Manlio Sodi ties in the creation perspective and the society/Church relations as well. A meaning of sacred is "set aside for God," while secularization is an active technician's stance toward creation, rather than a passive resignation to natural cycles or fixed societal roles. There is no longer need to pray to God; one goes out and gets things done.<sup>15</sup>

Luther also questioned the need for sacred–profane distinctions in the Church, preferring a "universal priesthood of the believers." In response, the Counter–Reformation Catholic Church concentrated decision–making onto its ordained members. Congar reports a late 19th century theological dictionary's low view of the laity. They get all of three words: "Laity: see Clergy."<sup>16</sup>

Vatican II explains ordained ministry in terms broader than sacred–cultic: the three–fold ministry of the successors of the apostles, the *tria munera* of priest, prophet and king is given to the apostles by Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Another dimension of broadening is that the priesthood, prophecy and kingship of the whole People of God is explained first, and then only that of ordained ministers. The priestly office is the one compared with secularity in the sacred–profane problem, and that most clearly in *Presbyterum Ordinis*.<sup>18</sup>

In explaining the relation between clergy and laity, John Paul prefers to use the Head–Body image of Christ's relation to the Church; secularity does not explicitly enter. Ordained ministers act as Christ the Head.<sup>19</sup>

A practical result of the recovery of lay dignity by reflection on the sacred–profane problem is that more theology is now being read and written by non–ordained persons.

Both of the last two meanings of secularity associate it to the laity, but in different ways. Laity have been one of two, three and four states in the Church at various times, and in every scheme secularity has distinguished lay folk from the others.

Pseudo–Dionysius the Aeropagite wrote of a hierarchy of three mysteries (ordination, eucharist, baptism), of three orders of clergy to celebrate them (bishops, priests, deacons), and three orders of faithful to benefit by them

<sup>15</sup> Sodi, "Secolarizzazione," 1267, 1269.

<sup>16</sup> "Laien: Siehe Clerus." Congar, "Laïc et laïcat," 102, cites *Kirchenlexikon* 7:1323 (1891).

<sup>17</sup> Vatican II document *Presbyterum Ordinis* [=PO] 1; LG 10–12, 20, 24, 26, 27; Vatican II document *Apostolicam Actuositatem* [=AA ] 2.

<sup>18</sup> PO 3.

<sup>19</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988) [= CL] §21–23, 36–44; also LG 10, PO 2. Note that in Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Vatican City: Libreria Vaticana, 1992) §16, the pope adds the roles of pastor and spouse of the Church; these roles place him in front of the Church as well as in the Church like the Head.

(monks, ordinary faithful, those in need of purification). These were simplified by Gregory the Great and many medieval writers to three states: laity, clergy and monks.<sup>20</sup> The *Decretals of Gratian* (c. 1142) divided Christendom into two categories: laity who deal with worldly affairs, and those who deal with holy affairs: clerics, monks and nuns.

In our century, secularity in the sense of helping the world toward creation–redemption–recapitulation provoked study on the Gregorian triple hierarchy of laity, clergy and religious. Shortly before the Council, a pioneering work by Yves Congar describes laity by two approximations. First, all Christians are ordered to the holy. Thus he denies the notion of secularity as opposed to the holy, of secular lay people opposed to holy priests and religious. But lay people are Christians who do not live exclusively for holy, otherworldly things (monastic view), and do not give holiness to others (canonical view). In brief, monks do not live in the world; lay people do. Priests do not work in the world, lay people do.<sup>21</sup>

Vatican II embraces three–state ecclesiology in *Lumen Gentium*, but backs away from it by later denying that religious life is a middle way between the clerical and lay states.<sup>22</sup> The 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, like the 1917 code before it, tries to harmonize Gratian’s two–state (clergy and all others) ecclesiology with the Gregorian three–state. It does so by saying laity or clergy become (1983) or are (1917) religious.<sup>23</sup> Then there are two ways of being not ordained:

<sup>20</sup> Dionysius’ *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* VI, 5 [= PG 3 536d]. Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 20–21 comments. Osborne, *Lay Ministry*, 223 discusses Gregory’s contribution.

<sup>21</sup> Congar, *Lay People*, 15–19, 108–111, 374. For a lay–clerical distinction in preferred theological method, see John Courtney Murray, “Toward a Theology for the Layman: The Problem of Its Finality,” *Theological Studies* 5 (1944) 43–75; and *id.*, “Toward a Theology for the Layman: The Pedagogical Problem,” *Theological Studies* 5 (1944) 340–376. Murray indeed describes the role of the lay person as renewal of the temporal order, but this means human society, and not the whole of created reality.

Cyril Papali, *De Apostolatu Laicorum* (Rome: Teresianum, 1962) 18–22, has a similar pair of distinctions. Lay folks do not flee the world like religious, nor do they, like clerics, stay away from managing temporal affairs. All are separated from the world somehow.

<sup>22</sup> The arrangement of LG’s ch. 3, 4, 6 supports; LG 43 denies.

<sup>23</sup> 1917 CIC c 107 has it:

Ex divina institutione sunt in Ecclesia *clerici a laicis* distincti, ...utrique autem possunt esse *religiosi*.

1983 CIC c 207:

1. Ex divina institutione, inter christifideles sunt in Ecclesia ministri sacri, qui in jure et clerici vocantur; ceteri autem et laici nuncupatur.

2. Ex utraque hac parte habentur christifideles, qui...suo peculiari modo Deo consecrantur.



outside the religious house in the world, and inside it as a nun or brother. By analogy, there are two ways of being a cleric, yielding a four-state ecclesiology of lay people, nuns and brothers, secular and regular clergy. No developed four-state ecclesial model, however, has emerged to include all these as distinct.<sup>24</sup> Whichever model of states in the Church one uses, secularity will be used to distinguish them.

## World, Creation and Secularity in Salesian Pre-Renewal Documents

Now we come to documents within the Salesian tradition. In those before the Council, we find a generally hostile attitude to the world and secularity at the theoretical level; *fuga mundi* dominates. But they engage the world much more at the practical level. This shows most clearly in writings connected with the Salesian brothers, and their particular ministry, the trade, agricultural and technical schools. Later, Salesians work out a remarkable theory of opening to the world, but with less emphasis on brothers and technical education.<sup>25</sup>

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Note the 1917 code just says clerics and lay exist by divine institution, while the 1983 code says different ministries are of divine institution, but the names are just names. For comment, see Osborne, *Lay Ministry*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Osborne, *Lay Ministry*, 221–225; 233–236, 251. He does not ignore that monks become bishops in the East (like the Cappadocian Fathers Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzen). He treats the importance of Western diocesan clergy set up as a monastery (as under the bishops Eusebius of Vercelli and Augustine of Hippo) on pp. 254–255. Clerics and lay persons inside and outside the monastery suggest the four-state ecclesiology in the text, based on two yes-or-no independent variables (called “Boolean,” after George Boole, who invented the binary mathematics to handle them). Borrowing a technique from digital electronics, we can use a Karnaugh map of the Boolean variables **ordained** and **religious** to yield a taxonomy of ecclesial vocations:

	not ordained	ordained
not religious	Christifideles laici	secular clergy
religious	nuns and brothers	regular clergy

Cf. other approaches to four-state ecclesiology: Forte, “Laicato,” 2, 354; CIC 1983 c 207. Forte seems to follow Congar, *Lay People*, 356. AA 25 has the 2-, 3-, and 4-state models all in play.

<sup>25</sup> Much of the material in this section is from my thesis: John Rasor, *The Spiritual Identity of the Salesian Brother in the Light of Official Salesian Documents*. Doctoral thesis submitted to Department of Theology, Salesian Pontifical University (Rome, 1995).

## Don Bosco

The Introduction to Don Bosco's Constitutions gives a theoretical understanding of the spiritual meaning of religious life, and of the vows. It is assembled from reflections on Scripture, the Fathers, and other authors. St. Alphonsus Liguori is extensively quoted.<sup>26</sup> It clearly enjoins flight from the world:

"The whole world," says the same apostle, "is in the power of the evil one." (1Jn 5:19) The religious is like one who goes on board ship, and trusting himself to the care of a skillful captain, remains unafraid even in the midst of storms.<sup>27</sup>

Another example is a conference Don Bosco gave on October 30, 1876 to 228 Salesians, novices and aspirants, to open the school year at the Oratory in Valdocco.<sup>28</sup> In it, he talks about religious life.

However, to achieve great things, we must be faithful to our vocation. The first step requires that we forsake the world, as many of you have already done by putting on the clerical habit. This, in itself, symbolizes the renunciation of the world and its allurements. Many wish to enter the Congregation as lay members, but for all members the main objective is the salvation of their souls. This honest intention assures us that we are on the right path. Banish all doubts.

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<sup>26</sup> "St. John Bosco to His Salesians," in *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Bombay: Provincial Office, 1967) 5–64. Complete texts also appear in the English Constitutions of 1925, 1949 and 1957. Studies include Pietro Braido, "Tratti di vita religiosa nello scritto 'Ai Soci Salesiani' di don Bosco del 1875. Introduzione e testi critici," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* XIII, 2 (July–Dec. 1994) 361–448 and XIV, 1 (Jan.–June 1995) 91–154; Francis Maraccani, ed., *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (Rome: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1986) [=POL], 24–27; Giovanni Bosco, *Costituzioni della Società di San Francesco di Sales 1858–1875*, critical edition by Francesco Motto (Rome: LAS, 1982) [=Const. FM], 20.

<sup>27</sup> "St. John Bosco to His Salesians," 7.

<sup>28</sup> Its sources: a manuscript attributed to Emanuele Dompè in the Archivio Salesiano Centrale [=ASC], collection number A0012001 Class. B10001, from the Barberis *Cronichetta (1875–1879) – XIX quaderno – Dal 30 ottobre 1876*, pp. IXX–9 – IXX–11 (viewable also in microfiche in A. Torras (ed.), *Fondo Don Bosco* (Rome: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1980), microfiche 0818 E11– 0819 A2 [=FDBM 0818 E11– 0819 A2]); another manuscript attributed to Dompè: ASC A0000302 Class. B10001, from the Barberis notebook *Discorsetti di Don Bosco – Quad. II – 1876 –*, pp. 9–18 (FDBM 0850 C3–C12); a manuscript by Giulio Barberis, in his *Cronichetta – Quad. X – Discorsi di Don Bosco 1876 –*, pp. 2–6 (FDBM 1251 B1–B5). There is a composite text reported in Giovanni Battista Lemoine, Eugenio Ceria and Angelo Amadei, *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco* (Turin: SEI, 1898–1939, 19 vol.) [=MBI] XII:559–565; in English translation: *Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle NY: Don Bosco Publications 1965–, 16 vol. of English translation to date) [=EBM] XII:409–414.

Let us therefore turn to the Oratory if our choice is a place far removed from sin. Here we no longer fall into the sins we committed in the past.<sup>29</sup>

Note that Don Bosco says that his boys can be safe from the world in the Oratory, not the religious house; in his mind, staying at the Oratory to help Don Bosco is equivalent to being a Salesian.

In the early Salesian rules, the relation between the local superior, called the Director, and his vicar and economist the Prefect, takes a clear reflection from the Church-world and *fuga mundi* problems. Salesian "coadjutors" and lay Salesians, the brothers, enter at this point. Some of Don Bosco's boys helped in the house as cooks, waiters, doorkeepers and in other support jobs. In the early days of the Oratory, anyone doing that was called a coadjutor, Salesian or not. In the 1870s and 1880s, however, lay Salesians managing and teaching in the shops acquired but did not like the name "coadjutor," sounding too close to the earlier meaning of service person or familiar. They, and the boys they taught, were "artisans." "Students" were boys in the liberal arts course, many of whom went on to priestly studies as clerics, or seminarians. Salesian brothers were then moving into catechetics and the professional education ministry, as well as working in support of the priests' and seminarians' ministry.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1875 Constitutions, Don Bosco wrote:

14. The Prefect takes the place of the Director, and his principal office will be to administer temporal affairs, take charge of the coadjutors, carefully watch over the discipline of the boys according to the rules of the house and in understanding with the Director. He must be ready to render an account of his administration upon request.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *EBM* XII:410, 412; see *MBI* XII:560, 562. The "lay members" of *EBM* XII:410 are "secolari" in *MBI* XII: 560.

<sup>30</sup> Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, examines the terms "student," "layman," "cleric," "coadjutor" and "artisan." These and other terms are treated at the end of each of the first six chapters. A shorter study of "coadjutor" is the one of Pietro Stella, "The Salesian Brothers (1854-1974): Development of his social-professional profile," in Peter Brocardo, Nicholas Cerisio, Renato Romaldi (eds.), *Acts World Congress Salesian Brothers* [=AWCSB] (Madras: SIGA, 1976) 49-83. The book is (approximately) a translation of *id.*, *Atti Convegno Mondiale Salesiani Coadiutori* (Roma: SGS, 1975) [=ACMSC]. In the 1907 English translation of the Constitutions (London: The Salesian Press, 1907), "coadiutori" is variously rendered as "co-adjutors," "lay-brothers." Here, "brother" will be used to indicate "coadjutori" in the wide sense of "lay Salesian," not the narrow sense of "cooks, waiters and doorkeepers."

<sup>31</sup> *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales...* (Torino, 1875) [=1875 C] X.14. See Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, H.11 for a translation.

The 1877 *Regulations for the Houses* give details on the jobs of the Prefect and the coadjutors:

#### The Prefect

19. Where there are shops, the Prefect will deal directly with the shop teachers and assistants, and will require them to keep records of outside orders, agreed prices, accounts receivable and payments received, time and material spent, and supplies; all this so as to give an account to whom it may concern.

#### The coadjutors

1. The coadjutors or persons entrusted with the domestic work are principally in three categories: Cooks, Waiters and Doorkeepers, who are to help each other in what is compatible with their proper duties.

2. To coadjutors it is highly recommended never to accept work outside their proper duties, never to accept tips from anyone, and not even to deal in anything that does not concern the House. If some personal need should arise, they should refer to the Prefect...

5. They are not to have any familiarity with the youngsters of the House; let them show respect and charity with all in performing their duty without private dealings, or worse yet particular friendships...

8. No one should refuse humble jobs; let all consider that God asks of each the fulfillment of the duties of one's own state...<sup>32</sup>

Here, "coadjutors" is clearly used in its old, service-personnel meaning. These rules, especially Art. 2 and 5, are designed to help the Prefect prevent the coadjutors from moonlighting, from deals on the side or under the table, with the aim of picking up a few extra lire here and there. Such practices would betray a worldly spirit, a less than apostolic attention to duty...and note that these are required of *all* coadjutors, Salesian or not. Indeed, we have here the picture of one who deals more with the outside world than do priests, and operates there rather than with the boys. Even so, the apostolic value of good example is not neglected.

In January of 1880, Don Bosco printed and distributed a circular letter to pastors promoting coadjutor vocations in the old sense used by the 1877 *Regulations for the Houses*.<sup>33</sup> He opens by remarking that many privileged souls want

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<sup>32</sup> Translation by author from *Regolamento per le Case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (Turin: Tipografia Salesiana, 1877) [=1877 R], Part I. ch. II. "Il Prefetto"; Part I. ch. XII. "I Coadjutori." Partial translations and comment on the *Regolamento per le Case*, and the early General Chapter deliberations can be found in Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, ch. 1 and Appendix J.

<sup>33</sup> A copy of the appeal is in ASC, listed as "Colloc. A1760526 Class. B31040.

to abandon the world to save their souls, then describes the kind of work lay religious might do as Salesians:

They should be ready for any sort of work; for example, in the fields, garden or kitchen, in the bakery or waiting on tables, or cleaning the house. If sufficiently educated, they can work as secretaries in the various offices. If they know a trade, they can continue to work at it in the respective shops. They should be from 20 to about 35 years old.<sup>34</sup>

Don Bosco is describing a career path to service and indirect support of the Society's apostolates (coadjutors); the reference to working in shop (artisans) does not mean teaching, but making and repairing things. There is no mention of professional schools, catechizing or missions. It is to be remembered that this appeal is indirectly addressed to young men outside Salesian houses; it is from the artisan boys that the future shop *teachers* will come.

By the time the 3rd General Chapter met in 1883, serious discontents among the brothers had arisen, some centering on the name "coadjutor." For their part, many priests had deep misgivings about the brothers' fitness for religious life. Their worldly lifestyle was criticized. These concerns are apparent from reading the proposals sent in to prepare for the Chapter.

Many blamed lack of care in formation given to lay members. Fr. S. Fumagalli writes that coadjutors have important jobs, and they can deal with the world more easily. But Salesian brothers did not feel appreciated.<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, at Don Bosco's insistence, the Chapter decided to apply the name "coadjutor" to all lay Salesians not seminarians. This was promulgated four years later in the combined acts of the 3rd and 4th General Chapters (see below).

For now, the Chapter decided to open a novitiate for brothers at San Benigno Canavese. It was already running scant weeks after the Chapter, and Don Bosco came to talk to 22 coadjutor novices, with their superiors, late in October of 1883.<sup>36</sup> Let us examine what he said there.

Bosco Giovanni. *Invito alla segnalazione di vocazioni religiose laicali*. Torino 1880." A text can be had in *MBI XIV:783* but not *EBM XIV*. The circumstances of this letter are given in *MBI XIV:393-394* and *EBM XIV:301-302*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, translation mine. *EBM XIV* omits this; an Italian text is in *MBI XIV:783-784*. Compare translation with that in Paolo Natale, Cosimo Semararo, et. al., *The Salesian Brother* (Rome, 1989), [=SB], 42.

<sup>35</sup> Antonio Papes, "La formazione del salesiano coadiutore nel 1883," in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane XIII* 1 (Jan.-June 1994) 167-173. The proposals are in ASC 04 (*FDBM* 1859 C1 - 1862 A12; more of the same for GC 4 is in *FDBM* 1865 A8-D6).

<sup>36</sup> See Arthur Lenti, "Key Concepts, Concerns and Fears of a Founder—Don Bosco in His Declining Years," in *Journal of Salesian Studies VI:2* (Fall 1995), 24-25; *EBM XVI*, 245-247, 328-330 on the novitiate there. English text of the conference: *EBM XVI:245-246*. Study and critical text of the 1883 conference, including a minor

Don Bosco opens noting happily that the artisans' novitiate is off to a good start, and that the numbers of brothers must grow. Then he comes to the first of two points he wants to make, his "idea of the Salesian coadjutor." Immediately we see he has no intention of distinguishing artisans and coadjutors, just as he had insisted at GC 3 on keeping the name "coadjutor" for all lay Salesians. Here he describes the brother's function in the Salesian apostolate:

I will develop two ideas.

First, I want to explain to you my idea of the Salesian coadjutor because I have never had either the time or the opportunity to go into a good explanation. Well now, you are gathered here to learn a trade and to train yourselves in religion and piety. Why? Because I need helpers. There are some things priests and clerics cannot do, and you will do them. I need to be able to take one of you and send you to a printshop, and say, "You take charge and make sure all goes well." Another I will send into a bookstore and say, "You run this place and make it work well." I need someone I can send to a house and say to him, "It will be your job to see to it that this workshop or those workshops run in an orderly fashion and leave nothing to be desired. You will make sure that the work is turned out as it should be." I need to have someone in every house who can take responsibility for matters of greater trust, like managing money, settling disputes, and representing the house to outsiders. I need to have things running smoothly in the kitchen and in the doorman's quarters, to have supplies ordered promptly, to see to it that nothing goes to waste, no one goes out, and so forth. I need people I can trust with these responsibilities. You will have to be the ones. In a word, you are to be like bosses over the other employees, not their servants. But everything in its proper order and within proper limits. Your task will be to direct, as co-owners of the workshops. This is my concept of the Salesian coadjutor. I really need to have many who will come to help me in this way! Therefore I am glad to see that you are wearing proper and neat apparel, that you have comfortable beds and dormitory cells, because you are not to be servants, but masters, not subjects, but superiors.

And now for my second thought. Since you are to come to my aid in both great and delicate tasks, you must acquire many virtues, and since you are to direct others, you must first of all give good example. It must be that wherever one of you is present there is also orderliness, morality, goodness.<sup>37</sup>

This does not sound much like the Gospel, where Jesus' disciples are told that the master must be the servant of all. But concrete models existed for this kind of role, men like Joseph Rossi in the purchasing office and Andrew Pelazza on the print shop floor.

Don Bosco's first thought is then about complementarity: there are "things that priests and clerics cannot do," that brothers will do. What are those things? None of the documents answers clearly, but the San Benigno conference seems to indicate a great degree of involvement with worldly affairs: teaching in and

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furor it provoked at GC 12: Papes, *op. cit.* Study 143–219; critical text 222–224.

<sup>37</sup> *EBM XVI*: 245–246.

managing the shops (artisans) and administering the house (coadjutors in the 1877 *Regulations for the Houses* sense). A supporting indication comes from the Constitutions, in the chapter on the habit. The brothers are to dress in black, that is, dress as a serious, businesslike 19th century Italian layman would. But *all* Salesians, priests, clerics and brothers, are to avoid worldly fashions. Putting on the clerical habit, and dressing in black, both mean the same thing: renunciation of worldly attitudes. And for the brother it means doing so while immersed in worldly concerns.<sup>38</sup>

Don Bosco puts “masters, not servants” in perspective in the second quoted paragraph, containing his second idea. He says that the brothers, being bosses, must grow in virtue, must give good example to other workers and see to the moral good order of the enterprises just as they do for the material good order. Growth in virtue, in good example, in energy as well as in numbers is needed to prepare for these apostolates. It is related to his reason for the first idea: “You are gathered here to learn an art and master religion and piety.” These novices must prepare to play that master role sketched out in the first idea; they must grow both in technical and spiritual virtuosity.

The Church–world problem came in for some reflection later in the 1880s. When the deliberations of the 3rd and 4th General Chapters were finally published together in 1887, they included a Theme III on the brothers and the artisan boys learning trades. Its use of the word “professional” in these deliberations alert us to the transition underway from trade schools to professional education. This theme contains a vocational identity for the brothers that continues the development present in the conferences and the circulars: from domestic service personnel to lay apostles, immersed in worldly affairs. The novelty is that the relation of priests and brothers in the Salesian enterprise is modeled on that in the Church as a whole. While the vocational identity statement includes all Salesian works, here the emphasis is deliberately placed on the professional schools, and serves to highlight the brother as a full–fledged Salesian educator.

### III. On the religious spirit and vocations among the coadjutors and the artisans.

#### §1. The Coadjutors

Our Pious Society is composed not only of priests and clerics, but also of lay persons ([1875 C] I.1). They are called Coadjutors (X.14, XIII.2, XV.3) because their specific role is to help the priests in the works of Christian charity proper to the congregation. Throughout the history of the Church examples abound of lay persons who were of greatest help to the Apostles and other sacred ministers,

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<sup>38</sup> 1875 C XV.3, equivalent to art. XV.3 of the 1907 English translation, and art. 199 in the English translations of 1925, 1949, 1957; art. 198 in 1967. See Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, Appendix H for texts and comparisons.

and the Church has always had the services of the faithful for the good of the people and the glory of God.<sup>39</sup>

Now, the name “coadjutor” is given a distinct meaning, wider than that in the 1877 *Regulations for the Houses*. It means a lay Salesian. In this introduction, the Chapter roots its discourse solidly on the Constitutions, immediately appealing to the very first article to give the brother a place right alongside the Salesian priest, a complementary religious and apostolic identity. The brother shares Salesian religious life with his priestly and clerical confreres, and is given a specifying identity. He carries out an indirect apostolate of support to that of the priests, and a direct apostolate, alongside the priest, exercising his own apostolic action in favor of the people and for God’s glory.

In our time, more than any other, Catholic apostolates, and those of our Congregation in particular, can benefit from the effective help provided by lay people. And, in certain circumstances, lay persons can work better and more freely than priests.

In particular, a vast field for the exercise of charity toward neighbor, to the greater glory of God, lies open to coadjutors through their assuming the direction and management of various enterprises of our Pious Society, through their becoming craftsmasters in workshops, or catechists in festive oratories, and more especially through their ministry in the foreign missions.

The indirect, or help-the-priest theme, coupled with the direct, work-for-the-Church theme, is repeated. The reader will recall the argument made at San Benigno for the importance of the brother’s direct apostolate: “There are things priests cannot do...”

Artisans are coupled with the brothers in this Theme III. The reason is that “becoming craftsmasters in workshops” is one of those brothers’ apostolates.

## §2. Young artisans

Among the principal works of charity done by our Society is that of gathering those young people who are so abandoned that instructing them in the truths of religion is wasted effort unless they are housed and directed to some art or trade...

In accepting these young artisans, the Pious Salesian Society aims at educating them in such a manner that, on leaving our houses after their training, they may have mastered a trade to enable them to earn an honorable livelihood, have received good religious instruction, and have acquired such knowledge as is appropriate to their state in life. It follows that there is a triple component to their education: religious-moral, intellectual and professional.

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<sup>39</sup> Translation of this material from GC3 and GC4 is by the author from *Deliberazioni del Terzo e Quatro Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana* (San Benigno Canavese: Tipografia Salesiana, 1887). [=GC 3,4], also in Giovanni Bosco, *Opere Edite*, First Series, books and pamphlets, 37 volumes of anastatic reprints (Rome: LAS, 1977-1978) XXXVI: 268-274, and partly in *MBI XVII*: 699-702.



Artisans learn a trade (professional component), and along with it the schooling (intellectual component) that will make them productive workers. These two aims make sure that instructing them in religion (the religious-moral component) will not be wasted. Schooling is an adaptation to changed conditions: in the dawning industrial age, it is no longer enough to board a boy and send him out to work with a craftsman.<sup>40</sup>

### *Religious-moral Component*

10. Since many good craftsmasters are needed to enable the Society to open new houses and to extend to as many young people as possible the benefit of an education, every confrere shall, by his good example and his charity, endeavor to foster in the pupils the desire to belong to our Pious Society. And when one of them qualifies, let him be sent to the novitiate, even at some sacrifice.

11. It is important to place graduates with good Christian employers, and give them a testimonial of good conduct to present to their pastor.

12. It is also advantageous, for those of sufficiently good conduct, to enroll them in the Salesian Cooperators and recommend them to some Catholic labor organization.

Here is another reason for linking artisans and brothers: artisans are potential future brothers, as the title of Theme III implies. Thus, the importance of finding and forming good Salesian craftsmasters for this type of education. If they are not skilled, they will have little influence on the artisans. And if they are not morally sound, their influence will not be moral; no vocations will come.

The last two rules highlight the Salesian concern for the boy after his years in the Salesian school, and for the growing importance of labor and social justice questions.

### *Professional Component*

5. In every professional house, at the giving of awards, there should be an exposition of the pupils' projects, and there should be a general exposition for all the houses of artisans every three years.

Then, to gain skill and speed it will help:

a. To give weekly, distinct grades for work and conduct.

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Ribotta, "Training Boys to Earn a Living: The Beginnings of Vocational Education at the Oratory," in *Journal of Salesian Studies* IV, 1 (Spring 1993) 61-86, discusses Don Bosco's early strategy of placing the young artisan under contract with a reliable employer who would see also to his moral education on the job.

- c. [sic]<sup>41</sup> to divide up the work by the piece, setting a certain percentage of the profit for the boy, according to a system developed by the competent Commission.
- b. [sic] The house of novitiate for artisans is to be provided with all equipment necessary for the learning and perfecting of the arts and trades, and is to be staffed by the best Salesian craftsmasters.

These rules show clearly that the intention of running true schools of arts and trades, as opposed to keeping everybody's shoes and clothes in repair, is well thought out with practical consequences drawn. Article 5b shows a particularly Salesian characteristic of the novitiate, encouragement to keep in practice at one's trade. This is far from the "spiritual studies only" model then favored by Church legislation.<sup>42</sup>

The Church-world and *fuga mundi* problems also influenced Don Bosco's project for the Salesian Cooperators. Even though he founded his Society from boys who had been students at the Oratory, he never gave up on the idea of obtaining help from priests, lay women and laymen living in the world. His first attempt was the extern Salesians, for whom he included a chapter in his proposed Constitutions. These would be secular priests and lay people who would observe as much of the Constitutions as their situation permitted, and who would share fully in the apostolate and the spiritual benefits of the Salesians. They would be a kind of religious in the world.

When Rome turned him down on this idea, he transferred it to the Association of Salesian Cooperators. The key sentence of the Cooperators' 1876 regulations, compared to the Salesian Constitutions, clearly shows his idea for a common mission:

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<sup>41</sup> GC 6 straightened out the lettering in *Deliberazioni dei sei primi Capitoli Generali della Pia Società Salesiana precedute dalle Regole o Costituzioni della medesima* (San Benigno Canavese: Tipografia Salesiana, 1894) [= GC 1-6] §508.

<sup>42</sup> Arthur Lenti, "Key-Concepts, Concerns and Fears of a Founder - Don Bosco in his Declining Years," in *Journal of Salesian Studies* VI, 2 (Fall 1995) 16-27, details Don Bosco's ideas on the novitiate.

1858 C I.1: Purpose of this congregation	1875 C I.1: I. Purpose of the society of St. Francis de Sales	1876 Regulations for the Cooperators
1. The purpose of this congregation is to gather together its members, priests, clerics, and laymen, for the purpose of perfecting themselves by imitating Our Divine Savior's virtues as far as possible. <sup>43</sup>	1. The purpose of the Salesian Society is the Christian perfection of its members, all spiritual and corporal works of charity towards the young especially poor ones, and also the education of the young Clergy. It consists of priests, clerics and laymen. <sup>44</sup>	The fundamental scope of the Salesian Cooperators is to do good to themselves by leading a life which is similar to that which is observed by Religious in the Common Life as far as they are able... This has for its principal end an active life in the exercise of charity towards one's neighbour and especially towards youth who are in moral danger. <sup>45</sup>

The Cooperators have essentially the same scope as the Salesian Society, and a life as close as possible to religious. Don Bosco even says some would leave the world for the cloister if they could!<sup>46</sup>

Already in 1876, Don Bosco said the Cooperators will be the Catholic Freemasons,<sup>47</sup> and Ceria interprets them in the *Biographical Memoirs* as the forerunners of Catholic Action. Explaining the scope of the Cooperators to Fr. Lemoyne in 1884, Don Bosco remarks that their scope is not just to help the Salesians, but the Church's pastors.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Author's translation of Const. FM 72 (text Ar); *EBM* V:635–645 has a version close to this.

<sup>44</sup> Author's translation of Const. FM 73 (text V).

<sup>45</sup> Giovanni Bosco, *I Cooperatori Salesiani, ossia un modo pratico per giovare al buon costume ed alla civile società* (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1876). Italian text in *MBI* XI:540–545; English translation and comment in *Rule of Apostolic Life* (Dublin: National Council of the Salesian Cooperators of Ireland, 1987) [=RAL] 89–90.

<sup>46</sup> Bosco, *I Cooperatori Salesiani*, "III. Scope of the Salesian Cooperators," in RAL 90.

<sup>47</sup> *EBM* XI:76–77.

<sup>48</sup> *MBI* XVII:25. See English translation and comment in RAL 40–41.

*Fuga mundi* in the Rectorates of Fr. Rua and Fr. Albera

In the first decades after Don Bosco's death in 1888, *fuga mundi* is almost the only approach to secularity in Salesian documents.

The 6th General Chapter (Acts published in 1894) revisited the professional schools. It made new regulations to have the workers' question and Papal teachings studied by the artisans, naming Leo XIII's 1891 *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>49</sup>

Changes were afoot in Salesian novitiates. One of their most striking features remained their strongly apostolic character, of which we saw a glimpse from the Acts of the 3rd and 4th General Chapters. They were different from the purely ascetic novitiates of other Orders and did not follow the mind of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. This is precisely the part of the Constitutions Don Bosco fought hardest for, even more than for the chapter on externs. In Fr. Rua's time (Rector Major from 1888 to 1910), the struggle to keep them apostolic meant a struggle to make them professionally up-to-date.

He wrote with satisfaction about the novitiates for brothers in 1896, 1897 and 1898.<sup>50</sup> In 1895, the 7th General Chapter had pulled back somewhat from the professional novitiate: "The word 'Novitiates' seemed out of place in dealing with norms exclusively regarding arts and trades."<sup>51</sup> The 8th went further:

## §I. Formation

4. For studies [the commission] proposes that, during the year of Novitiate, the novices be rigorously held to what the Latin Constitutions prescribe: "During the time of the second trial, or year of Novitiate, let the novices not be allowed to exercise any of the works proper to the Institute, so that they may concentrate on acquiring virtue and perfection of soul, and on the vocation to which they are called by God." (XIV.12) Furthermore, taking the needs of the Society into due consideration, studies shall be made less profane and secular, so as not to become dangerous.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, GC 8 set in motion the planning for an agricultural novitiate, with all the technical and scientific trimmings, including chemical analysis laborato-

<sup>49</sup> GC 1–6 §492–495.

<sup>50</sup> Michele Rua, *Lettere Circolari* #52 (Nov. 1, 1906) (2nd. ed. Turin: Direzione Generale Salesiana, 1965) #31 (July 2, 1896), 175; #32 (Jan. 31, 1897), 193; #34 (June 24, 1898), 208.

<sup>51</sup> Author's translation from *Deliberazioni del Settimo Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana* (S. Benigno Canavese: Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1896), 79.

<sup>52</sup> Author's translation from *Atti e Deliberazioni dell' VIII Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana* (S. Benigno Canavese: Scuola Tip. Salesiana, 1899), 110; the quoted article is from the 1874 Constitutions. See Const. FM 196 (text Ut).

ries.<sup>53</sup> GC 8 wrote the above rule in keeping with the prevailing *fuga mundi* orientation of religious formation of the time, to keep secular studies out of the novitiate. But it is not applied to the agricultural novitiate.

No less than eight times does Fr. Albera (Rector Major 1910–1921) touch on the problem of secular studies and the spiritual life in his circular letters. As early as 1911, he wants to limit the technical course (following GC 11; GC 2 had recommended getting teaching credentials for it), as long as the “current educational laws” in Italy remain.<sup>54</sup> In a 1913 letter on Salesian apostolates, Albera is against it because it does not look like it can foster vocations if installed in the boarding schools, and would drain off candidates for the classical course: a proven vocation seedbed. He adds there that we teach human sciences only to have the right to teach divine science. Naturally, when World War I forced cut-backs, Albera fingered the technical course as the first to go.<sup>55</sup> After the war, he cited Don Bosco’s Barcelona dream of 1886, where Mary warns him: “And watch out for the error prevalent today, which is mixing those who study human arts with those who study the divine, because the heavenly science can never be mixed with the earthly.”<sup>56</sup> Similar is the remark a few months later (taken from St. Thomas), that interest in things of this world and spiritual things are inversely related.<sup>57</sup> Interpreted literally, this would mean that human science is of no use to spirituality; indeed, is positively harmful.

But in 1921 the picture changes. Writing on spiritual direction for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Fr. Albera says learning and spiritual progress have to develop together, so as to be of mutual support. He warns against a forced spirituality not in line with the active character of the Salesian Sisters.<sup>58</sup> Not content with this, in the next circular (on vocations) he practically retracts the 1913 “no mixing” doctrine of sacred and human sciences: we must

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII. §III, 137-40 proposes an agricultural novitiate. The proposal was adopted, and Fr. Rua suggested (pg. 142) making a set of rules for this kind of novitiate after some experience had been gained.

<sup>54</sup> Paolo Albera, *Lettere Circolari* #1 (Jan. 25, 1911) (2nd ed. Turin: Direzione Generale Salesiana 1965) [= Albera, *Circolari*], #3 (May 15, 1911), 45. The technical course of the 1859 Casati law is a kind of technical–business course for businessmen, officials, farm experts, technicians; not like the classical course. See Michael Ribotta, “The Day They Shut Down the Oratory School,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* II, 1 (Spring 1991) 19-44. The closure in question occurred in 1879. The Casati law was superseded by the Gentile legislation of 1923.

<sup>55</sup> Albera, *Circolari* #10 (May 31, 1913), 137, 139; #19 (July 10, 1916), 232.

<sup>56</sup> Author’s translation from Albera, *Circolari* #29 (March 19, 1920), 325. Dream: *MBI* XVIII:72–74.

<sup>57</sup> Albera, *Circolari* #35 (Oct. 18, 1920), 370, is part of a commentary on the “personages” and the “ten diamonds” dream of 1881 at San Benigno. For texts of the dream, see *MBI* XV:183–187; *EBM* XV:148–151.

<sup>58</sup> Albera, *Circolari* #39 (Feb. 20, 1921), 417–418.

cultivate the natural sciences. With good Catholic magazines, we can follow the development of ideas in our time, scientific discoveries, and the latest tactics of the Church's enemies.

A return to the "no mixing" doctrine may seem to be the import of a passage from that letter.<sup>59</sup> It is a doublet of one from the 1913 apostolates letter; here are the two:

1913 Apostolates letter:	1921 Vocation letter:
To achieve this, never let it pass from your minds, O dear sons, that Don Bosco told us to cultivate human sciences only to have the right to teach that divine science that forms true Christians, and above all to work with God Himself in raising up numerous vocations from the great numbers of boys placed under our care. <sup>60</sup>	Perhaps we have lost sight of the fact that Don Bosco told us to cultivate human sciences especially to have a way to teach that divine science that forms true Christians, and above all with the help of God to raise up numerous vocations from the great numbers of boys given to our care. <sup>61</sup>

Note the change in emphasis: what is tolerated in 1913 "only to have the right," becomes actively promoted in 1921 "especially to have a way" to teach boys about God.

Don Bosco's second successor often wrote about love for souls and the spiritual life. In a 1913 circular letter about oratories, Fr. Albera seems more ready to minister to the world where Don Bosco and Fr. Rua wrote about fleeing it:

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<sup>59</sup> Albera, *Circolari* #40 (March 19, 1921), 424–472, or in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore* [=ACS] II 2 (March 19, 1921) 134–172. ACS became *Atti del Consiglio Superiore* for numbers 244–310, then *Atti del Consiglio Generale* (311–present). English translations are available in *Acts of the Superior Chapter* [=ASC] from 1932, then *Acts of the Superior Council* (numbers 244–310), then *Acts of the General Council* [=AGC] (311–present).

<sup>60</sup> Author's translation from Albera, *Circolari* #10 (May 31, 1913), 139:

Per raggiungere questo fine, non vi passi mai di mente, o carissimi, che D. Bosco ci ha ordinato di coltivare le scienze umane solo per aver diritto d'insegnare la scienza divina la quale forma i veri cristiani, e soprattutto per suscitare, cooperando all'opera di Dio stesso, numerose vocazioni nell'immenso campo giovanile destinato alle nostre cure.

<sup>61</sup> Author's translation from Albera, *Circolari* #42 (May 15, 1921), 494:

Forse si è perduto di vista che D. Bosco ci aveva ordinato di coltivare le scienze umane specialmente per aver modo d'insegnare la scienza divina che forma i veri cristiani, e soprattutto di suscitare, coll'aiuto di Dio, numerose vocazioni nell'immenso campo giovanile affidato alle nostre cure.

Then each House will be a source of great good, a hearth radiating light and warmth, and will continue not only to save those thousands of souls that find refuge therein, but also will form new apostles every year, ready to light that warming fire in other places that need it most. And so the work of our Venerable Father will continue, beneficent and healing in the midst of the world and of society.<sup>62</sup>

These examples from Fr. Albera's circulars, the reader will note, are not about *fuga mundi* as a means to religious perfection. They are about keeping boys in Salesian oratories and schools safe from the world's harmful influence. An important arena of interaction with the world is the professional and agricultural schools; Fr. Albera had very little to write about those.

Fr. Albera's letter on vocations devotes some lines to the brothers, prompting a slight opening to the world and society:<sup>63</sup>

So, our brothers must be ready to teach catechism, to give religious-social conferences, to teach in primary and middle schools, to become shop teachers, to assist the boys day and night, to administer the goods of the community, in effect to take care of that whole section of our apostolate which does not require the priestly character.

...These vocations, my dear sons, are one of our Society's biggest needs right now. Without them, it cannot attain the high social purpose pressed upon it in our day; rather, the vocation of the brothers is one of the most genial creations of that love which seeks to make the way of perfection accessible and easy for all.

What is new is the application to brothers of what St. Francis de Sales proposed in a general way in his *Introduction to the Devout Life*: perfection (called "devotion" by the Bishop of Geneva) is for all classes and conditions of people, in the world or retired from it.

Much later in the letter is a ground-breaking observation about the brothers' formation:

It would be very useful to have Houses for coadjutor artisans like those where the clerics in triennial vows finish their religious formation and their studies, so that they can become good shop teachers and good religious. They need a solid religious formation at least as much as the clerics, if not more; not only to become good Salesian educators like them, but also because they will perhaps have more dangerous contact with the corrupt world.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Author's translation from Albera, *Circolari* #10 (May 31, 1913), 145.

<sup>63</sup> Albera, *Circolari* #42 (May 15, 1921), 504–506. The whole letter is on pp. 479–530, or ACS II 4 (May 15, 1921) 134–172; quotes from it are the author's translation.

<sup>64</sup> Author's translation from Albera, *Circolari* #42 (May 15, 1921), 520.

The diffident stance towards the world is still there, but Fr. Albera tells Salesian brothers to prepare, and to courageously confront it.

Fr. Albera's Councilor for Arts and Trades was the energetic young former Provincial of Spain, Fr. Peter Ricaldone. He revisits the theme of safety from the world's temptations in religious life by recommending a vocation search among older youth and adults who want to retire from the world.<sup>65</sup>

### Fr. Rinaldi, Brothers and Technology

Fr. Rinaldi (Rector Major 1922–1931) wrote a circular letter to mark the opening of the aspirantate and finishing course for missionary brothers at Cumiana. In terms similar to Fr. Albera's, Fr. Rinaldi comes to grips with how to help all classes of people attain perfection, and the brother's vocation is the spiritual wedge:

3. ...But with his Society, Don Bosco has opened the way of religious perfection not only to a given number, but to all laymen who felt called to sanctify themselves in the life of the community, engaged in the apostolate of education in the midst of poor and abandoned youth, or the missionary apostolate among the savages...

That is how Don Bosco made perfection accessible to every class of persons with his Society, by the very exercise of all the different cultural, artistic, mechanical and agricultural professions. In the Salesian Society there is room for all kinds of people: the less instructed will sanctify themselves in humble jobs in the individual houses; the professors at their lecterns, from first grade right up to the university; shop teachers on the floor and farmers out in the fields: all these either in Institutes in civilized places or out in endless untilled Mission regions.

Another Albera idea: precisely because the brothers exercise those artistic, mechanical and agricultural professions, they can advance in religious perfection like their priestly confreres preaching, saying Mass, hearing confessions. They are sanctified by working in the world.

Then Fr. Rinaldi explains how the ministries of the lay and ordained Salesian work together:

We have to form men at Cumiana filled with the spirit of God, which is the true Salesian spirit, so they can one day go to the Missions and live Christian doctrine in practice, so as to evangelize those savages that the missionary priest is instructing in the Faith. There, in the very person of the farmer and the artisan, must shine forth Jesus' model of work. Jesus with the carpenter's plane, with the

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<sup>65</sup> Pietro Ricaldone, *Il Consigliere Professionale*, in ACS I 4 (Dec. 24, 1920), 104–106.



ax, with the hoe; *coepit facere et docere*. ["Jesus did and taught." Acts 1, 1] Our Salesian brother must represent the life of Jesus at Nazareth.<sup>66</sup>

There is not enough here to say that Salesian official documents have traded flight from the world for sanctification in the world or *apud mundum*, but the trend is unmistakable.

The 13th General Chapter met in July of 1929 at Valsalice near Turin. Its deliberations on the brothers, and on professional and agricultural schools, are of interest to our theme.

GC 13 wanted them to be real schools, appealing to the spirit of article 5 of the new Constitutions revised by GC 12. This meant religious formation, and also formation to earn an honest living.<sup>67</sup> In 1929, the Salesian professional education network could point to real progress, but understaffing was a serious problem. GC 13 refused to cut corners, and insisted on careful technical formation of the brothers assigned to teach in and manage the shops. Novitiates especially were to make way for novice brothers to practice their trade.<sup>68</sup>

Fr. Joseph Vespignani, Councilor for Arts and Trades under Fr. Rinaldi, wrote a circular letter in 1930 recalling Don Bosco's 1883 talk to the novice brothers at San Benigno. Commenting on the "not servants" passages, Fr. Vespignani says that brothers are superiors with respect to the other workers in the shop, like factory or farm managers. They have to look professional, as would any leader; it is not a question of a worldly spirit of domination. Salesian brothers often go into the world, continues Fr. Vespignani. There they apply the prudence of serpents and the simplicity of doves (See Matt 10:16), to become "lions" of spiritual energy.<sup>69</sup>

Fr. Rinaldi came back a few months later with a comment on Fr. Vespignani's comment. He wrote that being bosses in the house meant having one's heart in the Salesian house and its apostolate, not on the world. They did not need to have a radio in their rooms or in their shops; indeed, the dangers of worldly distraction to their vocation demand that there must be at least as much formation for them as for priests—a point Fr. Albera had already made in 1921.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Translation by the author from Filippo Rinaldi, "Cumiana – Scuola agricola per Aspiranti Missionari ...," in *ACS* VIII 40 (July 24, 1927) 572–58.

<sup>67</sup> Filippo Rinaldi, "Capitolo Generale XIII: 2° Tema, Scuole Professionali ed Agricole," in *ACS* X 50 (Oct. 24, 1929) [=GC 13] 808–814. The same number reports results on the other two themes, pp. 805–808, 814–823. See also *Bollettino Salesiano* 53 (1929) 238.

<sup>68</sup> GC 13 814.

<sup>69</sup> Giuseppe Vespignani, "Il coadiutore salesiano secondo la mente del Beato Don Bosco," in *ACS* XI, 54 (Oct. 24, 1930) 897, 905.

<sup>70</sup> Filippo Rinaldi, "Una parolina ai confratelli coadiutori," in *ACS* XII 56 (April

### *Fuga Mundi* in the Salesian '30s, '40s and '50s

The next Rector Major was Fr. Ricaldone (1932–1951). Some of his letters revisit the classic theme of *fuga mundi* as a help toward religious perfection, especially when telling Salesian brothers to avoid worldly fashions, and contact with the world. He added practical warnings against tips, deals on the side, and neglecting the rule to wear black.<sup>71</sup> In a major circular letter on the “manifestation” or “friendly talk,” Fr. Ricaldone refers to the Salesian Congregation having a particular character of being in contact with the world; he does not forbid working in it. This, however, does not remove the Superior’s duty to counteract worldly influences. It is to be noted that this letter is to all Salesians, not just the brothers.<sup>72</sup>

After him came Fr. Renato Ziggiotti (1952–1965). Seconded by his vicar, Fr. Alvin Fedrigotti, and by the Spiritual Director General Fr. John Antal, Fr. Ziggiotti wrote similar letters, adding television to the devil’s toolbox as the ’50s went by.<sup>73</sup>

### Fr. Ziggiotti and the Second Vatican Council

More than any Rector Major before him, Fr. Ziggiotti reveals an appreciation for the created order, which brings us to the God–world problem. This is the Rector Major, and this is the time, in which the bulk of Salesian reflection on secularity shifts from *fuga mundi* terms to God–world and Church–world terms.

In the summer of 1962, just before the Council, he writes about the construction progress of the shrine at Colle Don Bosco. Ziggiotti shows a good eye for detail, describing the earthmoving, the pouring of the foundations, the reinforcing bars, etc. This gives him the occasion to remind Salesians that they are

26, 1931) 945–948.

<sup>71</sup> Antonio Candela, “The Prefect of Arts and Trades: New edition of the revised programme drawn up for the professional schools; Our Lay–Brothers; black suits and secular innovations,” in *ASC* 88 (July–Aug. 24, 1938) 16; *id.*, “Circa il vestito dei Coadiutori,” in *ACS* XXX 161 (Nov.–Dec. 1950) 13; Pietro Ricaldone, “Lettera del Rettor Maggiore: §8. Cura dei giovani chierici e coadiutori: biennio di perfezionamento: raccomandazioni ai coadiutori,” in *ACS* XXII 112 (July–Aug. 1942) 191–194; Antonio Candela, “Il Consigliere Professionale: Circa il vestito dei Coadiutori,” in *ACS* XXXI 161 (Nov.–Dec. 1950) 13–14.

<sup>72</sup> Pietro Ricaldone, “Manifestation,” in *ASC* XXVII 142 (July–Aug. 1947) 9, 19, 50.

<sup>73</sup> Alvin Fedrigotti, “The Prefect General: Television,” in *ASC* XXXV 182 (July–August 1954) *id.*, “The Prefect General: Be forewarned against the danger of decadence, induced by a spirit of false modernity...,” in *ASC* XXXVIII 197 (March–May 1957) 4–5; *id.*, “The Prefect General...Causes of and remedies for distressing defections,” in *ASC* XL 210 (Nov.–Dec. 1959) 9–10.

the "temple of the living God" (see 1 Cor 3:16) by the power of the Spirit. God likes perfection, as the wonders of nature attest from stars to atoms. And we, "little less than the angels" (Ps 8), are creation's masterpiece. The depth of the Fall from this perfection highlights the height of God's mercy; priests and religious are especially privileged to serve Him more closely.<sup>74</sup>

Fr. Ziggiotti was groping toward a new vision of the world and the Church's place in it. This is evident in the first of a series of circular letters he wrote in 1964. These commented on each of the ten diamonds Don Bosco dreamed about at San Benigno in 1881. The first pair of these is "Work and Temperance," and in it he manages to touch the God-world, Church-world, Church-state and sacred-profane problems. He notes a development in the Church's view of work:

But today, with a more exalted concept of the dignity of the craftsman and worker, with the institution of the feast of St. Joseph the Worker and of Jesus in the workshop, *filius fabri*, I believe that it is a fascinating topic for the theologian, the sociologist and more especially for us workers in the Salesian vineyard, to consider this subject of the merits and nobility of work. In fact, the first and most perfect worker is God Himself *per quem omnia facta sunt*. And our work, if it is modeled on divine perfection, will acquire the highest value and be a means of attaining to all other virtues.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, God as creator is the first of all working folks. His craftsmanship is being revealed in the discoveries of the astronomical immensity of the universe (quasars were discovered the year before, giving us a look across billions of light years, and back in time to the youth of the universe). But humanity is the summit of it all, and God continues with us his creative work today, in redemption. And his instrument is the Church:

And again, how great the unceasing work of God in regard to each creature, and especially us men from Adam down to the present day, in the history of mankind, in the evolution of civilization, in the succession of centuries and of peoples. The history of the Church, which is the living presence of Jesus Christ on earth in His mystical body and in His work for the souls He longs to save, provides the most telling proof of His hidden, constant, patient, merciful and wonderful work.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Renato Ziggiotti, "The Rector Major:...3. Let us build a living spiritual Temple..." in ASC XLIII 226 (July-Aug. 1962) 2-7.

<sup>75</sup> Renato Ziggiotti, "The Rector Major... 3. The *strenna* for 1964: For January and February, ... Work and temperance..." in ASC XLV 234 (Jan. - Feb. 1964) 4-5. A "strenna" is a motto or watchword for the year.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

It is precisely here that human work has intrinsic value; it is not just some kind of training program for heaven. This obviously applies to the Salesian apostolate, with its strong lay component. Paul VI, writes Ziggiotti, wants a Catholic laity that shares in the spiritual priesthood of Christ.

“Mention is made,” says the Pope,” of a *consecratio mundi* and the laity have special prerogatives assigned to them in the sphere of the profane and the temporal, a sphere where it is possible for them to diffuse the light and grace of Christ precisely because the laity can act upon the profane world from within, whereas the priest cannot exert any influence upon it except in an external way by his words and his ministry.

“It is your privilege to be the most watchful informants, the most careful advisers, the best qualified witnesses, the shrewdest counselors and the most generous collaborators in the many needs of this world of ours: in the world of education, administration, social services, in the world of the press, of the arts, in the world of philanthropy. You are the bridge between the society of the *Ecclesia* and that of the *Civitas*: hence there is to be found in you a certain ‘psychological duality’ due to the fact that you belong at one and the same time to the society of the Church and that of the State.”<sup>77</sup>

Ziggiotti goes on to say Salesians have to educate secular clergy and the laity for this apostolate to the world. He ends by advertising a booklet on sanctified work, and Fr. Peter Braido’s book *Religiosi Nuovi* on the Salesian brothers.

When the Council finally begins, Fr. Ziggiotti is thrilled to be there. He has been assigned to the Commission on Religious, but his interests are more broadly ecclesiological.

... We see admitted as observers also a hundred or so dissident Christians, Protestants too, anxious to make contact with the Church of Rome and study closer at hand the problems that induced their leaders to cut themselves off from the parent stock, with consequences that are only too easy to verify: such as isolation, barrenness, division on top of division, uncertainty, and enslavement to civil law and political interests.

While not free of a certain triumphalism, Fr. Ziggiotti’s remark touches the old problem of how the Church relates to the secular power. Another is the phenomenon of treating God as irrelevant in everyday life; this is the secularization we saw connected with the God–world problem, the attempt to explain the world with no reference to God. As “laicism,” Fr. Ziggiotti condemns it without hesitation:

The Supreme Pontiff sums up in these simple words “a guiding principle of the Christian life” this massive piece of work which will be the subject of study in the Ecumenical Council. There will be rules given to all classes of Christians to defend them from the most dangerous doctrinal errors of our time: rules of faith

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

and morals, principles that will guard against unbelief, indifferentism and the inroads of laicism: clear teaching against corruption of morals that will not brook restraint, that is publicly extolled by the press, by associations, by the cinema and in reading matter that finds its way among all classes of persons and destroys the ties of home life and tries to justify revolt against all authority and plunge society into anarchy.<sup>78</sup>

Later, he hopes for guidelines to better collaboration between clergy and laity, and between religious and secular clergy. These two problems taken together indicate the coordinates along which the Council considered the laity, that is, as distinct from clergy and religious. All of this will lead to clearer witness of the Gospel before the world.<sup>79</sup> Fr. Ziggotti clearly believes the Council will result in greater attention to the world by the whole Church, and indeed that is what happened.

### The Special General Chapter

Fr. Ricceri was elected Rector Major by the 19th General Chapter in 1965, after Fr. Ziggotti became the first one to step down from office. Ricceri served until his own retirement at GC 21 in 1978. During Fr. Ricceri's rectorate, the 20th, or Special, General Chapter was held in 1971–1972. This General Chapter, at nearly seven months the longest in the Congregation's history, produced new Constitutions, new Regulations, and a set of documents to explain them. These documents are the Acts of the Special General Chapter.<sup>80</sup> They contain the first Salesian attempts to describe secularity.

### Secularity in the Church–world problem

Document 1 is called "Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church," and it is the first to attempt a description of our term "secularity." It takes care to distinguish among "secularization," "secularity," "secularism." The first is explained as an historical process by which men and women take responsibility for creation. Secularity is treated along the Church–world axis: it is the legitimate autonomy of the temporal order with respect to the Church, while not excluding an opening to God: closure would be secularism. As a result, the Chapter continues, the Church makes no official opinions about cultural and scientific matters, while many societal functions previously in her orbit are provided for by the state. Many today would label that very result "secularity." For this reason, the Chapter sees the Council as calling the Church to a humble, loving, yet courageously

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<sup>78</sup> Renato Ziggotti, "The Rector Major: 1. The 2nd Vatican Council in progress...." in *ASC* XLIII 228 (Nov.–Dec.) 4.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 5–7 also *id.*, "The Rector Major: 1. The Church and world of today...." in *ACS* XLV 239 (Nov.–Dec. 1964) 1–3.

<sup>80</sup> In English: *Special General Chapter XX of the Salesian Society* (Rome, SGS 1971) [=SGC].

prophetic stance toward the world.<sup>81</sup> Beyond a stance, the Chapter follows the Council in calling for action; that is, the Salesian mission is part of human effort to renew the world.<sup>82</sup> Traditionally, Salesians have always stressed technical education, and Salesian brothers have played a central role in this ministry. Unlike the 19th General Chapter and many of the ones before it, however, this Chapter makes no extended reflection or deliberations on that particular apostolate. Instead, the whole Salesian mission is made part of the renewal of the temporal order.

The SGC devotes no little ink to a consideration of the fundamental unity of the Salesian mission while at the same time holding in tension two kinds of service: to the temporal order and to the spiritual order. Don Bosco recognized these in his formula “honest citizens and good Christians,” or simply “spiritual and corporal works of mercy.” The Chapter adds various binomials such as “human betterment and evangelization,” “evangelization and promotion of justice,” “human formation of the poor” and “evangelization of the poor.”<sup>83</sup> But the Chapter prefers to unify these; it offers many unifying formulae such as “save the whole person,” “penetrating the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel.”<sup>84</sup> Perhaps the most fundamental and theologically developed, however, are the “grace of unity” and “spirituality of mission.” The first does what it sounds like: unites God and humanity as the object of the Salesians’ love. The spirituality of the mission models this unity on the unity of Jesus’ mission: he is the apostle of the Father, sent to gather the lost children.<sup>85</sup>

### Some Later Reflections of Fr. Ricceri

Fr. Ricceri returned to the subject of Don Bosco’s binomial “work and temperance,” emblematic of Salesians’ involvement in the world, in a 1974 circular. It continues the Special General Chapter’s reflection on the positive theological value of work, adding that Don Bosco made it joyful. Fr. Ricceri recalls another of those unifying formulae from the Special General Chapter; this time it is Pius XI’s “civilize by evangelizing, and evangelize by civilizing.”<sup>86</sup> The same issue of the Acts of the Superior Council announces a course for radio and TV announcers at Provincial house in Buenos Aires.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> SGC §31, citing Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* 36, 41; AA 7.

<sup>82</sup> SGC §97.

<sup>83</sup> “Honest citizens” is in SGC §59; “human betterment” and “evangelization” in §60; “evangelization” and “promotion of justice” often in §62–77; “poor” in §76.

<sup>84</sup> SGC §59.

<sup>85</sup> SGC §127 has “grace of unity;” §26 has “spirituality of mission.”

<sup>86</sup> Luigi Ricceri, “Letter of the Rector Major: Work and Self–Restraint...,” in *ASC LV* 276 (Oct.–Dec. 1974) 7–13, 37; *SGC* §276. See also Pius XI, *Rappresentanti In Terra* (1929) §26.

<sup>87</sup> “From the Provincial Newsletters,” in *ASC LV* 276 (Oct.–Dec. 1974), 95–96.

Another Special General Chapter theme revisited by Fr. Ricceri is that of politics and justice, joining the Church–state and Church–state problems. Politics is, he writes, (1) values and goals relating to the common good, to our social nature, and (2) the art of using power, forming alliances and movements, etc. to prioritize and achieve (1). When the politician has no values, there will be trouble. The Church is in the world to liberate it; that is the value she brings to the political process.<sup>88</sup> Presumably, Ricceri would say that she needs some faith–filled political artists to sing and sculpt those values for the world.

### The World Congress of Salesian Brothers

Even more than in Fr. Ricceri's circular letters, the World Congress of Salesian Brothers shows how Salesians continued to reflect on the Church–world problems brought up by the Special General Chapter. The Congress was not just on or about the brothers, but a reflection on the meaning of the brothers' identity within the larger Salesian identity. Its *Acts* consists of speeches mostly by priests and a few brothers, and proposals from the assembly of mostly brothers and a few priests.<sup>89</sup>

### The Lay Dimension of the Brother's Vocation

Fr. Mario Midali tackled the identity problem from the theological point of view. The Salesian brother is, of course, a Christian and a Salesian, but his specific difference from other Salesians is in his lay identity. That means a specific connection with the world.

The author is careful to distinguish three possible senses of "lay":

- not ordained,
- not consecrated,
- consecrated as lay religious or lay member of a secular institute.

All these have Conciliar support.<sup>90</sup> Since Midali is going to adopt the "lay religious" meaning, it remains to explain the brother's identity with respect to that of

<sup>88</sup> Luigi Ricceri, "Letter of the Rector Major: the Salesians and Political Responsibility...", in *ASC LVII* 284 (Oct.–Dec. 1976) 3–60.

<sup>89</sup> The Congress' work is to be found in Peter Brocardo, Nicholas Cerisio, Renato Romaldi (eds.), *Acts World Congress Salesian Brothers* (Madras: SIGA, 1976) [=AWCSB].

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*, 114 and LG 31 (not ordained); 43 (not consecrated) and PC 10, 11, 15 (lay religious or member of secular institute). Midali's three meanings correspond to three Boolean equations:

M1 = NOT **ordained**  
M2 = NOT **consecrated**

Solutions on left half of Karnaugh map, note 24  
Solutions on top half of that Karnaugh map

the Salesian priest. For the lay component, he confronts the sacred–profane problem, but does not approach the religious component from a *fuga mundi* stance.

Salesian brothers, like lay faithful, share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Jesus Christ. As members of the priestly people, they offer their secular or profane life and work to the Father along with the sacred species.<sup>91</sup> They evangelize the world by word and witness of life; they bring Christian orientation to the management of temporal affairs. In addition to all this, and distinct from it, the brother's religious consecration amplifies his lay sharing in the mission of Jesus and his Church. As a religious he acts in the name of the Church. While in law the Salesian congregation is classified as clerical, the Salesian mission itself is intrinsically secular, that is, apt for renewal of the temporal order, since it centers on poor, young, ordinary working folks and the missions. Further, the Salesian brother has this secularity as his proper and peculiar characteristic, since he has a lay vocation.<sup>92</sup> Now we have an approximation to the Salesian brother's identity: he is a layman and therefore secular, a religious and therefore consecrated, working in the mission of a juridically clerical religious institute whose apostolate is typically secular.

Besides the distinct Salesian mission to poor youth and to ordinary people, there is also a distinctly Salesian way of working in it. Here again, the lay character of the Salesian brother influences all the characteristics belonging to that style of working.

The lay presence is indispensable: without brothers the Congregation would be incomplete. The clear intention of Don Bosco as founder, and Salesian tradition agrees, is that the Salesian religious Congregation must consist of ordained persons and laymen in order to be what it should be.<sup>93</sup> The specific role that Salesian laymen perform in the Congregation is that which lay women and men do in the Church, as Fr. Midali explained earlier following LG 31.

As to working in Salesian style as a lay person, Midali says the brother relates more easily to the young, to workers, and to ordinary folks precisely because he is lay and therefore naturally connected with and sympathetic to the world.<sup>94</sup>

Does the lay character of the Salesian brother affect his spiritual life? Once again, the Council's doctrine on the specific contribution of the lay person to the Church's mission is the starting point for delineating the Salesian brother's spiritual identity, and it colors all his spirituality as it does all his vocation: not

M3 = (NOT **ordained**) AND (**consecrated**)      One cell only: bottom left.

<sup>91</sup> LG 28a, 34b.

<sup>92</sup> AWCSB, 115–119.

<sup>93</sup> AWCSB, 121. The first clear statement of this comes from 1965 by the 19th General Chapter: "Acts of the 19th General Chapter of the Salesian Society," in ASC XLVII 244 (Jan. 1966) [=GC 19] 66. The Acts occupy the whole number, 3–374.

<sup>94</sup> AWCSB, 121–128.



surprising, since the Council touched on the spirituality corresponding to each vocation in the Church: priestly, lay and religious.<sup>95</sup>

### Juridical Identity

Fr. Gustave Leclerc's contribution at the WCSB, "Juridical Aspects," has the stated purpose of sketching the juridical or legal position of the brother in the Salesian Congregation, which is legally an exempt clerical institute of pontifical right. This was of more than academic interest, because many Salesians felt that the time had come to allow brothers to become local, provincial or general superior. The SGC applied arguments at the interface between Christology and ecclesiology to conclude in agreement with traditional practice and GC 19. It said the superior represents Christ and Don Bosco to his community. The first relationship is how the Council sees the relationship of the bishop to his local church. Authority must be seen in the New Testament perspective of service to the community; the superior (Director, Provincial, Rector Major) serves by guiding it spiritually, animating its charity, and ministering to its needs, especially spiritual ones.<sup>96</sup>

Now, Fr. Leclerc looks at the Church–world interface. Like Midali, he has some thoughts on the role of the lay person in building up that People of God. Commenting on the SGC, Leclerc notes the juridical view of the lay person's exercise of the *tria munera*. LG 31's "engaging in temporal affairs" is the starting point, but how does his kingly (governing) component fit within a clerical religious Congregation? Leclerc replies that Don Bosco wanted governing not to be separated from the exercise of priestly ministry: he always had the Director as the one primarily responsible for the house in both the temporal and spiritual spheres. This, of course, is the orientation of CIC 1917, in force at the time of WCSB.<sup>97</sup> But in the end, the Congress pronounced its opinion in favor of permitting brothers to serve as local, provincial or general superior.

### Apostolic Identity

Fr. Paolo Natali addressed the Congress on the apostolate of Salesian brothers. His focus is once again on the lay nature of the brother's vocation, and how that plays in the world. The lay, profane or secular on the one hand, and religious on the other, are two ways of being present to world. "The lay Christian is Christ and the Church where the world fully is," he said. A lay religious has a mixed sort of presence: his vows are religious, while in his apostolate he moves into the world in a way the priest cannot: Natali seems to have Don Bosco's 1883

<sup>95</sup> SGC §26, 127; AWCSB, 131–132.

<sup>96</sup> SGC §642–653; also see GC 19, 32–33, 41–43, 99.

<sup>97</sup> AWCSB, 165. For a supporting observation leading to a different conclusion on the brother as Director but not Provincial, see AWCSB, 187–188.

San Benigno “things which priests and clerics cannot do that only you can do” formula in mind. A priest is religious as opposed to secular; representing Christ the Head, he has an objectively religious dimension.

In fact, it is the community gathered around the eucharistic table that is itself exquisitely secular or political, while at the same time holy. In this the community resembles the Church, which faces the world while keeping the Cross in view. Brothers in it represent love for the world and the Cross where others cannot.<sup>98</sup>

Natali has a good deal to say about the secular features of the Salesian mission, and the traditional brothers’ apostolates within it, like technical schools. They link the Salesians to the workers’ world. There, working folks see things in terms of what practical good they can do and how to get it done: a “workers’ epistemology.” Christ can transform one’s vision of the good and the methods, giving a Christian meaning to secular work.<sup>99</sup>

### The Proposals of the WCSB

As the speakers followed one another, groups of Congress delegates were studying them and generating proposals for debate and voting in plenary session. All, approved or not, are grouped by topic in the *Acts*, with the voting.<sup>100</sup> The proposals, like the Congress speeches, tend to prefer the sacred–profane axis of the secularity problem.

Proposal #2’s preamble is the Congress’ own attempt at sketching an outline of the brother’s identity. Its specifically lay character, in the WCSB delegates’ view, is expressed in its secular dimension especially seen in technical and professional education, and in the lay incarnation of Salesian values in spiritual life: ideas the reader will recall from the SGC, Midali and Natali. The Congress requested (124 YES, 6 NO) further study “for a positive definition of his specifically lay character.”<sup>101</sup>

Proposal #4.1 was for allowing a brother to be elected Rector Major, Provincial or Director. Arguments for it centered on a trinomial featured in the SGC and 1972 Constitutions: common mission, consecration and communion. It was approved, 90 YES, 42 NO. Proposal #6 asked to have canonical recognition of what the Salesians have been all along: a religious institute that is both clerical and lay. It passed, 102 YES, 26 NO.<sup>102</sup> Although its framers do not mention it,

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<sup>98</sup> AWCSB, 258–259, 264.

<sup>99</sup> AWCSB, 270–287.

<sup>100</sup> AWCSB, 425–445, the blue pages, has all the proposals.

<sup>101</sup> AWCSB, 428.

<sup>102</sup> AWCSB, 428–432.

proposal #6's backers could have appealed to the doctrine that "religious life by its nature, is neither clerical nor lay."<sup>103</sup>

### Fr. Ricceri's Closing Address

In his closing address to the Congress, Fr. Ricceri emphasized the issue of brothers as Directors. He handles it in terms of the brother's and the priest's identity, and relates the sacred-profane problem to the Church-world problem. It is precisely in complementary relation with the Salesian priest that the brother's lay character is to be understood.

As a matter of fact, his way of being lay is necessary to the very Salesian mission, and colors the Congregation, making it an harmonious ensemble of religious priests and laymen. They live together "with one heart and one soul" to "evangelize by civilizing and to civilize by evangelizing,"... There are not two missions, one natural and the other supernatural. There is a single mission of a religious nature...which tends to bring about "that the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another."<sup>104</sup>

The ecclesiological orientation of Fr. Ricceri, following the Council and the SGC, is clear. From the very beginning, Don Bosco wanted to form a community of priests and laity, that is of all the forces available in the Church, to bring their specific contribution to the great work of saving the souls of youth in danger. The Salesian community needs priests and brothers together, so it can evangelize and educate part of the earthly city around it.

But in reflecting on the problem of the brother as Director, Ricceri departs from ecclesiological considerations and cautions against changing the model Don Bosco set up and consistently used, which he says is part of our charism.<sup>105</sup> The reflection on lay-priestly complementarity within the Salesian community, similar to that in the Church, is not used here. But it is later taken up by Fr. Ricceri's successor, Fr. Viganò.

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<sup>103</sup> LG 43, later codified in CIC c 588 §1. Note §2 of the same canon:

An institute is said to be clerical if, by reason of the purpose or design intended by its founder or in virtue of legitimate tradition, it is under the supervision of clerics, it assumes the exercise of sacred orders, and it is recognized as such by church authority.

The Church as a whole turns out to be clerical by two of these three tests.

<sup>104</sup> My translation from ACMSC, 574-575, using SGC and LG 40 in the official English translations. AWCSB, 454 has another.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 456-458.

## Fr. Viganò's Years

Fr. Egidio Viganò, a Vatican Council participant, governed the Salesians from his election at the 21st General Chapter (1978) until his death in 1995.

### GC 21

GC 21, like the 19th and 20th, looked at the brother's vocation and its secular dimension from the theological point of view. Like the SGC, this Chapter distinguishes the lay state from the lay dimension of the brother's vocation, an incarnation of the state of consecrated life. Whether modifying "dimension" or "state," "lay" has its familiar LG 31 positive meaning: working for the heavenly kingdom by ordering things on earth to God. Another recurring theme is the unity of the lay dimension with religious life. This is the General Chapter that finally trades *fuga mundi* for *apud mundum*.

The brother works in the world as a layman, and witnesses to the kingdom at the same time as a religious by those very same actions in the world. Once again, the lay dimension colors all aspects of his life, and gives to the community an enriching contribution that complements that given by the priests. "He will reveal the Kingdom of God, already present in the world and in the history of man, and in this way proclaim the Kingdom that is to come." This orientation to the world results in a particular sensitivity of the brothers to working folks, art, technology, craftsmanship.<sup>106</sup> But the Chapter wants still more study in the area of lay impact on religious life. One response we will see in the next document.

### A Circular Letter on the Lay Element in the Salesian Community

In 1980, Fr. Viganò unsheathed his restless pen to deal with the brother's identity. He felt the need to bring to the whole Society's attention the crisis in brothers' vocations. Indeed, that is his major insight: this letter is not just to or about the brothers, but to the whole Society, and about the whole Society. It has a lay dimension, and that dimension lies in severe crisis: a crisis of Salesian self-understanding.<sup>107</sup> As with the World Congress, the focus is on the sacred-profane problem, but God-world and Church-world enter as well. Indeed, this document explicitly considers the meaning of our exact term "secularity" more than any other here examined.

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<sup>106</sup> *Acts of the 21st General Chapter*, Rome: Editrice SDB (1978) [=GC 21] §172, 178-180, 188-189; the quote is from §184.

<sup>107</sup> Egidio Viganò, "The lay element in the Salesian Community," in *ASC LXI* 298 (Oct.-Dec. 1980) [=LE] 3-11.

The Salesian heritage, says the Rector Major, leads the community to merge Gospel and culture, to renew the earthly city. If some of this sounds lay, Fr. Viganò would readily admit it. Recalling one of those unifying formulae from the Special General Chapter, he says that the community both evangelizes and helps human development.<sup>108</sup> To do that, two dimensions are needed:

Thus we find in the Congregation's single vocation two fundamental aspects: the sacerdotal and the lay...Hence all members of the Salesian community must experience as a part of their lives a kind of "lay sensitivity" and a specific "sacerdotal sensitivity" as they strive for brotherly communion and co-responsibility.<sup>109</sup>

What is this lay dimension? It lives at three levels: in creation, in the Church, and in the Salesian community. Each of these has to do with the world; indeed, two of them are described using our exact term "secularity."

Creation comes from God and from him derives goodness; a lay mentality affirms the good of creation, knowledge, science and technology. Exaggerated laicism denies it is created; the narrow clericalist denies it is good.<sup>110</sup> This spiritual vision of the goodness of creation gives rise to a style of action proper to Salesian brothers:

We could say in this sense that a "lay mentality" is concerned with objective truth; it dedicates itself to this no matter how complex things are, no matter how much study, science, technology, patience and experimentation be called for; it cultivates a close attention and respect for assessing facts, a deep sense of professionalism, an awareness of the importance and problems of all facets of work, a factual approach to reality, a serious attitude to planning, an instinctive cooperation, and a profound appreciation of organization. Indeed the universe is a good teacher.

All these qualities will be hard to find in one who thinks he can do away with secular values. Intuition, poetic temperament, goodwill or prayer will not fly a plane.<sup>111</sup>

Turning now to the lay aspect at the Church level, Viganò uses "secularity":

And the layman sees himself as living out his baptism in his particular role of secularity (v. LG 31). He is engaged in the multifarious temporal affairs and sees them as belonging to his vocation...<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> LE 13–14, and *SGC* §60–61.

<sup>109</sup> LE 15.

<sup>110</sup> LE 19–21.

<sup>111</sup> LE 21. Goodwill and prayer help decide where to fly the plane.

<sup>112</sup> LE 22.

Note that the use of “secularity” here is equivalent to the use of “secular character” (*indoles saecularis*) in the text of *Lumen Gentium* 31. Thus, Viganò thinks the “secular character” proper to lay persons is a meaning of “secularity.” This is the meaning described above in connection with the Church–world problem.

Fr. Viganò develops the “liturgy of life” idea from WCSB and GC 21. The world, like the Church, is really a sacrament of God’s dialogue with humanity. The lay person offers his person and his world to the Father. The Father’s Word is in the temple of the celebrating community, and also in the created world.<sup>113</sup> This liturgical view brings the sacred–profane problem in as well:

Such a vocation enables the layman to unearth from the “profane” a rich vein of sanctity—even attaining to spiritual heights traced out by holy Founders who have initiated special Gospel projects. We thank the Holy Spirit that among these latter he raised up Don Bosco at the beginnings of the industrial revolution to offer to men his special spirituality of apostolic action suitable for all, cleric, religious or lay.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, at the level of the lay religious, at the *apud mundum* level:

Within the Church there is a third level of laicism, *in a more limited field* and suitable for the religious life. It is not what in ecclesiastical circles is known as “secularity,” but is classed by the Church as a “form of religious life.” It does not mean an immediate involvement in the world and its temporal activities but implies that one directly and publicly belongs to a community of Religious who witness to the Beatitudes.<sup>115</sup>

And this is where the brother contributes to the whole Salesian enterprise, even to the whole Church. The whole community witnesses to these values, and the brothers play a leading role doing that close to the world.

Internally, the Congregation as a whole has a priestly element and a lay element. If it has a lay element, it must perforce have a secular aspect; indeed it is at the center of a vast movement of layfolk, with a social program: evangelization and development of the young, and of the working class.

This secular style is historically visible in Don Bosco’s project for the externs, in Don Bosco’s vision of the social program just mentioned, and in Salesians’ adaptability, in their wearing a simple or no religious habit, in non-monastic terminology: “house,” “Inspector,” “Director,” “assistant.” It impacts the lay Salesian’s spirituality, and by extension the Salesian spirituality itself:

<sup>113</sup> LE 24–25.

<sup>114</sup> LE 25. Note the three–state ecclesiology. An earlier Viganò letter on Salesian education discusses the priestly dimension of a mostly lay Salesian educating community: “Letter of the Rector Major: Salesian Educational Project...,” in *ASC LVIX* 290 (July–Dec. 1978) 27–28.

<sup>115</sup> LE 25. Emphasis in the original.

The very nature of our activity is slanted towards a witness and service open to the secular: the "activity-spirituality" of St. Francis of Sales is explicitly interested in temporal values and translates the wealth of the contemplative dimension and the religious vows into an education aimed at building up among men a society of love.<sup>116</sup>

Just as St. Francis de Sales made a project for sanctity for people busy in the world, Viganò quotes Fr. Rinaldi's assertion that Don Bosco "made religious perfection accessible at all levels of society."<sup>117</sup>

### Thoughts from Other Letters

Fr. Viganò later wrote several letters in which this lay-secular sensitivity is put to work. In them, the emphasis shifts back to the Church-world problem. One is on the workers' world; he got the idea to write it after a trip through Latin America where he saw possibilities for technology to aid in development there. He also notes the many requests coming from mission lands for brothers and technical schools.<sup>118</sup>

The Rector Major documents the historical primacy of Don Bosco's care for young workers and artisans, and the importance of the brothers and the professional schools in this field. The lay Salesians were mostly these artisans, and later technicians, that gave it a workingman's face. Lay-priestly complementarity means that the brother's work is pastoral, and that Salesian priests generally know which end of a hammer to hit with: mighty handy in mission lands.<sup>119</sup>

The letter faintly reflects a distinction made by John Paul II in his 1981 letter *Laborem Exercens*. It is that between the *subjective* value of work, the good it does to the worker; and the *objective* value: the good it does for the world and society. Viganò writes about how our work can help bring creation to the end God planned for it, which is the bridging of the gap between matter, spirit and divine life. A spirituality of work ennobles the worker (subjective value), and advances the renewal of creation (objective value). Technology helps, too.

All through this letter Fr. Viganò refuses the simple mapping "priests preach, brothers work," or "priests do spirituality, brothers do technology." It is the Salesian or the Congregation that has to embody the spirituality of work, and has to work efficiently. We have to learn about this world and evangelize it in its own language. And that means work to renew the world with a human

<sup>116</sup> LE 31-33.

<sup>117</sup> LE 33, also Rinaldi, "Cumiana—Scuola agricola..." in *ACS* VIII 40 (July 24, 1927) 572-580. LE mistakenly cites this as "ASC 4" both in English and Italian.

<sup>118</sup> See Egidio Viganò, "Letter of the Rector Major: The Salesian Mission and the Workers' World," in *ASC* LXIV 307 (Jan.-March 1983) 3-39.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-18.

face, in the power of the Spirit, as we pray in the third eucharistic prayer. He recalls that the brothers' glory days were when there were many technical and agricultural schools.<sup>120</sup>

The Rector Major followed up his circular with an address to Milan's civic celebration of the 1988 Don Bosco centenary. In it, he more explicitly appeals to the Pope's subjective-objective distinction in the value of work. The concrete expression of Don Bosco's concern for both is the technical and agricultural schools, and the Salesian brothers.<sup>121</sup>

Don Bosco held the objective, or world-forming, aspect in high esteem:

He kept a keen eye on the evolution of the nascent industries and was awake to the various *contributions made by technology*. He saw in these conquests of human progress new horizons and possibilities for doing good...

...Don Bosco, as we have seen, taught a due appreciation and esteem for the true lay status proper to the world of work; he taught that due importance should be given to the temporal order, with openness to scientific progress; ...that all this should be set against a background of ethics and love, so that *technology and its lay characteristic never become "man's adversaries."*

But primacy goes to the humanizing subjective value of work in Don Bosco's educational project, especially the solidarity it can promote:

Don Bosco worked and struggled to *eliminate the opposition that existed between study and work*, between the category of the students and white-collar workers, and that of the blue-collar workers and artisans, or "artisti" as they were known at the time in Italian. The classroom and workshop were under the same roof; machinery and books went hand in hand; the *technical side was not separated from that of the humanities*, and in this way an example was provided of a fraternal community where *distances arising from diversity of occupation were overcome*; no class struggle but a convergence in communion and collaboration between different categories.<sup>122</sup>

No little help to this came from his bringing a lay dimension of professional work into his communities of consecrated life in the person of the Salesian brothers. With them, Don Bosco made work a modern means of reaching holiness.<sup>123</sup>

One of John Paul's points in *Laborem Exercens* is that a right view of creation is needed. In a 1989 letter on the "New Evangelization," Viganò comments

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–36.

<sup>121</sup> Egidio Viganò, "Don Bosco and the world of work" (address to civic celebration of the Don Bosco centenary in Milan), in *ACG LXIX* 326 (July–Sept. 1988) 64–68.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 70–72. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.



on this aspect of secularity, wrapping up a long grocery list of problems into the God–world problem:

The “theology of creation” must be rethought and developed starting from the notion of the lay state and giving special importance to the “anthropological turning point” enriched by the signs of the times and the progress of the phenomenological sciences. This opens up an immense area of knowledge and one which has a strong incidence on the progressive elaboration of a new culture. The nature of the lay state; the values of secularity; the harmonious laws of nature; the singular nature of human life, of its dignity and the pedagogy of its maturing process;...politics in its relation to the common good; economy and the use of goods for all; human solidarity in its many aspects; all these are vast themes that need to be studied doctrinally from a renewed theological point of view, able to contemplate things according to the creative plan of God the Father in harmony with the present development of culture.<sup>124</sup>

In another circular letter, Fr. Viganò assigns secularity to education and the school:

Education...belongs to the field of culture and is part of earthly reality; it refers to the process of assimilating a collection of evolving human values with their specific aim. In this sense one can speak also of its lay or secular dimension, because of its creatural content that can be universally shared with all men of good will...

...Evangelization, on the other hand and in the wider meaning of the term, is directed of its nature to the passing on and fostering of the christian faith...<sup>125</sup>

Fr. Viganò then proceeds to map education onto the order of creation, and evangelization onto the order of redemption.<sup>126</sup>

Fr. Viganò’s 1986 circular letter on lay people in the Salesian Family aims to reinvigorate efforts by Salesians to form and energize lay collaborators in their ministry, and to empower them to do their own ministry with the spiritual style of Don Bosco. The lay people he has in mind are Cooperators, alumni who do apostolate, helpers and friends.<sup>127</sup> He links the God–world and Church–world problems:

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<sup>124</sup> Egidio Viganò, “The ‘New Evangelization’,” in *AGC LXX* 331 (Oct.–Dec. 1989) 15.

<sup>125</sup> *Id.*, “Letter of the Rector Major: New Education,” in *AGC LXXII* 337 (July–Sept. 1991) 13, 15.

<sup>126</sup> *Id.*, “The Salesian and the Workers’ World,” in *AGC LXIII* 307 (Jan.–March 1983), 14–15. A 1993 circular letter on Salesian schools made much the same argument, arriving at a “lay nature” of the school: Egidio Viganò, “Educating to the faith in the school,” in *AGC LXXIV* 344 (April–June 1993) 5, 19.

<sup>127</sup> Egidio Viganò, “Letter of the Rector Major: the lay person in the Salesian Family,” in *AGC LXVII* 317 (April–June 1986) 3–8.

The bearer of the banner for the re-assertion of the true secular or lay state in the world is, among the People of God, the lay person. In fact the rediscovery of the World as the creation of the Father, an expression of his omnipotent love; of the World as the story of mankind, in which Christ, the presence of liberating love, became incarnate; of the World moving forward to its final destiny as a plan in developing transformation through the work of the Holy Spirit, the bearer of sanctifying love, all leads to the emergence of the fascinating and inseparable double concept of "God and the World."<sup>128</sup>

The Rector Major had a contribution to make on the use of the term "secular," in practically all the senses we have identified above, and it came at the 1987 Synod of Bishops on the laity.

The whole Church, through the harmony of its components, is the great sacrament of salvation for humanity. The mutual concord between the common factors and the specific differences found in it could be expressed as follows:

- the whole Church is "secular," but not all its members are "lay;"
  - the whole Church is "consecrated," but not all its members are "religious;"
  - the whole Church is "contemplative," but not all its members are "monks and nuns;"
  - the whole Church "evangelizes," but not all its members are "successors of the Apostles;"
  - the whole Church is a "priestly people," but not all its members are "bishops and priests;"
  - the whole Church is "kingly," but not all its members are "shepherds,"
- etc.

The fact, for instance, that the Church has a "secular dimension" does not contradict nor rule out the particular sense of the "secular character" proper and specific to the laity (LG 31), but is rather a pressing invitation to analyse that sense. An analogous treatment is necessary in the case of each of the other dimensions referred to.<sup>129</sup>

All these pairs have a characteristic or dimension of the whole Church, which is especially incarnated in some group of the Christian faithful. The application to our topic of interest is that the Church as a whole is secular, but lay people are the ones whose proper and distinguishing characteristic (*indoles saecularis*) is secularity. They are needed to help the Church be secular. In this way, Fr. Viganò directly confronts the problem that some tend to downplay, and that is what

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. The English translator has given us "final destiny" for "punto omega." ASC XXXIX 204 (Nov.-Dec. 1958) 13, reports a directive from the Holy Office to remove Teilhard de Chardin's books from the libraries of religious institutes.

<sup>129</sup> Egidio Viganò, "Formation of the Laity and Pastoral Work for Youth." Intervention made in the assembly hall to the Synod of Bishops, Oct. 8 1987, in ACG LXIX 324 (Jan.-March 1988) 75-76.

is the specific, positive, distinguishing role of non-ordained and non-religious in the Church.<sup>130</sup>

In a follow-up written intervention, he gives the “secular dimension” of the Church a place alongside its “priestly dimension” related to ordained ministers, and alongside its global vocation to holiness and radical following of the Gospel, related to religious.<sup>131</sup> But the specific “secular character” of the laity

...consists in permeating human life with the baptismal riches of the “energy of the resurrection.” The Laity consider that it is their christian vocation and mission to carry out this great task from a position within temporal values so as to assume, advance and multiply their autonomy. Through their efforts this autonomy reaches its fullness in its recapitulation in Christ.

...The “proper” characteristic of the lay person therefore implies the assuming from within of the temporal realities of creation so as to promote and purify them through the new kind of life that stems from christian initiation, harmonizing them in the vital synthesis of consolidation in Christ.<sup>132</sup>

Viganò had more to say about this at the 1994 Synod of Bishops on religious in the Church. He explained how the Church’s secular dimension is expressed by its working in the world. Lay faithful have their proper secular character by which they live and work in the world and transform it from within. Concretely, the Gospel insights of religious Founders and Foundresses can vitalize the spirituality and apostolate of lay faithful.<sup>133</sup> Both religious and laity can minister to the temporal order, but with different ways according to the secular dimension of the first and the secular character of the latter:

In fact consecrated and lay persons—in mutual complementarity—would appear as two poles in a living and flourishing interrelationship: on the part of the consecrated there would be the gift of the “source of the charism” with its eschatological force, and on the part of the laity the gift of the “challenge of the world in daily life” from the standpoint of the baptismal commitment.

The first pole provides a horizon of spiritual transcendence with the richness of the beatitudes as regards specific secular commitments.

The second pole offers a particular competence which promotes the mission from within the same secular sectors.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Osborne, *Lay Ministry*, 563–564; and Magnani, “Theology of the Laity,” 593–607.

<sup>131</sup> Egidio Viganò, “For a positive description of the ‘lay person among the faithful.’” Intervention made in writing after the presentation of the language-group summaries at the Synod of Bishops, in *ACG LXIX* 324 (Jan.–March 1988) 79–82. The reader will recognize Gregorian three-state ecclesiology.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 81–82.

<sup>133</sup> Egidio Viganò, “Interventions of the Rector Major at the Synod of Bishops,” in *AGC LXXVI* 351 (Jan.–March 1995) 65–66.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

Thus the *apud mundum* problem consists in finding the proper way to harmonize the action of these two poles.

Even while at the Synod Fr. Viganò spoke against applying a lay dimension to all religious institutes in the persons of their non-ordained members, he had no hesitation about doing so for the Salesians.<sup>135</sup> That lay dimension is in the whole Salesian institute and each Salesian, a point he had already made in the 1980 letter on the communities' lay element.

Convoking the Society's 24th General Chapter for 1996, Fr. Viganò still again distinguishes the secular dimension of the Salesians and the secular character of the laity. The Chapter's theme is "Salesians and the Laity: Communion and Sharing in the Spirit and Mission of Don Bosco." Unless the Salesian community, with its secular dimension, animates the laity, salvation and the transcendent cannot reach the laity's secular character.<sup>136</sup> The profane, or lay, dimension of the Salesian community allows it to touch the sacred. But then Fr. Viganò died in June 1995, and the General Chapter had to elect a new Rector Major.

## GC 24

Since the theme dealt directly with the laity, one would expect to find much in the Chapter document on them and their relation to the world. This is the case; indeed, the introduction to the first chapter advertises as much:

### Secular and prophetic dimension of the charism

The mission to the young and the poor has a particular secular dimension "because it is a charism that has been raised up in the Church for the world" (ACG 350, 16).

The charism of Don Bosco, precisely because it is educative and ranged on the side of culture, creates a singular harmony with tasks proper to lay people.

It is for this reason that on becoming a mission it extends beyond SDB communities and the works themselves. Mission and works, in fact, are not the same thing, even though the work may be necessary as a setting for the convocation and formation of the vast movement of those who work for the young, within and outside Salesian structures, in the Church and in the institutions of civil society.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–71, and Egidio Viganò, "Letter of the Rector Major: Reading the Founder's charism again at the present day," in *AGC LXXVI* 352 (April–June 1995) 3–35.

<sup>136</sup> *Id.*, "Letter of the Rector Major: Convocation of 24th General Chapter," in *AGC LXXV* 350 (Oct.–Dec. 1994) 14–18.

<sup>137</sup> *Salesians and Lay People: Communion and Sharing in the Spirit and Mission of Don Bosco. Documents of 24th General Chapter*, in *AGC* special number 356 LXXVII (May 1996) [=GC 24], §4. Texts available online:

This secular and prophetic dimension is why Don Bosco invented the brothers. They can be a leaven in worldly realities, and make the community able to minister to the world.<sup>138</sup> There were 14 of them at the Chapter including this author, surpassing the all-time record set at GC 21. Let us now examine how GC 24 sees the Salesian movement in relation to the world, and its view of the Salesian brother's place in that relationship.

The recently concluded General Chapter relates secularity as createdness to some of the other problems:

Man was created "in the image and likeness of God" and is called to exist in a relationship which manifests the gift of the Trinitarian communion present in his heart.

"And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Created realities have an intrinsic goodness, their own autonomy and consistency.

Humanity responds to the initiative of God, who calls it and collaborates with it for the transformation of the world through work, science and technology, in the development of society through politics and economics, in the pursuit of justice and solidarity among different peoples. Of this the witness of great men and women is a sign. Such a project manifests the unity of all human beings who come from the same Source and have the same final End. God truly loves the world and involves everyone in working together to build it in unity and peace (see GS 92).<sup>139</sup>

To bring that love, the Church is in the world for the world. The Church accepts the values of the world, and raises them up with the novelty of the Paschal mystery. Her secular dimension is part of her nature; that is rooted in the Incarnation and realized in different vocations. The seeds of the Kingdom are signs of the Spirit working in creation and in history. Further, the reason component of Don Bosco's educational triad "reason, religion and kindness" should now include the ability to criticize and value earthly realities.<sup>140</sup>

GC 24 noted a similarity between the Salesian Congregation and the Church:

The Congregation feels as its own the concerns and hopes of the young and of the Church, of which it wants to be an efficacious sign while serving the world to which it has been sent.<sup>141</sup>

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[http://www.hooked.net/~jmrasor/DBH\\_Web\\_Site/gc\\_24\\_english/frame.htm](http://www.hooked.net/~jmrasor/DBH_Web_Site/gc_24_english/frame.htm)

<http://donbosco.sdb.org/eng/cg24/frame.htm>.

<sup>138</sup> GC 24 §4; also GC 21 §178.

<sup>139</sup> GC 24 §58–59.

<sup>140</sup> GC 24 §65, 100.

<sup>141</sup> GC 24 §17. Cf. Constitutions art. 47, on the educative and pastoral community's similarity to the Church. No other article is referenced more than this one in

It goes on to say that Don Bosco wanted Salesians in the world; these were the externs, then the Cooperators. He also had his lay Salesians within the religious communities. Later came the Volunteers of Don Bosco, with vocational characteristics of Salesianity, secularity, and consecration. The General Chapter looks at the variety of these and other vocations in the Salesian community and in the Salesian family as reflections of the Church. It reviews the roles of these vocations, following the Council and the just-issued apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, with Gregorian three-state ecclesiology.<sup>142</sup>

As we have seen, lay religious do not fit easily within that scheme. Nonetheless, GC 24 recalls (probably from Fr. Viganò's 1980 letter, "The Lay Element...") that brothers in Don Bosco's Salesian communities are a sign of their secular dimension, especially openness to the world of work.<sup>143</sup>

As for the lay faithful's participation in the Salesian mission, reasons for including them proceed directly from Conciliar and post-Conciliar teaching on their role in the universal Church. They secure the secular dimension of Don Bosco's mission, and can be models for the young to discover the secular character of their own vocation. They bring in specific professional, educative and pastoral skills. Salesian lay religious also can do all these, but the Chapter only mentions the one about secularity:

Within the religious community we find the figure of the Salesian brother, "the genial creation of the great heart of Don Bosco" (Don Rinaldi). He combines in himself the gifts of consecration with those of the lay state. To his consecrated brethren he recalls the values of the creation and of secular realities; to the laity he recalls the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom. To all he offers a particular sensitivity for the world of work, attention to the local environment, and the demands of the professional approach associated with his educative and pastoral activity...<sup>144</sup>

But there is a certain tendency to forget practical applications of the principle that brothers help the secular dimension of the community. For instance, when future needs for Salesian training and qualification are discussed, GC 24 wants pastoral qualification in preference to administrative,<sup>145</sup> forgetting that the Salesian brother is precisely the one who can give the pastoral tone to secular activities like administration and technology.

The Chapter's diffidence with regard to administration shows up again in a discussion of the contribution of religious consecration to the Salesian enter-

GC 24's work.

<sup>142</sup> GC 24 §66, citing LG 31, PO 2, Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1996) 31–32, 46, 52.

<sup>143</sup> GC 24 §72.

<sup>144</sup> In GC 24 §154; see also GC 24 §162, 164.

<sup>145</sup> See GC 24 §174.

prise. Some are said to feel split: lay in their administrative jobs, and consecrated in community. Some even think they could do more good outside, possibly as a result of their secularization.<sup>146</sup> The presence of lay religious is forgotten; they unite the secular character of administrative and technical work to their consecration.

On the Church–State problem, GC 24 recalls that Don Bosco had the help of the anticlerical politician Urban Rattazzi to help design his Constitutions. He was able to win the friendship of these characters, so now Salesians should find ways to translate Don Bosco’s educative geniality into the world of culture and politics.<sup>147</sup>

Turning to the sacred–profane problem, or the question of ordained and non–ordained ministers, the General Chapter proposes as a first response a spirituality proper to each kind of vocation. In the case of lay faithful in the Salesian mission, it points out a spirituality of daily work and professionalism,<sup>148</sup> something we saw appearing in the ’20s and ’30s as a Salesian trait from discussions about the professional schools.

On balance, it appears at this early date that the 24th General Chapter has made great advances in considering the role of the lay faithful outside Salesian communities in Don Bosco’s mission to youth, but did not do so for the role of lay religious within those communities.

### Summary: A Lover Church in the Universe

Reviewing our progress, we see immediately that Salesian documents before the Council deal with secularity almost exclusively in *fuga mundi* terms. Beginning with Don Bosco, General Chapters and Rectors Major have repeatedly warned of worldly dangers and distractions. Meanwhile, in practice, Salesians in offices, shops and on farms were dealing with worldly realities, preparing young people to be “honest citizens and good Christians” there.

The great merit of the Council was to clarify the Church–world problem, so that it and communities within it could confront their practical problems of relating to a rapidly changing world. The Salesians are no exception; with the Council’s Church–world solutions in hand, they exchanged *fuga mundi* for *apud mundum*. With these same solutions in hand, they also are now developing a theory and practice for solving their own sacred–profane problem. But this is at the level of spiritually animating a vast movement of lay persons, not at the internal level of ordained and non–ordained religious in community.

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<sup>146</sup> See GC 24 §45.

<sup>147</sup> See GC 24 §§95, 100, 121, 140.

<sup>148</sup> See GC 24 §97, 98.

Secularity problems remain. The many reflections of Church and Salesian documents on technology and renewal of the temporal order suggest actual manipulation of the natural, physical, temporal order. Dams and farms already do this to a large extent, but certainly Christians would balk at paving over all of Earth's land surface. Can Christians contemplate manipulating long-term climate changes to avoid another Ice Age? Farms in Antarctica? On Mars?

Surely, our presence has left a considerable mark on this planet's biosphere, and seems destined to make a bigger one. The ultimate meaning of our terraforming activity is clear in Church and Salesian magisterium: it is directed to the recapitulation of all things in Christ. Since we interpret terraforming as "Christoforming," and make partial progress toward it, can we not regard human effects on this planet as sacramental? Being a disciple of Christ is the fundamental task of people in the Church, and all their more particular ministries and vocations are ordered to that end. I believe that, beginning with a sacramental Christology as does Schillebeeckx, we can see sacramentality at the heart of the temporal order:

- The temporal order is the sacrament of the Father's project to share life.
- Jesus is the sacrament of the Father's project to renew the temporal order, and our life in it.
- The Church is the sacrament of Jesus working out the Father's project in it, here and now.
- The liturgy, the ministries, the vocations are all sacraments of the Church's action.

In particular,

- The laity are the sacrament of the Church's action to renew the temporal order by service and holiness of life.
- Religious are a sacrament of the Church's action to point to the final order by witness of holy life, pointing to the eternal order, however they may renew the temporal order.
- The clergy are the sacrament of the Church's action to renew the temporal order by proclaiming to it God's life-giving Word, however they live.

Note that the whole Church must proclaim, must witness, and must renew the temporal order. All disciples must help push this world to be more like the Kingdom; stable vocations and ministries both symbolize and effect this mission.

As long as we disciples of the Lord still have not reached the heavenly Jerusalem, we must look to it, long for it.



Come! say the Spirit and the Bride. (Rev 22:17)

We must gather our children, paint our door lintels, make our house ready to receive Jesus Christ our Lover. But we cannot stay there.

As long as we disciples of the Lord still have not reached the heavenly Jerusalem, we promise with the Bride, from our earthly city:

I will rise and go the rounds of the city  
through the streets and the squares  
seeking my true love. (Song 3:2)

For God is certainly in our world, and we can meet our Lover in its streets. It is there that he meets us the Bride, there in those squares that he kisses us and gives us jewels of holiness. And there will our children play and build.