

The Salesian Brother's Spiritual Identity:

A Lay Consecrated Youth Minister

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Article 45 of the Salesian Constitutions goes to some pains to treat the Salesian brother's place in the community in parallel with that for the ordained Salesian.¹ It clearly shows that Salesian brothers are an integral part of the community, not an add-on or subordinate vocation:

Each of us is responsible for the common mission, and participates in it with the richness of his own personal gifts and with the lay and priestly characteristics of the one Salesian vocation.

The Salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God's Kingdom in the world,² close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.

The Salesian priest or deacon brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry, which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

The significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay Salesians in the community constitutes an essential element of its makeup and of its apostolic completeness.³

¹ Much of this article is taken from John Razor, *The Spiritual Identity of the Salesian Brother in the Light of Official Salesian Documents* (Rome, UPS doctoral thesis 1995). The thesis covers some of Don Bosco's informal talks, plus all the documents, from 1858 to the date of publication.

² Salesian brothers have a special connection to the world. See Razor, "The Concept of Secularity in Salesian Documents," in *Journal of Salesian Studies* [=JSS] VII:2 (Fall 1996), 167-214.

³ *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Rome 1984) [=1984 C, 1984 R], art. 45. The full text is available online at http://www.boscohall.org/salfam_reader/animation/sdbrule/index.htm. This is the Rule currently in force for the Salesian Society.

Yet, the import of this article has yet to be realized. Even if we have wisely stopped calling ourselves “Salesian Fathers,” some outside the Society still do. While the theoretical identity of the Salesian brother is well in place, it seems the application is lacking.

How did this come to be? This study will look at how the Salesian brother’s vocation appears in official Salesian writings while Don Bosco was founding the Salesian Congregation, and at how the Congregation has theologically reflected on that vocation as part of its renewal of its Constitutions. It will then examine how this identity has been applied. This study will therefore show the brother’s identity to be inspired by the charism of the founder, and renewed in the spirit of Vatican II. Indeed, the Congregation sees in this vocation a path to holiness, making it a spiritual identity.

The title of this study suggests three components of this identity: lay, religious, and youth minister. I will attempt to trace the development of each of these in the documents and practices considered.

1. Writings From the Founding Period

I will now examine the rule or “Constitutions” that Don Bosco wrote for his Salesians, and the acts of the 3rd and 4th General Chapters⁴ In both of these documents, we find material on the lay members of the Society, and on “coadjutors.” These terms are similar in Salesian meaning, but not interchangeable.

1.1. Names

Where did that name “coadjutor” come from? And what other names were in use at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales in Turin?

When Don Bosco and his Mamma Margaret began to shelter boys in their humble rented Pinardi shed, there were students and artisans among them. Students are boys who study a course of humanities and classical subjects, leading to a career in the professional classes of society: teachers, writers, government officials, the clergy. Artisans instead are those learning or practicing a trade: tailors, cobblers, tinkers, sculptors and painters, woodcarvers,

⁴The acts of these two Chapters were combined as *Deliberazioni del Terzo e Quarto Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana...* (San Benigno Canavese: Tipografia Salesiana, 1887) [=GC3-4], also in *OE XXXVI:253-280* and partly in Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, Eugenio Ceria and Angelo Amadei, *Memorie Biografiche di San Giovanni Bosco* (Turin: SEI, 1898-1939, 19 vol.) [=MB] XVIII:691-704 (Appendices 36-40). The theme on artisans and brothers is reproduced on pages 699-702 as Appendix 39.

stonemasons, ironworkers. In the pre-industrial age, these were hired helpers attached to a master craftsman, or at most independent small jobbers. Don Bosco's first destitute artisan boys lived with him in the Pinardi shed and house, and went out to work in the city. He helped them find good employers who would also see to their moral formation.⁵ The earliest students also went out of the Oratory hospice, but instead they studied in private schools nearby in the city. Don Bosco was not happy with either arrangement.

From 1853 to 1862, he was installing shops for tailoring, shoemaking, woodworking, printing and binding, and ironwork. These kept clothes, shoes and furniture in repair, printed the growing list of Oratory publications, and supplied valuable help in building and maintaining the expanding Oratory complex. Besides all this, Don Bosco could be surer of the boys' moral formation by keeping them in his own shops. As the shops expanded, Don Bosco hired local master artisans to run them. That had very mixed results.⁶

⁵ See Michael Ribotta, "Training Boys to Earn a Living: The Beginnings of Vocational Education at the Oratory," in *JSS IV*: 1 (Spring 1993), 61-86.

⁶ On the history of Salesian trade and professional education, the interested reader can begin with Pietro Stella, "*I Coadiutori Salesiani (1854-1974): appunti per un profilo storico socio-professionale*," in Pietro Broccardo, Nicola Cerisio, Renato Romaldi (eds.), *Atti del Convegno Mondiale dei Coadiutori Salesiani* (SGS, Rome 1976) [=ACMSC], and translated as *Acts of the World Congress of Salesian Brothers* (Madras: SIGA, 1976) [=AWCSB].

For the early period the reader can continue with Ribotta, *op. cit.*; also *BM IV*:458-463, 549, 574; *V*:5, 20-24, 497-499; *VI*:129-131; *VII*:38-42, 70-74; Eugenio Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana* (Turin: SEI 1941), 650-651 (summarizing Superior Chapter minutes of Dec. 14, 1885, when Fr. Giovanni Battista Rinaldi brought in a draft agreement with the outside shop teachers at Faenza: *ASC* 0592, mf 1883 A11), and Luciano Pazzaglia, "*Apprendistato e istruzione degli artigiani a Valdocco (1846-1866)*," in F. Traniello (ed.), *Don Bosco nella storia della cultura popolare* (Torino: SEI 1987), 16-17. These will give some idea of Don Bosco's difficulties in finding a stable organizational setup for his shops.

The transition to trade education is already well advanced, though not without problems, by the 3rd and 4th General Chapters. See the proposals (and complaints!) of individual Salesians in A. Torras (ed.), *Fondo Don Bosco* (Rome, Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco 1980), microfiche 1859 C1-1862 [=FDB 1859 C1 - 1862]: A11 "*III Capitolo Generale (1883): Proposte*," and mf 1865:A8-D6 "*IV Capitolo Generale (1886): Proposte*." For Don Bosco's strategy in moving toward trades and technical education, see Pietro Braidò, *Il progetto operativo di Don Bosco e l'utopia della società cristiana* (Rome: LAS 1982), and his "*Laicità e laici nel progetto operativo di Don Bosco*," in *Atti della XII Settimana di spiritualità della Famiglia Salesiana* (Rome: Editrice SDB 1986), 32-34, and studies of the development of Salesian trade and technical schools provided by Silvio Tramontin, "Don Bosco and the world of work," and José Manuel Prellezo, "Don Bosco and the professional schools (1870-1887)," both

Beginning in 1854, persons called “coadjutors” appear in the Oratory registers. They are a narrowly defined group of domestic workers: cooks, waiters, helpers in the laundry and cloakroom. Notice that these are not artisans; they did not work in the shops.⁷

These earliest coadjutors were not Salesians, either. Who then were the Salesians? By 1860, Don Bosco had finished establishing a *collegio*, or high school for the students in his Oratory. The teachers were his own seminarians or “clerics,” chosen and trained from Oratory boys: Michael Rua, John Baptist Francesia, Angelo Savio, John Cagliero and others. When they and 14 others met in Don Bosco’s room to found the Salesian Congregation in December of 1859, there were as yet no laymen, no coadjutors, no artisans among them.⁸

What about Salesian coadjutors? In the 1858 Constitutions they do not appear at all, while in 1875 they occur in two places.⁹ They are lay Salesians. This is the wide sense of the term “coadjutors,” and is that of the official definition coming from GC3-4. It is the meaning of “Salesian coadjutor” today.

The narrow sense is that of domestic workers; later some of these became Salesians. A look at the 1877 *Regulations for the Houses* (1877 R),¹⁰ as they evolved into the 1966 Regulations, is enough to convince us that these coadjutors do not evolve into the professional school staff but instead into non-

in Midali and Egan, *Don Bosco's place in history* (Rome, LAS 1993). For a 120-year overview of Salesian brothers, see Pietro Stella, “*Cattolicesimo in Italia e laicato nelle Congregazioni religiose. Il caso dei coadiutori salesiani (1854-1974)*,” in *Salesianum XXXVII* (1975).

⁷ See Pietro Stella, *I Coadiutori Salesiani*, 50-52.

⁸ The school at the Oratory is the background for all the biographies of saintly boys that Don Bosco wrote, and is indeed the background for the legendary aspects of the Don Bosco phenomenon: the dreams, prophecy and miracle stories, the games and plays and music, the moral formation in a thoroughly Catholic atmosphere, the whole picture of the wonder-worker and his huge, lively band of ragamuffins. There is no trace of the shops, or any other specific feature of the artisan’s world, in any of those biographies.

⁹ Italian *Regole o Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales...* (Turin 1875) [=1875 C], X.14, XIII.2 (‘*sodales adiutores*’ in all Latin versions), and XV.3 (‘*socii adiutores*’ in all Latin versions). Intermediate versions show ‘*fratelli coadiutori*’ (1860-1864), more ‘*socii adiutores*’ (1867-1873) in some drafts of XI. Admissions (the fees). The full text of 1875 C is reproduced in Giovanni Bosco, *Opere Edite* (Rome, LAS 1977-1978) [=OE] XXVII:10-99. See critical texts in Francesco Motto *Costituzioni della Società di San Francesco di Sales 1858-1875*, (LAS Rome, 1982) [=Const. FM], 176-177.

¹⁰ *Regolamento per le case della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (Torino, Tipografia Salesiana 1877), reproduced in Ricaldone, *Don Bosco Educatore*, Vol. II (Torino, 1952), 499-580, also in OE 29:97-196. See Rasor, “Early Salesian Regulations: Formation in the Preventive System,” in *JSS VIII*:2 206-265 for an overview of how scattered sets of rules developed into the Regulations from about 1850 to 1967.

Salesian service personnel or domestics. Those rules say the coadjutors must have no familiarity with the boys.¹¹ Salesian coadjutors (wide sense) are beginning to be separated from these service personnel (narrow sense) in GC1 and 2, a process complete only in 1924.¹²

Don Bosco seems to have never made a great deal about distinguishing coadjutors in this narrow sense from the artisans who became Salesians and worked in the professional schools. His objections to any kind of class splitting of the lay Salesians are well documented.¹³

“Lay Salesians” occur more than “coadjutors.” “Laymen” are in the Constitutions continuously from 1858, nearly always in the trinomial “priests, clerics and laymen.”

1.2 Don Bosco's Constitutions

Don Bosco's whole life and work can be summarized in the motto he lived and proposed to his Salesians: “Give me souls, take away the rest.” Right from the first and second articles of the Constitutions, in all versions from 1858 to 1875, the Salesians are urged to save their own souls and those of others. Don Bosco centers on this theme in each of the relatively few conferences and informal talks he gave to the artisans, coadjutors, and those who formed them.¹⁴ In each, he quickly gets to the part that artisans can play in this great enterprise.

¹¹ See 1877 R Part I. Chapter XII. *Dei Coadiutori*.

¹² To see coadjutors turned into domestics, find them in *Deliberazioni del Secondo Capitolo Generale della Pia Società Salesiana...* (Turin, Tipografia Salesiana 1882) [=GC2] Division III. Chapter I, Art. 2 and 13; follow them through *I. Regolamento per le Case della Società di San Francesco di Sales*. (Turin: Tipografia Salesiana (B. S.), (first of a 7-volume set produced by GC10) I. For the Houses Part II, Section II Chapter XVII. Domestics Art. 586; then see them in *Regulations of the Salesian Society* (English translation of set produced by GC12. London: The Salesian Press 1925) Ch. XVI. The Domestics, Art. 255.

¹³ See *Archivio Salesiano Centrale* [=ASC] 0592, reporting Rua's idea in a Chapter meeting of Sept. 6, 1884 to have two classes of coadjutors, one the purchasing-agent, engineer, lawyer type; the other cooks, waiters, etc. Don Bosco did not go for it, and insisted that those rough types be never called “coadjutors,” but “servants.” See also MB XVII:372-374 and Antonio Papes, “La formazione del salesiano coadiutore nel 1883,” in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* XIII 1 (Jan.-June 1994). Study 143-219; critical text 222-224, esp. 213.

The Salesian archival material from Don Bosco's times have been microfilmed. See FDB mf 1881 A6.

¹⁴ The most important: October 1872, two in March 1876, and the famous 1883 one at San Benigno Canavese to the brother novices. Critical texts and studies of the first three are in appendices B, C, and D of Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*.

Don Bosco's 1875 Constitutions begin with the purpose of the Society, which is to sanctify its members by ministry to poor youth.

Purpose of the Society of St. Francis de Sales

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.
2. Jesus Christ began first by doing, then by teaching; so, too, shall the members begin by perfecting themselves in the practice of every interior and exterior virtue, and by acquiring knowledge; then they shall zealously apply themselves to benefit others.¹⁵

"Perfection" means holiness; Don Bosco never hesitated to challenge boys to be saints. Don Bosco proposes in the Constitutions a way of perfection for laymen no less than priests and clerics. Religious life according to these Constitutions is a sure path to perfection, a point he made more than once in those talks to the artisans. That goal is clear in every version of Article 1.

Article 2 maps out the general Salesian strategy for perfection: first, virtue and study to perfect oneself; then ministry. Note that study is placed right alongside virtue; following Article 2 would be the most natural thing for a well-disposed young student: study hard, be good. Artisans can follow Article 2 as well: work hard, live your faith. Here is a way for a boy, whether student or artisan, to become a saint by doing well what he has to do anyway. Don Bosco in his spiritual direction and recommendations to boys constantly stressed the value of doing one's ordinary duties well, and of helping one's school companions.

But Don Bosco had more to say about perfection than general means. Religious life gathers together a whole ensemble of effective and specific means, and Salesian religious life makes them easy and effective for the young and for common folk. Don Bosco has a place for a student or artisan to stay with him, help him as a Salesian, and become a saint.

The Founder had much to say and write about the importance of following one's vocation, and means to preserve it. In an 1877 "Good Night" after a retreat in which for the first time artisans also participated, he goes after them:

Also the artisans, and not just the fancy little students, have to think about their vocation. If I saw in any of them the desire to become a Salesian, I would take

¹⁵ 1875 R I:1, translated by the author.

the matter to heart, and be most careful to collect this precious pearl and keep it in the Oratory.¹⁶

Indeed, the question of vocation is vital to salvation. In the spiritual *Introduction* to the Constitutions, "Importance of following one's vocation," he writes that the whole enterprise of one's eternal salvation depends on following one's vocation, just as the whole mechanism of a watch is ruined if the master wheel is broken.¹⁷

Religious vocation for Don Bosco involves flight from the world. Since following a religious vocation means flight from the world, preserving it means keeping away from the world. In practice, this means detachment from family, and hiding one's vocation from worldly people.¹⁸

Absolute and undifferentiated equality among priests, clerics and brothers is an absurdity; they have different roles within the one Salesian enterprise of soul saving. What is the proper relation among these groups? How do they fit together to accomplish the purpose for the Society set forth in the first article of the 1875 Constitutions? This is the question of lay and priestly complementarity.

¹⁶ My translation of this excerpt from an April 20, 1877 "Good Night" to the students and artisans in Gresino's chronicle #10, p. 54 (*ASC* 110, *FDB* mf 0855 E11), *MB* XIII:423; compare with *BM* XIII:332. Fr. Pietro Ricaldone comments on these two in his *Don Bosco Educatore*, vol. 2 (Colle Don Bosco, LDC 1951), 467-474.

¹⁷ The thought finds expression also in *GC2* Division III Chapter IV, introduction (see J.12-13).

The master wheel of a mechanical watch combines with the master spring to establish the fundamental rhythm (a few swings per second) of oscillation of the watch. The main spring, instead, is wound up to make the watch go; that provides the energy to keep the master wheel oscillating with the master spring. This oscillation rhythm is then divided down by gears to produce the slow movement of the hands. In a digital or electronic watch, the wheel-master spring combination is replaced by a tiny crystal of quartz, whose natural frequency of vibration decides the watch's fundamental rhythm (millions of vibrations per second). The battery, like a main spring, provides the energy to keep the oscillations going. And electronic circuits divide the fundamental rhythm down to make the numbers change.

What youth today would understand a vocation example in terms of a "main spring"? Some have never seen a watch with hands.

¹⁸ Text available in all versions of the Constitutions since 1875. See, for example, *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales...* (Madras: Provincial Office 1967), "Introduction: Entry into religious life," 4-6. Don Bosco explains the idea at some length in a conference of Oct. 30, 1876. Critical text in Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, Appendix D. There is a composite text reported in *MB* XII:559-565, and in its English translation *Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle NY: Don Bosco Publications 1965-1977 vol. of English translation to date) [=BM] XII:409-414.

In his conferences to artisans and Salesian brothers, Don Bosco increasingly talks about involvement with worldly affairs: managing business enterprises, running shops, administering the house: the kinds of things done by Salesian brothers like Joseph Rossi,¹⁹ Andrea Pelazza²⁰ and Peter Barale.²¹ A supporting indication comes from the Constitutions, in the chapter on the habit. Salesian priests dress like diocesan priests and seminarians. The brothers are to dress in black, that is, dress as a serious, businesslike conservative 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. But for the brother it means doing so while immersed in worldly concerns.

¹⁹ Joseph Rossi (1835-1908). Born in Mezzanabigli, young Joseph was attracted by Don Bosco's booklet *Giovane Provveduto*. He came to the Oratory in 1859. First to apply for and receive admission to the Salesians in 1860, he professed 1864. He briefly ran the cloakroom, then assisted and taught in the print shop. He gradually grew into an effective Purchasing Agent General, and managed the supplies for all the Valdocco shops out of a central warehouse. Br. Rossi was a consultant at GC1 on cost-cutting, and at GC3 and GC4 on shops. He stayed on as Purchasing Agent and administrator under Fr. Rua, and died at the Oratory on Oct. 28, 1908. Eugenio Ceria, *Profili di 33 Confratelli Coadiutori*, Colle Don Bosco: LDC 1952; Eugenio Ceria, *Diz. biog.* 245; *BM XV*:591.

²⁰ Andrea Pelazza (1843-1905) was born in Carmagnola, near Turin. He started at the Oratory in 1862 in the cloakroom and as a singer, then as a music teacher. He directed the print shop after Sir Frederick Oreglia left in 1870, and acted as a true educator to the boys there. When Don Bosco acquired a paper mill at Mathi, on the Turin-Lanzo railway line, he hired a reliable foreman and sent Andrea Pelazza out for a short time as manager. Br. Pelazza died on Sept. 23, 1905, having spent nearly all his life in and around his beloved print shop in Valdocco. *Bolettino Salesiano* XXIX 10 (Oct. 1905) 313; Secondo Marchisio, "Andrea Pelazza," mortuary letter, *ASC*.

²¹ Peter Barale (1846-1934) was born at Morano Po near Alessandria in Piedmont, and entered the Oratory in 1868. He started as one of the bookbinders under the direction of Joseph Buzzetti. He made his first vows the next year, and then was sent to Lanzo where he made perpetual vows in 1872. Peter loved printing, selling books and editing; hence he was honored by Don Bosco with the light-hearted title "Knight of the Press" in 1875, and by the serious job of founding member of the editorial board of the *Salesian Bulletin*. Besides that duty, Br. Peter organized the St. Joseph Sodality, the band, the theater. He served as a consultant to the Third General Chapter. During Fr. Rua's years, he did stints at San Benigno, Mathi, Spezia, Catania, Rome and Ivrea; he had less to do with his beloved bookstore and more to do with washing dishes, slopping hogs, keeping the gardens, even the whole of 1911 cleaning bathrooms. On top of all this, Br. Peter suffered from intermittent mental depression and spiritual dryness; several Rectors Major guided him spiritually through these trials. Both conditions cleared up shortly before his saintly death in 1934. Ruffillo Uguccioni, "Coad. Barale Pietro," mortuary letter, *ASC*.

Access to government positions in the Congregation often comes up in discussions on brothers. Neither in the Constitutions, nor the Regulations, nor in any General Chapter deliberations from the founding period, do we find a requirement of priesthood for the offices of Rector Major, Provincial or Director, or member of any council or chapter. The articles to look for especially are the ones in the Constitutions giving the requirements for a member to be elected to the various offices.²²

Looking at how Don Bosco's Constitutions describe Salesian ministry, we will see a pattern: there is a need; there is a response; lay Salesians have a role in two of the three need-response pairs. Chapter I, consisting of Articles 3-7, describes "works of charity" or "exercises of charity" done for young people. In Don Bosco's time, and into the 20th century, they were called "apostolates." Now, especially after Vatican Council II, we would call those "youth ministries." Each of these is treated separately in one or two articles.²³

Let us now examine these need-response pairs.

Oratories have primacy in Don Bosco's Constitutions; they are "the first exercise (or work) of charity" in his versions.²⁴

²² One can check in Appendices H and J of Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*:

Rector Major	1875 VII.1; VIII.1, 5 (H.7, 8)
Member of Superior Chapter	1875 VII.1, IX.1 (H.7, 9)
Member of General Chapter	1907 IX.17 footnote 14 (H.11)
Provincial	1875 IX.17, 1907 IX.17 footnote 4 (H.10)
Member of Provincial Council	1907 IX.17 footnote 7 (H.10)
Member of Provincial Chapter	1907 IX.17 footnote 8d (H.11)
Director	1875 X.5; 1907 X.5 (H.11)
Member of house council	1875 X. [no specific article]

Footnote 86 of the thesis text also reports an objection by Bishop Alexander Riccardi to a 1868 version of Don Bosco's constitutions, writing to Rome: "According to paragraph 1 of article 3, the Congregation consists of priests, clerics and laymen. These laymen are not said to be oblates, that is *conversi*, but a class of members perfectly equal to the others. They have the same rights, and so can come into the direction of the Society, since the Constitutions do not exclude them from that. It is not said whether they can continue as laymen, even when definitively professed, or can be elected to some office. In a word, a layman could become Superior General, and choose other laymen to govern the Congregation." (my translation from Const. *FM*, 236). It does not seem that anybody else worried about this until 1923. It was in that year that a massive re-codification of Salesian particular law began; it would eventually include articles prohibiting the election of a Salesian brother to the offices of Rector Major, Provincial, Director, or their vicars.

²³ They are all in Article 42 of the present 1984 Constitutions. That is in Chapter 4; the other articles there present a global view of Salesian ministry.

²⁴ 1875 C I.3 .

3. The first exercise of charity shall be to gather together poor and neglected boys, in order to instruct them in the holy catholic religion, especially on feast days.

Don Bosco's conference of March 31, 1876 to artisans and brothers gave several concrete examples of brothers teaching catechism in the missions.

The professional schools are the late-19th century development of what Don Bosco began with his work contracts, then moved into corners of the Pinardi shed and onto Mamma Margaret's kitchen table. The schools' purpose is clear from the Constitutions.²⁵

4. However, since one often finds boys so neglected, that, unless they are received into a school, every care would be expended upon them in vain, every effort shall be made to open houses in which, with the means that Divine Providence puts into our hands, they shall be provided with lodging, food and clothing. While they are instructed in the truths of the Catholic Faith, they will also be introduced into some trade or craft.

Notice the relation between the third and fourth articles, and all their earlier and later versions. The fourth always notes that some boys are so poor and abandoned that the Oratory alone cannot save them as the third article directs. The houses or hospices where they are introduced into a trade are then the remedy; this later develops into the professional schools. Those schools seal in the benefits of the Oratory ministry for the most abandoned youth.

Helping poor seminarians is the focus of Art. 5, following the oratory-hospice-workshop complex in the 1875 Constitutions.

5. [appears in 1860] Since the dangers are many and great for young aspirants to the ecclesiastical state, this Society shall take the utmost care to foster the piety of those who show special aptitude for study, and who are also to be commended for good conduct. With regard to taking in boys for studies, the poorest of these shall be preferred, seeing that they would not be able to pursue their studies elsewhere, provided they give some hope of a vocation to the Ecclesiastical state.

Don Bosco always viewed the students' section at the Oratory, and the *collegi* at places like Mirabello, Lanzo and Alassio as the embodiment of this article. The brothers' role in them is to support the effort indirectly as cooks, doorkeepers and waiters: the 'coadjutors' in the narrow sense of 1877 R.

Ministry to simple folk is the last of the ministries in the first chapter of the Constitutions. The purpose is clear from the two articles on it:

²⁵ 1875 C I.4, and all its earlier and later incarnations to 1966.

6. Since there is now a need to also uphold the Catholic Religion among Christian peoples especially in small towns, the Salesians shall zealously endeavor to give spiritual retreats to confirm and encourage in the practice of piety those who, moved by the desire of a more virtuous life, may come to hear them.

7. They shall also endeavor to spread good books among the people, employing all the means that Christian charity inspires; lastly they shall seek by word and writing to combat irreligion and heresy, which are now striving under every guise to make their way among the uneducated classes. This should be the object of the sermons that they give from time to time, as well as of triduum and novenas, and of the good books, which they distribute among the people.²⁶

This article has the same general orientation as that of the third and fourth articles: there is a danger to salvation for those who cannot handle it unaided, so the Salesians will help. Especially in the spreading of good books one recognizes the contributions of printers and publishers like Br. Barale and Br. Pelazza.

In all this first chapter, the need-response pattern is clear: in articles 3 and 4 the boys are in danger because they are abandoned, so Salesians will run oratories and professional schools. In article 5, seminarians are in danger due to poverty. So, Salesians will give them free or inexpensive training. In articles 6 and 7, plain folks are in danger, because they are not instructed. So the Salesians will preach and publish for them.

Some indications about the service or support ministry come from those 1877 R rules for the coadjutors. They give a picture of a person who does not teach, but nonetheless by piety and good example as well as concrete support plays a role in the educational process. They also seek to preserve the religious spirit in one who has much to do with the world and dangerously worldly affairs. The importance, even prominence, that one in the service ministry as a skilled administrator can assume is highlighted in an 1883 conference.

1.3. The 3rd and 4th General Chapters

After the Constitutions, two of the most important writings are connected with the 3rd and 4th General Chapters (GC3 in 1883, and GC4 in 1886). First, we have that 1883 conference, given at San Benigno Canavese. This was just after GC3 had discussed the brothers and decided to move their novitiate there (over Don Bosco's preference for keeping it at the original Oratory in Valdocco). Proposals to the Chapter, and discussions during its sessions, reveal widespread discontent among artisans, brothers, and superiors at trade schools. Don Bosco felt he had

²⁶ 875 C I.6-7.

to do something quickly, not wanting to wait until the combined acts of GC 3 and GC 4 were published.

In late October he went there to talk to 22 brother novices, with their superiors. Fr. Barberis presented a summary of that talk 39 years later, at the 12th General Chapter (GC12), but had to defend its authenticity against some critics.²⁷

Don Bosco opens saying that the novitiate for young men from the shops is up and running, and that the numbers of brothers must grow. Of course, we recognize these boys as artisans. Then he comes to the first of two points he wants to make, his "idea of the Salesian coadjutor," a clear use of the wide meaning of "coadjutor" in the Constitutions. Here is the key paragraph, describing the brother's function in the Salesian ministry:

Well now, you are gathered here to learn a trade and to train yourselves in religion and in piety. Why? Because I need helpers. There are some things that priests and clerics cannot do, and you will do them. I need to be able to take one of you and send you into a print shop, and say, "You take charge and see that 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 the work is turned out as it should be." I need to have someone in every house who will 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.

Note that the ministries described here are both direct (help the Church by spreading good books, teaching trades, etc.), and indirect (help the priests help the Church by supervising workers, running the kitchen, balancing budgets.)

The next paragraph raised eyebrows when read later in 1922 at GC12:

In a word, you are not to be those who do the actual work or job, but rather those who direct. 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...you are not to be servants, but masters, not subjects, but superiors.

²⁷ *BM XVI*, 245-6. Study and critical text, including the reading at GC12: Antonio Papes, "*La formazione*." Papes presents three conferences from Barberis' notebook; Don Bosco's is the second.

This does not sound much like the Gospel, where Jesus' disciples are told that the master must be the servant of all; here is where the chapter members at GC12 had difficulty. But concrete models existed for this kind of role, men like Joseph Rossi in the purchasing office and Andrea Pelazza on the print shop floor. Don Bosco puts things in perspective in the next paragraph, where 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. Toward the end, he repeats that they must grow in numbers, but also in kindness and energy: Don Bosco has unwittingly described how he himself handles administration.

If this growth occurs, then the "little flock" will inherit the kingdom: kingdom and not servitude, Don Bosco emphasizes. No less than three times he touches this "not servants" idea.

Don Bosco's "first thought" is then about complementarity: there are obviously things that brothers cannot do, just as there are things priests cannot do. These have to do with material affairs. Thus Don Bosco implies that the brother's specific role has to do with temporal affairs, while explicitly stating that it is distinct from and complementary to that of the priest.

His "second thought" is that to prepare for these ministries, growth in virtue, in good example, in energy as well as in numbers is needed. It is related to his reason for the first thought: "You are gathered here to learn an art and master religion and piety." These novices must prepare to play that role sketched out in the first thought; they must grow both in technical and spiritual virtuosity. This really is a spiritual portrait of the brother, derived from his ministry. It is a portrait of an apostle whose work is his sermon.

GC3 met for only a week in September. Present were four brothers, called in by Don Bosco as experts: Joseph Buzzetti, Peter Barale, Joseph Rossi, and Andrea Pelazza.²⁸

GC 3 did not finish its document, but left that to GC4 in 1886 (with only Br. Rossi, the Society's purchasing agent, attending as an expert on trade schools). The work of these two chapters was published together in 1887; we will call it "GC3-4." GC3-4 gives us a framework for the brother's identity in its Theme III: the general Salesian vocation, and the specific role of the "coadjutors" within it.

²⁸ See minutes of GC3 session of Wednesday, Sept. 5, 1883, in *FDB* mf 1864

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, and the Church has always had the services of the faithful for the good of the people and the glory of God.

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 theme title seems to be using “coadjutor” in the narrow sense: distinct from artisans, and not necessarily Salesians. The section title certainly uses it in the wide sense; indeed, the official wide definition is given under it.

What does it tell us about identity? The brother shares Salesian religious life with his priestly and seminarian confreres, and is given a specifying apostolic identity: indirect ministry of support to that of the priests, and direct ministry, alongside the priest, working for the people and for God’s glory. We heard this already at San Benigno. Notice how quickly GC3-4 passes from the specifically Salesian coadjutor to the lay person in the Church: it is saying that to understand the Salesian brother in the Salesians, just look at the lay person in the Church.

1.4. The Constitutions and General Chapters on Formation

Formation is a valuable area in which to look for spiritual identity. It will sometimes state more clearly what identity it wants in speaking of formation by the mere fact that the identity has to be put into practical, teachable terms for candidates and formation personnel. An example is article 5 of Don Bosco’s Constitutions, introduced above as an element in the need–response pattern in Chapter I. It is the one about helping poor seminarians.

This is not just an article about Salesian formation, but about a ministry directed to a particular class of poor youngsters, for their benefit and that of the

local church. Given the importance Don Bosco attached to the whole question of vocation, and its impact on salvation, it is little wonder that this ministry should be typically Salesian.

From this we see that vocation and formation ministry are not simply designed to ensure a future for the Congregation, but true ministry to young people. They are part of our apostolic identity. Nowadays, we'd say that vocation ministry is part of youth ministry. What, then, is the particular role of lay Salesians in this ministry? GC3-4 gave a clear answer while introducing Theme III: by their good example more than any habit, they will reflect credit upon religious life. More specifically, by their professional competence and precision, and their teaching, brothers in the shops will attract more artisans to join the novitiate and expand the professional school's ministry especially in the missions. In the Oratories, they will teach catechism and thus show that announcing the Good News is not just a program for priests, but of the whole Church.

Strangely, there is almost nothing at all in GC3-4 about brothers' formation. A tiny scrap, placed in the section on the boys' shop skill, concerns the novitiate:

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.²⁹

There is plenty about the artisans' formation; apparently the two Chapters intended the brothers' formation program and procedures to be derived from that. Imagine! Brothers share formation with the young artisans.

In any formation program for a religious institute, the novitiate has the key role of forming identity by living it. Stages before the novitiate show the identity without fully living it; stages after that refine what the novitiate has done. Salesian identity is apostolic, so an apostolic novitiate makes sense. But Don Bosco's bold project for an apostolic and not purely "ascetic" novitiate, and the difficulties he had in getting Rome to accept it, are well known. For the brothers' novitiate at San Benigno Canavese, this translated into GC3-4's recommendation that it be well endowed with equipment, and have the top Salesian shop teachers. It shows once again the Salesian brother as an educator (unlike the picture of coadjutors given by 1877 R); here he is a key part of the formation team in the novitiate. The emphasis on improving the brothers' professional skill in the novitiate, a time usually given over to exclusively "ascetical" or "spiritual" training, is a constant Salesian feature. It is due to an

²⁹ GC3-4, Theme III, §2 Young Artisans, *professional component*, Art. 5b. It is numbered incorrectly, following Art. 5c.

instinctive conviction that, for an artisan to become a religious, he has to integrate his craft into his spirituality.

A spirituality of craft is useless if it does not improve what is crafted. Quality control must be part of the work. This point is made also by GC3-4:

2. Skilled and honest craftsmasters should be provided, even at considerable cost, so that our workshops may be able to turn out perfect products.³⁰

GC3-4 divided artisans' (and, by extension, brothers') formation into three grand divisions: the religious-moral, (new) intellectual, and professional components. Intellectual formation is important for workers in the new industrial age, so Salesian professional schools will have to keep pace. Otherwise, they will turn out few, and probably imperfect, products.

Let us return briefly to that guide in formation that Don Bosco insisted on at GC3 for an apostolic formation experience. He is, of course, the local superior, or Director. GC3-4 gives him a clear role:

9. Every other month the Director shall hold a conference for assistants and heads of workshops, listen to their observations and suggestions, and give suitable guidelines and advice for the good management of the workshops. If there are non-Salesian craftsmasters, they should also be invited.³¹

This is about professional schools, not formation houses. But that is precisely what Salesian formation in Don Bosco's time was all about: it was training in a working Salesian house under busy practical Salesians who were in the trenches day by day, dealing with real problems. This kind of *ad hoc* formation has its drawbacks; it raised hackles in Rome,³² but also has its advantages: take any good artisan or (narrow sense) coadjutor from a Salesian house run according to GC3-4, and you have a candidate with most of his initial formation already done.

³⁰ Ibid., Art. 2. In effect, this is the "zero-defects" quality management of the American aerospace industry in the 1950's and 1960's. Later experience showed it to be unrealistic.

³¹ Ibid., *Religious-moral component*, Art. 9.

³² See, in *MB X:942* (omitted from the English *BM*), Archbishop Vittelleschi's observation #16 on the 1873 draft sent to Rome for approval: "The novitiate should be set up in accordance with Clement VIII's Constitution *Regularis disciplinae* and with the other prescriptions of canon law. Of special importance are the prescriptions which relate to housing novices in a house of novitiate, to their total separation from the professed, and to their being engaged solely in spiritual exercises and not in any of the works of the Institute."

See also *MB X:752-3* (also omitted from *BM*) for the offending articles on the novitiate, including its apostolic features.

2. Identity in Today's Rules

After Don Bosco, the somewhat scattered rules and formation program components were rapidly developed into a workable system. The Constitutions had been updated by GC10³³ and GC12 to conform to the 1917 code of Canon Law, and to the needs of a Salesian Congregation working all over the world in societies at various levels of development. The great formation chapter, the 15th General Chapter of 1938, developed rules for all phases of formation.

2.1. Summary of the Renewal Process

The Salesian Constitutions in force today are the end product of Vatican II renewal. That began with the 19th General Chapter (1965), notable for its "equal duration and quality" formation doctrine.³⁴ GC19 was a kind of transition chapter: it has features common to GC15, yet touches renewal themes of the Vatican Council which by then had only one session left to complete. No brothers were elected delegates to this chapter, but two served as invited experts for the commission considering brothers and technical schools.

The next General Chapter, the special one called to renew the Rule, produced an interim set in 1972. Salesian studies do not refer to this chapter or its Acts with the expected "GC20," but instead as "SGC."³⁵ 3 brothers were elected delegates to this chapter, and 4 more attended as observers. There were 3 seminarians also among the observers, something that has not happened since. The Acts give the theological background to the new rules, and include some material on the brother's identity.³⁶

The 1975 World Congress of Salesian Brothers looked at that in the light of the situation then current, and looked ahead to the next General Chapter.³⁷

³³ At which Br. Tarable, substitute delegate from Tierra del Fuego, attended in spite of the objections of Fr. Piscetta. See Ceria, *Annali* III:540.

³⁴ See "Acts of the 19th General Chapter of the Salesian Society," *Acts of the Superior Council* [=ASC, also meaning the earlier title *Acts of the Superior Chapter*] XLVII 244 (Jan. 1966) [=GC19], 72. Not original; this goes back to 1921: See Albera, *Lettere Circolari* (2nd ed. Turin, Direzione Generale Salesiana 1965) #42 (May 15, 1921), 520.

³⁵ *Special General Chapter XX of the Salesian Society* (Rome, SGS 1971) [=SGC].

³⁶ See *SGC* §145-149.

³⁷ Its Acts are published in Pietro Broccardo, Nicola Cerisio, Renato Romaldi (eds.), *Acts of the World Congress of Salesian Brothers* (Madras: SIGA, 1976) [=AWCSB].

GC21 decided in 1978 to continue the experiment with the new Rules, but did add some meaty theologizing on the brother's vocation.³⁸

Finally, GC 22 made a final revision of the Constitutions and Regulations in 1984 based on the 1972 set. Along the way, the Rectors Major Fr. Aloysius Ricceri then Fr. Egidio Viganò were helping the Salesian Congregation understand what was going on.

2.2. The Special General Chapter and World Congress of Salesian Brothers

The World Congress of Salesian Brothers (1975) met to consider the implications of the Vatican Council and of SGC for the brothers. SGC called for this Congress in two places, with two different emphases. In the directives at the end of Document 1, we find one "to change the mind and attitude of the whole Congregation towards the Salesian brother"³⁹ by means of a world congress of brothers. In Document 20, such a congress of brothers has the more limited task to study the SGC documents relating to them.⁴⁰ In making the official convocation some months later, Fr. Ricceri made it quite clear that both mandates of SGC could not be fulfilled by a congress having only brothers as members. No, the Congress must rethink the figure of the brother in the light of Salesian tradition and renewal in order to sensitize the whole Congregation. Since the figure of the brother impacts the whole Congregation, this Congress must be of the whole Congregation about the brother, not just of brothers.

In the 1972 Constitutions,⁴¹ articles 36 and 37 did what C45 does for our current 1984 version. There, the lay dimension of the brother's vocation does not have the idea in Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 31: "order temporal affairs to the Kingdom." The Acts of the SGC did, however, explicitly appeal to LG 31 to establish a specifically lay dimension of this vocation (§149).

In the Congress, Fr. Mario Midali explicitly and theologically treated the brother's identity from SGC and Vatican II principles. He clearly adopted the LG 31 "order temporal affairs to the kingdom" line of SGC §149, rather than the less developed "[implicitly temporal] things that priests cannot do" of Don Bosco's 1883 San Benigno conference, and of 1972 C 37.

³⁸ *Acts of the 21st General Chapter*, Rome: Editrice SDB (1978) [=GC21], Doc. 2 (§166-239).

³⁹ SGC 184. Emphasis in the *Acts*.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, 763.

⁴¹ Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St Francis de Sales (SGS, Rome 1972) [=1972 C and 1972 R].

The SGC made two revolutions in understanding religious consecration, again following the Vatican Council:

- Consecration is God's initiative and work, not ours. We respond.⁴²
- Religious consecration is designed to help the Church be holy and proclaim the Gospel.⁴³ It is not just to perfect its members; it is for the holiness of the whole Church.

I call these two the "Copernican revolution" in Salesian understanding of religious life. They represent a change in thinking every bit as significant as the idea that the Earth goes around the Sun, and not the other way around.

We are called to mission; we leave all things to be like Christ: 1972 C 68. Hence the unity of our consecration and our mission, of our love for God and neighbor: the "grace of unity."⁴⁴ Religious life is a way of life based on the Gospel, and so proclaims the Kingdom: 1972 C 69-70.

1972 C 37 has almost none of this. In fact, it goes back to pre-Copernican language: the brother "answers a divine call ... to consecrate his life ..."

Again at the Congress, Midali steers truly. He says mission is entrusted by the Church to the community. Consecration is an act of God and comes under the grace of unity.⁴⁵

There is little in AWCSB about the prophetic value of religious life.

2.3. General Chapter 21

GC21's purpose was to review that experimental 1972 Rule that resulted from the SGC. It was kept, with some modifications.⁴⁶ 5 brothers took part as delegates to this chapter, with 7 other brothers as observers.

GC21 presents a complete, compact vocational identity of the Salesian brother:

He is rather a baptized Christian, called by God to give himself wholly to him in Christ, and thus to serve him as a "lay religious" in the Salesian Congregation. In it and in union with the Salesian priest, he realizes, under the inspiration of Don Bosco, the specific mission of promoting the integral Christian education of the young, especially the poorest of them.⁴⁷

⁴² SGC §107. See Is 61:1-2, quoted in Lk 4:18.

⁴³ SGC §111. See LG 43, 44a, 46b.

⁴⁴ See SGC §127.

⁴⁵ See AWCSB 110.

⁴⁶ Given in GC21 Document 5.

⁴⁷ GC21 §172. The Special General Chapter wrestled with the core meaning of our mission. Here are 4 different formulations:

In briefest summary, this paragraph says that the brother is a lay religious Salesian educator. GC21 lays more emphasis on the common call of all Christians to holiness, following LG 39.

The brother is clearly not a cleric or priest, but the more difficult problem tackled here is how he differs from the lay faithful in the Church. The distinction is in the brother’s religious life. The Vatican Council says that a lay person is one who is neither a priest nor religious, and also says what an ordained minister is.⁴⁸ So, what is the Salesian brother? The Council says he is not a lay person, but he is clearly not a priest either. The 21st General Chapter, elaborating on this definition, harmonizes the religious and lay characters of the brother’s vocation. The lay dimension (§178) is that of the LG 31 “order temporal affairs to the kingdom;” GC21 quotes SGC §149 and not 1972 C 37. It impacts every phase of the brother’s life. By his religious consecration (§177) he is part of a community whose members give their whole lives for the salvation of souls. In §190, the brother is devoted to Mary whose virginal and humble life imitates Christ. Here is an approach to the “prophetic-charismatic” idea in later identity formulations.

GC21 goes to some length in drawing out the spiritual implications of such a vocation.

Spiritual identity:

By spiritual life we here mean a practical way of perceiving, experimenting, maturing and living Christian and Salesian ideals of sanctity. The brother is called to live and bear witness in the Salesian community to an experience of faith and of Church with respect to his particular vocation and state of life. This too belongs to his vocational identity.⁴⁹

Notice how spiritual identity is part of vocation identity. Fr. Chavez will take up this idea again, in his first circular letter as Rector Major, in 2002.

According to...	Our mission is...	and...
SGC §25, 59	announcing the Gospel	reordering temporal affairs
SGC §61	integral promotion	liberating education
SGC §62	evangelizing	sanctifying
SGC §77	evangelization	promotion of justice

From this table, it appears GC21 §172 comes closest to SGC §61.

⁴⁸ See LG 28, 31.

⁴⁹ GC21 §186.

2.4. Fr. Viganò's 1980 Letter: Lay and Priestly Dimensions in One Community

Fr. Viganò wrote a letter that seems to be about Salesian brothers, but it's really about Salesian identity for the whole Congregation.

Shortly after GC21, he unsheathed his restless pen to deal with the brother's identity. It was in crisis, and the whole Salesian Society's identity with it. 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. That whole Society is in crisis precisely because its lay dimension is in crisis.⁵⁰

At the beginning of the letter, Fr. Viganò wastes no time in asserting that each Salesian, to understand his community, must understand both the Salesian brother and the Salesian priest. Vocation is lived in community; the priestly and lay vocations work together so the community can accomplish its mission. Our common clerical and lay mission, together with the "splendid modernity" we inherit from the founding genius of Don Bosco, are the distinctive characters of the Society. The brother's and priest's mutual cooperation also works in the Preventive System; it is practiced by the community. That community is guided by a priest.⁵¹

The present crisis, points out Fr. Viganò, is not just a crisis of priests or brothers, but a crisis of our Salesian self-understanding, in both its priestly and lay aspects. At times, the lay aspect has received less attention; hence there has been an unbalanced theological grounding. Nonetheless, GC21 has helped us see the brother's vocation as specific in being lay, complete, original, and meaningful.⁵²

There is a crisis in numbers, but more important is the crisis in identity. If we don't understand the lay Salesian identity, the whole Salesian identity suffers. And we have to understand priestly Salesian identity for precisely the same reason. Unclear terms in secular and even Church documents' usage do not help.

At this point he distinguishes "lay" as in "lay religious" from the simple "lay" state in the sense of LG 31. The Salesian brother is not "secular" in the sense associated there with "laity," but a religious, so he "testifies in a splendid and singular way that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God

⁵⁰ Egidio Viganò, "The lay element in the Salesian Community," in *Acts of the Superior Chapter* [=ASC; later the title changed to *Acts of the Superior Council*] LXI 298 (Oct.-Dec. 1980) 3-4. Henceforth, we will refer to this letter as *LE*. In brief, [=LE].

⁵¹ See *LE* 5-7; see also *GC21* §194, 196, 212-239. Don Bosco's March 31, 1876 talk to the artisans is cited; see Rasor, *Spiritual Identity* Appendix D.17.

⁵² See *LE* 7-11; see also *GC21*, §172-180.

without the spirit of the Beatitudes.⁵³ Here is the “prophetic-charismatic” value of religious life presented more clearly than before.

The community dimension impacts the religious identity: the brother is not a “consecrated secular;” he lives in community and not in the world. The brother’s identity impacts the community: it 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 a theme from the Special General Chapter, he says that the community both evangelizes and helps human development.⁵⁴ The Congregation as a whole does both evangelizing and human development.

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.⁵⁵

This is a long way from the cramped vision of ourselves by which we are still called “Salesian Fathers” in some places. In fact, repeats Fr. Viganò, if we do not understand the lay dimension, we do not understand the brother, the Cooperators or even indeed the Salesian Congregation or the Salesian Family.⁵⁶

What then is this lay dimension in the Rector Major’s view? He considers it at three levels: in creation, in the Church, and in the Salesian community.

A lay mentality affirms the goodness of creation, knowledge, science and technology. God and creation are one not in a pantheistic sense, but because creation comes from God and from him derives goodness. Exaggerated laicism denies it is created; narrow clericalism denies it is good.⁵⁷ This spiritual vision of the goodness of creation gives rise to action styles proper to the brother’s spirituality:

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.

⁵³ See LG 31, and also “lay” in Rasor, *Spiritual Identity*, Appendix A, Glossary.

⁵⁴ See LE 13-14, SGC §60-61, and the footnote above about how the SGC struggled with this mission theme.

⁵⁵ LE 15.

⁵⁶ See LE 15-18.

⁵⁷ See LE 19-21.

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.⁵⁸

A lay mentality in the Church, even for the lay religious, does resonate with the sense of LG 31. The lay person, religious or not, feels the need of grace; he must know and live that Kingdom to which he is ordering temporal affairs. The lay vocation is a call to make history.⁵⁹ Clearly, this is the Salesian brother's turf.

Since he belongs by baptism to the prophetic and royal priesthood of the People of God (see LG 34-36), he sets about making the world the true temple of the Lord and turning man's manifold activities into a conscious and vital liturgy blending with the Eucharistic Christ. Creation thus becomes, through salvation history, a dialogue of love between God and man, and the world is seen in the guise of the sacramental mediation of this intercommunion.

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.⁶⁰

Fr. Viganò develops the "liturgy of life" idea. The world, in effect, is a sacrament of God's dialogue with humanity. The community, incarnating Christ, offers itself and its world to the Father. His Word is in the temple of the celebrating community, and also in the 13.7 billion years old whisper of the Universe.⁶¹ Our praise rises to him from workbench and altar.

The lay dimension in religious life is realized in community. Here Viganò explains that lay religious life differs from that of the lay faithful in not living in the world, in one's own family and immersed in temporal affairs, but living in a

⁵⁸ LE 21. Goodwill and prayer help decide where to fly the plane.

⁵⁹ See LE 22-23.

⁶⁰ LE 23-24.

⁶¹ Also Fr. Ziggotti on God's work in creation, in "The Rector Major... Work and Temperance," in *Acts of the Superior Chapter* [=ASC] XLV 234 (Jan.-Feb. 1964) 2-14.

Coming from everywhere is microwave radiation like that of a body whose temperature is 2.725°K. Two Bell Telephone company scientists found it in the year Ziggotti wrote that letter; they were wondering why their new antenna had more noisy static than it should. Current astrophysics identifies that noise with the faint echoes of the long-ago moment of creation, the "Big Bang." See three pages that won a Nobel Prize: Arno A. Penzias and Robert W. Wilson, "A measurement of excess antenna temperature at 4080 Mc/s," *Astrophysical Journal* 142 (1965) 419-421. The universe is a good teacher.

community that proclaims the Gospel by its lifestyle: once again, the prophetic idea of religious life.⁶²

What kind of spirituality can grow in such a community? Being secular, it can animate the laity and connects with the world of work. Being priestly, it knows in which direction to animate.

This secular style shows up in flexible structure, individual ownership of goods, simple or no religious habit, adaptability, family spirit, non-monastic terminology. Most important, it shows up in our common spirituality:

The very nature of our activity is slanted towards a witness and service open to the secular: the “activity-spirituality” of St. Francis de 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. Our mission among youth and the masses, in which we live out the vital tenets of the Preventive System, direct the Salesian’s evangelizing efforts along channels of secular culture and social education that open up man’s development to the indispensable mystery of Christ.⁶³

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.”

The lay mentality involves a vision of the world as a place for spiritual experience. Creation is good and capable of teaching spiritual values. With priestly and lay dimensions together, the community dreams of the world as Kingdom, builds the world to look more like the Kingdom, and celebrates that Kingdom in the liturgy of life. The lay spiritual vision is the eyes of the religious community, eyes with which it knows the world and looks with love on the world.

Fr. Viganò reports some unsettling numbers in his letter, focusing on the declining numbers of brothers, and their declining percentage of total membership in the Congregation. The table and figure below give a more global view, covering the entire life of the Congregation as a religious institute. They support Viganò’s conclusions: the number and percentage of brothers have been declining since 1970.

⁶² See *LE* 25-27.

⁶³ *LE* 33.

Year	Salesians	brothers	% of total	Source of data
1860	26	2	7.69%	Ceria, <i>Annali</i> I, pp. 36-37
1870	101	23	22.77%	ICS ⁶⁴ 3-4, AWCSB, p. 52
1880	551	182	33.03%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 58
1890	1299	389	29.95%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 58. Stella gives 29.94%.
1900	3527	1061	30.08%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 58
1910	4372	1171	26.78%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 58. Stella gives 25.32%.
1920	4916	1300	26.44%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 58
1930	8493	2098	24.70%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 68
1940	12881	3113	24.17%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 68
1950	15835	3357	21.20%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 68
1960	19295	4055	21.02%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 68
1970	20457	3887	19.00%	ICS 3-4, AWCSB, p. 68
1980	17286	2950	17.07%	Elenco ⁶⁵ 1981-II, p. 233 gives 16773, 2898. Add 513 novices, 52 novice brothers.
1990	17631	2729	15.48%	Elenco 1991-II, p. 226 gives 16984, 2659. Add 647 novices, est. 70 novice brothers.
2000	17014	2398	14.09%	Elenco 2001-II, p. 257 gives 17014, 2338. Novices counted. Est. 60 novice brothers.

Table 1: Numbers and percentage of Salesian brothers

⁶⁴ Magazine *Il Salesiano Coadiutore*, published in Colle Don Bosco from 1948 to 1966.

⁶⁵ A yearly list of Salesian provinces, houses and members is published in Rome under the simple name *Elenco*. It also contains yearly statistics on total membership, membership by province, deaths, etc. Formerly, it was published in Turin under various names: *Società di San Francesco di Sales*, *Società di San Francesco di Sales Antico Continente*, *Elenco Generale della Società Salesiana*, *Annuario* etc.

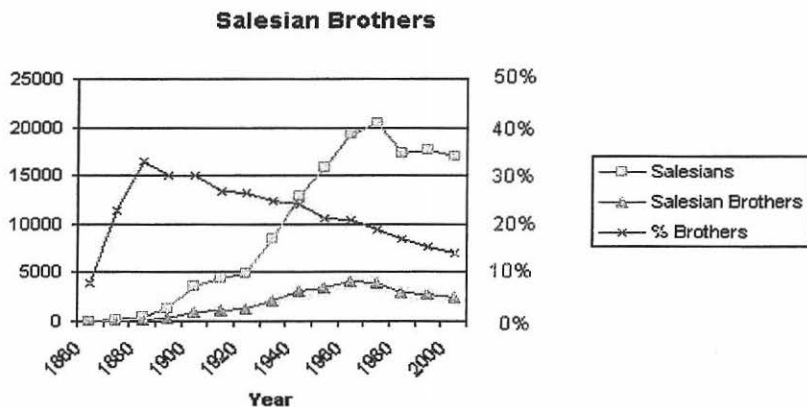


Figure 1: Numbers and percentage of Salesian brothers

What to do? Fr. Viganò insists that the solution lies in renewing the formation of all Salesians. Not only must all brothers be fully formed as educators and as spiritual men, but the whole Congregation has to rediscover its lay dimension.

He reminds Salesians of their fundamental unity of formation, a doctrine developed over 50 years: initial formation has the same phases and the same Salesian content; life in common is itself formative. Unity of formation demands both priests and brothers prepared to work together.

Beyond all that, brothers have to attract vocations by being holy.

2.5. General Chapter 22 and the Constitutions (1984)

Four years after Fr. Viganò's letter, and one year after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law, the Salesian Congregation celebrated its 22nd General Chapter. This Chapter finished the process of renewal begun with the 19th General Chapter, and ordered by the Council.

As the letter of convocation makes clear, the main purpose of this Chapter was to produce a definitive version of the Constitutions and Regulations, to replace those made *ad experimentum* at the SGC in response to the Council's

mandate.⁶⁶ It was also to study the Rector Major's "State of the Congregation" report, then elect a new Rector Major and Council.⁶⁷

The Chapter began on January 14, 1984 in Rome, with four brothers as elected delegates. Another four were observers. The Rector Major, Fr. Vigandò, said in his opening address:

We are concluding a long period of study, research, revision and reformulation, that has matured in two important General Chapters, the special 20th Chapter and the 21st. We are not starting from scratch. We are approaching the end of a road we have followed, by God's grace, with intelligent attention to the signs of the times and the indications of the Vatican Council, and with the sincere desire of adhering and giving new life to the spiritual patrimony of our origins.⁶⁸

A little later on, he recalled what Don Bosco told Fr. Barberis: "I am making a rough copy of the Congregation, and will leave making the good copy to those who come later."⁶⁹

Another problem, more specifically related to the subject of this study, Fr. Vigandò raised in his April 17 intervention. The identity of the whole Congregation, in his view, is in crisis if its lay component is in crisis; this idea we recognize from his 1980 letter. The lay and priestly complementarity of which he wrote then, and to which all the last three Chapters referred, is necessary to make the community a center and agent of pastoral charity. He adds that the priestly ministry of the Director is also essential to this centralizing of pastoral charity in the community's ministry.⁷⁰

Related to the identity crisis is the numbers crisis, over which the Rector Major raises a "cry of alarm" in his "State of the Congregation" report. In the "hour of the laity," it seems no men's congregation has been able to renew its lay dimension. For us, the lack of brothers has especially hurt our efforts in the Third World.⁷¹ Especially unsettling to Vigandò was the percentage of brothers among the newly professed: 11% in the six years 1978-1983. It was up to 13% in the later '80s, so the "cry of alarm" had a small effect.⁷²

⁶⁶ See *Ecclesiae Sanctae* II, 1, 12-14.

⁶⁷ See *ASC LXIII* 305 (Special number, July-Sept. 1982) 5-20, esp. 6.

⁶⁸ *Acts of the 22nd General Chapter* (Rome, Editrice S.D.B. 1984) [= *GC22*]

§18.

⁶⁹ See *GC22* §22. The remark to Fr. Barberis is quoted from *MB XI*, 309.

⁷⁰ See *GC22* §41.

⁷¹ Vigandò, *La Società di San Francesco di Sales nel sessennio 1978-1983* (Rome 1983) [= *RRM22*], 322.

⁷² See *RRM22*, 108; *La Società di San Francesco di Sales: Dati Statistici, 1984-1989* (Rome, Editrice SDB 1990), 31. Longer term statistics on novices are in Table 2, Appendix E.

Now, we look at the new Rule of 1984.

The process of renewal did not just produce a new set of Constitutions. Besides those, it produced a new set of Regulations; more importantly it provided a perspective under which these and other texts of our particular law are viewed as parts of our "Rule of life."

The "Rule of life" is not quite the same as the Constitutions. The *Presentation* of the 1984 Constitutions and Regulations begins: "Here at last, dear confreres, is our renewed and approved Rule of life." The book, of course, contains not only the Constitutions but also the Regulations, and the same spiritual writings of Don Bosco included in the 1972 text.⁷³

It is not just a collection of texts; it is a way to live, a Rule written in the heart. It means that the Salesian professes the Constitutions, not just the vows. The Rule of life is, in short, making that "good copy" of which Don Bosco spoke to Fr. Barberis.⁷⁴

The GC22 decided to keep the material of the 1972 Constitutions and Regulations, and to keep their basic orientation. That meant dealing with our mission, communion and consecration, then going on to formation and organization. But it also decided to preface all of this with a First Part on "The Salesians in the Church," that is, on identity. As in 1972, the 1984 Regulations roughly follow the structure of the 1984 Constitutions, especially after ch. 5.

Fr. Viganò leaves no doubt that the Constitutions and Regulations are the fundamental document of Salesian identity. He begins his *Presentation*: "Here at last, dear confreres, is our renewed and approved Rule of life. It is offered to you in a manual which every Salesian should keep with him as his identity card."

This First Part is divided into three chapters: one on the Society of St. Francis de Sales, another on the Salesian spirit, and one on the profession of the Salesian.

Let us look at how the first articles set up the identity question. Article 1 makes clear the initiative of God by action of the Spirit through Mary to raise up Don Bosco to help save poor youth. Consecration is God's work; he also inspired Don Bosco to found the Salesian Family.

Article 2 is the first long-range look at our identity: we are in the Church to carry out that same project which the Spirit inspired Don Bosco to start. The idea of religious life at the service of the Church's mission and holiness is seeded here. The same Spirit who put the idea for such a project into Don Bosco will help us carry it out. He will help us to be "signs and bearers of the love of God for young people, especially those who are poor." A sign of love that

⁷³ See *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Rome 1984) [=1984 C, 1984 R], 5-7.

⁷⁴ See GC22 §90-92.

delivers love is none other than a sacrament; the Church is such, and so is the Salesian community and indeed each Salesian, all in virtue of baptism. Thus the article presents the common Christian vocation, specified by Don Bosco's mission, as the fundamental structure of Salesian identity.

Article 3 previews the structure of the Constitutions' Second Part:

We live as disciples of the Lord by the grace of the Father, who consecrates us through the gift of his Spirit and sends us out to be apostles of the young.

Through our religious profession we offer ourselves to God in order to follow Christ and work with him in building up the Kingdom. Our apostolic mission, our fraternal community and the practice of the evangelical counsels are the inseparable elements of our consecration which we live in a single movement of love towards God and towards our brothers.

Our mission sets the tenor of our whole life; it specifies the task we have in the Church and our place among other religious families.

Consecration as God's doing is revisited from Article 1; here it unites mission, communion and religious life. These three inseparable elements furnish the titles of 3 of the 4 chapters in the Second Part of the Constitutions.

Our mission is the specifying identity under the more general identity of Christian. Communion and practice of the counsels are not given this treatment; they are common to all religious. Note how Article 3 uses two methods for specification of an identity: the global impactor (mission), and specification by comparison with other identities (those of other religious).⁷⁵

Already Article 3 gives us a glimpse of the unity of the priestly and lay incarnations of the Salesian identity, in bidding us follow Christ to build up the Kingdom. We offer the gift of our life and work, along with Jesus the Eternal High Priest, to the Father. It is like the gift of the Spirit coming down (*epiclesis*) on the gift of the universe. Here is the lay dimension impacting our mission and our Eucharist. Building the Kingdom is lay work (LG 31); we "order all temporal things...that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer." In the fullness of time Christ the Supreme High Priest, Head and Body, will hand that Kingdom over to the

⁷⁵ See Francis Marracani, ed., *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco* (Rome 1986) [=POL], 68, 106-108. On page 68, Marracani *et al.* advance the thesis that Art. 3 contains the structure of the whole Constitutions, but I think this goes too far. A rough mapping might be:

Art. 1-2	First Part: The Salesians of Don Bosco in the Church
Art. 3	Second Part: Sent to the young—in communities—following Christ
	Third Part: Formed for the mission of pastors and educators
Art. 4	Fourth Part: The service of authority in our Society

Father as a priestly act of thanksgiving, glory and praise. Preparing the gift and offering it is the one movement of love towards God and towards our brothers; this is the "liturgy of life."⁷⁶

Article 4 treats of the form of the Society. That form is at once priestly and lay, not by simple division of members into clerical and lay categories as in all pre-Vatican II versions from the 1858 draft right up to article 12 of the 1966 Constitutions. Instead, "clerics and laymen complement each other as brothers in living out the same vocation." This complementarity is part of our identity. Our commentator team sees here what Fr. Viganò hinted at in his 1980 letter, and boldly stated at the closing of GC22: the lay and priestly dimensions simultaneously present in the heart of each Salesian. The whole community acts in priestly and lay dimensions.⁷⁷

Article 5 not only relates the Salesian Society to the Salesian Family, but implicitly relates the individual members to it by reason of the distinct vocations present within it. If the groups in the Salesian Family "live in communion with each other, share the same spirit and, with specifically distinct vocations, continue the mission he [Don Bosco] began," then the complementary relation of priests and brothers in the Salesian community is like that among the various vocations in the Salesian Family.

Earlier, in making the 1972 Constitutions, the 20th General Chapter said:

The Salesian spirit is the complex of aspects and values of our world and of the Christian mystery (before all else the Gospel, the Church, kingdom of God...), to which the sons of Don Bosco, gathering the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and by reason of their mission are particularly sensitive, as much in their interior disposition as in their exterior behavior.⁷⁸

Briefly, this says the Salesian spirit consists of values plus a style of life and action. This general organization of values and ways of acting on those values is also used in the 1984 version. Now let us see how the styles and inspiration of the Salesian spirit are packed into it.

Article 10 gives us the Constitutions' view of the meaning of the term "Salesian spirit."

Under the inspiration of God, Don Bosco lived and handed on to us an original style of life and action: the Salesian spirit.

It is summed up and centered in pastoral charity, characterized by that youthful dynamism which was revealed so strongly in our Founder and at the

⁷⁶ See *POL*, p. 173-179.

⁷⁷ See *POL* p. 112-115 (commenting C 4); *LE* 5-7; *GC22* §80.

⁷⁸ *SGC* §86.

beginnings of our Society. It is an apostolic impetus that makes us seek souls and serve God alone.

So it is a youthful and dynamic style of life and action, expressing the value of pastoral charity. That central value (C10-13) is what pushes us to relate in a certain way (C14-C17), to minister in a certain way (C18-C20).⁷⁹

Here is how the Salesian spirit is organized in 12 articles of our present Rule:

The Salesian spirit (1984 Constitutions)	
Pastoral charity the central value	
C10	Fundamental level: Pastoral charity, the center of our spirit
C11	Fundamental level: Fatherhood of God
C12	Personal level: Attentive to God, contemplative in action. Trinitarian prayer. (prayer in C85-95)
C13	Ecclesial level: Sense of the Church, center of forces working for Kingdom
Style of relationships	
C14	Predilection for young
C15	Loving kindness, chastity, spiritual fatherhood
C16	Family spirit
C17	Optimism and joy
Style of pastoral work of education	
C18	Work and temperance
C19	Initiative and flexibility, quality control
C20	Preventive System a spiritual experience
C21	Don Bosco the model

Table 2. The Salesian spirit in the 1984 Constitutions

Article 11 proposes as the fundamental model the Heart of Christ, apostle of the Father. If the Salesian spirit is based on pastoral charity (C10), then it makes sense to point to Jesus the Good Shepherd. It has the Salesian way of reading the Gospel: gratitude to Father, love for poor young, zeal for Kingdom, method of Good Shepherd, desire to gather into unity.

Article 12 provides the “pointer” to our prayer style in C85-95, giving here its theological foundation and place in our identity.

As he works for the salvation of the young, the Salesian experiences the fatherhood of God and continually reminds himself of the divine dimension of his work: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” (Jn 15:5)

He cultivates union with God, aware of the need to pray without ceasing in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ and with the Father,

⁷⁹ A structural proposal found in *POL*, 159-161.

whom he feels close at hand. Attentive to the presence of the Spirit and doing everything for God's love he becomes like Don Bosco a contemplative in action.⁸⁰

The Salesian's union with God is none other than "prayer without ceasing." He does this by making his work a prayer, or being a "contemplative in action." Here is another handle to lay spirituality: good solid Kingdom-building work is a priestly offering to the Father as we have seen, but it can only be made in and through Jesus; and that means in his body the Church. The idea returns in Article 18 on untiring work.

Article 13 has more on pastoral charity brought to this ecclesial level: loving Christ in his Church leads to fidelity to the Pope, and communion with bishops and local churches. Article 85 will later clarify the community's ecclesial dimension: it is none other than an image of the Church. The present Article makes clear that our aim is to insert youth into the Church.

Articles 14-17 touch traditional elements of the Salesian spirit: preference for the young, loving kindness, family spirit, joy and optimism. These are common to all Salesians, ordained or not.

Article 18 says the Salesian creates with God and works with Christ to build the Kingdom. These activities are proper to lay people's ministry in the Church as we have seen, but the Constitutions do not say that the Salesian brothers are supposed to do it. All Salesians are supposed to do it, and they can, because the whole Congregation has its lay dimension. Recall that all Salesians make of their life and work a pleasing offering to God in the "liturgy of life," not just the priests; this is because the whole Congregation has a priestly element, a priestly dimension.

This Article 18 reminds us, in the commentator team's view, of the "professional quality" of the lay sensitivity that Fr. Viganò mentions in several places. That means the worker must watch what he doing, and not just pray about it. The only prayer that will repair a Canon printer driver installed on a

⁸⁰ Jerome Nadal, a disciple of St. Ignatius Loyola, describes the Jesuit founder in a letter:

hanc rationem orationis concepit Pater Ignatius, magno privelegio, selectissime; tum illud praeterea in omnibus rebus, actionibus, colloquiis, ut Dei praesertim rerumque spiritualium affectum sentiret atque contemplaretur, **simul in actione contemplativus** [Nadal crossed out "contemplationis" here] (quod ita solebat explicare: Deum esse in **omnibus rebus inveniendum**)... Quod igitur privilegium ... idem toti Societati [Iesus] concessum credimus... (emphasis mine)

See *Monumenta Historica Societatis Jesu*, IV 651; V 162.

computer with a Hewlett-Packard printer, is a prayerful installation of the correct driver.⁸¹

Article 19 enjoins quality control: "periodically he evaluates his work." Quality control, we recall, is an activity recommended for brothers by the 3rd and 4th General Chapters. But the 1984 Constitutions rightly place it in the common Salesian spirit...again, impossible without a strong lay element and sensitivity.

Now I would like to focus on the complementarity question introduced by Article 4: how the priestly and lay dimensions work together in the Salesian community.

Article 45 comes to the heart of this question. I have quoted it again, below, with added emphasis. Note the structure of four paragraphs: the two inner ones have comparative identities of the brothers and the ordained members, sandwiched within two outer ones sketching out the unity of these identities. The lead or top outer paragraph considers the **mission**; the fourth or bottom outer paragraph deals with the **community**.

Each of us is responsible for the **common mission**, and participates in it with the richness of his own personal gifts and with the lay and priestly characteristics of the one Salesian vocation.

The Salesian brother brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a **witness to God's Kingdom in the world**, close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life.

The Salesian priest or deacon brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry, which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by **preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments**.

The significant and complementary presence of clerical and lay Salesians in the **community** constitutes an essential element of its makeup and of its apostolic completeness.

These two outer paragraphs contain openings to spirituality of mission, and of communion, respectively.

The two inner paragraphs are crafted in remarkable parallelism (again, emphasis mine):

⁸¹ See *POL* p. 217-219; *RRM22* §293, *GC22* §82 (Fr. Viganò's closing address).

The Salesian brother	The Salesian priest or deacon
brings to every field of education and pastoral activity the specific qualities of his lay status, which make him in a particular way a witness to God's Kingdom in the world , close as he is to the young and to the realities of working life .	brings to the common work of promoting human development and of educating in the faith the specific quality of his ministry , which makes him a sign of Christ the Good Shepherd, especially by preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments.

Table 3. Complementarity in Article 45

Note how at each stage the difference between the lay Salesian and priestly Salesian identities together form a kind of double-action or push-pull teamwork. Brothers push the world into shape as Christ's Kingdom, while Jesus the Good Shepherd pulls it with love to his Father.

Explaining the theological sense of mission, especially as found in Articles 2 and 3, Fr. Viganò notes in his closing address to the GC22 that we are to be "signs and bearers of the love of God for young people." (Art. 2)

In this sense whatever we do, even actions which in themselves belong to the temporal order, enters (and this is the great innovation!) into our consecrated life because it is covered by the mission we have received through the Church, by its community dimension and by its special gospel witness, three points which are inseparable one from another.⁸²

Viganò then develops ideas from his 1980 "lay dimension" letter to show how each Salesian must understand both dimensions if he is to observe Article 45:

This requires a particular formation of the personality of each confrere, so that in the heart of each clerical Salesian there is an intimate feeling of being linked to and co-involved with the lay dimension of the community, and in the heart of each lay Salesian in turn there is the same feeling in respect of the community's priestly dimension.

It is the Salesian community (see Const. 44, 45, 49, 50) in each of its members, which bears witness to these sensitivities and carries out undertakings which are at the same time both 'priestly' and 'lay.'⁸³

It is precisely in getting this lay dimension into everyone's heart, he goes on, that the "cry of alarm" will get an answer. He recalls some of the lay attitudes

⁸² GC22 §62.

⁸³ GC22 §80.

from his 1980 letter: practicality, professionalism, adaptability, constancy, solidarity, spirituality of work.⁸⁴

2.6. Names

The 1984 Constitutions and Regulations show some interesting choices in the use of the names “coadjutor,” “lay Salesian” and “Salesian brother.” Also, there are differences between the Italian and the English versions.

The English index has entries for “Coadjutor” and for “Salesian brother.” The Italian index has entries for “Coadiutore” and “Salesiano coadiutore.” There is no Italian “Salesiano fratello” corresponding to “Salesian brother.” We note immediately that the Italian avoids “brother” entirely.

The English index entry for “Coadjutor” refers the reader to the entry for “Salesian Brother.” That entry’s exact title adds a qualifier: it is “Salesian Brother (Coadjutor).” The English thus steers away from “coadjutor:” in fact, the term appears nowhere outside the index. But the Italian entry for “Coadiutore” points to that for “Salesiano coadiutore;” it does not discard “coadjutor” for “brother” as the English does. The actual Italian entry also has an extra qualifier: this time, it is “Salesiano coadiutore (laico).” The Italian brings out the lay element in the brother’s identity more clearly than the English.

Both indices list C45, C106, C116, R98, and R169 as containing the term “Salesian brother” or “Salesiano coadiutore.” But on reading articles C106 and R98, we find the English term is instead “lay Salesians.” In Italian, they are “salesiani laici.” There is no index entry for these. Similarly, R169 contains “clerical and lay members” or “laici e chierici.” Article C45 contains both variants “lay Salesian” and “Salesian brother,” or “salesiano laico” and “salesiano coadiutore.” Similarly, the Italian C116 has both “salesiano coadiutore” and “salesiano laico.” But it reverses their placement with respect to the English: “coadiutore” is in its text, and “laico” in its title.

The index skips the occurrence of “Lay members” or “soci laici” in C62. They are also in the index entry for “Complementarity.” It lists C4, C45 and R169 as containing material on “complementarity between priests and lay members in Salesian vocation and mission.” In this, the English follows the Italian exactly.

Article C113 contains the term “lay Salesian” or “Salesiano laico,” but is also skipped by the index. Article 4 is overlooked: it says the Congregation is made up of “clerics and laymen,” or “di chierici e di laici.”

If we list the articles containing “lay Salesian” or “salesiano laico”, we find five: C45, C106, C113, C116, and R98. We might add to this list C4 and C62 with “lay members” or “soci laici.” If we do the same for “Salesian

⁸⁴ See GC22 §81-82; also the 1980 letter: LE 17, 28-34.

brother” and “salesiano coadiutore,” carefully selecting those that actually contain the exact terms in question rather than relying on the index, we find that there are only two: C45 and C116. It seems strange that there is no index entry, in English or Italian, for the terms used more often: “lay Salesian” and “salesiano laico.”

It is my position that the term “lay Salesian” and its equivalents are theologically more precise: they express our identity better. But they might not do so for young people without some explanation.

3. Application of the Salesian Brother’s Spiritual Identity

All right, we have an identity. What do we do with it?

First, use it. Can we sell this identity? Can we get young people to understand it, consider it, live it? General Chapters since the renewed Rule, plus documents from the animation departments, have basically done that. They have, with few exceptions, used the identity we find in C45 to generate vocation and formation programs.

Next, testing. One test is to compare the identity to obvious success stories. Does this proposed identity really fit the data, that is, the lives of holy Salesian brothers? Another test is to review the vocation and formation programs in the spirit of Constitutions article 19.

The final operation of application is to use the test results to go back and refine the identity.

3.1 Example: Artemide Zatti

Br. Artemide Zatti was recently beatified. Fr. Vecchi, in one of his last letters, pointed him out as an example of the lay consecrated Salesian vocation.⁸⁵ Here is where we can do our testing: does the life of Br. Zatti fit our proposed identity for the Salesian brother?

Artemide Zatti was born in the town of Boretto, in northern Italy’s Reggio Emilia province, of working-class parents in 1880.⁸⁶ This province is just south of the Po Valley, in the region of Romagna. It’s about 12 miles northeast of Parma and about 60 miles northwest of Bologna, right on the Po River.

He moved to Argentina with his family in 1897. His parents, Luigi Zatti and Albina Vecchi, settled the family in Bahia Blanca, south of Buenos Aires,

⁸⁵ The whole letter is published in English as Juan Vecchi, “Beatification of Br. Artemide Zatti: a Sensational Event.” in *ASC LXXXII* 376 (July-Sept. 2001) [= *BAZ*] 3-58.

⁸⁶ Vecchi’s biographical sketch is taken almost wholly from the *Positio* of the cause for beatification.

on the Rio Colorado. This is not far from Carmen de Patagones, where the Salesian missionaries began to penetrate into the interior of Patagonia. It is also near Viedma, birthplace of his grandnephew, Fr. Juan Vecchi. Immigrants in this area were predominantly Italian, anti-clerical, and working-class.

The family became part of the parish of Our Lady of Ransom, run by the Salesians. This is where Artemide fell into our net. It also had a high school and a trade school. Fr. Carlo Cavalli became a dear family friend, a figure of Don Bosco for young Artemide. From then until 1900, young Zatti was active in the Salesian young workingmen's associations.

Zatti read the life of Don Bosco, and saw it come to life in Fr. Cavalli. This spiritual guide encouraged Zatti to study for the Salesian priesthood. So, he went to the aspirantate at Bernal and studied there for two years.

But Zatti caught tuberculosis in 1902 from a young priest in his care. So, the Salesians sent him to Viedma. There he met a young Indian lad, Zefferino Namuncurá, who also had the disease.

Both the SDBs and FMAs were running high schools in this town of about 5,000. The SDBs also had a trade school, an agricultural school, and a St. Joseph Hospital. Zatti worked in the hospital pharmacy under Fr. Evasio Garrone, an unlicensed physician. His health improved to the point where he could think about resuming his studies for the priesthood. He learned the pharmacist's profession well, and was soon Garrone's right-hand man.

Tuberculosis was incurable in those days; one could only keep it under control. That, and Fr. Garrone's appeal to keep Zatti as a valued collaborator, led the superiors to propose to him the vocation of the Salesian brother. Sometime between 1904 and 1906, Artemide began to follow that path. He seems to have made a promise to Our Lady to dedicate himself to his poor and sick neighbors in return for his own health. He revealed this only in a letter he wrote in 1915, testifying to the holiness of the recently deceased (+1911) Fr. Garrone.

Zatti professed in 1908. For him, priesthood and the brother's vocation were just two ways of serving God and neighbor.

He recovered his health to the point where he could take charge of the pharmacy after Fr. Garrone died. He would visit the sick in the hospital day and night. He would jump onto his famous bicycle and pedal around town looking for people to help, or dragoon them into helping him help.

The hospital was rebuilt on new premises in 1915, and Br. Zatti was the administrator. He supervised maintenance, trained the personnel, met the payroll, handled the purchasing, and even acted as surgical assistant in a pinch.

Here's how a typical Zatti day would go:

- Up at 4:30 or 5:00 AM, then meditation and Mass.
- Around 7, into the hospital wards. "Everyone still alive?" "Yes, Br. Zatti!" But he'd check each patient to be sure. Some needed medication, so he took care of that.
- Breakfast, then another check on each patient.
- Then he hopped on the bike and went around to the outpatients. Most of the work was giving antibiotics by injection.
- Promptly at noon, lunch with the community, then *bocce*. He never missed this.
- 2 – 4 PM, out again on the bike.
- 4 PM, tea with the community. He never missed this.
- Late afternoon: desk work. If the in box was empty, he'd visit the wards again, or do another bike tour.
- 6 PM, spiritual reading, sometimes Benediction, with his confreres. He never missed this. Then to the wards to check on the patients at their supper. He gave them the "Good Night" shortly before 8.
- 8 PM, supper with his confreres.
- Around 9 PM, to his room with paperwork or personal study. He earned a government certificate as an infirmarian, roughly equivalent to a registered nurse. He also got his pharmacist's license from La Plata University.

He was on call at any time during the night.

In July 1950, he fell off a ladder, got up, but had constant pain. Doctors found incurable cancer of the liver a few months later. Zatti kept on working as long as he could. After filling out most of his own death certificate, he went to his reward on March 15, 1951. The whole town turned out for his funeral.

Fr. Vecchi reads the spiritual significance of Br. Zatti's life in terms of the Salesian vocation and Christian life, and later in the letter as an illustration of the brother's vocation.

Don Bosco showed Artemide Zatti how he could be like Jesus. That's been the path to holiness for a lot of young people.

Don Bosco and Zatti were totally dedicated to the mission to the young and the poor. Vecchi especially likes the figure of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what Zatti was all about. Here is an application of a spirituality of mission, with an associated ecclesiology of mission, that the SGC sketched out in 1972.⁸⁷ It has since been eclipsed somewhat by the ecclesiology of communion.

⁸⁷ See *SGC* §23-30.

Zatti was famous for referring to his patients as Jesus. “Do you have warm soup and clothes for a ten year old Jesus?” “Sister, can you get some clothes and a bed ready for a 75-year old Jesus?”

Pastoral charity is at the center in this spiritual portrait. Zatti united love of God with love of neighbor. It’s *da mihi animas, caetera tolle* in action.

Note that Jesus, and Zatti following His example, healed and taught. They were lovingly available to those most in need. They taught by word and example. In Zatti’s case, the words were little reminders of God’s love, family jokes, and his encouragement to follow God’s will even in the face of death.

We have seen how this is a favorite theme of Fr. Philip Rinaldi, rooted in Don Bosco’s professional schools, the brothers and the artisans. In taking up this theme, Vecchi recalls Rinaldi’s meeting with Pius XI. He also seems to be influenced by Fr. Viganò’s 1980 letter, even if he never quotes it. Consider:

- There is a dignity proper to human values.
- Natural laws and realities have a legitimate autonomy.
- Charity must be enlightened by smart planning and hard work.
- Zatti made spiritual growth and professional growth come together in his program for holiness.
- Work hard with love. Trust science and technology to help you work.

A risk pointed out by Vecchi is letting professionalism suffocate spirituality. Vecchi does not specifically cite this danger, but Viganò does: “Good will does not help fly an airplane.” Vecchi does point out the corrective: the “grace of unity.”

Vecchi interprets from the *Positio* a unified spiritual portrait: here is a man with a full personality, at once practical and spiritual. He’s a professional health care provider, an administrator, a community man, a gentle guide through the dark valley of death walked by the sick.

Zatti, like Don Bosco, attracts attention as one who can be united with God while busy with multiple and delicate “worldly” affairs.

More than once in this letter Vecchi points out the community dimension of Zatti’s holiness: always present for community functions, joyfully contributing in jokes, games, meals, prayer.

Here’s a man, like Don Bosco, who handled millions but never took anything for himself. Here’s a man, like Jesus, who walked that path the Father showed him, even when he would not have chosen that path himself.

After considering the spiritual significance of Br. Zatti’s life, Fr. Vecchi goes on to see what we can learn from it about the brother’s vocation in particular. This is the letter’s contribution to a theological understanding of this vocation.

This section on the letter is built around the relation of brothers and priests in the community, more or less as does article 45 of the Constitutions.⁸⁸ He emphasizes community more than the article, however: not surprising, in view of approaching GC 25. Indeed, Vecchi poses the question like this: "What does the lay state contribute to the brother's being a consecrated Salesian, and how does being a consecrated Salesian affect how he is a lay person?"⁸⁹ And he proposes the unique character of the Salesian community—priests and laity together—as the answer.

Here is where GC 24 connects with GC 25. The Salesian brother helps lay faithful see "the values of total dedication to God for the cause of the Kingdom."⁹⁰ In community, he helps his ordained confreres to love the world.⁹¹ All his professional or "worldly" activity is directed to the good of his fellow human beings, that highest good which is insertion into the unfolding Kingdom of God.

While it is true, says Fr. Vecchi, that priests and lay consecrated persons in the same community is no new phenomenon, we Salesians propose that the brother's lay vocation enables a unique way of being a community that draws young people into sacramental relationship with the Trinity.⁹² He then recalls Fr. Viganò's "lay element" letter at some length.

GC24 wanted a study of a possible "mixed" form of the Salesian Society, rather than the present "clerical" designation. It noticed that *Vita Consecrata*⁹³ had called for a special commission to study this very problem for the whole Church. Of course, we would have to answer ourselves the question about whether we'd be Don Bosco's Salesians if we became a mixed congregation.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Note that seminarians are not considered in article 45; they get lumped with young brothers in article 46. Recall the many times Don Bosco enumerated "priests, clerics and laymen."

⁸⁹ Some of this is recycled from an earlier letter: Juan Vecchi, "The Father Consecrates Us and Sends Us," in *ASC LXXIX* 365 (Oct. – Dec., 1998) 3-49. See esp. page 40.

⁹⁰ *BAZ*, 38. See also *GC24* §154.

⁹¹ See *GC25* §137, which cites *GC24* §154. Note this in Fr. Chavez's closing address; the Chapter text does not include the idea in the logical place: §70.

⁹² See *BAZ*, 39.

⁹³ See *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Vita Consecrata"* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome 1996) [=VC] §61.

⁹⁴ There is a clear ecclesiological tendency here, and indeed in all Salesian theologizing about our community and mission. We think of our community by analogy with the Church; recall how GC3-4 began constructing the brother's identity in the community by analogy with the lay person's place in the Church. Neither the Church nor religious life is by its nature "clerical" nor "lay", but both are needed to get the

Vecchi (and others) are often asked, “Why do we need brothers, if GC24 has told us to collaborate with the laity?” His answer is from that same GC24: brothers in the community make it easier for that community to be an animating nucleus, precisely because of lay members in it.⁹⁵ Fr. Viganò’s 1980 letter comes to mind in this context. Lay religious: they can relate to lay people. Lay religious: they can spiritually animate.⁹⁶

Toward the end of his Zatti letter, Fr. Vecchi looks at formation issues. The present Constitutions in Article 106 repeat a principle already expressed by Fr. Paul Albera⁹⁷ in a circular letter, and part of our particular law since the 19th General Chapter:⁹⁸ the formation of priests and brothers follows the same stages, with roughly equal duration, but with appropriately different content.

Vecchi suggests interprovincial collaboration on Brothers’ formation, an idea going back to at least GC 13.⁹⁹

3.2 Be Saints!

Even before Zatti’s beatification, Fr. Chavez had been thinking and writing about the example of holy Salesians. In fact, his very first circular letter as Rector Major is about this: “My Dear Salesians, Be Saints!”¹⁰⁰

He recalls Constitutions article 25:

The witness of such holiness, achieved within the Salesian mission, reveals the unique worth of the beatitudes and is the most precious gift we can offer to the young.

“A spirituality is a particular and concrete way towards holiness,” says the Rector Major.¹⁰¹ He then points to the Salesian Youth Spirituality developed by GC23, listing and describing its essential elements. His formulation differs from that of GC23, however, in content and formatting:

“teaching and healing” job done. We have always looked at ourselves the same way: recall what GC 3-4 said about the apostles and their lay helpers.

⁹⁵ See GC24 §154.

⁹⁶ See BAZ 41, 43.

⁹⁷ See the “equal length” idea in Albera, *Lettere Circolari* #42 (May 15, 1921),

520.

⁹⁸ See GC19, 72.

⁹⁹ See *Atti del Capitolo Superiore* (former title of *Acts of the General Council*) X 50 (Oct. 24, 1929), reporting on GC13. See esp. page 814. English translations exist only from 1932 on.

¹⁰⁰ In AGC 379 LXXXII (Oct.–Dec. 2002), 3–37.

¹⁰¹ See *Ibid.*, 19.

GC23 §161-180	Chavez, “Be Saints!” 19-25
▪ daily life	▪ daily life ▪ pedagogical wisdom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practical realism
▪ joy and optimism	• hope and joy
▪ friendship with Jesus	• friendship with Jesus
▪ communion in the Church	• membership in the Church
▪ service. ¹⁰²	• commitment to good works

Table 4: Salesian Youth Spirituality

In developing this sketch, Fr. Chavez appeals to concrete models: Dominic Savio, Michael Magone, and Mary the Mother of Jesus. We easily recognize these figures, and Don Bosco’s formation methods, in the GC23–Chavez proposal. Thus it passes the test we put forward earlier in this study: it does describe real Salesian saints. Follow this, and you can join them.

Still further into the letter, Fr. Chavez extracts Salesian spirituality by examining Salesian heroes of sanctity:

<i>Element of Spirituality</i>	<i>Salesian Hero</i>
Work and Temperance	Michael Rua
Pastoral Charity	Philip Rinaldi
Humility and Work	Mary Mazzarello
Daily Life and Work	Artemide Zatti, Mamma Margaret
Contemplation and Action	Maria Romero Meneses, Attilio Giordani
Family Spirit, Relationships	Vincent Cimatti
Spiritual Balance	Joseph Quadrio
Sacrifice	Andrea Beltrami, August Czartoryski, Louis Variara
Martyrdom	Aloysius Versiglia, Callistus Caravario (China), 95 in Spain, 14 in Poland.

Table 5. Salesian spirituality in holy Salesians

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, 19-25; compare with GC23 §161 (summary) and §162-180 (full treatment). Note how Chavez’s formatting seems to make everything from “practical realism” down subordinate to “pedagogical wisdom.” He refers to a retreat given by Fr. Vecchi, and ideas he used at various Salesian youth meetings.

3.3. General Chapter 25

Recent General Chapters, especially GC23, produced very little about Salesian brothers. But they had more brothers at the Chapter.

GC24 met in 1996 to consider animation of the laity in our ministry. Among its delegates were 10 brothers, and 4 more attended as observers. It contributed an idea that attracts the attention of later documents: lay Salesians in a community help it animate laity outside the community.¹⁰³

GC25 examined the Salesian community. 8 brothers took part as elected delegates, and 3 as invited observers. Its results appear in a special number of the Acts of the General Council;¹⁰⁴ this publishing method has been standard since GC19.

These Acts contain very little about the Salesian brother in its document on the community. There is a passing reference at the end of guidelines for animating the young: brothers and priests in community help its vocation ministry.¹⁰⁵ Another is in a guideline about care of brothers after initial formation.¹⁰⁶ The document does not use the GC24 idea of the community, animating nucleus of EPC, helped to be such by the presence of lay Salesians.¹⁰⁷

Most of what the Acts say about Salesian brothers is at the end, in the messages. In fact, the one to all the Salesian confreres is given over entirely to the meaning of Zatti's beatification, and brothers in the community. Its identity statement for the brother is short and accurate: a consecrated lay Salesian. GC24's idea makes an explicit appearance here.¹⁰⁸

GC25 took no action on GC24's request for a study of a possible "mixed" form of our Congregation (neither "clerical" nor "lay"). That was entrusted to the Rector Major and the Council, not to a General Chapter. See "Project of Animation," below. By mid-2001, the Vatican special committee mandated by VC to study this hadn't finished, so Fr. Vecchi in the Zatti letter said the directive of GC24 is still valid. In spite of uncertainty, charismatic fidelity for each Institute will be a criterion.¹⁰⁹

3.4. Program: Finding and Forming Vocations

How do we find vocations like Savio, Magone, Zatti, Giordani, Rua, Versiglia and the others? Our clues will come from the recently revised formation

¹⁰³ See GC24 §154.

¹⁰⁴ "The Salesian Community Today," in 378 of *AGC LXXXIII* (May 2002).

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, §48.

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, §60.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, §37 and §48, possible landing places besides §70 for this idea.

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, §137.

¹⁰⁹ See *BAZ*, 42-43.

handbook *Formation of Salesians of Don Bosco*, and more specifically, from its supplement on admissions, the *Criteria and Norms*.¹¹⁰

It begins a short section on particular signs of a Salesian brother vocation with a paragraph on identity. This neatly summarizes our renewed theology of this vocation; we will immediately recognize several recurring themes.

On account of his lay consecrated state, the Salesian brother is at one and the same time a sign of the secular dimension of the Church and of the values of consecration; for the Salesian community, the Educative Pastoral Community and the Church, he is a living pointer to the values of the secular dimension of the world and of history.¹¹¹

The basic identity elements and their values are all there: lay connection to secularity, prophetic value of religious consecration, commitment to youth ministry in common with the Educative Pastoral Community (EPC). Next comes a little more theology of the brother's lay state. CNSVD states that being lay is not about what you can do, but how you do it. It is about a way of being and acting, not simply a role or (worse) a negation of some other role.¹¹² The Vatican II document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, does indeed make a two-part negative definition of a lay person: not ordained, and not a religious. But it quickly follows that with a positive definition that does seem to be role-based: lay people order temporal affairs to the Kingdom.¹¹³ But Salesian theology of the brother's vocation has consistently pointed to this Kingdom-building *role* as having an impact on the brother's entire *spirituality*. Action follows being: one who is spiritually sensitive to the lay dimension loves the world, understands it, and wants to bring it to the Father.

As for particular characteristics of a future Salesian brother, the supplement borrows heavily from Fr. Viganò's letters and from the Constitutions [where I cite the sources in brackets].¹¹⁴ Someone who can live this vocation will have

¹¹⁰ *Criteria and Norms for Salesian Vocation Discernment: Admissions* (Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, Rome 2000) [=CNSVD]. Check §§85-86 to identify a possible brother vocation, or at §87 for characteristics of a possible future Salesian priest.

Unlike *FSDB* 1985, this version stays close to the Constitutions in sketching out identity.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, §85.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ See *LG* 31.

¹¹⁴ Quoted below from *CNSVD* §86, with reference to sources.

- closeness to the world and concern for human problems [Viganò's "Lay Element" letter], interest in the world of work [Viganò's 1983 "World of Work" letter in ACS LXIV 307] and sensitivity to the local area, readiness to offer his services;
- a professional approach ["Lay Element" letter again], aware that every job is necessary, a serious approach to planning [C19], the ability to collaborate;
- an esteem and a liking for manual and technical work, but also an appreciation for intellectual work and a readiness to profit from it ["Lay Element" again];
- sharing the spirit and the mission of other members of the Educative and Pastoral Community and of the Salesian Family, according to his own identity as a Salesian brother [GC 24 §154].

A word or two about FSDB 2000 itself. Its Chapter 2 makes identity the "starting-point and goal of our formation." That identity is that of consecrated youth ministers as in C45, richly commented with considerations about ministry and the values of religious life in §27-37. The brother's identity is then specified in §40. Following GC24 §154, FSDB says he "combines in himself the gifts of consecration with those of the lay state." It goes on to cite *The Salesian Brother*, and includes material on the secular dimension of the lay element similar to that in the "Lay Element" letter.

For the *Ratio*, formation means growing into Salesian identity.¹¹⁵ In several places, very short identity summaries appear, and they agree with C45: Salesian identity means to be Jesus, the Good Shepherd for the young;¹¹⁶ the brother's specific identity combines consecration and the lay state.¹¹⁷

3.5. Program: Project of Animation

Another tool chosen by Salesian leadership to implement our identity is the six-year plan based on the most recent General Chapter. Now, it covers the years 2002 to 2008.¹¹⁸ Like some messages of GC25, it calls for a "renewed, extraordinary and specific commitment to the vocation of the brother." Implementation responsibility is given to both Formation and Youth Pastoral departments.¹¹⁹ The Formation Department will also study the "mixed

¹¹⁵ See *FSDB* §41.

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, §25. See the longer treatment in §27-37, which draws from SGC, the Constitutions and *POL*, and many other documents considered in this study.

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, §40.

¹¹⁸ "Project of Animation and Government of the Rector Major and his Council for the period 2002-2008," in *AGC* 380 LXXXIV (January-March 2003) [= *Plan 2002-2008*]. It takes up the entire number.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31, "Formation Animation Area #6."

congregation" idea from GC24.¹²⁰ In doing so, the Department will avoid over-emphasis on the managerial and technical roles, looking instead for pastoral and educative roles.¹²¹

3.6. Program: Cereda's Guidelines

Fr. Francesco Cereda, General Councilor for Formation, developed a program for implementing the commitment to the brother wanted by Plan 2002-2008. It appears in a few pages of the "Guidelines and Policies" section of the Acts of the General Council.¹²²

How do we find and form brother vocations? From the beatification of Br. Zatti as a launching point, Cereda gives background orientations and practical suggestions for this job.

He begins with a review of post-Conciliar development of the brother's vocation in the documents coming from Rome. He summarizes the key titles:¹²³

- The Acts of the World Congress of Salesian Brothers (1975),
- General Chapter 21's document on the brother (1978),
- Fr. Viganò's "Lay Element" letter (1980),
- The 1984 Constitutions and Regulations with its commentary, *The Project of Life*,
- *The Salesian Brother: History, Identity, Vocational Apostolate and Formation* (1989),
- General Chapter 24 (1996),
- The third edition of the Ratio, or formation handbook (2000),
- Fr. Vecchi's 2001 letter on the beatification of Br. Zatti,
- General Chapter 25 (2002),
- The Project of animation and government of the Rector Major and his Council for 2002-2008.

Cereda's review gives a privileged place to Article 45 of the Constitutions:

The basis of every reflection and directive for today however, remains article 45 of the Constitutions with its commentary, provided in the text *The Project of Life of the Salesians of Don Bosco*.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 32, "Formation Intervention 6.1.1.3."

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 32, "Formation Procedure 6.2.1."

¹²² "The Care and Promotion of the Vocation of the Salesian Brother," in *AGC* 382 LXXXIV (July-September 2003), 29-43.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 30-32.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

Turning to the present situation, Cereda notes the prominence of the ecclesiology of communion and makes the obvious application to the problem at hand: no promotion of the lay vocation, no communion. Also, there's still a lack of clarity on the brother's identity, to the point of crisis. He recalls Viganò's 1984 "cry of alarm" over the crisis in numbers.

What to do? Go to the *Project of Animation*, says Cereda. The main points from there:

- Identity,
- Visibility,
- Vocation and formation ministry.

Awareness of the brother's vocational identity will have to come from awareness of our mission to youth and of our shared religious life as starting points. Here are the two general elements in the title of this study: "consecrated youth minister." My position here is that awareness passes to the specific quality that the lay state contributes to the brother's vocational identity, and Cereda moves into this with remarks about the brother's visibility.

Here is that oft-noted insight from the 24th General Chapter: precisely because it has a lay component, the Salesian community can animate the laity to be youth ministers.¹²⁵ Brothers working with young people are where the rubber hits the road. Complementarity comes into play, also: the specifically professional character of the lay Salesian's vocation is in synergism with pastoral commitment and spiritual experience. But this will not happen if people cannot see Salesian brothers.

And it will not happen if brother vocations are not found and formed, says Cereda. Brothers must help: they should be on the formation and teaching staff of all Salesian formation houses, including seminaries.

Referring to the *Ratio*, he reminds us of the fundamental unity of priestly and lay Salesian formation in its stages. All candidates have equal access to the necessary cultural foundation upon which any specific formation is to be built. During the novitiate, the candidate makes the choice of which form of Salesian vocation to follow; the choice is finalized before the specific formation period after practical training.¹²⁶

Specific formation to lay Salesian life happens after practical training. This is the stage least developed in comparison to the parallel stage for the seminarian Salesian, that of theology. But Cereda says that it is precisely here that the *Ratio* breaks new ground. This stage is not just professional qualification; it is formation to a professional way of being a consecrated youth minister. There is no such thing as formation to be a generic Salesian.

¹²⁵ See GC 24, § 154.

¹²⁶ *FSDB* 2000 §323, §342.

However, common formation to the Salesian identity remains the focus of formation in the post-novitiate. For that reason, Cereda recalls that the *Ratio* wants seminarians and brothers to do this stage together in one community.¹²⁷

Finding brother vocations will hinge on improving awareness of two facets of the vocation of a lay consecrated youth minister: the prophetic value of his religious life, and the specific contribution of his lay vocation to his ministry. Cereda asks how many doctors, coaches, or teachers actually see their jobs as ministry? The implied answer is that any of them that are Salesian brothers will certainly do so.¹²⁸

Even where people are aware in these two senses, there may not be a coherent plan for vocation ministry, and there might not be any brothers involved to a visible degree. A coherent plan must include provision to make all forms of the Salesian vocation visible, explain their common points and differences (unity in diversity) and provide a clear path to any of them.

4. Summary

Who are the Salesian brothers? From the Rule and other documents here examined, we have a consistent, three-element vocational identity outline: the Salesian brother is a lay consecrated youth minister. Every element: ministry to youth, being lay, and being a religious, affects the way he lives out his vocation. Every element, reduced to practice, contributes to his spiritual identity. His specific identity, and that of the Salesian seminarian or priest, contributes to the spiritual identity of the community.

Here is a possible way to show how our renewed documents, and especially Constitutions article 45, present the Salesian brother's and priest's identities in their proper context, that of the Salesian community:

The Salesian community of religious (GC25) is the animating nucleus (GC24) of the EPC's youth ministry (GC23). It has lay and priestly dimensions (Viganò's 1980 letter).	
Priests: pastors and educators for youth in the image of Jesus the Good Shepherd (FSDB 2000 ¹²⁹ , C 45).	Brothers: pastors and educators who animate youth to transform the world toward the Kingdom (FSDB 2000, C45).

Table 6. Vocational Identity of the Salesian priest and brother

Who are the Salesian brothers? Over the ping-pong table at the youth center, do not even think of drawing diagrams like this or talking about a secular slant

¹²⁷ FSDB 2000 §421.

¹²⁸ Cereda, "Care and Promotion", 38.

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, §30.

proper to the lay vocation. No, keep it simple: “Oh, we’re the guys that make the Gospel work. The priests help us understand it and party about it. We make that our life, like Don Bosco did.”