
NOTE

PERSONNEL OF THE NEW ROCHELLE PROVINCE: INCREASE AND DECREASE 1946-1988

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This study investigates the statistical history of the personnel of the New Rochelle Province of the Salesians of Saint John Bosco from 1946 to 1988. Its purpose is to present and evaluate data about the so-called vocation crisis of the post-Vatican II years. The data were first presented as part of the documentation for the 1989 provincial chapter; at that time I began with 1952, but I now cover the entire postwar period.

How many confreres have we had in our province, and what has happened to them over the years? What changes, if any, can be discerned in the patterns? What conclusions can be drawn from the information?

1. The New Rochelle Province

The province of New Rochelle (New York), designated as Stati Uniti-Est (SUE) in the official documents of the Salesian Society, is one of two Salesian provinces in the United States of America. Salesian work in the United States began at San Francisco on March 11, 1897.¹ A North American province was canonically erected with headquarters at San Francisco on January 20, 1902. It comprised four houses — all national parishes for immigrants — two in that city and one each in Oakland (California) and New York.²

¹ On earlier attempts to bring Don Bosco's sons to California and their eventual arrival, see M. RIBOTTA, *The Road Not Taken — The Salesians' Circuitous Road to North America*, in "Journal of Salesian Studies" (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of Salesian Studies) 1 no. 2 (Fall 1990), pp. 47-67.

² T. VALSECCHI, *Origine e sviluppo delle ispettorie salesiane. Serie cronologica fino all'anno 1903*, RSS 2 (1983), 266-267, 272; J. HURLEY, ed., *Service for the Young* (n.p., 1972), pp. 2-4. The beginning of Salesian work in New York is discussed by P. PASCUCCI, *Once upon a Time in Old New York*, in "Journal of Salesian Studies", 3 no. 1 (Spring 1992), pp. 1-25.

Province headquarters subsequently were moved 3,000 miles eastward to New York City, and in 1919 to New Rochelle, just north of New York. Salesian work expanded sufficiently, and the United States was so vast, that it became expedient to divide the North American province. On May 28, 1926, the province of San Francisco was established with six houses (five parishes and one school).³

The eastern province had nine houses in 1926 (seven parishes and two schools).⁴ One of the parishes was located at Toronto, Ontario (Canada).⁵ Its boundaries remained essentially the same for sixty-two years: eastern Canada, the United States east of the Mississippi River plus the state of Louisiana. When the Salesians went to Puerto Rico in 1947, that unincorporated American territory was made part of the New Rochelle Province; with the island's taking on commonwealth status (1952), the Salesian work was reassigned to the Mexican-Antilles province (1953). Beginning in 1971 the New Rochelle province undertook some parish work in the Bahamas, which continues. In mid-1988 the Salesians of the New Rochelle province were established in three Canadian provinces (New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario); in seven states (Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida); and on Grand Bahama Island.⁶

On August 15, 1988, eastern Canada became an independent vice province, headquartered at Sherbrooke (Quebec). The new vice province was made up of 7 parishes, 2 schools, and the provincial residence. The New Rochelle Province remained with 18 parishes, 8 schools, a college seminary, a seminary residence, 2 boys' clubs, 3 retreat houses, a publishing house, a mission procure, a residence for sick confreres, and the provincial residence.⁷

2. Methodology

Following World War II, the American Church in general experienced a very impressive numerical growth in vocations.⁸ The Salesians in particular experienced such growth, plus the immigration of quite a few confreres from Italy and from

³ T. VALSECCHI, *Le ispettorie salesiane. Serie cronologica dall'anno 1904 al 1926*, in RSS 3 (1984), pp. 119, 121-122.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124; Hurley, pp. 7-10.

⁵ Hurley, pp. 14-15.

⁶ *North American Directory 1988-1989* (New Rochelle, 1988), pp. 24-48.

⁷ *Ibid. passim*.

⁸ It has been suggested that the decline in priestly vocations in the U.S. actually began in 1942; in that year the ratio of priests to total Catholics peaked at one priest for every 617 Catholics. "Never before, or since, would the American Catholic community have so many priests available." Of course, no one noticed that ratio as long as seminaries were full and new priests were being ordained in large numbers (1945-1967). The total number of priests in the U.S. peaked at 59,892 in 1967. See Dennis CASTILLO, *The Origin of the Priest Shortage: 1942-1962*, in "America" 167 (1992), 302-304; the quotation is from p. 303.

Central Europe following the Communist takeovers in nations such as Lithuania, Poland, and Yugoslavia.

I will present and analyze data on the province's personnel for the period 1946-1988. I end with January 1, 1988, eight and a half months before eastern Canada's separation from the New Rochelle Province (and about a year before the study was originally done). I begin with January 1, 1946, less than five months after the end of World War II, because the province's make-up may be presumed at that date still to reflect the war situation.

As I said in the opening paragraph, the study originally began with 1952. Thence it proceeded to 1988 by looking at the province's situation every nine years.

I take my data from various Salesian elencos, or international directories, particularly those of 1946, 1952, 1961, 1970, 1979, and 1988.⁹ Obviously such data are not comprehensive; but for a good overview, every single confrere and every single year do not have to be reviewed. These six years provide a reasonable overview of the growth and decline of the province's numbers at short intervals. It is not just numbers that I look at, however. I have looked at and followed every individual confrere through these six directories, achieving a longitudinal study of the province's men.

At various times Salesians from other provinces have come to the United States for studies, particularly at the house of philosophy in Newton (New Jersey) and the theological residence at Columbus (Ohio). I do not count them as members of the province in the study since their presence here was meant to be, and was, a transient one. I do count members of the province temporarily outside it (e.g., for theological studies in Italy). Confreres on temporary loan from other provinces, but with a kind of permanence in the province (e.g., for pastoral work in a national parish) are also counted.

3. Data and Observations: 1946-1951

My use of the 1946 elenco, in contrast to the later editions, had to be refined by consultation with archival materials because the home province (New Rochelle or San Francisco) of the confreres in formation at Newton was not indicated. During World War II novices, students of philosophy, students of theology, and coadjutors in initial formation made their home in that rural town of northwestern New Jersey (population 1950: 5,781).

In January 1946 the Province of New Rochelle had 148 Salesians:¹⁰

⁹ *Elenco generale della Società di san Francesco di Sales*, published annually, non-commercially, at Turin until 1965, and at Rome since then.

¹⁰ A "cleric" or "clerical brother" is a novice or professed member preparing for the priesthood (including deacons). A "coadjutor" or "coadjutor brother" is a novice or professed

Table 1: *Personnel of the Province 1946*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices	4	1		5	3.4
temporarily professed	27	6		33	22.3
perpetually professed	20	19	71	110	74.3
total	51	26	71	148	100 ¹¹
% of province	34.4	17.6	48.0		

Clerical members were five-sixths of the province. Almost three-quarters of the members were perpetually professed, and more than a fifth were temporarily professed; novices were proportionally negligible. Six of the priests, canonically attached to the provincial house, were serving outside the province as military chaplains.

Six years later (January 1952), 17.6% of those 148 men no longer belonged to the province:

Table 2: *Losses 1946-1951*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Died	8	5.4‰
Transferred ¹²	2	82.4
Left the Society ¹³	16	10.8
Remained	122	82.4

member intending to remain a lay member. "Clerical members" include both clerics and priests.

¹¹ In some tables percentages may not add to exactly 100% because of rounding to the nearest decimal.

¹² E.g., by returning to their province of origin or going to the missions. This study takes no further note of them unless they permanently returned.

¹³ Except for Section IX, this study takes no note of whether the men who left might have joined a diocese or another congregation.

More particularly, this is what happened to 1946's 148 Salesians by 1952:

Table 3: *Change 1946-1951*

<i>status 1946</i>				<i>status 1952</i>				
	<i>number</i>	<i>p.p.</i>	<i>trans.</i>	<i>ord.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>rem'd</i>	<i>%¹⁴</i>
cler. novices	4					2	2 ¹⁵	50.0
coad. novices	1	1					1	100.0
cler. temp.	27	11 ¹⁶		9		7	20	70.4
coad. temp.	6	6					6	100.0
cler. perp.	20			19		1	19	95.0
coad. perp.	19		1		1		17	89.5
priests	71		1		7	6	57	80.3
	148	19	2	28	8	16	122	82.4

The 16 of 1946's confreres who left the Society divided thus:

Table 4: *Departures 1946-1951*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of departures</i>
novices		12.5%
clerics	2	
temporarily professed		43.8
clerics	7	
perpetually professed		
clerics	1	6.3
priests	6	37.5
clerical members	16	100.0
lay members	0	0.0

¹⁴ Status: perpetually professed (in addition to those ordained), transferred to another province, ordained priests, died, left the Society, remained in the province, percentage of group remaining.

¹⁵ Both clerical novices who remained in the Society as of 1952 were in their second triennial vows, one as a cleric, the other as a coadjutor.

¹⁶ One 1946 cleric in temporary vows made his perpetual profession as a coadjutor.

It seems somewhat astounding that all the confreres who left were clerics; in fact, the coadjutors gained 2 confreres from the ranks of 1946's clerics, as mentioned in the notes to Table 3.

Three of the priests who left had been military chaplains. Aside from that, one might be surprised at the high ratio (44%) of those who left the Society although they had made their perpetual profession.

In the six years from 1946 through 1951, the province lost 26 confreres from death, transfer, and departure from the Society. Yet its size increased by almost 80% in those same years, as it received 118 new members.

Table 5: *Vocations 1946-1951*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of new</i>
novices	9	4		13	11.0
temporarily professed	49	14		63	53.4
perpetually professed	5	12	25	42	35.4
total	63	30	25	118	

The number of confreres who came to New Rochelle from other provinces seems extraordinary: 51 of them, or 43.2% of the new membership of the province. Nine were confreres fleeing Communist oppression. Most notably, Fr. Ernest Giovannini, the provincial (1944-1958), brought over from Italy 12 young coadjutors to help start up trade schools and, perhaps, to strengthen the presence of the lay component in the Salesian identity. Of the other transferring confreres, 14 were clerics and 25 priests. The 51 came from 20 different provinces in 14 countries. Italy contributed more than half (26) from 7 provinces; the Barcelona province contributed 5 young clerics (this was the period when Puerto Rico belonged to the New Rochelle province), and the Paris province 3 clerics and a priest (work in French-speaking Canada began in 1947).

Clerical members made up 74.6% of the new membership of the province, and lay members 25.4%. This was a marked change from 1946, when priests and clerics were 82.4% of the existing province. The reason for the change was not only the influx of coadjutors from Italy but also native vocations. Of the confreres who came to New Rochelle from elsewhere in the Congregation 23.5% were lay brothers; but 26.9% of the native vocations (U.S. and Canada) were coadjutors, as well.

The few losses (26), the many in-transfers (51), and the new vocations (67) meant that by January 1952 the Province of New Rochelle had gained a net of 92 Salesians, or 62% more men, to a total of 240.

4. Data and Observations: 1952-1960

In January 1952 the Province of New Rochelle had 240 Salesians:

Table 6: *Personnel of the Province 1952*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices	9	4		13	5.4
temporarily professed	50	15		65	27.1
perpetually professed	15	37	110	162	67.5
total	74	56	110	240	
% of province	30.8	23.3	45.8		

The lay membership of the province grew substantially, from 17.6% to 23.3%. The province was substantially younger, with the novices and temporarily professed now accounting for almost a third of the members (32.5%), in contrast to 25.7% in 1946.

Nine years later (January 1961), one in four of those 240 men no longer belonged to the province:

Table 7: *Losses 1952-1960*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Died	11	4.6‰
Transferred	8	3.3
Left the Society	40	16.7
Remained	181	75.4

More particularly, this is what happened to 1952's 240 Salesians by 1961:

Table 8: *Change 1952-1960*

	<i>status 1952</i>			<i>status 1961</i>				
	<i>number</i>	<i>p.p.</i>	<i>trans.</i>	<i>ord.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>rem'd</i>	<i>%</i>
cler. novices	9	5				4	5	55.6
coad. novices	4	3				1	3	75.0
cler. temp.	50	11	3	18		18	29	58.0
coad. temp.	15	8				7	8	53.3
cler. perp.	15		3	12			12	80.0
coad. perp.	37				2	4	31	83.8
priests	110		2		9	6	93	84.6
	240	27	8	39	11	40	181	75.4

The 40 confreres who left the Society between 1952 and 1960 divided thus:

Table 9: *Departures 1952-1960*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of departures</i>
novices	5	12.5%
temporarily professed		
clerics	18	45.0
coadjutors	7	17.5
perpetually professed		
clerics	4	10.0
priests	6	15.0
clerical members	28	70.0
lay members	12	30.0

More than offsetting the loss of almost a quarter (24.6%) of the province's personnel between 1952-1960 was the gain of 224 new confreres — a 93.3% increase over the province's size in 1952! Thirty of these new members (13.4%) had belonged to other provinces in 1952 and in 1961 were working in our province permanently or on an extended basis. Another 194 men had joined the Society in those years. (Some of these, too — those entering the novitiate during 1961 or later — may have transferred into our province from another, but I have not researched that; most, if not all, were “native” vocations.)

The 30 confreres who transferred from other provinces included 3 perpetually professed clerics (10%), 7 perpetually professed coadjutors (23%), and 20 priests (67%).

The 194 “new” members of the Society included:

Table 10: *Vocations 1952-1960*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of new</i>
novices	28	10	38	19.6
temporarily professed	89	43	132	68.0
perpetually professed	15	9	24	12.4
total	132	62	194	

Clerical members made up 68% of the new membership of the Society, and lay members 32%.

Consequently, in January 1961 the Province of New Rochelle had grown to a membership of 405 Salesians.

Table 11: *Personnel of the Province 1961*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices	28	10		38	9.4
temporarily professed	89	43		132	32.6
perpetually professed	34	58	143	235	58.0
total	151	111	143	405	
% of province	37.3	27.4	35.3		

Clerical members now composed only 72.6% of the province, down from 76.7% nine years earlier; lay membership had increased from 1952's 23.3% to 27.4%.

The total membership of the province grew from 240 to 405 confreres in nine years — a growth of 68.8%. Growth was greater among coadjutors, the numbers almost doubling (+98.2%); clerical membership grew a “mere” 59.8%.

Increases by specific groups during the nine-year period were:

Table 12: *Increases 1952-1960*

clerical novices	211%
coadjutor novices	150
temporarily professed clerics	78
temporarily professed coadjutors	187
perpetually professed clerics	127
perpetually professed coadjutors	57
priests	30

There was obviously a youth movement on in our province during the 1950s. All categories of members were increasing, but novices and temporarily professed were increasing the fastest, priests and perpetually professed coadjutors the slowest.

Notable findings about the New Rochelle Province's development in personnel between 1952 and 1960 are:

1. One-quarter of the men active in 1952 were no longer part of the province in 1961, and most of these (one-sixth of the total membership) had left the Society.
2. The province grew phenomenally despite these losses, from 240 members to 405.
3. A sizeable portion (13%) of the province's new membership still came from other parts of the Society, 50 years and more after its canonical establishment in 1902.
4. While numbers were increasing among both clerical and lay members, lay membership was growing more than 1.5 times as fast as clerical membership.

5. The average age of the province decreased: in 1952, 32.5% of the members were novices or temporarily professed, but by 1961 this proportion had grown to 42%; the “priestly presence” decreased from 45% to 35%.

5. Data and Observations: 1961-1969

The nine years from 1961 to 1969 were also a period of growth. Before surveying that growth, we will see what happened to the older membership, the 405 confreres of 1961, as of January 1970:

Table 13: *Losses 1961-1969*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Died	21	5.2%
Transferred	11	7.7
Left the Society	116	28.6
Remained	257	63.5

One immediately sees that the loss of personnel has gotten heavier: from 1952-1960's 24.6% to 1961-1969's 36.5%. This loss was caused by death and transfers at basically the same rates as in the earlier period, but the portion of those leaving the Society jumped to 28.6% — up by 12.0%. In other words, the statistical difference in losses between the two nine-year periods comes from this category.

In more detail, the province's personnel went in these directions between 1961 and 1969:

Table 14: *Change 1961-1969*

	<i>status 1961</i>			<i>status 1970</i>				
	<i>number</i>	<i>p.p.</i>	<i>trans.</i>	<i>ord.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>rem'd</i>	<i>%</i>
cler. novices	28	8	1			19	8	28.6
coad. novices	10	1			1	8	1	10.0
cler. temp.	89	16	1	29		43	45	50.6
coad. temp.	43	27	1			15	27	62.8
cler. perp.	34		2	22		10	22	64.7
coad. perp.	58		2		4	10	42	72.4
priests	143		4		16	11	112	78.3
	404	52	11	52	21	116	257	63.5

Between 1961 and 1969, 116 confreres left the Society:

Table 15: *Departures 1961-1969*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of departures</i>
novices	27	23.5%
temporarily professed		
clerics	43	37.1
coadjutors	15	12.9
perpetually professed		
clerics	10	8.6
coadjutors	10	8.6
priests	11	9.5
clerical members	83	71.6
lay members	33	28.4

Clerical departures, 71.6% of all departures, were virtually identical with the clerical proportion of the province's membership (72.6%) in 1961.

Between 1961 and 1969, 22 priests came from other provinces to work in the New Rochelle Province. No coadjutors or clerics transferred into the province in the '60s — in contrast to the 1952-1960 period, when 33% of the transfers were perpetually professed brothers, lay or clerical.

The province lost 148 confreres during the '60s from deaths, change of province, or departure from the Society. To the 22 priests coming to the province from other provinces, our province added 131 "home-grown" vocations. So the losses were replaced, with a net gain of 5 men.

The 131 "new" members of the Society by 1970 included:

Table 16: *Vocations 1961-1969*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of new</i>
novices	16	2	18	13.7
temporarily professed	85	12	97	74.1
perpetually professed	12	4	16	12.2
total	113	18	131	

Clerical members made up 86.3% of the "new" membership, and lay members just 13.7%. One notices at once a drastic drop-off in the coadjutors' ranks; in the previous nine-year period, they were 32% of the province's new members. If the 22 priests who transferred into the province were also counted, the ratio would be even more lopsided.

In January 1970 the New Rochelle Province's total membership was 410 men.

Table 17: *Personnel of the Province 1970*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices	16	2		18	4.4
temporarily professed	85	12		97	23.7
perpetually professed	36	73	186	295	72.0
total	137	87	186	410	
% of province	33.4	21.2	45.4		

As the proportions of the new membership have already indicated, there was during 1961-1969 a swing toward clericalization of the membership of the province. (At the same time, a strong sense of declericalization was entering the province's mindset; but that is another topic.) Specifically, by 1970 clerical membership had jumped to 78.8%, slightly greater than 1952's 76.7%, but much more than 1961's 72.6%.

The province enjoyed a net gain of 1.2% in its personnel in the '60s, from 405 men (1961) to 410 (1970). The gains were entirely in the older ranks:

Table 18: *Increases and Decreases 1961-1969*

clerical novices	— 43%
coadjutor novices	— 80
temporarily professed clerics	— 5
temporarily professed coadjutors	— 72
perpetually professed clerics	+ 6
perpetually professed coadjutors	+ 26
priests	+ 30

Only three classes of membership showed an increase, three which augured well for the immediate future. But the serious drops in the younger classes indicated future problems if not quickly reversed. In 1952, novices and temporarily professed made up 32.5% of the province; in 1961, 42.0%; but in 1970, just 28.1%.

This section of our study has shown how the New Rochelle Province developed in personnel between 1961 and 1969. Notable findings are:

1. 36.5% of the men active in 1961 were no longer part of the province in 1970, and most of these (more than one-fourth of the province's total roster) had left the Society.

2. Despite these severe losses, the province managed to maintain its numbers by recruiting new members.

3. New membership in the province declined by 32.5%, from 194 new men (1952-1960) to 131 new confreres (1961-1969).

4. Between 1961-1969 more of the province's new membership (14.4%) came from outside the province than in the 1952-1960 period (13.4%) — but only in terms of ratio, not in absolute numbers.

5. The province's membership got older (72% perpetually professed in 1970, vs. 58% in 1961) and more clerical (79%, up from 73%).

6. Data and Observations: 1970-1978

For the first time in its history, the New Rochelle Province experienced a net decline in personnel numbers during the 1970-1978 period. As one might surmise, this decline had two broad causes: the loss of old members and the decline in newly-entering members.

In 1970 there were 410 men in the province. In 1979, 250 of them remained:

Table 19: *Losses 1970-1978*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Died	19	4.6%
Transferred	11	2.7
Left the Society	130	31.7
Remained	250	61.0

The membership loss in general was quite similar to that of the 1961-1969 period. The particulars are as follows:

Table 20: *Change 1970-1978*

<i>status 1970</i>				<i>status 1978</i>				
	<i>number</i>	<i>p.p.</i>	<i>trans.</i>	<i>ord.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>rem'd</i>	<i>%</i>
cler. novices	16	5				11	5	31.3
coad. novices	2	1				1	1	50.0
cler. temp.	85	7		32	1	45	39	45.9
coad. temp.	12	2	1		1	8	2	16.7
cler. perp.	36	2 ¹⁷	1	15		18	17	47.2
coad. perp.	73			3	3	14	56	76.7
priests	186		9		14	33	130	69.9
	410	17	11	50	19	130	250	61.0

One of the 5 clerical novices of 1970, after his first profession, switched from cleric to coadjutor. Two of the 85 temporarily professed clerics became coadjutors by the time of their perpetual profession. And as the table shows, three perpetually professed coadjutors studied for the priesthood and were ordained. Thus a total of six confreres changed their lay or seminarian status during this period, three clerics becoming coadjutors and three coadjutors becoming priests. Whether this was unusual in the Society worldwide I do not know; it was very unusual though not unprecedented in this province (see Table 3).

The percentage of confreres remaining in the province shows a further decline compared to 1961-1969's 63.5% (not to mention 1952-1960's 75.4%). Once again the ratio of deaths and transfers proves fairly constant. The percentage of those leaving the Society increased yet again: from 28.6% (1961-1969) to 31.7%. Since 1952-1960, the ratio of those leaving the Society has almost doubled from one in six to almost one in three.

Of the 130 confreres who left the Congregation we find:

¹⁷ One of these two opted to become a permanent deacon.

Table 21: *Departures 1970-1978*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of departures</i>
novices	12	9.2%
temporarily professed		
clerics	45	34.6
coadjutors	8	6.2
perpetually professed		
clerics	18	13.8
coadjutors	14	10.8
priests	33	25.4
clerical members	107	82.3
lay members	23	17.7

Clerical members, who were 78.8% of the province in 1970, left in slightly greater proportion — 82.3%, in contrast to the lay members' 17.7%.

From 1952 to 1960 our province welcomed into its ranks 30 confreres from other provinces; from 1961-1969, another 22; but between 1970-1978, just 9 transferring priests (one of whom was returning after some years in the missions). These transfers accounted for but 9.4% of the confreres added to the province's roster in 1970-1978 — a good sign if it meant that the province was mature enough to supply almost all its own needs and no longer needed to depend of "feeding" from Europe.

But in fact "native" Salesian vocations dropped off: In 1952-1960, 194 Americans and Canadians joined the Society; in 1961-1969, 131 locals; but in 1970-1978, only 87 home-grown vocations — a 33.6% decline in nine years. A hopeful sign, though, was the presence of 20 novices among those 87 in 1978!

This total of 96 new members of the province (9 transfers and 87 Americans or Canadians) obviously did not nearly offset the loss of 160 men through death, transfer out of the province, or leaving the Society.

The 87 "native" Salesian vocations divided as follows:

Table 22: *Vocations 1970-1978*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of new</i>
novices	20		20	23.0
temporarily professed	46	7	53	60.9
perpetually professed	10	4	14	16.1
total	76	11	87	

A statistic of continuing concern is the 87.4% clerical composition of the new membership (up 1.1% from the previous nine years). An aberration is that 16.1% of the new members were already in perpetual vows, up almost 4% from the ratios of both 1952-1960 and 1961-1969. Did that rise mean that, suddenly, those in initial formation were beginning to persevere at a higher rate? Or did it mean that between 1973 and 1978 there were so few entering that the 1970-1973 group made up a disproportionately high number of these "new" members? To answer the second question one need only consult the appropriate elencos. The last major part of this study will be a longer-range study of perseverance rates (Section 8) that will enable us to answer the first question.

In January 1979 the New Rochelle Province's total membership was 346 men:

Table 23: *Personnel of the Province 1979*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices	20			20	5.8
temporarily professed	46	7		53	15.3
perpetually professed	21	63	189	273	78.9
total	87	70	189	346	
% of province	25.1	20.2	54.6		

The clericalization of the province continued; by 1979 priests and clerics made up 79.8% of the membership, up 1.0% in nine years, 7.2% in eighteen years, and 3.1% in twenty-seven years. Novices made up a slightly greater percentage of the province than they did in 1952 or 1970, but far less than they did in 1961. Notwithstanding that, the aging of the province was evident:

Table 24: *Perpetually Professed Confreres as a Proportion of Total Province Membership*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>
1946	13.5%	12.8%	48.0%	74.3%
1952	6.3	15.4	45.8	67.5
1961	8.4	14.3	35.3	58.0
1970	8.8	17.8	45.4	72.0
1979	6.1	18.2	54.6	78.9

For the first time (at least within the scope of this study), more than half the province were priests. For the first time, more than three-quarters of the province were in perpetual vows. The ratio of perpetually professed coadjutors climbed while their absolute number dropped, though not as drastically as most of the other

personnel ranks of the province.

Except for the novices, all of whom were clerics in this unusual year, and the priests, every category of membership in the province experienced a decline in the nine-year period. The number of priests, of course, reflected in part the number of clerics in the previous two nine-year cycles.

Table 25: *Increases and Decreases 1970-1978*

clerical novices	+ 25.0%
coadjutor novices	—100.0
temporarily professed clerics	— 45.9
temporarily professed coadjutors	— 41.7
perpetually professed clerics	— 41.7
perpetually professed coadjutors	— 13.7
priests	+ 1.6

Total personnel in the province dropped from 410 to 346, a loss of 15.6%. The number of confreres in temporary vows was way down, yet, as we have already seen, these are the ones most likely to leave the Society in the next nine years. The only bright spot on the picture was the number of novices.

7. Data and Observations: 1979-1987

The previous part of the study showed the New Rochelle Province beginning to decline in numbers. Almost one-third of the confreres left the Society between 1970 and 1978, while the losses due to death and transfer remained proportionally constant. But the influx of new men no longer covered the losses. Gradually the province was becoming more and more clerical — a serious foundational problem. More serious from the immediate practical standpoint, it was rapidly aging at the same time that the total membership dropped by one-sixth.

In 1979 the province had 346 confreres. In the next nine years almost 30% of these were lost to the province.

Table 26: *Losses 1979-1987*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Died	28	8.1‰
Transferred	10	2.9
Left the Society	63	18.2
Remained	245	70.8

The first thing one notices is that “only” 18.2% of the members had left the Congregation — the lowest percentage since 1952-1960’s 16.7%. Then one notices that age has struck the province: the 8.1% of 1979’s confreres who died is substantially higher than the average of 4.8% who died during the previous three nine-year periods 1952-1960, 1961-1969, and 1970-1978. (Of the 28 who died, 2 were under 50 years of age; I have not compared this ratio with the ratios of earlier periods.)

Table 27: *Change 1979-1987*

	<i>status 1979</i>			<i>status 1987</i>				
	<i>number</i>	<i>p.p.</i>	<i>trans.</i>	<i>ord.</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>rem'd</i>	<i>%</i>
cler. novices	20	3		2		15	5	25.8
coad. novices	0							
cler. temp.	46		1	22		23	22	47.8
coad. temp.	7	6				1	6	85.7
cler. perp.	21	1 ¹⁸	2	13		5	14	66.7
coad. perp.	63				3	6	54	85.7
priests	189		7		25	13	144	76.2
	346	10	10	37	28	63	245	70.8

The 2 novices who were ordained are the first to advance so far in their formation in a nine-year period (in this province, in this study), and the 22 temporarily professed clerics who were ordained is by far the highest such percentage in this study. Two reasons may be presented for these facts:

1. The period of practical training between the years of studying philosophy and those of theology was reduced from three years to two during this period, bringing eventual ordination one year sooner.

2. More candidates were coming to the Society at a later age — after having already earned bachelor’s or higher degrees. For some of them the process of formation was shortened.

The proportion of temporarily professed coadjutors who made their perpetual vows (85.7%) was also the highest found in this study. The sample, however, is the smallest one in the study and, pending future studies, not much significance attaches to it.

A source of pride for the province lay in the reason for the transfers of the temporarily professed cleric, the two perpetually professed clerics, and two of the

¹⁸ Permanent deacon.

priests: they went to the African missions (after their ordinations, in the cases of the clerics).

In the 1979-1987 period there was some good news about the province's personnel losses compared with the previous nine-year cycle: the rate of men leaving the Congregation was cut in five of the six categories (the exception being the novices), and the total rate was reduced by 13.5%, from 1970-1978's 31.7% to 18.2%.

The 63 confreres who left from 1979-1987 divided thus:

Table 28: *Departures 1979-1987*

	<i>Number</i>	<i>% of departures</i>
novices	15	23.8%
temporarily professed		
clerics	23	36.5
coadjutors	1	1.6
perpetually professed		
clerics	5	7.9
coadjutors	6	9.5
priests	13	20.6
clerical members	56	88.9
lay members	7	11.1

The departing clerical confreres were 9.1% more than their proportion of membership in 1979. The 38.1% of those leaving who were perpetually professed was down from 50% in the previous nine-year period, but still more than the 26.7% of 1961-1969 or the 25% of 1952-1960. On the other hand, it was less than the 43.8% of the 1946-1951 period.

Of the 346 men who belonged to the province in January 1979, 245 remained in January 1988 (70.8%). They were reinforced by only 44 new confreres. Of these 44, 12 were priests transferring from other provinces (27.3% of all the new confreres), including one returning to the province and 8 coming to work with Italian, Polish, or Hispanic immigrants; and 3 were transferring clerics (6.8%). The 29 "completely new" men included:

Table 29: *Vocations 1979-1987*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% of new</i>
novices ¹⁹			4	13.8
temporarily professed	22	2	24	82.8
perpetually professed	1	0	1	3.4
total	23	2	29	

Not counting the novices, the new membership was 92.0% clerical, higher still than all the previous figures recorded. The figure for perpetually professed is shockingly low (cf. Tables 10, 16, and 22). It reflects either very small novitiate classes from 1980-1982 (even in comparison with the four novices of 1988), or a very low rate of retention of the members of those classes, or both.

With the number of new members barely replacing those who had died; the number of those transferring in replacing those transferring out, with a few extra; and more than one in six leaving the Society: the number of confreres serving in the province continued the decline we saw in the previous nine-year cycle. In January 1988 the New Rochelle Province's total membership was only 289 men:

Table 30: *Personnel of the Province 1988*²⁰

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
novices				4	1.4
temporarily professed	25	2		27	9.3
perpetually professed	5	60	193	258	89.3
total	30	62	193	289	
% of province	10.5 ²¹	21.8 ²¹	66.8		

Priests and clerics now composed 78.2% of professed members of the province, down by 1.6% from 1979 (the earlier figure also included the novices). The drop was not only because priests and clerics left the Congregation in proportionally greater numbers than did coadjutors during 1979-1987, but also because they died in

¹⁹ The elenco no longer distinguishes between clerical and coadjutor novices.

²⁰ If one consults the statistics published in the *Acts of the General Council of the Salesian Society of St John Bosco*, vol. 69, no. 325 (April-June 1988), p. 52, he will find different numbers in all of the categories below except the novices. I am not sure how to account for this; I suppose that confreres "on leave" and some of those whom I have counted as transferred out of the province account for some of the variance. I suggest that my figures more accurately reflect the actual state of the province.

²¹ Percentage of 285; the novices, neither clerical nor coadjutor, are not counted.

proportionally greater numbers: 89.3% of the deaths. In fact, in 1988 there were proportionally fewer clerical members than in 1970 and just 1.5% more than in 1952. But the proportion of priest-members of the province jumped from 54.6% to 66.8% in nine years.

The aging of the province went on:

Table 31: *Perpetually Professed Confreres as a Proportion of Total Province Membership*

	<i>Clerics</i>	<i>Coadjutors</i>	<i>Priests</i>	<i>Total</i>
1979	6.1	18.2	54.6	78.9
1988	1.7	20.8	66.8	89.3

Every group but priests suffered a loss of numbers during 1979-1987:

Table 32: *Increases and Decreases 1979-1987*

novices	— 80.0%
temporarily professed clerics	— 45.7
temporarily professed coadjutors	— 71.4
perpetually professed clerics	— 76.2
perpetually professed coadjutors	— 4.8
priests	+ 2.1

The province's net loss was 57 members (from 346 to 289), or 16.5% of the 1979 enrollment. The downward spiral begun during the 1970s continued at a frightening pace. The province took several steps to address the vocational crisis:

1. Establishing the Eastern Canadian vice-province in August 1988 gave to the Canadian confreres and their works a more clearly Canadian identity. One of the results of that could be more Salesian vocations for that vice-province.

2. The province vocation director already in the late '70s and continuing in the '80s undertook new (to the Salesians) forms of vocation advertising, e.g., in the student newspapers of Catholic universities, in national Catholic magazines, etc. Some of these campaigns were prepared with the help of advertising professionals.

3. A vocation director was appointed for the southern U.S. For some years previously, one man had to roam the entire U.S. part of the province visiting, speaking, interviewing, evaluating, and doing all those things that vocation directors do.

4. A house of formation for interested candidates and pre-novices was opened in New Orleans in 1989, the better to serve potential Salesian recruits from the South and to ease their transition to life in a large province of an international

Congregation.

5. The 1986 provincial chapter directed each community of the province to put together a vocation plan and revise it annually. Each community was also directed annually to appoint one confrere to coordinate local efforts to promote vocations.

6. After long study and the required approval from the general council, the province promulgated a formation directory on May 10, 1991; it is part of the province's general directory, discussed in the 1989 provincial chapter (see the first paragraph of this study).

Naturally, it remains to be seen whether these efforts and others will bear fruit. Meanwhile the culture remains adverse to long-range commitment, to chastity, and to other values of religious life, or Christian life in general. The Church, and ecclesiastical careers, continue to take their knocks from assorted controversies and occasional scandals.

On the other hand, it seems that the Church and the Congregation have been down this road before. Even in Don Bosco's days huge numbers of Salesians, including perpetually professed, left the Society.²² Yet the Congregation flourished. The road on which the province of New Rochelle — and others too, judging from the statistics published annually in the *Acts of the General Council* — presently finds itself need not be a dead-end street.

If there is a significant difference between how the Congregation looked at any given moment during the days of Don Bosco (or how our province looked in the 1940s and 1950s) and its present demographic state, it is the age of the confreres. Then numbers were few and those leaving were proportionally many, but those who remained were on average much younger than we find the men of New Rochelle and Sherbrooke today.

8. Long-term Perseverance

This study has thus far been concerned with how the New Rochelle province grew or declined in one six-year and several nine-year periods. Along with that we necessarily saw deaths, transfers, new men entering, and perseverance rates.

It is of more than passing interest to know about perseverance rates over longer stretches of time. We saw in Table 2, for instance, that 82.4% of the province's 1946 members remained in 1952. How many remained in 1961 or 1970? As we look at each cohort, will we find varying long-term rates of perseverance, as we did in the short term? What conclusions might the evidence point toward?

²² Pietro STELLA, *Don Bosco nella storia della religiosità cattolica*, 2^a ed., 2 (Rome: LAS, 1981), pp. 394-395, 401-402.

The men in the province as of January 1, 1946, form one cohort. Those who entered between 1946 and 1951 form a second one, which I will call the 1952 cohort; those of 1952-1960 a third (1961); those of 1961-1969 a fourth (1970); and those of 1970-1978 a fifth (1979).

When I speak below of “persevering,” I will mean those who remained in the province or who died in it (as far as the study is concerned). I will not count those who transferred out of it unless they subsequently returned (having been provincial or a missionary elsewhere, for example).

Those referred to below as “in initial formation” are the men in the novitiate or in temporary vows.

Table 33: *The 1946 Cohort*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Persevering in 1952</i>	<i>1961</i>	<i>1970</i>
initial formation	38	29	25	25
perpetually professed	107	100	98	95
	145	129	123	120

Over a twenty-four-year period (1946-1970), 65.8% of those in initial formation persevered (25 out of 38). Those in perpetual vows persevered at an 88.8% rate (95 of 107).

Table 34: *The 1952 Cohort*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Persevering in 1961</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>1979</i>
initial formation	76	45	33	21
perpetually professed	42	32	27	22
	118	77	60	43

Over a twenty-seven-year period (1952-1979), 27.6% of those who were in initial formation in 1952 persevered. Those in perpetual vows (men who transferred into the province 1946-1951 or who entered the Society and made their perpetual profession in that period) persevered at a 52.4% rate.

Comparing the 1946 cohort with the 1952 cohort, we see that the rate of perseverance for the perpetually professed members dropped from 88.8% to 52.4%. The fact that we are looking at twenty-four years in the former case, and twenty-seven years in the latter ought not to make a significant difference. But the 1946 cohort includes *all* the members of the province in perpetual vows at that time, whereas the 1952 group includes only members new to the province, and therefore on average much younger; that is a significant difference. But is it so significant that

by itself it explains a drop of 36.4% in rate of perseverance?

The rate of perseverance of those in initial formation, however, is comparable if we assume that the twenty-four-year period is essentially comparable to the twenty-seven-year period. Again, we find a major drop in the rate of perseverance, from 65.8% to 27.6%

Table 35: *The 1961 Cohort*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Persevering in 1970</i>	<i>1979</i>	<i>1988</i>
initial formation	170	82	51	49
perpetually professed	54	36	30	26
	224	118	81	75

Over the twenty-seven-year period 1961-1988, only 28.8% of the confreres in initial formation remained or died in the province. This is but marginally better than the 1952 cohort's 27.6%. Those in perpetual vows persevered at a rate of 48.1%, appreciably less than the 52.4% of the 1952 cohort.

As we saw in Tables 7-8, 181 of 1952's province ranks were still active members in 1961; 144 (79.6%) of these were still in the province in 1970. Of the 37 who were not, 17 had died (9.4%), 4 had transferred to another province (2.2%), and 16 had left the Society (8.8%). Between 1961 and 1969, the drop-out rate about halved, from 16.7% (1952-1960). Not unnaturally, the death rate about doubled, from 4.6%. The rate of province transfer was similar, 3.3% vs. 2.2%.

Table 36: *The 1970 Cohort*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Persevering in 1979</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1993</i>
initial formation	115	49	36	32
perpetually professed	38	22	20	16
	153	71	56	48

The men in initial formation in the 1970 cohort have persevered at a rate of 27.8% during the twenty-three years since. Of the perpetually professed in this group, 42.1% have persevered. Both of these figures are lower than the rates of the 1961 cohort over a twenty-seven-year span. In Table 33 we saw that over a twenty-four-year period, 65.8% of the 1946 cohort in initial formation persevered.

In 1961, 44.7% of the province were veterans who had belonged at least since 1952. Of the 116 men who left the Society between 1961 and 1969, only 16 (13.8%) came from this veteran group. The other 86.2% came from men who joined the province between 1952 and 1960. Among factors which might be at work here are (a) the age and maturity of the earlier group in contrast to that of the new and, of

course, younger members; (b) a more solid formation program enjoyed by the earlier group; (c) a lowering in the quality of candidates admitted during the '50s. (These three factors are not mutually exclusive, and other explanations are also possible.)

Possibilities (b) and (c) invite a comparison of 1952's personnel in formation with 1961's and 1970's. How did the confreres in formation in 1952 persevere in comparison with their younger confreres?

These are the rates of perseverance which we find:

Table 37: *Long-term Perseverance I*

	<i>Original number</i> ²³	<i>9 years later</i>	<i>18 years later</i>
1952 novices	13	8 = 61.5%	5 = 38.5%
temp. professed	65	37 = 56.9	28 = 43.1
perp. prof. clerics	12	12 = 100.0	12 = 100.0
formation total	90	57 = 63.3	45 = 50.0
1961 novices	37	10 = 27.0	3 = 8.1
temp. professed	132	74 = 56.1	45 = 34.1
perp. prof. clerics	34	24 = 70.6	14 = 41.2
formation total	203	108 = 53.2	62 = 30.5
1970 novices	18	6 = 33.3	3 = 16.7
temp. professed	95	42 = 44.2	33 = 34.7
perp. prof. clerics	11	7 = 63.6	6 = 54.5
formation total	124	55 = 44.4	42 = 33.9

One sees in every case that 1961's groups had a lower rate of perseverance than did 1952's. Before one jumps to the conclusion, however, that this was because formation in the '60s was somehow defective in comparison with earlier formation, one must also remember that the men who entered the Society between 1952 and 1960 were (obviously) younger and (presumably) less mature when the sociocultural turmoil of the '60s hit the entire province, and so were more susceptible to that turmoil regardless of any formation program.

A comparison of the 1970 cohort with the 1961 cohort yields mixed results: the 1970 novices and perpetually professed clerics show a greater rate of long-term perseverance than their 1961 peers. The 1961 temporary professed persevered at a higher rate than 1970's over a nine-year period, but the rate became a virtual tie over eighteen years. Overall, the men in formation in the 1970 cohort persevered

²³ Confreres who later transferred from the province within 18 years are not counted in this table. Those who died in the province within 18 years are counted as having persevered.

at a slightly higher rate (3.4% higher) than those in the 1961 group.

Clearly, men who entered the Congregation prior to, roughly, 1955 show a much greater tendency to persevere than those who entered afterwards.

The startling differences in rates of perseverance between the 1952 cohort and those of 1961 and 1970 may be a function of stage of religious life and not of the quality of the respective formation programs. The influence of the 1970s on Salesians in formation was a different influence than that of the 1960s. Before one can begin to draw firm conclusions about the variances in rates of perseverance, one must study the rates of loss experienced by other congregations in these periods, the relative ages of admission, admission criteria and procedures, formation programs, etc.

Less than eighteen years has passed since 1979; hence a complete comparison of the 1979 cohort with the earlier ones cannot be made. Here are the data up to October 1993:

Table 38: *The 1979 Cohort*

<i>Group</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Persevering in 1988</i>	<i>1993</i>
initial formation	72	33	28
perpetually professed	17	14	13
	89	47	41

Table 39: *Long-term Perseverance II*

	<i>Original number</i>	<i>9 years later</i>	<i>18 years later</i>
1979 novices	20	5 = 25.0%	5 = 25.0%
temp. professed	52	28 = 53.8	23 = 44.2
perp. prof. clerics	9	7 = 77.8	6 = 66.7
formation total 81	81	40 = 49.4	34 = 42.0

The comparison of those in formation in 1979 with the other three cohorts (Table 37) shows that after nine years the 1979 cohort generally resembled the 1961 cohort; which is to say that they did not fare very well. The relatively large novitiate class that was a source of hope (Tables 21 and 25) turned out, numerically, to be a disappointment (25% remaining). On the other hand, aside from the novices, those in formation in 1979 (those already professed) proved more persevering than their 1970 correlates (57.4% vs. 46.2%) and just slightly less persevering than their 1961 peers (58.3%). Those in formation in the early and mid-70s apparently did last better than their immediate predecessors. The factors posed concerning differences in rates of perseverance (under Table 37) might be posed again here.

The data for the 1979 cohort after fourteen years suggest that after eighteen years this cohort will closely resemble the 1970 cohort in rates of perseverance: not

nearly so enduring as the 1952 cohort but marginally better than that of 1961.

9. Changes of Status

In several places we have seen that confreres changed their lay or clerical status in the Congregation. The total number of these members was small. But it seems to be worth asking how well these men persevered and what, if anything, we can learn.

Two of the subjects of this study changed their status from cleric to coadjutor between 1946 and 1951 (Table 3). By 1961 both of these men had left the Society.

Between 1970 and 1978 six confreres changed their lay or clerical status (following Table 20). All three who switched from cleric to coadjutor left the Society by 1988, and so did one of the three coadjutors who sought and received priestly ordination.

This sample of eight individuals is too small to draw anything resembling a definite conclusion, but, six of the eight having left—five of them after perpetual profession—one might ask whether such changeovers generally indicate a fundamental vocational instability. Obviously such instability is not universally the case.

10. A Bright Spot amid the Losses

Don Bosco treasured all vocations for the Church, as we know. Among the scores of those counted somewhere above as having left the Salesian Society, as well as among those not counted because I studied only six particular elencos, are many novices, clerics, and priests who are now serving the Church as secular priests. I am personally aware of at least 31 of them, 11 who left the Salesians as novices or clerics, and 20 who left after ordination—just since 1946. Another priest has joined a new religious congregation. No doubt there are others in this period; I have not tried to track any down.²⁴

11. Tentative Conclusions

The data presented above suggest the following tentative conclusions for the two provinces (New Rochelle and Sherbrooke) that emerged from the 1988 division of the New Rochelle province.

1. The provinces, even in the best of times, may expect at least one confrere out of six to leave the Society over nine years' time.

²⁴ One could do such tracking for the U.S. by using the annual *National Catholic Directory* (New York: Kenedy).

2. The best way to minimize these losses appears to be to concentrate on the initial formation program (between first profession and perpetual profession) since the vast majority of confreres who left did so in that span. As heavy as the losses from this group were in the statistics presented above, there were additional losses not counted in this study: all those who entered, professed, and left within the gaps between the years studied, e.g. between 1962 and 1968.

3. The loss of confreres seems to have bottomed out, whether because of more mature candidates, more careful evaluation of candidates, a solidified formation program, the settling down of the times in and out of the Church (if they have settled down), or a combination of these factors.

4. The two provinces have more men available now than New Rochelle did in 1946 or even 1952, but these men are substantially older (contrast Tables 6 and 30). That brings the benefits of experience and the drawbacks of age and poor health.

5. The death rate in the provinces is likely to remain higher rather than lower (closer to 8.1% than to 4.6% per nine years) for the immediate future.

6. The number of confreres leaving the provinces to serve other parts of the Congregation or to retire will have a minimal impact on the provinces (having averaged 2.9% per nine years since 1952).

7. Unless there is a major influx of new North American candidates or confreres from abroad, the number of men in the provinces will continue to fall gradually for the foreseeable future.

8. The image and role of the coadjutor brother in Don Bosco's family continue to bear study, and strategies for attracting and retaining coadjutor vocations need to be devised, evaluated, and adjusted if this image and role are as vital as the Congregation has thought up till now.