**FR RINALDI**

***Good Father and humble servant of all***

**A Spiritual Profile**

**Fr Pierluigi Cameroni, SDB**

***“I will do my best to acquire true humility***

***and show charity to everyone.***

***To this end, I will not allow a day to pass, not even***

***even a single moment, without meditating on such virtues***

***and I will examine myself to see if I have sinned against them.”***

*(From Fr Philip Rinaldi’s resolutions)*

*(English translation by: Agnes B. Paulino)*

# *Presentation*

On the occasion of the first centenary of the foundation of the Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco, I am happy to present Fr Pierluigi Cameroni’s book *Fr Rinaldi, Good Father and humble servant of all, A Spiritual Profile.* The title already indicates the rich spiritual goal that the experience of this son of Don Bosco offers us in a life filled with God.

The saints are not simply our intercessors, but are above all people who accompany us on our journey of holiness through their testimony, and are transparent of that living and faithful God who walks beside us in history and loves us with a Father’s tenderness. Fr Philip Rinaldi, living image of Don Bosco, was one of these.

Fr Pierluigi Cameroni’s valuable text draws up a profile that highlights the great spiritual depth of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, one that makes him a true mountaineer of the Spirit:

– He was a man of God, a man of great faith nurtured with prayer and the Eucharist. Fr Ceria wrote that: “Fr Rinaldi presents himself to us with the features of a man of interior life. He practised it himself and preached it to others. He firmly believed that in order to live in accordance with Don Bosco’s spirit, one must not lose sight of one’s interior life...” Meditation, in particular was something he saw and did as an essential moment of growth in the interior life. To the young women whom he guided spiritually and with whom he began the experience of consecrated Salesian secularity, he recommended: “Never omit your meditation, even for one day of the year.”[[1]](#footnote-2)

– He was a man filled with God’s love; it was an embodied love, translated into kindness and fatherly consideration for one’s neighbour from both a material and spiritual point of view. As a good father, he was concerned with meeting the needs of the confreres, but also the needs of many ordinary folk who knocked at his door or whose needs he had already guessed; he was also very much appreciated for his wise, prudent and profound spiritual direction. And it was precisely his experience in guiding some of the oratory girls at the House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, girls who wanted to make progress in holiness, that gave rise to one of the most beautiful fruits of his creative activity, an all new experience at the time: faithful to the urgings of the Holy Spirit, he was the founder of what today is the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco.

– He was a welcoming man who knew how to give of his time generously to whoever had need of him, treating each as if they were the most important person in the world. Ever humble, he considered others to be always better than he was. He was prudent and transparent in his relationships, and both cordial and reserved. He was strong in adversity and at times of misunderstanding. He was austere and simple, faithful to the teachings of the young people’s Saint, so much so that it is said of him that “he only lacked Don Bosco’s voice.” His devotion to the Virgin Mary had a childlike simplicity.

If the saints are like the stars of the night that point out our path in life, certainly Fr Rinaldi can be considered a star of the first magnitude, to be loved, imitated, and from whom there is so much to learn. I am sure that this volume will help us to gain a much greater understanding of Salesian spirituality and to help the thirst for daily holiness grow in those who read it, in the way Fr Philip Rinaldi has shown us.

*Olga Krizova*

*World Moderator*

*of the Volunteers of Don Bosco*

# *Introduction*

***“I urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received with all humility*** and ***gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bonds of peace”*** (Eph 4:1-3).

*“Anyone who approached Fr Rinaldi felt he was approaching a father. Even his physical figure inspired confidence: a beautiful attitude, something he did habitually with a kindly but barely perceptible smile. His was a gentle, calm voice; slow and measured his words; a very mild and fatherly gaze which was an invitation to conversation”* (Fr Zerbino).

Fr Philip Rinaldi’s witness of life was an embodiment of the freedom he experienced in the gift of self, the unconditional trust in the love of God the Father of which he was a tangible sign. The human and spiritual events of his life that we will retrace by giving special attention to the testimonies gathered for the inquiry leading to his beatification,[[2]](#footnote-3) were marked, ever since he was a boy at the Salesian school at Mirabello, by his meeting Don Bosco. Don Bosco was a father who would accompany his vocational journey and stamp the quite original style of his entire life. Fr Rinaldi lived in the light of Don Bosco, interpreting the Salesian charism through the category of fatherliness as an expression of authenticity and vocational fruitfulness. From his youth he rejected every temptation to entrust himself to occasional spiritual fathers.

Even as a young priest he was given responsibility, until in time he became the successor of Don Bosco himself. And at all times he was on guard against this temptation, confirming and consolidating the educative and pastoral experience that had come from the young people’s Saint. Guided by and under the fatherly gaze of Don Bosco, he experienced that spiritual authority that liberates, brings growth and maturation to every good seed, allowing him to heal, lift up, and lead in a personal and unique form. He experienced genuine fatherliness and responded with filial obedience which, by virtue of the grace of the Holy Spirit, did not weigh upon him, but made him docile and attentive to the whisperings of his inner Teacher and opened up new horizons not only for himself as an individual, but also for all those who related to him or depended on him in some way..

Indeed, intimately shaped by this charismatic experience of a regenerating and liberating fatherliness, Fr Rinaldi immediately became a point of reference for many individuals and institutions to a point where he had extended the fatherly heritage he had received from Don Bosco in a truly prodigious way. The fact that as a young priest he had been given great responsibility, such as the accompaniment and formation of adult vocations, is a sign of how he lived and interpreted authority in spiritual terms at every stage of his life, across such a range of duties and roles, from Rector to Provincial, from Prefect General to Rector Major. He did this not as an exercise of power or in the style of a manager at the administration centre, but as an expert intermediary of the Spirit’s urgings and a faithful follower of his desires, as they touched on the lives of individuals, or communities and institutions.

We see a first side of this spiritual fatherliness in his intention and determination to safeguard and preserve the core of the Salesian charism as it emerged from the cradle of Valdocco and was embodied in new and diverse contexts and settings. It was not only a good to be preserved, but one that needed to flourish in all its expressions, and he gave strength and vigor especially to translating the charism into a lay setting, with special attention to Past Pupils and Cooperators, as well as inaugurating a new form of secular consecration with the planting of the seed which would flourish as the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco. Fr Rinaldi was the guarantee of novelty in continuity through a practical exercise of discernment and discrete and efficacious action to bring the vital sap of the charism everywhere. He exploited all the charismatic resources available to him, while avoiding fragmentation or reducing things to ideology.

A second side of Fr Rinaldi’s activity was the ability he had to draw on his personal experience, rooted as it was in the very springs of Salesian experience, drawn directly from the source, the Founder, and the rich setting of grace that was Valdocco and the first Salesian generation. The events of his maturing and deciding on his vocation, his accompaniment of adult vocations, the years he spent in Spain as the first Rector there and then as Provincial, the roles he had at the summit of the Salesian Congregation, were marked by the practical experience he had of either personal or community spiritual direction. Fr Rinaldi carried out the different responsibilities to which he was called from the perspective that the superior was first of all responsible for the *salus animarum* of his subjects. The motto *Give me souls* found its first expression and field of activity in the care he showed in protecting the confreres’ vocations. The superior, as Don Bosco wanted him to be, referred to the great monastic tradition of the *Abba,* the *Father,* who reflected God’s fatherliness, mercy and prevenient and healing grace. What is surprising in Fr Rinaldi is the fact that in common with Fr Michael Rua and Fr Paul Albera, the first successors of Don Bosco, he lived at a rather delicate time when the Holy See had established that Directors/Rectors in religious houses would no longer be the confessors of their confreres. With great wisdom, and in obedience to Rome, Fr Rinaldi was able to adapt this provision in such a way that it would not compromise the charism, while at the same time seizing upon the opportunities that this challenge involved. No wonder, therefore, that he exercised his role of authority and encouraged everyone else called to it without making excuses regarding their adequacy for the task. This was one aspect of great relevance for consecrated life: faced with scarcity of numbers and the haemorraghing of vocations, superiors and leaders are asked not to back off from the duty of noting the spiritual progress of the confreres and community.

This way, obedience and mission are not about personal whim or ill-advised capitulation to the urgency of the moment, but a response to the desires of the Spirit nurtured through true personal and community discernment. Due to his lengthy experience of spiritual direction, the ministry of Reconciliation, listening and dealing with his co-workers, Fr Rinaldi gained the ability to intuit hearts intimately, encourage consciences to be open, thus opening the royal path to recognising God’s will and a readiness to fulfil this will faithfully and creatively. Thus he presents himself to us as the superior and father who knows people from within and from without, encouraging a real self-awareness in them that offers security and strength, avoiding the extremes of a retreat into narcicsism or soaring vain ambition. There may certainly be unequal relationships between roles taken on and areas of responsibility, but the common ground is that we are all children of God who need to be obedient to the inspirations and movements of the Holy Spirit.

This way holiness, the apostolic and educative mission, missionary work, fidelity and the prophetic impetus of the charism are brought back to his unique vision and fatherly solicitude. The superior and father, as Fr Rinaldi lived and experienced it, is not the kind of person who is exclusively caught up in duties or distributing roles and tasks. Fr Rinaldi did not do this, not even during his twenty years as Prefect General, a role that mainly required him to carry out disciplinary and administrative duties. He knew how to protect and extend the ‘leaven’ of fatherliness and spiritual direction that precisely during that time would lead him to start up the more original works and enterprises of his lifetime. He assisted individuals and institutions, either those already founded or ones he started, to become what they were called to be. To do this, he was able to recognize and reject both the temptation to be a kind of policeman superior, suppressing and controlling, or the kind he was possibly more exposed to being, one who just let things go, neither intervening nor correcting. Like a good driver, he knew how to manage these two tendencies well and to guide people and institutions with the great wisdom and greatness of soul that would be recognized by everyone. What resulted was a superior who was a father, one who was of sturdy mind, experienced, untouched by human respect or the need to seek approval, not the least interested in strategies aimed at preserving power. Instead, in each authority role he humbly acknowledged his own inability and unworthiness and saw the need to put forward new names in different sets of circumstances, to invest in new and more capable confreres, people more suited to the duties required.

At the school of Don Bosco, he was convinced that the grace of God is at work, and we need to support it and correspond to it. The spiritual life consists in accepting that our life is shaped by the Spirit in obedience to his action. In this loving relationship we can see the primacy of grace and along with it the free contribution and awareness of the human being. Human beings cooperate by listening and being available and obedient. Their wish is to encounter the Lord and they pray that this encounter will take place and contribute to the mission they need to fulfil. The spiritual life is a dynamic that develops over time, involving all human dimensions, with its own rhythm and moments of growth and trial.

Aware of his own weakness and incapacity, Fr Rinaldi always lived with the profound conviction that “*if the Lord does not build the house, in vain do its builders labor”* (Ps 127:1) and that “*Apart from me you can do nothing”* (Jn 15:5). A concrete expression of this primacy of grace was his insistence on living the “union with God” that characterizes life in the spirit of Don Bosco, and that prompted him to ask Fr Eugenio Ceria to write the famous text *Don Bosco with God[[3]](#footnote-4)* on the occasion of the beatification of the young peoples’ Saint.

His special tool for cultivating union with God on a daily basis was his fidelity to and constant reminders of daily meditation, received from Don Bosco as he lay dying. Thus, as he wrote in the circular letter of 24 February 1925: “*In the Memoirs [of the Oratory], which Don Bosco himself wrote for our instruction, he tells us says that at about 12 years of age, Fr Calosso taught him to make a little meditation daily and he said that from that time on he began to appreciate what the spiritual life was. We will certainly do what is pleasing to him and what will attract the blessings of God upon us if we resolve to make our meditation better. By lifting up our minds to God we will learn to work in a way which is more in conformity to the spirit of our Father, our guide and model: we will be more active, more kindly with the boys, more charitable to the confreres, more ready to sacrifice ourselves for the good of souls; and we will move God’s heart to reveal Don Bosco’s holiness to the world even sooner.”[[4]](#footnote-5)* Meditation, daily examination of conscience, monthly recollection and the annual retreats are privileged moments for listening to the Word of God, purifying the heart, discerning God’s will.

His role as a superior who was a father led him to show particular care when it was a case of discerning the choice of people called to take on roles of responsibility, seeing to their formation and how that was carried out. It meant working for the life of the community through accompaniment of the confreres, preserving consecrated life and the charism, and purifying every deviation, spiritual sickness, to ensure the right conditions for mission, and safeguarding the good name of the Congregation.

The occasion for this book is the celebration of the centenary of foundation of the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco, of whom the Acts of this process at the time said: *“The Zealots of Mary Help of Christians, today the Volunteers of Don Bosco, are Fr Rinaldi’s most inspired institution for women while he was Prefect General of the Congregation. The Servant of God had the temperament or better the charism of the founder. He knew how to read the signs of the times, seize upon the needs of the world and relieve the anxiety of souls. Beginning with the spiritual requests of women among whom he was working, Fr Rinaldi finally achieved and set up a form of consecrated life in the world that is known today as consecrated secularity. The spiritual and juridical doctrines of his time had not matured to the point they have today; in the first instance there was a lack of official documents of the Church to support innovation in the scene of consecration to God. But it is not difficult to demonstrate how Fr Rinaldi had the charism, not of religious life in the world in the guise of a Third Order, but of consecrated secularity as a way of lifting up and sacntifying earthly reality. This is how he arrived at the beginnings of a secular institute that, today, recognizes and honors him as Father and Founder.”[[5]](#footnote-6)*

Fr Rinaldi shines out today as a special gift for the whole Salesian Family and in a special way for the Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco who venerate him as founder. His testimony helps us and is a reminder to live and promote consecrated life in its diverse forms and genuine expressions, going beyond both functionalist deviations and interpretations relying too much on psychology. In particular, he once again suggests the need to look after the conferes and the community, the sense of fellowship, as well as understanding the superior as father, harnessing spiritual and charismatic concern for the confreres through the spiritual fatherliness that finds one of its keenest and most fruitful expressions by savouring “home” and “family spirit” so typical of the Salesian charism.

# 1. **Biography**

## *1.1 His years in Lu Monferrato (1850–1877)*

Philip Rinaldi was born at Lu Monferrato, diocese of Casale and province of Alessandrina, on 28 May 1856 to Cristoforo Rinaldi and Antonia Brezzi, and was baptized on the same day he was born. The parents, well-off citizens, had nine children in whom they would nourish a genuinely Christian spirit and deep piety. The father was an impeccably upright and deeply religious man; Fr Rinaldi himself described his mother as “a wise woman, a strong woman, a holy woman.” Fr Rinaldi spoke of his father as a man who preserved his sons “from the corruption of the world ... through his piety.” We do not know the precise date of Philip’s First Communion, but he began receiving the Eucharist regularly, a unique case among the boys of the parish. He was confirmed at age 6, on 21 May 1862. A year earlier he had fleeting contact with Don Bosco. “The first time Don Bosco was in Lu, Fr Rinaldi would have been seven or eight years old (in fact, he was 5). He was at home playing. When he heard the sound of a band approaching, he went out and joined the crowd that was gathering. He knew nothing about Don Bosco at that stage, and that was the first time he had seen him, his boys around him, and talking to the people who crowded around him as he passed through. The band went on as far as the parish church and little by little, Don Bosco also arrived there. He followed the band, as was naturally the case. Caught up in the crowd, Philip got close to Don Bosco, but at the most would have kissed his hand.”[[6]](#footnote-7)

From childhood, Philip revealed his good character. He was sociable and placid, respectful of his parents, and they taught him to be an example to the other children. He was devoted to Our Lady. He did not attend the elementary school in the village but received his early education from a private teacher. There was an intense religious atmosphere in the entire village, and at the turn of the century, vocations would grow to truly exceptional numbers. The Rinaldi family, including the extended family, would be extraordinarily fruitful with male and female vocations: 25 of them between 1800 and 1900.[[7]](#footnote-8)

In the autumn of 1866, his father sent him to the San Carlo junior seminary that Don Bosco had established in the nearby village of Mirabello. There, he would meet Don Bosco on two occasions in November 1866 and on 9 July 1867. They would make a deep impression on him and leave an indelible mark on his soul. In a circular in 1931, a few months before he died, Fr Rinaldi remembered these encounters, describing them with the typical traits of Salesian spirituality: he mentioned “Father,” “loving kindness,” word in the ear,” “friendship,” “confession,” all ingredients of an intense spiritual life: “I remember as if it were yesterday the first time that I had the good fortune to meet him. I was little more than 10 years old at the time. The good Father was in the refectory, after his lunch, and still seated at table. He very kindly asked me to talk about myself, whispered in my ear and later asked me if I wanted to be his friend, adding immediately, as if testing how I was responding, that I might come to confession in the morning. These are now distant illuiminations, but they shine with very keen clarity now that my life is moving to its end. They are part of the dazzling splendours of the immortal halo that surrounds the head of the one to whom I went as a child and whispered the story of my soul into his ear.”[[8]](#footnote-9) He went to confession a second time to the Saint; later, Fr Rinaldi confided to Fr Eugenio Ceria that he had seen Don Bosco’s “face suddenly shine with a mysterious light.” The Rector of the house at Mirabello was Fr John Bonetti, and the assistant was the cleric Paul Albera, whom Philip would always remember with gratitude and affection and who would become the second successor of Don Bosco. The young Salesian accompanied him with advice, comforting words and above all with the example of charity and religious sense. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1867, after Don Bosco’s second visit, Philip left the college with an embittered soul, like someone who had taken the wrong road. He left the college and returned home to the family. He had headaches and poor eyesight and he had been struck by an assistant.

He returned to Lu and once more took up work in the fields, leading an exemplary life, distinguishing himself for his piety and virtue. At 17 years of age, he had a very brief crisis, but it had little consequence: along with some other young men he thought about not taking part in a procession where they would wear the cloak of the Confraternity of Saint Blase, which he was a member of, but he overcame the temptation and his human respect, did his duty and left written: “The memory of that day always did me a lot of good.” His prompt and complete resumption of duty was confirmed by the fact that at 18 years of age he was elected president of the Confraternity and regularly received Holy Communion, something that was unique among the youth of the village, as he would tell us himself. He thought about marriage, but after going to see Don Bosco at the Saint’s invitation, he decided to put the idea of marriage aside.

His religious vocation matured slowly. Thinking he neither had the health nor the capacity for being a priest he thought he would get himself a job, something more humble in his opinion: “The priestly trade does not seem made for me.” So, when he had turned 20, not feeling himself called to marriage, and having to make a decision, Philip thought of making his way to some Religious Order. He would be neither farm worker nor priest. But other than God’s grace, many factors would converge to bring his religious vocation to maturity: the concern of the zealous parish priest, Fr Ganora, “a great supporter of vocations,” and Don Bosco’s interest (he had had a good impression of the young man) continued to follow him. They never ceased keeping an eye on him and encouraging him to embrace the ideal of consecration to God, inviting him to take up religious life in the Salesian Society, in spite of the resistance and difficulties this young man from the Monferrato had presented. Philip Rinaldi himself would tell us much later: “Don Bosco never left me in peace. He wrote to me many times or made me say that I would go with him... a little later, he wrote to me, inviting me as usual, and I was tired of this insistence so replied: ‘I frequently have headaches... and more, I have poor eyesight; so it is impossible for me to undertake and continue my studies...’ I believed I had won... On the contrary, Don Bosco still kept writing to me saying: ‘Come; the headaches will pass and you will have sufficient eyesight for studying.‘ I felt beaten and after having reflected a little, I decided to obey Don Bosco.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

As we look at it now, despite the at times unfocused spiritual profile of the young Rinaldi as a young layman, there were sure elements for claiming that before and after Mirabello he was a model for the seriousness of his habits, his obedience to his parents, his piety and especially his Marian piety, regular receptionn of the sacraments, a rather rare case in those times, and for his active involvement in the Confraternity of Saint Blase, which he was elected as president of. This too is a very significant fact, since we are talking about an association of elderly individuals generally jealous of their privileges. Nevertheless, aside from his imposing physical presence that attracted the local village girls, it did not seem that Philip had any romantic interests, even if he had some moments of crisis and restlessness. But he was 21 before he would eventually overcome his natural uncertainty, thanks to Don Bosco, and would decide for religious life He had already sunk some solid foundations for becoming an excellent religious and priest, as in fact then happened. In particular, in this phase of his life, he showed a religious spirit, commitment to perfection, apostolic zeal among his fellow villagers, humility and prudence: all dimensions that, like seeds, would bear copious fruits of holiness and apostolic fecundity.

The religious vocation of the young Rinaldi, therefore, matured slowly, between uncertainties, suffering and resistance that would last for about ten years, more due to his temperament than to indecision, and to a congenital psychological insecurity and deep humility that brought him to distrust himself, especially when faced with the responsibilities of the priest. Finally, with God’ìs grace and Don Bosco’s help Philip would conquer his uncertainty and hesitation. It was a moment of true conversion. On 22 June 1876, Philip had a long chat with Don Bosco about his vocation. An exchange of letters with Fr Bonetti followed, and on 22 November, a final meeting took place with Don Bosco. It is significant that in leaving the world to offer himself to the Lord, he would tell Our Lady in somewhat dogmatic terms : “I would rather die than not correspond to my vocation.”

We make reference here to an autobiographical text by Fr Rinaldi which is revealing of his human and spiritual charcter. What stands out first of all is the decisive role Don Bosco played in the lad’s discernment and vocational accompaniment, its style marked by patience, purification of motives, and above all, charismatic attraction. What also emerges is the “reserved” trait that had characterized him since childhood, either in what he thought about himself, or of his actions. It is a trait that would stay with him throughout his life. Expressions like “being hidden in the Congregation,” “doing humble tasks,” “without anyone in the world seeing it,” “no one at home knew or said anything about it” “I begged him to keep everything a secret,” not only point to a psychological trait, but a style of life focused on interiority, on what is not immediately visible. In the final part of the account we see a strong and decisive will entrusted to the maternal intercession of Mary, wanting to be faithful to the gift received. It is all about a choice of life that marks a point of no return, given the awareness of God’s and the guarantee offered by Don Bosco’s mediation.

In the part entitled *Episode,* Fr Rinaldi recounts the memory of a day that marks a watershed in his existence. In spite of being surrounded by peers who were urging him to free himself from every tie with his past upbringing and the signs of faith he had learned in his family, he came to a decision to surmount all his psychological conditioning and barriers by testifying to his freedom of choice and personal adhesion to the faith of his fathers. His mother’s tears and prayers, along with the powerful intercession of St Joseph, were helps that placed him firmly on the path that led to God’s will.

### *An original description by Fr Rinaldi of his youth***[[10]](#footnote-11)**

(The “notebook” in the Salesian archives consists of 6 pages; it lacks the first page)

... everywhere; I had answered all my objections. He had won me over little by little. Detached from myself, I no longer had any problems to overcome. My relatives had left me free and my choice naturally fell on Don Bosco, who had already won me back again through his appeals, and his expeditions to America. Whether I studied or not, then, seemd to make no difference, and indeed I had always had those earlier humble feelings. Those days I wanted to be hidden in the Congregation, just doing humble tasks. In my heart I decided that without anyone in thre world seeing it, I would personally go and see Fr Bonetti at Borgo S. Martino.

It was a Sunday in September and I left early in the morning, hoping to go to confession, be in touch with the Salesians and be accepted by Fr Bonetti then bid goodbye to the relatives... (sic) Arriving at S. Martino, I found nobody at the reception desk, so I went upstairs and entered the chapel... No one there. So I went up another flight of stairs, opened a door and found the Brothers just getting out of bed. “Where is Fr Bonetti?” I asked. “Fr Bonetti? He is no longer the Rector here. He was transferred to Turin!!!” Like a dog that had been whipped I waited around no longer, turned on my heels and before nine was already returning to Lu. No one at home knew anything about it, and then I thought about reaching Fr Bonetti by writing to him. It was ten years since I had written to him and I tried to open my heart as best I could. He wrote back to me, encouraging me on behalf of Don Bosco. I had said nothing to the family, but they suspected something seeing the arrival of a letter with the Oratory address, so on 12 November, Feast of St Evasius, I opened my heart to my father with a letter. Poor father, he was so moved. I then begged him to keep everything a secret, which he did until after my departure.

On the 22nd of that month I went to Don Bosco at S. Martino where the feast of St Charles was being celebrated. Don Bosco told me to go to Sampierdarena; and that after two years, I would go to Turin for my clothing day, and that is what happened.

The day before my departure I went to my confessor to say goodbye. His eyes opened wide at the news, but he looked me in the eye and saw that I was clear about it, so he gave me wise advice and his blessing. I finally said goodbye to the family and turned my back on the world that had stolen the most beautiful years of my life.

May the Lord and his Blessed Mother grant that, having resisted so many graces in the past, I may no longer abuse them in the future.

Yes, O my most blessed Mother, may I die rather than not correspond to my vocation. Grant that I may make up for the past with the present and the future.

### *Episode... (sic)*

We are happy: now is the time for parties, amorous pursuits, having the time of one’s life, even squander a little money... flirt! Seventeen, I was saying... looking at whether one should tuck oneself away in a corner of the fireplace somewhere or just hang onto mother’s apron! We are young men and we should not hang around doing nothing. Away with all the leg-pulling... Having friends, leaving behind certain things that women and boys do is no great evil. Instead of attending confraternities, processions, etc., it is better to smoke a cigar. How pleasant it is is sending up clouds of smoke overlapping, rising, dissolving and going to waste...!

Meanwhile, it is Sunday; let’s get out of the house, look for a good time and away... Why not go for a walk in the countryside? We have time: and there is also... C.G. who will happily take part; we call him. So, off we go, here and there, chattering.

The vespers bell rings for the first time, the second... before it rings the third time, why not enjoy a glass of Malvasia? So good. We have hardly entered the courtyard when our mother looks over my friends from head to foot; are these the types for my son, she says? Poor boy: he’s off selling his soul! And not knowing what our mother is think, we drink to her health.

It was St Joseph’s Feast day and according to the custom of my village, there was a procession. Up until that day, since I was a little fellow, like we had all done from time immemorial, I used to attend the confraternity of St Blaise, and always joined in the procession wearing the white cape, despite already starting to feel ashamed. And I was overcome especially by human respect that I could only conquer by leaving those young lads behind. I stopped myself by not going with them... I was already... among the women... the old ones... We took steps to enter the church. I noted in passing that one of the boys was quite dangerous and I was sure that in church he would either have disturbed me or would have got me to leave. But I was calm, I was near the door, I pushed it to enter and opened it for my companions to pass through, then, as if held back by an invisible hand, I felt I was pushed out. I turned around without saying a word and like mad ran hastily back home... I entered the house and a groan mixed in with my name struck my ears. It was my poor mother who was kneeling in front of St Joseph praying for me to be freed of all evil. Mortified, I seized my habit and went to the procession, while my good mother said: St Joseph has touched your heart. She was right; even today I still cannot explain what made me turn back, the hand that restrained me, my hasty, unconscious run home without saying*:* there was the hand of God. The memory of that day always did me much good and instilled huge confidence in St Joseph in me. And now in recognition, I would like to describe how it was appropriate for giving him glory and encouraging many others to always turn to this dear Saint. But since I do not know and I cannot know, I ask him to always give me enlightened confidence in him and to inspire this in many others.

## *1.2 Aspirant and young Salesian (1877 – 1882)*

From that moment on, he abandoned himself trustfully into God’s hands, and God made him “a daring and secure accomplisher of apostolic enterprises.” So, at 21 years old, in 1877, Philip entered the institute that Don Bosco had opened at Sampierdarena (Genoa) for the formation of adult vocations, where the Rector was Fr Paul Albera, who had already been his assistant at Mirabello. Writing to his relatives, he described him as his “guardian angel,” who comforted him with a word and a glance and supported him in the journey he needed to undertake, to the point where, when the young Rinaldi confided in him the fear that one day or other he might run away, he was heard to reply: “I would go and bring you back.”

What we still have of those early years of religious life are the “Resolutions” that the young Rinaldi entrusted to some loose pages. They are a precious document for understanding the spiritual energy that informed his religious formation and preparation for priesthood. Given the content of those “resolutions” it does not seem to be overstating things to say that that from then on he strove for perfection in Christian life with all his strength. Indeed, it turns out that his life was dominated by spiritual motivations and sketched out according to a concrete program involving the struggle with his defects, vigilance in temptation, constant control of his passions, prayer, mortification and trustful abandonment to God under the watchful gaze of Our Blessed Lady. The chief points of his daily ascetic commitment were: humility, obedience, controlled use of language, and total availability to what the superiors wanted, since he thought of them as the representatives of God and mediators of his will. These were practical and not idealistic or illusory guidelines for religious life and revelaed the practical approach that would guide Fr Rinaldi throughout his life, as well as being signs of an uncommon spiritual maturity for a young student aspirant to religious life. One very valubale passage is where he says: “I want to do, think, speak with God alone as the goal,” an expression of a radical choice that would provide a deep structure for his life, a point of no return that would give him guidance in event be it happy or sad. Moreover, two virtues would emerge that would stand out in his spiritual profile: charity and humility: the first was manifested in the exercise of fatherly kindness, loving-kindness, and the other in the constant attitude of generous and unselfishness service of his neighbour. These resolutions were a constant point of reference whereby he could check on his progress and pick up again when needed, and were expressed through his fidelity to morning meditation and an examination of conscience in the evening.

### *Philip Rinaldi’s resolutions between 1877 and 1881***[[11]](#footnote-12)**

*(These original resolutions, written down over different years, are contained on three pages in a tiny and unsteady hand).*

Your counsellor is death.

In the work, the aim and end is eternity.

Always have great distrust of yourself and great confidence in God, in Our Blessed Lady.

I want and promise to observe the rules of the Congregation of St Francis de Sales.

I want to tame my inclination to pride.

On Saturday I will receive Holy Communion to honor Our Blessed Lady.

27 March 1882 – retreat

I resolve to often read the former written promises and scrupulously put them into practice until the retreat next autumn.

On 22 September 1878, I made the vow of chastity for one year.

On 27 September 1879, I renewed this vow.

Reminders my confessor has given me to smotth the way in the Salesian Congregation and as a forewarning (*sic):* Humility, Patience, Obedience.

Philip?? (*sic)* Whenever you are tempted, reflect:

1. On the dangers of the world.

2. On the reason why you withdrew from it.

3. That in the world there is no stable pleasure.

4. That everything is dissipation of spirit.

5. That you need to suffer to save yourself.

6. That prayer and trust in God overcomes every difficulty.

7. On how much Our Blessed Lady favors prayers well said.

8. That the world and the body are nothing and the soul and Paradise are everything .

Think about and recall the urgings you have had from Divine Grace, why you withdrew from the world; and that here is where the Lord wants us.

1877 – Sampierdarena

Daily method

1. When waking in the morning I will kiss the Crucifix and say some brief prayers. I will also kiss the scapular or medal of Our Blessed Mother and recommend the day to her that the Lord has once again given me.

2. By which I mean that whenver the bell sounds, I will be ready to obey the commands of Our Blessed Lady.

3. I will get out of bed as soon as is indicated, and every morning on my knees I will ask for Our Blessed Lady’s blessing.

4. While dressing myself, I will remain recollected with thoughgs of God.

5. For the rest of the day I will do what pleases my superiors.

6. I wish to overcome the distractions that will come to me either in church or study or in school.

7. I will receive Holy Communion every morning if my superiors do not take away permission for this.

8. I will confide all my anxieties in my spiritual superior.

9. I will eat only when and as much as my body requires for preserving my health.

10. In recreation I will refrain from talking too much, since this is very harmful to me.

11. On walks and when going out, I will mortify my eyes out of love for Mary most holy.

12. I want and promise to be devoted to Our Blessed Lady and St Joseph. And I hope to receive from you, dear Mother, my protector, the grace of coming to love Jesus and giving my life for his glory.

20 March 1881

I want to save my soul. I will put up with negativitie things by complaining only to Jesus, Mary and St Joseph.

19 April

Here, that’s enough: it has already been too much; I’ll stop here and with the Lord’s grace, I absolutely want to stop complaining. I want to do, think, speak only with God in view. I will submit in a heartfelt way to any superiors, and instead of thinking as if I am in charge, I will first at least try to get as much agreement... (unintelligible) as possible from the superior who points out the rule to me.

My God, Most Holy Mother, I want it because you want it, but give me the grace.

Remembrance of Fr Canepa Domenico: C. and O.

Promises made at *Monte della Madonna della Guardia* on 3 October 1879 to always obey my superiors.

If Our Blessed Lady grants me the memory and true wisdom, I promised to spend all the time left to me after obedience with holy books, sermons and other written material that speaks of Mary.

### *Fr Rinaldi’s resolutions and prayers 1878 – 1879***[[12]](#footnote-13)**

*(The page was not dated, but a probable date, 1878 has been pencilled in).*

I am a stick in the Rector’s hands. He loves me, wants me to go to Paradise; therefore, I ought to let him think about it, help me, lead me to Paradise.

Concern and thoughts about studies I leave to Him; I want to be happy when I can say that up till now I have done what I can, and that’s it.

I might have knowledge, intelligence and memory but I have nothing without the protection of Our Blessed Lady. Well then, If I succeed, good, it is her glory and God’s and if not, it’s not up to me to worry about it.

Most Holy Mother, remember that I intend to study for the glory of God, so if knowledge will cause me harm, do not give it to me. You have always helped me until now, and I hope that you never abandon me.

LONG LIVE MARY and the one Who created you.

*(On the reverse of the same page)*

Rule of life regarding food:

1st – At breakfast: cup never full of milk and coffee; no more than ¼ loaf of bread.

2nd – At lunch: just enough, with mortification.

3rd – At dinner: one ladle of thick vegetable and pasta soup – half a loaf of bread, no more

4th – Outside meals – neither food nor drink.

I will do my best to acquire true humility and show charity to everyone. To this end I will not allow a day to pass, not even a single moment, without meditating on such virtues and I will examine myself to see if I have sinned against them.

Resuming his studies was difficult at the beginning but then he made continuous progress. He gained his teacher’s certificate as a private student. And having overcome his early difficulties settling in and with his studies, at the end of the year he was described as being “most studious and excellent.” Fully trusting in the help of the Lord and of Our Lady, he made such progress in his spiritual formation that on 22 September 1878 he made the vow of chastity for one year and renewed it the following year.

On 8 September 1879, he entered the novitiate at San Benigno Canavese and immediately won the respect and trust of the novice master, Fr Giulio Barberis, who appointed him assistant to his fellow novices. This demanding task of assistant to the other novices, which he carried out in obedience to his spiritual diretor, though not without some inward struggle, would contribute to gradually tempering his character to the point where he acquired the self-assurance, serenity and calm that were then to be the characteristics of the mature man. On 20 October he received the clerical habit from Don Bosco himself and on 13 August 1880, made his perpetual profession.

He did an accelerated course in philosophy and theology (1880-1883), continuing his efforts at forming his character and overcoming his psychological insecurity. He made remarkable progress in his spiritual life, acquiring extraordinary spiritual maturity that then allowed him to rapidly reach the summit of perfection. Furthermore, there was confirmation of this in the fact that in the meantime, Don Bosco himself used all the prestige of his advice and authority to have him advance as far as the goal of priesthood, which he received on 23 December 1882 at Ivrea.

It all took place at Don Bosco’s wish, as Fr Rinaldi himself would attest to some months after Don Bosco’s death, as a sign of the decisive role that the Saint played in his Salesian and priestly vocation: “I ought to remember that from when I was ten until I turned twenty, I resisted my vocation both inwardly and outwardly. It was Don Bosco who traced the way for me, who sent me to receive holy orders without me hinting at it or asking him or others. When I became a priest, he asked me if I was happy: My reply: while Don Bosco is around, all very well; but if Don Bosco were to send me out of the Congregation, I would find myself very uncomfortable.”[[13]](#footnote-14)

As we see from this journey in his life, and as Fr Rinaldi himself often declared and humbly recognized, it is clear that he did not receive an extensive cultural preparation, either in terms of theology or specialist knowledge: the rapid stages of his priestly preparation, following one another in quick succession did not permit this. In Salesian tradition it was known as the “school of fire”, indicating how they needed to quickly pursue the results that would make them suitable for the demands of Salesian work among the young. For sure, Philip Rinaldi’s humanistic and theological preparation was reduced to the essentials, both at the beginning of his religious life and later. Don Bosco wanted things to happen in a hurry for Fr Rinaldi, so he could have him available immediately, and was satisfied with what was purely necessary. Fr Rinaldi commited himself to study and above all placed his trust in the decisions Don Bosco took in this regard and carried them out with extreme obedience. So, what actually distinguished Fr Rinaldi and what everyone realised was his practical knowledge which came from common sense, personal reflections and from experience, of course enlightened by God’s grace: this knowledge did not make a doctor of him, but a sought-after spiritual director, a teacher of life and also a holy person of governance.

When we examine his life, from his early years of priesthood to the summit of responsibility in the Congregation, we see concrete proof of the shift he made from “psychological uncertainty,” more the case because of his precarious conditions of health, from the difficulty of taking up his studies once more, and from his low self-esteem, to a maturity characterized by a growing interior life. It would make him, through his priestly ministry and the experience he gained, a man fully in control of himself, of clear judgement on people and situations, and a sure guide and leader for anyone who would approach him. He was a calm and serene person, master of people and events, while remaining humble, reserved, without show of strength, more confident in God than in himself. We can also recognize how the action of the Holy Spirit in his life brought about real transformation and also how people who might be limited and lacking in human eyes, but who let themselves be intimately shaped by him, become pillars of strength that turn life into an adventure in the Spirit.

A number of features of his spiritual character are already made manifest in a particular way in this early period of his life: hise tender and filial devotion to Our Lady, the seriousness and practical way he commits himself to his sanctification, his fidelity to the practices of piety, and his trust in the superiors, full of the simplicity and readiness to obey that reached its summit in the holy founder.

## *1.3 Director of adult vocations and superior in Spain (1882–1901)*

Immediately after his priestly ordination, Don Bosco made the decision to appoint Fr Rinaldi as Rector at the Mathi work in Turin (1883–1884), where the young superior immediately made the house a true family through his zeal, charity and fatherliness. The following year, he was transferred to the St John the Evangelist house in Turin, where adult vocations were formed to religious life and prepared for the priesthood. Now that he was in Turin, he had the good fortune and privilege of being able to regularly visit the founder who was a guide and example to him and urged him on in the practice of perfection. It was a particularly fruitful period for him, insofar as he could confess every week to Don Bosco and so assimilate his true spirit. He made the most of it to the point that those who knew about it remembered and admired his unostentatious piety, charity, zeal, his firmness always clothed in kindness and constant serenity: in short, a rich set of virtues that already made him an incomparable master of pedagogical wisdom. “He ran the house for five years. They were five years we can consider to be the central period of his life, because during them he brought to completion the transformation initiated when he came to know and then followed his vocation. He entered St John with something still of his youthful rashness, brashness or impulsiveness in speech and action and sentiments, but he came away from them as a man in control of himself and spiritually superior to the circumstances of daily life. Just looking at him gave one the impression of firmness, kindness and piety.”[[14]](#footnote-15)

Fr Rinaldi’s worth also did not escape Don Bosco’s successor, Blessed Micahel Rua, who in 1889 sent him to Spain as Rector of the house at Sarriá in Barcelona. On the eve of his departure, he formulated the resolutions that have come down to us today, and which clearly reveal how, in such a brief period, Fr Rinaldi had acquired a perfect balance of character and great spiritual fatherliness. He was fully competent in the way he discharged his duties there, despite the situation being so different from many points of view from the previous experiences he had had in Piedmont, It showed, ultimately, the extent of progress he had made in practising virtue and how deeply rooted was his fidelity to the ideals he had inherited from Don Bosco. Aware of his limitations, which the “Attention Philip!” he wrote at the beginning of his resolutions pointed to, meant that he also spent this phase of his life with great filial trust in Mary, feeling he was always and only her *niño.*

### *Fr Rinaldi’s resolutions (1889)*[[15]](#footnote-16)

This morning, it is all about humility – even at the start of lunch – therefore confidence and hope in God – certainty of succeeding in great things.

At the end of lunch, due to my stupidity, I plainly did not know how to speak about my poverty, I got confused, or rather embarrassed and said “yes” when I should have said “no” and here I am far, far from those holy thoughts I had earlier been inspired by.

If I act like this during the Retreat, what will I be doing with things amidst difficulties, far from the superiors?... Where will I get that tranquillity, that frankness, that spirit of Don Bosco, spirit of holiness?

Mary most holy, here is your *niño.* So, help me to do what God wants so I can end up doing the good that the superiors expect from me, that God’s glory demands, that the good of souls needs, and that I too, in some of my better moments have desired.

I resolve therefore:

1 – to make a sincere confession.

2 – If I go to Spain:

1. I will speak little, including with outsiders, of anything that is unrelated to the glory of God and to the good of society
2. Charity and gentleness always with the confreres by patiently putting up with whatever might happen to me, listening to them and questioning them, and regularly asking them to come for their *rendiconto* (manifestation). However, it will be good to speak informally to everyone and not chatter about vain and stupid things. Careful here, Philip! Insist that they attend to their duties and watch over them.

Be regular with meditation, and especially humility, the exercise for a happy death, conferences, *rendiconto*, prayer before every action and to keepo myself recollected in God. In extraordinary cases, I will at least say: Mary Help of Christians, pray for me!

3 – With the young, always be happy and good and sincerely so. I will spend time with them, playing with them, chatting; Then speak of God, Mary Help of Christians and of Don Bosco.

4 – With the Sisters, always patience, reserve and never abandon them, but not waste time either.

5 – With benefactors, good manners, never opposition. I will speak especially of our work, that is of Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians, about doing good, the need for their support, about Fr Rua, the Oratory. I will not get involved in politics, declaring myself ignorant of them and busy about doing good for the young, therefore quite unable to be concerned about politics.

Humility, confidence in Mary Help of Christians and courage

M.HC. help me! St Joseph, assist me!

Once there:

1 – I will take a good look over the House: the workshops, classrooms, recreation, church, refectory, and try to get to know the local customs.

2 – I will ask politely of all the confreres: clerics, priests, brothers and novices.

3 – I will give a conference.

During the twelve years of his activity in the Iberian peninsula, first as Rector of the house at Sarriá for three years, then for another nine years as Provincial of the new Spanish-Portuguese Province, Fr Rinaldi founded twenty-one Salesian houses in Spain and Portugal, all solidly founded in the spirit of Don Bosco, and thus can be called “founder of the Salesian Work in Spain.” In this new location, and by his amiable nature, he was able to earn respect and general admiration. “He loves Spain as if he were born here,” said the Archbishop of Valencia, Archbishop Marcellino Olaechea. He gave remarkable help to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, encouraging and supporting the foundation of new presences. He also fostered publishing activities. We can see from testimonies that Fr Rinaldi was very capable at harmonizing apostolic energy and interior life, to a heroic degree.

First of all as a *perfect religious:* so faithful to the Rule and to the Salesian spirit, he tirelessy sought to foster it by word and example among the confreres and the young, focusing especially on family spirit, piety, charity, poverty. And by applying the preventive method in the education of the young, in a brief time he managed to give new impetus to Salesian life, reaping the fruits of this in numerous good vocations for the Salesian Congregation and for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Then as *ideal superior:* the enlightened wisdom of his governance, prudent action, and charity together with firmness. He was untiring in the fulfilment of his duty, but always calm and serene, unperturbed in difficult moments because he trustingly abandoned himself into the hands of Our Lady Help of Christians. He promoted the Catholic press, festive oratories, gave many conferences and retreats; he supported and energised people and encouraged them with circulars vibrating with faith and zeal.

Finally, as a *model priest,* he was able not only to earn respect, trust and reverence from confreres and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, but also from among the laity at whatever level of society. When he left Spain, again at the decision of Blessed Michael Rua, all those who had known him and had been able to appreciate his virtues, had an indelible recollection of his goodness of heart, charity, his incomparable fatherliness, his ardent zeal for the good of souls and for seeking out vocations that he was able to discern with keen eye, and then encourage and guide. Archbishop Marcellino Olaechea testified that he was still a young man when he first came to know him, and that he dealt with Fr Rinaldi with great familiarity in his different tasks, above all when the latter was Provincial of Spain: “I have the impression that in all of my rather long life, I have never found a priest who gave me such an elevated notion of God’s loving fatherliness.”[[16]](#footnote-17) This could only be the result of a lifen that developed in such an apparently simple and plain way, but that was one of perfect fulfilment of all his religious and priestly duties because it was a constant, spontaneous, ready and joyful life in full fidelity to the spirit of Don Bosco. His was an heroic practice of Christian virtues, and the virtues proper to his religious status.

## *1.4 Prefect General (1901–1922)*

In 1901, he was appointed Prefect General, that is, Vicar General of Blessed Michael Rua, and went from a mainly pastoral activity to duties of a rather bureaucratic nature, from now on having to busy himself with matters of a disciplinary and administrative nature as the first collaborator of the Rector Major. Fr Rinaldi accepted the change in a spirit of faith, obedience and service; indeed, he immediately went about things with such commitment, ability and integrity that he soon earned the complete trust of the confreres. This was such that on two occasions, the General Chapters of 1904 and 1910 would reconfirm him, the second of those occasions by absolute majority. He adapted himself to the new duty and new tenor of life to such an extent that it was said: “It seemed that Fr Rinaldi had always been Prefect General.”

In the nineteen years that Fr Rinaldi was Prefect General, he gave irrefutable proof of being a true Salesian who lived his priesthood in intimate communion with God, but always strove for the salvation of souls. As shown by: the authenticity of his religious life, his fidelity to things that would noruish his interior life, to begin with the daily celebration of Holy Mass at 4:30 in the morning after a devout preparation and followed by a prolonged thanksgiving; his diligence at work, his unconditional readiness to tackle the complex and often thorny problems of his office, his generosity and understanding towards all; the charity and firmness he demonstrated in fraternal correction, something he needed to do by virtue of his office; his imperturbable serenity even in the most serious difficulties, such as when he had to be involved in the painful “*Varazze affair*;” his humility in every trial; his prompt obedience to two Superiors General over those years, Fr Michael Rua and Fr Paul Albera.

With regard to the so-called “Varazze affair” that would mark the life of the Congregation during those years and had a wider impact at national level, we need to remember that it had all begun in 1907 when a Masonic and anticlerical plot led to an unscrupulous campaign accusing the Salesian college at Varazze (Savona) of scandal. The accusers were a boarding student, through a diary later shown to be false, and the boy’s adopted mother, who inspired the diary. The Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the students were accused of obscenities and “black masses”. By striking at the Salesians, the aim had been to defame the entire Congregation and the Church itself. The affair had extraordinary impact throughout Italy, thanks to the extended campaign by the anti-clerical press. As Prefect General, Fr Rinaldi took charge of following the case and here too, in these painful circumstances, so clearly demonstrated his wisom and prudence; he assured the college Rector, Fr Carlo Viglietti, of the closeness of the superiors and of the entire Congregation, and gave detailed indications as how to act in the legal arena and in countering public opinion. Prompt and decisive actions by the Salesians took place in the space of a few days. Thanks to their absurdity, the accusations were pulled to pieces; the jouranlistic outrage ran its course, but legal procedures continued until 1912. Over this time Fr Rinaldi had to maintain relationships between the Salesian Superiors and the defence lawyers, winning the trust of the former and the respect of the latter. Revealing of his attitude are some pages that he placed beneath the statue of Our Lady, in which, with humble self-consideration, he asserted his trust in the Virgin’s assistance. “Dearest Mother, 1907 has presented you with two crimes by good Tambeccari (?) and Turina. The 1st was resolved, the 2nd is in abeyance. This year, I do not know how many items of litigation have to be placed before you: there is the entire Varazza case still unresolved, and I do not know where it begins and where it will end; there are the cases of Silva and Farina, Napoli and Giardini, and who knows whatever else the devil will provoke. I recommend myself to You, our advocate. I have no other hope, I, your ignorant and useless one responsible for these things. We hope you will not abandon us in 1908. P. Rinaldi.”[[17]](#footnote-18) It is a simple note, but it shows the profound and forevere keen religious sense that he brought to the pressing issues of office. We also need to acknowledge that thanks to this ability, prudence and constancy of his, the cause has finally had a happy outcome with the decision made on 5 June 1912.

But, as a priest, he could not limit himself to merely rendering a bureaucratic service, however valuable and meritorious that was; he felt the need to do more, to communicate his own inner richness to others. So we find him involved, in the first instance, in the formation of the young Salesian clerics in the spirit of Don Bosco and Salesian pedagogy, of which he was an excellent teacher. He gave countless talks, conferences, lessons, instructions on these subjects. From 1900 to 1914, he went to Foglizzo every fortnight to speak to the Salesian clerics, and his simple and original words left a deep impression on those who heard him for the conviction and passion that flowed from his heart, to the extent that these lessons were written down by his listeners, who acknowleddged that here they had an “expert in Salesianity.”[[18]](#footnote-19)

He was also unceasing in the apostolate of hearing confessions, preaching the Word of God and spiritual direction, always managing to be persuasive and effective due to the supernatural spirit and optimism he instilled, as well as his sensitivity and delicateness. For ten years he was also the spiritual leader at the girls oratory at Valdocco, run by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He had a special gift for understanding and guiding people, spent some hours in the confessional every morning after Holy Mass and was able to direct souls in a kindly and firm way, leading those who showed signs of a vocation towards consecrated life. His presence, already similar to Don Bosco’s was a continuous recall to the loving presence of God. No wonder, then, that Fr Rinaldi’s apostolic activity would see the blossoming of many vocations to religious life among the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and that very many young people would come out from there well prepared for an authentic Christian family life.

Over these years he increasingly stood out for his leadership, accompaniment of Salesian Family groups, either consolidating those already started, or giving life to new groups among which the first nucleus of what in time would become the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco. They recognize Fr Rinaldi as their founder. He dedicated himself passionately to new and original forms of apostolate, becoming a genuine and to some extent prophetic man of the future.[[19]](#footnote-20)

### *The sphere of the lay faithful*

This was an area where Fr Rinaldi showed what a forerunner he really was. He strengthened and promoted the *Cooperators* Association*.* At the time the custom was for the Rector Major to be personally interested in them, buthe did this through a delegate. Fr Rinaldi saw that things were not moving ahead sufficiently due to lack of adequate organization; he insisted with Fr Rua on setting up a central office headed by the Prefect and made up of three councillors and one or more secretaries as required. He selected the personnel, encouraged Provincials and Rectors to act, promoted different formation and apostolic commitment initiatives, clearly distinguished the Cooperators from benefactors, encouraged the involvement of young people who had completed 16 years of age, and much later, in 1917, saw to a new edition of their Regulations which simplified the enrolment process, saw that the local centers would be up and running, and formed and completed the animating structures; in this connection he gave special importance to the “Salesian Bulletin”. Between 1903 and 1930, he was the driving spirit behind nine international Congresses, four in Italy and five in Latin America; and it is worth noting that the Congress of 1920 marked a turning point in the organization and activity of the Salesian Cooperators. His fundamental preoccupation was always that of seeing to it that the true spirit of Don Bosco underlay their activities.

With the *Past-pupils* Fr Rinaldi's action was of a still more original kind, and rich in results with an international and worldwide perspective. There are documents in the archives which show that he studied this argument with the lay people themselves. He convoked the International Congress at Valsalice in 1911 which proclaimed the International Federation of the associations and created a directive organization: it was the first international federation of this kind among all Catholic institutions! His, too, was the idea that the Past Pupils should erect a monument to Don Bosco in the Square in front of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, an idea that reached happy realization in 1920. For its inauguration he had organized three International Congresses: of the Cooperators, male past pupils and female past-pupils respectively.

Fr Rinaldi, in fact, was the inspirer and organizer of the FMA Past Pupils: “from the first moment that he became connected with the Oratory for girls, he had toyed with the great idea of gathering the FMA past-pupils into a world union, certainly a daring innovation but at the same time one that caused him no fear.” As leader of the first association he appointed Felicita Gastini, daughter of Carlo Gastini who had gathered together the first group of former pupils of Don Bosco.

Another group in the female sector which was the object of his special care was that of the *Zealous Promoters (Zealots) of Mary Help of Christians*, which later developed into the present *Secular Institute of the “Don Bosco Volunteers”* In 1908, he chose from among the Children of Mary the group he called the “Zealous Promoters of the Oratory”. In the first congress of the FMA past pupils (1911) some of those present proposed the setting up of an association of Children of Mary “in the world”; later (3 October 1916) he prepared a draft statute for them with seven points; on 20 May 1917, he called their first general meeting – it was the official beginning! After overcoming more than a few difficulties and misunderstandings, the new association was given the ‘all clear' with the approval of its first Regulations in 18 articles (July 1918); on 26 October 1919, Fr Rinaldi was present when the first seven made their profession, and not long afterwards (November 1920) he had them elect from among themselves a Council for the admission of new members (lay autonomy! 29 January 1921). In October 1922, when receiving the renewal of the vows of some of them, he insisted on their Salesian spirit, considering them the first consecrated women dedicated to the following of Don Bosco in lay society. At first sight it appears a humble start, as are all beginnings, but it contains an ecclesial novelty. “Here”, writes his biographer, “Fr Rinaldi had conceived and realized a new form of consecrated life in the world, and had begun an Institute which at the present day recognizes and honors him as its inspiration and father.” It could be said that this was the most inspired of all his personal work. No one suggests that he had explicitly thought of a “Secular Institute” as the term is understood at the present day; that would be an anachronism. But what seems certain is that he instinctively perceived and followed a path that led to consecrated secularity, and in so doing "intended to take up an ideal that Don Bosco had not had time to realize, and give it form."

Another lay initiative we should recall is the “*Don Bosco Teachers Union*”. A group of teachers, who had Fr Rinaldi as their spiritual director had suggested, at the beginning of the 1920s, the formation of a non-political association of Christian inspiration for teachers and professors. He saw at once the benefit this would bring both to the members themselves and to their educational activity in the state schools. He took up the suggestion and gave life to a new kind of “Union”, of which he became the first animator with his great prestige. The initiative had three aspects that were very dear to him: it was an association of lay people, it aimed at the moral education of the young, and it intended to work according to Don Bosco's preventive system. This association, too, was the first of its kind in Italy in the field of Christian inspiration: not that Fr Rinaldi sought to be the first with everything, but his apostolic zeal led him to take up willingly avant-garde positions.

Another field in which his creative zeal was followed by positive results was that of *social communication*. There would not have been many who expected Fr Rinaldi to be concerned about founding a big publishing house, and yet that is precisely what happened. He is the founder of the International Publishing Society (SEI). Don Bosco had already launched various publishing activities at Valdocco, but decades later they had not yet been organized in a systematic way. Fr Rinaldi provided such organization for the sector and created the SEI, having recourse for its financial support to Cooperators and benefactors of various countries in Europe and America. Like the holy Founder himself, he too had a flair for enterprise in certain apostolic works.

In addition he promoted various publications and reviews; in Spain, for instance, there was the news-sheet *El Oratorio festivo*, and then later he gave a lot of attention to the *Bollettino Salesiano*. He founded *Voci fraterne* and *Unione* for the SDB and FMA Past-pupils respectively, the *Maria Ausiliatrice* magazine for the Basilica at Valdocco, and *Gioventù Missionaria* for the missions. He equipped libraries for the young; he founded cultural groups; he fostered the *schola cantorum*, cooperative associations, free medical services... He had the idea of founding a Magazine for women: it is interesting to consider the sense of relevance with which he conceived this plan for a women’s periodical.

### *His fatherly dedication to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*

It fell to him to act at a particularly delicate moment when the Apostolic See decreed the juridical and administrative autonomy of the Institute, which had until then been aggregated to the Society of St Francis de Sales. Communion of spirit and mission had to be intensified while the autonomy was being organized.

He won general esteem by making a sound and equable division of material goods between the two Congregations, as appears from the Acts of the Processes; but above all he gained the confidence and trust of the members of both when he worked so hard in a continual fatherly and deeply spiritual manner to make sure that the common charismatic heritage of the Founder was preserved. The depositions in the Processes are unanimous and enthusiastic in this respect: the testimonies given by members of the FMA are the most valid as regards both his personal holiness and his work for spiritual and apostolic communion between the now two institutions of Don Bosco.

One of the works to which Fr Rinaldi gave particular attention, in collaboration with the FMA, was the girls' oratory at Valdocco, where he had begun to work as the Director (as it was then called) in 1907 when he succeeded Fr Francesia in the office. For years, this was the scene for the expression of his priestly zeal and his new educational and apostolic initiatives. It is difficult to understand how he managed to get through so much work in addition to his duties as Prefect General; but the depositions are so detailed, concordant and authoritative that they ensure the objectivity of what we have said. He left to the Sisters whatever was theirs to decide, but he provided animation, suggestions, guidance and encouragement with fatherly optimism and enlightened wisdom. In an atmosphere of shared fervor, hundreds of girls and young women came together; groups were formed according to age and cultural level, with apostolic, social, cultural and recreational aims, which some texts list and explain with a wealth of facts. Manifestations of different kinds kept the Oratory at a sustained festive level; vocations multiplied (Fr Rinaldi was one of the regular confessors in the basilica for two hours every morning). From the girls the work extended, and the effects were found in families, in the neighborhood, in places of work, and in Catholic associations of the diocese. The Oratory was not a world closed in on itself but a place with doors open to all; it was a seedbed of good, into which Fr Rinaldi also inserted elements of the Catholic laity to guide it to true life.

This was a great Salesian lesson, not only for the FMA but for the confreres too. Fr Rinaldi, in fact, saw the Oratory as an active center of cultural, social and religious initiatives. He wanted to see such oratories in the suburbs of the big cities (as later were those of S. Paolo and Monterosa, for which he had a special affection as Rector Major). In the boys' Oratory at Valdocco, for example, he it was who founded the “Auxilium” Circle. which was later to become famous in Piedmont. (In its first year of foundation, 1906, the members wanted Fr Rinaldi as their president; he accepted, but on condition that they prepared lay leaders who would guide the association under their own responsibility).

As well as his oratorian activities he was unstinting in his valuable spiritual direction of the Sisters, and in the pedagogical conferences he used to give at the FMA Generalate at Nizza Monferrato, where they had a flourishing educational institute: he spoke to the Sisters, to the students of the higher classes, to the teachers, to mothers. Quite surprising was his ability to understand women's problems: as well as purely educational matters, he dealt with problems of engagement, marriage and married life with a truly pastoral outlook. He was able to transfer to the woman's world the knowledge and practice of the preventive system, whose application had been interpreted until then largely from the standpoint of work for boys.

But Fr Rinaldi's greatest contribution to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was realized as interpreter and defender of their common spiritual patrimony. Sister Clelia Genghini declared in the Processes: “The period between 1905 and 1913, and especially between 1905 and 1907, was a crucial one. There was the fear of being completely cut off from the direction of the Superiors of the Salesian Society, and then little by little from Don Bosco's spirit... In this period Fr Rinaldi, with his fatherly kindness and his wise and enlightened advice, was a source of great help and reassurance to our Institute. Proof of this are the letters he wrote at that time. In one of 5 September 1905, he said: ‘May the Lord enlighten you. You are passing through the most solemn moment of your life. All you need at present is God's grace and to preserve your equanimity. I have great hopes for the success of the new arrangements, provided you arc able to imbue everything with Don Bosco's spirit.'”[[20]](#footnote-21)

His message, therefore, was: welcome a proper autonomy, but in the full communion of the same spirit. “To this end,” declared Sister Teresa Graziano “Fr Rinaldi visited by preference and with a prudent frequency our Major Superiors who, during his first years as Rector Major, were still resident at the Mother House at Nizza. He was instrumental in getting it transferred to Turin, alongside the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians, from where the Superiors could participate more intensely and with greater ease in Salesian life and could absorb more spontaneously and efficaciously the spirit of Don Bosco.”[[21]](#footnote-22) He was concerned to a quite extraordinary extent to ensure the closest possible communion in the identical and precious heritage.

In these delicate circumstances his presence was providential, with his constant and enlightened delicate and fatherly wisdom; he seemed to have received from the Holy Spirit the special gift of being able to perceive the traits of the female mind: he was able to influence their hearts in a truly wonderful manner but with great tact. His spiritual direction, personal letters, advice given to the Superiors, multiple forms of guiding contacts and even corrections, all served to intensify fidelity and union.

It is interesting to note the sincerity and candor with which he spoke or wrote to the Superiors. In a letter of 1915, for example, to the well deserving Superior General, Mother Catherine Daghero, he said with familiar sincerity: “My desire has always been to foster among you ideas which seem to me to be truly those of Don Bosco. I have the impression that to a certain extent we have said too often: ‘They are Sisters, they are women, not everything can be adapted to their situation.' And so things have been allowed to run on, and without being aware of it you are becoming religious like all the others. In that case there was no need for another religious Institute of women; there are so many of them already!”

These are expressions which refer to a cultural climate of other days, especially on the part of priests and confreres. But what is remarkable, and I would even say prophetic, is the fact that he never tolerated any less delicate behavior or attitude stemming from a certain superiority complex on the part of the confreres with respect to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (and for that matter, women religious in general), and at the same time he exhorted Mother Daghero to guard jealously the common Salesian identity of which the venerated Co-foundress, Mother Mazzarello, had always been the zealous interpreter and transparent exemplar.

If the two Institutes, in their lawful juridical autonomy, have been able to maintain relationships of intense spiritual communion, mutual understanding, practical solidarity, and fruitful reciprocal collaboration, the merit is due especially to Fr Rinaldi.

And this is a prophetic warning for us at the present day in a Church characterized by “communion” and involved in the apostolic search for a “new evangelization”.

When Fr Rinaldi was elected Rector Major, he considered one of his most serious obligations to be his pontifical appointment as “Apostolic Delegate” for the Institute of the FMA, that had been obtained for the first time from Pope Benedict XV in 1917 through the good offices of Cardinal Cagliero.

Among the many instances of service and guidance, particular mention must be given to the special New Year “Strennas” that he gave to the Sisters in 1922, 1929, 1930, 1931, and 1932. (It was Fr Rinaldi's custom to give a different Strenna to each group, and sometimes even different ones for the Salesian Priests and Brothers). All his interventions were aimed at the keeping in vigor of the character and form given to each group by the Founder, without ever becoming dosed to the needs of the times.

In conclusion, while on the one hand Fr Rinaldi revealed excellent qualities of government, on the other, without realizing it, he consolidated his own customary spontaneous, joyful practice of all the Christian virtues, but especially charity, prudence, justice, strength and purity, in an harmonious fusion of contemplation and action that kept him tending towards both God and neighbour. He would never budge from this heroic tenor of life.

## *1.5 Rector Major (24 April 1922 – 5 December 1931)*

When he was elected Rector Major on 14 April 1922, the moderator of the Chapter, Fr Luigi Piscetta, asked him if he would accept. Fr Rinaldi had hidden his face in his hands and stayed so for some moments, moments that seemed eternal to everyone. He then replied, full of emotion: “This election is a mess for me and for you. Our Lady wants us to see that she alone is the one who is at work in our midst. Pray that I do not ruin what Don Bosco and his successors have done.”

The period in which Fr Rinaldi was Rector Major of the Salesians covers almost ten years and is certainly the richest in terms of testimonies to his virtue, thanks to the testimonies from three processes, and to bibliographical and archival documentation. In fact, the profound interior life of Don Bosco's third successor and, at the same time, his intense apostolic activity in which his spiritual fatherliness stands out, are very well outlined.

First among his concerns as a father was the religious and professional formation of the confreres. He focused, in the first instance, on the need for a deep interior life, which would then become works and he sought to foster this in so many ways: he sent out circulars that are still today a tangible testimony of his faith and piety; he held frequent meetings or assemblies, especially at the level of educators; he gave audience to any who wanted it, always showing that he was fully available to listen, comfort, and urge people on to good; he visited all the houses that he could, in Italy and abroad, and where he could not personally go he sent fatherly letters, giving concrete proof of his constant concern for everyone’s good, of his spirit of sacrifice and untiring hard work. “Fr Rinaldi was untiring and lent himself to eveyrone with extreme goodness. He was forever calm, always the same; in his paternal heart he knew just how to find the right word that left everyone satisfied and at the same time full of admiration and reverence for him.”[[22]](#footnote-23)

Another aspect that was particularly dear to him as Rector Major was the observance of the rules and the study of Don Bosco’s spirituality, of which he was the faithful mirror in his daily life before God, in community and in his social relationships. The Founder’s beatification in 1929 was the most important event during his time as Rector Major, with the celebrations that followed in Italy and in the whole world. Even though it meant a huge effort on his part, it also offered him a propitious occasion for re-launching the charism as the prototype of the “religious educator”, and for rekindling family spirit, community life and the sanctification of work among the confreres. With this in mind he asked Pius XII for theIndulgence attached to sanctified work, and was granted it. Writing at the time of the beatification, he said: “I have come to understand just who Don Bosco has become for us... the sure model for our own life as religious educators, the light placed on a candlestick to give light to the whole world; the faithful minister appointed by his and our Lord Jesus Christ to distribute Christ's goods to those in need; our special intercessor with the Virgin, Help of Christians.”[[23]](#footnote-24)

In addition, in accordance with the general direction the Church was taking, he gave impulse to the missions: through the missionary ideal, relaunched with enthusiasm in the Congregation, he obtained surprising results, resulting in a wonderful flowering of vocations which allowed the Salesians to arrive in all continents and bring the light of the Gospel to them. He was convinced that the missionary ideal and enthusiasm nurtured the hearts of young people, increased their faith and aroused vocations. For this reason he established houses for aspiring missionaries. He sent them out to mission countries before their novitiate so that they would know the environment and learn the languages. He founded the *Gioventù missionaria* magazine and promoted congresses and missionary exhibitions. It is not without significance that during his time as Rector Major the number of members of the Congregation increased from some 4000 to around 8000, and that the number of religious houses and works also increased considerably, with incalculable spiritual benefits especially for the young.

Especially devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to Mary Help of Christians, Fr Rinaldi promoted her cult with praiseworthy zeal, drawing from these sources serene trust, optimism, hope, strength in difficulties and illness, calm in the face of death. In the last two years of his life, while his physical strength was gradually diminishing and pain was on the increase, above all because of his heart condition, he endured every discomfort with uplifting resignation, continuing as far as he could and in so far as his strength allowed him, to take an interest in the confreres’ problems, personally seeing to his correspondence with them, receiving them in audience in a friendly way, listening to them with great patience and sharing their anxieties and joys.

In 1929, his health being rather precarious, he thought of presenting his resignation as Superior General. He put it forward personally as a case of conscience, but the authority and advice of his close collaborators persuaded him to continue with the task. In this regard it is worth noting the extraordinary moral benefit that came to the Congregation and to the Salesian Family from the presence at the top of a superior who, if not in full strength, nevertheless made the spiritual heritage of Don Bosco felt like no other. At a time of great religious fervour and apostolic enthusiasm for the beatification of Don Bosco (2 June 1929) it was providential that Fr Rinaldi was Rector Major. In this matter, too, Fr Rinaldi was a humble servant who did not seek prestige, but gave of himself unreservedly.

Towards the end of his life, his chronic illnesses worsened and he was laid low, exhausted and without strength: there was the imminent threat of a stroke, a family illness. In the early days of December 1931, he suffered from uninterrupted hiccups. At 4:30 a.m. on 5 December, he received Communion and listened to Mass in his room. He seemed to be improving and wanted to receive a venerable French Salesian for a few moments. He was alone in his room and was heard to cough: a few minutes later the barber was allowed in. Fr Rinaldi was sitting in his high chair as if asleep, his head reclined: he had left the world on tiptoes. On his knees was found the first volume of Fr Rua's life, with some notes on the way in which Don Bosco had cultivated the spiritual life of his successor and his sons.

2. A profile of virtue

## *2.1 Close to us and a man of great virtue*

Before his death, says Fr Tiburzio Lupo, he was not spoken of as a saint. He knew him as a boy and then as a Salesian, in particular in his role as Secretary General, even though he maintained that he was “loved and respected as a good father, superior and perfect example of the Salesian in everything, and very close to us.”[[24]](#footnote-25) Yet, from the day of his death, both the spontaneous “veneration” shown from all sides, and “the graces” that some said they had received through his intercession, “made us realize what, indeed, were his virtues.”[[25]](#footnote-26)

In fact, throughout his religious and priestly life, at first sight Fr Rinaldi was not extraordinary, contrary to what often happens in the life of the saints who call attention to their rather original work, endowed as they are with preternatural gifts. But over decades, everyone had been able to see, and had admired the fact that he had not only remained constantly faithful to the ideal he had embraced as a young man, but that his steady will had meant that he had implemented the program of life he had then professed to perfection. It gradually became a matter of habit for him to move within the sphere of life of the Spirit, also bringing others along with him in this – practising the theological and cardinal virtues, observing the vows and all the obligations of his state, according to the spirit of Don Bosco, all with the same simplicity and humility, to the point where he gave the impression that this was normal.

Fr Rinaldi’s, then, was a plain form of holiness; he had implemented a precise program of life but smoothly, without serious penances except those required by total fidelity to the laws of God and the obligations of state, and without humiliating mortifications; it was a holiness that had none of the austere and almost none of the traditional about it; it was the result of service rendered to God and neighbour out of love for God and thus with human sensitivity, firmness and warmth. It was a holiness that pleased, in short, because it was articulated clearly and calmly as part of the optimism that comes from theological hope experienced outside of the rigid settings of other times, a modern and relevant holiness because it can be imitated today by anyone who is led by the firm willingness to give an adequate response to God, in whatever circumstance of life, and in accordance with the gifts God has given them and wherever they have been called to exploit their talents.

It is not a question of a kind of holiness revealed through extraordinary events, but of a heroic life lived in the constant search for good, constant fidelity to duty, perfect self-control in the midst of the difficulties of daily life be they great or small. His holiness "takes on a stamp of naturalness and good-natured and humble spontaneity, a constructive, unobtrusive holiness.”[[26]](#footnote-27) It is the example of “an ordinary life lived so perfectly that it could be described as extraordinary.”[[27]](#footnote-28)

Beginning with a healthy Christian upbringing, Fr Rinaldi rapidly reached the heights of religious and priestly holiness. His life can be divded into two main periods: his life as a layman, covering some twenty-two years, and his religious and priestly life for another fifty-three years or so. From these emerged his strong commitment to perfection and a continuous ascent in the exercise of virtue to the highest levels. Witnesses do not hesitate to describe this as heroic, explicitly or in some equivalent manner, given the promptness, joy, constancy and toughness of the struggle both to observe God’s law and the precepts of the Church, and his duties as superior and religious.

Fr Peter Ricaldone,[[28]](#footnote-29) who was by his side from 1910 to 1931, and succeeded him as Rector Major and knew him when Fr Rinaldi was the Rector at San Giovanni in Turin, recalled the special recognition given to Fr Rinaldi’s work of fostering vocations and how he was impressed by his goodness and administrative gifts. He especially recalled the admiration and affection that the confreres and the young people had for their Rector. “If I had to express my humble opinion of Fr Rinaldi’s personality, I would say that he was a priest of great interior life, of truly exceptional judgement and practical criteria, of a kindness and fatherliness that shone through all he did, of a powerful, productive work that no one could explain if we were to consider his often precarious health; and finally, of a humility so profound that it meant there was nothing extraordinary about him, to the extent that people would not have generally thought we would be introducing his cause of beatification.”[[29]](#footnote-30) Then, going back to the many conversations he had had with him on the need for a solid basis of Christian life for an authentic consecrated life and fruitful priestly ministry, he drew the conclusion that Fr Rinaldi “was always a model of observance of the commandments of God, of the Church and of the Salesian Constitutions and traditions. He never practised or preached a sublime asceticism, but the plain, simple, accessible kind, such as that of St Francis de Sales and St John Bosco... this explains why we have never seen anything extraordinary in him, but an ordinary life lived so perfectly as to be able to qualify as extraordinary.”[[30]](#footnote-31) And he concluded with a truly complete and real picture of Fr Rinaldi’s virtuous character: “I am convinced that Fr Rinaldi had practised virtues to an heroic degree: 1) because he practised them throughout his life; 2) because he practised them with an extraordinary strength of will, even during illness, difficulties, and adversities; 3) especially because there was an uninterrupted and extraordinary effort on his part to hide the heroic way in which he practised these virtues; 4) because I believe that what was truly heroic was his total detachment from earthly things, from people and from himself.”[[31]](#footnote-32)

Fr Tranquillo Azzini got to know Fr Rinaldi in 1901 when he returned from Spain to become Prefect General. He remembered how he met him when he was still a student, gaining a very high opinion of him as completely a man of God. He recounted that Fr Rinaldi examined the young aspirants’ hands to see if there were calluses, because he said to them: “If you are good at working, you would be good workers in the Lord’s vineyard.” He had the opportunity to often meet him as a young student, and each time Fr Rinaldi told him: “Remember that you belong to me,” showing the fatherliness that brings people to Salesian life through the kindness and patience that conquers hearts. Fr Azzini testified that Fr Rinaldi practised “virtues in an apparently ordinary way, but in reality in an extraordinary way. Indeed, because of the spontaneity with which he practised them and the constancy with which he persevered in them until his death, I believe that he practised them in a way that I do not hesitate to call heroic*.” [[32]](#footnote-33)*

Other testimonies insist on his heroism in the face of the trials, difficulties, adversities that Fr Rinaldi had to face and overcome. Very significant in this regard are the words of Fr Pietro Tirone, member of the Superior Chapter and Spiritual Director General of the Congregation. They indicate the constant effort Fr Rinaldi made throughout his life in the face of difficulties: “He practised all these virtues in a way that was very much above the ordinary, and that I am in no doubt about declaring as heroic. If the length of time is considered – his entire life – during which he practised them; if we take into account the effort he had to make to conquer himself, his natural inclinations; if we consider the difficulties coming from the nature of the things and human malice, the prejudices, contrary habits he had to overcome to practise these virtues, we also need to say that it required a resolute will and more than human strength to practise these virtues as he did.”[[33]](#footnote-34) This conviction grew over time, especially when, because of the duties he was given he worked closely with Fr Rinaldi, continuing to be even more edified: "Not only did I confirm my view, but I grew ever more in the esteem and admiration I had for his ardent priestly zeal and for his admirable activity in every sphere, but above all for his superior virtues.”[[34]](#footnote-35)

For getting to know Fr Rinaldi’s degree of perfection and deep spirituality, what Fr Giuseppe Matta, a diocesan priest, has said in offering us the deep motivations of Fr Rinaldi’s virtuous actions is significant: “He always practised these virtues with true naturalness and did so every day and in every circumstance – even in the most adverse – of his life until death, such that he showed himself to be as perfect a human being as is possible for human strength assisted by the God’s grace. In his life, the ordinary became extraordinary for the perfection with which he did everything.”[[35]](#footnote-36) The testimonies that were part of the Process present us with a picture of Fr Rinaldi’s virtues in tones that theologians point to as the signs of their heroic practice: the sheer number of times, their continuity over time, promptness, facility, cheerfulness, arduousness. Moreover, they were not improvised but truly inwardly felt and lived as part of a full and free responsibility for spiritual life.

Sr. Rosalia Dolza, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, knew Fr Rinaldi when she was still a novice at Nizza Monferrato, and was inwardly moved by the preaching of this man of God. It aroused a firm purpose for religious life in her and of passionate apostolic ardour. This first encounter was like a seed that grew over time and strengthened the impression she had received as a young novice. It became more the case when, as superior and provincial, she dealt with Fr Rinaldi on many occasions and over a long period of time. This accont of a first encounter that then led to a history of positive and fruitful relationships, was mentioned in various testimonies and is expressive of thed pedagogical and spiritual tradition testified to by Don Bosco himself in the providential encounter with the young Bartholomew Garelli on 8 December 1841. It was an encounter that sowed the seed for his future work and educative mission and the style of an effective and lasting educative approach. For Sr Dolza, the encounter was such that she did not hesitate to claim: “I have not found, nor have I known other priests or superiors who could equal him in virtue and holiness, despite them being most worthy individuals and religious full of virtues. The Servant of God excelled and surpassed them all in an outsanding way.”[[36]](#footnote-37)

Fr Antonio Candela, Rector and Provincial in Spain from 1904 until 1916, then Rector of the Salesian house in Marseilles in France and later, in 1925, elected a member of the Superior Council, ascertained that the memory of Fr Rinaldi was very vivid not only among the members of the Salesian Family, but also among the numerous groups of benefactors and friends of Salesian work: “In a particular way they all praised his virtues, his great practical criteria, his prudence, his large heart and ardent zeal for the good of the souls, someone who could discern with a sure eye, encourage and guide. I never heard a discordant voice in this from anyone.”[[37]](#footnote-38)

In conclusion, of particular value are comments by Bishop Evasio Colli who preached at the month’s mind after Fr Rinaldi’s death: “He was a man who had a balance of all virtues rather than one or more of them standing out from the others. He was equally a formidable man of action and an ascetic; audacious and prudent, tenacious and humble; strong and fatherly; a business man and a man of God; apostle and builder; modern and conservative; he was, in short, the complete spiritual man.”[[38]](#footnote-39)

The man of God shone through the transparent exercise of virtues, someone who had assimilated the spirit of the Gospel and of his founder, St John Bosco, according to a style inspired by *The Treatise on the love of God* and the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St Francis de Sales. In particular, the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity occupied a central place, and were the core dynamic that conditioned and enlivened the entire structure of a virtuous life. All events, even painful ones, were expressions of the wisdom and goodness of God for Fr Rinaldi. And appropriate attitudes sprang from this faith: trust in Providence, serenity amid storms, filial abandonment, moderate use of what are considered to be human abilities or supports, his ability to see things *sub specie aeternitatis,* exclusively seeking what would be for the glory of God. This kind of faith blossoms in hope and matures in charity, resulting in reassuring joy.

Fr Rinaldi’s spiritual character, seen in the light of the virtues he practised, reveals on the one hand, visible and perceptible aspects that characterize the face of the disciple of Christ, just as Don Bosco wanted it to be in a society that unfortunately no longer seemed to appreciate the classic forms of religious life, while on the other hand, it revealed the other, less perceptible but equally important aspects, such as the hidden but “load bearing” things that characterize an ascetic way of following Christ. More than a particular virtue, what was “specific” to Fr Rinaldi’s holiness was the complex of attitudes, deep convictions and well-tested experiences that came together harmoniously in creating an original and individual style of holiness and apostolate that makes Fr Rinaldi one of the more remarkable embodiments and interpretations of the Salesian spirit – a result of meditation, prayer, vocational and charismatic responsibility.

*2.2 Faith: a man of solid, unshakeable faith*

The faith that shone through Fr Rinaldi’s life defines him as a believer before being a religious, someone with abundant enthusiasm for the mystery of Christ and shaped by kindness, with a heart forged by charity, making him energetic yet balanced, hardworking yet temperate, creative yet with common sense. Faith points to a whole view of the reality we are part of “from above”, a view permeated by optimism and wisdom. It clearly offers the pastoral motivations for action and permeates and sustains that tone of healthy humanism which characterizes the Salesian apostolate. The man of faith is tuned into the mystery of God, convinced of the final victory of good over evil, tirelessly committed to building up the Kingdom. Fr Rinaldi was convinced that any weakening of faith in God would cause serious spiritual decline, with harmful consequences for the Christian and apostolic identity of the Congregation and the Salesian Family.

When those testifying speak of faith in Fr Rinaldi’s life, they use adjectives like “solid,” “unshakeable,” “lively”. They are words that recall the biblical concept of believing, as something with a foundation, based on secure rock, testifying to stability and consistency. “A man of deep, robust faith,” is Fr Carlo Marchisto’s description of him. Sr. Ursula Pavese remembers him as “A man of profound and heartfelt faith.” Others who testified spoke in very similar terms, almost producing a litany of such acknowledgements: “A man of the greatest faith”, ”a man of very keep and profound faith”, “a man of solid, unshakeable faith”. Some described him as “driven by a very lively faith”, while others spoke of the “lively spirit of faith that animated all his life and apostolate,” and others still who said “he was always animated by enormous faith.”

From the vigourous and vivid nature of the vocabulary used by witnesses in their testimonies, one grasps the impact of personal conviction based on experience. The claim is not that he had just great faith, but that his faith in some way defined him as a “man of faith.” His faith is described in terms of its depth and robustness, and as solid and unshakeable, giving Fr Rinaldi’s faith a virile aspect. Some remember the well-known words of Paul when they reflect on the faith of Fr Rinaldi: “He truly lived by faith;” “He lived solely by faith;” “Throughout his life he was guided solely by reasons of faith.” We note how the vocabulary used by not a few who gave testimony is one that expresses totality: “Always,” “solely,” “throughout his life,” “all his apostolate.” Those whose spirit is a little far from this have the impression that they are being presetned with very much universal judgements. However, the feeling is that these judgements, other than their conceptual content, have a true and proper value and subjective significance. Word like “always,” “solely,” “all,” show the strong impact that Fr Philip Rinaldi’s faith had on these witnesses, as a value that gave unity to his life.

There is no doubt about this. Fr Rinaldi was driven by a very keen and solid faith. It is true: faith appears prominently in all men and women of God, since it is the first fruit of God's pleasing action and the fundamental response of the human being to the life-giving presence and word of God. It is also true that among the various witnesses of the Spirit, the fundamental aspects of Christian living end up taking on particular aspects and hence, in addition to being common elements, they become characteristics of the religious experience of some of them. It seems to us that this is the case of faith in Fr Rinaldi’s spirituality. It was this spirit of true faith that gave him the courage to face so many difficult commitments inherent in his mission and office. “When we saw Fr Rinaldi, we saw him continually immersed in God, forever meditating, in spite of his many tasks. His entire activity was one of faith, and governance for him was inspired by and based on his spirit of profound faith.”[[39]](#footnote-40)

There are many signs through which this profound and living faith was manifested: “Only the most ardent spirit of faith can explain his entire life and marvellous activity”: faith “shone through his whole being and action,” especially when he prayed, celebrated, gave conferences. Many recall “the way he was when before the Blessed Sacrament”; his deep faith and “great devotion” shone through when he was celebrating the Eucharist; “his faith was most transparent in his piety and devotions.” Sermons and conferences too were circumstances in which he expressed his faith and strengthened the faith of his listeners: “He also sought to infuse faith in us.”

The oratory girl, Anna Frassati, who then became a leader of associations and Catholic Action recalled, as a woman of discernment and apostolic commitment, the influence Fr Rinaldi had on her: “He passed on his faith through his simple but profound word, direct, rich with substance; it was not just a voice you heard and was then forgotten. It struck root in the heart.”[[40]](#footnote-41) Fr Peter Rinaldi, a grand-nephew, had known him since his boyhood; when he became a Salesian their relationship was always one of trust, and they wrote to one another. He ended up writing a biographical and spiritual profile with the eloquent title *By Love Compelled, Driven by love,* in which he said: “The imperturbable calm of the Servant of God, his constant serenity and his ever reassuring and comforting words had their origin in his deep spirit of faith; it was the spirit of faith that had led him to write as one of his novitiate resolutions: ‘I want to think, speak, act only with God in mind.’”[[41]](#footnote-42)

### *A man entirely of God*

Fr Rinaldi was a “man entirely of God”; “his person pointed to the things of God.” It was the outward reflection of the theological direction of faith, hope and charity that oriented his person and life. Faith animated his profound communion with God, nourished by continuous and fervent prayer. One could clearly see that he was united with God and to those who observed him he gave the impression of a man in continuous union with God. Those who spent several years with him describe him as a person “in continuous union with God,” “continually immersed in God,” “endowed with the most ardent spirit of prayer,” “a priest in whose presence you felt the presence of God,” “he was adorned with the true spirit of prayer. One could say that he always prayed.” His recollectedness aroused admiration and edification.

This sincere and profound faith had its foundation in union with God. “He was always calm and serene, recollected and devout, even in the midst of the most varied occupations. We could see that the thought of God occupied his soul and he would be described as the man of interior life in the midst of the noise of daily life.”[[42]](#footnote-43) Fr Azzini stated: “I can attest that the Servant of God was a man of the highest faith, and that indeed he truly lived by faith. He showed this by the perfection of his works and by his words which were always inspired by the highest and purest principles of faith. What stood out most in him was the continuous and absolute trust he placed in the Lord. He in no way relied on his own strength and human help, but everything was committed to the supernatural guidance of faith.”[[43]](#footnote-44) The same witness says that Fr Rinaldi, was burning with zeal for the propagation of the faith, teaching catechism to children, carefully seeing to decorum in the House of God and in liturgical rites, He was very much devoted to the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin, St Francis de Sales, St Valerius, his village Patron Saint. Faith guided and sustained him in his life.

Guido Ferreri, who as a young boy was part of one of Fr Rinaldi’s more original activities, the St Paul’s parish and oratory in Turin, put it this way: “Fr Rinaldi was a man of conviction and exemplary in faith. This faith shone thorugh in an exceptional way in everything he did. I often had the opportunity to serve his Mass and his devotion edified all of us. His preaching was all about the spirit of faith and abhorrence of sin. After one of his exhortations we felt devout and very good. He had a deep devotion to Our Blessed Lady and his Marian preaching made us more enthusiastic... He inspired young people to love the Pope through his preaching, following the example of Don Bosco. His zeal for the propagation of the faith was demonstrated by his interest in each of us in the Oratory and by inviting us young people to carry out the apostolate with our companions. From the Oratory, therefore, a good few dozen vocations emerged, a good number of them going off to the missions.”[[44]](#footnote-45) His conferences were so interesting and practical that many notebooks taken by the Sisters have been preserved. This is the particular value of the *Quaderno Carpanera,* a collection of the conferences he gave to the young women, the core group of the future Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco.

Nicola Angeleri, who had attended the Valdocco Oratory where Fr Rinaldi had founded a very flourishing “Auxilium” group, with the intention of spiritual formation and social action for young people so they could take up a fruitful lay apostolate, attested to his faith, devotion to the Eucharist, the Sacred Heart and Our Lady: “A living and active faith was evident in Fr Rinaldi. Faith and love for the Lord were the motive for his activities. One sensed his keen faith and the Lord’s presence in the way he celebrated and preached. He insisted in a special way on the Eucharist, devotion to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady.”[[45]](#footnote-46)

Sister Ida Diana, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, met Fr Rinaldi when she was 12 years old and attended the Oratory of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco, where Fr Rinaldi was spiritual director and animator for various associations that distinguished themselves for their spirit of piety, purity of life, union and mutual charity of their members, and their readiness to do every kind of good work. He created an uplifting spiritual and moral atmosphere, which became fertile soil for strong vocations to consecrated life and marriage. This is how she described the faith of the man of God: “His deep sense of faith shone through in the way he spent time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the way he celebrated Holy Mass or presided over other religious services. His fervent and thoughtful preaching on the eternal truths testified to his very lively faith. Especially when he encouraged devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and to Mary Help of Christians, his words were a living and profound echo of a lived and communicative faith. It was clear that the truths he preached radiated naturally from his inner life, his living in the presence of God, from which it transpired that his was no theoretical teaching but lived experience.”[[46]](#footnote-47) Bishop Marcellino Olaechea sums it up well: "He had a deep theological faith and appeared as the ‘iustus ex fide vivit.’”[[47]](#footnote-48)

### *Man of prayer*

This faith was experienced and nourished in his life and in the practice of prayer, as would be testified by those who were close to him. Fr Tommaso Bordas, who came to know Fr Rinaldi at the Salesian House in Sarriá, Barcelona (Spain) as a 9-year-old, has spoken of the strong impression he received from their first meeting on the occasion of a retreat. This was later reinforced when, as young student of theology he listened to the Prefect General’s conferences on pedagogy in the house at Foglizzo, and then saw him while engaged in the various tasks he undertook at the General House in Turin. He described Fr Rinaldi’s daily life as that of a man “undoubtedly endowed with a great spirit of prayer, both vocal and mental. It was edifying for us to see him always at his place in the choir stall in Mary Help of Christians Basilica from the early hours of the morning, taking part the first of the community meditation times. His was an attitude of devout recollection that instilled devotion in everyone who was there. He would never be seen sitting during the meditation... He nurtured the same spirit of prayer in others that enlivened him so strongly, as the principal means for achieiving Christian perfection and for overcoming the difficulties of a spiritual and material nature.”[[48]](#footnote-49) Every evening he would come down from his room, cross the courtyard in Valdocco and went to the small choir area behind the altar “where he remained praying at length and in devout adoration, his demeanour revealing the vibrant faith that was his very heartbeat.”[[49]](#footnote-50) He was seen to actualize the ideal of incessant prayer that was proposed by the desert Fathers in obedience to the recommendation of Christ the Lord and of the Apostle. “Pray always,” and many people saw his “profound recollection.” As a good way to appreciate his spirit of piety, it is worth reporting what he himself thought about the relationship between “meditation and Eucharist:” “He used say that meditation well done, is to some extent more effective than Holy Communion itself, because for someone who has meditted in depth and seriously, it is more difficult to fall into sin than someone who has gone to communion, even with the very best of preparation.”[[50]](#footnote-51)

He made frequent and fervent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; he was also very fond of brief prayers that revived the sense of God’s presence throughout the day, along with entrusting himself to Mary and the intercession of the saints. It was no rare thing to find him with his rosary beads in his hands; and it was moving to see him praying beneath the picture of Mary Help of Christians. He would often go there during the day, praying in her sanctuary.

He practised and encouraged the eminently Salesian devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In a letter to Fr Pietro Berruti, Provincial in Chile, he wrote: “From now, before every doubt and fear, just say: ‘Heart of Jesus, I trust in you,’ then push ahead both as regards yourself and others.”[[51]](#footnote-52) He fostered devotion to the Sacred Heart in so many different ways, recommending that we “mould our heart on the very Heart of Jesus, and he himself was a faithful copy of that.”[[52]](#footnote-53) This devotion of his had nothing mawkish or sentimental about it, but it was the burning furnace which unleashed the apostolic zeal that led people he directed to courageously and unashamedly witness to their faith in their family, or at work. “He was convinced that only through an intense love for the Heart of Jesus could he firm up true piety in the heart of his spiritual daughters.”[[53]](#footnote-54) In his final years he gave great importance to the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, organizing a procession within the oratory which parents and children would take part in and during which he preached, focusing entirely on the family and promoting the consecration of families to the Sacred Heart.

Among his preferred saints was “his” Don Bosco, for whom he had a devotion that was “impossible to describe” and he saw it as his strict personal duty to foster this devotion. He dedicated all his energy to preserving the true spirit of the Founder in the Congregation, and he was himself described as the “living image” of Don Bosco. Added to that was his love for the Pope and the personal devotions he constantly nurtured.

### *The pillar of the Eucharist*

The Christological dimension of Fr Rinaldi’s spiritual life was focused on love for Jesus in the Eucharist. One witness saw in this “something extraordinary which led one to immediately understand, even simply in his act of prayer, how immensely convinced he was of the real presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the most holy Eucharist.”[[54]](#footnote-55) “His devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was a vibrant one”; “he encouraged and fostered Eucharistic devotion,” which is considered to be the basis and soul of Don Bosco’s preventive system.

Without wanting to draw attention to himself, his outward demeanour, so devout and respectful, encouraged reverence and love for the Eucharist. A number of those testifying said how they had been impressed by the way he celebrated the Holy Mass. Fr Tommaso Bordas, who had been present on various occasions at Masses celebrated by Fr Rinalid, testified: “Without seeming odd, his demeanour pointed to how intimate was his understanding of the great mystery that he was celebrating and how deeply convinced he was of the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament... He never omitted fervent preparation and a becoming thanksgiving”[[55]](#footnote-56) One expressions of such faith and Eucharistic love was adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: “On the occasion of the Forty Hours Devotion celebrated at Mary Help of Christians, the Servant of God was seen to kneel for a long time in fervent adoration, wholly recollected and absorbed, such that he was unaware of what has happening around him.”[[56]](#footnote-57) He wanted the place where the Eucharistic Lord lived to be always clean and dignified. During the night, if he could not sleep, in spirit he visited the five tabernacles, those in the house and the others in the house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, adoring the Lord in a way that recalls the Eucharistic love of Blessed Alexandrina Maria da Costa, Salesian Cooperator and mystic of the Eucharist.

### *The pillar of Mary*

Many of those who testified spoke of his devotion to Mary: “He nurtured a very special devotion to Our Lady... he encouraged people to love her.” Devotion to Mary is “very special,””profound,” “tender,””vibrant,” “very tender.” The testimony of Fr Giuseppe Matta sums up Fr Rinaldi’s Marian devotion very well: “It is well known that the Servant of God was devoted to the Blessed Virgin, venerated especially under the title of the Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians. Following a praiseworthy tradition in the Salesian Society, he wanted the feast of the Immaculate to be celebrated with particular solemnity and the usual academy to be held. He then took particular care to ensure that everything that referred to devotion to the Blessed Virgin, venerated especially under the title of Help of Christians, was accomplished with the greatest solemnity and with works of particular piety... The feast of Mary Help of Christians was a real event for him. Everything had to converge to glorify the blessed Virgin, to exalt her with prayers and hymns and above all to make sure that there were many confessions and communions... In every letter of his, every exhortation, everything he wrote and preached, he never failed to encourage people to love Our Lady, pray intensely, to be devoted to her with special love and to have the greatest trust in Her..”[[57]](#footnote-58) The brief prayer *Maria Auxilium Christianorum* was continually on his lips. He ardently fostered devotion to her in what he wrote, his writings and with exhortations that drew his listeners in, igniting their love and devotion for the Mother of God.

Devotion to Our Lady, which he was brought up with from childhood and which had very tender aspects to it, was one of his special characteristics. “His love and devotion for Her had something profoundly unsophisticated about it, and could almost be said to be childlike, but it revealed the trust and abandonment he placed in Her. When he had some particular difficulty, he went back to his Patroness with full confidence.”[[58]](#footnote-59) To document his filial recourse to Our Blessed Lady it is worth reading the small sheets of paper he used place under a statuette of Our Lady on his writing desk. We are talking about prayers written on separate small pieces of paper and which reflect the difficult situations and problems he had to face and resolve day by day. The messages start off with things like: “Dearest Mother.... I recommend myself to You, our advocate. I have no other hope, ignorant and useless as I am, and the one you have put in charge. I hope that you will not abandon us,” “Most Holy Mother mine... the interests of the Pious Society are entrusted to my prudence and activity. You know how very clumsy (*sic*) I am,and how I would not know what to do. So, You do it. You know what I should do and how. You are our help. You are our Mother. If I must serve you, command and guide me. It is enough that I am an instrument in your hands and ever your most devoted son and servant.” “My sweetest Mother...” They are expressions that, on the one hand, show his unlimited and filial confidence in entrusting himselft to Mary’s motherly intercession, while on the other, they show his sense of inadequateness and inability faced with situations that were difficult and rarely simple.

*Prayers to Our Lady*[[59]](#footnote-60)

(These are handwritten prayers on small separate pieces of paper that Fr Rinaldi placed under a statuette of Our Lady on his writing desk. They were written in different years and reflect the problems that he had to resolve day by day).

Dearest Mother, 1907 has presented you with two crimes by good Tambeccari (?) and Turina. The 1st was resolved, the 2nd is in abeyance. This year, I do not know how many items of litigation have to be placed before you: there is the entire Varazza case still unresolved, and I do not know where it begins and where it will end; there are the cases of Silva and Farina, Napoli and Giardini, and who knows whatever else the devil will provoke.

I recommend myself to You, our advocate. I have no other hope, I, your ignorant and useless one responsible for these things. We hope you will not abandon us in 1908.

P. Rinaldi

Virgin, Mother, after Varazze comes Marsala. You have perfectly resolved the Tambeccari, Turina, Silva, Varazze cases, etc.; to You, therefore, our advocate, I also also entrust Marsala to you. Guide our ignorance well and my misgivings as to what we will do. You how many doubts, how much uncertainty accompanies what I do, guide them to good, for the good of the souls and for the glory of God.

You know that without you, P.R., yours in C.J., will not solve one of these. Keep an eye on Bari, Loreto, Alvito.

Most Holy Mother mine, to my prudence and activity are entrusted the interests of the Pious Society. the interests of the Pious Society are entrusted to my prudence and activity. You know how very clumsy (*sic)* I am*,* and how I would not know what to do. So, You do it. You know what I should do and how. You are our help. You are our Mother. If I must serve you, command and guide me. It is enough that I am an instrument in your hands and ever your most devoted son and servant.

December 18, 1908.

Dearest Mother. The matter of our properties I am placing under your direction because I really do not know what to do. Also, the Bookshop and the Oratory House, I do not know how to fix things up. You know what is appropriate and what I can do to benefit your works. Tell me what to do therefore, or do it yourself directly; but may I always carry out God’s will and not my own.

Bless me, Yours in C.J. 32 – 10- 09

13-3-‘14. My sweetest Mother. You know the torment and the danger that trouble me. To you I turn again because you free me. I remind you that I am yours and I want to be so exclusively and forever. But you know that I can do nothing on my own, since I know and understand nothing. Enlighten me. Strengthen me, save me, free me. O clement, O pious, O sweet Virgin Mary – *dignare me laudare te: da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos.*

25-7-’17. Dear Mother. I recommend the cause of Loggia (?) to you, and Cabiglione, Gaido, Quaranta, Moron. You know that I cannot do other than lose my head and theirs. Protect me from whatever danger and them from whatever evil. I want only what (is) to the glory of God and good of souls. Yours Phil.

Dearest Mother. For some time I have been drawing the attention of others to things that I have been doing well and predictions that have worked out well either to satisfy myself or to gain the admiration of those who listen to me; now this is pride, vanity and self-love: I need to correct myself and seek God alone. Help me to practise *ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.* You know that this poor man can do nothing of his own.... (perhaps “Philip” – removed).

Dear Blessed Mother. I am leaving for Spain: I recommend the trip to you and the reason I am going there. Without you, we will achieve nothing or only make blunders. I recommend my brother to you: see that everything is for the good of our soul. Bless me. Your poor Philip Rinaldi.

December 2, 1911

Dearest Mother, let me know if I should leave the female Oratory or how much and how I should be involved. Do not allow it to be a pretext for chitchat, suspicion or even slander. Enlighten me, but also free me from dishonest malice. You loved the beautiful virtue so much and you did not suffer the least insult during your life, free me and us from such miseries.

December 30, 1909

Your son P.R.

### *The apostle*

He demonstrated his deep faith not only in personal devotions, but also in his external activities, his initiatives and in his exhortations to the confreres. “He drew inspiration from his faith for all his initiatives and all his works and also sought to instill it in us in us and whoever came to him.”[[60]](#footnote-61) Fr Giuseppe Matta states: “He was a man of a solid and unshakeable faith, and lived solely by faith, which was the norm for his every activity.”[[61]](#footnote-62) His talks and conversations were stamped with a spirit of faith to the great spiritual benefit of those who engaged with him. He warned members of the Society to be on their guard lest their apostolic energy might lead to unrestrained activity, harmful to the life of the Spirit. He instilled a spirit of faith in his sermons: “It was enough to listen to one of his conferences to see that he was a man for whom faith was the principal strength behind his activity, such that it became second nature to him and animatedall his intentions and works.”[[62]](#footnote-63)

Fr Rinaldi’s life and activities cannot be explained without the maximum degree of faith that shone through his words, relationships with others, in spiritual direction, even in the matters he was mostly involved in during the years in which he was Prefect General. His life demonstrates that it was by faith that he decided to give himself to God and accept the difficult moments of obedience that marked all his roles, given his belief that due to his health and knowledge, he should only be used in the most humble offices.

What shone through was the character of a man of constant and convinced prayer, who drew the strength for action and daily service from his union with God. As soon as he was elected Rector Major he was called back to Rome by Pope Pius XI to renew the devotion and filial obedience, his and that of the entire Salesian Family, to the Vicar of Christ, and it was then that he asked for the indulgence for sanctified work. His ceaseless activity was no superficial activism, but an expression of his belief that characteristic proper to the Salesian spirit is “untiring hard work sanctified by prayer and union with God.”

Fr Angelo Zannantoni, a past pupil of Valdocco and then a Salesian, highlights well the contagious and radiant force of Fr Rinaldi's faith that irreversibly marked the story of his vocation, an expression of vocational ministry as a result of attraction: “He was recognized by everyone as a man of heroic faith that shone through his personality and sustained all his activities. His was a supernatural faith based on interiority and foreign to outward show or noise. One noted nothing about him outwardly, he did not have a faith based on sentiment, but whoever dame to him felt it bursting from within and was won over by it, as happened to myself. In fact, when I was professing my vows in his presence, I left with a profound feeling of joy that I could not explain. Contact with him had given me deep calm and serenity and this intimate joy lasted for many days. Those who approached him had the distinct impression that he was a man whose abandonment to God's will was total. A man who always seemed to be in communion with the Lord.”[[63]](#footnote-64)

Sr. Teresa Graziano, Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Provincial of Sicily, concurs: “He was animated by a very vibrant spirit of faith which enlivened his whole life and apostolate. This spirit of faith emerged in all manifestations of his thinking and his heart.”[[64]](#footnote-65) This faith soothed her and enlightened her in the difficulties of life, feeling internally strengthened and ready to make every sacrifice, such as when she met him for the first time when she went to confession in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Although there were several people waiting and she was temnpted several times to go to another confessor, she felt like there was a hand holding her at that confessional, as if a special grace was linked to that confessional. Indeed, she experienced indescribable consolation and above all met the one who would resolve her life problem, to such point that the date Fr Rinaldi told her she would enter the Institute coincided exactly with the date she had decided a year earlier to be a religious.

The light of faith never weakened in Fr Rinaldi amidst difficulties and adversities, but shone through it all, guiding his journey towards God. Especially in the years in which he was Prefect General, he found he had to deal with the mountain of issues and huge responsibility weighing on his shoulders. His need to look after administration and religious discipline were supported by the great faith that gave him calm and serenity of spirit, absolute self-mastery without bewilderment and agitation.

His faith is also testified to by the attitude of docility and supernatural vision with which he always accepted indications fronm his superiors and, in a very particular way, his union with Don Bosco and the way he was permeated by him, both when he was alive and after his death: at every moment of his life, and especially during the period in which he held the office of Rector Major of the Salesian Society, he was well aware that his main mission was to preserve the spirit of the holy founder in its entirety, and faithfully carry out what he had indicated or planned down to the smallest details: with this firmly rooted conviction, Fr Rinaldi was a tireless diffuser of faith, constantly promoting apostolic activities and giving a great impulse to the missions.

This spirit of faith also inspired the advice with which he guided souls, that brought precious light and fervor into the depths of hearts. In some of the letters Fr Rinaldi wrote to his grand-nephews he said: “You ask me what you must do to be a Salesian according to Don Bosco's heart. You will be such if you seek God alone in everything you do; if you are not afraid of work; if you are gentle, cheerful, tolerant towards others and patient with everyone... Only if you have learned to suffer and humble yourself for Jesus Christ will your progress in the spiritual life be assured... In our search for holiness it is to ordinary things that we must turn, our duties, the hidden sacrifices in our day to day existence. Let us face them with faith, serene and joyful at the same time, in union with Jesus Christ... See that you give life to all your actions by living for Christ, with Christ and in Christ.”[[65]](#footnote-66)

A concrete expression of his faith was his study and action in promoting the missionary activity of the Salesians and the great development that the Salesian missions experienced While he was Rector Major. His impressive commitment to the missions was stimulated by his desire to propagate and increase faith. Faith was, in fact, the light of all his religious life and apostolate.

During his time as Rector Major, he aimed to guide Salesians towards the spirit of prayer and union with God, since this had also been the secret of Don Bosco's holiness. On the occasion of the 1922 General Chapter he said: “Let us never forget that the spirit is superior to rules and regulations and that the wheelers and dealers battle it out a lot, but end up with little. Miracles are worked through steady piety.” He had expressed to Don Bosco his desire to go to the missions to spread the faith, but the answer he got was that he would be sending others. And, in fact, as Rector Major he gave great impetus to the missionary activity of the Salesians, founding institutes to prepare young people for the missions based on the simple strategy: “If you are holy, you will save souls” and he preferred to accept the poorest and most difficult missions.

## *2.3 Hope: every day you need to bring a brick to the building of our home in Paradise*

At Don Bosco's school, hope for Fr Rinaldi signals the certainty of help from above, in an entirely creative life, that is, one committed to planning daily practical activities for the salvation of young people in the first instance so they may attain the ultimate goal: Paradise. This is the virtue that highlights the energy and activity of the Salesian in building up the Kingdom; the constancy of his efforts and the enthusiasm of his commitment are based on the certainty of help from Jesus and Mary. Fr Rinaldi was convinced that God alone can strengthen us, He alone will keep us firm to the end because he has placed us on the solid foundation of Christ; by his very nature he is faithful and will protect us from evil.

“The Servant of God was animated by a very vibrant hope. His thoughts were fully oriented towards eternal goods, which he hoped to achieve through the infinite merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ.”[[66]](#footnote-67) Witnesses in fact agree that Fr Rinaldi was a man of great hope. They saw his life projected “beyond the things of this world,” “based on the things up there,” “oriented towards heaven.” This supernatural spirit gave him unshakable confidence in Divine Providence. With the help of divine grace he who in his adolescence was uncertain and undecided, became a model of intrepid donation to God: “Throughout his life he showed that he never depended on his own strength or his own initiatives, but that he trusted only in the help of the Lord, whom he constantly invoked, and in the help of Mary Help of Christians, to whom he entrusted his causes.”[[67]](#footnote-68) He possessed a serenity and optimism that he also passed on to others, especially when there were painful events or situations, such as when he wrote to Sister Teresa Graziano, struck by a family misfortune: “Be brave and trust very much in God and in Our Lady... If following Our Lord sometimes makes us suffer, let us remember that in Paradise we will be well rewarded.”[[68]](#footnote-69) Fr Candela also testifies to this hope, referring to the following response of Fr Rinaldi when he manifested to him the inadequacy and discomfort he felt at being appointed a member of the Superior Chapter: “You see, there are confreres in the Congregation who are more capable than us and who would do better than us. But the Lord has chosen us. We do what we can. He will do the rest.”[[69]](#footnote-70) Constant serenity in the midst of great trials was also a sign of hope. His weapon at that time was trusting prayer based on Christ's promises.

Besides such trust, what is springing from his faith, conferring a characteristic note to his spirituality, that is, the serenity and the self-control in all the circumstances. Unanimously speaks of his calm and constant serenity, incomparable, supernatural, and indestructible, also in the midst of the big trials. Fr Guido Favini, who knew Fr Rinaldi as an alumnus of the Valdocco oratory and then later as a Salesian had confidential dealings with him, receiving tasks of responsibility, among which that of running the San Paolo oratory, testifies: “All the major administrative, financial and disciplinary problems from the various Provinces and every house of the Salesian Congregation ended up in his office, with their moral, legal, financial worries. He saw to them all right down to the details, never getting upset, showing unshakeable calm, prudence and care, for which the superiors and confreres were immensely grateful to him even when he had to take serious measures. He would never raise his voice, lost patience, got upset. His spirit of recollection allowed him to accept everything as from God’s hands, see the ways of God’s Providence, and enjoy his customary union with God, overcoming all difficulties with trust in God and total abandonment into God’s hands.”*[[70]](#footnote-71)*His characteristic optimism was fully supernatural and even in the most arduous circumstances, based on the certainty of divine asasistance. “Through word and example he sought to instill in the hearts of those who approached him this enlightened trust in the Lord’s assistance, the keen hope which inspired him and that he passed on through persuasive words filled with fatherly goodness.”[[71]](#footnote-72)

Fr Pietro Zerbino, who had known him since boyhood and since he was a young Salesian at Valdocco, testifies: “Hope, with Fr Rinaldi gave an incomparable serenity to his outward demeanour that succeeded in calming the most agitated souls... and giving everyone a sense of tranquility and trust... His was a supernatural optimism, nourished by an unshakable trust in God: difficult situations, unexpected difficulties, the magnitude of the initiatives did not upset him, because he was convinced that if a work was desired by God, he would bring it to completion, as had always happened while Don Bosco was alive. We who knew him and were near him for years, do not even once recall seeing Fr Rinaldi frowning or disturbed... Fr Rinaldi's heroic hope shone out above all in the foundation of new and difficult Missions, such as the one in Japan, and in the foundation of various Missionary Institutes to feed them with personnel, so that in just 9 years he was able increase the number of Salesian missionaries by more than 2000. To meet these enormous expenses he trusted in Providence, decisively refusing to resort to human means that were not in line with the means that divine Providence usually makes use of.”[[72]](#footnote-73) In particular, he wanted his confreres to think and act not according to the logic of the world, convinced that God’s works are not like those of human beings. This aspect is also of great relevance for the Church of our time, when we often get involved and overwhelmed by worldly logic that always results in resounding failures and deeply hurts the life and credibility of the ecclesial community, sometimes even causing serious scandals. What Fr Bonvicino said about the Borgo San Paolo work in Turin is interesting: "With regard to hope I must point to his great trust in Providence in all apostolic initiatives and his optimism based on the hope of the Divine in everything. It is interesting that which Fr Bonvicino says about the work of Borgo San Paolo in Turin: “With regard to hope I must point out his great trust in Providence in all apostolic initiatives and his optimism based on the hope of the Divine in everything. For the Oratory of Borgo San Paolo I must say that ‘*contra spem in spem credidit.”[[73]](#footnote-74)*

Here are the clues to proven virtue even to the point of heroism. Heroic faith was the basis of his hope. “He was animated by a very ardent supernatural hope that he demonstrated in every one of his undertakings. He did not trust in himself, nor in the help of human beings, but placed all his trust in God. He used to say: ‘If I personally have to suffer some failure in my work, it doesn't matter; if the work is willed by God, he will see to making it triumph.’”[[74]](#footnote-75) Fully detached from earthly goods, he placed all his trust in God, abandoning himself to Him: "The mainstay of Fr Rinaldi's entire life was his heroic hope. He waited to receive everything from Jesus and Mary Help of Christians, to whom he entrusted the solution of every difficulty with full and filial abandonment to the divine will and the search for heavenly goods without any attachment to earthly goods.”[[75]](#footnote-76) With this hope he started two oratories in an outlying and difficult area of Turin, and he undertook the opening of numerous aspirants, especially for missionary vocations.

Witnesses trace his absolute detachment from worldly goods and honours back to this orientation of life, the fact that he entrusted his life to Providence, and it was a form of life he also inculcated in his confreres. On one occasion he was offered a share in the profits of a national lottery, which he refused because he wanted to live off Providence and not off lotteries. Of course we also refer to the detachment from present goods and honours of those who seek to embody the eschatological orientation of the Christian in their religious life.

“His whole being led to the things of God. When we spoke with Fr Rinaldi we realized that his whole life was focused on the ‘things up there’... He used to say to us: ‘every day you need to bring a brick to the building of our home in Paradise.’”[[76]](#footnote-77) The Christian faith necessarily translates into hope, because it deals with faith in the God of the promise. Christian existence is a life on a journey, a decisive orienting of oneself towards the future of God, or towards God, our future, so that we are guided by him. Statements by wtinesses present Fr Rinaldi as tending towards his divine future. “He was animated by a most lively hope. His thinking was fully directed to eternal goods"; another recalls that “he constantly had thoughts of Paradise and used to say, ‘Paradise never costs too much.’” Fr Tommaso Bordas attested: “Equivalent to his ardent faith, the theological virtue of hope was alive in the Servant of God, both in the sense of reaching eternal life with the grace of God, and in the certainty of having the divine help necessary to achieve said end, and to carry out works of good and zeal for the glory of God.”[[77]](#footnote-78) Such was his encouragement to Salesians to constancy: “With the hope of Paradise.” In fact, Fr Rinaldi did not allow any occasion to pass without keenly encouraging this Christian virtue by which he was animated, in everyone. In conferences, sermons, in private conversations, he sought to pass on this spirit of unbounded trust in God which he had, and which filled his heart.

The salvation of his soul was Fr Rinaldi’s fundamental concern and hecommited himself to this with serious and decisive will throughout his life, entrusting himself confidently to the Lord and working untiringly in view of Paradise. His life was the surest proof of this heroic habit of hope, and concrete facts demonstrate it: leaving the family at the age of 20 by becoming a priest, the almost immediate responsibility of being a Rector, accepted in obedience, the sudden detachment from Italy by going to work in Spain, twenty years spent as Vicar of the Rector Major dealing with complex and often very distressing issues, and finally, ten years of government of the Congregation with an extraordinary program of initiatives promoted solely for the Kingdom of God. These are facts that presume the immense strength he drew from hope. He counted confidently on God’s promises, and looking beyond human events, he was able to face the difficulties and the risks with trust, constancy, and an unswervingly serene soul. Fr Rinaldi did all this and therefore carried out not just isolated acts of abandonment to God, but his entire life was an heroic gesture of hope. His final years were an accelerated preparation for Paradise which he felt was imminent to the point that he used to say goodbye in this belief: “Arrivederci in Paradiso” (See you in Paradise)!

## *2.4 Love of God: everything in Fr Rinaldi was about love of God*

Those who spent time with him noticed that it was “a deep love of God that impelled him, and it was the reason for his dedication to souls. He loved God and wanted him to be loved by us.”[[78]](#footnote-79) This love was translated into living in God's grace and growing in virtue and exhorting us to love the Lord: "Seek the Lord alonein everything and let the rest go.”[[79]](#footnote-80) This inner movement of love transpired in his words and sermons, which were simple but sincere, and with which he managed to touch souls. He never brought himself to the fore. On the contrary, he made “a special effort to hide himself, so that God would always appear in everything.”[[80]](#footnote-81)

His love for God prompted him to put His holy will into practice with great precision and to have a particular horror for every form of sin and the desire for reparation. Fr Tranquillo Azzini, who had known him since 1901 and worked for many years as administrative secretary of the Salesian Society, declared: “The Servant of God, animated by that ardent charity that bound him to the Lord, suffered immensely for the offences that ungrateful humanity commits against God. And he endeavoured to make reparation for them in the best way he could. From the fact that after his death – according to what I heard – penitential objects were found on him, I believe that he also tried by these means to make reparation for the world’s offences against the infinite Majesty of God.”[[81]](#footnote-82) His charity manifested itself through zeal: for the conversion of sinners, praying for them and doing everything possible to get them back on the right track, organizing hours and days of reparation to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, diligent dedication to the ministry of confession with a generosity that ccould be described as truly heroic.

Witnesses agree in giving prominence to the heights which Fr Rinaldi’s love for God reached: a love that shone with extraordinary intensity in his life and qualified his holiness. Fr Tirone, who was appointed Spiritual Director General of the Salesian Society attests: “Everything about Fr Rinaldi was love of God. His mind and heart were full of God, he often spoke of God, and always with the deepest respect and the most tender love. His whole life, even when he had to deal with the most varied matters, was a continuous act, an incessant hymn of God's love, and an impetus of zeal for His glory and the salvation of souls. The numerous works to which he put his hand and happily brought to completion with perseverance and sacrifice were but an effect of his great love of God. God was the one and only purpose of his life, from his entry into the Congregation until his death.”[[82]](#footnote-83)

Sister Ursula Pavese, who met Fr Rinaldi while attending the girls’ oratory at Valdocco since she was six years old, was so impressed by the encounter with him that she compared the image of Don Bosco’s monument in the Square in front of Mary Help of Christians with the fatherliness she experienced in the encounter with Fr Rinaldi. Retaining a vivid memory of the impressions, moods, and atmosphere one breathed in the oratory and the spiritual fruits that matured while she was there, she testified as follows: "Through his peaceful, warm and soothing words we felt that God was in relationship with us and we with God. We came away from him with our spirits energized, convinced that to love the Lord we had to think and act as he, Fr Rinaldi, had taught us, and joyfully we tried to act and truly live like that... His great love for God shone out in something that we would not have known how to describe, but that made us convinced that he was a saint. His love for God that was powerfully communicated to us, and only when we met him, more out of an inner impulse than out of reasoning, it reminded us of the need that his words had brought about in us, young girls from 14 to 18 years old as we were, to love the Lord, be united with him, or rather, enjoy him... The love of God and neighbour that we all recognized as huge in Fr Rinaldi was the secret and the measure of the spiritual input that we experienced in some sectors of the oratory. His love of neighbor, his ability to attend to all material and moral needs with such understanding, was not only acting for the salvation of souls, but a real desire to lead them to greater intimacy with God.”[[83]](#footnote-84)

Love of God was translated into a constant effort to live always in his presence and to do his will. He practised what he taught: “True piety is not words, beautiful phrases, outward attitude, frequent visits to the church: no; true piety is nourished by sacrifice and by the fulfilment of God's will.”[[84]](#footnote-85) For Fr Ricaldone: “His love for God manifested itself in a profound spirit of piety and uplifting recollection. It then showed up and moved hearts in his conversations, sermons and lectures. Those who dealt closely with him were convinced that he made a special effort to to hide himself, so that God would always appear in everything. He was very delicate even in the smallest things, especially when it came to preventing offence against God.”[[85]](#footnote-86) And that without ever stopping or considering that he had achieved his goal. In an address to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians he said: “Now, you will tell me to do what I have recommended that you do. Express this wish for me at the foot of the altar. Say it, tell Jesus. so that I too may love my neighbor, celebrate Holy Mass well, say my prayers well. And you will tell me: But you already do this! It can be done better, it can always be done better. Onward, then, always onward, till we reach Heaven.”[[86]](#footnote-87) The resolutions he wrote down when he was a student at Sampierdarena in Genoa are also testimony to this commitment.

Fr Tommaso Bordas, who met Fr Rinaldi in Spain when he was five years old and was then close to him until his death, as an assistant to the Salesian Superior Chapter, attested: "The whole life of the Servant of God can be said to have been a continuous act of his love for the Lord. He demonstrated this by the exemplariness of the life he had already led since he was a young man before entering the Salesian Congregation; by the detail with which he attended all his obligations; by the precision with which he conducted his religious life and by the great delicacy of conscience which was evident in him... His submission to the will of God in every case was complete, a submission which he did not fail to inculcate in his confreres, especially in his penitents, as the basis and foundation of their Christian life.”[[87]](#footnote-88)

The love that Fr Philip Rinaldi had for the God who revealed himself to us in Jesus as Love, is expressed in the vocabulary of totality: “Everything about Fr Rinaldi was love of God”; “He had a heart filled with true love for the Lord”; “He was nimated by a very keen love for the Lord”; “He was animated by very ardent love for the Lord.”. One can find a flourishing of adjectives with which witnesses describe Fr Rinaldi's love for God: “very ardent”, “very keen”, “most tender”, “strong”. These are all descriptions that, that on the one hand, manifest the fire of charity that springs from the Heart of Christ, and on the other the typical traits of the Good Shepherd who loves with a mild and humble Heart, through the gift of himself.

These are not abstract statements, but are based on experience and concrete facts. “By his very presence, by his behavior he demonstrated his great union with God and his immense love... it is difficult to judge a person, but many things can be guessed, and in Fr Rinaldi one sensed, felt the profound love of God that drove him, and that was the reason for his dedication to souls.”[[88]](#footnote-89) The lover, as we know, often speaks of his love. Fr Rinaldi could not hide his love for the source of love. The tenderness and ardor of which the witnesses speak clearly refer to the empotional aspect of love. His keen love for God was demonstrated by submitting fully to his will, manifested and expressed through the invitations and commands of his superiors. God's love, transformed with generous commitment into charity, filled his soul; besides manifesting itself outwardly by his loving fatherliness, it was shown and continues to be shown by the many spiritual works he began, and whihc he did not cease to work at constantly and zealously, consuming his physical strength, and yet it was never enough for him.

Fr Tiburzio Lupo, who knew the spirituality of the man of God well, has attested: “His love for God is proven by his life of piety, the edifying celebration of the Holy Mass, his regularity in the practices of piety in common, especially meditation, his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Following the example of Blessed Fr Rua, he always promoted this devotion in Salesian houses. There was also his abandonment to the will of God in the infirmities that afflicted him, especially his eyes, and a heart condition, which only increased his desire to be united with God.”[[89]](#footnote-90) Fr Antonio Candela, who knew Blessed Philip Rinaldi well and observed him carefully, spoke no differently: “The love of God can be said to be the motive behind Fr Rinaldi’s intense activity. This was clear from what he said, wrote and did. Everything about him was aimed at glorifying God. Undoubtedly, the Servant of God had great delicacy of conscience and was constantly endeavouring to maintain union with God, refraining from doing anyting wrong. He often spoke of this union with God in his conferences.”[[90]](#footnote-91)

Sr. Teresa Graziano said: “The love the Servant of God had for the Lord was certainly tender and very much alive. And he demonstrated it ithrough full adherence of his will God’s will. It meant accepting responsibilities he did not feel naturally prepared for, and he fulfilled them with much peace, serenity and perfection... The love of the Servant of God for the Lord was manifested in a special way in his spirit of piety, in calm and profoundly recollected prayerfulness.”[[91]](#footnote-92) Finally, Arturo Poesio, a pupil of the oratory when Don Bosco was still alive and subsequently President of the International Association of the Salesian Past Pupils, testified thus: “To the best of my knowledge and as far as I know from what I saw externally, I can attest that the Servant of God had a heart filled with true love for the Lord, for whose glory he spent all his energy and all his activities. When in contact with him, I always had the impression that he was an exemplary priest, foreign to all fault and imperfection, and completely dedicated to multiplying good works for the glory of God and the good of souls.”[[92]](#footnote-93)

*2.5 Love of neighbour:**If I were not in contact with the souls I would no longer be real*

Love of God became love of neighbor. The supernatural and theological outlook that enlivened Fr Rinaldi and drove him to heroic generosity is evident. Fr Rinaldi’s extraordinary love of neighbor sprang from his heroic love of God: sincere, active, constant and universal supernatural love. We could say that his words during a Retreat for the for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were fully realized in him: “Our interior life pushes, urges us to charity, work, sacrifice for our neighbor.” First of all, Fr Rinaldi fulfilled his duties as superior in an exact manner, with total self-giving for the good of his confreres, not only when this involved intense external activity, with frequent travel (for example, during the period he spent in Spain), but also during the long office hours carrying out the duties of Prefect General and Rector Major of the Salesian Society.

Nevertheless, God's love led him to find time for magnificent priestly activity in the ministry of confession, spiritual direction and preaching, as well as for the direct promotion of apostolic works. Fr Tirone reported that Fr Rinaldi, called in 1901 to hold the office of Prefect General, “celebrated Holy Mass at 4:30 a.m. each day. and then for a couple of hours sat at the confessional, and it was always well-frequented. He was also called on during the day, and left his work and went immediately to the confessional. Anyone who wondered at this was told, ‘This is how we remember that we are priests!’ His spiritual direction was much appreciated and many took advantage of it.”[[93]](#footnote-94) Fr Zerbino also reports the following words Fr Rinaldi said to Fr Rodolfo Fierro when he told him that some were complaining about the amount of time the Prefect General was dedicating to the ministry of confession: “Look, all day I am dealing wioth money and business. If I do not put myself in contact with the souls and not try to lead them and us to God, I would no longer be real.”[[94]](#footnote-95)

Fr Rinaldi's inner life was a life of love for God and dedication to neighbor. His love for others, however, was clothed in goodness, gentleness, attentive and caring benevolence, kindly forbearance. In a word: spiritual fatherliness that sustained hims and helped him to walk in God’s ways. Here, Fr Rinaldi showed the distinctive character of his uncommon personality and the unmistakable features of his priestly life, by exercising the highest and most perfect theological virtue. Love of neighbor is naturally the projection and practical realization of love of God. It can be said that all his life, his wide-ranging activities developed in oratories, conferences, sermons, catechism, had only one purpose: to prevent and fight sin and to promote the glory of God and the spiritual good of souls. Just as his entire life was an act of love for God, so was it also an act of love for neighboras part of the Congregation, or in other words with the priests and other onfreres, and beyond it, through the continuous exercise of spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

*They spoke of Fr Rinaldi as they would of a father*

“In carrying out his office as Rector Major, he revealed the kind of person he was more and more each year. He showed prudence, wisdom and above all, fatherliness, resulting in the growing affection of all his sons. They spoke of Fr Rinaldi as they would of a father. Just as piety was the characteristic of Fr Albera and the Rule, observance fidelity was the characteristic of Fr Rua, so fatherliness was the characteristic of Fr Rinaldi.”[[95]](#footnote-96)

As a superior, he was a good father to all. Witnesses speak of his “uncommon fatherlyl kindness.” He did his best to give himself to others, literally until the last moment of his life. In fact, after a final act of charity to an elderly confrere who had asked him for an audience, he say exhausted in a chair where he died a few minutes later. The confreres emphasize his fatherly kindness in governing, exhorting, correcting. Fatherliness was Fr Rinaldi's special, unmistakable and identifying characteristic. “He was convinced that people are won over more by the heart than by intelligence. Therefore he did not tire of recommending kindness with everyone, and encouraged people to see Jesus Christ even in the most humble, and especially in those who seemed from God.”[[96]](#footnote-97)

He also instilled this in those who were given responsibility for governing and managing. A letter to his niece,, Sr. Maria Rinaldi, who asked advice when she was to be appopinted superior, is quite revealing: “Your first task is to safeguard the family spirit in the community... your role as superior is to radiate calm, serenity, joy... Very often take a look at yourself and see if your face spreads sunlight around you... A superior must govern with the heart, not with the Rule: it is the heart that makes people love the rule. This is what Don Bosco thought, taught and practised. If as superior you are unable to be loved by the Sisters, then you are out of place, and you would do well to ask to be removed.”[[97]](#footnote-98) And writing to a recently appointed provincial, he wrote: “Yes father: with fatherliness, you will perform miracles.”

There is one photo worth a thousand words, showing Fr Rinaldi as the loving and beloved father. It shows him being borne aloft in a chair around the paths at Ivrea by the young missionary aspirants. He was amused and happy about it, especially for the joy of seeing how happy the boys were, a happiness he also spread about him. The photo recalls the episode when the boys at Valdocco carried Don Bosco around on an armchair, celebrating as they expressed their joy after he was cured through Our Lady’s intercession. Here as then, are the youth who in sure way canonize the Salesian holiness that he has in the fatherliness the more sublime expression of that pastoral charity that loves and gives rise to love in return. His life was a constant application of the words he had written in his first circular to members of the Congregation: “On 24 April last, when... I knelt, emotionally, before the smiling image of our Help of Christians in her Shrine, I felt in my heart that at that moment all of you were given to me by her as dearest children in Jesus Christ, and that since then all I had to live for was you Doesn't fatherhood mean a complete immolation for the good of the children?”[[98]](#footnote-99)

A welcoming, sincere, tender, understanding and helpful fatherhood, which he exercised throughout his life and which was admired by everyone, confreres, sisters and laity, over the previous thirty years and in particular during histime as Rector Major. “His time as Rector Major was characterized by a great fatherliness and heightened spirituality. By common affirmation of all confreres, Fr Rinaldi was a kindly and fatherly man, and that was how I knew him.”[[99]](#footnote-100)

It is interesting to note that this fatherliness towards his confreres was also recognised and appreciated by the outside world. Sister Teresa Graziano extols the Fr Rinaldi's love for his his Salesian confreres: “The dominant note of his charity shone out in a very evident way towards his confreres. Not only did he treat them all with fatherly kindness, but he also emphasized their best qualities, covered over their faults, did not want his children to be touched, and defended them as a good father zealous for the good name of all his family.”[[100]](#footnote-101)

After mentioning several episodes regarding Fr Rinaldi's love for neighbor, Fr Pietro Zerbino concludes by saying: “These last episodes remind me of a very Salesian form of charity in which Fr Rinaldi distinguished himself perhaps like no other Major Superior after Don Bosco: fatherliness, which is the most beautiful and dearest characteristic of Don Bosco. Anyone who approached Fr Rinaldi felt he was approaching a father. Even his physical figure inspired confidence: a beautiful attitude, something he did habitually with a kindly but barely perceptible smile. His was a gentle, calm voice; slow and measured his words; a very mild and fatherly gaze which was an invitation to conversation.”[[101]](#footnote-102)

*He loved everyone and wanted to reach out to everyone*

He gave himself to everyone with heroic generosity, without preference, loving everyone with the same affection as a father and trying to solve all situations correctly. If he had any preference it was for those who suffered and were sick. He lavished extraordinary charity on them. He had special attention for his sick confreres who were returning from the front at the end of the First World War. He also gave attention to sick past pupils, visiting them, comforting them and helping them. This memory of a girl from the oratory is very realistic: “His heroic charity was manifested especially in visits to the sick. I often saw him go to relieve the angelic souls of young women who were going through times of material and moral misery: living in hovels, attics, long dark and dangerous corridors as they were in some houses in old Turin around Valdocco, not far from my house. Overflowing with goodness he softened even the hardest and most hostile faces in those homes where the priest was not wanted... Going up and down those stairs was burdensome for him: he seemed burdened by the weight of so much material and moral misery. He made a heartfelt plea to religious and pious lay people to intensify their assistance to these poor people; but, more than was really possible for him, he went himself, due the risk of contracting the tuberculosis that prevailed in those stagnant and unhygienic places. He loved everyone and would have liked to reach out to them all.”[[102]](#footnote-103)

His word often had a reassuring and calming effect on others, as told by Fr Pietro Zerbino who, as a young confrere, found himself experiencing a change of community that cost him a great deal because of a confrere with a very difficult character. When he met Fr Rinaldi in the courtyard at Valdocco, he shook his hand, looked him in the eye and with a few words changed him inwardly so that the young confrere felt transformed: a nightmare was replaced by a peace that gave rise to the sunshine of serenity. Fr Zerbino testified: 2For me, the heroic charity of Fr Rinaldi was revealed above all in the form of a goodness that had become habitual for him. He was in fact good to everyone, even to those at fault. It's true that ‘God alone is good’, but God communicates his goodness to his friends. Fr Rinaldi's was a supernatural goodness, the fruit of a continuous union with God and of his extraordinary love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”[[103]](#footnote-104) His great spirit of charity towards his neighbor in the last stages of his life, as a priest for many years and superior of the Salesians, was enlightened by the grace of fatherliness. His special love was for the sick and the parents of Salesians. As a manifestation of this charity, one could mention the love he showed in correcting his confreres, the impetus he gave to the Salesian missions, his dedication to the confessional and to the various works of the apostolate, such as catechesis, oratories and lay associations.

In everything, he showed sincere respect for the individual. He gave his time generously to the individual, whoever he was, whoever came to him with a question, a difficulty, a problem. “He was never in a hurry,” is one claim that we find among many witnesses, and is an indication of his self-control and truly heroic charity: “When we spoke with him we always went out comforted, with the satisfaction of having been able to express every pain, every situation. He was never in a hurry. He received every person, even a youngster, and received him as if he were a very important person.”[[104]](#footnote-105) Giving himself to everyone without reservation was his heart’s profound need. He embodied the goodness of Don Bosco. The same understanding of human misery, compassion for all material and spiritual needs, the same concern for receiving, consoling, instilling courage and hope were the concrete translation of this compassion of his fatherly heart. Felicita Gaslini, mother of a family, praised Fr Rinaldi’s charity and fatherly goodness: 2Even in the exercise of charity towards his neighbor, as an expression of the ardent charity that made his heart burn for the Lord, the Servant of God was a true model. He loved his neighbor as someone to do good for, first of all to do good for the soul, and then the body. He saw every effort of his as an exercise of the works of spiritual and temporal mercy.”[[105]](#footnote-106)

Both as Prefect General and Rector Major his antechamber was crowded with the poor; and he always combined material and spiritual charity. Countless orphaned and abandoned young people were welcomed into Salesian houses at his insistence. Sometimes it was pointed out to him that perhaps too many were accepted. But he replied good-naturedly: “It goes beyond that, the Lord has room for everyone.” He loved to visit the sick and despite his workload he always promoted the Conferences of St Vincent de Paul.

Numerous episodes are cited, including by those who benefited from them, as proof of his heroic exercise of works of spiritual and corporal mercy. Perfect charity while seeing to formation of all the Salesians, young people at boys and girls oratories, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians whom he showed particular zeal for, and Salesian past pupils who he aided in materials ways as well. “A characteristic of the Servant of God was his fatherly charity, which he showed for Past Pupils in a particular way... He was always happy to be among the Past Pupils... Nothing could be more consoling for a father than to see his own children around him.”[[106]](#footnote-107) He showed no resentment towards those who offended him or made him suffer, and he was open-mindedly generous and unconditional in forgiveness. His charity also extended to the deceased, whom he prayed for and saw that others prayed for them.

Fr Azzini attested: “The Servant of God certainly did not fail to zealously carry out works of spiritual and corporal mercy whenever the occasion presented itself. His constant concern was the Christian education of youth, which Salesian work aimed at in particular. He therefore wanted to give lively increase to Religion classes in all Salesian Institutes, and to catechism classes in all oratories dependent on the Salesian Society. His love for his confreres was even more than that of a father. It can be said that he reached out to everywhere there was a need or some difficulty. He didn't even wait for needs to be pointed out, but seemed to get there beforehand. He was immensely charitable to his sick confreres. He often visited them, comforted them with spiritual help, and wanted them to be properly assisted in everything, both as regards medicine and food. His charity was not denied even to confreres who failed in their duties. Even in admonishing and correcting he was always fatherly. I recall one day when a confrere was in his office shouting in a fit of anger. The Servant of God remained ever calm and serene, so much so that the confrere was forced to recognize his injustice and apologize to him.”[[107]](#footnote-108) He also demonstrated the same affection and respect for confreres who had left the Congregation.

One work of charity he stood out for was his consolation for the afflicted, especially for boys when he saw them down or discouraged. He would immediately approached them to make them happy again, almost mindful of his experience as a boy in the college at Mirabello. This was the case for young Gregorio Ferro, in Spain, who approached Fr Rinaldi to tell him that he wanted to leave the college. Fr Rinaldi brought the boy's head to his breast and said: 2No, my son, you will be a Salesian and you will do very well.” And so it happened. .

*2.6 Prudence: Fr Rinaldi’s most outstanding virtue*

Several testimonies agree in recognizing prudence as a characteristic virtue of Fr Rinaldi’s, especially as superior and teacher of spiritual life, a virtue in which his interiority and holiness were reflected. There is talk of his “consummate prudence", “personified prudence", exercised with the exquisite trait of gentleness and delicacy. Evasio Colli, Archbishop of Parma, a close friend of Fr Rinaldi’s, said: “For me he impersonated prudence so much so that I confided in him to the end, even on matters relating to my episcopal ministry, certain that his precise and calm word solved even the most difficult problems.”[[108]](#footnote-109) Fr Ricaldone, who was close to him for 20 years in the government of the Congregation, was able to state: “If I had to say what was the virtue that most stood out in Fr Rinaldi, I would not hesitate in saying that it was prudence... He had a deep knowledge of himself, and therefore a great humility, convinced of his insufficiency. He manifested it every time that it was a question of accepting some position... in the difficulties and in the works undertaken his word was always light and sure direction for all. He possessed the utmost discretion and used it to illuminate, order, guide, moderate in all circumstances. He knew how to keep secrets and confidences. He measured his words and even more so what he wrote. His discretion was combined with truth, gentleness and firmness.”[[109]](#footnote-110) Fr Bordas continues in the same tone: “One of the great gifts that made Fr Rinaldi so highly respected as a Superior was undoubtedly his consummate prudence, the natural and clear result of his focus on and union with God. He was never rushed, but always calm and a master of himself. He allowed all opinions to be spoken and presented, and then, very carefully gave his judgment, which was generally welcomed by all, even by opponents, with true satisfaction.”[[110]](#footnote-111) Sister Graziano remarked: “Prudence was not only a natural quality of his, but a true supernatural virtue, because we saw him always focused, and we noticed that, before acting or giving any advice, he recollected himself and prayed. It seems that he drew the decisions he had to take, and the advice he had to give from some inner light."[[111]](#footnote-112)

It is enough to make a quick overview of the different stages of Fr Rinaldi's life to realize that he always acted with the utmost prudence. When he decided to follow God's call to religious life, he asked his superiors for advice and was a model of sincerity and docility. Then, as a superior, he appeared subject to legitimate authority and exercised his functions in a fully satisfactory manner and with abundant good resuilts. “The Servant of God can be described as the prudent individual par excellence, in that he was never agitated, hasty with his decisions, but calm and thoughtful. If he needed to he took as much time as was necessary to examine and reflect on things... He prayed for the necessary enlightenment, and in the more difficult circumstances and imore important affairs, he made triduums and novenas and saw that others made them, to ensure the protection and illumination from heaven... How much prudence he showed when he had to decide on his vocation! He studied it for a long time on his own, but did not decide to follow it until he had the clear and repeated invitation from Saint John Bosco to enter the Congregation. Even when it was a question of receiving sacred orders or positions in the Congregation, he did not do so unless he was called by Don Bosco and assured that it was the will of God in his regard.”[[112]](#footnote-113)

In governing at different levels, he knew how to respect the competence of other superiors without ever invading their territory. He listened to and took into account the opinion of the councillors, showing himself nevertheless unshakable when it came to defending some of Don Bosco's principles or traditions; and, after having prayed and studied the individual questions with the help of those who were in charge, he took the decisions and put them into practice without delay. Fr Candela reported: “In Chapter meetings he left the greatest freedom of speech; he listened to all the advice and did not take decisions until after everything had been well thought out and especially after having asked for the light from heaven.”[[113]](#footnote-114) Fr Ricaldone, speaking in the light of his personal experience declared: “He thought things through very much when acting and di this I would say by nature. More than once this seemed excessive to me and I allowed myself to tell him: he smiled, but the facts proved that he was right. He was not only a *cunctator*, but a skilled sailor through the reefs: he was also very skilled at finding unforeseen solutions even in material affairs.”[[114]](#footnote-115) We often find expressions like “keep thinking,” “think about it more,” “reflect then we will decide,” “let us pray, then we will decide” in the Minutes of the Superior Chapter.

Prudence was shown in the ordinary performance of his duties, in spiritual direction, and stood out with particular intensity in certain especially difficult circumstances that he had to face and resolve. In these cases he employed truly heroic prudence and simplicity, guided as he was by particular gifts of nature, but above all by the light that came to him from supernatural grace, the fruit of prayer and contemplation. It will suffice to recall his way of acting during slanderous campaigns against the Salesians, as for example in the case of the Varazze affair, unleashed by Freemasonry. Fr Rua gave the supreme directives, but the one who had to deal with lawyers, journalists and other people was Fr Rinaldi. He was able to conduct matters in such a way that the din newspapers stopped and it all came to an end. The guilty were condemned, but how much trouble it caused for him, how many thinking and work it took! It is also worth remembering his attitude towards the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, especially on the occasion of the Holy See’s decision that established the autonomy of female religious institutes from male institutes.

His penitents also praised his prudence in spiritual direction and personal relationships; a prudence exercised simply and firmly: “Personally frank... clarity personified.” He was always prudent, both when dealing with things concerning his office, and when dealing with his confreres, and in spiritual direction. An obvious sign of his consummate prudence was the the number of people who went to his confessional in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. This came from the fact that the penitents discovered a spiritual director of enlightened spirit in Fr Rinaldi. He was practical and his direction was in accordance with God’s heart. Fr Eugenio Valentini attested: “It is well known that Fr Rinaldi was considered a person of great prudence and enlightened counsel. Before being elected Rector Major, he went to the basilica each day to hear confessions, and his confessional was very popular. When he became Rector Major and could no longer be in the confessional, audiences with him became very popular with every class of people who turned to him for advice and moral help.”[[115]](#footnote-116) Sister Graziano, who had him as guide for her vocation and religious life, spoke of his prudence: “His spiritual direction had nothing long and complicated about it. The Servant of God helped with his enlightened and fatherly word. And, if necessary, he knew how to ask for real sacrifices, but then he supported souls in their struggles, always urging them to do good good and inspiring them with the greatest confidence in the infinite goodness of God.”[[116]](#footnote-117) A former oratory girl recalled her youth under Fr Rinaldi’s guidance: “Because of his reputation as a virtuous and prudent man, Fr Rinaldi was highly sought after for problems of conscience and was considered enlightened in his vocational choices. He was an enlightened guide, for many years, to many generations, young and old alike. Gifted with fine intuition, divine light, he directed people to discover the will of God. I think it is difficult to number all the beautiful, holy vocations that have adorned the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians during those years and which are due to the Servant of God... at that time, in the atmosphere of the ‘living’ Oratory, the idea of becoming postulants went through the heads of all of us young people. Fr Rinaldi had us pray, advised us, slowed us down. The clarity of his intuitions was impressive.”[[117]](#footnote-118)

Examples of such wisdom are the advice given to Fr Ignazio Bonvicino when he was sent to Penango to open a missionary aspirantate. On that occasion Fr Rinaldi told him: “The aspirantate is not yet the novitiate: it is a college where the spirit of Don Bosco is best practiced. If you have to remove some aspirant, make sure that he goes away very impressed by the treatment he has received; as a friend, not as an enemy.”[[118]](#footnote-119)  Perhaps this iremark was also the result of his personal experience when he left Mirabello due to being badly treated and rememberied how difficult it is to reconstruct wounded relationships and erase negative memories. To Fr Ignazio himself, when he was later sent to direct the new agricultural school in Cumiana, he said: “In controversial matters, do not listen to a single bell; listen to them all.”[[119]](#footnote-120) The suffering and the pained events of his vocational story had enabled him to be ardent and sure when it came to carrying out apostolic enterprises and above all in the art of helping individuals discern and choose their calling. What a wise example of prudence he showed in advising on recruitment of vocations, opening new houses, assigning specific and potential tasks to individuals! What prudence he showed in preventing abuses or in dealing with them, in avoiding misunderstandings, making plans and carrying them out according to time and circumstances! Fr Ricaldone said: “I recognize that I have not found another individual who possessed the gift of counsel so eminently as Fr Rinaldi did. Priests, religious, industrialists and government people turned to him with their doubts and they all came out enlightened and comforted.”[[120]](#footnote-121)

2.7 Justice: charity without justice becomes weakness

Fr Rinaldi's love for his confreres was a love that always kept in mind the demands of justice. He was a ‘just’ man in the full sense of the word. “As for justice, I am convinced that Fr Rinaldi was the ‘*Vir Iustus’* in the biblical sense of a person endowed with every virtue. He used to say: ‘Charity without justice becomes weakness. We must be good, but just, the one who prefers charity to justice is at fault.’ I always found the Servant of God most exact in the fulfilment of his duties towards God, and very careful in seeking and carrying out his holy will. He was extremely delicate in dealing with his neighbor in everything that was due to him.”[[121]](#footnote-122) He practised the virtue of justice to God and neighbor in a perfect way. He gave himself completely to God and did not spare himself in his various roles of responsibility. Fr Guido Favini attested: “It perfectly corresponds to the truth that Fr Rinaldi exercised justice to the highest degree. *Towards God*: all his life was a continuous search for God's will to carry it out; and he found it in the desires and suggestions of Don Bosco and the other superiors, in events around him, and he always conformed to this will in order to pay God the tribute of respect and obedience that was due to him. As a Salesian religious, he never deflected from the Rule, so much so that he was considered the most Salesian of Don Bosco's sons. *Towards human beings*: especially in his relationships as superior, he took great care not to favour anyone to the detriment of others, to distribute positions equally, to love everyone with the same affection as a father, to resolve all situations in the right way.”[[122]](#footnote-123)

The practice of justice was manifested in the exactness with which he administered the goods of the Congregation as Prefect General, and worked to ensure that debts were settled as soon as possible. Here is how his administrative secretary spoke about it: “I had the opportunity to admire his precision from the administrative side. In fact, being with him for many decades in the administration office, when he was Prefect General, I could see how detailed and minute he was in recording things; how he wanted creditors and suppliers to be satisfied punctually: and I can state that I never heard anyone complain about his method of accounting, or complainthat they had not received what was due to them.”[[123]](#footnote-124) It is worth noting that in the 21 years in which he was Prefect General, given the extraordinary development of works, there were no bankruptcies or economic risks. This sense of responsibility was also manifested by his wanting to be informed of all situations of an administrative nature, while having full confidence in his collaborators. His sense of gratitude towards benefactors is also worth noting. His concern to carry out their will with precision was a great merit, something that is truly uncommon when one sees certain freedoms that others take, and of which there is very sad evidence. In this regard, he organized a special office to express his gratitude to benefactors.

An eloquent example of the exercise of justice without favouritism, can be found in the relationship with his four Salesian nephews. One of these attested: “I note his gratitude to benefactors and his relationship with his family. The Servant of God was always foreign to the idea of meddling in the affairs of kinship. Yet his influence on his relatives was great and beneficial... neither superiors nor confreres saw even the shadow of nepotism in him. He followed us with more than paternal interest, but never wanted us to be privileged in any way.”[[124]](#footnote-125)

With regard to justice to others he quoted the example of his father Christopher to the family, writing, on the occasion of his father’s death: “And you especially, who have to rule the family, imitate his justice in contracts, his attachment to religion, his disinterest in managing goods and things of the Church, his perseverance and determination in raising his children.”[[125]](#footnote-126) As priest and religious this example is enriched with supernatural motivations. He was not making distinction of age, merit and tasks.

Another example of justice occurred at the time of the division of intangible assets between the Salesian Society and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians when, by the will of the Holy See, the two Congregations were legally and administratively separated. Fr Rinaldi's positive and balanced influence on this delicate issue showed his profound sense of justice and prudence. This was particularly delicate and very complex because there had been a complete communion of real estate assets, but with his sense of justice and fairness, he led things in such a way that at the end of the division there was mutual satisfaction and complete harmony.

Another episode to remember was when he worked in Fr Rua’s name for the settlement of the dispute between the owners of the Poma Company and their workers during a strike. He was the mediator who brought the two parties together and led them to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of both parties.

And in some cases, what justice he practised! Especially with his confreres, in whose regard his goodness and fortitude converged in a magnificent synthesis of fatherliness; he was able to chide an intemperate superior, support injured material and spiritual rights, and he personally took the blame or through the Congregation for the errors of some members, without taking refuge in anonymity or invoking the support of the powerful for his own protection. This exercise of justice was manifested in a truly heroic way even in cases where it was necessary to go ahead and defend the good reputation of the Congregation in the face of serious slander that seriously compromised its very survival. Fr Antonio Candela attested: “At the time of the so-called Varazze affair, I was in Spain. But I heard that the Servant of God, while feeling all the pain of the serious accusations that had accumulated against the Salesian Society, nevertheless did not lose heart, and full of confidence in the inevitable help of the Lord and the Blessed Virgin Mary Help of Christians, with a spirit of great courage took charge in order to dispel the obscene calumnies, and through the powerful efforts of lawyers managed to obtain full justification of the Salesian Society.”[[126]](#footnote-127)

2.8 Fortitude: *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat (All things are possible in him who comforts me)*

His complete self-mastery and his control over all the spontaneous reactions of nature, a mastery that manifested itself in calm amidst daily difficulties, revealed a fortitude of mind in Fr Rinaldi that was heroic that for its perfection and perseverance. There is proof of this in his efforts to strive for religious and priestly perfection, and holiness: an effort sustained constantly throughout his life. Through long practice he achieved complete self-mastery, perfect balance in all circumstances and control of external events, including the unforeseen and regrettable. Fr Tommaso Bordas attested: “Supernatural fortitude shone out in the Servant of God in a special way, highlighted particularly by his deep humility. For although he felt very humble in his own regard, he did not hesitate to undertake major enterprises and to continue them energetically, if he understood that they were required for the greater glory of God and the good of souls. One could see that he was animated by the sentiment of the apostle who said: *‘Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat.’”[[127]](#footnote-128)*We recall what he did to tackle numerous material and moral difficulties, the wounds resulting from the First World War, financial disasters, the expenses required for supporting the missions, the persecutions suffered by the Congregation in different parts of the world.

All this without ever losing his usual joviality and paternal loving kindness. In fact, serenity was acquired at a high price, as the result of a struggle with himself. His character would have led him to be indulgent, but fortitude gave him perfect control over himself, so that his proverbial goodness and unalterable serenity were not a sign of weakness, but of proven virtue. All the witnesses speak of this unchanging serenity, of his “perfect steadiness in the face of the most disconcerting and unforeseen events"; even in periods of fatigue and of his final illness "he was imperturbable,” “he never spoke of it, acting... serenely.” At the same time they admit that he was “almost inflexible when it came to preserving unchanged the religious traditions left to us by Don Bosco"; that "he was austere and inflexible with himself... he knew how to correct those who lacked the religious discipline and spirit of Don Bosco charitably but firmly”; and that he was firm and intransigent in governing when it came to defending the truth.

He gave proof of heroic fortitude in illness, especially in his final years, as witnessed by Fr Vacca, who acted as his personal secretary in the last period of his life and who had been shown fatherly, even motherly affection and attention from Fr Rinaldi: “Even though he understood how things were and his risky heart condition, even in the last two years he submitted himself to tiring journeys, to bring the comfort of his smile to distant places... he was always there for everyone, both to give audience, receive festive demonstrations, celebrate functions, without giving up; and the smile on his face would never alter, nor would he allow tiredness or intolerance to shine through... And he never spoke of it, acting with a spirit of adaptation to his illness so serenely, that having recourse to help from others seemed more like an act of fatherly confidence on his part, than an imperative need. Never a complaint at the many sleepless nights, nor were they grounds for him to dispense himself from the daily concerns of duty and charity.”[[128]](#footnote-129) His constancy and perseverance in the practice of virtue and the commitment with which he was faithful to the practices of piety are noted. Fr Ricaldone declared: “During periods of exhaustion he spent his sleepless nights sitting most of the time in a large chair. And he was always there at 4:30 a.m. to celebrate Holy Mass, and then attend meditation.”[[129]](#footnote-130)

However, the aspect that deserves to be studied with greater attention is that which concerns Fr Rinaldi’s fortitude in the performance of his duties as superior, bearing in mind also that for almost fifty years he held uninterrupted positions of government in the Salesian Society. The documents present his kindness as the most characteristic trait of Fr Rinaldi, to which his fatherliness can be added with even greater intensity. Despite this, there are no lack of testimonies that document how this kindness was combined with firmness, always directed to the glory of God and the good of souls. The deposition from Fr Ricaldone is significant in this regard: “It is natural that a major superior of a Congregation finds many difficulties along the way; I am not referring to what we might call the ordinary ones; and I speak of just one.”[[130]](#footnote-131) Here the reference is to 1931 when *Il Duce*, Benito Mussolini, dissolved all Catholic associations and also the festive oratories. Fr Rinaldi left Turin in protest and by speaking with authorities in a very frank manner, he succeeded in havingthe oratories re-opened through the personal intervention of *Il Duce*. His words “always gentle and kind, took on a strength of phrase and incisive tonality when it came to affirming the truth or defending unarguable principles of healthy spirituality, and he was intransigent in matters that he understood clearly or that were clearly defined, while proceeding in a most affable manner.”[[131]](#footnote-132) Fr Ricaldone testifies how Fr Rinaldi was “inflexible” when it came to preserving unchanged the religious traditions left by Don Bosco, and tells of a time he saw him really angry when one poor individuals had made a very bad impression among young people; after scolding himseverely, he sent him away. Fr Tirone reports how, in the face of modernism, Fr Rinaldi severely reprimanded someone who even appeared to be in sympathy with this position. He “was convinced of the obligation and importance of correction; he did it and wanted it to be done, but always gently, and he preferred to encourage rather than correct.”[[132]](#footnote-133) He was able to correct those who lacked the religious discipline and spirit of Don Bosco charitably but firmly at the right time.

The works Fr Rinaldi undertook and the constancy with which he pursued them also speak of his fortitude. Considering the uncertainty that characterized the origins of his vocation, the firmness with which, since the novitiate, he had formulated and maintained his resolutions, introduced by an energetic “I will”, this is significant. Despite the fragility of his physique, he never retreated in the face of the fatigue involved in his duties, even at times he was forced to take to his bed. Fortitude for Fr Rinaldi was a kind of harmony of gentleness and firmness. He could “armwrestle with a velvet glove.” His authority was devoid of strong words and ways, but imbued with humility that moved and convinced. He rarely commanded, more often he “begged”, “invoked”, “exhorted”, “expressed a thought”; not forceful expressions, but stronger than certain imperatives. Their fascination stemmed from the fortitude he applied in his own regard: he did not indulge in the weaknesses of nature, in justification of pride or, in general, of passions, adaptations of convenience, or in the subterfuges of compromise. “He was never disconcerted, nor did he ever lose his courage even in the most difficult moments. In those circumstances, one can say, his confidence in Mary Help of Christians doubled. He entrusted and recommended himself to her with the most fervent prayer. And he was able to overcome the most serious difficulties with the most absolute calm and tranquillity.”[[133]](#footnote-134)

The virtue of fortitude was manifested in strength of character and in the way in which he faced adversity, with complete self-mastery: “In every circumstance he was seen to exercise the most eminent and heroic virtue, without effort, without showing any disgust or struggle, as if the movement of passions did not exist in him, so much was the calm, peace, the smile that infused his face. He was always serene, always paternally and amiably kind.”[[134]](#footnote-135) His was a goodness that knew how to be strong and a fortitude tempered by goodness: these were qualities that harmonized in Fr Rinaldi’s soul and characterized his personality. This virtue was certainly extraordinary and he practised it heroically, given that he succeeded in maintaining a balance between his search for his own sanctification, and the spiritual, organizational and also material work of the Congregation. He prayed, preached, heard confessions tirelessly and uninterruptedly. He made endless journeys to meet his sons and carried out intense activity throughout his life. Fr Giacomo Vacca attested: “It seems to me that the virtue of fortitude was like a garment that perfectly fitted his person. His presence and ever serious words affirmed his possession of this virtue, seemingly part of his very nature. His perfect steadiness in the face of upsets and the most regrettable unforeseen events, his spontaneous trust in Providence, all with the serenity of mind made others feel secure, and communicated this to others, had convinced me that he had arrived at such self-mastery after lengthy, difficiult and arduous practice; his life is a confirmation of this. The illness that eventually killed him also involved an heroic exercise of strength and resistance on his part. He had no fears or uncertainties about his responsibility. After lengthy periods of prayer and reflection, after asking advice, he acted with such firmness, even in the most complex cases, as to give everyone full confidence of success.”[[135]](#footnote-136)

This was the case to the end: “He manifested his strength in resisting passions, putting up with people and adversity, and in illness. Sometimes he would say to me, ‘You see? This eye is already lost, and from the other I can only see double, or black flies and flashes.’ Yet he remained cheerful and serene... In 1924 he believed that everything was over; yet he was imperturbable, and it was often not possible to get him take a little rest. As for his strength in defending the rights of the Church, the family and the Congregation, especially with regard to the freedom of Christian education, he demonstrated this very clearly.”[[136]](#footnote-137)

2.9 Temperance: work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish

The temperance that is always linked to work in the Salesian tradition, our coat of arms as Don Bosco said on a number of occasions, points to general self-mastery in an austere lifestyle made up of sacrifice, demanding of time and accompanied by a sense of measure and balance as the result of the ability to curb one's reactions. This attitude of temperance is to be combined with a generally pleasant demeanor, a popular style, rich in common sense and with sufficient room for a healthy dose of shrewdness. “The Salesian” Fr Rinaldi said, “must know how to hold things steady; he does not go around with his eyes closed, he opens them but goes no further: if things are not going well, he stops. He practises self-matery including in games; he deals with the youngster whom he despairs of in a measured way; he can stay silent, hide his emotions, speak up at the right time, and can be shrewd.”

His temperance showed up in the tenor of his life. Witnesses say that “he had no special affection for any particular food... he was satisfied with the common food... he was very mortified where sleep was concerned... very simple in his dress and in room... alien to the most legitimate little quirks of interest...”; his life was truly penitent and mortified. And all this despite the fact that he was superior for almost his entire priestly life. From his youth, he imposed a regime on himself that was as mortified and simple as ever, devoid of refinement and comfort both in his food and clothing, and in the furnishings of his room and office, and this was something he remained faithful to for the rest of his life. It is enough to recall the commitments made as a young aspirant at Sampierdarena and those formulated on the occasion of his departure for Spain, where we see a complete program of control over what he did, said and his attitude. Fr Tarquinio Azzini outlined Fr Rinaldi's temperance this way: “He was thrifty and temperate. He always kept to the common food, and I remember that in the evening he usually did not take a drop of wine. He didn't like refinement, he didn't look for comfort either in his clothes or in the furnishings of his room and office. He hardly gave himself time for sleep, because he went to bed late and got up early. He observed any fasting and abstinence in the Rule in exemplary fashion, and added his own mortifications to that. I can therefore testify that his was truly a penitent and mortified life.”[[137]](#footnote-138) His unvarying calm, constant self-control, an edifying composure that favoured inner recollection, his spirit of prayer and union with God made him a temperate man.

“Allergic” to every comfort and comfort, he was described as “more unique than rare”, for the particularly arduous temperance he practised: “He never said more or less than was appropriate or that could offend justice, charity or the reputation of others. Every time I approached him I never heard anything but words of edification. Even the very tone of his words revealed a person who by virtue, and long exercise, had complete dominion over himself.”[[138]](#footnote-139)

Fr Tommaso Bordas attested: “Indeed, he was an extraordinary model of the virtue of temperance. Beginning with his simple way of dressing, up to the absence of any search for comfort that was evident throughout his tenor of life, he was a continuous manifestation of this virtue. As for food, he was completely at the service of community life, without resorting to special foods... He was very frugal where sleep was concerned, prolonging his work very often after evening prayers and getting up early in the morning to be present for the practices of piety and the ministry of confession. He also supported the idea of not going to bed after lunch. The Servant of God's temperance was not restricted just to the narrow and limited sense of food, drink and sleep, but included control of all passions, which must be subject to reason and faith. His example in this was so outstanding that the frequent exhortations he gave Salesians to inculcate these virtues were very effective, especially through conferences and reminders at Retreats. He was always mindful of Don Bosco's motto: ‘Work and temperance make the Salesian Congregation flourish.’”[[139]](#footnote-140) Fr Zerbino spoke similarly: “The instinctive allergy that Fr Rinaldi felt for any ease or comfort speaks of the heroic degree to which he had taken the virtue of temperance. Rising in the morning 4:30 a.m., the long hours spent over 20 years as Prefect General among the narrow confines of the confessional, the long hours of audiences to all classes of people, then the uncomfortable journeys, his eak eyesight sight that made it difficult for him to read the printed material and letters he needed to read, the common food which was not always suited to his stomach, and many other penances inherent to his office, were occasions accepted Fr Rinaldi lovingly accepted as a way of mortifying himself and exercising charity heroically. There is also a very rare kind of temperance in which Fr Rinaldi was heroic, temperance in the use of language. His words were always measured, prudent, serene, capable of calming any agitated spirit. For me, Fr Rinaldi joins the category of human beings who are more unique than rare, canonized by St James when he says: ‘Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.’”[[140]](#footnote-141)

A fragile body, undermined by work and disease, required constant care. Fr Rinaldi accepted this, but with so much effort! Mortification was customary for him, with its value of expiation and assimilation to Christ the Lord. “Brother Body” deserves little; it is enough to keep him alive and gives wings to his soul to fly and join God in conversation.

2.10 A perfect religious: *Coepit facere et docere (Jesus began to do and then to teach)*

*Chastity: keeping ourselves for God alone, like Mary*

Fr Rinaldi was a model of the convinced and zealous religious who perfectly observed the vows of his Salesian religious profession. He lived his religious consecration in a profoundly consistent way and we must not forget the fact that this was due to the influence Don Bosco had on him throughout his life, starting with his vocation, to which Fr Rinaldi gave an almost mysterious meaning: at the crucial moment of the decision he saw Don Bosco surrounded by light.

A “living image” of Don Bosco, of whom he lacked “only the voice”, he was “an angel of purity”; for many years engaged in the apostolate in various female circles he was admired and revered by all for his extreme and unimpaired confidentiality. “He was always modest, composed, and very correct. We never found anything indelicate in what he said or did.”[[141]](#footnote-142) A special manifestation of his chastity is the fact that he had to deal continuously with women – Sisters, lay people and girls at the oratory – and yet not “the slightest weakness” was ever noticed in his regard. Put positively, “his outward demeanor showed a sense of reserve and purity which everyone noticed. He was constantly dealing with women, there is no doubt that he had a special gift for understanding the female soul, but throughout his life there was never even the slightest hint of surrender to sentimentality.”[[142]](#footnote-143) Sister Pavese’s testimony is interesting in this regard. She had been a young girls at the Oratory: “Even though he was regularly and discreetly involved in a female setting, I never noticed anything about Fr Rinaldi that was not polite or chaste. As he formed us he instilled this beautiful virtue in us gracefuilly, delicately and so convincingly that we fell in love with the ideal of keeping ourselves for God alone, like Mary; Fr Rinaldi encouraged us to celebrate a day of purity, which he had suggested be kept annually.”[[143]](#footnote-144)The consequence of this formation was the proposal that he made to the young people to take the vow of chastity, renewed every six months, both for girls who were preparing for marriage and those whose leaning was for consecrated life.

A very faithful interpreter of Don Bosco's pedagogy, he educated and protected the innocence of young people and was very strict about sexual education. “This virtue was all the more precious in him because he was of a very sensitive nature and very much loved the souls entrusted to him. For him, this virtue was the fruit of constant vigilance over himself and of an admirable and constant mortification of the senses. Whoever approached him felt the deepest respect for this virtue, which shone out in him, and also sensed the simple familiarity that came from the fatherly kindness with which he treated everyone.”[[144]](#footnote-145) This also led to a pedagogy of chastity: “All his recommendations for the observance of the preventive system had as their special aim to preserve innocence in young people who had not yet lost it, as well as to avoid contagion and relapses in souls already victims of evil.”[[145]](#footnote-146)

Fr Antonio Candela put it this way: “He practised the virtue of chastity in an exemplary manner: as a Salesian superior, both in Spain and in Turin, he had the opportunity to bring together women from the aristocracy and women of all classes. I was able to see with what dignity and confidentiality he did so. In his lectures and sermons he strongly recommended purity. On the occasion of the second centenary of the canonization of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, he wrote a letter in the Acts of the Chapter recommending purity; then he referred to Don Bosco as one who loved the beautiful virtue and was a model of mortification in practising it, exhorting the Salesians to imitate their father.”[[146]](#footnote-147) In his deposition, Fr Giuseppe Matta said: “I can attest that the Servant of God also practised the virtue of chastity in a truly exemplary way. Having approached him several times, I had the impression that he was an angel of purity. From his forever composed bearing, his forever chaste word, everything that transpired from his words and demeanor, one could see that the Servant of God loved and practised the virtue of chastity, something he inculcated in others by his very presence... I recall that at his death, one of the most beautiful praises I heard coming from his confreres was praise for his love of the beautiful virtue.”[[147]](#footnote-148)

*Poverty: something I am very comfortable with!*

Fr Rinadi practised evangelical poverty, expressed in his detachment from the goods and comforts of this world. He sought to avoid any suspicion of luxury in the houses of the Congregation. He confided more in Divine Providence than he did in human wealth and wanted every Province to have at least one house supported exclusively by Providence and that would take in orphans and other poor youth for free. When there were earthquakes in Messina (1908) and Marsica (1914), he wanted the houses to be open to orphans. “Both as Prefect Genera and as Rector Major, he rnsistently recommended religious poverty, and never tired of inculcating the habits of properly understood economy among his Salesians. He always wanted buildings to be of the size and with the room required for pedagogy and hygiene purposes, but always sought to exclude any hint of luxury or refinement. He would always ask how much general and scholastic furnishings cost.”[[148]](#footnote-149)

After enjoying the well-being of his family, as a religious he wanted to be free of all this. As a Salesian he was a superior for most of his life, but he never wanted or tolerated any special treatment for himself. He practised poverty as a virtue and a vow, practising mortification and recommending it through detachment from earthly things and in actual practice. “He was a true example of religious poverty. I have no hesitation insaying that his poverty was heroic even in comparison with the other Rectors Major that I have known. I was always impressed by the great poverty Fr Rinaldi’s clothes as Rector Major. His cassock was old and faded, shoes very ordinary, and even despite the improved quality of the day he wore small round glasses bordered by white metal. His office and his bedroom too had poor and non too comfortable furnishings.”[[149]](#footnote-150)

Fr Peter Ricaldone testified: “He practised poverty in his own regard in the way he dressed, in food and in his room. When I needed to examine his room after his death, I was edified by its extreme poverty. He was detached from money, the things of this world and from comfort. He preached poverty more as a virtue than a vow, practising mortification and recommending it.”[[150]](#footnote-151) “He practiced the poverty with himself in the clothing, in the food, in the room. After his death, his room had to be examined; we were edified by the extreme poverty. He was detached from money, from the earthly things and from the comforts. He preached the poverty as virtue more than a vow, exercising it himself in the mortification and recommending it.”150 Fr Peter Rinaldi, his nephew, stated: “Together with my father we saw his room. It was truly poor, so much that my had father had asked him if perhaps he should change some of hte furniture, especially a more comfortable bed and the desk, both of which were truly uncomfortable and coming apart. The Servant of God then replied: ‘No, no, it is something I am very confortable with!’”[[151]](#footnote-152)

*Obedience: submission of the heart*

His obedience was above all submission in a spirit of faith to the holy will of God. This spirit gave him the strength to accept the office of superior which was conferred upon him many times during his life. He also had profound respect for the Rule, the Constitutions, to which he himself was “most obedient”. Thus, he was so faithful to his religious duties and to the spirit of the founder that it was possible to him as “a mirror of religious perfection.”

He had been exemplary in obedience since childhood and throughout the rest of his life he exercised it heroically from the time he overcame his doubts and abandoned himself to Don Bosco. “In obedience the Servant of God was a model from the very first days of entering the community. He came there in obedience to Don Bosco, and as soon as he entered, he was obedient to Fr Albera, who was his first Rector... As Superior General, then, he was very observant of the Constitutions. He was always on good terms with authority both civil and especially religious, and showed the greatest deference towards them.”[[152]](#footnote-153) In the spirit of faith and of obedience he always accepted the more difficult tasks, any tasks that were assigned to him, despite his feelings of inadequacy.

He understood obedience as “submission of heart, seeking only the glory of God.” Among the resolutions he wrote down at various times, we read this: “I will strive to submit myself in heartfelt way to any superior, seeking only the glory of God. Instead of thinking about how they should command I will think about how I should obey; and if I should command, I will first try to gain at least as much consent as possible... from the superior who points out the Rule to me.”[[153]](#footnote-154) And again: “I am a stick in the Rector’s hands. He loves me, he wants me in Paradise; so I must let him do the thinking, to help me, to take me to Paradise.”[[154]](#footnote-155) These resolutions were more than simply written down. They were practised in exemplary and constant fashion, as evidenced by the testimonies.

Fr Pietro Zerbino has outlined Fr Rinaldi’s obedience in some detail: “Fr Rinaldi’s heroic obedience can be seen from the detailed consideration of the various authorities to which he submitted and from the insistence with which he spoke of the need to be subject to the authority of the Church, the Pope, etc... Fr Rinaldi submitted 1st ) *to Don Bosco*: in his humility he always thought himself unworthy and incapable of being a priest; but with edifying docility and obedience he accepted Holy Orders when Don Bosco told him to. He did similarly when Don Bosco chose him to be the director of the ‘Sons of Mary’. Even subsequent positions, including the highest as Rector Major, he accepted always and only out of love for Don Bosco and the Congregation, overcoming his instinctive repugnance for positions and honours. It is interesting that as Rector Major, not being able to make the prescribed ‘Rendiconto’ to the superior, he went to Don Bosco’s casket and there he made his filial rendiconto to his Father. 2nd) *to Fr Rua*: knowing him well, the future Blessed Michael Rua entrusted him with a difficult mission, sending him to develop the Salesian work in Spain, with these simple words: ‘I thought of sending you to Spain.’ Even when he was Prefect General, and therefore Fr Rua’s Vicar, he was always very obedient. 3rd) *to Fr Albera*: ... When Fr Albera was elected Rector Major, he who was his Vicar and second in authority among the Salesians, made this point: ‘If the superior is happy, I will continue to take care of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the past pupils of the girls Oratory. But if I need to renounce this, I will do so cheerfully.’”[[155]](#footnote-156) Even as Rector Major he lived and inculcated obedience in particular by practising the Constitutions: “Most observant of the Rule himself, he fostered love for and observance of it in others. Elected Rector Major, the first spiritual *strenna* he gave the Salesians was this: ‘Let us try to imitate the Servant of God, Fr Rua, in the exact observance of religious life.’ I am convinced that the Servant of God was describing himself when he said: ‘The Salesian who observes the Rule in detail becomes another Don Bosco almost without realizing it; a very special atmosphere spreads around him that draws young people to him and makes them affectionate in his regard. He wins the benevolence of good people and the deferential tolerance of the bad ones.’”[[156]](#footnote-157)

Where the Church and the Pope were concerned, he always accepted their various dispositions and requests with docility and prompt obedience, such as when it came to the question of the rector-confessor, recognizing God’s will and Don Bosco’s wish in obedience to the will of the Pope. Worthy of note were the many statements, especially in circulars, of attachment and absolute fidelity to the directives, references and teachings of the Roman Pontiff, which he accepted and all his religious to accept simply and meekly without the slightest discussion, as the first and sure norm of judgment and practice. “He was always exemplary in obedience, especially when it came to the Pope, ecclesiastical authorities and his superiors... For him the voice of Don Bosco, Don Rua, Don Albera was a command. He was also able to obey the doctor, '*propter necessitatem*'. I recall that one day he had already left the room with his suitcase to go to Sicily. The doctor told him that in conscience he could not allow him to travel. Fr Rinaldi made it clear that it was a commitment he had made and that it seemed to him he could quietly manage it. The doctor insisted and Fr Rinaldi obeyed... He was very observant of the rules. Perhaps no one after Don Bosco put them in a better light or illustrated them and promoted their observance better than he did,”[[157]](#footnote-158) as confirmed by the circular he wrote in 1924 for the 50th anniversary of the approval of the Constitutions.

*Humility: he saw himself as everyone’s servant*

Fr Rinaldi’s humility was profound. He practised it and loved to see it in his confreres, especially when it came to taking on some responsibility and office. “We always saw him humble in bearing, speaking and acting. He had a very low concept of himself and I don't remember hearing him talk about himself. He felt unworthy every time he was promoted to a position... His humility was always hidden by his kindness and gentleness. He was always welcoming, and from his way of acting it was clear that he considered himselfeveryone’s servant. I would add that his humility was understood correctly and did not prevent him from taking up his roles as Rector and Provincial, Prefect General and Rector Major with due decorum. And while he himself practised humility and all the other virtues, he did not fail to inculcate them in his confreres with loving and strong insistence.”[[158]](#footnote-159) Fr Azzini confirmed: “He was truly eminently endowed with the virtue of humility, which he practised constantly throughout his life. He never aspired to honours, and he never tried to assert himself. He was so modest and so humble that anyone who had not known him personally, and had seen him, would have considered him the least among the priests of our Congregation. Even in the exercise of his duties as superior of the community, he never made his authority burdensome, but always treated everyone with great and truly exquisite fatherliness, so that everyone in the community went to him with the utmost confidence.”[[159]](#footnote-160)

Humility was “his dearest virtue” and, after fatherliness, his most striking feature and the one that made most of an impression on people. This was the case for many guests who arrived at the Oratory in Valdocco and saw the spontaneity with which humble coadjutors and children approached the Rector Major, and the friendliness with which he welcomed them. It was his humble attitude that removed any apprehension. Following the example of Don Bosco, in fact, even as Rector Major he only wanted to be called *Fr Rinaldi*. “The practice of humility came from his constant willingness to consider himself small and never to stand out, let alone dominate others. He always accepted the highest offices of the Society out of obedience, but he would have liked a minor role in the shadow of a novitiate.”[[160]](#footnote-161)

He never spoke of himself and tried first of all to renounce the office of Prefect General and then, when in latter years his infirmities increased, he wanted to resign as Rector Major, believing that his state of health could affect the government of the Congregation and that it should not walk at his pace.

One of his youthful resolutions was: “I will try to gain true humility...” and he faithfully kept this in word, deed and gesture. “In all the time that I knew him, he seemed to me to be humility personified.”[[161]](#footnote-162) Fr Pietro Zerbino attested: “Fatherliness and humility are for me the characteristic virtues of the figure of Fr Rinaldi... At Fr Rua’s death, Fr Rinaldi took on the government of the Congregation in accordance with the Rule. And when the members of the Superior Chapter gathered for the first time after that, he begged them, during the time of ‘sede vacante’, not just to feel sorry for him, but to assist him with help and advice on the government of the Congregation. And when he was elected Rector Major, after the death of Fr Albera, he told his electors: ‘This election is a time of confusion for me and for you.’ He also demanded humility from missionaries: ‘We must go on mission with humility to learn from others, bringing our wealth of experience and good will, to work and pray. Only the Saints do good.’... His humility also encouraged him to ask those who worked closely with him to correct him. In a letter to the Catehcist General, Fr Tirone, he wrote: ‘There has to be rudeness, haughtiness or something boring about my words that irritates others. See what's there: perhaps things I don’t even see, and warn me about this and anything else so that it is not the case that here I am recommending charity and union to everyone else, but ruining things with those closest to me. I expect this charity from you, that you will tell me what you need to tell me, without fear of upsetting my own self-respect, which needs to be humiliated’... Fr Rinaldi also had the appearance of a humble man. He wandered the corridors and courtyards slowly, recollected, eyes cast down as if he were the least of the house, yet he was the first! He was always ready to pause if anyone wanted to talk to him or even just kiss his hand.”[[162]](#footnote-163) Fr Giuseppe Matta said: “the Servant of God was always most humble despite being honoured with important tasks and responsibilities. I never heard him speak of himself; he loved to hold the least positions. In many of his addresses, as well as in his annual letters, he referred all the good achieved by the Salesians to the Lord, to the goodness and protection of Our Lady, to the inspiration of the founder. There was no danger that he would praise his own work; indeed, he would have preferred his prodigious efforts to be ignored.”[[163]](#footnote-164)

3. A VERY SPECIAL TESTIMONY

3.1 Sister Maria Lazzari, Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Passion of Jesus

Maria Virginia was born in Turin on 6 June 1885 into a very religious family, the eldest of three children. She was only ten years old when her father, transferred to Portici for work reasons, died of an infection. Her mother, a very cultured woman, raised her children and passed on healthy Christian principles and an excellent education. Virginia graduated and continued her university studies, having Fr Philip Rinaldi, third successor to Don Bosco, as her spiritual director from the age of twenty-one. To support her family, she took up service as an employee in the State Railways although she felt the call to consecrated life. Fr Rinaldi suggested the Secular Institute of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. She entered (1909) with the religious name of Margaret Mary of Jesus, a name she kept for the rest of her life. In 1912 she took her vows and in the same year, having won a competition, she began her school career as a teacher and secretary, first in Camerino, then she was transferred to Pinerolo, then to the “Rosa Govone” Teachers College at Mondovì and again to Pinerolo. From 1917 to 1923 Virginia taught at the “Berti” Teachers College in Turin, then moved to the “D'Azeglio” High School. On 5 December 1931 her confessor, Blessed Philip Rinaldi, died, and three years later her beloved mother. Virginia no longer had family ties; twenty-four years had passed since her religious vows, lived in the world in a profoundly Christian spirit. In her free time she was at the Cottolengo or other institutes teaching free of charge or visiting the poor, to whom she brought assistance but above all, the word of God.

As early as 1922, Fr Rinaldi had recommended that she pray for a great mission for which she was destined. He spoke to her about it from time to time without being able to specify what it was. Finally in Lent during the Holy Year 1933, while at the Visitation Monastery, she received a package of holy pictures depicting the “quadrant of the Passion”. She understood that her calling it was to spread devotion to “Spending time with Jesus during the hours of His Holy Passion.” She had it printed and distributed, getting her manys many acquaintances to join, and thinking that the Work was to be entrusted to a religious institute. In July 1933 she met the Provincial of the Passionists and spoke to him about it. In the autumn of 1934, she turned to the Sisters of Nightly Reparation in Florence. In January 1935, however, an inspiration came to her out of the blue, as if dictated, to write up a “program” that she put to the Handmaids of the Holy Trinity in Padua. It was not the right way. She came to know Fr Alessio Magni, a Jesuit, who after careful examination told her: “I do not agree with you trying to entrust this to others. Go to Turin and start this Work by bringing together young women who show signs of a vocation.” Virginia then wrote in her memoirs: “I understand that to act differently would be contrary to the Divine Will and yet feeling my own insignificance so deeply, I place myself completely at God’s disposal.” She had nothing, not even a place where she could bring possible companions together, aince she had always rented lodgings near near religious institutes. At the time she usually stayed near the Tertiary Carmelite Sisters in Pozzo Street. But, it was providential that one day she came across a small book dedicated to the passion written by Fr Giuseppe Petazzi, a Jesuit from Trieste, whom she succeeded in contacting. They came to a mutual agreement to spread the booklets and the holy pictures.

In December 1935 she wrote a meditation in preparation for a period of probation and a formula of admission, and on Christmas night she carried this out privately in the church of the Visitation, and in the morning, repeated it with three friends in the Chapel of the Shroud. It was the beginning of the Work. Only on 31 May, 1936, Pentecost, was she able to move with the little furniture shed to to a house in the centre of Turin. The nascent congregation, the result of Providence, began to be known, counting among its supporters the Servant of God Bishop G. B. Pinardi, Auxiliary Bishop. The first aspirants arrived, while Virginia began to travel to carry out her mission. At the beginning of August she went to Rovigo where she stayed with some relatives, then to Brescia. On 30 September 1936, she was received in audience by Cardinal Maurilio Fossati who gave her encouragement. On 5 December the Statutes of the Missionaries of the Passion of Jesus were approved, and two days later the Decree of Erection as a Pious Union was issued.

The small community immediately received many requests for collaboration from priests and bishops: they came from Navasa di Limana near Belluno, from Padua and Trieste, and from the Jesuit she had met. Hence, Virginia asked to teach at an institute in that city. At the time, her salary was her only sure source of income. She would finish her school career three years later.

By the end of 1936 it was possible to buy a house in Villanova near Mondovì, thanks to a Salesian Sister who was a friend of the late Blessed Rinaldi. It was dilapidated, but suited to their financial possibilities and by happy coincidence, stood on a hill called Monte Calvario. This is the current Mother House. They were years of great sacrifice, but lived in a Christian way. Mother Margaret was the mother and teacher, counsellor and confidante of everyone. Their poverty was great, but their enthusiasm was of equal measure. Requests for help multiplied: the first was in autumn of 1938: the parish priest of Chiusa Pesio, who had been looking for Sisters to open an orphanage for years. Others followed, and Mother Margaret responded as she could, overcoming enormous difficulties, driven by the awareness of the good that was being done. This was during the Second World War and the painful event affecting the house in Trieste. This house, purchased thanks to the generous help of a noblewoman, allowed the apostolate to spread in the suburbs among the most marginalized, saw the birth of a group of dissident Sisters led by a Jesuit. It was her “test of fire”. After so many difficulties, in 1942 Mother Margaret was forced to close it down, with the help of the Servite Fathers. Those who remained faithful to her testified to her words: “Ensure that you overlook every offensive word we may have received and do not hold a grudge against anyone, because otherwise your heart dries up and you paralyze the most delicate feelings of charity.”

The small community received immediately many requests of collaboration on behalf of priests and bishops: they arrived from Navasa of Limana near Belluno, from Padova and from Trieste, from that Jesuit that she had known. For such reason, Virginia was asked to teach near an institute of that city. Her stipend was at the moment the only sure source of income. She would have concluded her scholastic career three years after. At the end of 1936, she was able to acquire a house in Villanova near Mondovi, thanks to the Salesian sister, friend of the late Blessed Rinaldi. It was falling apart, but in line with their economic possibility and by happy coincidence was on high ground called Monte Calvario. It is the current General Mother House. They were to be years of great sacrifice, but real Christianly. Mother Margherita was mother and teacher, counsellor and confidante of all. The poverty was great but grand was the enthusiasm. The requests for help would multiply: in the autumn of 1938, the parish priest of Chiusa Pesio, who had spent years looking for religious to open an orphanage, was the first. Others would follow which Mother Margherita responded to as she could, overcoming enormous difficulty, spurred on by her awareness of the good that could be accomplished. It was during the Second World War and the distressing events surrounding the house in Trieste. This house, purchased thanks to the generous help of a noble woman, allowed their apostolate tp take place out on the periphery among the very marginalized, but it was run by a group of dissident Sisters led by a Jesuit. It was the “test of fire.” After much suffering, in 1942 Mother Margherita was forced to close the house with the help of the Servite Fathers. Those who remained faithful testified to her words: “See that you forget every offensive word we may have received and do not hold a grudge against anyone, because otherwise the heart dries up and the most delicate feelings of charity are paralysed.”

Three years later an extraordinary event happened, almost a response from on high to the apostolic zeal of the Work. On her way to Mondovì by train, one of the most talented Missionaries, Sister Carla De Noni, was mortally wounded by a burst of machine-gun fire. She was rushed to hospital but near death, and Mother Margaret stayed with her. Inexplicably, she survived, but on 26 April she was taken to the Mother House so that she might die among her Sisters. There was no hope, humanly speaking, but Mother Margaret, having gathered the community together, asked them to pray, seeking the intercession of Fr Rinaldi, of whom she had a handkerchief as a memento. She gave it to poor Sister Carla who, to everyone’s amazement, showed sudden improvement. After escaping death, she had to undergo about twenty short but very painful operations to extract the bone splinters in her face. Her jaw remained disjointed, due to the lack of two centimetres of bone, and her tongue hung loose. One afternoon, Sister Carla fell asleep, and when she woke up, the bone was healed, as shown by the radiological examination. The miracle sealed the beatification of Fr Philip Rinaldi in 1990.

The institute quickly prospered in Piedmont. Mother Margaret, who had accepted the care of the Retreat House for the Monregalese diocese since 1942, opened a free nursery school in 1947. From 1949 she was responsible for the Casa Alpina in Balma di Frabosa for poor workers, and three years later she was entrusted with the Men's Hospice in Mondovì, which was about to close. She accepted by sending the only nuns she had at home to help her. In 1958 it was the turn of Marina di Finalpia (Savona), and in 1960 the retirement home at Piozzo. On many occasions, and there were hundreds of them, she had to say no, that it was absolutely impossible. In the last two years of her life, Mother calmly prepared herself for death. On 15 May 1961, she left with some of her Sisters for Lourdes, and on 14 July she was at Villanova for the last time. She retired to Turin and died peacefully at dawn on 12 December. The solemn transfer of her remains to the Mother House at Villanova Mondovì took place In 1964.

3.2 Testimony of Mother Maria Lazzari

“My name is Maria Lazzari, daughter of the late Giovanni and Chiara Giuditta, and I was born in Turin on 6 June 1885. I am the Superior of the Pious Union of the Missionaries of the Passion of Jesus. I am a registered teacher. I live in Villanova di Mondovì where the Mother House is.

I met the Servant of God in unusual circumstances. Wishing to find a confessor in keeping with the needs of my spirit, I prayed to Mary Help of Christians to obtain such a grace for me. In the early days of September 1906, I had the inspiration to go to the Church of Mary Help of Christians to make my confession; but not with the intention of looking for a regular spiritual director, because the Sanctuary was too far from my home, which was close to the Salesian Church of St John the Evangelist. At the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians I turned to the sacristan to call a confessor for me: a venerable priest came, the Very Reverend Fr Philip Rinaldi, then Prefect General of the Pious Salesian Society. I went to confession to him, and immediately knew that I had come across someone completely given to God. I felt very good about this; I returned there occasionally, but then I became convinced that it was worth the expense of crossing the city every week, to receive direction from that holy priest who showed that he had been chosen by Mary Help of Christians to look after my soul.

I spent more than twenty five years of my life under the guidance of the Servant of God. During that time, I always saw in the Servant of God a true master of spirit, and as everyone called him, including the priest in charge at Mary Help of Christians, Fr Roberto Riccardi, another Saint John Bosco, a confessor and ideal director, a saint of unparalleled virtue.

I am convinced that the Servant of God practised every virtue in a truly eminent and exceptional way. Shonme out most remarkably were his humility, the charity, patience, purity and spirit of poverty. He was admirable for the zeal that he had for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He was completely forgetful of self all earthly things.

The Servant of God was goodness personified for everyone. He was a true father to all, though not expansive by nature, not mushy, and a man of few words. He was always poised, composed, very cultured, and respectful of anyone in every situation. I saw him approach small boys, listen to them kindly, treat them with expressions of fatherliness, almost with respect and showing interest in them that was very moving. He was aways compliant, especially if he could do a favour or render a service to someone. One day, while I was waiting to speak to him, a poor old lady asked him for a note of introduction and recommendation. But she was never happy with the form used by the Servant of God; she had him do it and redo it several times, until, with an expression almost of subservience and great goodness, he said to her: “You tell me what you want me to write, and I will write it.”

In 1910 a very good young man fell ill, and the Servant of God mentioned to me how desolate his poor mother was. She was also in serious financial straits. He showed a strong desire for me to raise some money among the people I knew to come to the aid of that poor family but without naming names. When I brought it to him, he thanked me with deep gratitude.

In December 1918 he also came to our house, where my mother, my brother and I were suffering from influenza, commonly known as the Spanish flu. When he heard that we could not find some Sisters to come and keep an eye on us, he went and found, and sent us the mother of an oratory girl who had at been asked on other occasions to provide the same service to other sick people. That same evening we saw the good ladyarrive, and we admired the great charity and solicitude of the Servant of God. Since my mother and I were quite seriously ill, and therefore unable to seek help when my brother died on Christmas Day, he offered to send – and in fact did send – two young men to preapre the body. I believve they were Salesian Brothers. During my illness, after going to confession, I told him that I was afraid of dying. He gave me courage, and told me to be at peace, that I would not die, but that I would still have many things I would have to do.

During that time, not only did he visit us but he also visited and comforted many other sick people, taking a fatherly interest in their needs, and helping them according to his possibilities.

Following the example of St John Bosco and above all the Divine Master, he did good for everyone, lavishing the treasures of his charity, which was fatherly, extended to everyone, and inexhaustible. It can be said that he was able to understand all kinds of sorrow and help all kinds of miserable situations. Whether people were rich or poor, adults or children, he welcomed them all with great kindness, showed great understanding to them all, and gave them all the help that was possible. He did everything he could for everyone, not just as a father, but as a humble and devout servant. He showed respect to everyone, and would never allow the least word that might discredit a neighbor or point out a neighbour’s faults, minimal though they may be.

He recommended that one's heart be shaped according to the Heart of Jesus himself; and he was a faithful copy of this. I can testify that he sought only the good, the greatest possible good, and he wanted good to be done well, as he so often recommended. He looked after every soul and every matter that was entrusted to him as if he had nothing else to bother about.

In the direction of souls, he was both firm and gentle: he knew how to make piety loveable; he showed the exercise of perfection to be easy and desirable. And he encouraged the practice of solid virtue. He led souls to God almost without them realizing it, and knew how to instill ardent devotion and love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians. He gave his support to grace in souls, and did not hinder it, in the sense that he knew how to wait for God's right moment; he led each individual to the perfection of the state to which he or she was called, not according to his own personal views, but according to the particular plans of Divine Providence.

Everyone misses his exquisite and saintly fatherliness, and many agree that that another Fr Rinaldi can no longer be found.

It could be said that the constant exercise of virtue had become second nature for him. In every circumstance he was seen to exercise the most outstanding and heroic virtue, without effort, without showing any disgust or struggle, as if movement of human passions did not exist at all in him, so much was the calm, peace, the smile that infused his face. He was always serene, always fatherly, always friendly and good.

The Servant of God was able to discern spirits, so that the souls who were under his guidance felt secure. He understood everything: he often read my heart and also knew what I was not telling him. In various circumstances he proved that he knew the future perfectly, and many of the things he announced before his death came true after he flew to Heaven.

Nine years before his death, in July 1922, he recommended that I pray and prepare for a great mission: he spoke to me of this mission several times over the course of the nine years, making it clear that it was a work that had to be done very well. In fact, a few years after the death of the Servant of God, our Institute came about, without my thinking about it, and I could not explain how.

In various circumstances, the Servant of God showed that he knew things that were unknown to anyone else. Among others, the Servant of God once went to the Salesian Institute in Milan. While he was there, I absolutely needed to talk to him, but no one knew this. I went to Milan for a few hours; I went immediately to the reception area in the Salesian Institute to ask for him. In fact he came to the parlor, and since I showed my surprise at finding him at home, he replied that he was waiting for me. Wondering about this I asked him how it was possible that he was waiting for me, as even I did not know I would be coming, since it was a sudden thing. He told me in all simplicity that during the morning he had felt that I would certainly come to talk to him that day.

I went often to pray at the tomb of the Servant of God to ask for his help and graces, and I noticed that other people, not belonging to the Salesian Society, were also praying at his tomb, attracted by his reputation for holiness and by the desire to obtain his valuable protection.

While he was alive, I saw a true model of the priest, religious, spiritual director and superior in the Servant of God. This opinion was fully shared by many people I spoke with. He had received most precious gifts from God and through his constant correspondence to grace, he produced marvellous fruits of goodness for the benefit of souls. After Servant of God’s death, his reputation for holiness has certainly not stopped. On the contrary, it has been growing among those who knew him.

I have never read or heard anything against the general reputation for virtue and holiness that surrounds the memory of the Servant of God. It seems to me impossible to find any fault regarding his holiness of life and virtues, having demonstrated by his life that he was someone well beyond all human misery.

Deeply convinced of the holiness of the Servant of God, after his death I had a Salesian close to him give me some items that had belonged to him, to be kept as a precious relic for any eventuality.

I understand that many people recommend themselves to his protection, intimately convinced of his holiness. I personally had recourse to him in various circumstances, and through his intercession I obtained a great many graces. For some time I had the beginnings of a cataract in my left eye, caused, the ophthalmologist said, by a lot of work with electric light; I had like a fog in my eye that often prevented me from seeing clearly. When I approached the Servant of God’s bier, that illness disappeared in a moment, as if by magic. I recall that I had told him about my poor eye while he was still alive, and that he had told me to stay calm.

A few months after the Servant of God’s death, while I was at school, I realized that I had lost a document of great importance; after looking for it for a long time without success I turned with confidence to the Servant of God, that he might give me the grace to find it again, even though I really didn't know where to look for it anymore. As soon as I finished my brief prayer I saw a piece of paper falling to the ground in the middle of the school ground, as if someone had thrown it down there. I was alone in the classroom; I got up immediately to collect the paper. I can’t tell you with what emotion and gratitude I collected the document I so much needed and had so unsuccessfully looked for.

More important are two facts that I consider to be truly miraculous. The first took place in our Girls Orphanage at Chiusa Pesio in the summer of 1940. A little girl named Rita Dadone, who attended our recreation center, contrary to the repeated prohibition of one of the Sisters, took advantage of a moment when she wasn’t watching, grabbed the swing while it was still moving, and fell badly, breaking her leg. You can imagine how upset the Sisters and her parents were. It was immediately seen that she needed treatment and her leg was put in a cast. But after the prescribed time, when the doctor removed the plaster in the Mondovì clinic, he noticed that the leg had not healed. The girl was also visited by a surgeon from Turin, who ordered an X-ray, then declared that the bone was out of place, that he had to operate, and that whatever happened the girl would remain lame. One can imagine the pain of the family and especially the father’s anger. Our Sisters were very saddened by it; that evening they didn't have dinner, but they immediately went to the chapel where they spent most of the night in prayer, begging the Servant of God that he might obtain from the Lord that grace that everything would go well, and the girl wouldn't remain lame. They promised that if they received this grace they would inform the Salesians. The next day was set for the operation. Before proceeding with the operation, the surgeon wanted to see her leg in the x-ray; and to his great astonishment he found it healed, perfectly healthy and the same length as the other leg. Of course, there was no more talk of surgery. With a sense of the deepest gratitude, the Sisters thanked the Servant of God. A report on the miracle was sent to the Very Reverend Fr Ceria, a Salesian. I don't know if the fact has been taken into consideration, but Rita Dadone always had a perfectly healthy leg since, and it's now been ten years.

The second miraculous event happened as followsy. On 20 April 1945, Sister Maria Carla De Noni, born Caterina De Noni, a Sister of our Institute, was on the electric railway that connects Villanova to Mondovì, she had been asked to bring a considerable amount of food to the partisan leaders hiding there. They had almost reached Mondovì when three airplanes suddenly appeared, and zoomed in to strafe the railway. Our Sister was severely wounded; her lower jaw was smashed and dislocated, she received two serious puncture wounds to her left lung, and one to her arm. Her condition immediately turned out to be very serious; she had to be administered Holy Oils on the way to hospital. Brought to the clinic, she was in danger of death at any moment.

Immediately, we had recourse to prayer to the Servant of God; after some days there, she was brought to our Mother House at Villanova Mondovi. On 27 April, towards 10 o’clock in the morning, she was at death’s door and the doctor had already declared that there was no more hope. I remembered having a handkerchief that belonged to Fr Rinaldi; I went to get it and entrusted it to Sr. Celina who brought it to the dying woman, while I ran to the community to tell the other Sisters that Sr. Carla was dying and that we would have to go to the chapel immediately to pray for the intercession of Fr Rinaldi to bring about a miracle. Therefore, I went to Sr. Carla’s bedside deeply upset.

When the Sister placed the Servant of God’s handkerchief on the dying woman, Sr. Carla told us that she immediately felt death had been adverted; she felt great relief, and to our amazement, asked for a drink with gestures, because since she had been hit by machinegun bullets she was no longer able to speak. We offered her some milk, which she could drink. From that moment on she improved; in a short time the scars closed; the flesh and the missing skin on her face grew in a truly surprising way; but the jaw bone was always missing, so her mouth could not be closed; her tongue hung loose, and Sister could neither speak nor eat. Some time later, Sister Celina, who stayed with her, said to her: ‘You will see, Sister Carla, that Fr Rinaldi does not do things by halves, and your bone will also grow back.’ In fact, after a few days, one afternoon Sister Carla fell asleep, and slept peacefully for an hour and a half; when she woke up, she felt something hard in her mouth; she unwrapped the bandage, touched her chin, and noticed that the bone in her jaw had grown back. From that moment on she felt completely cured; she could close her mouth, talk, feed herself, and began to resume her normal life. The Curia at Mondovì has begun the process for investigating this miraculous healing.”[[164]](#footnote-165)

**4. Fr Rinaldi, founder**

It can be said of Fr Rinaldi that he was a true prophet: more than 30 years before the Church would begin to speak officially of Secular Institutes, in Pius XII’s *Provida Mater Ecclesia on 2* February 1947, followed by an explanatory document, *Primo Feliciter* in1948, he gave life to the Association of Salesian Zealots, clearly directed to life in the world and the nucleus from which the Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco would flourish.[[165]](#footnote-166) In many things, he was a man of his times and conditioned also by the theological and ascetic language of the era, such as, example, the use of the adjective “religious” attributed to a state of life that he himself really wanted to describe as being “non-religious”. Today, especially after Vatican Council II, we describe it better with the adjective “consecrated.” But, it is likewise true that in many other things, Fr Rinaldi anticipated and went beyond his times, something especially true – staying with this area – with regard to the concept of “secularity,” not so much in juridical and lexical terms but certainly in terms of its substance, He went well beyond the “sociological” notion of secularity to something that touched on a theological understanding of it.

Speaking of the foundation of the Association of the Salesian Zealous Promoters in his work *Beato Filippo Rinaldi, vivente immagine di don Bosco* (*Blessed Philip Rinaldi, living image of Don Bosco),* Fr Castanopresents it in a chapter that bears the title, significantly, *Fondatore in penumbra (Founder in the shadows),* putting it this way: “Fr Rinaldi came to conceive of and implement a new form of consecrated life in the world and establishing the beginning of an Institute that today recognizes itself in him and honours him as its inspiration and father. It could be said that this was the most intuitive and personal work of the Servant of God, even if it is true that he wanted to remain with Don Bosco's ideal, attributing what he did to the Founder. If initially it might seem a simple derivation of his spirit, in reality this was not so. Rather than sharing the mission of his Father and Teacher, Fr Rinaldi aimed to broaden his work, spread his aspirations, increase the vitality of the Salesian family tree. In fact, looking at things now in light of history, he managed to emulate and complete the figure of his great model, and has gained citizenship among the creators and initiators of new religious associations in the Church. That is, he understood and anticipated the path that led to consecrated secularity to uplift and sanctify the world. This was completely new to the Salesian spirit, which was enriched by an intuition of such quality.”[[166]](#footnote-167)

4.1 Fr Rinaldi, an adult vocation attentive to secular life

A decisive role in the formation of his personality was undoubtedly played by the family environment he grew up in until he turned twenty, where there was the daily presence of women, his mother and his sisters, marking his sensitivity and ability to relate calmly and positively with the world of women. “In family life, under the firm and loving care of his mother, and in contact with four brothers and two sisters, the Servant of God learned to know and appreciate women. The living and energetic model was his mother who was diligent in everything, concerned with educating her children in a Christian way, forgetful of self so she could be all things to all of them, ready for sacrifice without complaining, ever serene and composed, rich in virtues and wise teaching... In a conference he gave on the mission women had at the oratories in Valdocco, Fr Rinaldi could not give her better praise by saying: ‘I thank God for having given me a strong mother, a wise mother, a holy mother!’ Along with his mother there were his sisters, the eldest of whom, Philomena, was his godmother at Baptism, and for whom he always had special respect and affection. This affection and respect were reciprocated, so much so that she was seen several times going to confession to her brother. It seems a small thing, but, in general, the child who grows up in the family with sisters, rather than only with brothers, acquires a particular psyche; his personality seems to become more complete, as his strength is made gentler by a sense of chivalrous protection towards those who are weaker than him, while the kindness and grace of his sisters affects his emotional and moral formation. This is also relevant for Fr Rinaldi’s psychological understanding. [We have seen] the extent to which Fr Philip was a master in this difficult field where the apostolate often encounters almost insurmountable difficulties, and also certainly, as well as discovering great satisfaction, also finds many risks and sharp thorns.”[[167]](#footnote-168)

Already during his time in Spain and especially in the years when he was Prefect General, Fr Rinaldi showed himself to be a man of great creativity, attentive to interpreting the needs of society, and a promoter of numerous groups and educational, apostolic and social activities. It is worth remembering that the nursery in which the new shoots of the Salesian family tree were formed, a result of Fr Rinalidi’s apostolic zeal and propheticenergy, was the small but very lively world of the girls oratory at Valdocco of which he was the director. Under his guidance and direction, over a few short years a real constellation of initiatives and foundations was created for the spiritual and material benefit of the girls, and it became an expanding universe of which Fr Rinaldi was not only the driving force, but the mind and soul. We refer to the girls oratory at Valdocco in Turin, opened by Don Bosco in 1876, when he called the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to Turin from Mornese and found lodgings for them in poor rooms near the cradle of Salesian works.

In order to fully grasp the novelty and openness with which Fr Rinaldi approached the world of women, it is necessary to go back to the beginning of the century, with a mindset so far removed and closed by comparison with today’s. Even simply dealing with topics like engagement, marriage and married life, work and involvement in social life, the many activities and initiatives he gave rise to and animated, the conferences he gave to oratorians and women members of the various groups and associations, show that he was not afraid of novelty. He was able to respond dynamically and in an original way to the needs of the times and perceive the traits of the female soul, valuing women for their potential and in every aspect of their lives.

Already in 1905, before being appointed director, he had suggested the foundation of a small Mutual Aid Society among the oratorians: the members paid modest monthly fees and in case of illness were entitled to be helped. Fr Rinaldi observed that these subsidies “were not alms, but subsidies due to them by right, according to the regulations.” The auditing of the accounts was carried out periodically before all the parties concerned.

In 1906 he managed to set up a group of Patronesses to defend youngfenale workers in the district and in the outskirts of Valdocco. Under the title of ‘Friends of the workers’ they were women from Turin who used the influence of their social position to protect and help young feamle workers, especially if they attended the Sisters oratory.

From 1907 until his election as Rector Major in 1922, he was the animator and director of the oratory, and the promoter of activities and associations aimed at the spiritual, cultural and social good of the young women who frequented it. They became more regular attendees than ever, happy to support and follow him in his proposals and undertakings. In particular, his catechesis, his preaching and his conferences touched the hearts of his listeners and from the very outset, Sisters and girls began to take notes and record what the director was offering and presenting, appreciating the inner richness and deep Salesianity that distinguished him.

In 1911, at the first Past Pupils Congress of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Fr Rinaldi had grasped the desire of some who were closer to the Institute who, while remaining in the world for reasons sometimes independent of their own will, wished to integrate themselves into the Salesian Family, to live the spirit of Don Bosco and exercise, to some extent, the works characteristic of his apostolic zeal. For Fr Rinaldi, accustomed to giving much thoughts to matters, and sensitive to the aspirations of souls, this group of past pupils soon brought to mind Don Bosco’s plan to have “External Members” as part of the early draft of his Constitutions. The Roman Curia’s men had discarded this idea as a novelty that did not fit with the traditional forms of religious life. In actual fact the two projects – the one the Saint had initially and this innovative one the past pupils were planning – were not destined to be associated with one another, because of the difference in the forms of life being considered: one was the life of simple Christians, the other of people who took with vows, and came together in association. However, the request in 1911 was an invitation to the Salesian Society to pass on Don Bosco’s spirit in a new and openly religious way among lay people destined to remain in the world. A sketch of some Regulations was also drawn up, but it was not followed up because it “did not correspond to the needs of souls who were to live in the world.” Fr Rinaldi sensed the meaning of what was maturing and followed a true path of discernment in the Spirit, marked also by misunderstandings and difficulties, which however did not distract him from his purpose and the search for God's will regarding this new form of incarnation of the Salesian charism.

4.2 Association of Salesian Zealous Promoters (Zealots)

On 3 October 1916, in agreement with three young women from the oratory at Valdocco and his spiritual daughters, he submitted a Statute (a set of regulations) in 7 points to Fr Paul Albera, Rector Major. The elements of consecrated secularity clearly emerge from these points. In his presentation, Fr Rinaldi spoke of a “tenor of life”, of a “flow of ideas”, an evocative image that speaks of something which is the source of something else, orientating it, accompanying it in harmony with the spirit of Don Bosco. He wanted its members to be linked to the Salesian Cooperators, underlining the lay character that must distinguish them; but he also wanted them to be consecratedwomen. Moreover, in the fourth point he indicated that their field of action must be the family and society, where in accordance with their state they should give good example and take part in works of public charity and devotion. They should also commit themselves to spreading good press and show special care for young people in need, giving them spiritual or material support. Finally, he pointed to the Salesian connotation of this new vocation. In this first draft of the regulations we already find all the elements of consecration, secularity and Salesianity that once developed and enriched would flow into the final set of regulations of the Zealots making them the seed that became the secular Salesian Institute now known as the Volunteers of Don Bosco. Fr Rinaldi proceeded with caution and prudence. It is interesting to note that in the various notes and interventions over those years he used the expressions “in accordance with your state”, “in accordance with your circumstances” and similar, terms he used insistently both when he spoke about vows, and when he illustrated their life of prayer and apostolate: in short, all their life was to be understood and lived in an atmosphere of authentic “secularity” with all its legitimate needs, unlike the needs of “religious” life.

After Fr Albera gave his approval to the project on 20 May 1917, during the novena for Pentecost and at the beginning of the triduum fpr the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, the milestone was laid for this incipient group of consecrated persons in the world. They were three *Daughters of Mary*, Maria Verzotti, Francesca Riccardi and Luigina Carpanera, cornerstones of a "Society of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in secular life."

In the historic first meeting that marked the foundation of the Institute, Fr Rinaldi stressed many elements that indicate not only a spiritual journey, but also the features of secular and Salesian consecration. After having called them by name, he addressed them in words that can really be described as both foundational and agenda-setting at the same time. We offer some of the most significant passages from this address as they were recorded by one of the first members, Luigina Carpanera:

“For a long time, the Most Reverend Superiors have received several invitations to establish a Society of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in secular life. This wish, which has been felt by a number of souls who wish to be more united to D. Bosco, to live by the same spirit, to perfect themselves and to carry out the same work that the Salesians do, but in the secular world... The superiors have always welcomed these wishes, all the more so because this was something that the Venerable Don Bosco truly had in mind and had been planning. In the report that he himself wrote regarding his work, he spoke of two distinct classes of people, observing the same rule, one which formed communities and the other that lived in the world, fostering the spirit of the Congregation there through practical activity. Perhaps the Ven. Don Bosco would have carried out this project had not the volume and extraordinary spread of his work completely taken up his time and effort. This was the period between 1875 and 1880; and this is the reason why later on there was no mention of a work that he had really given some thought to. However, the superiors will study the ways and means of being able to start this work, and indeed, after the three of you visited him for the third time, expressing your wish, the Very Rev. Fr Albera spoke to me about it, expressing his very real interest in starting a new work for good... we begin this work in obscurity, and we will begin with the three of you here. You will be morally joined in the same spirit, will strive for perfection, above all in the particular exercise of prayer, but in accordance with the spirit of the Venerable Don Bosco: much simplicity, no complications. No one must know what is maturing in your heart; just continue to be as you are. The Sister who lives in community can more easily practise works of piety because they are regulated by a fixed schedule, but you will have to do this when and as you can. Yet it is essential that there is order, union and uniformity of prayer for you too. First of all, study well the spirit of the Ven. Don Bosco; diligent order in the practices of piety that will be the same as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, but reduced, that is: attend Mass daily, meanwhile praying the prayers of the good Christian, ten minutes of meditation, the Holy Rosary. The Holy Rosary can be used as preparation for Holy Communion, and meditation as thanksgiving or vice versa, whatever you think best. You should not omit meditation without a serious reason; even just five minutes; because it is in recollection, in inner silence that the voice of God is heard and the religious soul is formed. Then there are the other practices of piety, that is to say, goign to Holy Mass and Holy Communion every day. In the afternoon you will make a visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament during which, if you can, do a little reading and then be recollected for a moment. If it happens that you do not have time to make this visit or read, recollect yourself briefly in the evening in your room before going to sleep and bring yourselves in spirit to the Church at Jesus’ feet in the Blessed Sacrament, and make your visit, do your reading at home... Another practice of piety is to make a day of retreat once a month. Choose a day of the month, if possible a Sunday, to recollect and meditate a little more on some points, especially concerning your inner life, making resolutions and intentions to improve yourself. Sanctify this day as if it were the last day of your life. Make a Retreat of at least three days each year. In the world, practise the virtues that you will certainly acquire through a more perfect life, working and making yourselves available to do the greatest possible good, alwaysin accordance with the spirit of the Venerable Don Bosco. But I repeat: much simplicity in any of your works or practices of piety. You are but a few, only three of you, but that doesn't matter; the works of the Lord are born in poverty, humility and take shape in silence. It is better to have a few but good spirits; it is better to have a single shrub, but with a strong and healthy root, rather than many scattered ones with weak roots. Be silent, call no one to follow you; your good example will suffice; be united among the three of you; form one heart, one soul. There are three of you, this is the perfect number, for there are also three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.”[[168]](#footnote-169)

Fr Rinaldi concluded has address by expressing his pleasure at the fact that the first meeting took place on the eve of the triduum for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians and during the novena in preparation for Pentecost, asking them to pray that the Holy Spirit might enlighten the Superiors.

In July, Celestina Domini and Giovannina Peraldo were added to the first three; and in November, Caterina Borgia and Teresa Salassa: the yeast had begun to have its effect. However, there were also moments of difficulty due to misunderstandings and attempts to change the nature of the group. Fr Rinaldi asked the Rector Major in all humility if he should continue in his task of animation and direction of the women's oratory and indirectly of this small group, but Fr Albera confirmed and reassured him in his role and mission. Consequently, throughout 1918 and 1919, Fr Rinaldi continued to prepare young people for the kind of life they intended to lead in the world as consecrated women in the spirit of Don Bosco. In the meantime, following directions from Cardinal John Cagliero, the Regulations of the Association of Salesian Zealous Promoters were drawn up, outlining the elements of consecrated lay Salesian life. The first seven professions were made on 26 October 1919 in the chapel next to Don Bosco's bedroom, as if to signify that it was an offshoot of the tree of the Salesian charism that had now germinated in a new form of life. These “first fruits” were received by Cardinal Cagliero, in the presence of Fr Rinaldi. On 29 January 1921, Fr Rinaldi wanted this first group of consecrated young people to also have a lay council: a clear orientation towards lay autonomy.

It is worth recalling the words Fr Rinaldi addressed to the Zealots in June 1922, a few months after his election as Rector Major and on the occasion of the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the central reference point for the pastoral charity, the core of the Salesian charism that these consecrated women were called to bear witness to in the world:

“Do everything you can; the Lord did not use the great ones of this earth, not the philosophers, doctors, nor kings, to propagate his teachings, but poor fishermen and with them he converted the world, he spread his Gospel. The Lord chooses the humble, so that it may be clearly seen that it is not we who do things, but He who is at work; He uses the most petty things to obtain the best results and make his power shine forth. It is enough for our part to follow his desires, to get to work, letting ourselves be guided by him, because we are small and capable of nothing. Cooperate, therefore, in working with all your strength, raising up your heart to God, trusting in Him, doing good for souls. May it be an awakening of true piety that corresponds to your mission, not to live according to your taste but to cooperate in doing good everywhere and always. Don Bosco said that good is done always and everywhere, with both pious people and sad types, because he was convinced that he was seeking the glory of the Lord alone. And you, wherever you are, be true Daughters of Don Bosco: in workshops, factories, offices, in the streets, among groups; never fail to live up to your goal; be always of equal temper, consistent with yourselves, your feelings; be pious, serious, zealous. Work with simplicity and candour, without ostentation, similar to Our Lady and as worthy Daughters of Don Bosco, expressing your piety, and comforting others with your good, gentle, charitable words.”[[169]](#footnote-170)

Fr Rinaldi continued to accompany and spiritually direct the new association in his fatherly and reserved style, always remaining in the shadows, like the good and faithful servant who has done his work. The Church has recognized him as the founder of what, over time, wouldl be the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco (1959), the embodiment of a project of consecrated life in the world with the spirit of Don Bosco.

CONCLUSION

In Fr Philip Rinaldi we have a very pertinent example of a religious and holy life. He generously spent his life not only in the performance of hidden and humble tasks, but in the office of superior with serious responsibilities involving the Congregation, the Salesian Family and the Church. He was superior for almost his entire priestly life (1883-1931), and for the last thirty years he was part of the supreme government of a very large religious Congregation in full development and expansion. He reconciled the firmness of authority with the fatherly goodness that everyone recognized. In government he was a faithful custodian and transmitter of the genuine Salesian spirituality originating from Saint John Bosco. The authority he wielded did not make him dizzy; he was *humilis* before he was *fortis*, and it was from his humility that he would draw the arguments most likely to shake up the lukewarm, bringing them back to the love of Salesian consecrated life. And all this in the critical period of the first generations after the death of the founder. He knew how to live as a perfect religious, in continuous union with God, with a profound spirit of faith, love and theological hope; he was humble, hardworking and serene in all circumstances, generously sacrificing himself for the good of his Institute, the Church and souls. He was a superior given to the exclusive service of God. He sanctified himself by governing, giving everyone, confreres, members of the Salesian Family, men and women of the Church, the model of the consecrated religious, priest and apostle.

He didn't do extraordinary things, but the way he did them was certainly extraordinary. A priest with a great interior life, he was modest and humble, a man of exceptional judgment and practical criteria, with a goodness and fatherliness that transpired from all his acts, with a strength and ability to work that defies explanation, especially considering his often precarious health in the latter days of his life. His style of action showed an acute sense of realism and concreteness. When accepting new vocations he would jokingly see if their hands had calluses so as to guarantee good workers for the Lord's vineyard. At Don Bosco's school and following his method he saw to piety, charity and hard work. “To preserve vocations, he used to say that if it was a question of morality or defects contrary to religious life, one had to be inexorable. Instead, if it was a question of other shortcomings they were to be tolerated and corrected. He was very keen on being supportive of personal inclinations that were in no way contrary to religious life.”[[170]](#footnote-171) He was very understanding and fatherly in the discernment of the vocations; above all when dealing with youth who were not exactly ill but were not giants of health. He always had at heart the care of vocations and formation of new generations, encouraging vigilance in accepting the novices, being strong in formation, prudent with admissions, and sending away the superficial and fickle.

His innate, realistic attitude and total inner integrity made him a free and frank person when speaking and acting and, if necessary, in resolving situations; for example, “He encouraged a girl who had a true vocation to remain at home with her already elderly father, and he did not allow her to enter the Institute until her father married again by is own decision, thus having the necessary assistance.”[[171]](#footnote-172) When girls were unemployed, he was concerned about finding work for them. Similarly, the numerous organizations he founded had the main purpose of forming wise and complete women, who would be brides and real mothers; he used to say “that good domestic training of women is the best protection for good order in the family and that a well-maintained home is also loved by her husband. Because he feels happy, peaceful and at ease at home, he no longer thinks about deserting the family and looking for new places and leisure.”[[172]](#footnote-173)

He brought the same clarity of vision to the aspect of prayer; for example he had no difficulty in having children say or sing Vespers in Latin: “Yes, it's true that they don't understand anything about these prayers and these hymns, but... *supplet Ecclesia*, that is... it's not the individuals who pray, but the whole mystical body of the Church that lifts up its arms in prayer to the Lord.”[[173]](#footnote-174) Also, with amazing Christian realism, he spread the practice among young women of a vow of chastity renewable every six months, to form tomorrow’s healthy Christian families and to prepare consecrated women who would be totally dedicated to their vocation and mission. In dealing with others, be it in ordinary social relationships or spiritual direction, or in the government of the Salesian Society and even when strenuously defending human rights in the courts, he was always transparent and firm: “He was frankness personified. Not only did he abhor any untruth, but we could say that he was clarity personified.”[[174]](#footnote-175)

From what has been said, it follows logically that his character was extremely balanced, sensitive both to its own shortcomings and those of others and to the smallest virtuous act. Witnesses are unanimous: “Already by nature he was a person with a calm, balanced and serene character. He had further perfected this through vigilance and prayer.”[[175]](#footnote-176) Besides, “his outstanding characteristic was the beautiful gift of equilibrium and reflection; he was above all remarkable for his profound humility.”[[176]](#footnote-177) The result was a strong human and religious impetus to urge even the most rebellious to the heroic practice of virtue: “His words were filled with, overflowing with fatherly kindness, great simplicity, but great conceptual depth, and were always suited to the people who listened to him and to the circumstances. They were fully effective for those who listened to him.”[[177]](#footnote-178) On one occasion he seemed to be hard, even rude towards a woman whose constant gossip was compromising the peace and good name of the group: “Remember that you can go to hell even for the language!” he told her; while on another occasions he seemed really angry: it concerned a poor fellow whose conduct had made a very bad impression among the young people.

A finally chiselled summary of the interior and Salesian profile of Fr Rinaldi comes from the biographer, Fr Peter Rinaldi, his grand-nephew: “In my opinion, the characteristics of the Servant of God are his deep interior life and dynamic activity accompanied by great fatherliness.”[[178]](#footnote-179) Rightly so, his serenity and imperturbability of character was the feature most noted and most appreciated by witnesses. Fr Rinaldi is a treasure of spirituality and virtue, an exemplary and sublime figure in every aspect, “a genuine saint” as Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, Archbishop of Turin, described him; “a saint of the first order,” in the judgment of his great friend, Archbishop Evasio Colli, who came from the same place and was Archbishop of Parma. He was a perfect example, and not only for Salesians, of how religious can and should be faithful to the charism of their founder, as reflected in the lives of the surest interpreters. His was a soul totally inspired by God, intent on living his consecrated and priestly life to the full in simplicity and serenity of spirit.

As a “*man of God”* he distinguished himself for the generosity with which he aimed at the perfection of holiness from his youth to the end of his life; for his intimate union with God, from which an imperturbable serenity and calm of spirit flowed; for his tireless zeal in promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls; for the religious sense which always inspired him in the face of the not always easy responsibilities of a superior, living completely and only for God.

As an “*apostle*” he went out to meet the men and women of his time with that special characteristic of goodness that made him recognized by everyone as a “beloved Father” with an inexhaustible variety of good initiatives, showing the boldness and faith that led him to undertake great enterprises especially in the missionary field, fully in accordance with the needs of the new times.

Years later his holiness is still gigantic and we can see the exceptional results of the service he rendered to the Church through the Salesian Congregation and the groups of the Salesian Family, in particular those founded by him. Among all those who gravitate around Don Bosco's Family and beyond, his reputation for holiness has not only established itself, but it is continually growing, as shown by reports of graces, the continuity of his works and the interest shown in his figure.

In the post-Council years during which the Church has urged religious institutions to revive the spirit of the founder, Fr Rinaldi hasbeen seen as the one who was the most faithful interpreter and continuer and can therefore be, for the new generations, a point of reference and almost a bridge that links us to and leads us back to Don Bosco.

His holiness is a convincing encouragement to sanctification for the People of God. Priests and consecrated individuals will be able to look to him in the present difficulties of their life and mission as a guide and model that was able to harmonize an intense interior life with the dynamic ardor of the apostolate.

Recalling what has been said and written about Blessed Philip Rinaldi, and in particular on the basis of the Procedural Acts leading to his beatification, the testimonies and documents, we can say that we are faced with a wonderful figure of the man, the Christian, the Salesian priest, the apostle, the founder, worthy of being proposed for the imitation of the faithful. His canonization will not only be of great importance for the Salesian Family, which will feel encouraged and impelled to work ever more and ever better in the vast field of its mission, but will also be the reason for a more intense Christian life for all the faithful, to whom Fr Rinaldi has left an indelible legacy of deep and profound Salesian spirituality which will contribute to a very significant increase in vocations to consecrated, priestly and lay life.

Fr Rinaldi offers a form of very simple, coherent, attractive and lovable holiness. It is not a type of holiness that is revealed in extraordinary events, but through an entirely heroic life aimed at the constant search for good, in constant fidelity to one's duty, in perfect control of oneself in the midst of all the great and small difficulties of daily life. He was a superior at the exclusive service of God, characterized by his enlightened wisdom of government, prudence in acting, charity and firmness, and by the unparalleled fatherliness of his being.

Fr Rinaldi’s holiness is to be seen under the banner of his fidelity to the figure and spirit of Don Bosco, of whom he was a worthy disciple and original continuer. He was the third successor of St John Bosco to lead the Salesian Society, after Blessed Michael Rua and Fr Paul Albera. In the almost ten years of his being Rector Major, the Salesian Congregation achieved the rapid spiritual and cultural development of its members, who were increasingly committed, on a world-wide level, to the delicate sectors of the education of young people and the missions. In over 50 years of Salesian religious life, he distinguished himself as a faithful interpreter of the spirit of Don Bosco and a mirror of his heroic virtues.

On 1 April 1934, Easter Sunday, Don Bosco, founder of the Salesian Congregation, was canonized. This was followed, on 29 October 1972, by the beatification of Fr Michael Rua, his first successor. On 29 April 1990 Fr Philip Rinaldi was beatified. Without doubt, this is an important fact which redounds to the honour of the Salesian Family and, at the same time, highlights the profound spirituality impressed on the Congregation by the founder and kept alive by his immediate successors. Fr Rinaldi followed completely in the spiritual wake of Don Bosco, who enlightened him in his vocation, helped him overcome his uncertainties, followed him with special care, respected him and prepared him for the important tasks that he then entrusted to him.

We conclude with a spiritual portrait of Blessed Philip Rinaldi offered by Salesian Fr Gugliemo Viñas Pèrez, born in 1879 in Auiga (Huesca) and who died in 1956 in Barcelona, and who was witness at the Information Process held in Barcelona in Spain.

“I would like to try to sketch out a poor and humble profile of Fr Rinaldi, not a complete one – too difficult a task, if not an impossible one since it would mean embrace every aspect – but of Fr Rinaldi in his forties, Fr Rinaldi in Salesian Spain, which represents the period in which we lived with him and had the greatest relationship with him.

In physical terms, he was a great guy – Just look at his photographs. In Spain, in the language of the people, we called him a good, very graceful lad!

His face was *very pleasant*! Full of fatherly goodness, distinguished.

*His eyes*, glasses slightly tilted, *were a secret, like a magnet* for most of those who knew him. Only after many years did they realize that one of those eyes was blind!...but everyone could enjoy the fatherly and attractive glances that gently penetrated the depths of souls...who were immediately captured!

*In prayer* he seemed immersed and as if he were talking to God; *distracting him, calling on him or passing on* some difficult task to him.

In *his zeal* for the education of young people he was a true apostle, in forming his confreres he was a Don Bosco. In his dealings with the Salesians he was a father.

His gentle, mild and pleasant *smile* was contagious, not because he burst forth into great laughter, which was not his style, but because seeing their father happy and satisfied made his children rejoice and be happy.

*Abrupt gestures or strong manners* were not part of his character he was always gentle and at the same time calm.

*His words* were few rather than too many! He did not waste words. From his mouth all gathered their *manna*, what was for them, what they needed, what apparently came to them as *inspired* or *prophetic* language.

*His outward demeanour* was elegantly simple and dignified, always virile without jarring. He attracted through the magnetism and scent of his virtues.

*His deep humility* and abandonment to God made him intrepid in his exploits... and Salesian Spain took off from there!!

*All his virtues*, lived with burning zeal, were bright stars which reached the heights of the saints, but his *fatherliness* was an *undying sun*. Under that sun we all felt good, confident, brought to heel... children!

With him we felt protected. We had nothing to fear.

Undoubtedly and in general terms, this is what our glorious Patron, St Francis de Sales, must have been like.”[[179]](#footnote-180)

**CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF THE LIFE OF BLESSED PHILIP RINALDI**

**1856, 28 May** Born at Lu Monferrato (Alessandria).

**1861, 15 October** Sees Don Bosco for the first time, passing through Lu with his boys.

**1856-1877 –** Secular life at Lu Monferrato (Alessandria).

**1866 One** year in the Junior Seminary at Mirabello. Meets Don Bosco twice. At year end, returns to the family.

**1877, October** Goes to Sampierdarena, Genoa to the house for adult vocations.

**1877-1879** Completes his secondary education.

**1879, 8 September** Novitiate at San Benigno Canavese.

**1879, 20 October** Clerical clothing.

**1880, 13 August** Perpetual profession.

**1880-1883** At San Benigno Canavese for theological studies.

**1882, 17 September** Tonsure and four minor orders at Biella, from Bishop B. Leto.

**23 September** Sub-diaconate at San Benigno from Bishop B. Leto.

**8 October** Diaconate at San Benigno, from Bishop E. Manacorda.

**23 December** Priesthood at Ivrea, from Bishop D. Riccardi.

**1883-1889** Director of adult vocations at Mathi and St John the Evangelist, Turin.

**1892-1901** Provincial of the Salesian Houses in Spain and Portugal.

**1901** Fr Michael Rua appoints him Prefect General (Vicar) of the Congregation.

**1904** Confirmed as Prefect General by the 10th General Chapter.

**1910** Re-confirmed as Prefect General by the 11th General Chapter.

**1922, 24 April** Elected Rector Major, third successor of Don Bosco, by the 12th General Chapter.

**1931, 5 December** Died in Turin.

**Cause of Beatification**

Fr Rinaldi’s cause of beatification and canonization had a singular beginning. His successor, Fr Peter Ricaldone, who was with him for 20 years, said at the time txhat he had doubts about the convenience of promoting it, because Fr Rinaldi “did not let anything extraordinary shine through in his person” and that before taking the initiative, he had been waiting for an extraordinary sign which would impeccably demonstrate the will of the Lord to glorify his Servant. Fourteen years after Fr Rinaldi’s death, the sign came. It was sensational. In 1945, Sister Carla De Noni, a Sister of the Missionaries of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, founded by Mother Margherita Lazzari, spiritual daughter of Fr Rinaldi’s, was attacked (it was during the Second World War) in a bombing raid and among other juries, suffered a smashed partially lower jaw. Following the application of a handkerchief belonging to Fr Rinaldi, her jaw unexpectedly grew by a few inches, allowing the Sister, who was in her death throes, to resume life again.

**1947-1953:** Ordinary Process in Turin with twenty-two witnesses, all *de visu (seen)* and all favourable. Of the witnesses eight were Salesians and six Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Added to this list were: a religious, Foundress of the Pious Union of the Missionaries of the Passion of Jesus; a diocesan priest, three laymen and three laywomen.

**1949-1950:** Information Process in Barcelona with twenty witnesses, all *de visu (seen).*

**February 19, 1956:** Decree of approval of Writings.

**June 11, 1977:** Decree of Introduction of the Cause.

**1980-1981:** Apostolic Process in Turin. Since those from the Ordinary Process had died, all but one of the 22 witnesses were *de visu* and knew Fr Rinaldi especially in the last 15 years of his life.

**June 25, 1982:** Decree of Validity of the Processes.

**1985:** Examination by the Historical Commission.

**October 14, 1986:** Special Congress of Theological Consultors.

**December 23, 1986:** Ordinary Session of Cardinals and Bishops.

**January 3, 1987:** Decree of Venerability.

**March 3, 1990:** Decree of recognition of the miracle.

**April 29, 1990:** Pope John Paul II beatified him in St Peter’s Square in Rome.

**PRAYER FOR CANONIZATION OF BLESSED PHILIP RINALDI**

*O God, infinitely good Father,*

*you called Blessed Philip Rinaldi,*

*Third Successor of Saint John Bosco,*

*to inherit his spirit and works*

*and to initiate various charismatic groups*

*in the Salesian Family:*

*grant that we may imitate his goodness,*

*his apostolic initiative,*

*his tireless industriousness sanctified by union with God.*

*Grant us the graces that we entrust to his intercession.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

***For information and to indicate graces received***

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1. ISTITUTO SECOLARE “VOLONTARIE DI DON BOSCO”, *Documenti e testi, V, “Quaderno Carpanera”. Le conferenze spirituali di don Rinaldi alle Zelatrici di M.A. (1917-1928)*, Rome 1980, p. 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO CAUSIS SANCTORUM P.N. 749, TAURINENS. CANONIZATIONIS SERVI DEI PHILIPPI RINALDI, SACERDOTIS PROFESSI AC RECTORIS MAIORIS SOCIETATIS SANCTII FRANCISCI SALESII, *POSITIO SUPER VIRTUTIBUS*, Roma Tipografia Guerra, 1985. For the bibliography, see M. DAI LOC NGUYEN, *Fedeltà nel dinamismo. Don Filippo Rinaldi e la crescita del carisma salesiano*, LAS, Rome 2011, pp. 147-150. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. E. Ceria, *Don Bosco con Dio*, LDC, Turin 1946. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Circular Letter, 24 February 1925, in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*, no. 28, p. 350. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. L. Castano, *Positio*, *Summarium,* p. 505, § 1750. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. *Altri ricordi del fratello Don Giovanni Rinaldi, Positio, Documenta*,no. XVII, pp. 552-553. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. This small village would have remained unknown had some mothers not made a decision in 1881 that would have major repercussions. Many of these mothers had the heartfelt desire to see one of their sons become a priest or one of their daughters totally committed to the service of the Lord in consecrated life. They began to gather every Tuesday for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, under the guidance of their parish priest, Monsignor Alessandro Canora, and to pray for vocations. No one could have imagined how the Lord would answer these mothers’ prayers so extensively. 323 vocations to consecrated life came from this town: 152 priests (including religious) and 171 religious belonging to 41 different congregations. Sometimes there were three or four vocations from the one family. The best known example is that of the Rinaldi family. The Lord called seven sons from this family. Two daughters entered the Salesian Sisters: Sister Maria Luisa Rinaldi was a missionary for 41 years in Santo Domingo and Central America, while Sister Filomena Rinaldi remained in Piedmont as an intrepid and courageous educator. Among the males, five became Salesian priests. In fact, many young people from the village joined the Salesians. It is no coincidence that Don Bosco went to Lu four times during his lifetime. The saint attended the first Mass of Philip Rinaldi, his spiritual son, in his native village. Philip loved to remember the faith of Lu's families: “A faith that made our parents say: the Lord has given us children and if He calls them we can certainly not say no! Every 10 years, starting in 1946 when the First Vocation Conference was held, all the priests and religious still alive gathered in their hometown from all over the world. Fr Mario Meda, parish priest of Lu for many years, told how this meeting was a real feast, a feast of thanksgiving to God for having done great things for Lu. The prayer that the mothers in Lu said was short, simple and profound: *Lord, make one of my children a priest! I myself want to live as a good Christian and I want to lead my children to be good so I may obtain the grace of being able to offer you, Lord, a holy priest Amen.*

   It is worth remembering Mother Angela Vallese (1854-1914), Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Superior of the first FMA missionary expedition to Patagonia; Archbishop Evasio Colli (1883-1971), Archbishop of Parma, friend of Pope John XXIII; Archbishop Mario Cagna (1911-1986), Apostolic Nuncio to Japan, Yugoslavia, Austria. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. *Circular Letter, 26 April 1931,* in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*, n. 56, pp. 940-941 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. G. Vacca, *Positio*, *Informatio*,pp. 10-11, no. 17*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. *Autografo di don Rinaldi sulla sua giovinezza, Positio, Documenta*,no. IX, pp. 535-538. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. *Fr Philip Rinaldi’s resolutions between 1877 and 1881, Positio, Documenta*,no. VII,pp. 532-534. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. *Fr Rinaldi’s resolutions and prayers between 1878-1879, Positio, Documenta*,n. VIII,pp. 534-535. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. *Fr Rinaldi’s reflections on an undated and handwritten sheet of paper, Positio, Documenta*,no. XIV,p. 548. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. E. CERIA, *Vita del Servo di Dio Sac. Filippo Rinaldi*,SEI, Turin, reprint 1951, pp. 55-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. *Fr Rinaldi’s resolutions in 1889, Positio, Documenta*,no. XII, pp. 543-545. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. M. OLAECHEA, *Positio*, *Summarium*,p. 363, § 1230. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. *Prayer to Our Lady, Positio, Documenta*,no. XV*,* pp. 548-549. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. E. VALENTINI, *Don Rinaldi, Maestro di pedagogia*, Turin, 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. For presentation of Fr Rinaldi’s charismatic role regarding the Salesian Family, we include part of the Letter written by Fr Egidio Viganò for Fr Rinaldi’s beatification, *Fr Philip Rinaldi authentic witness and interpreter of the “Salesian spirit”*, in *Acts of the General Council*, no. 332, pp. 22-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. C. GENGHINI, *Positio*, *Summarium*,pp. 218-219, §§ 758.760. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio*, *Summarium,* p. 113, § 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 167, § 578. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. *Letter of 9 July 1929*, in *Acts of the Superior Council*, no. 49, p. 770. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. T. LUPO, *Positio,* *Summarium*,p. 387 § 1317. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. *Ibidem*,§ 1318. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. A. ZANNANTONI, *Positio,* *Summarium*,pp. 438-439, § 1515. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. P. RICALDONE, *Positio,* *Summarium*, p. 277, § 968. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Fr Peter Ricaldone is without doubt the most authoritative witness in the process for the beatification of Fr Rinaldi. He was born on 27 July 1870 in Mirabello, where Don Bosco had opened the first Salesian college outside Turin. His father, a man of character and balance, a well-off farmer, became mayor of the town. To complete his studies he was sent to the Salesian College at Alassio, then to the Borgo San Martino College. Here, one day, Peter was able to chat with Don Bosco alone, and would then see him a second time in Turin. After some hesitation, which led him to the seminary at Casale until about to begin his theology studies, he returned to the Salesians. He made his first religious profession on 23 August 1890. Still a young cleric, he was sent to Spain, where he remained for twenty years carrying out intense apostolic and educational activity and in 1901 became the Provincial of Andalusia, also carrying out the task of Visitor to houses in Latin America. In 1911 he was called to join the Superior Council as Director General of Professional (Technical) and Agricultural Schools. In 1922 he was elected Prefect General. In those years he distinguished himself in preparing the Salesian missions pavilion for the Vatican Exhibition, as well as making an extraordinary visit to the missions in the Far East. He played a large part in the organization of events connected with the beatification of Don Bosco (1929). In 1932 he was elected Rector Major, fourth successor of Don Bosco, and governed the Salesian Congregation for about twenty years. A man of considerable intellect and governmental skills, he gave vast impetus to the spiritual and professional formation of the Salesians, and to development of institutes of higher culture, including the Pontifical Salesian Athenaeum. Twice he travelled around the world, bringing the depth of his administrative experience everywhere he went, an understanding heart, human advancement to native peoples and this concern for migrants. He multiplied the number of technical schools, ensuring that they had specialised personnel everywhere. He had the joy of seeing the canonization of Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello, the beatification of Dominic Savio. He died on 25 November 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. *Ivi*,p. 266, §§ 926-927. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. *Ivi*, p. 277, §§ 967-968. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. *Ivi*, p. 294, §§ 1034-1035. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 24, § 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 245, § 852. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. *Ivi*, p. 227, § 784. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 347, § 1196. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. R. DOLZA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 163, § 564. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium,* p. 165, § 572. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. L. CASTANO, *Beato Don Filippo Rinaldi, 1856-1931. Vivente immagine di Don Bosco e suo Terzo Successore*, Elledici, Turin, 1990, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. E. VALENTINI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 518, § 1794. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. A. FRASSATI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 479, §1655. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 399, § 1363. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 242, § 840. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium,* p. 7, § 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. G. FERRERI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 496, §§ 1720-1722. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. N. ANGELERI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 490, § 1691. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. I. DIANA, *Positio, Summarium*, p.454, § 1570. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. M OLAECHEA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 368, § 1249. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 79, § 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 178, § 615. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 16, § 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 419, § 1444. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. M. LAZZARI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 306, § 1074. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 106-107, § 370. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 326, §1132. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 72, § 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 125,§ 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 329, § 1138. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 10, § 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. *Prayers to Our Lady*, *Positio, Documenta*, no. XV, pp. 548-550. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. F. GASTINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 40, § 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 324, § 1124. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. C. MARCHISIO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 409, § 1400. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. A. ZANNANTONI, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 440-441, §§ 1522-1523. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 119, §§ 406-407. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 399, §§ 1364-1365. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p.12, § 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 78, § 272. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 132-133, § 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 196, § 686. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. G. FAVINI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 463, § 1598. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 182, § 633. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 421, §§ 1447-1451. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. *Testimony of Fr Ignazio Bonvicino*, SDB, *Positio, Documenta*, n. XVIII, p. 555. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 131, § 447. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. C. MARCHISIO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 409, § 1404. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. A. FRASSATI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 480, § 1657. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 76, §§ 266-267. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. A. FRASSATI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 480, § 1659. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 135, § 461. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 285, § 995. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 17, § 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 241, §§ 836-837. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. U. PAVESE, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 445-447, §§ 1540-1542.1547. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. P. TIRONE*, Positio, Summarium*, p. 242, § 842. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 285, §§ 995-996. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 242-243, § 843. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 79, §§ 276-277. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. A. FRASSATI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 480, § 1659. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. T. LUPO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 383, § 1295. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 182, § 634. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 133, §§ 452-453.455. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. A. POESIO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 31, §§ 112-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 231, § 799. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 429, § 1482. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. *Ivi*,p. 416, § 1429. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 287, § 1005. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. G. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 472, § 1631. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. *Rector Major’s Letter*, 24 May 1922, in *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*,n. 14, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. C. MARCHISIO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 408, § 1395. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p.136, § 468. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 425, § 1463. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. R. GABASIO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 488, § 1686. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 422, § 1456. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. C. MARCHISIO*, Positio, Summarium*, p. 408, § 1395. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. F. GASLINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 47, § 170. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. A. POESIO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 32, §§ 115-116. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p.18, § 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. E. COLLI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 401, § 1371. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 289-290, §§ 1013-1015. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium,* p. 85, § 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 144 § 495. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. P. TIRONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 243, §§ 844-846. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 187, § 653. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 283-284, § 991. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. E. VALENTINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 523, § 1807. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 145, § 499. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. A. FRASSATI, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 482-483, §§ 1667-1668. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. *Testimony of Fr Ignazio Bonvicino, SDB, Positio, Documenta*,n. XVIII,p. 555. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. *Ibidem.* [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 288, § 1008. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 427, §§ 1473-1474. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. G. FAVINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 465, §§ 1606-1607. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 20-21, §§ 69-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 401, § 1373. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. *Positio*, *Documenta*, n. XI, p. 543. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 182, §§ 631-632. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 89, § 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. G. VACCA, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 255-256, §§ 888-890. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 275, § 959. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. *Ivi*, p. 284, § 992. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. G. VACCA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 255, § 887. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 291, § 1020. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 21, § 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. M. LAZZARI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 307, § 1076. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. G. VACCA, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 254-255, §§ 884-886. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 292, §§ 1025-1026. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 21, §§ 72-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 343, § 1183. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 88, §§ 309-312. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 428, §§ 1477-1479. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 292, § 1027. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*, p.403, § 1379. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. U PAVESE, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 450, § 1557. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium A. CANDELA, Positio, Summarium, p. 190, §§ 664-665*, p. 151, § 521. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 90, § 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 190, §§ 664-665. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 344-345, § 1187. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. T. BORDAS, *Positio, Summarium*,p. 92, § 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 431, § 1487. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 292, § 1028. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 402, § 1378. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 23, § 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. *Philip Rinaldi’s resolutions from 1877-1881, Positio, Documenta*,n. VII,p. 534. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. *Philip Rinaldi’s resolutions from 1878-1879, Positio, Documenta*,n. VIII,p. 534. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 433, § 1495. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 191-192, §§ 669-670. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. P. RICALDONE, *Positio, Summarium*, p.292, §§ 1029-1031. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. *Ivi*, pp. 293-294, §§ 1032-1033. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 23, § 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 155, § 534. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. E. VALENTINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 525, § 1815. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. P. ZERBINO, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 434-435, §§ 1499.1501-1502.1503.1508. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. G. MATTA, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 346, § 1193. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. M. LAZZARI, *Positio, Summarium*,pp. 303-312, §§ 1063-1089. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
165. With the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* of 2 February 1947, on the Feast of the Purification, a brief history of the "states of perfection", from Religious Orders to Congregations and Societies of Common Life, was first outlined. As a final step, the new institutions of lay people (and regular priests) consecrated to God were introduced, given the title of "Secular Institutes". It was a decisive step, an achievement that gave a juridical foundation and a place in the Church to new form of consecrated life in the midst of the world. On 12 March 1948, Pius XII issued the *Motu Proprio,* *Primo Feliciter*, which not only clarified *Provida Mater*, but on some points offered the key to its correct interpretation. If *Provida Mater* offers the juridical foundation of Secular Institutes, *Primo Feliciter* talks about the life of their members. A few days later the decree *Cum Sanctissimus was issued by* the Sacred Congregation of Religious, which is a kind of official commentary on the directives concerning Secular Institutes. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
166. L. Castano, *op. cit.*, p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
167. L. LARESE – CELLA, *Il cuore di Don Rinaldi. Terzo Successore di S. Giovanni Bosco*, L.I.C.E. – R. BERRUTI, Torino, 1952, pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
168. ISTITUTO SECOLARE “VOLONTARIE DI DON BOSCO”, *Documenti e testi, V, “Quaderno Carpanera”. Le conferenze spirituali di don Rinaldi alle Zelatrici di M.A. (1917-1928)*, Roma 1980, pp. 1-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
169. *Ivi*, pp. 150-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
170. C. GENGHINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 209, § 725. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
171. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 146, § 504. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
172. *Ivi*,p. 104, §, 362. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
173. A. CANDELA, *Positio, Summarium*, pp. 177-178, §§ 613-614. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
174. T. AZZINI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 21, § 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
175. *Ivi*, p. 20, § 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
176. T. BORDAS*,* *Positio, Summarium*, p. 77, § 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
177. T. GRAZIANO, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 127 § 433. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
178. P. RINALDI, *Positio, Summarium*, p. 398, § 1362. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
179. G. VIÑAS PÈREZ, *Positio, Summarium*,pp. 373-374 [↑](#footnote-ref-180)