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5 December

Blessed PHILIP RINALDI priest
Founder of the Secular Institute
of the Volunteers of Don Bosco

Memorial

For the Secular Institute of the Volunteers of Don Bosco: feast

Philip Rinaldi was born at Lu Monferrato, Italy, on 28 May 1856. From his boyhood he had known Don Bosco but it was only at the age of 21 that he accepted the Saint's invitation to become a Salesian.

After his ordination to the priesthood in 1882 he was entrusted with the formation of adult aspirants to the priesthood. From 1889 he worked for twelve years in Spain and Portugal until in 1901 he was called by Don Rua to be Vicar General and Economer. Intense work did not prevent him from further qualification in the priestly ministry as an eminent spiritual guide. He developed the Salesian Family in all its aspects, and enriched it with the institute, something new for its time, now known as the *Don Bosco Volunteers*.

He was elected Rector Major in 1922 and dedicated himself especially to the formation of the confreres and to development of devotion to Don Bosco, insisting always on the interior life, union with God, the mission, and unlimited trust in Mary Help of Christians. As an authentic interpreter of the Founder he was able to read the "signs of the times" with prophetic intuition and adapt to them, sometimes in a courageous and daring manner.

He died at Turin on 5 December 1931, and was beatified by John Paul II on 29 April 1990. during the XXIII General Chapter of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

From the Common of pastors; or from the Common of saints: for religious. Psalms of the day as in the Ordinary.

Office of Readings

SECOND READING

From the Circular Letters of Blessed Philip Rinaldi, 24 January 1924.

*(24 January 1924; Acts of the Superior Chapter,
5/23 [1924] 174-179 passim)*

Understand, love and practise the Constitutions

The Constitutions are the soul of our Society, and are central to the whole life of Don Bosco; their story is that of his own life. We can say, indeed, that in the Constitutions we have the whole of Don Bosco; in them is his single objective of the salvation of souls; in them is his perfection through the holy vows, in them is his spirit of gentleness, amiability, tolerance, piety, charity, and sacrifice.

Our Constitutions are not merely the fruit of Don Bosco's intelligence and burning charity but, just as it can be said that in Don Bosco's life the supernatural emerges at every turn, so also the

Constitutions in their origin and progressive development are illuminated by a visible supernatural intervention.

Don Bosco wrote the articles of his Constitutions first in the minds and life of those he had chosen as his first followers, and only when it seemed to him that they corresponded to the objective he had in mind, did he finalize them and commit them to paper.

When one reads those early Constitutions presented by Don Bosco to Pius IX in 1858, one seems to hear the voice of the good Father himself, explaining to his sons in great simplicity and clarity the norms to which they should adhere: not by compulsion but by the bond of fraternal charity, so as to form a single heart for the acquiring of perfection in the practice of every work of spiritual and corporal charity towards the young, especially the poorest of them, and in the fostering of ecclesiastical vocations. They should not be concerned about material things but each one, without prejudice to his personal rights, should live as though he possessed nothing. They should not be attached to their own will, but show such filial obedience to the Superior that the latter had no need to command. They should not have many practices of piety in common, but should practise union with God in the midst of the active life which was to be the mark and glory of his sons. Rather than a Society, Don Bosco intended to form a family based almost entirely on the gentle, amiable and watchful fatherliness of the Superior and on the filial and fraternal affection of the subjects; indeed, while maintaining the principle of authority between Superior and subjects, he did not want distinctions but equality among all in everything.

In this way Don Bosco in practice lived his Constitutions with his first sons for thirty years, correcting, modifying, improving and even removing certain articles which he has marked on his manuscript and which had seemed to him in practice not suitable or of little utility. Let us not forget that in this work he was enlightened from above, and in consequence those modifications did not affect the fundamental points on which his Congregation was to be based.

RESPONSORY

Cf. Heb 13,21; 2 Mac 1,4

R/. May God equip you with everything good that you may do his will * working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

V/. May he open your heart to his law and his commandments,

R/. working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ.

* *Or, for the Secular Institute of the Don Bosco Volunteers:*

SECOND READING

From the Conferences to the "Don Bosco Volunteers" of Blessed Philip Rinaldi.

(*"Documents and Texts", V, Rome 1980, 42-47 passim*)

Prayer and apostolic activity

Piety is born of a pious heart; a soul formed to the presence of God prays and has its strength renewed through meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading, and recollection; vocal manifestation comes only after we have entered into ourselves, in concentration, in recollection. Recollection is necessary because it predisposes us for reflection. Reflection is an efficacious prayer, and is necessary for a knowledge of our weaknesses and needs; it enables us to study ourselves, it awakens our love of God, increases our desire for holy Communion and a greater knowledge of the Lord. Reflection nourishes our souls and spirit by a substantial kind of devotion.

Piety is not an end in itself but is useful for everything, especially because it prompts our good works. What work should this Institute of yours be doing? In what way? There are many religious institutes, each of them with a particular purpose, or a specific mission to carry out. The works of mercy are seven in number, and every one of them is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord.

In your own case, what should you do in order to have life? First of all, pray every day for the courage to carry the cross the Lord has laid on you - this is the first thing you must do. And then let each one do well her own work in your particular state of life and conditions as God would have you do, and this according to the spirit of the Lord and of Don Bosco. But even this is not sufficient; you must have another particular objective in view. No matter how busy a person may be, there is always a little more energy available, and this you must use for some special purpose compatible with your state. The works of Don Bosco are such that you can always perform some of them in whatever circumstances you are placed: his programme is to do good in some way, particularly to poor and abandoned youth.

Above all, let your activity begin in your own families, doing well whatever duties God has given you, working unequivocally with the spirit of the Lord; the extra energy or enthusiasm you have you should spend for the benefit of poor youth; pay less attention to those who are rich, and concentrate your care on young workers. Convince yourselves of this: if we are able to treat the poor with the true spirit of the Lord, they will listen to us more willingly, they will love us and follow us; unfortunately our shortcomings sometimes render us incapable of appearing as we should be.

RESPONSORY

Eph 5,8-9; Mt 5,14.16

R/. You are light in the Lord; walk as children of light, * for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

V/. You are the light of the world: let your light shine before men;

R/. for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Concluding prayer as at Morning Prayer.

Morning Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

Heb 13, 7-9a

Remember your leaders, who preached the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever. Do not let yourselves be led astray by all sorts of strange doctrines.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. I placed watchmen on your towers, * they watch over your Church.

I placed watchmen on your towers, they watch over your Church

V/. Day and night they proclaim your name

* they watch over your Church.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

I placed watchmen on your towers, they watch over your Church.

Ant. At the Ben. What you have learned, received,
heard and seen in me, do!
And the God of peace will be with you.

INTERCESSIONS

At the beginning of a new day, let us praise and invoke God our Father who always calls generous workers to labour for the spreading of his Kingdom, and let us say with faith:

Father of all goodness, hear our prayer.

Father, in Blessed Philip Rinaldi you have given us a sure interpreter of the Salesian spirit:

– increase in all the members of our Family fidelity to the Founder's charism.

You made of him a model and teacher of the interior life:

– help us in the variety of our commitments to realize a deep communion with you.

You led him to fulfil a multiple service of great responsibility in the Salesian Congregation:

– inspire those whom you have given us as guides a wise spirit of enterprise.

You made of him a mirror reflecting the fatherliness of St John Bosco:

– pour out your Spirit into our hearts that we may be loving with all.

You gave him wisdom and prudence in his ministry as a spiritual guide:

– enlighten and support our commitment to travel with the young along the road to holiness.

Our Father.

PRAYER

Father, in your infinite goodness you have made Blessed Philip Rinaldi a shining gospel example of joyful self-giving; may we follow the inspiration of his apostolic initiative, and by daily fidelity to our work, bring to its fullness your project of love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Evening Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Pt 5, 1-4

Now I have something to tell your elders: I am an elder myself, and a witness to the sufferings of Christ, and with you I have a share in the glory that is to be revealed. Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you; watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but be an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. This is a man who loves his brothers, * and intercedes for the people.

This is a man who loves his brothers, and intercedes for the people.

V/. He laid down his life for his brothers,

* and intercedes for the people.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

This is a man who loves his brothers, and intercedes for the people.

Ant. At the Magn. God is my witness to the deep affection I have
for all of you in the love of Christ Jesus

INTERCESSIONS

With a sense of humble gratitude, let us thank God our Father for the abundance of his gifts and let us say:

God our Father, hear our prayer.

Father, may the table of your Word and the Bread of life which comes to us through the apostles

– be always for us the living source of our apostolic activity

Father, may the Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus, whom he gave to the beloved disciple to be his Mother also:

– be our helper in educating the young whom you entrust to our care.

Father, source of unending love, you will be all things to everyone in eternal life:

– grant that we may love our brothers and sisters with the heart of St John Bosco.

Father, who through your servant Philip, established a new group of apostles in the world with the Salesian spirit:

– bless the Volunteers of Don Bosco so that they may spread your kingdom with the witness of their evangelical lives.

Merciful Father, you give to your faithful servants the infinite joy of paradise:

– through the intercession of Blessed Philip, have mercy on the deceased members of the Salesian Family.

Our Father.

PRAYER

Father, in your infinite goodness you have made Blessed Philip Rinaldi a shining gospel example of joyful self-giving; may we follow the inspiration of his apostolic initiative, and by daily fidelity to our work, bring to its fullness your project of love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.