

EAO Good Night Talk (11)

Taiwan - Taipei
The Day of Consecrated Life
February 2, 2015

What are the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB) good for?

Heartfelt greetings from Taipei!

This year I'm privileged to spend almost three months with the China province confreres until April 28, which includes also the Lunar New Year (Feb 19 is starting the Year of Goat). The experience of extraordinary visitation helps to get into deeper and calm dialogue of life with all 124 Salesians of 14 nationalities forming this provincial community with 12 communities in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.

The Year of Consecrated Life offers all of us a good opportunity to deepen our roots. There are some 700.000 religious sisters, 80.000 religious brothers and 115.009 religious priests in the Catholic Church. But usually nobody pays much attention to the small flock of the 'secular institute members'. In fact worldwide there are only 32.549 members of secular institutes in the Church. Believe or not, the Volunteers of Don Bosco (VDB) are the largest (1200+members) among them and Olga, their 'Responsabile maggiore' is also the President of the World Federation of all 214 Secular Institutes in the Catholic Church.

In Asia we can meet **143 VDB** living in India (14), Hong Kong and Macau (16), Thailand (12) and Cambodia (2), Vietnam (28), South Korea (21), Japan (3), Philippines (46), Indonesia (1) and Timor Leste (2). Probably most of you have already met Paoline, the first Asian member of the VDB Central Council (2001-2013). In our region there are 18 SDB 'ecclesiastical assistants' accompanying the VDB on their vocation journey.

During my 12 years as *VDB Assistant* in Korea (1990-2001) I was asking myself often: **'What is the specific contribution of the VDBs to the Church and to the Salesian Family?'** Indeed among the 30 groups of the Salesian Family there are five secular institutes: *VDB, Disciples of Don Bosco, Daughters of the Queenship of Mary, Cancão Nova and Volunteers with Don Bosco(CDB)*. 'Yes, we are good for any situation and occasion!' - it's the VDB enthusiastic answer during 2015 Salesian Family Days in Rome.

To be in humble, very concrete and effective way the 'salt of the earth' is the best contribution of the VDBs. Without any protection of community or external structures they witness the obedience, chastity and poverty of Jesus in ordinary secular environments. They are able to transform from within their family, workplace or local society. Their regular formation and monthly recollection is their 'formation house'. Without revealing their consecration they offer a shining witness to Jesus in Don Bosco's way, as the VDB use to say 'We bring Jesus and Don Bosco to the society'.

The preparation for the VDB Centenary (1917-2017) already started 3 years ago. Their roots are going back to Blessed Don Philip Rinaldi at Valdocco. You can meet some VDB in your province and ask her: 'What is your vocation good for?' Don't miss this inspiration during the Year of Consecrated Life!

In Don Bosco

Fr. Václav Klement, SDB

EAO Regional councillor