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Nucleus 28

### **Discernment requires patience**

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After the Synod of young people, we consider in this nucleus the experience of vocational discernment lived by Fr. Rinaldi. Don Bosco accompanied him with his fatherly and patient solicitude until he was able to make a free and responsible choice.

"The word that did good for me was when I told Fr. Albera that I feared I needed a few days to do my own thing and had to escape. He replied: 'I will come to get you'". This immediate and affectionate response from Fr. Paul Albera, director of the Salesian house in Genoa Sampierdarena, to the twenty-one-year-old Philip Rinaldi, who was there discerning his vocation, contains a real strategy (the same one already used by Don Bosco) in a spiritual situation that could be defined as "not feeling called on the one hand, and continuing to be called on the other". A situation of uncertainty and refusal to accept one's vocation.

Born in Lu Monferrato (Alessandria) on May 28, 1856, eighth of nine children, Philip met Don Bosco for the first time at the age of five, during one of the many walks that the holy priest made with his young people. His youthful temperament was not what one could properly expect from a saint, but Don Bosco also saw in him the good cloth of a priest and educator. At ten years of age, he begins to frequent the Salesian house of Mirabello for his studies. He meets Don Bosco two times and he immediately feels he is his friend. Following an ill-treatment, he returns to his family, where however, he receives letters from the Saint of the youth who invites him to return: "Don Bosco's houses are always open to you". He later confided: "I had no intention of becoming a priest". Don Bosco, however, thinks otherwise. He visited him in 1876. Philip is now twenty, with the prospect of marriage. Don Bosco definitively won his cause. Fr. Rinaldi will then confess: "My choice fell on Don Bosco ... He had answered all my objections". He will remain yet another year with his family, preoccupied with his studies, his headache, and his sick left eye. "Come! - was the last patient invitation of Don Bosco - The headache will pass and you will have enough to study". Thinking back on all his resistance, he will one day exclaim: "Let the Lord and Our Lady do everything. After having resisted Grace in the past, I must no longer abuse it in the future". At the age of twenty-one, Philip Rinaldi undertook the journey for adult vocations in Sampierdarena. In 1880, after the Novitiate, he made his perpetual profession in the hands of Don Bosco himself.

When on December 23, 1882, the day of his priestly ordination, he hears Don Bosco ask him at the end of his long period of vocational discernment: “Are you content now?”, he will respond with filial emotion: “Yes, if you keep me with you!”.

During his 49 years of priesthood, the first twenty find him as Director at Mathi Torinese, in a school for adult vocations, then at St. John the Evangelist in Turin, then in Barcellona-Sarrià in Spain.

A few days before Don Bosco’s death, Fr. Rinaldi desires to go to confession to him. Before absolving him, Don Bosco, already very weak, tells him only one word: ‘Meditation’.

In 1889, Fr. Michael Rua, first successor of Don Bosco, nominates him as Director at Sarrià, a place well-known to him, saying: “You will have to take care of very delicate matters”. In three years, with prayer, gentleness, a paternal and animating presence among the young and the Salesian community, he developed the work. He was then nominated Provincial of Spain and Portugal, contributing in a surprising way to the development of the Salesian Family in the Iberian lands. In only nine years and also thanks to the financial help given by the Venerable Dorotea Chopitea, Fr. Rinaldi founded sixteen new houses. After a visit, Fr. Rua was very impressed and later, in 1901, he nominated him as General Prefect of the Congregation. With this new responsibility, Fr. Rinaldi continued to work zealously, without ever renouncing his own priestly ministry. For twenty years he carried out his task of government with prudence, charity, and intelligence. After the death of Blessed Fr. Rua in 1910, Philip Rinaldi was re-elected as the Prefect and the Vicar of Fr. Paul Albera, the new Rector Major. In an apparently bureaucratic role, he did things that left a mark. Above all, he became an expert spiritual director. He rose very early in the morning and, after celebrating Mass, he began his five hours in the Confessional.

We cannot overlook the work of assistance and spiritual direction carried out in the FMA feminine oratories in an historical time in which women began to assert their proper rights through various lay and Catholic feminist movements. The founding of the Past Pupils Association on March 8, 1908, in the female sewing workshop located in via Cottolengo, Turin 33 is due to his intuition into the feminine genius. An association that, like its founder, would come a long way!

WORK FORM FOR THE CONFEDERAL COUNCIL, FEDERATION, UNION, AND FOR ALL THE PAST PUPILS OF THE WORLD.

- What strikes you about the experience of Don Rinaldi?
- Do you find an invitation for yourself?
- Pray with the universal Church for the young.

Lord Jesus,

After the Synod, Your Church  
turns its gaze to all the young people of the world.  
We pray that they may courageously  
take their lives in their hands,  
aim at the most beautiful and deepest things  
and always keep a free heart.

Accompanied by wise and generous guides,  
help them to answer the call  
that you address to each of them,  
to realize Your life project  
and achieve happiness.  
Keep their hearts open to big dreams  
and make them attentive to the good of others.

Like the beloved disciple,  
may they also be beneath the Cross  
to welcome your Mother,  
receiving her as a gift from You.  
May they be witnesses of Your Resurrection  
and know how to recognize You alive beside them,  
proclaiming with joy that You are the Lord.  
Amen.

Please send your personal or group response by e-mail to:

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