
Guide to the Victor P. Salandini, 1949-1992

Collection number: m0249

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ABSTRACT

Biographical information, correspondence, personal files relating to parish work with Mexican Americans, research on California farm labor problems, and teaching materials, together with reference files on farm labor topics such as organizations, legislation, statistical studies, etc.

BIOGRAPHY

Fr. Victor P. Salandini is best known as an activist of the Mexican American community and advocate of the California farm laborers' cause. A close associate of Cesar Chavez (director of the United Farm Workers union), Fr. Salandini defied the Catholic hierarchy and the U.S. government several times, suffering parish transfers, suspension, and even imprisonment in order to pursue his calling as a priest to the oppressed. At the same time his scholarly research on the labor question ("The Short-Run Socioeconomic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. Thesis, Catholic University, 1969) was utilized by the U.S. Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare and reprinted by the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Bureau of Standards. The only son of a farmer, Victor Paul Salandini was born August 12, 1927 in Escondido, California. From age twelve until his 1952 ordainment as a Roman Catholic priest, Salandini spent every summer working as a laborer in the fields. His first appointment as curate (1952-1954) to the Rev. Leo L. Davis of the Immaculate Conception Church, a Mexican American parish in San Diego, allowed him the opportunity to bring his personal experience as a field worker into the forefront of his ministry's concern. In 1953 Fr. Davis founded the United States' first Cardijn Center, a predominantly lay organization dedicated to the social doctrine of the Church. Fr. Salandini headed a Cardijn Center sub-group, the Young Christian Workers, whose aim was "to restore Christian dignity to the world of work." He later wrote that "the Cardijn Center has given my priesthood meaning." In 1957 he was selected to attend the Young Catholic Workers International conclave and seminar in Rome. The Diocese of San Diego, as well as his parishioners, praised Salandini's efforts. As an assistant pastor (1954-1957) to two San Diego Mexican American parishes and as Pastor (1957-1962) of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, El Centro, California, Fr. Salandini worked to develop Christian leadership in young men. In a rural Mexican American parish this concern soon fed into a ministry supporting the migrant laborer. From 1957 to 1962 Fr. Salandini was chaplain to 6,000 braceros (migrant workers) in the Imperial Valley. In addition to his religious duties, he tried to improve conditions in the migrant camps by showing weekly films and introducing other social activities; he also devised an effective system to safeguard the money which hundreds of workers sent their families in Mexico. Meanwhile, from January to March 1961, the newly-formed Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) began their first big drive to organize workers in Southern California, a campaign which culminated in a strike in the Imperial Valley's lettuce fields. The experience of watching the increased union activity further impressed upon Fr. Salandini the need to improve the working conditions of migrant laborers. He strongly supported his parishioners who were the strike's main participants. Church officials, however, were not pleased with his involvement and, according to Salandini, he was "silenced by the Diocese which felt that Church intervention at that time was not prudent." Fr. Salandini was transferred to high-school teaching duties within San Diego. While in San Diego, he completed his B.A. degree at San Diego City College (1962). He went on to receive an M.A. degree from St. Louis University (1965), writing a thesis entitled: "An Objective Evaluation of the Labor Disputes in the Lettuce Industry in Imperial Valley, California, during January-March 1961." In 1964 the Diocese allowed Fr. Salandini to resume work as an assistant parish priest at Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a Mexican American parish in the rural border community of San Ysidro, California. Again, Fr. Salandini was placed in an excellent position to further union efforts. After a period of quiescence, AWOC resumed its attempts to organize field workers in late 1964. In March 1965 AWOC extended its efforts to San Diego County where Fr. Salandini spearheaded the campaign by making the church hall available for organizational meetings. In June, two weeks after AWOC struck five farms, the Diocese sent Fr. Salandini out of his parish, releasing him exclusively to _ attend summer sessions at San Diego State University and later the Ph.D. program in labor economics at Catholic University, Washington, D.C. Diocesan intervention did not lessen Fr. Salandini's devotion to the farm labor movement. His growing acquaintance with Cesar Chavez had greatly influenced him. While he studied in Washington he worked as the official legislative representative of the National Farm Workers Association's (later the United Farm Workers), and also served on the Mexican-American Advisory Committee of the War on Poverty. In April 1966 he led a sympathy march to the nation's capital which was followed by a mass for the grape-strikers. Upon his return to the San Diego area, Fr. Salandini, along with Cesar Chavez, the Rev. Wayne C. Hartmire (Director of the California Council of Churches Migrant Ministry) and eight striking grape-workers, was chained, jailed and tried for trespassing on DiGiorgio Corporation property after attempting to claim the strikers' confiscated goods. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1969, Fr. Salandini was increasingly recognized as an authority on the California farm labor question. From 1969 to 1971, as the Research Director of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, he travelled across the United States and Canada to lecture and inform the public. In addition to publishing numerous articles and reviews, Salandini worked for New Manpower Researchers of the Department of Labor, The Labor Guild of Boston, and participated in the Wilhelm Weinberg Seminar, a conference sponsored by the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations. He also collaborated with Wayne State University in compiling a selective bibliography entitled "Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers." Fr. Salandini continued to pursue his more controversial labor activities as well, stating he was "merely following papal social doctrine that a priest be concerned with the needs of the poor." In 1965 he began serving as a part-time chaplain for Chavez and union farm workers. Salandini's ministry reached its climax in 1971 when San Diego Bishop Leo T. Maher suspended him for refusing to wear vestments other than a burlap serape emblazoned with Chavez's stylized eagle and for distributing corn tortillas as communion bread. Diocesan officials accused "the tortilla priest," as Salandini came to be known, of "scandalous disobedience" for using his religious status as a political weapon. They also charged that he harassed the owners of picketed farm operations by holding daily masses in defiance of a court injunction. Bishop Maher later reinstated Salandini, and he returned to his academic career as associate professor of

labor economics at Fresno State College.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The papers of Fr. Victor P. Salandini consist of 5 1/2 linear feet of correspondence, personal files, and reference files dating from 1949 to 1973. The research strengths of the collection lie in its fairly full documentation of Fr. Salandini's particular farm labor interests and specific events in which he was involved (the bracero program and the Imperial Valley lettuce strike in 1961, for example). Less specific research strengths of the papers include documentation of the role of the Catholic Church in California, farm labor organizing, and the role of specific labor organizations during the 1960s, such as the Workers' Organizing Committee, National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee. Although Fr. Salandini was Research Director for the UFWOC, AFL-CIO, from 1969 to 1971, those files are not included in these papers. The papers are arranged in two major series: Personal Papers and Reference Files. Series I, Personal Papers, consists of material generated by Fr. Salandini. Sub-series within Personal Papers include biographical information, correspondence, and working files generated by parish work, scholarship, and teaching. Series II, Reference Files, consists of files created by Fr. Salandini for his own reference purposes. They reflect his primary interest in farm labor problems, specifically those of Mexican Americans in California.

SERIES I: PERSONAL PAPERS, 1952 -1973

Scope and Content Note

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION, 1965 -1973

This sub-series consists of four folders, including clippings, short biographical sketches submitted to publishers, and Fr. Salandini's 1973 curriculum vita. **CORRESPONDENCE, 1952 -1974**

Approximately one-half linear foot, correspondence has been arranged chronologically with incoming letters interfiled with outgoing carbons. This arrangement maintains the coherence of particular issues and involvements that are subject-related rather than relating specifically to Fr. Salandini himself. Commencing in 1952, most of the correspondence through 1958 concerns parish work in the Diocese of San Diego. There is church business correspondence from Charles F. Buddy, the Bishop of San Diego, and letters from individuals whom Fr. Salandini worked with in the Cardijn Center, the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and Young Christian Students (YCS). Little outgoing material is available from this time period.

Correspondence from 1958 concerns farm labor problems; parish work in El Centro is represented during 1959-60.

Correspondence from 1965 until 1969 is sparse and pertains mainly to dissertation research. Fr. Salandini's work in Canada on the grape boycott is represented during 1969-70 but there is little thereafter. The correspondence files end in 1974. A list of selected correspondents follows this scope note.*

PARISH WORK, 1952 -1967

Covering the period 1952 to 1967 and consisting of one-quarter linear foot of material, these papers relate particularly to the role of Fr. Salandini vis a vis the structure of the Church and its various lay organizations.

SCHOLARLY WORK, 1961 -1969

Fr. Salandini received his Masters degree in Economics having written his thesis on the labor strikes of the early 1960s in California's Imperial Valley. He continued his research in the area of farming and labor in California and received his Ph.D. in labor

*lacking, 8/11/87 economics. These files (one linear foot) consist of research notes, proposals, papers and articles written from 1961 to 1969.

TEACHING MATERIALS, 1971 -1972

Teaching materials contain one linear foot of student papers, lectures and readings from several Chicano Studies courses taught at Fresno State College, 1971-72. There is also one file of material from his student, Dagmar Seeley, at D.Q. University (Davis, California) 1972-73.

SERIES II: REFERENCE FILES, 1949 -1972

Scope and Content Note

Fr. Salandini's reference files consist of three linear feet of publications, reports, articles, and newsclippings on many aspects of Mexican farm labor in California. Fr. Salandini's original file names have been retained. Some subjects are specific, others quite general. Topics such as unionization, the bracero program and the termination of Public Law 78 are well-covered, sometimes under several related headings. Other more specific topics include mechanization, migrant housing, and key labor strikes. The bulk of the material is dated from 1961 to 1972.

SERIES III: ADDENDA, 1964-1992

Scope and Content Note

An addition to the papers of Victor Salandini, including duplicate copies of two papers by Father Salandini.

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Subseries A: Biographical Information, 1965-1973

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Box 1, Folder 2	Clippings, 1965-66
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Box 1, Folder 16	1968
Box 1, Folder 17	1969
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Box 1, Folder 19	1972-1974
Box 1, Folder 20	Addresses and notes on correspondence
Box 1, Folder 21	Addresses
Box 1, Folder 22	Address book (1)
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Subseries C: Parish Work, 1952-1967

Box 2, Folder 4	Bracero monies to Mexico, ledger, 1960-62
Box 2, Folder 5	Cathedral High students, 1954
Box 2, Folder 6	Crosby benefit, 1959
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Box 2, Folder 8	Mass and march, April 10, 1966
Box 2, Folder 9	Sermons, 1953-60
Box 2, Folder 10	Sermons for social action, 1954
Box 2, Folder 11	Work reports, 1957-59
Box 2, Folder 12	Young Christian Students, St. Jude's Church, 1953-55
Box 2, Folder 13	Young Christian Students, social action retreats, 1955
Box 2, Folder 14	Young Christian Workers, 1953-59
Box 2, Folder 15	Young Christian Workers, study week, 1965
Box 2, Folder 16	Young Christian Workers, study week, 1967

Subseries D: Scholarly Work, 1961-1969

Box 2, Folder 17	Cardijn Center, notebook (research and bibliographies) and information, 1965-66
Box 3, Folder 1	Catholic University (Washington, D.C.), labor economics class notes and final exams, 1965
Box 3, Folder 2	Catholic University (Washington, D.C.), paper and research, 1965
Box 3, Folder 3	'Chicano and Anglo Communication', bibliography, ca. 1970
Box 3, Folder 4	"Freedom for Farmworkers," typescript, ca. 1970
Box 3, Folder 5	"Impact of Farm Labor Unionization on the Small Raisin Grape Farmers in Central California," research proposal, 1971
Box 3, Folder 6	Inflation, paper and research material, 1967
Box 3, Folder 7	New Manpower Researchers conference, 1968
Box 3, Folder 8	"Objective Evaluation of the Labor Disputes in the Lettuce Industry in Imperial Valley, California, during January-March, 1961," masters thesis, St. Louis University, 1964
Box 3, Folder 9	"A Profile of Cesar Chavez," typescript, n.d.
Box 3, Folder 10	Research material and proposal, 1967
Box 3, Folder 11	Research notes, 1968
Box 3, Folder 12	St. Louis University, course work, 1963 (1)
Box 3, Folder 13	St. Louis University, 1963 (2)
Box 3, Folder 14	St. Louis University, 1963-64
Box 3, Folder 15	St. Louis University, 1964
Box 3, Folder 16	St. Louis University, faculty, 1965-66
Box 4, Folder 1	"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1969
Box 4, Folder 2	"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, research material (1)
Box 4, Folder 3	"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, research material (2)
Box 4, Folder 4	"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, first draft with notes
Box 4, Folder 5	"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, miscellaneous research material

Subseries E: Teaching Materials, 1971-1972

Box 5, Folder 1	Catholic Church, materials on, used in Chicano Studies courses
Box 5, Folder 2	Chicano farm labor
Box 5, Folder 3	Chicano unrest
Box 5, Folder 4	Contemporary issues facing Chicano students
Box 5, Folder 5	Decline of the Californios by Leonard Pitt, notes on
Box 5, Folder 6	"Farm Labor Union Problem."
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Box 6, Folder 1	Seely, Dagmar, papers, 1972
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Box 6, Folder 4	Student papers, 1971 (3)
Box 6, Folder 5	Student papers, 1972-72
Box 6, Folder 6	Student papers, 1972

SERIES II: REFERENCE FILES, 1949 -1972

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 Box 6, Folder 8 **Agricultural Worker's Organizing Committee (AWOC)**
 Box 6, Folder 9 **Agricultural Worker's Organizing Committee (AWOC), activities in San Diego County**
 Box 6, Folder 10 **Alinsky, Saul**
 Box 6, Folder 11 **Bracero program, 1958-59**
 Box 6, Folder 12 **Bracero program, typescript by Jan Carolyn Knippers**
 Box 6, Folder 13 **Bracero program, role of church**
 Box 7, Folder 1 **Bracero program, 1962-64**
 Box 7, Folder 2 **Bracero program, termination, 1964**
 Box 7, Folder 3 **Bracero program, legal briefs, 1967-68**
 Box 7, Folder 4 **Campus unrest**
 Box 7, Folder 5 **Chavez, Cesar, articles**
 Box 7, Folder 6 **Chicano Manifesto, by A. Rendon, excerpts**
 Box 7, Folder 7 **Congressional Record**
 Box 7, Folder 8 **Employment practices, improvement of**
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 Box 7, Folder 10 **Farm labor data (1)**
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 Box 7, Folder 13 **Farm labor data(4)**
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 Box 8, Folder 4 **Farm labor clippings (1)**
 Box 8, Folder 5 **Farm labor clippings(2)**
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 Box 8, Folder 7 **Farm Workers Opportunity Project**
 Box 8, Folder 8 **Farm Workers Opportunity Project, excerpts**
 Box 8, Folder 9 **Galarza, Ernesto**
 Box 8, Folder 10 **Giannini Report, 1964**
 Box 9, Folder 1 **Giumarra contract**
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 Box 9, Folder 3 **Grapes, cost studies**
 Box 9, Folder 4 **Immigration, reports and data**
 Box 9, Folder 5 **Immigration and Naturalization Service, annual reports for 1966, 1970, and 1971**
 Box 9, Folder 6 **Immigration, Mexican, report, 1966**
 Box 9, Folder 7 **Imperial Valley, research papers**
 Box 9, Folder 8 **Imperial Valley, lettuce strike, 1961**
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 Box 9, Folder 10 **Imperial Valley, clippings relating to Public Law 78**
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 Box 9, Folder 12 **Journal of Farm Economics, reprints**
 Box 9, Folder 13 **Kenny, Fr. Keith, invocation, 1966**
 Box 9, Folder 14 **Legislation, 1971**
 Box 9, Folder 15 **Library of Congress Bibliography on Mexican Farm Labor Progress, 1951-65**
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 Box 10, Folder 2 **Migrant housing**
 Box 10, Folder 3 **National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC), 1965**
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Box 10, Folder 13 **Strikes, clippings, 1966-71**
Box 10, Folder 14 **Woods, Sister Francis Jerome, "Texas, Mexican ethnic leadership" (Ph.D. dissertation, 1949)**
Box 11, Folder 1 **Jones, Lamar B., " Mexican-American labor problems" (Ph.D. dissertation, 1965)**
Box 11, Folder 2a **Thor report, 1964-65**
Box 11, Folder 2b **Truman, Harry S. Library. Photocopies, 1951**
Box 11, Folder 3 **United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) AFL-CIO**
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SERIES III: ADDENDA, 1964-1992

Gift of Victor Salandini, 1993 April 6

- Box 12 **"Objective Evaluation of the Labor Disputes in the Lettuce Industry in Imperial Valley, California, during January-March, 1961," masters thesis, St. Louis University, 1964**
- Box 12 **"Short-run Socio-economic Effects of the Termination of Public Law 78 on the California Farm Labor Market for 1965-1967," Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1969**
- Box 12 **Updated curriculum vita**
- Box 12 **Newsclippings**
- Box 12 **Articles by Jerome Wolf, 1966**
- Box 12 **Articles by Beverly Fodell, 1974**
- Box 12 **Three Issues of The San Diego Review, Oct.-Dec., 1992**

Note

With column "The Tortilla Priest," by Father Salandini